



Scene Rubric

Version 1.0 – November 2021

Author: Valerie Ihsan
Project Title: And Then There Was Me, a Memoir
Chapter or Scene: "Jake and Nazim"
Length: 1478 words
Date: 11 December 2021

In three sentences or less, what is happening in this scene?
Nazim surprises Valerie with a visit and momentarily misleads her into thinking he's staying forever. The visit is tarnished and Nazim reads Valerie's private journal. Valerie contemplates the reality of polyamory.

Why is this scene important? AND/OR What are you trying to say about life?
The scene shows Valerie's continued disillusionment with her relationship with Nazim. The "beginning?" of the end.

How do you want the reader to feel when they read the scene?
Indignant for Valerie. Rooting for Valerie. Irritated at Nazim.

What's wrong with the protagonist's personal world? What is the disruption?
*"...reading someone's journal is wrong. I don't care if what you read was okay with you."
 Also, the long-distance relationship doesn't work for Valerie, but she doesn't currently have the courage or strength to break it off, and the idea of doing it messes with her self-worth and identity.*

Commented [J1]: "Valerie contemplates the reality of polyamory." As written, this made me really sit up straight and raise an eyebrow (in a good way).

Commented [J2]: See previous comment.

Commented [J3]: Again, see previous comments 😊 The idea that her polyamory turning out not to be what she thought it was going to be is a very powerful concept because you can substitute "polyamory" with just about anything.

Who are the characters in the scene?

Character	Voice	Emotional State	Physical Condition
Valerie+	1 st person	Distressed	healthy
Nazim-	3 rd person	Flippant? Uncertain?	healthy

+ protagonist
 - antagonist

What does the protagonist want (external pursuits)? Do they get it?


Want: For Nazim to move to Eugene while looking for work.

Acquired: Yes/No

Underdeveloped	Fair	Good	Excellent
The want or external pursuit of the protagonist is unclear or undefined. Readers perceive the character's want as flat.	The want or external pursuit of the protagonist exists, but it is unclear or inexplicably inconsistent throughout the scene. Readers understand the character's motive in the	The want or external pursuit of the protagonist is easily identified. Although it is defined, the protagonist does not always act consistently on the want. Readers	The want or external pursuit of the protagonist is well-defined. Their external pursuit is obvious to the reader and understood by the other characters in the scene.

Commented [J4]: Feels like "excellent" to me. At least in the beginning of the scene.

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	scene, but it often defies logic.	understand the character's motive in the scene, but it is often too predictable.	
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Notes:

What does the protagonist need (internal desires)? Do they get it?

Need: To listen to herself, be honest with herself, acknowledge that she doesn't want a long-distance relationship, and to have the courage to break up with Nazim.

Acquired: Yes/No

Underdeveloped	Fair ?	Good	Excellent
The need or internal desire of the protagonist is unclear or undefined. Readers perceive the character's need as flat.	The need or internal desire of the protagonist exists, but it is unclear or inexplicably inconsistent throughout the scene. Readers understand the character's internal desire in the scene, but it often defies logic.	The need or internal desire of the protagonist is easily identified. Although it is defined, the protagonist does not always act consistently on the want. Readers understand the character's motive in the scene, but it is often too predictable.	The need or internal desire of the protagonist is well-defined. Their internal desire is obvious to the reader and understood by the other characters in the scene.

Notes: *I kind of think that the protagonist perceived need should be unclear at this point. Learning it is part of her arc.*

What does the antagonist or force of antagonism want (external pursuits)? Do they get it?

Want: To see Valerie. To be sexually intimate.

Acquired: Yes

Underdeveloped	Fair	Good	Excellent
The want or external pursuit of the antagonist is unclear or undefined. Readers perceive the character's want as flat.	The want or external pursuit of the antagonist exists, but it is unclear or inexplicably inconsistent throughout the scene. Readers understand the character's motive in the scene, but it often defies logic.	The want or external pursuit of the antagonist is easily identified. Although it is defined, the antagonist does not always act consistently on the want. Readers understand the character's motive in the scene, but it is often too predictable.	The want or external pursuit of the antagonist is well-defined. Their external pursuit is obvious to the reader and understood by the other characters in the scene.

Notes:

What does the antagonist or force of antagonism need (internal desires)? Do they get it?

Need: Maturity

Acquired: No

Underdeveloped	Fair	Good	Excellent
The need or internal desire of the antagonist is unclear or undefined. Readers perceive the character's need as flat.	The need or internal desire of the antagonist exists, but it is unclear or inexplicably inconsistent throughout the scene. Readers understand the character's internal desire in the scene, but it often defies logic.	The need or internal desire of the antagonist is easily identified. Although it is defined, the antagonist does not always act consistently on the want. Readers understand the character's motive in the scene, but it is often too predictable.	The need or internal desire of the antagonist is well-defined. Their internal desire is obvious to the reader and understood by the other characters in the scene.

Notes:

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Commented [J5]: Not sure I agree based on the polyamory concept...I wonder if that's why you felt this was "fair?"

Commented [J6]: Very clear, well-defined. I'd say "excellent."

Commented [J7]: Is it? I'm not really sure what Nazim's internal desires are based on this scene alone.

What is the Conflict? (What single moment or circumstance pushes the protagonist out of the status quo?)

Conflict: Nazim saying he was staying for good.

Underdeveloped	Fair	Good	Excellent
The protagonist does not face an initial Conflict. The event pushing the character out of the status quo is missing.	The initial Conflict is present but lacks the intensity to make a reader care. The protagonist can avoid or defuse the obstacle presented by the Conflict.	The initial Conflict propels the protagonist into a situation that forces a Choice. The character cannot go back to the previous state and cannot do nothing.	The initial Conflict catches the protagonist and reader by surprise. The event creates an unavoidable situation and should logically set the stage for a Choice.

Notes:

What is the Choice? (Best Bad Choice or Irreconcilable Good?)

Choice: To call Nazim out on his bad behavior (lying, reading V's private journal) or ignore it. Pretend it wasn't so bad; she was over-reacting. (Lying to herself.)

Best Bad Choice or Irreconcilable Good: Best Bad Choice

Underdeveloped ?	Fair	Good	Excellent
The protagonist does not face a Choice. The character is completely passive or reactive, acting without agency.	The Choice is too easy for the protagonist. The stakes for all the consequences are not equally positive or negative.	The Choice posed to the protagonist is difficult. The character struggles to determine the best path forward.	The Choice becomes incredibly difficult for the protagonist. The character cannot see a way out of the predicament, and neither can the reader, which should set up a surprising but inevitable Consequence.

Notes:

What is the Consequence (What event occurs because of the protagonist's decision?)

Consequence: Valerie continues lying to herself and pretending everything is Fine.

Underdeveloped	Fair	Good	Excellent
Because the protagonist is passive or reactive, the Consequence is dull and one that the reader anticipated, creating an unsatisfying ending to the scene.	Because the Choice is too easy for the protagonist, the Consequence is obvious and easily predicted by the reader, but there is minor satisfaction when the reader correctly guesses the outcome.	When the protagonist struggles to determine the best path forward, the Consequence is often unexpected, which delights the reader.	With an incredibly difficult Choice for the protagonist, the Consequence strikes the perfect balance of surprising but inevitable. The reader never sees the end of the scene coming, but once it does, they realize they should have seen it all along.

Notes:



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If you find the Story Rubric helpful, please consider buying me a coffee at <https://ko-fi.com/jthorn>.

Thank you and best of luck with your story!

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Commented [J8]: I think the Choice comes after Nazim says, "It makes me happy to know that you are taken care of here. I'm not here to help you when you need help. I'm glad that you can get your needs met with someone else."

What are Valerie's options after he says this?

Sure, the invasion of privacy is important, but it's the revelation it sparks that poses the biggest question for Valerie in this scene.

Commented [J9]: Re-thinking the Choice will probably generate a new Consequence.

Commented [J10]: Ideas for Revision: What if you started the scene with, "How long are you staying?" You'll have to rewrite a bit but that frees up some real estate for your Consequence.

Slow down the pacing when Nazim reveals his approval of the affair with Jake.

Maybe the Consequence hasn't been written yet. In the scene, there's no more dialogue after Nazim says he's glad her needs are being met. What did she say to that?

Sincerely,
J. Thorn