

"...clever, complex and filled with an engaging cast of characters, *Old City Hall* captures the vibrancy and soul of Toronto" - Kathy Reichs

Cheat Sheet  
Chapter One, Week One

ROBERT ROTENBERG

Monday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020

## 1. THE HIGHWAY MAN

This is a poem written by Alfred Noyes, voted Britain's 15<sup>th</sup> best poem in 1995. [Here's a wonderful version by the Canadian singer Loreen McKennit.](#)

*"The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees.  
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed up cloudy seas.  
The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor.  
And the highway man came riding – riding –riding  
The highway man came riding, up to the old inn door."*

## 2. WHY ACTION IS IMPORTANT

*"No, no! The Action first, explanations take such a dreadful time.  
Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventure in Wonderland &  
Through the looking glass."*

- Lewis Carroll

## 3. C-A-V-E-S

Keep these five letters in your head, and by your computer, every time you write. These are the five KEY elements you need to start a story, write an email, write a memo, pen a letter, tell a story, any and everything.

**C** is for Character

**A** is for Action

**V** is for Voice

**E** is for Emotion

**S** is for Setting

\*Remember, put the S on top, so it is really SCAVE. (Setting always comes first!)

## 4. SETTING IS CHARACTER

Watch the [opening sequence of The Sopranos](#), notice how it tells you almost everything you need to know about the lead character. We'll touch on this next week.

## 5. ACTION VERSE DESCRIPTION

A terrific quote from the writer Lee Child:

*“Speed up the description, slow down the action.”*

## 6. HOLD BACK THE ACTION

Go on You Tube and look up a few short clips of Alfred Hitchcock talking about suspense. **NOTE, there is a difference between SUSPENSE and BUILDING TENSION.** Think about this and we will discuss at the next session. If you can get a copy of his film Stranger on the Train, look at the scene when one of the main characters must walk up a big staircase in a large home, and there’s a huge dog on the landing.

(Hint...in the opening of a book you want to build tension. Suspense comes later.)

## 7. WHAT DOES MR. SINGH LOOK LIKE?

Many of you have already sent in your descriptions. Keep those cards and letter coming in. Send them to my email address: robert@rsjlaw.ca

## 8. WEEK TWO: CHAPTER ONE OF “THE GUILTY PLEA.”

A few things we’ll touch on:

- a. Why start a book with a minor character?
- b. Using humor to break up the tension.
- c. Voice of the character. **NOTE voice is NOT the same as point of view.**
- d. Exercise: if you have Old City Hall, or download the first chapter, pick all the words or phrases that are used that are in Mr. Singh’s voice.  
Hint, here’s one: Tuesday next.
- e. Who is the narrator. Hint...this is a trick question.

## 9. RECORDING OF WEEK ONE.

[Here is the link to a Youtube video of the week one reading.](#)

Thanks for everyone who tuned in! Please invite your friends to week two.

Have a safe week,  
Robert