

Fox Vox

Volume 1

Writing Contests

The Goal-Driven Story

Why your character wants and needs matter more than your outline.

**News from the Greater
Writing Community**

Community Spotlight

An interview with Regal Eagle



Fox Vox

KI UPDATES

“The Author’s Journey” will be taking a break for the month of August.

DJ will also be unavailable for Feedback in August as he takes a break from Server Administration.

Server Owner

DJ Firefox

Moderation Team

Catt

Jade

Nithalys

Zeta



FUNDING SUMMARY

\$100

Carry over and new donations

\$83

Remaining Need

\$183

Annual Costs

THE GOAL- DRIVEN STORY

Explore how connecting character desires to story momentum creates fiction that readers can't put down.

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The Goal-Driven Story

By DJ Firefox

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Here's the scenario...

You've got this awesome premise. You totally know what you want to happen in your story. But when you finally sit down and get writing... it just doesn't feel quite right. Your characters *do* things, but your readers aren't connecting to them like you envisioned. They lose interest, or get caught up in *what* the characters are doing instead of the *why*.

Here's what's probably happening: you're clear on the events of your story, but you haven't fully mapped out **what is driving your characters to make the choices that create those events**.

There's a difference between a character doing something and a character wanting something so badly that they have no choice but to do it. When readers can feel and understand what your characters desire and why those desires matter they go beyond being passive spectators and start actively rooting for them.

So what's the secret? How do you get your readers to invest in your story?

It's simple. Just remember that your characters' wants and needs are not decorative details that fit around your plot. They **ARE** your plot. Everything that happens in your story should emerge from characters actively pursuing what they desire. Even when (especially when) that pursuit creates conflict, complications, and impossible choices.

Your characters' wants and needs are not decorative details that fit around your plot.

They ARE your plot.

To better understand how this works, we need to talk about **Narrative Goals**.

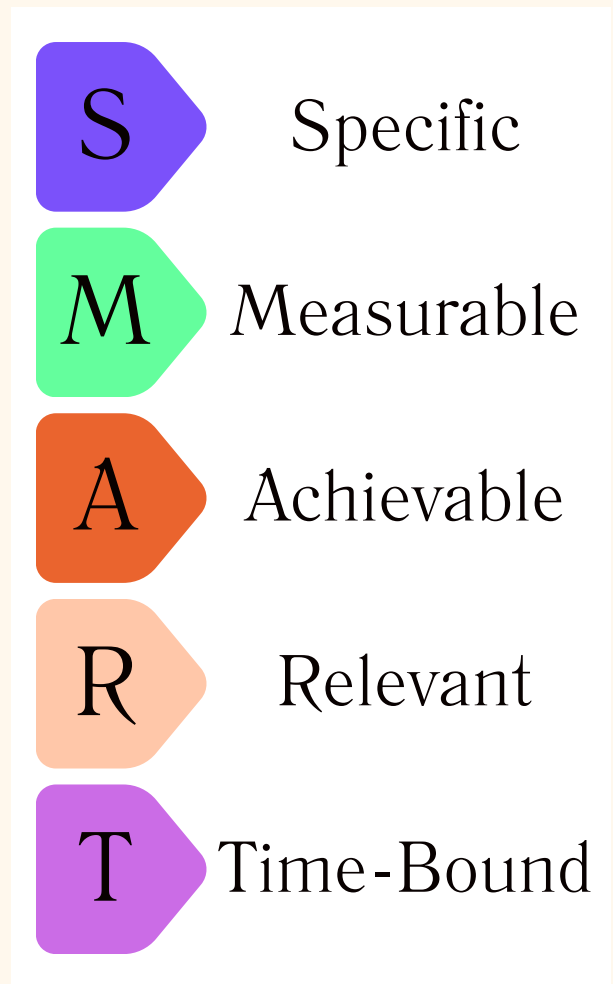
In personal development, successful goal-setting follows a specific framework: goals should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART). This structure exists because vague aspirations don't drive behavior. "I want to be healthier" is a *wish*. "I want to run a 5K in under 30 minutes by June" is a **goal**. It's specific enough that you can actually do something about it.

The same thing can be said about your characters. When your characters' goals are vague, they end up waiting around for things to happen. Readers will then lose interest because there's nothing actively pulling the story forward.

But if you play the role of a "personal development coach" with your characters and give them specific goals to chase? You'll find that they start making decisions. They take action. And when obstacles emerge (which they absolutely will), those obstacles create real conflict instead of feeling like random events.

Story Goals are what you as a writer want to achieve *with* your story.

Character Goals are what your characters want to accomplish *in* your story.



When you're building a goal-driven story, you are managing two overlapping systems:

Story Goals that are what *you*, the writer, want to achieve. Maybe you want to explore what it means to sacrifice everything for justice. Maybe you want to show how trauma echoes through generations. Maybe you want to prove that redemption is possible. These goals live at the *thematic* level.

Character Goals are what your *characters* want to accomplish. A character might want to solve a murder. They might want to win someone's love. What is important is that they are measurable. You should know when (or if) the character achieves them.

Before we talk about how to set these goals, we need to distinguish between two things that often get confused:

Character Wants versus **Character Needs**.

A **Character Want** is what your character consciously desires. It's usually external, concrete, and easy to articulate. The detective wants to solve the murder. The romance protagonist wants to win their love interest's heart. The fantasy hero wants to defeat the Dark Lord. Wants are important because they're *actionable*. They drive plot. They give your character something to *do* every single scene.

Character Needs, on the other hand, are what your character actually requires for *growth or healing*, even if they don't know it yet. Needs are usually internal, emotional, and tied to their development arc. The detective needs to confront her trauma instead of running from it. The romance protagonist needs to learn that they're worthy of love as they are. The fantasy hero needs to understand that power without wisdom destroys. Needs are about the things that end up transforming your characters. AKA character development.

Something to remember is that wants and needs are often in direct conflict. Think about it like this:

A character who wants something and needs the exact same thing will get it, feel satisfied, and the story ends without much (if any) character growth. But a character who wants one thing and needs something completely different? That's someone your readers can recognize, because it mimics real people from real life.

A detective wants to solve the murder and protect her reputation (**Character Want**), but to solve the murder she has to stop running from her past and face the skeletons in her closet (**Character Need**). She can't solve the murder *and* protect her reputation. She can't win cleanly. She has to choose what matters more, and whatever she chooses means losing something else.

This intersection between Character Needs and Wants is what creates believable characters, and readers connect to them because they've lived in similar circumstances. Okay, maybe not the murder investigation, but the choices between things that they can't have simultaneously.

When your character's wants and needs are in genuine conflict, your reader stops watching what *happens to them* and starts caring about *what they choose*.



You can use the SMART system to create your own Narrative Goals.

S

What are the concrete, external desires that give your characters direction and purpose?

M

How will you or your characters know if they have successfully achieved or failed?

A

Can your characters actually succeed?

R

Why does this matter? What would make success meaningful?

T

When do they need to accomplish this? Is there a deadline that forces them to act now?

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What am I trying to explore through this story?

How will my readers know that my story has actually delivered on its promises?

Are the conflicts actually leading to character growth?

Will my readers actually relate to my characters or to the story I'm trying to tell?

What events make the climax inevitable instead of a surprise?

The goal-driven approach treats characters as autonomous agents whose wants and needs create the plot. The detective's internal conflict (wanting to solve the crime while needing to confront her past) naturally creates a situation where she becomes implicated. It's not arbitrary.

It has to happen because of who she is and what she wants.

This is why a well-planned story can still feel hollow. You've planned what happens, but you haven't figured out why your character would choose that. Your goal as an author is to not only explain *what* happens, but also *why*.

Your goal as an author is to not only explain what happens, but also why.



AN INTERVIEW WITH REGAL EAGLE

Fanfiction Author Regal Eagle is a deaf, non-English speaker who completed his first fiction series in 2025 (in English!).

Set in the universe of Capcom's Monster Hunter, the story follows Valen, a Hunter still grappling with the trauma of losing a friend as he becomes a legend who can take the fight to the Elder Dragons themselves.

DJ Firefox interviewed Regal Eagle to get a glimpse into his writing process and what's next for him!



Cover Art by [Amayensis](#)

Regal Eagle's profile picture and novel cover art used with permission.

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Completing a novel series is a huge accomplishment. How does it feel to reach the end of such a big creative journey?



It feels frankly amazing, I had the first idea on that project about 4 years ago, and while I had started working on it 3 years ago, it was only in 2023 that I was able to seriously work on it.

I was really surprised by the number of positive comments about my story, but they only helped to give me motivation to carry on writing! Now that I am at the end of it... It lifts a weight off my shoulders, as I have been literally been thinking about details of this story daily, but the best was seeing all of the comments of my readers that had reached the end as well. I was not quite expecting so many of them admitting they have cried I will say though! But I take it as that I managed to make my reader care so much about my characters that they shared their pain as well.

It is truly an incredible feeling.

Can you walk us through your writing process? How you develop ideas, build your world, and stay focused across multiple books?

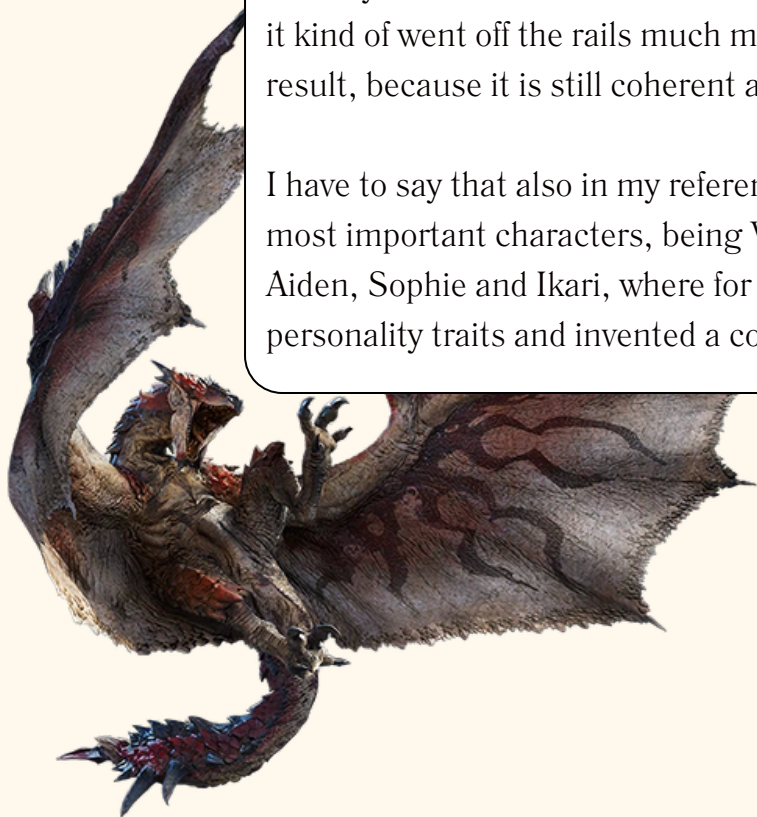
Of course, it won't work for everybody but that is how I do it myself:

First an idea has to stick around for at least 1 year before it can truly deserve that I make a story about it. Because that means that it is an idea for me that is worth to be explored. I see a lot of friend writers that have constantly new ideas of stories and such, but eventually never end up getting something done, so as much as it may pain some, I think the most crucial aspect is to filter through what comes up, and accept to discard those that you weren't as invested in. Do I get this feeling? I no longer remember those so they weren't worth in the end!

Second is that I do a rough plan for the story. For Sky Knights, it was more detailed on Sky Piercer story, because since I was not really following a game, I had to completely invent the story from scratch, I would estimate that the story plan alone was around... 7k words? It was quite long, but it was necessary so that I stay consistent for the story.

For Sky Render however... I will admit while I was following roughly the game story, it kind of went off the rails much more than I expected. But I am also happy of the result, because it is still coherent and meshes well together.

I have to say that also in my reference document I also had a rough backstory for the most important characters, being Valen and Nikki of course, but also Raphaëlle, Aiden, Sophie and Ikari, where for those that are canon, I wrote down their key personality traits and invented a couple for others as to flesh them out.



For the world building aspect... Would you believe me that I didn't plan anything really in advance? To be honest I often have an idea while writing a chapter and as I mull it over I think it is a great idea, and I elaborate on it on later chapter.

For example, the concept of Named in my story is a big thing, they are Hunters that have been deemed worthy by apex monsters as they died. Would you believe me that it wasn't something I had planned at all for when I started writing the story? I kind of did not touch much on it during Sky Piercer... But it is truly a big thing in Sky Render, and one of the main plot points! So I would suggest you don't have to think your world have every details figured out, you can figure it out as you write it!

As for how I stay focused across multiple books, it is due in part with my criteria for starting a story: if I have the idea in my head since at least a year... That means I have gotten the time to imagine ideas as well, develop them, visualize key scenes, and the only way to empty my mind is to write! So writing these stories is also a way to empty my mind of everything it comes up with related to that story, and that is kind of a motivation in itself!

Since English isn't your first language, how did you approach writing such a complex series in it, and what challenges or surprises came with that?

Great question! I have actually been seriously reading fanfictions since around 6 years ago. And I will admit that before my level in English wasn't as great as it was. But the more I read them, the more my reading comprehension improved. Nowadays I'd say there is nothing that I couldn't understand in English.

Writing however is another story. I have started writing with a story that I have long since abandoned... I think I didn't go deep into it, barely 10k words. However I then met a couple people and we kind of... Created a connected multiverse together? If you are curious you can see my works on [Fanfiction.net](https://www.fanfiction.net), but be warned that those 2 stories are long since abandoned, and I am quite certain I won't go back to them, because I no longer think daily about their plots, about scenes, and what I want to do with them. I have literally lost my muse for them.



But they have been great for one thing: they have been a stepping stone for me to train my writing muscle, and without these, I believe that the beginning of Sky Piercer would have been much rougher. Some of them have also been a great help with beta work, even though they can't quite help as much anymore.

But yeah, I didn't really think about writing my story in another language, as I already have been doing so since a while, and while a lot of grammatical errors still slip by, they are much less than before, and I improve little by little.

Do you think that writing in a second language influenced your storytelling style or voice in ways you've come to appreciate?



It is something that I believe so, but not quite sure... As nowadays I read so much in English I don't really believe it that much of a second language for me. I don't enjoy reading stories in my native language, French, anymore, something always feels... off to me, I am not quite sure why but it is present. So while it must have impacted my style in some ways, I wouldn't be able to tell you which.

As someone with Asperger's and ADHD, how do those part of your identity shape the way you imagine and create your stories?

I have already said above that once an idea stick around long enough, I start getting ideas of the plots, key scenes, world building... This is I believe due to both of these factors, giving me such an hyperactive imagination, and thus constantly mulling over my stories. Everyday I go to school or use public transportation, my imagination wanders, re-imagining key scenes, fantasies or some details that comes up in the moment, it primarily a way to keep it busy, and pass time when I have nothing else to do, but thus a great way to flesh out my works.



Are there any writing techniques or routines you've found especially helpful for focusing or organizing your thoughts during long projects?

Well... Especially recently I have found a really foolproof way to get myself to write. As everybody with ADHD will certainly tell you, we get quite... Easily distracted. It is hard for us to get to settle down somewhere and start doing it. We really need to get motivated for doing so.

So, how do I work around that? It is actually really simple: remove the distractions altogether!

To be more clear, I have a laptop that I literally cannot connect to internet outside of school. And internet... Is truly the most powerful distraction you can get as an ADHD person. So when I really want to write, what I do is that I grab this laptop, go to another place, like at least 10 minutes away from home, and leave my phone behind!

Now you have no access to internet, your smartphone similarly out of reach and the only way to keep yourself busy being your laptop where you write your story and not powerful enough to play the games you would rather be playing, so what do you do?

You write!

With this technique, I am able to write like 2 or 3 hours every time I do it... Which can be from three to five thousands words in total once I am done.

So I have quite literally weaponized my ADHD to get myself to write my story! I will admit that having a laptop that cannot connect to internet at all will not be possible for every writer, but if you have the means, to get a very cheap laptop that you can ask a qualified technician to brick its ability to connect to internet... It can be the most powerful tool you have as a writer.

How does being Deaf influence the way you write dialogue, describe sound, or build sensory experiences in your stories?

Hmmm, I would say that it probably also means that I don't focus as much on the sounds in my story. It tends to go deeper in the visual aspects or tactile ones. Because that is usually how my world is, I lose a lot of the sound clues around me, and it tends to be in the background unless I focus on it.

To give an example, in video games, when I play them for the first time, I don't really have the ability to truly register the music as I play, especially during challenging boss fights, as I am more focused on the action. However, I will often then later go to Youtube and listen to the tracks of the fights I have enjoyed the most, and able to truly feel the music. Even during rematches it is more of a background thing unless it is a truly frigging marvelous track.

Expedition 33 had been a great experience for me because of that... The music of this game is frankly insane and it had been a great experience for me. But yeah, I will say that I focus more on how characters view each other than on the sounds on the environment. I will focus more on the sounds caused by what is in focus, what is the object in interest at the moment than on what is around.

Many people would find this journey challenging even without extra barriers. What helped you to keep going when things got tough?

At first it was my personal project, something that was dear to me, that I wanted to do because I loved the characters I have created. I had also at that point been quite obsessed by Valstrax since at least three years... This monster have quite literally crash landed in my world, becoming my sole obsession instantly, and I truly wanted to make a story with one as the focus.

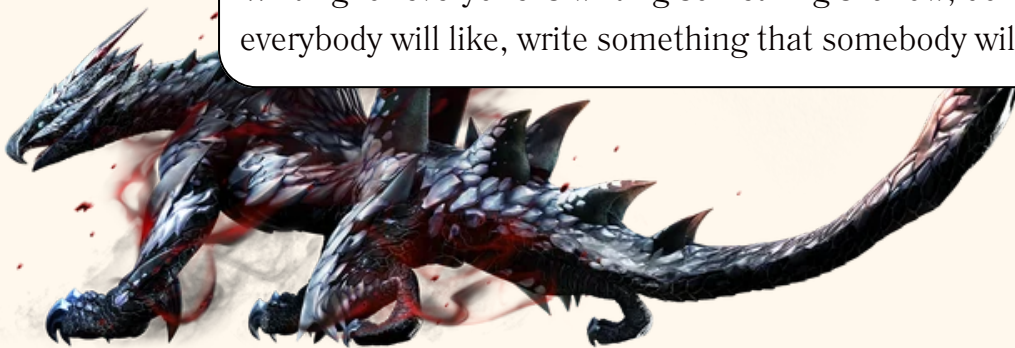
But as I posted my chapters... The comments started coming in, all glowing, all praising what I have done, and they have been a great help to keep me writing, because now it was no longer only for me, it was also for those invested readers that enjoyed my story and were invested in it, to see what would come next out of my work.

I have heard a lot of stories about authors receiving a lot of hateful or overly critical comments on their work... and I have been quite surprised to receive almost none of it. I believe I have gotten one or two, but they never really stuck around in my mind, and did not diminish my motivation to continue my work. So if any of these readers are listening to me... I would like to say thank you, for being around and sticking with me until this story dear to me was done!

What advice would you give to other writers with personal struggles who dream of telling their stories too?

Just because you believe that your idea, your story isn't something that will be popular, that will be loved by many... won't mean that nobody will like it. It will be another's person favorite story, that they will want to read more of it. You may also simply want to write for yourself, because you have been obsessed with this plot, this idea since that long, and want to get it out of your head at last.

There is no shortage of reasons to write a story, you just have to accept it is a long time commitment and it may be a while until it is done... But once you do? You will truly not regret it, I am certain. You will always have something to add, something different from the others, that will make it unique from what they have read before. Writing for everyone is writing something shallow, do not chase something everybody will like, write something that somebody will absolutely love.



And if you are worried about the grammatical errors that you may have slip by... One of my weaknesses is that once I have finished a chapter, I am unable to reread my work after. That is why I rely on a few trusted friends that are native speakers of the language I write into so that they may at least correct the most egregious errors.

You'll find no shortage of people ready to help you if you join a community of writers and readers of fanfictions/stories. Some popular authors have amazing communities that I am certain will have some ready to help you.

So yes, the only thing stopping you from telling your story... is how important that story is for you. If it is something you truly want to put down in words, to go into? Then let nothing stop you!

Since completing the Sky Knight series, Regal Eagle has begun writing a new story called Platinum Priest. A Inheritance Cycle / D&D crossover fanfiction, Regal Eagle only had the following to say about his new story:

CANON WILL EXPLODE

READ IT NOW ON:

ROYAL ROAD®

SPACEBATTLES



[FanFiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net)



[AO3](http://www.archiveofourown.org)



NEWS FROM THE GREATER WRITING COMMUNITY

PIRATE ALERT!



While there have been many posts and pings about the situation, it bears repeating the news of a wave of Copyright Infringement occurring on Google Play and Google Play Books.

This particular wave of pirated content seems to be targeting any fiction that had been deemed “popular” on the web-novel site RoyalRoad.com.

RoyalRoad has posted [a recent blog article](#) that covers their latest efforts to assist authors who have been affected, as Google has not made the process for getting infringing content removed from their stores easy. Namely, they are now offering a way of verifying that your RoyalRoad username is connected to your Legal Name and that your RoyalRoad user account is the original publisher. This feature can be found on your [Author Dashboard](#) under [Publication Verification](#).

If your content has appeared on Google Play Books, then you will need to follow Google’s copyright removal process. To begin, submit a new request on their Legal Page.

<http://support.google.com/legal>

It is strongly recommended that you take screenshots of both your original work, the infringing copy, relevant details of your account on RoyalRoad, the URL of the unauthorized book or books, the URL of your original work, as well as any other bits of supporting evidence (social media posts, creation dates, rough drafts and notes, etc.). When filling out the form, be sure to use your Legal Name during the filing process and not a fake name or pen name!

SCAM ALERT!



Writer Beware has also posted a list of Publishing scams coming out of the Philippines as well known scam agencies (including AI-driven scams from Nigeria). Read the full articles and see the lists at the links below:

[Overseas Scam List](#)

[Impersonation List](#)

TROPE OF THE MONTH

The McGuffin (MacGuffin)



What is it?

A plot device whose only purpose is to get the plot moving while being otherwise irrelevant or unexplained. Most commonly takes the form of an artifact, package, or weapon.

Examples in Media

The Holy Grail of Arthurian Legend.

The Golden Fleece of Jason and the Argonauts

Unobtanium from James Cameron's Avatar

The unopened box from Cast Away
The Ruby Slippers from The Wizard of Oz

Did you write a plot device... or a McGuffin?

Can the item or event be swapped out for another of item similar value or important event?

If you completely removed the item or event from the story, does the plot completely fall apart?

Can your characters worry about it, but your readers not care about it?

YES

NO

YES	NO
McGuffin	Plot Device
Plot Device	McGuffin
McGuffin	Plot Device

Writing Contests



**Indiana Review
Bloomington**

General fiction, poetry,
and non-fiction. All
genres are considered.

DEADLINE

Aug 15 & Nov 30

[Apply](#)

**McNeile Writing
Competition**

Short story opening
inspired by the theme
“Absent Friends”. UK
Only

DEADLINE

September 5th

[Apply](#)



Folk horror short stories
with an “authentic Folk-
Gothic atmosphere”.

DEADLINE

October 1st

[Apply](#)

Tadpole Press

Uplifting short of 100
words or less.

DEADLINE

November 30

[Apply](#)

Lascaux Review

Previously published
works allowed in non-
fiction, short fiction, and
poetry.

DEADLINE

December 31st

[Apply](#)



Nine award categories
including Thriller and
fictions set in Greece.

DEADLINE

December 31st

[Apply](#)



CAUTION



While Kitsune’s Inkwell has done its best to find contests that are legitimate, authors should perform their own due diligence and research before applying to any of the above contests.



K^{tsune's} inkwell