

ABFF 9:16 MICRODRAMA STORYTELLING GUIDE

A Quick Creative Reference

Microdramas are mobile-native, episodic stories designed for fast consumption, emotional impact, and repeat viewing. They are not simply short films presented in a vertical format. Strong microdramas are built for momentum, clarity, and addiction; stories that pull viewers from one episode to the next. If an episode can end neatly, it likely needs more tension.

Core Storytelling Principles

- **Write for the Scroll** - Viewers encounter microdramas mid-scroll. Establish stakes quickly and make the premise clear within seconds. Curiosity should drive the viewer to keep watching.
- **Episodic Momentum** - Each episode should advance the story, not simply extend a moment. New information, emotional shifts, or consequences should occur in every episode.
- **Cliffhangers Are Essential** - Episodes should end on unresolved moments that compel the next watch. Clean endings work against the format.
- **Heightened Emotion & Clear Stakes** - Microdramas often feel soapy, urgent, and emotionally direct. Stakes should be personal, immediate, and easy to understand.
- **Character First** - Strong characters anchor the series. What does the character want right now and what are they about to lose?
- **Think in Series** - ABFF evaluates microdramas as complete series. There should be escalation across episodes and a payoff by the end.

Cliffhanger Prompts

(Use as creative guides)

- A secret is revealed, but not explained
- A character makes a shocking choice
- New information changes everything
- A relationship is put at risk
- A plan fails at the last moment
- Someone arrives, interrupts, or overhears
- A truth is exposed, or about to be