

# Stories Are What Save Us: How to Write Effectively about Trauma

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# If this were easy, we'd all be doing it already...

“A significant part of the writer’s practice – maybe the only part that matters when it comes to attitudes – is recognizing that writing is difficult, that it takes many drafts to realize a finished product, and that you’re never going to be as good as you wish.”

John Warner, *Why They Can't Write*

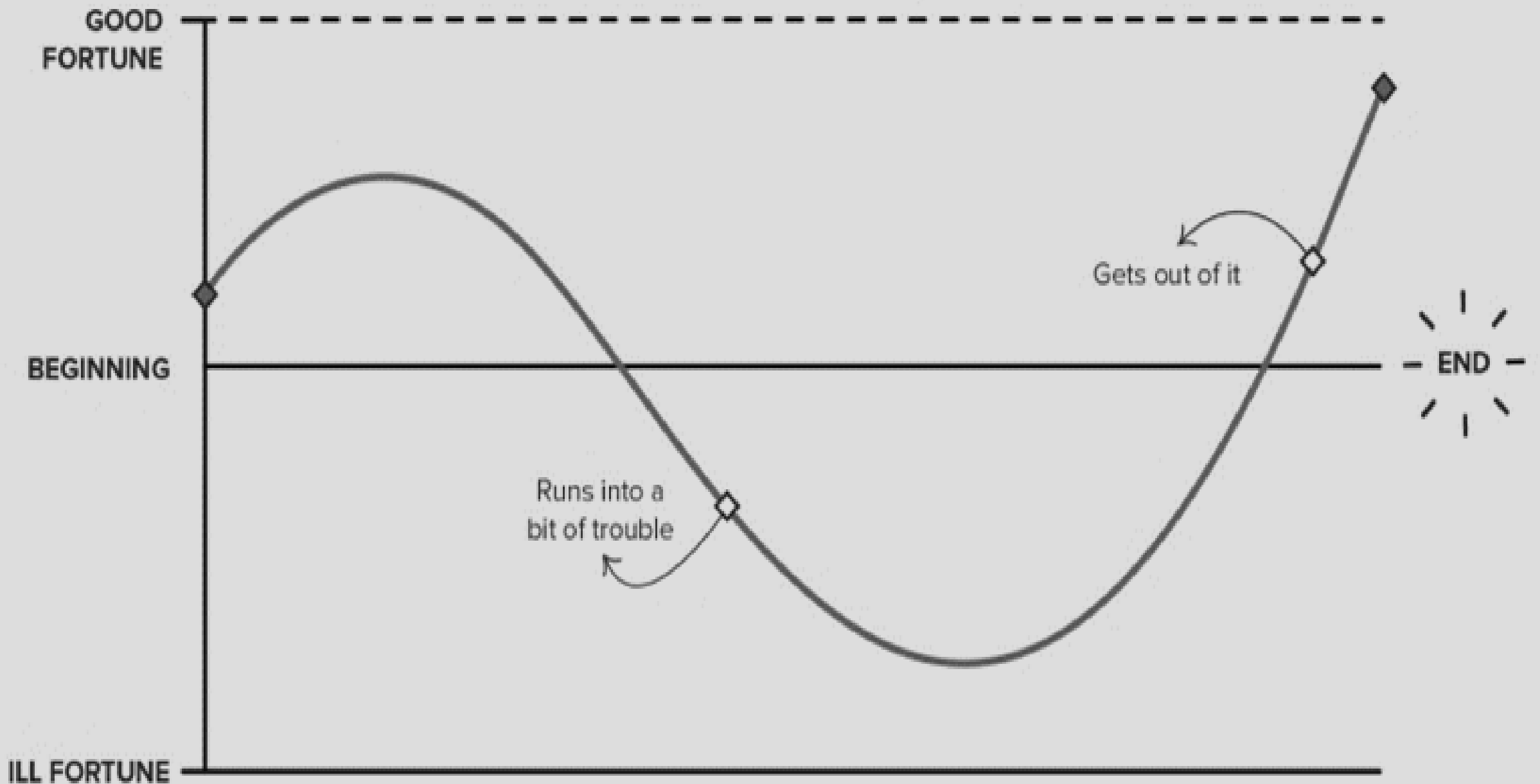


# Kurt Vonnegut's "Shapes of Stories"

"You will see this story over and over again. People love it, and it is not copyrighted. The story is 'Man in Hole,' but the story needn't be about a man or a hole. It's: somebody gets into trouble, gets out of it again."

Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without a Country*





# Kurt Vonnegut's "Shapes of Stories"

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## Inciting Event:

- Is it clear what the problem is? Will your reader feel invested in the story?

## Progressive Complications:

- Does your reader get a clear picture of the downstream effects of the problem?

## Crisis & Climax:

- Does your reader know what the alternatives are? Do they understand the decision you make when faced with a true crisis moment?
- Is the reasoning behind your choice clear? Do you provide the **HOW** and **WHY**?

## Resolution:

- Do you make the topic relevant to the reader? Do you show them why they should care?

# Uncovering Your Object of Desire:

The character wanted \_\_\_\_\_.

To get what they wanted, they \_\_\_\_\_.

Then they \_\_\_\_\_.

But \_\_\_\_\_ got in their way.

So they \_\_\_\_\_ and got / still didn't get what they wanted.

Possible Areas of Transformation You May Have Experienced:	1	2	3
✓ My priorities about what is important in life have changed.			
✓ I better appreciate the value of my own life.			
✓ I developed new interests that I now want to pursue.			
✓ I became more self-reliant.			
✓ I have found people I can count on when life seems too difficult.			
✓ I established a new path for my life.			
✓ I am closer now to those I love.			
✓ I can handle whatever difficulties come my way.			
✓ I can now do better things with my life.			
✓ I can accept the way things work out.			
✓ I have new opportunities that I may not have had otherwise.			
✓ I have more compassion for other people.			
✓ I put more effort into my relationships.			
✓ I am better able to change things that need to be changed.			
✓ I am stronger than I thought I was.			7

# It's easy as 1, 2, 3...

## Step 1

Add one of the areas of transformation you experienced to the end of: "I believe..."

## Step 2

Explain **HOW** you know you've transformed in *that* way

## Step 3

Explain **WHY** you believe you've transformed in *that* way



# Questions?



# Let's Stay in Touch!



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