

Ep #27: "Writing Is Rewriting" But How?

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In this episode, we are talking all about rewriting. I love rewriting. It's my favorite part of the process. So I've got some tips and tricks for you. So listen in.

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This is the script reader pro podcast, hands on advice, insider hacks and deeper discussions for the screenwriters who are serious about breaking into the industry.

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Hey, everyone, this is the script reader pro podcast. Yes, and my not so lovely husband is sitting across from me.

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Yep, we had a bicker mint. Let's just be real here, guys, before the podcast. And we don't argue. We bicker. So it's called a bicker mint.

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No, we don't even, I've just, I just invented that. It's a stupid word. See, bickering. And what did you say to me? You said, Oh, this is going to be a great podcast, because it's going to be very combative. Yes,

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combative, conflict and tension.

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That's what we're talking about today. No, we're not, no, we're not.

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Today. We are talking about rewriting and how to rewrite.

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I'm so excited about this topic, aren't you, because I'm in such a combative mood, yes,

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but see, like, what you kind of do is rewrite yourself every morning, because you get dressed, you get done up, and then you have your accessories, and you're like, oh, Scott, this necklace, I don't think matches my shoes. So then you rewrite your outfit. Are you

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trying to get on my good side now by complimenting me?

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Maybe? Is it working? No, okay, well, then let's rewrite it. Let's rewrite

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like for rewriting and starting from the beginning. This morning, everybody speaking

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of starting from the beginning. What do we usually do when we start off the podcast? Nice, nice transition, segue. What do

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we usually do? Usually we get along more and we kiss in this part of the podcast. No, we usually talk about what we've seen lately.

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Yes, we do, and we've seen some really good stuff. Cordially

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invited. Oh my gosh. When I saw the name of it, I was like, I don't remember it. Then I remembered it, and then I thought, that's kind of a stupid title. How come it just didn't now that I look at it, it, I don't feel like it. It justifies the movie, but that's

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what you write on a wedding invitation. You are cordially invited. Yes, wedding

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you did in the 1920s I guess, do people still say cordially? I don't know. I've never heard anybody say cordially. So, yeah, I would like to cordially Have you come to my birthday. But we don't

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have dinner parties or or anything. So maybe, maybe they still do. But regardless, it was really fun, guys, you can send us. You want to invite us to something. Cordially invite us. Cordially invite

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us. We'll be there with bells on, but you'll have to pay, probably, for the flights and accommodations. Well, we can, we can work it out. And also, also a shopping allowance would be stipend. Yes, yes. Okay. Cordially invited. Do you want to just tell the list?

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So it was on Netflix? No, it was on prime. Sorry. It was Will Ferrell and Reese Witherspoon, really funny romantic comedy. It just really checked off all the boxes for us. We were, we thought

it was, had a lot of heart. It was really funny. There's this alligator scene that is absolutely hilarious. I was gonna

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say the alligator scene. And actually, the funny thing about the whole movie, not the funny thing, but the thing about the whole movie is as you know, it takes me a long time to get to laughter, to laugh out loud, yeah, and I laughed quite a few times, and I remember that because I laughed very few times in movies, but this one really was just well done. Yeah, so good. The premise was so good. It was just fun. Yeah, it was fun. It was fun.

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And my only thing there, though, was by and I'm not gonna ruin the movie, but like, obviously, Reese Witherspoon Will Ferrell, are the leads. So you expect them to kind of fall in love, but I never they fell in love. Well, I don't know if they did not, but I did not feel the chemistry between them. No, I don't know. I just didn't, I don't know if it's because he just seemed so much older than her, or, I think, didn't kind of fit her.

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It's her. I think it was his six pack that, you know,

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but no, I just, I was like, I don't, I don't see it, I don't feel it either. It felt to me like, uh, which wasn't the actor thing. It was more the writing thing, like, they never really, ah, do

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you though? Because I think it's more the acting. I think the acting choice was, like, the casting choice, you mean, yeah, yeah. Casting choice was off. I think either you do Reese with someone else, or you do, yeah, will, will with somebody else.

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But anyways, it was, it was, it was really well done. It was fun. It was clever, and it was

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fun. Recommended, hey, yes, today we're talking about how to rewrite. Like you said, Yeah, rewriting. Man, it's one of the biggest man. It's so exciting, I can't hardly say man, anywhere else, except when I'm on the podcast. Anyways, moving on. Let's rewrite that.

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But no rewriting is one of those things that people are always having trouble with, and a lot of people just don't know how to do it. And I always say that anybody can write a first draft of a movie script or a TV pilot. Anyone can. Not everybody should correct but everyone can, and because it's easy to find how you do the format. Easy to research structure. Anyone can, kind of like, lay it down right. A lot of people will just pull out that, save the cat, follow the cookie cutter beats and Okay, you've got it right. But what separates the real writers from the people just kind

of trying to figure it out is rewriting. It's taking what you've done and going into that next version and making the magic happen. So that's what we're going to talk about. To kind of give you some tips and tricks and things that you can kind of look for as you get yourself ready to go into that second draft. And also, how do you know when you're ready? Right? When you're ready to go in and do the work?

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You're ready? When I say you're ready, that is my life. Good answer.

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Good answer. So the old adage is that writing is rewriting, and nothing can be further from the truth, right? Rewriting that that's what takes the work, that's where the skill comes in and one of the best things you can do as a writer is to learn how to analyze your own work, learn how to take a step back, look at it with fresh eyes, and go back in to see the problems. Because we all think our work is great. We all think, oh my gosh, this is perfect. I don't think I can even change a thing. The trick is getting out of that zone and being able to look at your work, something you've written 1015, years ago that was really, really great. It might not match the level of your skill and talent now, so going back seeing it different helps Well,

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yeah, not just that, like you might 1015, years ago, have people, you know, listening to cassette tapes. Now, records are big, yeah,

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updating isn't that weird

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that it went from the what was before, the cassette tape, the eight track, the eight track to the cassette tape, yeah, to then the wreck. Well, records were first forever, yeah, but I'm saying it's it went

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from it went to to eight tracks to cassette tapes to CDs

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to streaming, no, and now we're back at freaking records. Yeah, records are huge again, right? Vine, which is weird, because people got rid of all the records, but no cassette

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tapes. Why are they not making cassette tapes anymore? We watched, we were watching Handmaid's Tale the other day, and there was a scene where she went down and found this box of cassette tapes. And even just the sound of of her opening jingle, yeah. Like opening in the plastic, plastic. I was like, Oh, it's so, like, nostalgic. And then, like, hitting the button, watching that door of the cassette slowly, I know what I said, Wow, that took a long popping it in the click

of the play. Oh, it's just, yeah, I know there was something about and then carrying that boom box under your shoulder, like,

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but yeah, it's going back and looking maybe at your older material, and seeing how you can freshen it up too, just with the time, not just how you've grown as a writer, but also with the current times, correct, yeah.

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And I mean, when you write something new, it's you don't want to let it sit for 10 years or even a year, right? But you do have to step away from it after that first draft. You have to let it however long it takes you to see it new, right? It's different for everybody. I mean, I, I read like, three scripts a day minimum, right? And so when I finish something of mine, and I go back into it. I've, I've had dozens of stories and characters come through my head. So when I look at my stuff again, it comes a little quicker when it when it means, you know, seeing it from that outside eye, but setting it down for a week, two weeks a month, you know, before you go back into whatever it takes. But if you don't want to do that, there are tricks that you can use to see it differently, yeah,

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like, what kind of tricks? Like, what do you mean to see it differently? So

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if you've typed your script on a computer, right, when you print it out, you will see it completely different. It'll come across so much different than just on the screen. But you can print it out, you can read it out loud, right, hearing it even like recording yourself reading it so you can listen to it back. You know, have it spoken to you from the program, reading it on your phone with a different screen size? There's, there's different ways to see your work differently, right? But it's also a big mental trick, because a lot of times you go into it and you just enjoy reading it. But you can't just sit enjoy reading it. You have to, like, analyze it, right? So that's what we're going to be talking about today. Is kind of going through those different beats. What about

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having giving it to someone that you know to read too? Yeah,

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for sure. And, I mean, that's always scary, right? Especially at first draft. So you want to make sure when you do give it to someone or even send it out, you're not that can be a good time to just send it out and get notes, right? But, when you do send it out to someone like us, for example, in your submission, Oh, you want to say, just so you know, this is my first draft, I want to understand what's working what isn't, rather than just go, you know, having someone going blank, thinking this is supposed to be ready to submit, right? Because then you're going to get a different point of view that way, at least from us, because we've all been there. We're all working

writers at script reader Pro, so we know what that that can be like. But yeah, it's different. I think, right, someone you trust,

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I think it's different just giving it to someone who also doesn't know what the format of a screenplay is, because then you could see them not fully grasping everything and maybe not being able to focus on the story. It's. Self and how it moves on the page, but more like, how am I supposed to even read this in the first place? Yeah, so having someone that knows the program that you're supposed to write in, which, for those listeners, you need to write in a program, yes,

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don't make it up. Don't make your own macro template in Word or pages. There's free software out there. You want to have something that does it right. It makes everything so much easier. So when

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you're going and you're rewriting though, then how do you even know where to start? Like, that's where I would be confused is it just seems very overwhelming to me.

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It is, and that's totally correct. My biggest advice to every piece of every writer is don't try to tackle everything at once. Don't go back in and just start picking apart every little thing from beginning to end. That's why it's important to read through it a few times, make notes, Mark what's working, what isn't, and then go in to do one rewrite at a time, right? So you want to look at it as as each section, what are the strengths and weaknesses, right? So, so there's a handful of areas and elements that you can look at. Okay? So, for example, you look at the concept, right? What would you want to ask about the concept as you're reading through it? Is the con?

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But is the concept? What you want to look at first before anything else? Well, like, is this an order? This

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isn't in order, but these are some of the areas that you can look at. So for example, with your concept, your concept is going to be there, right? It's, it should be clear. It should be easy. You want to ask yourself, Is it coming across, right? But the big question is, are you executing it? Well, right? Is it, you know, whatever that i Big Idea sets up, is it pulling it off? Is it answering the question? Is it? Is it keeping it in focus? Does it veer off? Does it suddenly disappear? And it's not about that,

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and then it's a completely different concept. Yeah, because there's sometimes you see a movie and you're just like, what that was just that fell flat, because they start with great intentions, and then all of a sudden it's a completely different movie. And

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scripts are like that all the time too, right? It's like, halfway through, I'm like, Okay, wait a minute. I thought this was about this, but this isn't even that idea anymore, right? And so it's, and it's, and it's, it's, it's, it's hard to do, and it's a big trick to learn, but it's a matter of trying to look at it from that analytical perspective, right? It's not just like, Oh yeah, okay, this is great, but like asking those questions as you're moving through a read, right? And that's the thing, too. Like when you're doing your rewrite, it's not just about writing, right? It's about reading. You got to read that whole script with that one specific thing going into the read and say, Okay, for this read, I'm looking at, does the concept track the entire way through? Well,

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I think, I think too, it's stopping and not looking at it as for you, but looking at it from the perspective of the audience is the big thing. That's the hard part with all of these things, is it's not going to be you that's just solely watching that up on this the big screen. It's going to be everybody else. So it might make sense to you in your brain, but does it portray the same way to everybody else? Yeah.

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And that, I mean, that's the hard thing, because as writers, we know, like I always say, we know the 17 things that happen between every single scene that never make it in the story. So sometimes we think what we've put on the page is clear for everybody, but it sometimes isn't. That's how you tell stories, right? You suck at that. I know I do because I leave stuff out, because in my brain, it's got I know everything that's happened. I know and I'm like, But when did that happen with? Who did that happen with? I know. And I'm like, I thought I said, right. So anyway, so you just have to be aware of that, yeah. So, so that's what you're gonna be looking for, for that kind of thing, that characters, as you read through it, you want to be looking because, and I'm saying read through it, because that's the first part of rewriting, is reading it and really seeing how it comes across. So characters, you want to be asking, are they all different? You want to read through it and be like, is this character different from this one? Have I seen this character before? Is this just a cliché? Is it a caricature? Is it coming across as, Oh, we've seen this cop a million times. That's what you're going to be looking for. How well each of those characters are standing out on their own, right

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well, and that's what's the most refreshing too, is when you see a character that like that you can maybe relate to in your own life, but you see them and you think, wow, that's really cool, that they actually picked these attributes from this person or these characteristics and then ended up, you know, making it into unique character. Because a lot of times it's just the same bland character, no personality, no humor, and it's just refreshing to have something new,

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yeah, and like and unexpected. Like, for example, in the in the Tulsa King pilot we watched, there's this pot store dealer. And, you know, I'm not giving the entire thing away, but Sylvester

Sloan's character, he goes in and he's, he's basically threatens the pot store owner and says, You're gonna pay me 20% everything that you bring in, and I'm gonna protect you and keep the gangs away. And the pot store guys just so laid back and low key. And he's like, What gangs I'm in? This is Tulsa. Like, it's not a gangland, right? But as the story goes through, the guy's just so. Like

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he's just laid back and he's oblivious, almost. It's like he's in his own little world, and he doesn't want

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this to be happening, but he also isn't strong enough, or maybe even care enough, about trying to stop it. And I've never, you know, normally you would think someone's gonna be like, Oh, this guy doesn't want to do it. He's gonna fight back. He's gonna, you know, but this guy was just, he's such a specific character, and no one else in the story is like him. Everyone else is so. So it's a great example of that, but that's what you want to be looking for. Are your characters different? So many characters that we read or just and even see it's just like, Okay, I've seen this person 1000 times, like, Give me something new, right? So that's something you're not looking for,

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yeah? And it's not just the character, it's also, I think, what the characters say and and how they speak and what they speak, right? Yeah,

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their voices, right? The dialog, you know, are their voices defining themselves as everybody knows. If, I mean, this is, if this is your first podcast you're listening to from us, you may be picking it up. You may not, if you listen a lot. Desiree is a very, very unique voice, right? She is unlike anyone. She talks like nobody. She's She just, she's so quick witted and comes up with stuff you just don't expect her to say, right? And so that's how you want to look at your characters, whereas me, I'm, I'm kind of, like, not as dynamic as that. I'm a little more bland than that, but our voices is a really

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good word for that. Thank you, honey. Yeah, it's nice, yeah.

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But yeah, that's the thing is, are they sounding different, or are they all talking the same? Do they all use the same? Because then

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you can't, you can't differentiate between the two, though. You should be able to read a script and know that that is what Scott said, and that is what Desiree said, and not mix up the two.

And without even looking at that, I'm saying, without looking at the names. Yeah, yeah, you have to even look at the name. That is a great

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point, right? That is a great script. When you don't even as a reader, you're not even looking because you can, you can hear their voices and you know who's talking. You know, a great, a great thing I learned from my manager once is you, you should never be able to swap two characters dialog and have it still work. If it still works, then they're not different. There's a problem. So that's a great kind of like challenge that you can do, to go in there and and and make sure that those voices are standing out and are different and are and if they're not, if they're not, that's a pass. You got to do any help, you know, play with those characters get maybe you may not know them enough, right? So you may need to kind of play and write up some fake scenes and just kind of see who they are. And

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being different too is not necessarily the it's not necessarily the words that they use. I think it's how they even how they express those words. So like the way that someone might say, hey, get over here. The next person might say, you here,

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I mean an example, another example for you, right? You can say something that the way you deliver it, it's delivering hilarious. But for someone else, saying the same thing, rude is rude. It's so rude. That's why people aren't sure at first if you're rude or funny, until they realize you're funny. But that's the thing. It's all about delivering

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until I'm on a until I have a bad day, and it's like not being funny then.

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And Desiree came up with this perfect line, and no one can use it, no, because you because I'm going to use it, I'm going to use it trademarking, but Desiree, I'll say that person,

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that person can swallow, no choke. You don't

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even remember your line. You know what? That person can go, suck a knife, suck

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a knife. That person can suck a knife. It can

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suck a knife. You guys, the delivery was great. And then, like, suck a knife, like they're gonna slice their lips right open. Like, oh, that's what your intention was. Instead of, like, suck a knife, I

feel like I'm so stabby. I just want to stab that person. No, that person goes, suck a knife. It was just like, anyways, yeah, different and unique, and we've never heard that line, so yeah, you want to give people lines of dialog that are just, you know, really defining who they are. Because as people, that's what defines us a lot of the time. More than anything, is what we say and do, and we see that all the time, especially today in the media, right? So what

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about like, when it comes to, like, the like, the layout of the script and everything,

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like the scenes and the structure of the scenes? Yeah? Structure, yeah. Scenes, structure. The big thing there is, is there a balance? Right? Being a balance. So, so say you have whatever, say it's a pilot, right? And you have a few scenes that are two three pages, and then you have like a 19 page scene, and then you have like a four page scene, and then there's really no room for anything else. Is there a balance? Are you are you making the most of the scenes? Are you getting in late? Are you getting out early? That's a big thing. And And people sometimes ask me, What does that even mean? Like, how do I how am I getting in late? How do I know you want to get in a scene at the last possible moment. So when you're rewriting, a great option is to look at that scene and think, Okay, if I cross out my first sentence here, does it still work? Oh, yes, it does. Okay. Cross out the second Does it still work? Yes. Do that until you can't cross out a sentence. That's where you start the scene. You start as late as you possibly can, and then. To end a scene you want to get out when you don't need to be there anymore. Every scene has at least one major reason for existing, right, whether it's a detail of the plot or a piece of character or whatever it might be, right? When you get that kernel in that scene, get out, right? That's your kernel. Let the kernel like that piece. That's another way of saying, get that piece, that specific thing, right? You just say peace. Then I like to use different words. Okay, that's my voice, Kate. Stop being cordial.

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That makes no sense. But

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yes, but once you're once you once you have that reason that that's your button, that's, that's the, that's the what you press to get out. Because if you do that, it creates a flow. It creates a pacing. Because you're getting out of a scene fast, when you're when you're you've accomplished what you need, and the next scene starting late, so you're just like, boom into the next scene, and then suddenly you're out and boom. It just creates the page turning type of situation. What about

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when it comes to like? Because we've talked in previous podcasts about the acts, right? And is that the same? When you go from act one to two to three, you want to get in, leave early, come in late, for

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sure. Yeah, yeah, I would say so right. There's, it's always better to have a shorter first act than a longer first act, because the movie, or the show, it starts on that second. That's where your movie starts, right? That that's, that's where everything gets going. So the first act is really kind of setting everything up, right? You're setting the story up, the characters the world, but something's got to happen, so make it happen and get us moving, right? So, so that's kind of how you can, you can loot, you know, you know, make sure that you have a solid flow. Also look for any entrances and exits. We probably talked about this before, but you should never start a scene with someone coming in a room and then people chit chatting and sitting down and suddenly like, Okay, now we're starting, no start in the room when they're already at the desk, right? That's, that's what you want to be looking at. That's what you want to be powering through. So, you know, don't, you know, try and try and try and remove any of those entrances and exits. So, so those are a lot of the things that you can be looking at as you go through each read to make sure that you know you're at least and it's flowing, and that you understand what you need to be looking for. So some of the questions, this is a checklist, and if you check the show notes, there will be a PDF there that outlines, you know what I just talked about, of some of those things still be looking for. But then also some of the questions that you can ask as you go into a rewrite, because sometimes it's hard to go in and you're just like, I don't even know what, especially if you're a newer writer, I don't even know what I'm supposed to be, supposed

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to be. And I, and I have the script notes here, yep. So I'll read you the questions, and you can answer them, yeah,

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and give a little of what, what that specific thing that can help with it? So, so you talk about movie scripts first and then pilots,

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okay, okay, movie scripts, does it incite the audience and main character, right?

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So that's, that's a question asked, like, you know, does it, does it make us pay attention? Does it make the main character pay attention to what's going on? Right? Is it hap Is there something happening?

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Does the first act end fast enough? We already talked about that. Yeah, get in and go, for sure. Does the second act challenge the character enough? That's a big one.

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A lot of times scripts feel like we're just sitting around and be like, okay, so how is this character ever going to grow or change, or What is even happening? Start throwing obstacles at them.

Start challenging them, start tripping them up there. Do you have enough of that going on from page 25 to 50 or so, right? Is there enough to keep the character moving and

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the audience engaged? Yes, because if nobody wants to watch something with someone just leaving their life and having no issues, no, that's boring. Yeah. Like

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we started a pilot there, and then we're talking movie scripts, but we watched a pilot. It's called Bad monkey with Vince Vaughn and lots of people like that. Yeah, supposed to be really good, but we were just like, do we want to keep watching this? It just felt like nothing really was going on. So that's the kind of thing you want to be looking for.

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Okay, then the next one is, does the lead make a choice to become active halfway through?

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Yeah, big, big, challenging question, maybe discuss what active is. Yeah, like, that's a big one for your script. As you're looking at it, does your character take control? Do they? Do they realize they they need to take the reins of the story? Did they become active, or did they just stay reactive the whole time halfway through? That should happen, so that's a big thing to look for, and you're going in, and if it isn't, then that's a good rewrite to work on

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this one. I don't really, I don't know why you chose 17, but do they get pushed down 17 flights of stairs?

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Yes, and that's just, that's figurative, not literal. No, what do you what do you So, meaning, like, okay, so d do your does your character fall down one flight of stairs? Or do you make them fall down? Yeah. Like, are they big enough, basically, right? Like, do they get hurt enough? Do they get tripped enough? Do they get pushed back enough so

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that they can come back and be the, not the villain, the

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the hero, the hero or heroine? Yeah? Um, yeah. Like, essentially, is it are is it hard enough on them? Because you should never make a story easy on your character. Ever not doesn't matter the genre. Do not make it easy on your character to keep going forward and and reaching. You

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know your goal when you just said that, the first movie that I thought of was Honey, I Shrank the Kids. Okay, no, I did. Yeah, easy. Like, not easy in the sense of, like, these kids are shrunk,

right? But then, like, look at the world around them, and everything is so, like, vast and so big in comparison. Yeah. So it's having them have to physically and mentally climb out of that, you know, smallness, to defeat this world that's too big for them, perfect example. So I think that that's what I think of when you said 17 flights of stairs,

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yeah. And that's the thing, don't make it easy, right? That's that big question. Is it easy on my character key,

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what about it? Says, does it build to climax? So many scripts

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I read, I'm like, wait a minute, it's over. Where was the climax? What was the point of this? If there's no climax, there's no point to your story, right? You're supposed to be building us towards something big, right? Sometimes it's just like, is there enough is and maybe it's just an emotional climax, like, it doesn't have to be giant explosions, but is there a point where it's like, Okay, here's the pinnacle of the story. There it is, right? Is that big enough? Or is there one at all? Right? That's another one to really look for and ask yourself, that's how you can view these things.

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And then these ones, I think, kind of go hand in hand. Is there an end to the story, and is the ending fulfilling?

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Yeah, I had those as two different questions, because, first of all, some people, they end their story

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and your question, what's happening? What's gonna happen now, sometimes

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it just ends, or it ends, and then there's another 11 pages of like, Epilog. It's like, okay, well, we're done, like, when we're done when, like, we don't need to see we're done our five years later, now, the couple's married, and look, they have a kid. Well, does it really matter? No, let me know. Imagine what happens when I stacked because I feel sometimes, but not for 11 pages. You know what I mean? When you're done, you're done, get out, right? And is it fulfilling, right? Does it? Does it answer the questions? Does it give the audience something when they can go, Okay, that was worthwhile. I'm glad I went through all that, because it delivered that. If it doesn't have that, you're like, Okay, well, I don't understand why we were here for so long. Like, what was the point of it all? Then there's a problem. So that's, that's the kind of stuff that you you can look at. Those are some of the questions you can ask yourself to get you into that analytical brain, to start seeing it from a different angle. Okay,

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now I have it has for pilots, so we're moving to TV. Yes. Does it grab us by the throat? Is that question?

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Yeah, and that's the big thing these days in TV. It's so ridiculously competitive. You have, like, seriously, some, like, a lot of people in reading rooms, when they're, like, you know, they're, they're looking for who they're gonna staff. One page is all they give you, and they know if it's, if it's something they're looking for or not. So one page. And we, if you go back to the episode where we were looking at where we were looking at first pages. There's a great page that we read through of yellow jackets. It's an a fantastic example of that one page. It grabbed us by the throat, and we're just like, Oh my gosh. Like, I want to read the rest of this script right now so it doesn't grab us by the throat,

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does it? And then same, same on the same sense. Does it not let us go? Yeah.

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Does it? Does it? Hang on? Does it keep going, right? Yeah, definitely. That's a big, big question.

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Are the first three pages the best pages you've ever written that

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should that should be your bar, people that should be your bar the first and I mean, every page should be but the first three pages are so imperative to people continuing to read those three pages should be the solid gold of anything anyone's ever read. Like, if that's not your goal, what's the point? Just stop, right? Like, when I sit down to write a script, I'm like, Okay, I'm writing a contained horror. I got my idea. Okay, I'm gonna write it. No, I have a note in my book that says you are going to write the greatest contained horror script ever written, that it may not turn out to be that way, but that's my goal. Because if it isn't, then why? Why am I even doing it well? And if

29:07

you're not focusing on the first three pages, there's really no point, because no one's going to read past to 45678, if the first three are boring. Yeah, exactly. Unless nothing happened the other

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day that the first four pages were basically a novel that broke down the entire history of what happened before the move, before the pilot started. And I'm just like, no one's gonna continue

reading. They're not. They're gonna read one page and stop because that that's not, that's not interesting, right?

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Yeah, and then how are there too many characters? Is the next question

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a big one. It's so hard to like, especially in a pilot. Yeah, you got a lot. You got to set up. You got a lot of things to set up, but you don't have to set up every character. In that first pilot, in that first episode, we can meet a couple of characters, but not really get to know them, or spend a lot of time with them. If they're going to be characters that are continuing, maybe we'll meet some in episode two or three. It doesn't matter, but the pilot six or seven characters. Is really all a reader can remember to track. Otherwise you're just like, Okay, wait a minute. Who is that character? Yeah, we've

30:06

watched pilots too where it's just like, where I have to have you pause it to explain who the people are, yeah, and that's a problem for me when it's because that takes me right out, and I'm lost at the beginning, and I honestly don't want to see anymore. It's

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almost even more important these days, because, unfortunately, you have no attention span well that, and it's the second screen syndrome, right where people want so you do this all the time, does you'll have something on that you're watching while you're scrolling through your phone and you're reading about sourdough start up, about which she's absolutely obsessed with, and she made an unbelievable loaf of sourdough the other day. I think about it all the time, and but, but that's the thing. It's that second screen people have something on in the TV while they're scrolling the phone. So if there's they look up and they're like, oh, wait a minute, who are these people? Because there's just so many characters, it just causes a problem. So you want to key in on that and make sure there aren't too many people.

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Yeah. And then the next question is, is the reason for the story? Clear? Yes.

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You know, are we understanding why we're here? Very quickly, right? The pilot of the Apple TV show, C Steven Knight, amazing writer, within the first few minutes, we understand that we're in a world, and everyone's blind because of a virus, and these people are all surviving blind, and there's someone who can see, and that's a big deal, and we know that within a couple pages, we know why we're here. So is there reason for us to pay attention? Clear

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is, is it setting up enough, laying out breadcrumbs, building to something, creating suspense? Yeah,

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that's and there's something you can actually, you know, track, right? You call them breadcrumbs, call them setups, call them clues, whatever it is, right? But are how many do you have? Is there enough of them? Is there a consistency to them? Look at the first episode of the perfect couple. It bounces back and forth between the different characters in the interrogation room, and then seeing those characters the day up to the murder, we're getting little breadcrumbs of who is this person, and why are they connected, and are they lying? Are they telling the truth? And then we see a little secret moment. So you're Is there enough building to get you to the end and be like, okay, man, there's so many ways this can go. I'm so excited, right? So as many setups as you can Are there enough?

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Does it move too slowly? Like a slow burn? Yeah, slow

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burns just don't really work anymore these days, like Desiree said, attention span, right? You can't spend 25 minutes of slow build up before something happens, especially in TV, because people are hitting that back button and they're trying one of the other 10,000 shows that are there. So is it running slow, or is it building a pace? Okay? And

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then the last question you have down here, does it get to an ending that doesn't give it all away and make us want more? Yeah? Well, especially with a pilot, you want to have the ending being so amazing that you need to find out what's going to happen in the next episode, you must, or what's the

32:57

point must? Yeah. And so are you getting there so many pilots, they're just kind of like, they kind of end, yeah, and it doesn't have to be like a cliffhanger, like, oh, you know, but it has to be something like, and we talked about this in other episodes too, but like, something happens where you're just like, oh my gosh, what? Right? I need to know what's going on next. That's you have, because that will make people think about your pilot when they move on to the next ones that they're reading, they'll they won't forget, because they'll keep thinking about, Okay, wait a minute, what's gonna happen there, and how's gonna go? That's the key, right? Making people remember, yeah, so, so, yeah, so they can check that out. Yeah, check the show notes. Those are some things you can be asking. And then the big thing, make a plan. Don't just go in willy nilly and think, Okay, I'm gonna put this all together and just do it. Make a plan, right? Don't try to do everything at once. You want to kind of take your time, right? Make a list of the different things and do us a rewrite for each one, right? And then you know what you also want to do. And this is then you don't want to make it easy on yourself, right? Pretend you're the protagonist in your story. Make it hard on yourself, right? Challenge every scene. What's one? What's something that someone can do to challenge every single scene? Desiree, I

34:10

only know this because I have to listen to you talk all the time, but I know for you, you'll look at a scene and you'll think, what would happen if I remove that aspect or that scene, what happens? Yeah,

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that's great, yeah, because if you cut it and it it feels like there's a hole, there's a problem,

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then there's a problem. But there's so many scenes that are unnecessary. There really are so many scenes, yeah?

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So if you cut it and it actually changes nothing, then it probably doesn't need to be there in the first place, that's exactly it, or it's not doing what you needed it to do, or why you put it there in the first place, or, or

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is keeping it in like bringing the story more to fruition, or is it changing, or is it, uh. Causing like, the effect of like, like ripples, yeah, yeah, yeah. If you remove it, it causes even just a couple ripples. Then it's probably important. Then most people are going to be questioned if most people are going to question that, yeah,

35:12

yeah, yeah, for sure. So that that's a lot of the things that you can have in mind when you're going through the rewrite process. My biggest note to myself when I go in and and I do any kind of rewriting, whether it's my own work or I'm rewriting on someone else, is that I make every single word, every single sentence, every choice a character makes, fight for its place in that script. If it can't prove to me why it has to be there, then it, it's getting killed. It's, it's, it's getting sliced out of that script, because it shouldn't be there. There shouldn't be a single wasted word in a pilot or Feature or Short. There just shouldn't, right? They should, they should fight to be there, to claim their place. And if not, they can do what, with a knife. They can suck a knife, then that can suck a knife. That can suck a knife. Trademark Desiree Parisian 2025

36:04

I'm going to be putting that's on a t shirt,

36:07

t shirt line, maybe a tank top. Our daughter would so wear that

36:11

suck a knife. It could go, I mean, people could take that as, like, really inappropriate, but no, but it's a good one. But I'm, I'm inappropriate, and I think outside the box. So there you do, hey, we're going to questions and answers,

36:24

right? Yeah. And if someone does have a question or something that they want to ask us, what should they do? Desiree,

36:29

they can think about the question and just dwell on that for the rest of their lives. No, these are the days of our lives. You can submit your questions comments to Hello at scriptreaderpro.com first question that we have that came in, yes, what is, uh, is it Riley? Riley O'Reilly, w r y L y, what a stupid looking word, w r y, l y, and when should I use it or not use it? So

36:57

O'Reilly is, let me look that up. Yeah, there's desire looking up O'Reilly is what you put in a parenthetical underneath a character's name, what's a parent or their dialog? Parenthetical is brackets. Why can't we

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just say brackets for ease of use? Sure. Okay, so what is it? Did you say

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O'Reilly is the emotional, you know, explanation of how a character is going to say that line. So whether it's, you know, emotionally, sarcastically, dryly, uh, you know, agitated, right, something that you're just making sure the audience or the reader understands how that character is saying something, or that the actor knows how they're supposed to say it. That's what a Riley because he was like, Oh, he says this Riley, right? And yeah, here

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it says, it's an adverb in a way that expresses dry, especially mocking humor, right? He reflects Riley on his life and work,

37:55

yes. So that's why they call them Riley's, because you're putting in that idea of, how is that person saying that line? That's the only real time you should use them and use them sparingly. If the writing is great enough, the reader shouldn't need to be told how that character is speaking. That means you nailed their voice, right? You know, the other time is for clarification, right? In that in that bracket, that parenthetical space, like, you know, this character speaking to that specific person when there's more than one person in a room, that kind of thing. But don't fill it with action. If there's an action, put it in action, break the dialog, have the action on the side in that space, and go back into the dialog. So I'll read a script. It'll be like 17 lines of parenthetical explanation within someone's dialog. It's just not what you're supposed to be

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doing. Okay, lots of things that I don't understand, because this next one is when I see MOS in a script. What does that mean? What do you

38:52

think it means? Desiree, if it says MOS, do you want to guess something out scene? The word that M, the M stands for a word that isn't starting with M. What a stupid thing. It's called. It's for without sound. So the reason is because Alfred Hitchcock's accent was so strong that when he would say without sound, he would say MIT out sound. And so then it became M, O, S. So if you have someone doing something or mouthing a word to someone, you would put MOS, which means that it's without sound.

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It can also mean Military Occupational Specialty, okay, well, sound, you're not really doing it out, yeah? Filmmaking, yeah. It says Yeah. So that's

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what it is. So if you ever see that a lot of writers are like, I don't know what this

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means. Master of sword could be Ministry of Supply. Could be that member of service, most likely myth out sound, okay, what a stupid thing. Sorry. Whoever asked the question. I really appreciate that question. Um, enter sarcasm here in parentheses. I just rolled my eyes. Okay, question three, what is the best way to deepen my writing and level it up to get attention?

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Wow, that's a that's a big question. Well, I think

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you've already talked about that too, basically this whole episode, the right pages, like the the three pages be the best you've ever written, I think is a big thing, right? That's going to to level up to get attention, right? Yeah.

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And basically, though writing, writing and rewriting and rewriting, the only way to get better at something is to do it again and again and again, right? If you're going to become, you want to be an Olympic level sprinter, are you never gonna run? Are you never gonna train? Do you think that the first time you run, you're Usain Bolt, you're using Usain Bolt?

40:48

Oh, I thought you said using No,

40:51

right? You're it's gonna take time. You're gonna have to run and run and train and run. It get stronger and stronger and stronger, and then all of a sudden, yeah, you're at the you've deepened your skill and you're at another level. So writing overnight, writing, taking notes, growing, taking suggestions, learning, educating, trying and trying and trying, just

41:09

like my sourdough starter. Yes, it doesn't happen overnight. No

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way. Man, it's been a half now and she's still playing with it. You have to perfect it,

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and if it doesn't work, you just do your research and try something completely different, until you get it perfect, until you level that

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up. So, yeah, just doing it and redoing it. Hey,

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guess what? What we're gonna have to say goodbye. Oh, this was a fun episode. I like this, except the beginning, yeah, when with our bickering, yes, but we we've come through the other side. We did. We finished the first and second act, and we're going to be fine. Not

41:46

we did not tell each other to go suck a knife at all. Nope.

41:49

We did not say that. Hey, Scott, I want to just tell people that to make sure that they subscribe to this podcast, the script, reader profile, podcast platform you listen to, we want to get five star reviews if you think we were good, yes. And

42:03

Desiree likes gold and converse. The converse has a star on it. You can give five Converse All Stars to Desiree. Yay.

42:11

Share this podcast with other writers that you might know. Yeah. Our goal

42:16

is to like is to educate. Maybe have something come across to you that hasn't been told you in that way, and suddenly it clicks. That's the goal. That's our hope. While being entertained, we want to we want to make sure you're having fun while you're doing

42:27

this. And as I've mentioned, you can email questions or comments or reviews. I would love reviews to add to the episode. You can send that into Hello at scriptreaderpro.com

42:37

Yeah, and check out our website, [script readerpro.com](http://scriptreaderpro.com) It has everything you'll ever need as a writer. We're all writers on our team. We're all working writers who have been in the trenches and and had successes and failures all over the place in the business. So our knowledge, our expertise, our feedback and suggestions, they all come from place of experience. So that's what makes us different. Check us out, whether it's you just need basic notes, deeper notes. You want a mentorship, so you're not writing in a bubble, all right. You need a rewrite or a polish that you know you've hit a wall and you just can't quite figure out how to do it anymore. Anything that you need Find us on there. Choose who you want to work with, and we'll help you out. And that's the episode. So until next time we are script reader Pro, helping writers craft wonder since 2012.