

**Premise:**

Liam Ballard – realtor

Aidan Ballard – foreman/construction guy

Jake Ballard – handyman and good-time guy

The Ballard Brothers live in a charming small town on the northern coast of California. They buy, fix, and flip houses in town, which caught the attention of a Hollywood type passing through town. They are now the stars of *On the Market* – a reality show in which a woman wants to buy a house, and in return for a down payment, they buy her choice and fix it up for her while she dates the brother of her choice. (Property Brothers meets the Bachelor.) While they all hated the idea at first, the money they've been able to make from it has afforded them the opportunity to start the youth program they built in honor of their uncle, the man who raised them after their parents died.

Liam and Aidan, though, are now off the market, haven't fallen for two previous buyers. That leaves only the youngest, Jake, to be the professional dater.

Jake is footloose and carefree. He lives on a sailboat that he's fixing up in the marina, and his goal is to save enough money to set sail around the world.

Backstory on romance: In high school, he dated Zora, a local gal who now runs the town bookshop. When they were teens, he was head over heels in love with her, and when she broke up with him because she was embarrassed to be seen with him, he suffered his first real heartbreak.

Now Zora's the buyer.

Characters:

**Jake Ballard:**

Wound – No one ever had room for him. His parents made him share a room with them, while his brothers slept in the only other bedroom. After they died, his uncle offered Jake a tent in the backyard. Always an adventurer, Jake loved it at first until he realized it was because his uncle didn't have room in the house for all three of the boys.

Belief – He doesn't deserve home or to be taken care of. *Shame from upbringing.*

Exterior identity – He's happier on the move, in a temporary home that can be moved around – roots only hurt when they're ripped out.

Essence – He deserves love and home, as he defines home.

Feature – Adaptable/cheerful (to cover shame)

Flaw – Impulsivity, which has kept him from ever committing to love, job, or home.

Coping mechanism – obsessed with weather

Ally – brothers

External goal – To finish the show and make enough money to start his sailing journey

Internal goal – To move from unmoored to grounded in family/love

## **Zora**

Wound – Dad killed in car accident, Mom thought everything was unsafe so she hoarded everything, including money (which Zora never knew till after Mom died)

Belief – the world is dangerous and people die too early (echoed when mom dies of freak accident not long ago)

Exterior Identity – She can protect herself with deep thought (overthinking) and no unplanned moves

Essence – Excessive fear is irrational – she deserves love and peace

Feature – Cautious/helpful

Flaw – Indecisive to point of paralysis

Coping mechanism – ALSO obsessed with weather

Ally – bookstore owner, Davina

External Goal – to rebuild home for herself (mom died, unexpectedly leaving their home to something/someone else, but left a shocking amount of money (that could have been used to fix up their hovel-home) that Zora can now use to buy a real, safe home.

Internal Goal – To decide to truly *live* and love.

**Past event** – Had sex with Jake in high school – was in love with him – had an ectopic pregnancy that almost killed her, almost died (proving Mom right about sex being too dangerous). Mom made her feel shame, never told Jake, just broke up with him. He thought it was because she was ashamed of the kid who lived in a tent.

## FIVE THINGS

Remember. Start with the GLOBAL story:

JAKE

ZORA

**Inciting Incident**

Asks Zora to *fake* fall in love with him for the sake of ending the show with a wedding

Agrees in order to get bonus: the landscaping for new house

**Progressive Complication:**  
Filmed Date - *midpoint*

Goes out on sailboat for filmed date at network's request, too stormy, sex, feels rooted in her (heh), almost loses boat, regrets impulsivity for once

Takes risk by going on boat when too stormy, sex, feels free for a moment, but justified when they almost die, back to scared

**Commented [J1]:** For our first go around, we will only look at the Five Commandments from the perspective of Jake.

**Commented [J2]:** The moment in the story that forever takes Jake out of his "normal" life. This can be causal or coincidental, meaning he does something that upends his life. Drunk texting a confession to an ex would be causal. Jake caused it. An earthquake destroying his house would be coincidental. Generally speaking, causal Inciting Incidents are stronger because readers can feel like the author has "cheated" if the event is purely coincidence.

Something has to make Jake ask Zora this question. What could that be? If you can, the Inciting Incident should mirror the Resolution which brings the story full circle. In above hypothetical example, if the house was destroyed in the Inciting Incident, a new house with a new wife would be a mirror of that in the Resolution.

**Commented [J3]:** In the Three Act structure, this is the "last complication" before Jake is faced with his Crisis question. It often ends Act 2 with the "All is Lost Moment" when the protagonist is at his lowest and this transitions directly (next scene) into the Crisis scene.

All Progressive Complications should be a "one-way street" meaning the protagonist should NEVER be able to back track to an early time/situation otherwise there is nothing at stake.

What would be the last thing Jake would face that would make the reader think, "he's totally screwed" and would logically lead to his Crisis question? It should be connected to Zoe and something that is irreversible. Could having sex with this woman and realizing he loves Zoe be it?

**Crisis**

Confirms to Zora he's not in love with her (lie), that the filmed wedding will indeed be fake, in order to let her have house in total for her feeling of safety, though he no longer wants to leave the area or her.

Confirms to Jake she's not in love with him (lie), so that they can get quick divorce so that he can leave to travel and find his life-long dream.

**Commented [J4]:** The gut-wrenching, nail-biting question the protagonist faces just after/at about the same time as the All is Lost Moment. Although it doesn't need to be explicitly written in the narrative or dialogue, the reader should know the choice and it should be HARD AS HELL with no clear, obvious option. This can be a Best Bad Choice or Irreconcilable Good. Best Bad Choice is "damned if you do and damned if you don't" while Irreconcilable Good is good for Jake but bad for everyone else or vice versa. The reader should be thinking, "Gawd! What would I do?" as they turn the page to find out what Jake does.

What is Jake's Crisis question? Did he in fact "cheat" in the previous scene? What is the difficult decision he is faced with? We know one choice because of the Climax but the one he doesn't choose should be equally plausible to the reader.

**Climax**

Miserable wedding, gift is O Henry-like that he had his brothers install the thing he hated in the house without her knowledge

Miserable wedding, gift is O Henry-like that she paid for docking in his port of call of choice, New Zealand?

**Commented [J5]:** The Climax is the consequence of the Crisis decision and this is clear – Jake has chosen to marry Zora but the twist is that the wedding is miserable. The added twist (which should occur in the Climax) is that they really are in love.

**Resolution**

At reception, ally holds mirror, they're in love etc

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**Commented [J6]:** The Resolution is the "new normal" for the protagonist. This would be married bliss – for real.