

Part I – The Breakdown Process
Susan Dansby

Six Scenes with a View of Writing Soaps

From Concept to Script to Air

An Overview

The Long Story

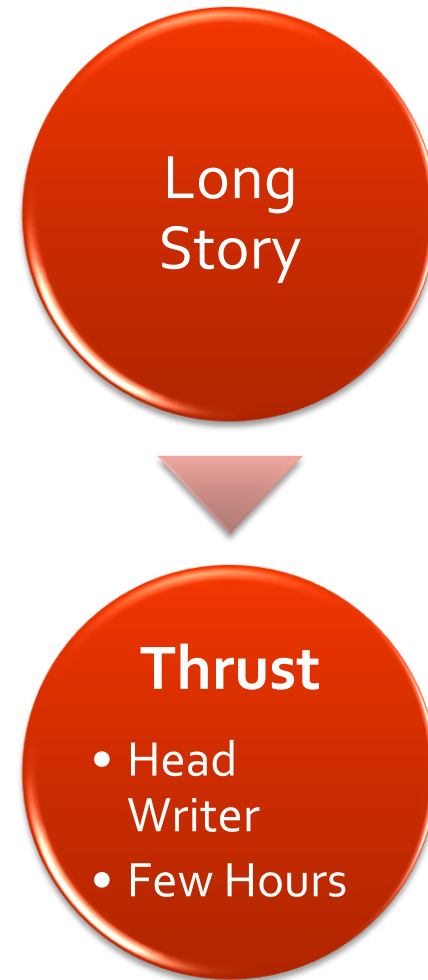
- The **Head Writer** (sometimes with an **Associate Head Writer**) writes the four or five long-term story arcs that will drive stories for three to six months.
- A **story arc** consists of character groupings: The Luke, Noah, Reid story arc includes Luke's parents, Lily and Holden; Luke's grandmother, Lucinda; Luke's father, Damian; Luke's sister, Faith, etc.)

Long Story

- Head Writer
- 3 mos-3 days

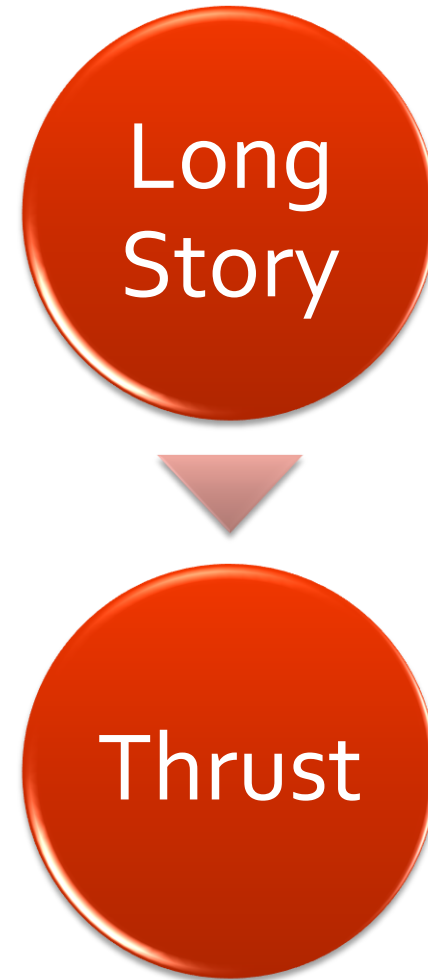
The Thrust

- After the **Long Story** is written for character groupings, it is sent to the Executive Producer, Network Executive, Sponsor/Production Company for approval/notes.
- One of the Head Writer's weekly tasks is to create a document that includes those notes, and breaks the Long Story into weekly chunks. That document is generally called a **Thrust**.



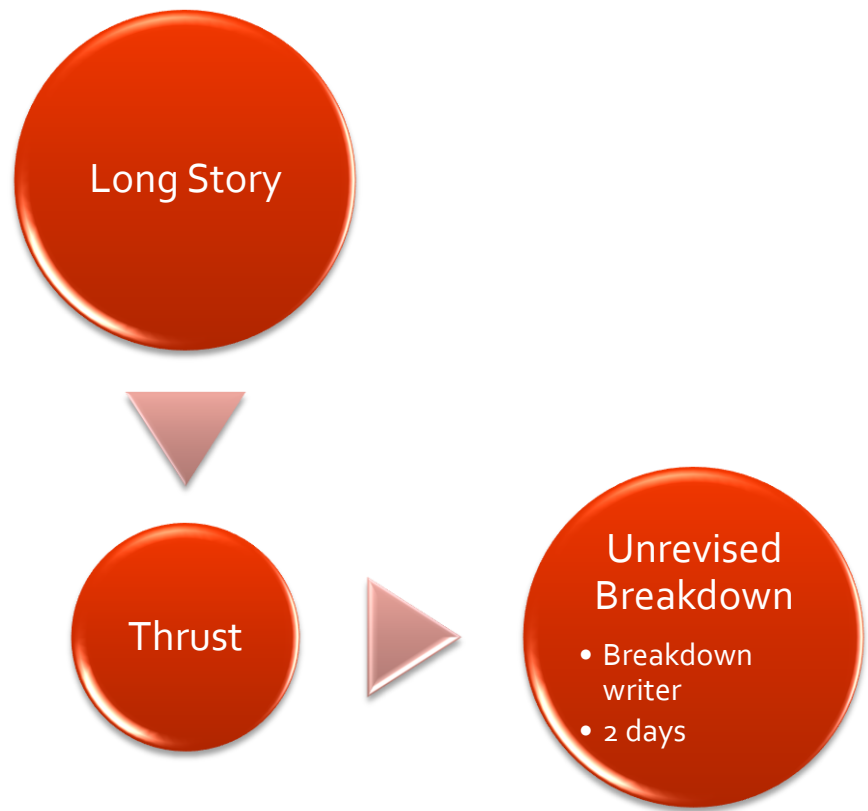
The Thrust

- On *ATWT*, the **thrust** was generally 8-12 double-spaced pages, and would be created by the Head Writer/Associate Head Writer in a matter of hours – gleaning material from long story, adjusting where needed.
- The weekly thrust is then noted by the Executive Producer, Network Executives and Sponsor/Production Company.



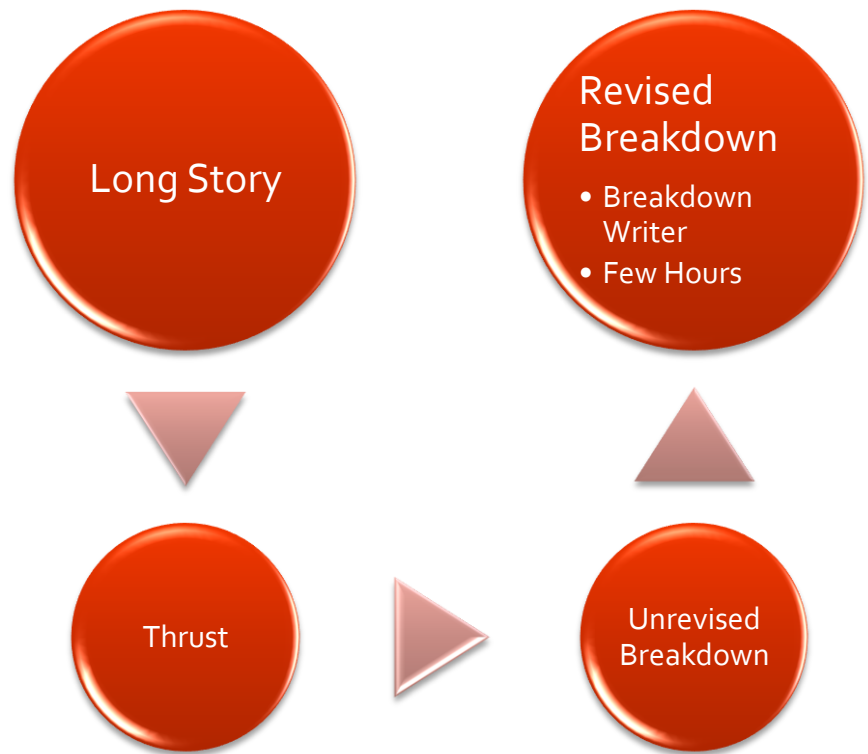
The Unrevised Breakdown

- With notes included, the thrust is then taken into the breakdown meeting where the Head Writer, Associate Head Writer and **Breakdown Writers** break the week's worth of stories into daily chunks called **Breakdowns**.
- A breakdown (14-20 pages) is a synopsis of every segment in that episode (20-27 scenes). A breakdown writer can have as little as two days to deliver the first draft of the breakdown.
- On *As the World Turns*, the first draft of the breakdown was then noted by the Head Writer and Executive Producer. It then became the **Unrevised Breakdown**.



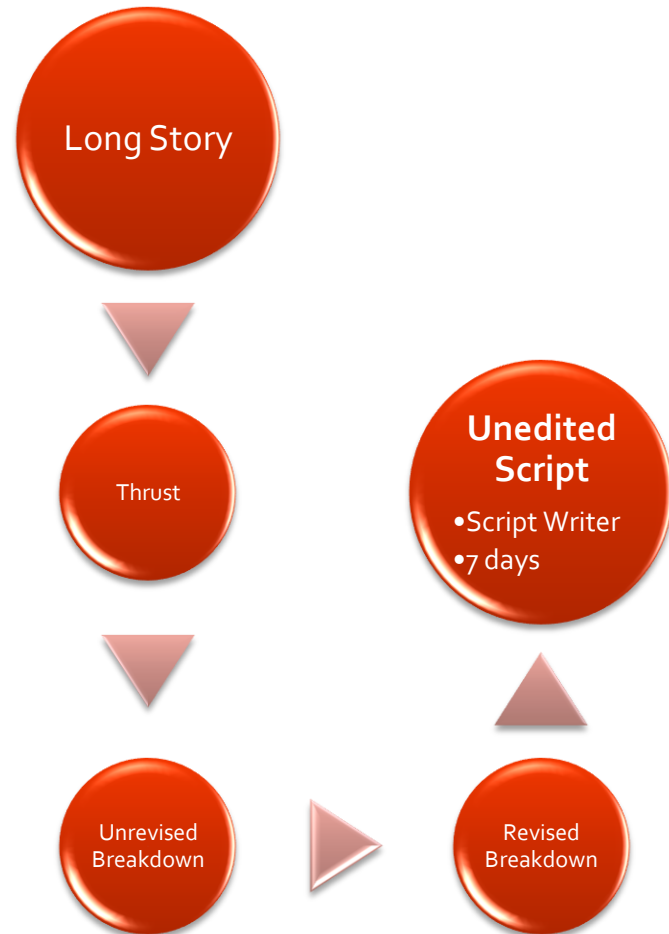
The Revised Breakdown

- The **Unrevised Breakdown** is noted by the Network Executives, Sponsor/Production Company, Executive Producer, Producers and Head Writer. Notes are incorporated within a few hours.
- Once the breakdown writer executes those notes, this becomes the **Revised Breakdown**.



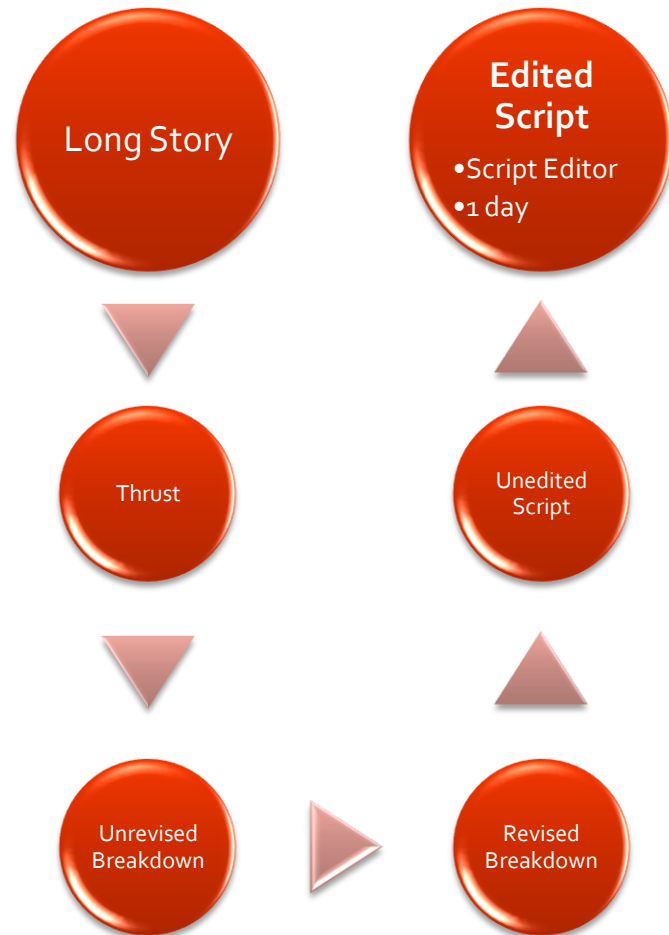
The Unedited Script

- The revised breakdown is assigned to a **Script Writer**, who turns the 14-20 pages into a **Script**.
- Some shows have a shorter turnaround; but on ATWT, the script writer generally had seven days to write a 90-page script.
- NOTE: Other departments: Production, Costume, Set, Music, Lighting, Audio, Directors, Associate Producers, etc., also get the revised breakdown, so they can start designing, planning and scheduling the studio day.



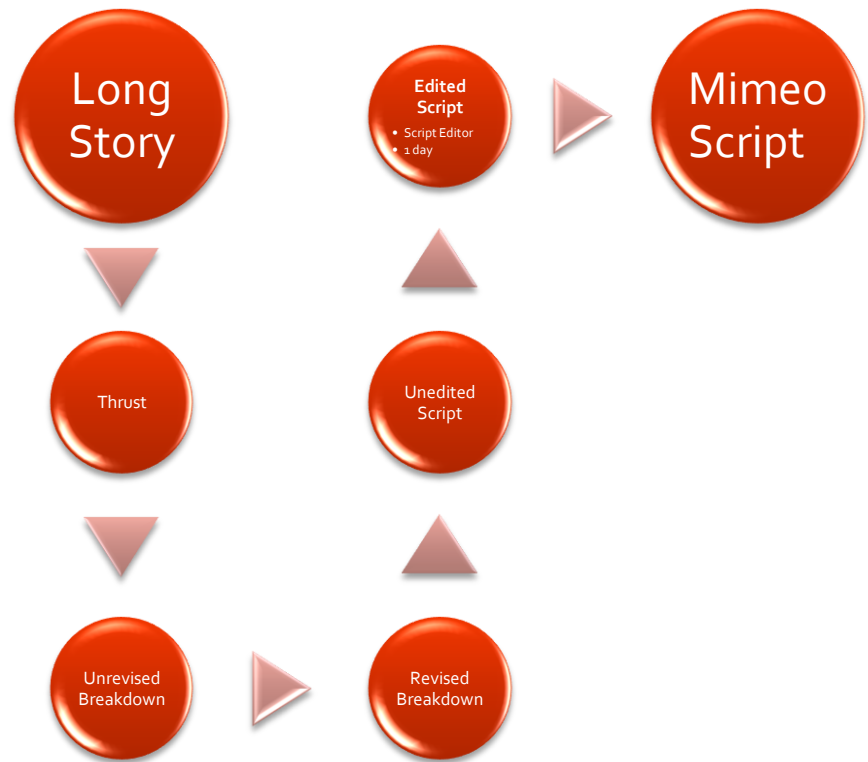
The Edited Script

- The **Script Writer** fully realizes the script: action, character intentions, and dialogue – keeping in mind production constraints, and that there are other Script Writers writing simultaneously. Therefore, you must be careful to adhere to your breakdown and not overstep into someone else's assigned day.
- Upon completion, the Unedited Script is delivered to the **Script Editor** for editing (typos, grammar, character intent, tracking action and dialogue). The Script Editor has about a day to edit each script, producing the **Edited Script**.



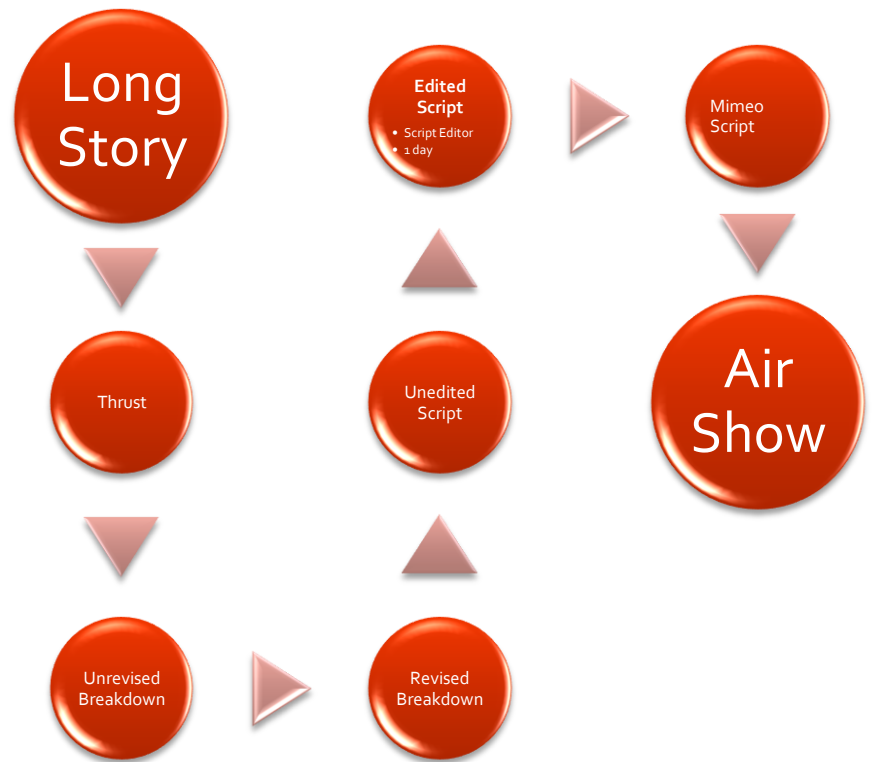
The Mimeo Script

- The **Mimeo Script** is the final script that will be copied and distributed to all of the above-mentioned people/departments PLUS the **Actors**.
- Even if actors are fortunate enough to get a mimeo script a week in advance, they might be working all five days during that week – leaving them little time to learn as much as 40 pages of dialogue per day.



Air Show

- There may be further cuts and additions made during taping – depending on the length of the show and other variables.



Long Story to Breakdown

Writing the Prologue

Your Long Story

- Took excerpts from the first 54 “extra credit” crisis scenarios submitted.
- Given those 54 parts, here's how the story came together.

Flow



THREE MONTHS BEFORE...

- Linda - The Snyder Foundation is hosting a fundraiser for the Reid Oliver Neuro wing and the Snyder Pavilion.
- Tom - Noah returns to Oakdale to attend the gala opening of the new neurology wing and to achieve closure with Luke. Noah (who after hearing less and less from Luke, started dating an actor named Aiden) .
- Genny - Luke thinks he saw Reid.
- SD – Luke has a meltdown. Noah takes Luke to Chris's Hospital Office to calm him.
- Linda - They sit, side by side on a couch (with a bit of distance between them). Noah [reminds] Luke that Luke deserves to be loved, that he's worthy of love... when Noah leans over to kiss Luke, he doesn't pull away. Things get more intimate, Noah's whispering sweet nothings in Luke's ear, telling him how desirable he is. Luke closes his eyes and tries to reconcile the conflict between his brain (knowing he's with Noah), his heart (aching for Reid), and his body (that's reacting because, let's face it, it's been awhile). And then...

THREE MONTHS BEFORE...

- SD – Noah's cell rings – it's Adrian.
- Tom - Luke is put off that Noah has seemingly moved on.
- SD – Luke's cool after that and claimed it was lingering feelings for Reid – actually jealousy.

ONE MONTH BEFORE...

- Dani - Emma Snyder has had a heart attack.
- Stefanie - Perhaps someone in his family has died, such as Emma?
- Ella - (As sad as this is to imagine)- a death in the Snyder family.
- Krissy - Death in family

JUST BEFORE...

- Dawn - Noah has been taken to the hospital after a car accident.
- SD - Luke's just gotten out of the hospital. He told his family he had a stomach virus. But Chris Hughes confirmed the truth to Luke.
- Jennifer - Someone is poisoning Luke slowly. Someone at Grimaldi Shipping is trying to take over.

PROLOGUE

9 months after they said goodbye at WOAK

PROLOGUE – Lily & Holden Family

Room w/Terrace

- Laura - Luke is working on the board of his foundation and helping Lucinda write her widely anticipated memoirs.
- Kirk - Noah told Luke there would always be a place for him in Los Angeles
- Maja - Luke wants to come to Noah; but he has confusing feelings about it. First of all, he's not sure if Noah is still waiting for him as he'd said he would
- Mary H - Lily and Holden have been dating for a while and are talking about getting remarried; Luke's hesitant to attempt to reconnect with Noah for fear that Noah might get the wrong impression - or that he might give into feelings, just because he's lonely. (cont'd)

PROLOGUE – Lily & Holden Family Room w/Terrace

- Dawn - Luke gets a call that Noah has been taken to the hospital after a car accident.
- Beth - Faith and Parker are together. Luke is surrounded by couples and is wondering if he is ever meant to have that again.
- SD - Luke gets a call, and tells the family that Noah's been shot.

ACT I

Both sense threat; both want to come to the rescue

ACT I - Noah Hospital Room w/Corridor

- Shannon - Noah's unconscious when he's brought into the ER. Luke's listed as next of kin on the emergency contact card in his wallet, so he gets the call and takes Lucinda's plane to LA.
- Mary P - [Approaching Noah's hospital room] brings up Luke feelings of helplessness that he felt when Reid was hit by the train and died.
- Ripley - Luke is still running Grimaldi shipping, when some of Damian's dirty business dealings come back to haunt the company. (remember poisoning)
- Katherine - Damian causing trouble
- Anita - Luke has just heard that Colonel Mayer's whereabouts are unknown and is worried for Noah's safety. [Change to Noah has just heard that Colonel Mayer's whereabouts are unknown and is worried for Luke's safety]
- Lee - Colonel Mayer, is inexplicably getting out of prison early. [Change to escaped] Noah has put his career in LA on hold to protect Luke from the Colonel. Luke is surprised by his former lover's newfound sense of responsibility and maturity.

ACT II

Luke and Noah arrive at Noah's beach house (keep threat alive), where Cliff is waiting – having heard that Noah was in the hospital. They're both hurt as they remember how they almost came together – and it fell apart.

ACT II Part 1 - NOAH'S BEACH HOUSE W/EXTERIOR

- Richard - Noah is making a documentary about same-sex couples who've been getting married after Prop8 is finally overturned by the courts.
- Amy - Noah has started dating a guy who he works, but it hasn't gone anywhere yet.
- SD – Noah's brought Luke here as a safe haven. Luke wonders how Noah's affording this place. Noah starts to explain as he opens the door, and...

ACT II Part 2 - NOAH'S BEACH HOUSE W/EXTERIOR

- SD – Cliff's there, waiting. Cliff leaves, and Luke is upset that Noah's moved on. They argue, finally building to why they haven't spoken in months – their ill-fated reunion at the opening of the neuro wing)
- Steven - (WeHo, of course) [Make West Hollywood where Noah lived when he was seeing Aiden. Beach house belongs to] a young producer named Cliff Wycroft, who, as it turns out, is much like Reid Oliver - only about the entertainment business. And, to throw in a monkey wrench, Luke meets and can't stand Cliff Wycroft.
- Terry - Noah is just beginning to see another man who could be a potential boyfriend. Time away in LA has given him some perspective on the history of their relationship -- the early days of first love and the going back and forth (breaking up) on both sides.
- Ana - Noah has been living a full life since he's moved to LA. And he was beginning to doubt his love for Luke. He feels like his love to Luke is fading from his minds because he met a guy who has same dream.

ACT II Part 2 - NOAH'S BEACH HOUSE W/EXTERIOR

- Ella - Luke angry Noah didn't come back for funeral (?) Luke is conflicted, emotional because of the death, and being reminded that the last death he experienced was Reid's, and doesn't know how to act around Noah because he realizes he's still in love with him too. Angst ensues.
- Jackie - Major holiday – [Linden remarry?] If Noah goes back he will have to face Luke and the unresolved tension between them
- Barbara - As far as Noah is concerned, Luke has only come to LA because he's found another "rescue" mission or another crisis to become involved in - not because he wants to be with Noah.

ACT II Part 3 - CHRIS'S HOSPITAL OFFICE // NOAH'S BEACH HOUSE W/EXTERIOR

- SD – Recreate Luke and Noah scene at Gala.
- Genny - Luke thinks he saw Reid.
- Carrie - Noah rushes back to Oakdale to be with Luke, but Luke is hesitant to get back together with Noah.
- Linda - Luke leans his head back in a way that could be interpreted as either inviting more, or trying to clear his head, and whispers, "Reid...."
- Faye - Everything he sees reminds him of moments in their relationship. Their first kiss, times they spent together, their final moments together, and Luke's final goodbye to Reid. Noah was very disappointed, but he told him to take all the time he needed.

ACT II Part 3 - CHRIS'S HOSPITAL OFFICE // NOAH'S BEACH HOUSE W/EXTERIOR

- Tom - Noah returns to Oakdale nine months after Reid's death to attend the gala opening of the new neurology wing and to achieve closure with Luke. Noah has started seeing someone [Aiden] but not seriously, and he wants to know where things stand in their relationship. Luke is initially put off that Noah has seemingly moved on.
- Shamos - In the past six months he has had many dates, flings, hookups, etc. He is still focusing on working in the film industry, but there are some major distractions, specifically a guy he is dating -- an up and coming young working actor & all around bad boy named Aiden. In a word, Noah has become ""HOLLYWOOD"" - playing the game, clubbing, parties, etc.
- Bonnie - The brains of the wing are Reid's; the heart and soul are Luke's. He's also worked with the board to institute a policy and training to address alternative families, both gay and straight. In his spare time he has started writing again.

ACT III

The truth about where they are and what they feel

ACT III- NOAH'S BEACH HOUSE W/EXTERIOR

- Nadine - Doubts himself as filmmaker; maybe things aren't really going his way, that it's harder than he imagined, especially without Luke by his side.
- John - Luke comes to realize he's used Reid, his family, everyone he knows, as camouflage so he won't have to own his own life - so he isn't accountable for his own actions. He realizes that the love he's always had for Noah is what scared him the most.
- Loreley – [Noah's] scared of being out there alone and is really missing Luke and wants him back.
- Karlee - Luke doesn't know whether to listen to his head and just stay friends with Noah or listen to his heart and give in to what they both want.

ACT III- NOAH'S BEACH HOUSE W/EXTERIOR

- Tanya - Noah needs to figure out what he's going to do now that his film is in its final stages of being made.
- Les - Subvert the melodramatic paradigm
- Nicole - I can't imagine Luke not calling out Noah on the fact that Noah only wanted to be his friend again *after* Reid got killed. (Noah had previously said he couldn't be Luke's friend if they weren't together, though we all realize he didn't mean it). I tend to think that Luke would point that out, in a rather loud and dramatic way. Particularly since the shock and denial will have worn off -- he'll be well into the 'angry' phase by now.

ACT IV

They fight together against the common enemy

ACT IV- NOAH'S BEACH HOUSE W/EXTERIOR

- Kay – Luke's ready to start a new life by going back to college and working on his dream of becoming a writer. Luke never stopped loving (and being in love with) Noah and he knows that he's a better person with Noah than without. Noah doesn't want Luke to come back to him just because he wants to be a better person.
- SD – Intruders attack.
- Mike - Since Noah's been in Los Angeles, he's been working out pretty heavy and has put in ten pounds of muscle and his tight long sleeve t-shirt was hugging him in all the right places. I have no problem going through you." said Noah in a stern voice as he started to crack his knuckles. [Intruder] threw the first punch but Noah blocked it with his left hand and threw a punch to [intruder's] nose so hard that you could hear the bones cracking.
- SD – Intruders subdued. (Might want to split this into two parts)

ACT IV- NOAH'S BEACH HOUSE W/EXTERIOR

- Laura - Luke explain to Noah, that Noah's blindness not just put him in a needy and scary situation, but since Noah don't talk too much about his feelings, Luke lost the eyes connection where he can "read" how much Noah loves him.
- Arthur - His new major is journalism. He chooses to go to college in L.A. because Noah is there, but he's hesitant about the nature of their relationship when he gets there. While Luke is the one to contact Noah as "friends," he's also the one to hold him at arm's length. He even pushes Noah to date other people, but it takes his jealousy to realize the depth of his own feelings.
- Thanh - For Nuke to work, Luke needs to be believe and have confidence that Noah won't push him away when there is a crisis and Noah needs to figure out why it's easy for him to push Luke away then turn to him when in need.

ACT V

Home

ACT V- SNYDER POND

- Christy - He sees himself spending the rest of his life married to Reid's hospital and otherwise alone and starts to think about Noah. He remembers the times he was writing and they were working on creative projects together. He talks to Lily and says this and that he's been thinking about Noah more and more. Lily tells him to call Noah but he doesn't want Noah to seem like a consolation prize. How can he believe I'm really choosing him after everything that happened? Lily replies you could choose to stay and mourn Reid forever so by going to Noah you're choosing him and deciding to live again.~~Noah pulls out the ring and says I want you to be certain about what I'm asking, I'll never push you away again and I want you to marry me.~~Luke says remember the day we said goodbye at WOAK and I gave you the video camera? Remember I had my hands in my pockets when you kissed me and walked out? That's because even then the pull to you was so strong I couldn't trust myself to touch you. But everything in me was crying out to fall into your arms, even just to find comfort from the pain of losing Reid with a friend. But now I know it was more than that
- Anna (MDFawn to FF crowd) - Noah sets out to show him just how hard he will fight for them.

ACT V- SNYDER POND

- Stacie - telling him not to quit, telling him that the movie---and him---are worth the wait. Luke then produces a couple of big suitcases from the back of his rental car. He's here to stay and rekindle his relationship with Noah.
- Mac - Within hours Noah is back in Oakdale, and at the Snyder farm. There he finds a quiet, reflective Luke all alone: staring at the water, contemplating his future, and recalling his past. Luke looks up and is surprised to see Noah. Over the years they have saved each other's life. Can they do that for each other again?
- Kate M - Luke tentatively asks why he came back. Noah answers just as tentatively: he wanted to come home, and to him, Luke is home.

ACTV- SNYDER POND

- Cam - The hospital wing, for example, isn't his dream. He just latched onto someone else's dreams and visions and tried to make it his own. Now he wants to get back what's really important to him and that is education, writing and Noah. Especially Noah.
- Goldie - from the very beginning, they dreamed of a future together.

ACT V- SNYDER POND

- Renata - Noah realizes that it took so long for Luke to come to him because Luke was (1) giving Noah a chance to be independent, wanting to show Noah that Noah is strong enough to make a life for himself in L.A. on his own (Luke knows Noah well enough and cares about Noah enough to know how important that knowledge would be to Noah down the line), (2) wanting to come to Noah free and clear of any residual grief, (3) arranging things so that his foundation and the neuro wing at the hospital could continue without his daily involvement, (4) supporting his siblings through his parents' rocky road to reconciliation, and (5) sending in his application forms and waiting to get accepted to college in L.A., then they can have a good conversation about it all, take a sunset walk on the beach, and have sex!~~In the waning weeks I was never looking for some big, dramatic incident but an honest dialogue between the two of them.

ACT V- SNYDER POND

- Jess - Luke invites Noah to the wedding. Luke's speech to Noah about getting rid of all the bad energy from his father is one of my favorite ATWT scenes ever.
- SD – Tag of this scene should be:

Callback to “Time Is What I Have”

- Noah: I don't know if I can.
- Luke: Me neither. That's one more thing we have in common.
- Noah: I can try.
- Luke: Me, too.
- Noah: It may take some time.
- Luke: Well, time... (KISSES NOAH'S HAND) time is what I have.

Assignment: Write Prologue

- Basic Action
 - Upset Carly threatens defensive Janet
 - Disarmed Faith returns kiss to pleased Parker

Assignment: Write Prologue

- Exposition
 - Try to reveal every fact listed in some other way than stating it.
 - Carly is upset – have her slam the door as she enters.
 - Faith is depressed – have her listening to sad music on her mp3.
 - Emma won the lottery – have her staring dumbfounded at the ticket.

Assignment: Write Prologue

- Goal, Motivation and Conflict
 - Make sure every character in scene has a clear goal, motivation and conflict.
 - Basic action: Angry Jack confronts defensive Margo about overtime.
 - Jack's Goal: Get more money.
 - Jack's Motivation: Wants to provide for family.
 - Jack's Conflict: Loves his job, doesn't want to quit.

Assignment: Write Prologue

- Grab our attention with the first line (avoid starting with “Hello.”)
- Keep Prologue short (2 breakdown pages/5 script pages)