



Protagonist *Ink*

Finding Your Story

A Retreat on Narrative & Transformation

FEBRUARY 8, 2026

ABOUT PROTAGONIST | INK

We build stories meant for business.



We build stories for people on a mission—the founders, brands, and cultural organizations carving their own paths. You're the ones shaping what's next. We're here to help you tell the right story in the right way.

Narrative architecture is the strategy that anchors your vision, aligns your people, and makes every conversation click.

A powerful story is more than your marketing, it's your DNA. Our goal is to make sure you show up as the protagonist: confident, clear, and impossible to ignore.

Patrick Kirkland

FOUNDER — CHIEF STORYBUILDER

Patrick has spent over two decades as a screenwriter, copywriter and creative director for Fortune 500 brands including **Apple**, **Verizon**, and **AT&T**, learning how stories scale at the highest level. Through Protagonist Ink, he partners with founders and organizations to shape narratives that matter.



A connector working at the intersection of arts, education, and community. Amy serves as a Learning Specialist at the **LA Phil** and Managing Director of Decoda. With a 25-year career spanning **Carnegie Hall** and **Lincoln Center**, she develops programs that inspire collective action.

Amy Kirkland

FOUNDER — EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

A C T I

The Foundation

QUESTION 01

Why are we here?

QUESTION 02

Why talk about story?

Once upon *a time...*

There was an organization called Pacific Crest...

EXERCISE 01 • 8-10 MINUTES + SHARE OUT

THE CORE QUESTION

What is Story?

PREAMBLE

The Stakes: Why Story Matters

Positioning

How you are perceived in the market. Story is the differentiator that moves you from a commodity to a category of one.

Alignment

Internal cohesion. When the story is clear, every team member knows the mission, the stakes, and their role in the narrative.

Infrastructure

The systems that support the story. Ensuring your operational reality matches the narrative you're telling the world.

FOUNDATIONS

Reframing Story

Story isn't just a marketing tactic. It's the lens through which we process reality and make meaning.

o1. Clarity over Cleverness

The best stories are the ones we understand instantly. If the reader has to work to find the point, you've already lost.

o2. Embrace the Conflict

Without conflict, there is no story. We often try to hide the messy parts, but that's where the resonance lives.

THE CORE SHIFT

"The best brands in the world
don't sell products."

They sell the belief of transformation.

CASE

*Belief,
Not Product.*

EXEMPLAR: NIKE

"Nike doesn't just sell shoes. They sell the *spirit of the athlete*. They sell the dream of overcoming."

When you align with a belief, the product becomes an artifact of that belief. You aren't buying a shoe; you're buying into a narrative of greatness.

CASE STUDY 02

Habitat for *Humanity*

"They sell the belief that everyone deserves a home."



Major Characters



Protagonist



Villain



Mentor



Allies



Stakes

THE CUSTOMER (BUSINESS) / THE HERO (STORY). THE ONE WHOSE WORLD CHANGES.

THE PROBLEM (BUSINESS) / THE SHADOW (STORY). WHAT STANDS IN THE WAY.

YOUR BRAND (BUSINESS) / THE GUIDE (STORY). PROVIDES THE TOOL/PLAN.

COMMUNITY & PARTNERS. THE INTERNAL TEAM OR EXTERNAL SUPPORTERS.

THE MISSION. WHAT HAPPENS IF THE JOURNEY FAILS?



Who are the *major characters*
in your organization?

CHARACTERS TO IDENTIFY

- The Protagonist (The Customer)
- The Villain (The Barrier)
- The Mentor (The Solution)

TIMING

5 Minute Discussion

A C T I I

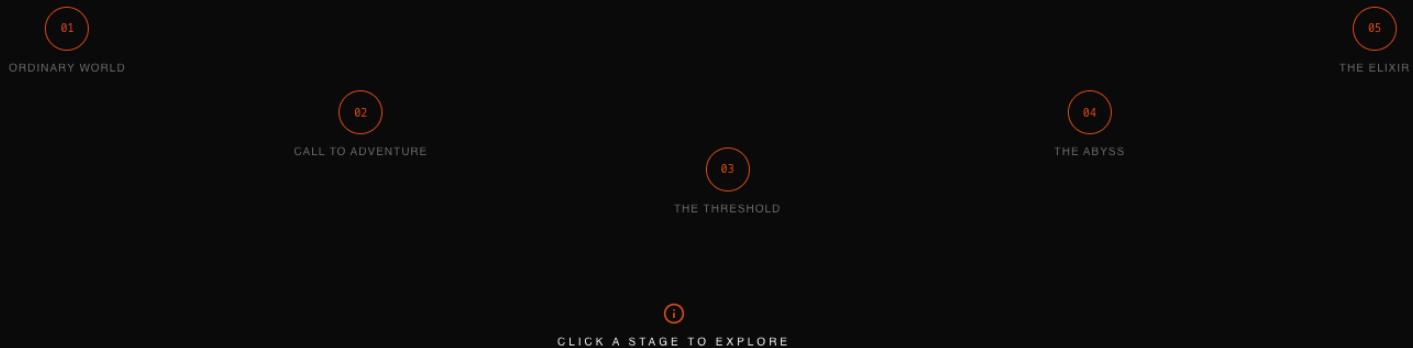
Building the *Next Chapter*

Every transformation begins in the status quo.

START: THE ORDINARY WORLD

FRAMEWORK

Storytelling 101: The Hero's Journey



A C T I I I

The Pitch

The One Liner

THE NARRATIVE ARCHITECTURE OF YOUR BRAND,
DISTILLED INTO A SINGLE, UNMISTAKABLE HOOK.

Round 1: Once Upon A Time

?

The Prompt

"Once upon a time, there was a [NARRATIVE IDENTITY] who believed [CORE BELIEF]..."

Don't overthink. Focus on the raw essence of your role and your conviction.

O B J E C T I V E

- 01 Identify your core archetype.
- 02 Define the foundational truth you stand for.
- 03 Share with your partner/group.

THE BREAKOUT

Round 2: Building the Next Chapter



Dreams

What is the ultimate vision for the future? What is the 'New World' your organization wants to build?



Barriers

What stands in the way? Identify the internal and external conflicts that must be overcome.



Allies

Who is on this journey with you? Who are the partners, community members, and stakeholders?



The Return

How will you be changed? What is the lasting impact after the conflict is resolved?

THE SYNTHESIS

Round 3: The Rewrite

2

THE TRANSFORMER FORMULA

"We take [AUDIENCE/CONTEXT]"

"Through [SPECIFIC CONFLICT/ACTION]"

"To reach [THE NEW REALITY]"

Your one-liner should be a promise of transformation. It's not what you do; it's the bridge you build between current reality and potential.