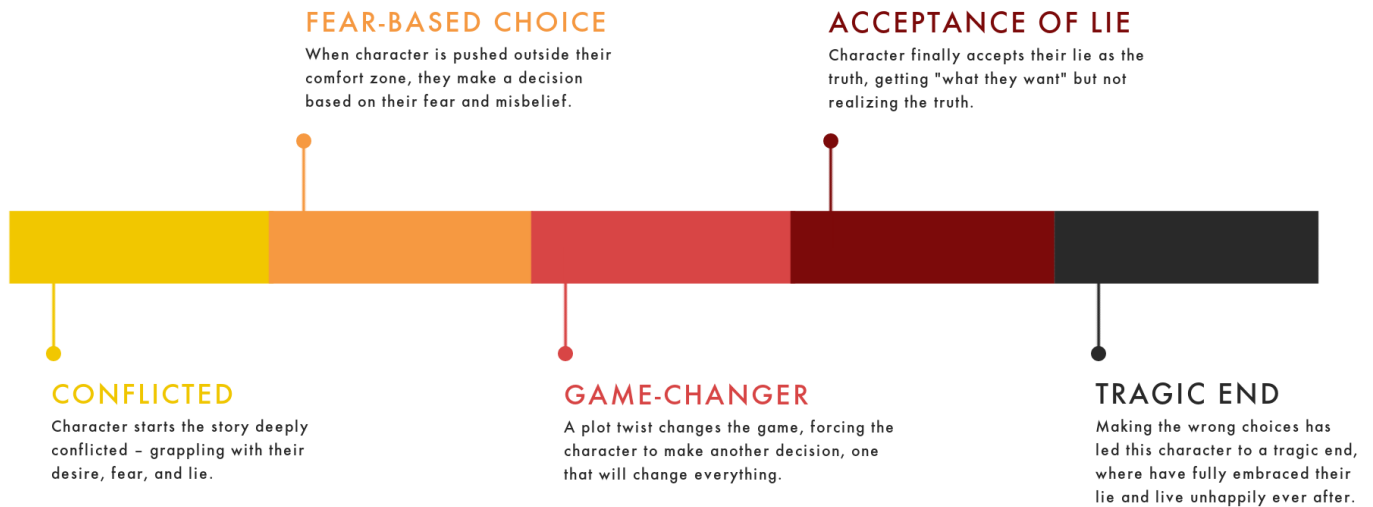


# THE NEGATIVE CHARACTER ARC



## 1. THE CONFLICTED STARTING POINT

Character starts the story deeply conflicted – grappling with their desire, fear, and lie. **Ask yourself:** What does my character think will bring them true happiness or contentment? How is their desire fundamentally based on their misbelief?

## 2. FIRST FEAR-BASED CHOICE

When character is pushed outside their comfort zone, they make a decision based on their fear and misbelief. **Ask yourself:** What is the “impossible choice”? Your character must be faced with options: stay inside their comfort zone and risk NEVER getting What They Desire, or venture into the unknown and accomplish their goal while STILL avoiding their fear.

### 3. GAME-CHANGING MIDPOINT

A plot twist changes the game, forcing the character to make another decision, one that will change everything. **Ask yourself: What unexpected thing is going to upend my character's plan (and entire life)? Why does it matter and how does it change the game?**

### 4. ACCEPTANCE OF LIE

Character finally accepts their lie as the truth, getting "what they want" but not realizing the truth. **Ask yourself: What makes my character embrace their lie, once and for all? What dramatic action do they take to get what they want?**

### 5. THE TRAGIC END

Making the wrong choices has led this character to a tragic end, where they have fully embraced their lie and live unhappily ever after. **Ask yourself: How have my characters' bad decisions led them to their tragic end? How can I show my reader that they are to blame for this whole mess?**

# STORY CASE STUDIES PT1

## LOKI FROM THOR

**The Conflicted Starting Point:** All Loki wants is to be king of Asgard – but not for the sake of the realm or its people. Only for the sake of proving himself worthy. But everything changes when Loki makes a shocking discovery: he is not Odin's son after all, but the son of a Frost Giant. This revelation shatters Loki's world and feeds into his greatest misbelief: that he is different from everyone else – an outsider, a monster, not worthy to be king. This lie clashes perfectly with his desire for respect and power.

**First Fear-Based Choice:** With Thor banished to Earth and his father in Odinsleep, he is faced with a unique opportunity: the chance to take his place as king. He's afraid of not being accepted for who he truly is, so he goes to extreme lengths to prove himself "worthy." This is what drives him to seize the throne and manipulate others into accepting his takeover. He is still avoiding his fear, but venturing into the unknown to get "what he wants."

**Game-Changing Midpoint:** Loki makes Thor believe that their father is dead and Thor is to blame – proving how far he'll go to get what he wants. Although this is Thor's game-changing midpoint, it marks a distinct moment in Loki's downfall. We can see that he is on the warpath, and won't stop until he eliminates everything that threatens him.

**Acceptance of lie:** As Loki descends into corruption, he becomes more disdainful, envious, and desperate. He longs to be respected as the king of Asgard, not only in the eyes of its people, but in the eyes of his father. Which leads him to another pivotal decision: orchestrating Odin's assassination. This is Loki's final and greatest attempt to accomplish his goal – a foolproof plan to win respect, power, and his own sense of self-worth in one fell swoop.

**The Tragic End:** Being the antagonist of the story, Loki is to blame for pretty much everything that goes wrong – but really, his lie is the true enemy. It internally destroys him and wreaks havoc on everyone else. All throughout the plot, Loki had countless opportunities to defeat his misbelief... but instead he made fear-based decisions, laying the groundwork for his own destruction. He battles Thor and loses, falling into the abyss of space.

# STORY CASE STUDIES PT2

## ELIZABETH FROM POLDARK

**The Conflicted Starting Point:** Ross returns home to Cornwall after fighting in the revolutionary war, only to discover that his whole family thought he died in battle. That includes his one true love, Elizabeth. While he was gone for two years, she became engaged to Ross's cousin, Francis... never expecting to see Ross again. Elizabeth still loves Ross and Ross still loves her, but she is afraid of losing the security she knows she has right now. She mistakenly believes herself to be vulnerable and helpless.

**First Fear-Based Choice:** Because Elizabeth's fear holds her back, events unfold exactly as planned. She denies her heart's desire and instead chooses security. She marries Francis. It's a way to accomplish her goal while still avoiding her fear. She wants to be loved and feel secure, but doesn't want to risk losing the kind of life she is used to.

**Game-Changing Midpoint:** Francis unexpectedly dies, leaving Elizabeth feeling more alone and vulnerable than ever. Ross's nemesis George Warleggen moves in for the kill. Blind to his real motives, Elizabeth welcomes George's attentions and eventually agrees to marry him. When Ross learns of this, he is livid – and has a heated argument with Elizabeth which ends with them in bed together. Elizabeth faces another impossible choice: wait for Ross, her true love... or marry George and have the security and stability she feels lost without.

**Acceptance of lie:** Abandoned by Ross, Elizabeth believes that he is not on her side and never was. She marries George, securing her safety and social status, but at the cost of living with the enemy – and losing Ross forever. As Elizabeth's character arc takes a dive, she becomes reactive and defensive; quick to decide who is her friend and who is her enemy – which plays right into George's ultimate plan to destroy Ross and alienate Elizabeth from him.

**The Tragic End:** Though Elizabeth is far from happy with a villain for a husband, she gets by – distracting herself with the wealth and prestige that comes with her new life. But when George begins to seriously doubt whether his son is actually his, Elizabeth goes to great lengths to prove her faithfulness to him... tampering with the birth of her second child and bringing about her own tragic death.