



FILM ANALYSIS

FINDING NEMO

HERO GOAL SEQUENCES

by Eric Edson

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An Overview

Learning basic story structure is incredibly important for all storytellers. And creating a complete, engaging story plot-line has forever been one of the toughest challenges in dramatic writing.

That's where **Eric Edson's new "Hero Goal Sequences"** concept comes in. Here's what this new story building approach will accomplish for you:

- ① You will always know exactly how much plot your script or novel will need;
- ① It insures that your Hero or Heroine is always active and driving your story forward – which means no more passive heroes;
- ① Your story will never sag or wander since the pace for change, plot development, and focus will be built-in, and dramatic tension will rise constantly;
- ① Your story will always be emotionally gripping, for maximum audience & reader involvement;
- ① Any script or novel structure problems will be uncovered for you, and you'll know exactly what's needed to fix them.

Now, let's get clear on some definitions of terms.

Definitions & Terms

HERO GOAL SEQUENCE / HGS

Usually consists of 3 to 7 pages of screenplay (3 to 7 minutes of film) in which the Hero or Heroine pursues a single physical, active short-term goal as one immediate step toward achieving the main plot objective that drives the entire story. A Goal Sequence ends when the Hero discovers:

FRESH NEWS

A form of new information that effectively ends the necessity to pursue the current goal, and creates another physical, active short-term goal, thereby launching the next Hero Goal Sequence.

FRESH NEWS either provides the Hero's next short-term physical goal, or sends her on a short search – less than 60 seconds – to find it.

A Hero can learn many new things in a story, but **FRESH NEWS** will only be those discoveries that actually change the Hero's current active goal to a new one.

Definitions & Terms



STUNNING SURPRISE #1

The arrival (on about page 25-30) of some major revelation or dramatic reversal that creates a moment of stunned shock for the Hero, and drops the curtain on Act One – while immediately raising it again on Act Two.

This moment of shocked surprise must happen with the Hero present so he/she can be impacted by it emotionally. Thus your Hero begins Act Two struggling to recover, while also floundering for a plan of action with which to press forward toward what has suddenly become a crystal-clear overall story goal.



STUNNING SURPRISE #2

Occurs at the end of Act Two (around page 90) when another profound shock for the Hero arrives. It comes out of the blue and changes everything, signaling the end of Act Two and the beginning of Act Three.

But this stunner must be the biggest reversal in your whole script, and it usually destroys completely the Hero's plan for victory – so starting Act Three your lead now faces the final showdown with the Adversary using only his wits and acquired wisdom to improvise actions toward achieving his ultimate goal.

STUNNING SURPRISE #2 can occasionally be a reversal to the positive – but if this happens, Act Three better be short!

Definitions & Terms

MIDPOINT

Approximately in the middle of all great movies there's a group of scenes that serve several storytelling functions. Unlike a Stunning Surprise, a Midpoint is NOT one moment, but a short series of them. Act Two is effectively broken into two halves by the Midpoint Sequence. It usually includes a "point of no return" for the Hero - there's no turning back now - and some form of "ticking clock" begins, to show time running out.

Tension and pace rise. Here also there can be an "unmasking," literal or metaphoric, where a secret truth is revealed. In romances, it's commonly here the lovers either kiss or make love for the first time. Or in mythological mode, there can be a literal or metaphoric death and rebirth moment, as a rite of passage for the Hero. (*See Eric Edson's book **The Story Solution** for details and examples.*)

OBLIGATORY SCENE

As in... you gotta have it. This is the showdown climax scene in Act Three where Hero and Adversary face off to go at each other for all the marbles (as befits your genre), settling once and for all if the Hero will win or lose their overarching story goal. It's why your Adversary must be one person, so the Hero can battle them one on one here, to resolve the conflict. (It happens in HGS #19, #20, or #21.)

DENOUEMENT

A French word meaning the untying. This final story sequence demonstrates that all plot and character threads have been resolved. It reveals the new, better world the Hero has made possible, and the audience gets a moment to recover from the ride. Don't make it long, but it's absolutely required.

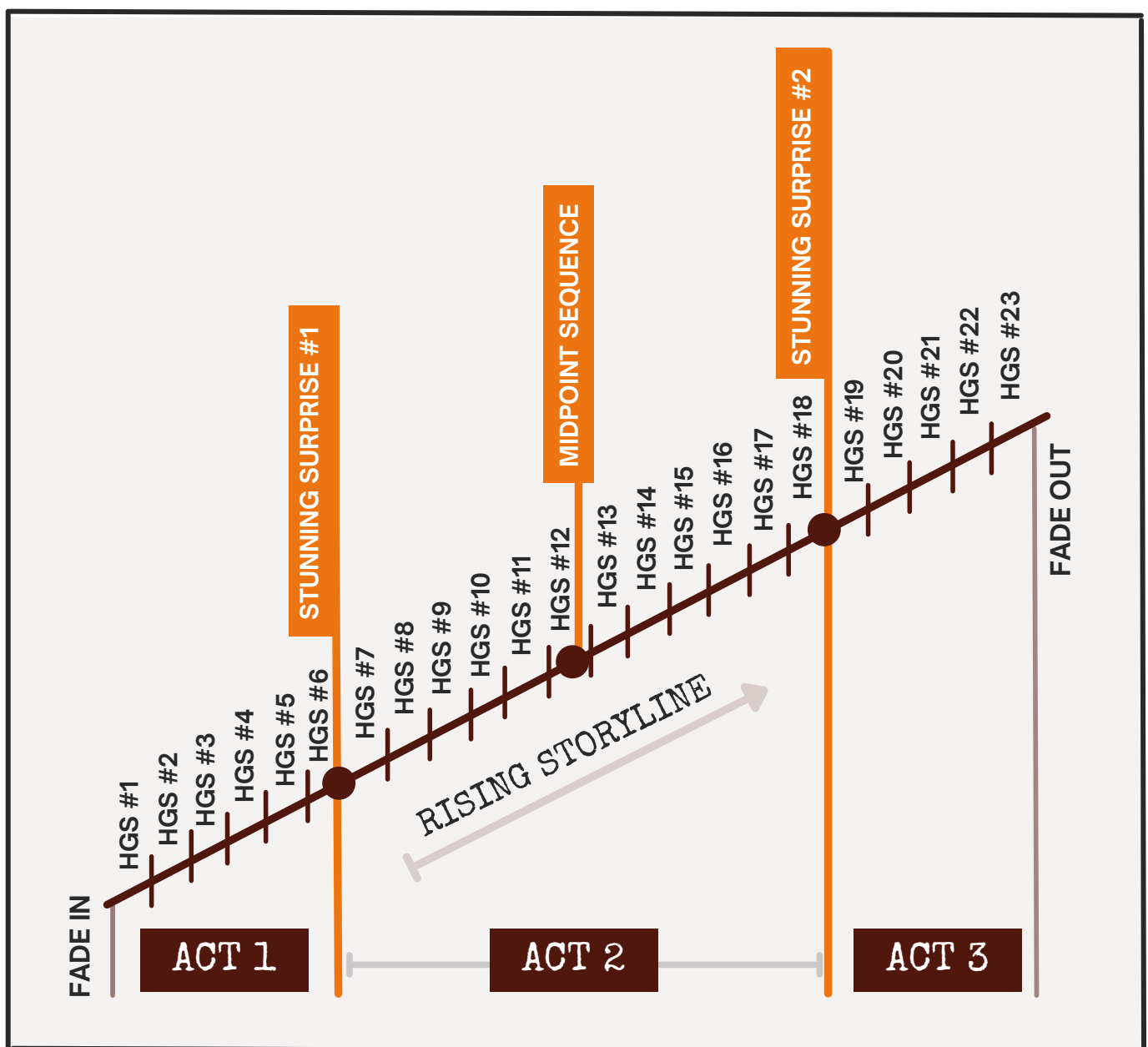
THE RULES

The Rules of Goals Sequencing

- ⦿ **EVERY** commercially successful one-hero American movie contains between 20 and 23 Hero Goal Sequences.
(The most common number of HGS used is 21)
- ⦿ **Act One ALWAYS contains 6 Hero Goal Sequences**, and Stunning Surprise One ALWAYS takes place as FRESH NEWS in Goal Sequence #6.
- ⦿ **The FIRST HALF of Act Two ALWAYS contains 6 more Hero Goal Sequences**, and the Midpoint Sequence ALWAYS takes place during Hero Goal Sequence #12.
- ⦿ **The SECOND HALF of Act Two ALWAYS contains 6 more Hero Goal Sequences**, and Stunning Surprise Two ALWAYS arrives as FRESH NEWS in Sequence #18.
- ⦿ **Act Three contains a minimum of 2 Hero Goal Sequences and a maximum of 5.** SO – a MINIMUM of 20 HGS and a MAXIMUM of 23 HGS in EVERY successful motion picture.
- ⦿ **A Goal Sequence cannot be repeated unless some major new story element is added.**

HERE'S HOW IT LAYS OUT...

The Hero Goal Sequences (HGS) Paradigm



"FINDING NEMO" HERO GOAL SEQUENCES

**Screenplay by Andrew Stanton & Bob Peterson & David Reynolds,
Original Story by Andrew Stanton**

CAST LIST

Hero:	Marlin
Sidekick:	Dory
Endangered Innocent:	Nemo
Adversary:	Darla
Adversary Agent:	Dentist
Independent Troublemaker:	Bruce
Mentor:	Crush
Sub Plot Mentor:	Gil
Helper Follower Ally:	Nigel
Helper Follower Ally:	Whale

"FINDING NEMO" HERO GOAL SEQUENCES

Screenplay by Andrew Stanton & Bob Peterson & David Reynolds, Original
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ACT ONE

● Hero Goal Sequence #1:

HERO GOAL: Hero wants to protect his wife and their “babies” (hundreds of eggs) in a wonderful new home.

- An evil barracuda attacks.

● Fresh News:

Marlin’s wife and all eggs but one are gone.

● Hero Goal Sequence #2:

HERO GOAL: Marlin must take son Nemo to his first day of school.

- Hero tries to tell a joke, but he’s a clown fish who isn’t funny.

SUBPLOT CUTAWAY - Nemo sneaks off with buddies to see his first boat.

● Fresh News:

Hero finds out the teacher took kids to a dangerous place!

● Hero Goal Sequence #3:

HERO GOAL: Marlin rushes to save Nemo from “the Drop Off”!

● Fresh News: (INCITING INCIDENT)

Nemo defies Dad and swims out to the speedboat, where the boy is netted and whisked away.

ACT ONE (continuation)

Hero Goal Sequence #4:

HERO GOAL: Horrified, Marlin chases after the boat to save Nemo.

- Hero runs in to forgetful Dory; she'll show him where the boat went.

Fresh News:

A huge shark insists Marlin and Dory come to a "party."

Hero Goal Sequence #5:

HERO GOAL: Avoid getting eaten by Bruce the Shark.

- Party turns out to be a 12-step meeting; sharks trying not to eat fish.
- Marlin spots a clue, the kidnapper's swim mask, but...

Fresh News:

...some blood spills in the water and Bruce attacks.

Hero Goal Sequence #6:

HERO GOAL: Hold on to mask clue...while racing away from blood-crazed Bruce.

Fresh News: (STUNNING SURPRISE ONE)

a torpedo is accidentally released and many old war mines explode, throwing Hero and Dory into a new dark world of danger and impossible obstacles. How will he ever find Nemo now?

ACT TWO

● Hero Goal Sequence #7:

HERO GOAL: Marlin must find the mask again, it's his only clue and hope.

- He wakes up muddled, on a dangerous cliff. Marlin must find the mask again, it's his only clue and hope.
- Hero sees a submarine wreck sink into an abyss with the mask.

● Fresh News:

The mask is lost...but Dory convinces Marlin they must swim down to the very bottom to retrieve it.

● Hero Goal Sequence #8:

HERO GOAL: Swim into the black abyss and get the mask.

- Marlin and Dory find it, but are almost eaten by an angler fish with a glowing lure on its head!

● Fresh News:

Dory can read the address on mask! "Sidney, Australia." Hero now knows where they must go.

SUBPLOT CUTAWAY – Nemo finds himself in a fish tank in a dentist's office; meets new friends, undergoes "initiation" ritual. He finds out he's to be a present for DARLA THE FISH KILLER... Mentor Gil has a bold plan for escape. **(Nemo is the ENDANGERED INNOCENT here. See Character Categories.)**

● Hero Goal Sequence #9:

HERO GOAL: Hero tries to get directions to Australia. Not so easy.

● Fresh News:

A school of tuna finally points the way. Marlin hurries off – only Dory hears, "Go through the trench, not over it."

ACT TWO (continuation)

Hero Goal Sequence #10:

HERO GOAL: Hurry to East Australian Current that'll carry them to Sydney.

- Forgetful Dory wants to swim through the scary trench, but Hero tricks her into going over it...

Fresh News:

Big mistake – they are surrounded by thousands of stinging jellyfish.

Hero Goal Sequence #11:

HERO GOAL: Get through the jellyfish and reach the East Australian Current.

- Reaching the other side of the jellies, Marlin finds he must go Back into them to save Dory.

Fresh News:

Rescuing Dory, Marlin is stung into unconsciousness.

Hero Goal Sequence #12: (MIDPOINT SEQUENCE)

HERO GOAL: Ride the current to Australia.

- Marlin wakes up inside the East Australian Current; Dory is okay, and their mentor-savior, Crush, teaches Hero he must confront his inner conflict (Marlin's over-protectiveness issue).

SUBPLOT CUTAWAY – The story of Marlin's brave crusade spreads across the whole ocean.

Fresh News:

*Riding on the current, Marlin learns they are approaching Australia!
Time to get off.*

SUBPLOT CUTAWAY – Nemo mopes in fish tank, but word arrives that Dad is coming after all! BUT... DARLA THE FISH KILLER IS COMING TO GET NEMO. ONLY 48 HOURS 'TIL DOOM! ("Ticking Clock" established.)

ACT TWO (continuation)

Hero Goal Sequence #13:

HERO GOAL: Get off the Australian current at the Vortex of Death... and live to tell about it.

- Marlin and Dory are pushed into their “exit,” a horrifying drop. They make it, and Hero realizes it was actually fun...

Fresh News:

...but Marlin now faces a vast, empty ocean.

Hero Goal Sequence #14:

HERO GOAL: Suck it up and swim straight ahead and hope to arrive in Sydney.

- Marlin soon realizes he is lost in this empty ocean. Sinks into fear.

Fresh News:

Marlin will have to get directions - somehow.

Hero Goal Sequence #15:

HERO GOAL: Ask a stranger, who is spotted approaching from a distance.

- The stranger turns out to be an enormous whale, but Dory insists she knows how to speak “whale,” so she tries.

Fresh News:

Marlin and Dory are swept into the huge mouth of a whale.

ACT TWO (continuation)

Hero Goal Sequence #16:

HERO GOAL: Get out of the whale's mouth.

- Nothing works and Marlin gives up hope, while Dory remains chipper as ever.
- Water in the whale's mouth now rushes back down its gullet... looks like the end to Marlin as he clutches to hold on. Dory insists the whale says "it's time to let go." Marlin finally masters his fear, lets go and falls...(Overcomes inner conflict.)

Fresh News:

They shoot out the whale's spout and the Hero finds himself in Sydney harbor! Dory CAN speak whale!

SUBPLOT CUTAWAY – The fish tank scum scam doesn't work, and Nemo gets gift-bagged for DARLA as THE FISH KILLER shows up. The end is near...

Hero Goal Sequence #17:

HERO GOAL: In the harbor Marlin must find the boat that kidnapped Nemo.

- A pelican scoops up Hero and Dory in its beak pouch, saves them from the attacking dumb killer seagulls.

Fresh News:

Turns out the friendly pelican knows where Nemo is!

SUBPLOT CUTAWAY – Darla terrorizes the fish tank. Nemo plays dead to get flushed down the toilet, but oops, instead he's headed for the trash... then DAD ARRIVES IN THROUGH THE WINDOW!

ACT TWO (continuation)

Hero Goal Sequence #18:

HERO GOAL: Swoop in and save his son, Nemo.

- The pelican flies Marlin and Dory into the dentist's office in his pouch and chaos erupts! Hero navigates from pelican's mouth.

Fresh News: (STUNNING SURPRISE TWO)

Marlin sees Nemo lying "dead" in a plastic bag; as the pelican is shoved out the window, the Hero believes he is too late...his son is dead and Marlin has failed to save him.

(Hero's plan for victory has been destroyed and this is the Hero's Darkest Hour, at the END OF ACT TWO.)

SUBPLOT CUTAWAY – Darla threatens Nemo, Gil risks sacrificing himself (a true Mentor) to help get Nemo into the dentist's "spit drain." Nemo escapes down the drain.

ACT THREE

Hero Goal Sequence #19:

HERO GOAL: Hero wants to thank Dory, go home alone and forget.

- It's a shock to Dory, Marlin IS her home now and she doesn't want to forget. Marlin says, "Sorry, I do."

Fresh News:

Marlin swims slowly off alone, heading home.

ACT THREE (continuation)

Hero Goal Sequence #20:

HERO GOAL: Go home in defeat and grief.

SUBPLOT CUTAWAY – Free, Nemo searches and find Dory in the fishing grounds. She has already forgotten him... but finally remembers! They swim off to find Marlin.

- Nemo and Dory swim up to Marlin, and he expresses joy in the reunion with his son, but...

Fresh News:

Dory is hauled up with tuna in a fishing trawler net!

Hero Goal Sequence #21:

HERO GOAL: Save Dory from the fishermen.

- Nemo tells Dad he's got a plan. Marlin is horrified by the danger the boy faces, but then Marlin says he'll trust his son's judgment. Marlin has grown beyond his unhealthy over-protectiveness.

Fresh News:

Nemo's plan works, Dory and the tuna are freed.

Hero Goal Sequence #22: (DENOUEMENT)

HERO GOAL: Return to the Hero's Ordinary World with his gift of new wisdom about child rearing.

- Everyone is happy and gets along with each other, even the sharks. Nemo tells Dad, "I love you." Hero says, "Go have an adventure." Dad has grown within, and his whole village is better for it. Marlin the clownfish now tells FUNNY jokes. (I.e., character growth is complete.)