

Fight Scenes

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Lost Hat Editorial

Principles of a Fight

1. Purpose

2. Goal and Stakes

3. Internal Conflict

4. Pacing and Twists

5. Weight and Mobility

6. Clarity and Simplicity

1. Purpose

- Why is this scene in your book?
- Does it advance the PLOT or CHARACTER?
- Does it only add tension?
- Avoid the monster of the week
- Can you cut this fight without changing the story?



1. Purpose

Plot

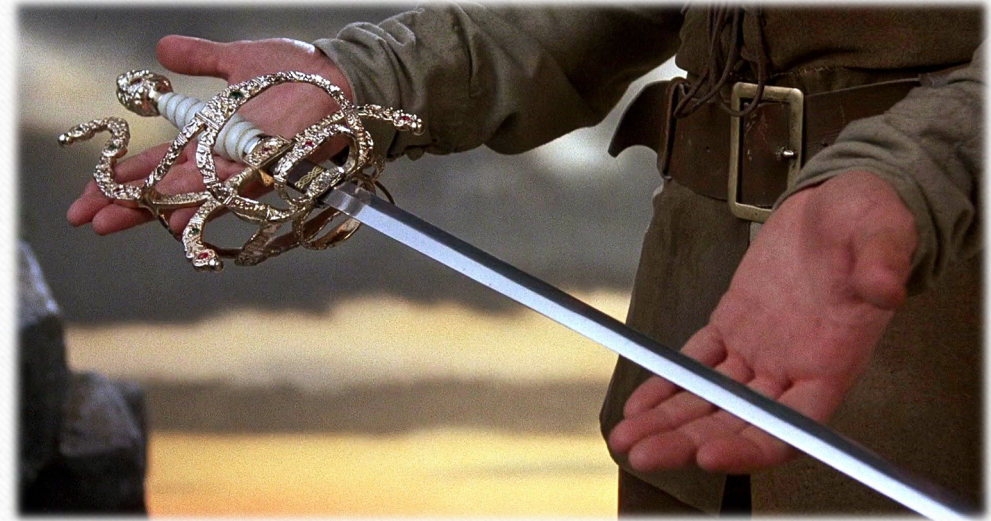
- Will and Jack first meet
- Jack gets imprisoned

Character

- Will is a hard worker
- Will hates pirates
- Jack's pistol isn't for Will
- Jack doesn't want to kill Will
- Will doesn't get recognition

2. Goals and Stakes

- Every character has a goal
- SPECIFIC and ACTIONABLE
- Goes beyond survival
- No one fights for the sake of it
- What happens if they lose?
- Death stakes, but what else?



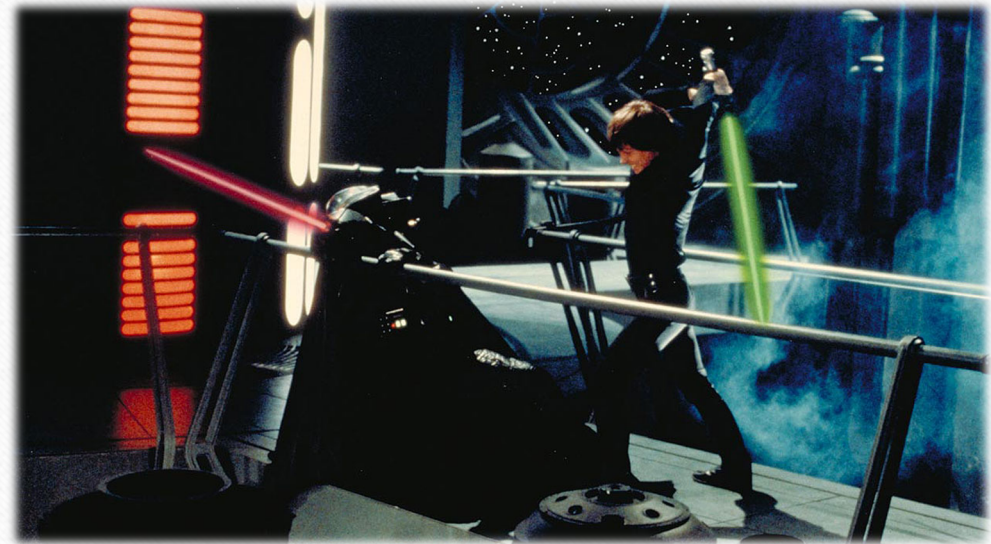
2. Goals and Stakes



- Will wants to arrest Jack
- Will wants to avenge Elizabeth
- Jack wants to escape

3. Internal Conflict

- Layered = Physical + Internal
 - Emotional
 - Moral
 - Ideological
- Dialog



3. Internal Conflict



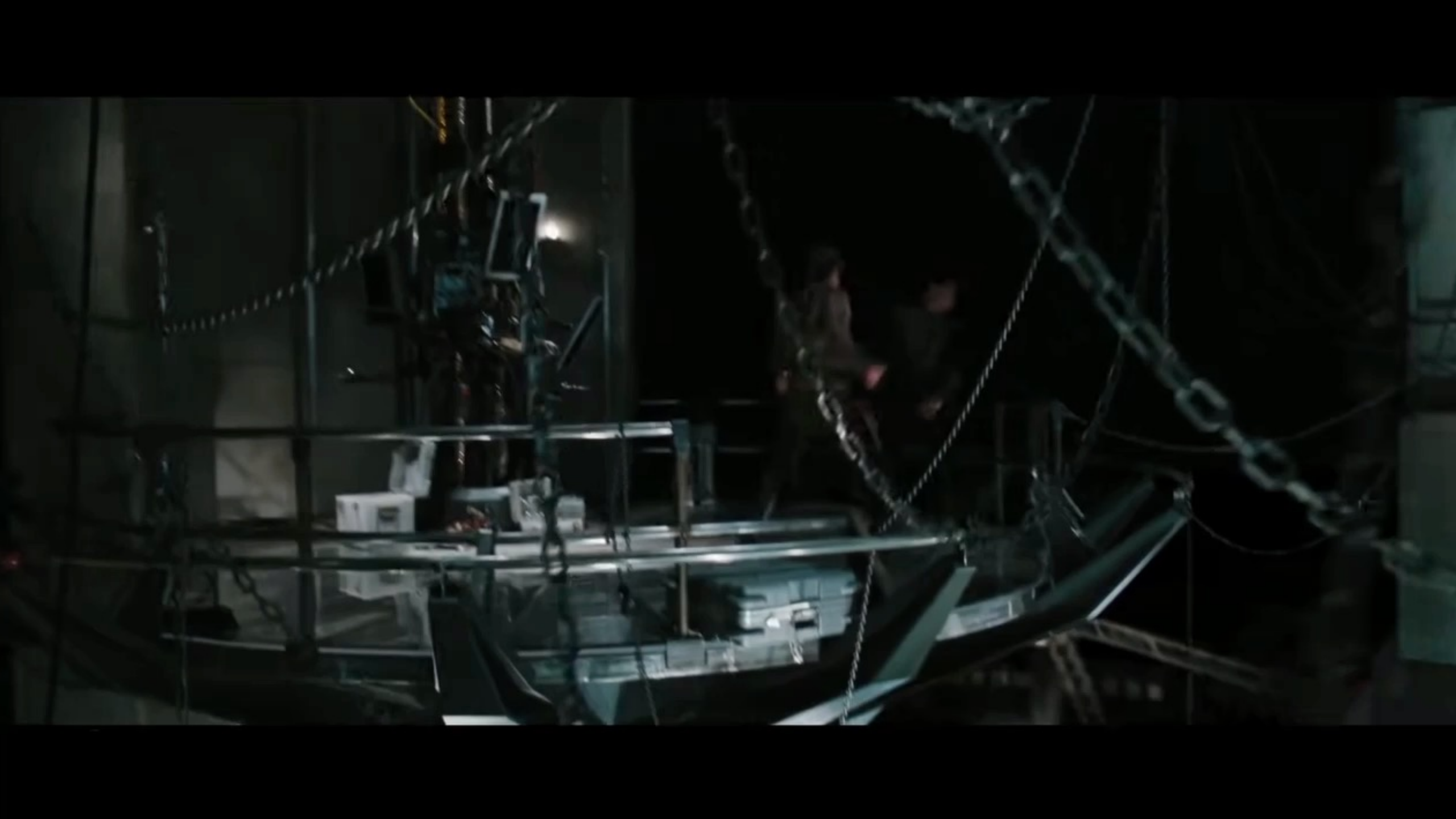
- Ethics of cheating in a fight
- Will reveals his hatred of pirates
- Will will fight for Elizabeth
- Jack doesn't want to shoot Will

4. Pacing and Twists

- Intensity rises and falls
 - Escalations
 - Intellectual component
 - Switcheroo
 - Don't repeat yourself
- Matches story structure
 - Inciting incident
 - Rising tension
 - Midpoint reversal
 - Major setback
 - Climax



Put it all together





5. Mobility and Weight

- Everything has weight
- Characters move appropriately
- Evidence of effort
- Lethality, stakes
- Directly affects mood
 - Realistic
 - Dramatic
 - Stylized
 - Whimsical







6. Simplicity and Clarity

- Short sentences
- Keep it simple, not too many moving parts
- High level choreography, not minute blow-by-blow
- Don't micromanage
- Make it easy for your reader to imagine

As they drew close, the nearest raised his gun.

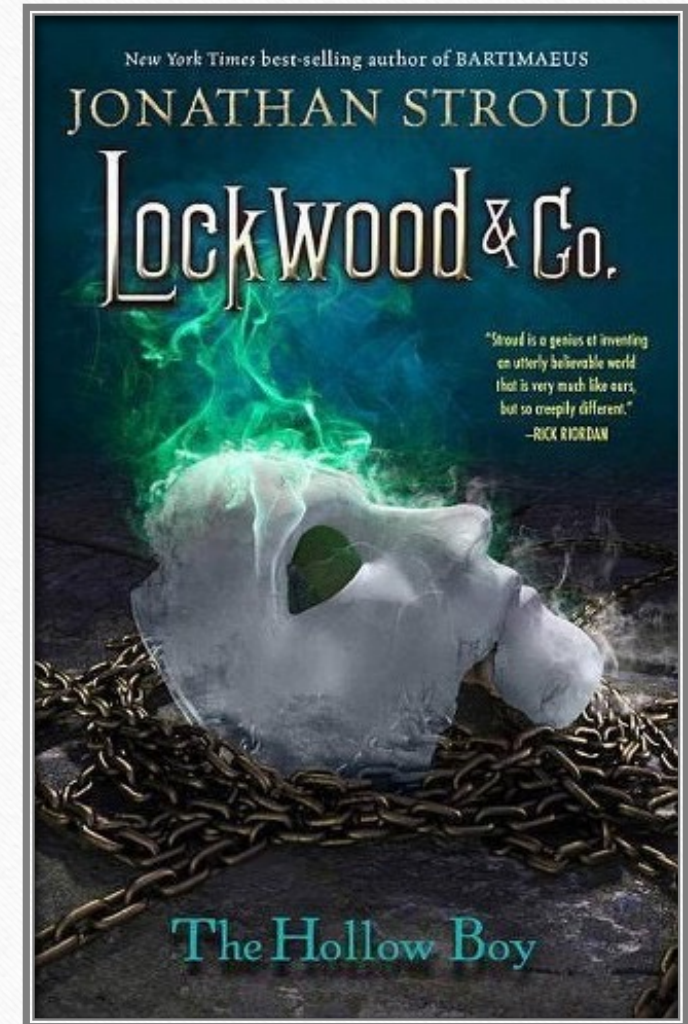
Lockwood threw his rapier, hard and horizontal, like a javelin; it nicked the assailant's arm, knocking the gun away.

Then I was on him, striking left and right. He parried my blows with quick defensive moves. It told me he was agent-trained.

The other man ignored us. He walked quickly toward Penelope Fittes, reaching in the pocket of his jacket. Now his hand too held something small, snub-nosed, and black.

Ms. Fittes saw it. Her eyes widened. She fell back against the rails.

Now the man I was fighting brought his greater strength to bear; his swordplay became faster. His blows jarred my rapier in my hand.



Questions?

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