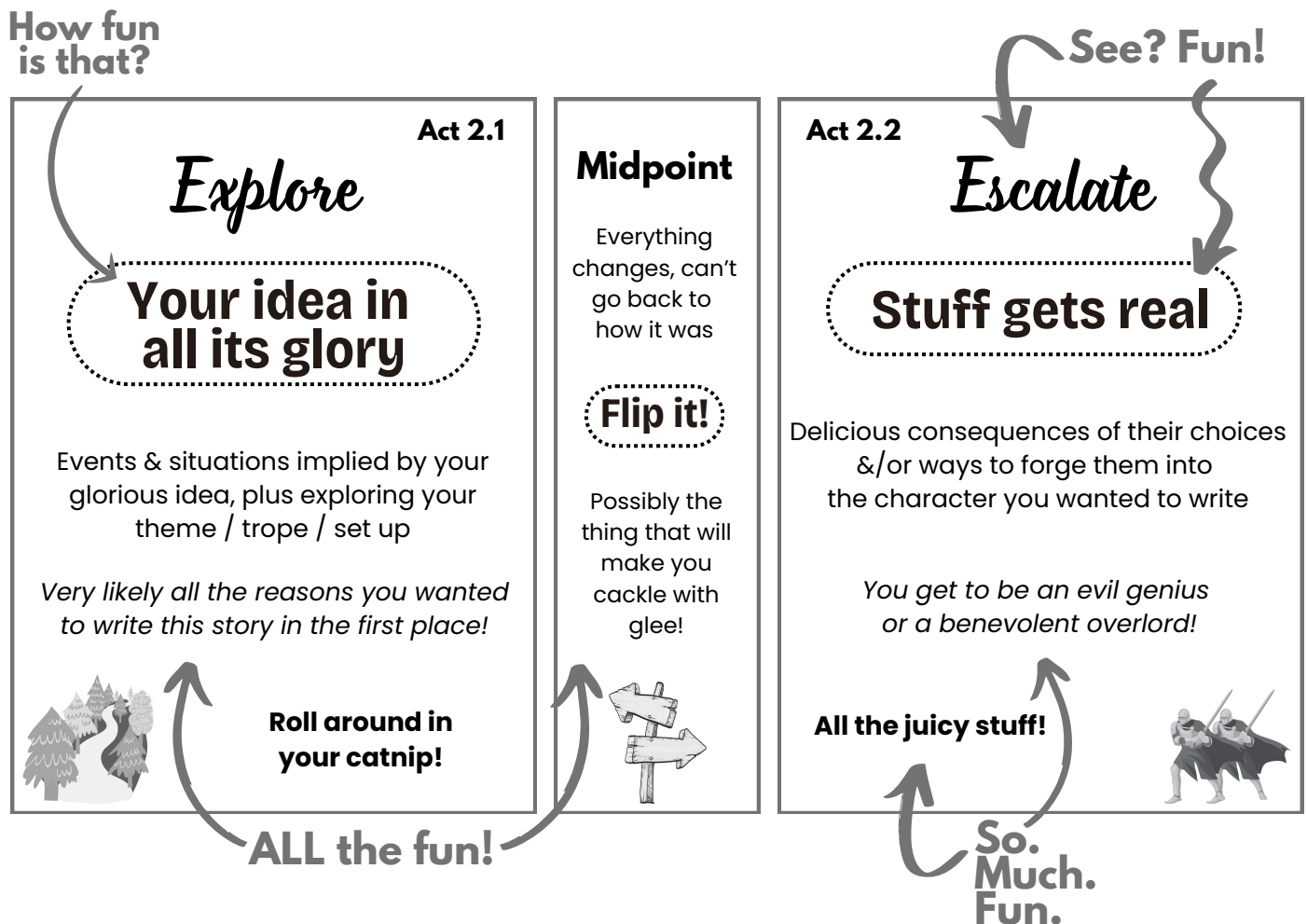## Troubleshooting Problem 1: It's the **boring** part

Problem: Can't get motivated because it's the boring stuff.

Temptation:
- Give up and start a new project
- Skip to the end & come back close to deadline.

But... this is the FUN section to write!

How fun is that?

Act 2.1

Explore

Your idea in all its glory

Events & situations implied by your glorious idea, plus exploring your theme / trope / set up

Very likely all the reasons you wanted to write this story in the first place!

Roll around in your catnip!

ALL the fun!

Midpoint

Everything changes, can't go back to how it was

Flip it!

Possibly the thing that will make you cackle with glee!

See? Fun!

Act 2.2

Escalate

Stuff gets real

Delicious consequences of their choices &/or ways to forge them into the character you wanted to write

You get to be an evil genius or a benevolent overlord!

All the juicy stuff!

So. Much. Fun.

Try this:

- Act 2.1: List all the **fun things implied by your glorious idea** (probably the reasons you wanted to write this story). Write them!
- Act 2.2: List all the juicy **consequences** your character will have to face & things that will **make them grow** into your vision. Write them!

Troubleshooting Problem 2:
The **conflict** ran out of steam

Problem:
The middle lacks tension.

Temptation:
- Just keep repeating the threat.
- Drag a fixable conflict ooooout.
- Jump the shark by throwing more things at the characters.

Try this:
- **Pinch Points:** the villain/conflict stops lurking in the background and does something to get them closer to their goal. Screenplays: 2 pinch points, halfway through each of the middle sections.

- **Reinforcing**: provide more evidence of the conflict. If you've reinforced well, the character believes the conflict/villain is more of an obstacle than ever.

- **Deepening**: existing conflicts. Not just reinforcing, something new happening that makes the conflict stronger than it was before. Make it worse!

Troubleshooting Problem 3:
The **pace** is sluggish

Problem:
You want narrative drive, but the wheels are spinning.

Temptation:
The Siren of the Manuscript Middle:
- "Quick! Fill it! Fill it with anything!"
- "There's soooo much room. Of course you can include ***."

Try this:
- **Check each scene** for its **purpose**. Every scene needs to be there for a reason (preferably 2 or more!) otherwise they're padding, and you lose narrative drive. If a scene can be cut without affecting your story, then cut it.

- **Combine two scenes** from the sluggish section to get one solid, layered scene (especially sittin' & thinkin' scenes).

- Experiment with **snag lines:** little hooks that raise questions, promise a payoff, tease & build anticipation.

Troubleshooting
Problem 2:

The only **twist** is how **predictable** it is

Problem:

You can't come up with a twist when you need one.

Temptation:

- Settle for the next obvious scene.
- Throw in a random twist even though it makes them act out of character.

Try this:

Trick your brain into leaving its nice, paved pathway.

- **Brainstorm 15:** come up with completely over the top ideas, then pull it back.

- **Brainstorm with a friend:** fun & laughter encourages your brain to reach further, plus, your friend's suggestions can send your brain in more new directions.

- **Start with a prompt:** (prompt is off the path, then adapt to suit). Think of your favourite plot twists, adapt the underlying idea to fit your plot, see if you like it or if it sparks other ideas.

Troubleshooting
Problem 2:

What's this **subplot** even doing?

Problem:

The subplot is missing, random or ineffective.

Temptation:

- Come up with 75 subplots.
- Write what's interesting, even if not connected to the main plot.

Try this:

- Create subplots by **teasing out** layers of core idea to **explore** & **reveal**, e.g., reinforce main plot's theme, reveal character, or demonstrate the stakes.

- **Add value** through subplots that **propel plot**, e.g., a subplot pushes the protagonist into character growth that they'll need for the main plot.

- Use subplots to **balance the rising tension** of the main plot: if you resolve some of the tension in one plotline, ramp up the tension in another.