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Masterwork

Literary Techniques and Story Development

Freytag Pyramid

Third Person Limited

Time-dependent development, narrowing distance, amplifying internal conflict.

Red flame

This is the story of Sophia, who wants to find out what’s knocking in the attic and does find out.

Unhinged

Sophia was a fair, short woman with blonde hair. She was 35 years old. Sophia was from Houston, Texas. Sophia’s only family was her father. She had just moved to her house in the dead of winter. She chose her home for its old-school class and charm. She loved all things vintage. Her hair was always pinned up 1940s-style. Her father told her she was not born into this generation. He told her she was an old soul. Sophia’s house was old and had been around since the 1950s. She suffered from anxiety, and she had a temper at times. All of this was heightened when she heard the noises from her attic.

Sophia had just moved into her new house. “Lord, please let me have a quiet night to rest,” said Sophia. She had many boxes left to unpack.

*Unpacking is for the birds, Lord.*  She had rewatched Friends on television when the power suddenly went out. She looked through her windows, and her yard was as black as coals. Sophia felt a chill throughout her house.

*I know it's winter, but the storm hasn’t even started, and the power is out. This is how I’m going to die; I know it.* The cold wind howled outside and rattled her shutters.

*The icy breath and draft from this floorboard are as cold as ice water in winter.* The walls moaned with an eerie high-pitched sound from the wind. Whoosh!

*That wind is the same wind from Wizard of Oz.* Snow had started to accumulate on the barren ground outside. *We will have a horrible winter this year, that’s for sure. I hope there’s not a blizzard coming.* She put her feet on the floorboard, and its squeaks filled the house. *I’m a sitting duck in the dark. I can see myself on tomorrow’s news, slaughtered down in her youth. Sophia never saw it coming. I don’t have much time before this thing might attack me. No one will make it through this storm to save me. She* heard the clock from the hallway-tick, tick, tick. Each minute went by longer than the one before. The hairs on the back of Sophia's neck started to rise. “There’s that noise again!” she yelled. It reminded her of barnacles being scraped off the hull of a ship. The sound pulsated from above. *Lord, I have never heard that sound before.*

Sophia felt her way to the kitchen with her hands extended out in front of her. She felt her way through her junk drawer. She came across the corkscrew, zip ties, and can opener before she found the matches. She discovered her kitchen candle nearby and lit a lone red flame in the darkness that engulfed her. Her hands started to tremble as she heard the noise again, this time louder. A boom made the ceiling rattle. Sophia’s breaths were choppy as she tried to inhale slowly.

*I wish I could get to my anxiety medication right now.* Her brow became furrowed as she tapped her foot nervously. *Lord, please don’t take me away tonight. I’m not ready yet, Lord!* “If you’re in the attic, I’ll knock you off your feet! If everything is bigger from Texas, whoever’s up there will see this big fist, but only for a second,” shouted Sophia. She set down her candle. She then took a heavy box and threw it across the room. The box landed with a great bang.

“I mean business! There might be bloodshed tonight, but it won’t be mine!” shouted Sophia. She listened for sound in response-there wasn’t one. Sophia’s hands started to tremble as she held on dearly to the flame that was her only guidance. If she kept going like this, she would have a panic attack. Her breaths became shallow and ragged. She tripped over a chair in the living room and fell flat on her stomach with her hand still holding up the candle and bright flame. Sweat started to drip off the temples of her forehead. She crawled a few feet on the floor and lay there with the wind knocked out of her.

“Lord, I’m going to need your help tonight.” She spoke. She began to make her way *to the attic.* She crept along her hall and began to climb a flight of stairs that would lead her to the attic stairwell. Every step she took up the stairs creaked as if she were in a haunted house.

“Lord Jesus, I know there’s no intruder in my house! Oh, it's going to be on like *Donkey Kong* tonight!” She stopped halfway through the steps to listen for the sound from the attic. There was only dead silence.

*Why did I choose a house this big? I’m never going to have many guests.* She finally made it to the top of her stairs. She sighed deeply. Sophia walked lightly past her bedroom door. The silence that filled her upstairs floor was deafening. She reached the end of the hall where the attic stairwell was.

Sophia tripped over a musty box and found a chaotic mess of old junk on the attic stairwell. She started to work her way up from the bottom step. She shoved down old dressers, lamps, and boxes of pictures and mementos. She even came across old textbooks from the 1970s. She found hats of every size, color, and fashion scattered about. “Lord, the previous owner was a hoarder!” said Sophia. “Lord, I’ve been sweating and struggling for hours.” She finally reached the top step. A gigantic spider’s web shined brightly in the corner of the doorframe. She grabbed an old umbrella to tear down the web and its inhabitants.

“I don’t tolerate pests!” said Sophia. She took one step from the threshold of the doorway. She cried out, “I know you’re here! She waited in the silence of the dark and dusty attic. Sophia walked further and realized her candle flame had burned out. There was more junk in her attic than on the attic’s stairwell. She came across several chairs that had been knocked over. “Lord, the junk never ends in this house,” shouted Sophia. Sophia stepped on an old vinyl record that had been knocked on the floor. Crunch! She slowly walked a few more feet and came upon what she thought was a tall, dark figure. She couldn’t make out his face, so she started to shout.

“You thought you could hide from me? Are you living up here?” Sophia heard no response. “I’m talking to you, fool. Are you deaf?” She reached out to grab the front of the man’s clothes and knocked down a coat and hat rack. Sophia jumped back.

*I may leave.* She heard the noise again. Large eyes lit up the room like a hundred yellow Christmas lights. Her jaw dropped in terror. She slowly started to move her feet backward. She gulped.

*“*Stay where you are, you devil beasts! I’m warning you!” said Sophia. They moved forward and hissed loudly. Anyone who witnessed it would have thought wild cats were about to attack her. Sophia twisted her body around and saw she was surrounded. She backed into a box of dusty records and almost fell.

*My time has come, Lord!* “Aaaaaaaaaah!” she screamed with terror. She made a run for the door at lightning speed. The rats sounded like nails on a chalkboard as their weight broke the railing to the attic steps. They sounded like a herd of cattle as they ran. There had to be a hundred rats or more. The rats were hungry. Sophia bolted down the steps and almost slipped on her hallway rug as she ran for her staircase.

*Rats! Rats! Rats!* Sophia slid down the banister of her staircase and hit the floor as fast as her feet could fly. Sophia raced ahead towards her front door in her plight of escape. She tripped on the threshold of her front door. She remained on her stomach with her hands over her head. The rats raced across her body. Sophia couldn’t even give out a small scream. A rat stopped to nibble at her ear and was quickly mulled over. Her body lay still as the weight of the rats pinned her down.

*How long is this going to last, Lord? This is endless. No wonder this house was so cheap! Lord, save me a spot up there next to my mama! Lord, please, take me now. These rats feel like slime all over me!*  Eek! The sounds of the rats’ squeaks filled Sophia’s ears. Sophia smelled putrid rank that had wafted to her nose.

*They smell like they just came from a dumpster on a wet day.*  They ran across her porch until they fanned out in every direction into the dangerous black night. Sophia stood up slowly. All she heard was silence.

*I hope all of you die in the wilderness.* “I’ll sleep on the porch tonight,” she yelped to the moonless night. The wind howled as more snow piled in her empty yard. The bare trees bent as they danced in the violence of the storm. A barnyard owl cried out, Hoot! Hoot! A wolf howled in the distance. Her power came back on in the house. Sophia’s T.V. blared a line from *Friends,* “You ate my sandwich? My sandwich?” Sophia lay motionlessly but let out a sigh of relief. She grabbed a blanket from the living room and lay on her swing porch set. The swing swayed back and forth. Creak!

*Thank you, Jesus. I’m still in one piece tonight. I sure do feel sorry for my realtor tomorrow.*