

Acting – Lesson 3

Understanding Your Character’s Objectives, Actions, and Obstacles with Nick Zadina

DEFINITIONS

Objective: One sentence stating what your character wants in a scene.

- I want to ace this test.
- I want to become friends with this person in my class.
- I want to make the basketball team.

Action: What your character does to achieve their objective.

- I READ each question twice to ace the test.
- I TRY TO SIT next to this person at lunch so I can befriend them.
- I TALK to the coach so I can be ready for the basketball tryouts.

Obstacle: Something that gets in the way of a character achieving an objective.

- I didn’t study and am bad at English.
- The person’s best friend is a bully.
- My best friend and I are up for the last spot on the team.

Super-Objective: A broader, larger objective which may be present for the entire play or through a character’s life.

- I want to go to Harvard.
- I want to find somewhere to belong.
- I want to prove to my parents that I can do anything I set my mind to.



The following is an example of what it may look like as you mark down objectives, actions, and obstacles in your script. This example is done as if you are playing the character Riley.

A Scene about a Glass of Water

ALEX is sitting at a table at a coffee shop, reading. RILEY joins ALEX.

RILEY: Hey Alex. *(Places a cup of water on the table between the two of them.)*

ALEX: Oh hey Riley, what's up?

RILEY: Nothing.

ALEX nods and goes back to their book. RILEY watches for a beat, then nudges the glass of water toward ALEX.

ALEX: What are you doing?

RILEY: Oh, I just thought you might want something to drink.

ALEX: Oh, thanks but I'm good.

RILEY: Really? You look like you're thirsty.

ALEX: What?

RILEY: Yeah, you look a little pale and your eyes are just... you look dehydrated.

ALEX: I do?

RILEY: Oh yeah!

ALEX: Well, I feel fine. *(Beat)*

RILEY: You like Mio?

ALEX: Do I like what?

Objective: I want Alex to drink the glass of water.

Action: Place the glass of water next to Alex

Action: Nudge the glass closer so Alex notices it

Obstacle: Alex is ignoring me

Action: Show concern for Alex so he drinks the water

Action: Make the water more appealing for Alex



RILEY: Mio! It's like, sweetener stuff for your water. Comes in all kinds of flavors. Gives your water a little kick of deli-ciousness. What's your favorite flavor?

ALEX: For what? Water?

RILEY: For anything! What flavor do you like?

ALEX: Cherry?

RILEY: Well, wouldn't ya know it. (*RILEY pulls out a bottle of Black Cherry Mio.*) Got some black cherry Mio right here. Lemme give ya a squirt. (*RILEY squirts some MIO into the water.*) Give that a try you'll love it.

ALEX: Riley! What's your deal!?! I'm not thirsty! ← *Obstacle: Alex isn't thirsty*

RILEY: (*Exploding, angry*) ALEX DRINK THE STUPID WATER! I NEED YOU TO DRINK THE WATER.

ALEX: Why?!?

Action: Intimidate Alex

RILEY: Because if you don't I'm gonna punch you right in the face.

ALEX: No you won't.

Obstacle: Alex called my bluff

RILEY: You're right, I won't, BUT STILL! (*Pleading*) PLEASE DRINK THE WATER!

ALEX: Alright alright! Take it easy...

Action: Beg Alex

ALEX drinks the water.

ALEX: Happy?

RILEY: Yes. Very. Have a good day. (*Exits*)

End of Scene

SUPER OBJECTIVE: To protect my friend Alex who was poisoned by a hitman. The water was really an antidote. I didn't want to tell Alex that though because I didn't want them to be scared.

