

A robbery at the convenience store

Scenario

Your character goes into a convenience store to buy something. While she is there, a masked person comes in and robs the place.

Questions

Write the answer to these questions. You don't have to use complete sentences. If possible, write the answers as part of a scene that may be in your finished story. As you write these snippets, always consider why your character makes these choices. What compels her to make this choice, as opposed to another? What is going on in her life or her past history that drives her to make these choices or take these actions? What colors her interpretation of the events?

What does your character need to buy?

Is it something she really needs so she has to make this stop? Is it something she thinks of and decides on a whim to pick it up now while she's thinking about it? Is she just killing time and decides to make the stop to pick this item up now?

Which convenience store does she go to? Why?

Is it near her home? If so, does she go there often? Is she a little familiar with it? Very familiar with it? Does she know the people who work there by face or by name? What does she think of the store? What does she think of the people who work there? What does she think about the selection of items they carry? What about their hours?

If it's not near her home, is it on the way to someplace she's going? Has she passed it before? Has she ever been to it before? Why or why not?

Is she in a hurry? If so, why?

Does she have a lot of time? Is she killing time?

What does the neighborhood look like?

How does she get there? Walk? Drive? Bike? Why?

What is the weather doing as she goes to the store? How does that impact which store she goes to or how she gets there?

What does the store look like from outside? Is it in need of a new coat of paint? Is it freshly painted? What signs are on or in the window?

What is the parking lot like? Big with lots of room? Too small so that the spaces are too close together threatening plenty of dings and scrapes? Is it full of cars? Empty?

What does it feel like from outside as your character approaches the entrance?

Are people hanging around the entrance? Is the place practically deserted?

What does the store look like on the inside? Clean? Dirty? Dark? Bright?

What about the person at the counter? Friendly? Surly? Indifferent?

How does she feel about the place when she sees inside and sees the clerk at the counter?

Are the aisles crowded together or roomy?

Is there a lot of stuff on the shelves or is it sparse as if they're letting things run out and then not ordering any more?

Is the building old so that the wood floors are uneven? Or is the building in good shape with tile and modern shelving?

Is anyone else in the store? If so, who? What do they look like? How old? What does your character think about them? What does she feel about them? Why?

Does she know where the item is or does she have to look for it?

Does your character go right for the item she wants? Does she meander up and down the aisles looking at everything else before she gets to the item she wants?

Where is she when she notices the robber? What is she doing? What makes her notice that there's a robbery going on?

Does the robber see her? If so, what does he do? What does your character do?

If not, what does your character do? Does she duck? Freeze? Drop something?

What does she see him do?

What is the first thought your character has when she realizes a robbery is in progress? Why?

What is the first feeling your character has when she realizes a robbery is in progress? Why?

Has she ever been a robbery victim before? Any kind of crime victim (mugging, rape, burglary, etc.)? If so, how does she feel now? If not, how does that make her feel?

Describe the robbery.

What does the clerk do? Is he calm? Does he freeze?

What does the robber do?

Are his hands steady? Is the gun shaking? Does he wave it around? Does he shout? Is he calm? Jumpy? What do his actions make the character think?

How does your character react? Is she calm? Scared? What does she *think* is going to happen? Does it?

What does your character **do** that shows how she's feeling (e.g., don't say "she was scared", or "she was calm somehow". Show us she is scared or calm or whatever without using the specific word.)

Are any shots fired? Does the robber shoot the clerk? Shoot into the air? Shoot a can of something in order to scare the clerk or your character? Does he shoot up the store? If so, how does your character react to that?

Then what happens?

Finally

What does this incident bring up for your character? What memory or emotion? Does it change anything for your character? If so, what? And why?

Choices

Your character always has choices. What choices does she make at each junction and why?

Think of your current story

How can you use this in your story?

Next step

Do this exercise for each of your characters