Okay, so you know who your characters are. Excellent. Now it is time to figure out what your characters are going to do.

Most stories are ultimately about the same thing—the journey a protagonist goes on to get what he or she wants. Whether his or her goal is to get the girl or cure cancer, the journey is never easy, and your character will encounter many setbacks along the way. Though they're painful for your protagonist, these obstacles are what will make your novel exciting to read.

Imagine a story about Jim who wants a sandwich more than anything in the world. How boring would the story be if all Jim had to do was walk from his bedroom to the kitchen, make a sandwich, and then eat it? That story is so uneventful it can be told in one sentence. But what if Jim is seriously afraid of the dark, the power is out in his house, and he has to walk down a dark hallway to get to the kitchen? And, once there, he has to fight his bratty younger sister, Emily, for the last slice of roast beef.

Though it may be simple, this story has both external conflict and internal conflict.

External Conflict
The external conflict is the one between a protagonist and antagonist.

In the above story, the protagonist Jim has a goal (to eat a sandwich), but a motivated antagonist Emily has her own agenda (to also eat a sandwich). The struggle between Jim and Emily over the last slice of roast beef is the external conflict in this story.

Internal Conflict
The internal conflicts are the fears and insecurities that a protagonist has to overcome in order to get what he or she wants.

In the story above, Jim has to overcome his fear of the dark in order to get the sandwich he wants so badly.

If you have completed your character questionnaires, you already know a good amount about the major players in your novel. Now it's time to answer some deeper questions about your characters' hopes and fears in order to create the conflicts that will make your novel interesting.

Take out and review your character questionnaires, then fill in the blanks below.

Your Protagonist

1. More than anything in the world, my protagonist wants:
2. But he/she is afraid of:
3. And his/her greatest weakness is (is it something like "falling in love too easily" or "crossbows"?):

Physical Antagonist
Complete this section if you have a physical antagonist.

More than anything in the world, my antagonist wants (this can be as simple as humiliating the protagonist or something a little more ambitious like world domination):

1. My antagonist's "beef" with the protagonist is:
2. My antagonist is afraid of (long-haired bunnies?):
3. His/her/its greatest weakness is:

Abstract Antagonist
Complete this section if you have an abstract antagonist.

1. The antagonist in my novel is not a living, breathing being. It is:
2. If my protagonist does not battle against this antagonist, it will eventually (ruin his or her life or cause death?):
3. My protagonist is battling against this antagonist by:

Congratulations! You now have the two basic ingredients for an excellent story: external conflict and internal conflict. Know that your internal and external conflicts will overlap throughout your novel. Once your characters find out about each others' fears and weaknesses, you better believe they will use them against each other mercilessly as they fight to make their dreams come true.