

A Novel Begins...

by Nonnie Augustine

She was washing the dishes in the sink, (you're not going to start with a pronoun, are you? Give her a name, for God's sake!)

Kate was washing dishes in the sink, (where the hell else is she going to wash dishes? In a creek?)

Kate was washing dishes (was washing-great! Now you've got a boring verb and a gerund.)

Kate washed dishes (so? How exciting can you get?)

Kate washed dishes and Zach (trendy name, there, but, okay) did his homework at the kitchen table (we know Kate's in the kitchen, don't we? And where else would a kid, big kid, little kid? do their homework but at a table? Oh, okay, he could be doing it at a computer. So, I guess you're going with "poor" since the mom doesn't have a dishwasher and he doesn't have a computer. Or he's young. Okay, but jazz it up fast, for Pete's sake!)

Kate washed dishes while Zach did his second grade homework (sentence finally works, but where's the jazz?)

Suddenly, (oh, God! An adverb, and the dreaded "suddenly" yet!)

The peace in the room was broken (no way are you going to use passive voice.)

A loud knock broke the peace in the room (one knock? Who knocks once?)

Loud knocking broke the peace in the room (no, don't like peace in the room. It's awkward and we're writing about people here, not rooms.)

Loud knocking startled them both (both?)

Loud knocking startled them. (misspelled knocking.)

Loud knocking startled them and Kate (put Kate, and now's the time for a pronoun, in a new sentence-vary the sentence length and besides you've lost the peace thing. Are you going to use a whole new sentence to get it in? I don't think you need to do that.)

Loud knocking shattered their peace. (think I like that better-maybe not.)

She dried her hands, patted her son's shoulder, and slowly unlocked the door. (Okay. But they're in a city, aren't they? Why not put a bunch of locks on the door? Give it some setting, why don't you?)

She dried her hands, patted her son's shoulder, and slowly unlocked the door's three locks (unlocked the locks?)

She dried her hands, patted her son's shoulder, and slowly (watch your adverbs. You know you love them-they'll be all over the place and please stop re-writing the whole sentence. You're just doing that to fill your "goal" time and you know it!)

undid the door's three locks (of course the locks are on the door. Jeez!)

undid three locks (better.)

Two (you've got to decide what city, finally)

Miami (good. Know a lot about Florida. Miami? Not so much.)

police officers stood at the door (how about some tone, here? Wouldn't Kate call them cops? Going to use third-limited, right? Or go with third omniscient? Oh, right. A novel. Change voices later maybe, for narrative.)

cops (plain clothes? Uniforms?)

uniformed cops (good-gets you out of explaining how she knew plain clothes guys were police)

stood at the door.(weak verb, and where else would they be?)

confronted her (thank God, a paragraph! Turn this damn thing off. It's early, but go cook dinner. Revise later. Or delete. Not yet. Don't delete it yet!)

