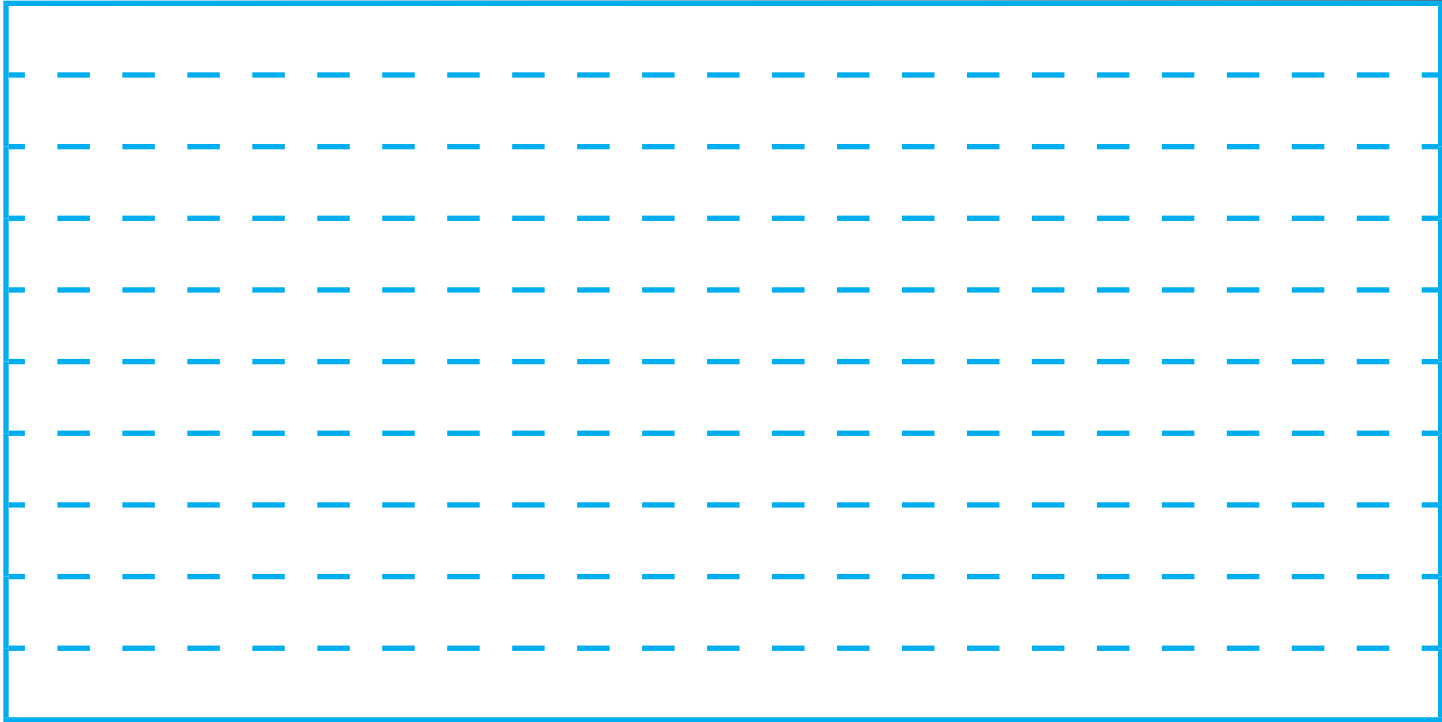# RAISING THE STAKES

In order to keep a reader engaged, you must constantly bring the story to a point where there is risk and potential failure. Readers want to see your protagonist succeed through conflict and find resolution where there is only doubt and doom. It is your duty as a story teller to constantly bring physical or emotional peril to the forefront of your story. Do not forget, people read fiction for one reason alone… They want to see conflict and conflict resolution. Of course this comes in many forms, and however you do it is up to you. But as YODA would say. "Do it, you must." Keeping tension in the story is what drives your audience!
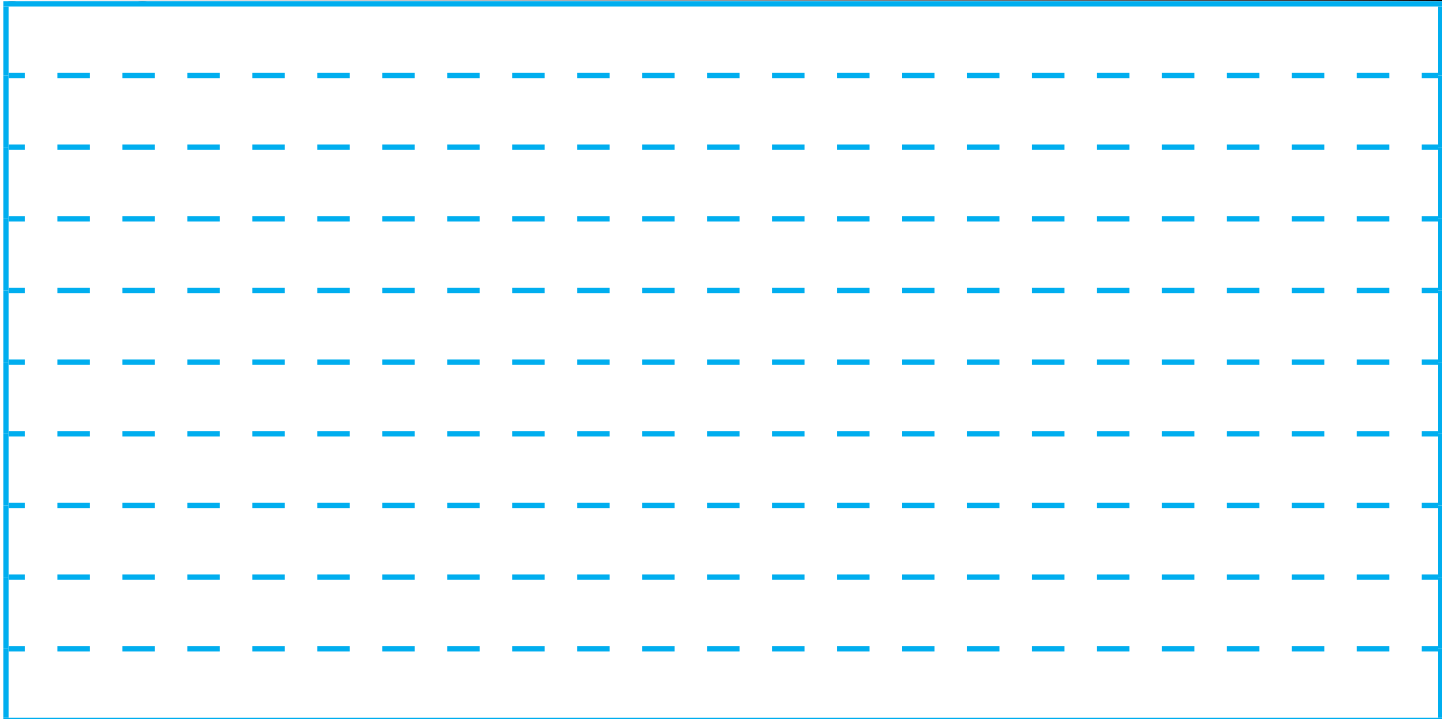
Questions to ask when writing/editing a scene for tension.

- What else is going on and does it raise the stakes also?
- Does your plot have twists?
- Are there red herrings?
- Did you spill all the info and now everything is expected?
- What is the consequence for failure (Besides death)?
- Does the story start at the right time?
- Do you begin where there ends up being more questions than answers?
- Does the goal of the protagonist shine through?
- How many voices do you have?
- Where are they and why does it matter?
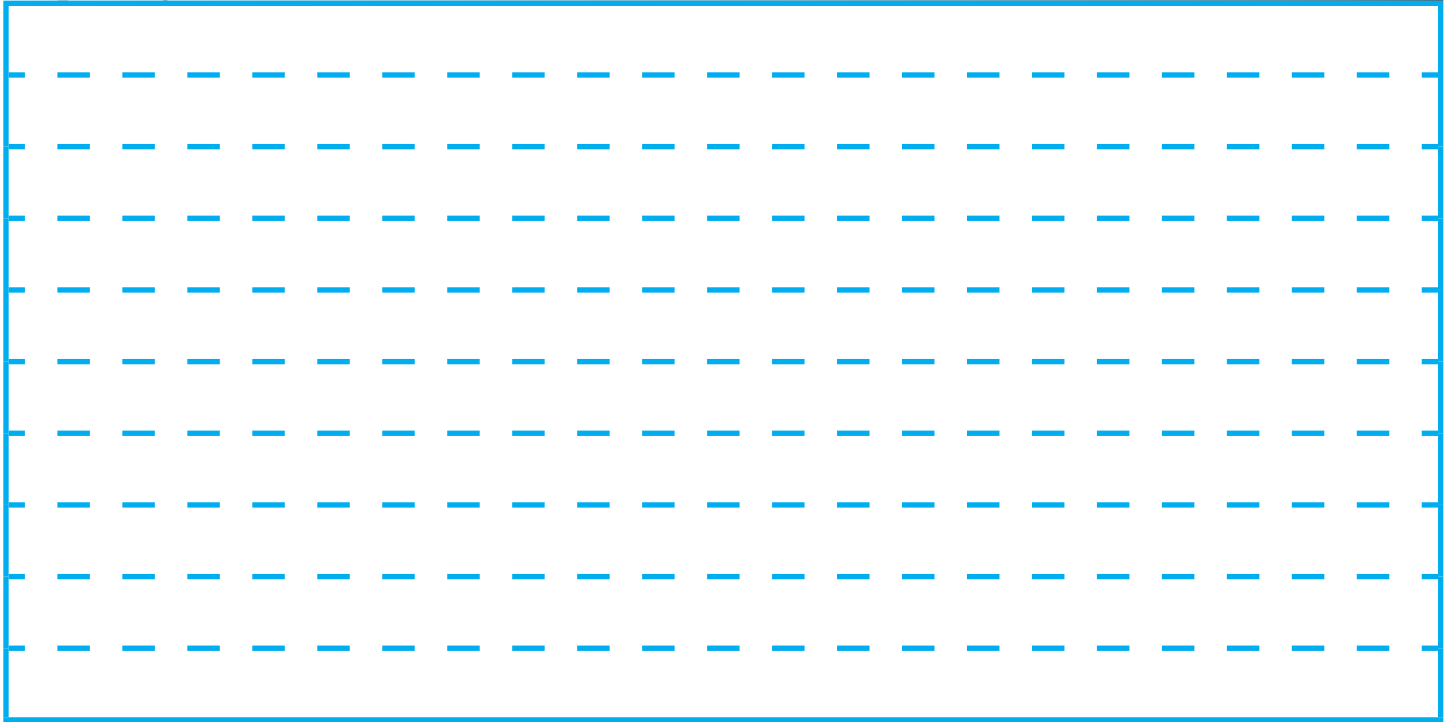- Does the back story(flashback) contribute to tension?

What type of change takes place in this scene to raise the stakes/increase tension?

What sort of twists have you brought into the scene/chapter to keep the reader guessing?

What sort of information does the reader have and what are you witholding to raise the tension?

What does the protagonist stand to gain from this situation and what are they going to lose?

What is the goal of the moment vs. the goal of the protagonist? Do they coincide and help? Why?

These questions should guide your writing down an important path. Reader engagement is just as important as story telling. You really can't have one without the other. Take the time to craft your story tightly so the reader is propelled forward into the next scene with questions, doubt and curiosity.