

Short Drama Beat Sheet — Hook · Conflict · Cliffhanger

60–90s episode · three acts

SERIES _____ EPISODE TITLE _____ TARGET LENGTH _____ DATE _____

ACT 1 · HOOK 0–15s

Cold-open hook · 0–5s

Open mid-conflict. First line or image must raise a question the viewer needs answered.

Stakes & world · 5–15s

Who wants what, and what breaks if they fail. One sentence of context, no backstory dumps.

ACT 2 · CONFLICT 15–65s

Inciting push · 15–25s

The event that forces the lead to act now — a reveal, an ultimatum, an arrival.

Escalation · 25–40s

The obstacle doubles. Every beat should cost the lead something visible.

Midpoint turn · 40–50s

New information flips the goal or the ally/enemy map. The audience re-guesses the ending.

Crisis · 50–65s

Lowest point. The hardest choice on the table — say the two options out loud in dialogue.

ACT 3 · CLIFFHANGER 65–90s

Climax beat · 65–80s

The choice lands on screen. Pay off the opening question — then complicate it.

Cliffhanger out · 80–90s

Cut on the reveal, not after it. Last 2 seconds set up the tap to the next episode.
