

# Rated R for Violence

2017 RMFW Colorado Gold Conference

Warren Hammond

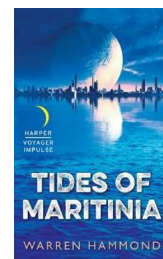
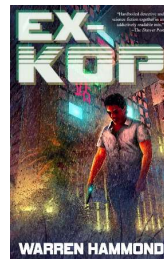
## Warren Hammond

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## Why include violence in our stories?

## Why include violence in our work?

Tension

Stakes

Thematic  
purpose

Historical  
accuracy

Memorable  
images

Character  
development

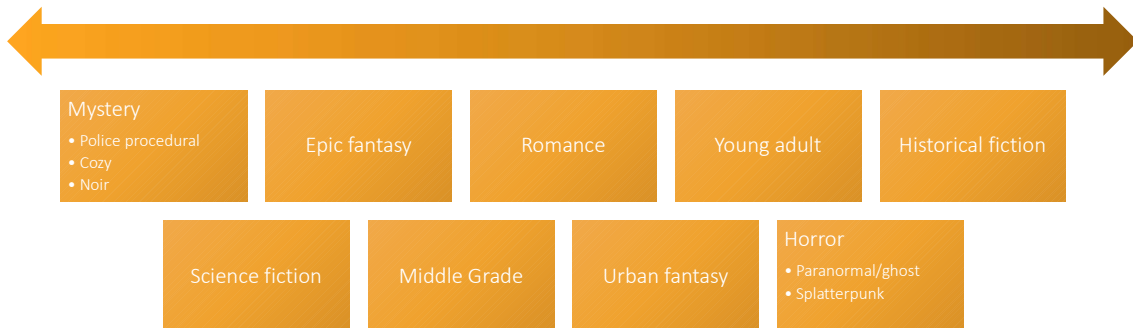
Plot  
advancement

## RSAC ratings for violence

Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Harmless conflict; some damage to objects	Creatures injured or killed; damage to objects; fighting	Humans injured or killed; with small amount of blood	Humans injured or killed; blood or gore	Wanton and gratuitous violence; torture; rape

## Where does my genre fit?

Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
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## Keys to representing violence well

Prerequisites

Reactions

Aftereffects

## Prerequisites for violence

### Precursors



- Precipitating events
- Exhaustion of options

### Motivations



- Revenge
- Redemption
- Greed
- Jealousy
- Self-defense
- Disaster prevention

### Means

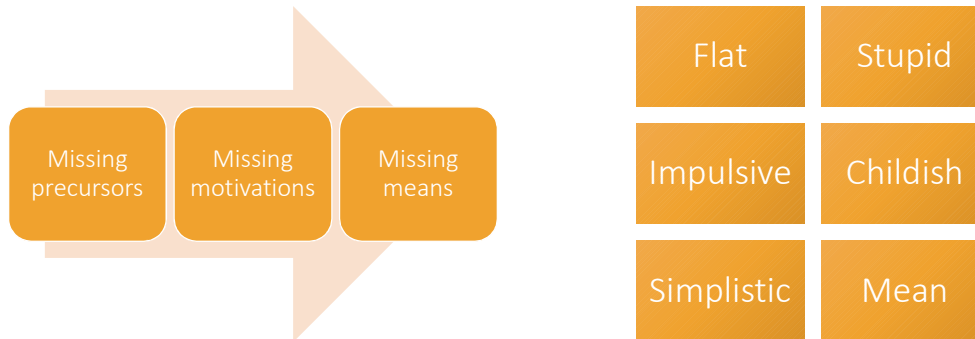


- Skills
- Weapons
- Opportunity

## Risk of missing prerequisites

PROTAGONIST COMMITS VIOLENCE

PROTAGONIST WILL READ AS



## Are the rules different for a villain?

Precursors

Motivations

Means

- |  |  |                                      |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/>                       | <input type="checkbox"/>                     | <input type="checkbox"/>             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Precipitating events  | <input type="checkbox"/> Revenge             | <input type="checkbox"/> Skills      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exhaustion of options | <input type="checkbox"/> Redemption          | <input type="checkbox"/> Weapons     |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Greed               | <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Jealousy            |                                      |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-defense        |                                      |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Disaster prevention |                                      |

## Witnesses of violence *must* react



## Required aftereffects of violence

### Physical



- Wounds
- Pain
- Death
- Limitations
- Medical needs

### Emotional



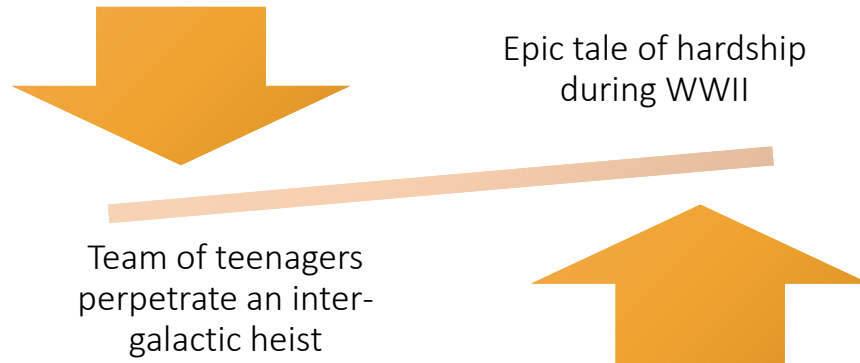
- Guilt
- Disgust
- Elation
- Satisfaction
- Introduction of new fear

### Consequences

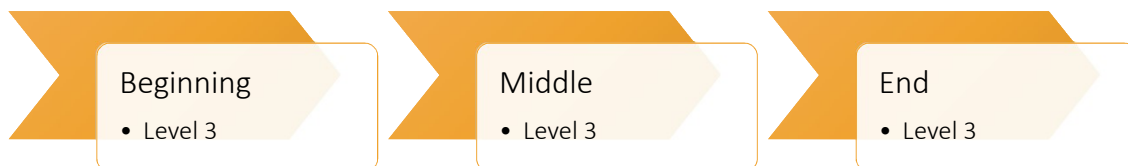


- Legal
- Approval of others
- Disapproval of others
- Escalation of stakes

## Aftereffects of violence



## Tonal consistency



## Tonal consistency

Write the next sentence:

- A single rose lay on the floor beside her, red like the rich Bordeaux she and I shared last night. I turned the body over.
- Streetlights oozed a dim glow. The pavement was wet with rain and the stench of death. I turned the body over.

## Mismatched tone and event: How to bridge the gap

Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
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**PG-13**



Rwandan genocide



## The Jaws rule



What we don't see is usually more powerful than what we do see

## Forms of violence that require extra special care

Rape

Violence toward children

Violence toward animals

## Quick tips for writing violent action

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Verbs, verbs, verbs

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Short declarative sentences

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Short paragraphs

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Time dilation

---

Minimalist choreography

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Emotions become elemental

---

Shifting of upper hand

---

Minimalist dialog

---

No urgency sappers

---

Stay in the moment

## But I need to advance the plot too?

FOR EXAMPLE

Villain must  
reveal  
something

Protagonist  
must show  
growth/remorse

A remembered  
clue comes to  
fruition

SOLUTION

Build-in standstills

- Stalemates
- Guns to the head
- Dying breaths

# Questions?

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