



Ep. #31: What Makes a Scene GREAT?

Transcript

This is the Script Reader Pro podcast. Hey, everybody, this is Desiree

>> Desiree: In this episode, we are talking all about the anatomy of a scene and the do's and don'ts.

>> Scott: Yes. We have some great tips and we'll explain things that some writers struggle with.

>> Desiree: So listen in.

>> Scott: 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.

>> Desiree: Hey, everybody, this is Desiree from the Script Reader Pro podcast. I'm here with Scott.

>> Scott: Hi, I'm Scott. I'm one of the team here at Script Reader Pro, and Desiree is our lovely and entertaining host. She is the entertainment portion of the program, and I am the useless part. Welcome to my marriage.

>> Desiree: Rude.

>> Scott: But we're here to talk about screenwriting. We're here to talk about. What are we talking about today, Des?

>> Desiree: Today we are talking about scene, anatomy, do's and don'ts.

>> Scott: Yeah, we're gonna go through a lot of tips because a lot of people ask questions or many screenplays that we all read, they, that seems to be a struggle.

Sometimes it doesn't seem like a scene has been challenged enough. So we're going to talk about that. But what do we. What do we first talk about when we get in? a podcast. Here it is.

>> Desiree: We talk about what I'm wearing, what my choice of shoes were today.

>> Scott: Yes.

>> Desiree: How I'm very coordinated.

>> Scott: Yes.

>> Desiree: And put together.

>> Scott: Yes. Like a life size adult LOL doll.

>> Desiree: Yes. Hey, speaking of dolls, have you seen the new I know for the writers out there, we don't like AI but have you seen the new AI where you can make a doll and make it look just like.

>> Scott: Like an action figure? Yeah.

>> Desiree: Yes.

>> Scott: Yes. You made one, and it was pretty, Pretty spoiled.

>> Desiree: No, I'm not asking you. I'm asking the listeners. I'm just gonna sit here silently.

>> Scott: Okay.

>> Desiree: And wait to see who responds first. Ready? Have you guys seen these action figure dolls that look like you? Hello. There's no one. nobody there but mine. Scott was, like, totally on point.

>> Scott: Yeah, it was pretty adorable. There was a wheelchair that looked just like yours. It was exactly like you. It was perfect.

>> Desiree: It was perfect. Just like me. Perfect. But today, Scott.

>> Scott: Yes.

We are going to start off by talking about what we saw lately

>> Desiree: We are going to start off by talking about what we saw lately. I did not see this movie.

>> Scott: No, you didn't. I went by myself.

>> Desiree: I. I actually asked you to go by yourself because you were kind of, in a rough spot. So I was like, hey, maybe going and watching a movie will make you feel a little bit better. And then you came home in an even worse mood than when you left the movie.

>> Scott: Oh, I was so mad. I was just, like, so mad. It was so frustrating. And, you know, I don't like to bash stuff, but, man, it was just like.

>> Desiree: I like bashing things.

>> Scott: I know you do, but I don't like to talk bad about people's projects.

>> Desiree: I. I like to talk bad about your projects.

>> Scott: Yes, I know. but, yeah, it was just like. The whole time. It just took me out of it the whole time. I was just like, okay, this scene is just. The scene is stupid. There's no reason for this. Ridiculous things are happening. Are they taking this seriously? Are they not? Are we supposed to think this is, an actual serious story, or is it just a giant caricature of action movies with Russian mobs in it? And. And that's why we're talking about scenes today. Because, like, people got to know what makes a good scene and what doesn't. Because a lot of scenes and scripts. Wow. You're that annoyed at me talking about this movie again, aren't you?

>> Desiree: Because you talked to me about this for, like, an hour straight, and I don't want to hear the ins and outs of it anymore.

>> Scott: Okay, well, some people probably liked it. Some people maybe didn't. But anyways, that's. That's what I watched this week. But that's what we're going to be talking about. We're going to move into talking about.

>> Desiree: You know who that's like?

>> Scott: That's James from On the Spectrum. Oh, we've been watching Love on the Spectrum. What a show, man. It's just like. You can't. It just makes you cry, like, the whole time. These people are so sweet, and they just see people as people, which is unbelievable if you haven't watched it, can't recommend it enough. And it's amazing.

>> Desiree: It's an amazing show. It really is.

>> Scott: Yeah, it is. Makes you. It makes you look at humans. that's not too bad. That's not too bad then.

>> Desiree: Scott says the movie made him grouchy. Can you admit to the listeners that you did come home grouchier

>> Scott: Okay, so, talking about scenes, this is what we're going to tackle today?

>> Desiree: Well, we are tackling it. But going back to the movie you saw.

>> Scott: Yes.

>> Desiree: Can you admit to the listeners that you did come home grouchier?

>> Scott: Oh, I did. It made me grouchy for days. It does. I'm like, why are these movies getting made and all these amazing scripts I've read are not getting made? It's frustrating.

>> Desiree: It is frustrating.

>> Scott: Frustrating.

>> Desiree: Frustrating for the writer out there, for sure.

>> Scott: For sure.

>> Desiree: But that's what we're here for, to share tips and tricks. Like Scott always says, tips and tricks. I got some tips and tricks.

>> Scott: Tips and tricks for you.

The biggest thing that makes a great scene is that it is loaded with conflict

>> Desiree: And so we, like I said, we are talking about scene anatomy. So.

>> Scott: Yeah. So the big question is, what makes a great.

>> Desiree: That's what I'm wondering. What makes you a great scene? I'll tell you what makes a great scene.

>> Desiree: Anything with me in it. No, what makes a great, great scene for me is basically some. Something that keeps me engaged and, and interested in wanting to know what is going to happen next. That's a great scene for me.

>> Scott: That's a great scene for me too. And especially reading a script, it's like, okay, I forget I'm reading. I'm just pulled in and bam, we're in the next scene and you're just.

>> Desiree: Off kind of like bones and all. When we read that one, that one really kept you in it, got you in really quickly and you stayed in the whole way.

>> Scott: Yeah. Even that scene, the opening scene of her playing the piano, the conversation was so interesting. You're like, okay, this. What is this girl hiding and why? Right. So, yeah. And the biggest thing that makes a great scene is that it is loaded with, with conflict.

>> Desiree: Conflict is everything, but conflict is usually seen as bad.

>> Scott: That's interesting that you say that, because most, most, most of those questions that come from writers to us is why. Why does every scene have to have conflict? What if it's a romance scene? What if it's a sweet scene or a funny scene? Conflict isn't negative necessarily.

>> Desiree: Negative?

>> Scott: No. I mean, it can be. Right. But even like two people about to share their first kiss and they're nervous and they don't know what to do or if they should or they shouldn't, that's conflict. Right. So it's just too. Every writer should know exactly what the purpose of a good scene is

I'm sure you've looked this up already, Des, because I saw you on your phone looking this up.

>> Desiree: Do you want to know the definition.

>> Scott: Of give the, Give the, Give the listeners, a definition.

>> Desiree: What is the best definition of conflict? A struggle or clash between opposing forces. Battle. A state of opposition between ideas, interests, disagreement or controversy.

>> Scott: There you go.

>> Desiree: So that can be within yourself too.

>> Scott: Oh, for sure. Oh yeah. Conflict. Even if it's a character by themselves. Yeah. There. If someone's going through something, if there's two forces, ideas, thoughts, words, are in contrast with each other, that's going to create conflict. So you want to have conflict in every scene that you possibly can. What is a scene without conflict? It's usually boring. It's the ones that make us sit there and go, okay, next, can we just move on to the next scene?

>> Desiree: Not just the scene, but how many times have you watched a movie and it's just like you're five minutes in and you're thinking how much longer until the movie's over? Because yeah, that's a bad.

>> Scott: It's a bad feeling.

>> Desiree: We've had that too. Where we've stopped things that at that five minute mark. Because there have not been enough good scenes right from the beginning that keep us interested, engaged.

>> Scott: Yeah. Or just make us like pull us in. Right.

>> Desiree: Really, what does the writer want to look for when it comes to the purpose of a good scene?

>> Scott: You should know, every writer should know exactly what the purpose of that scene is. A, lot of scenes that just feel like, well, that was a waste of time. It's because they didn't really do anything.

>> Scott: The true test is, can you. If you remove that scene from your entire script, would it affect anything? If it doesn't or doesn't enough, it shouldn't be there in the first place. Cut it or do more with it. Right.

>> Desiree: So like if you're talking about an alien who wears a purple ah hat and likes to go jumping on trampolines, if that's seen in one scene and then we don't see the alien in any other scene, probably wise to take it out.

>> Scott: Probably.

>> Desiree: And how many times. There are a lot of times too, Scott, where you'll read something and you'll be like, I have no idea what happened because it was just scene after scene of randomness.

>> Scott: Yeah.

>> Desiree: Like that, like an alien in a purple hat.

>> Scott: For sure.

>> Desiree: I only said this because I'm looking at E. T and I was trying to think of a different hat color other than this.

>> Scott: I was like, this is the. Not the type of movie Desiree should be explaining because she doesn't like these.

>> Desiree: I don't like these movies because they're not real. But. And someone better not send an email and say, ET Is real. It's real in my heart.

>> Scott: But it's true. Just the other day, watched something I was like, that was so, they, they set this up in the beginning of the movie as a big thing and then we never heard from it again. Right, Right. Or you'll have a character to sit down and have this big conversation with someone about just arbitrary things and then we never see them again. Or why. What a waste of time. Don't waste time. So you should always know why your scene is there for Example, you know, two. Two characters walk into a 7 11. Like, oh, let's stop here and let's get a drink. And they go in and get their Slurpee and they talk back and forth and. And then as they leave, they bump into the killer that they don't know they're. They're searching for. Okay, well, that's the purpose of the scene. So the purpose of that scene is for them to bump into the killer. If the

dialogue and interaction before that gives us more information about the characters or they're talking about clues, great. But if they're just talking about what their favorite Slurpee flavors are and just nonsense, we should start them at the Slurpee machine. We shouldn't start them walking in to the 7 11. Okay. And so that's a great way to really challenge a scene and see if there is a purpose to it and if you're getting to it in the right way.

>> Desiree: So not even the right way, but getting into it in the right way.

>> Scott: And at the right time. Right.

Cut all entrances and exits from the script

A, note I got a long time ago from a producer was, cut all the entrances and exits from the script. And I was like, what? What do you mean? So I'm like, can you, you know, give me a little bit more on that? And. And she did. She went into it and explained it. So basically, we don't need to see anyone walking into a scene or walking out of a scene. We shouldn't have to see that. If a character walks into a boardroom and sits down and is at the table and pulls out their pens and the next person comes in and sits down and then they start talking. We don't need to see anything before they start talking.

>> Desiree: We don't even need to see when they start talking.

>> Scott: No, we should be. Once they're in the middle of a.

>> Desiree: Conversation, because the beginning is just, again, useless information. It's going to be, hi, how are you? What's your name?

>> Scott: Yeah, Bill.

>> Desiree: Bill. Oh, nice to meet you, Bill. My name's Fred. Hi, Fred. Nice to meet you. Where are you from? Yeah, who wants to watch?

>> Scott: No, it's not important. Unless that scene starts with, an amazing line of dialogue. Like, so, I hear you had sex with my wife last night. Okay, well, that starts a scene with conflict. Right. You know, and maybe we want to see how the one character reacts to the other character coming into a room. That can work, but we don't need to see the first character walking into the room. Right. So start a scene as late as you possibly can. A Great thing is, go back into your scene and read the first

line and say, okay, so if I cross that out, can I still start on the next line? Oh, I can. Okay, do it again. Second line, third line, if it still makes sense. And you can start there. That just shows you you don't need those other lines. Start at the moment you can't be without. That's where you start. Same thing. End of a scene. If you've achieved your purpose and there's no reason to stick around, don't show them shaking hands, walking out of the room, heading down to their car.

>> Desiree: Unless there's, unless they're heading to their car. And then later someone's gonna kidnap them from that garage beside where their car is.

>> Scott: Yeah, but then cut from the boardroom to them getting out of the elevator in the parkade.

>> Desiree: Right. I'm saying we still need to.

>> Scott: Unless the killer following them.

>> Desiree: That's what I mean.

>> Scott: Like purpose. Make sure every reason, every moment we're in there has a purpose for being there.

>> Desiree: Maybe it's as much as going over every line by line and saying, what is the purpose here?

>> Scott: Challenge every line. Make it fight for the reason.

>> Desiree: What is the purpose here? What is the purpose here?

>> Scott: Right, Exactly.

Starting late and ending early in scenes can create incredible pacing and movement

Great note. So a great way to think when you're writing scenes is when you sit down to write that first scene, second scene, whatever that scene you want to think, this is going to be the best. I'm going to write this. This is the, this is going to be the best scene in my entire script.

>> Scott: And then when you do the next scene, think the same thing. This is going to be the best scene in my entire script. Like everyone always puts so much emphasis on the, on the first page and they put so much energy in making it perfect. Well, do that with every page, do that with every scene. Every scene should be the best scene written in that script. Because that means it must be there. Right? It gives it a reason to be there. So if you can't, if it's not doing enough, you got to keep working on it or you, or you pull it right out. Okay? So once you're achieved, once you've got that moment, once that moment's been achieved, you need to get out. And Craig Mason said this a long time ago on script notes, and it always stuck with me that you want to find the button moment in that scene. So, meaning that's the last possible thing we need to get. So whether it's a sharp line of dialogue, if it's a crazy action, if it's a big boom, if it's, you know, anything, right. That's the moment you push us in. And this is where the magic of it comes. Are you ready, Des? I'm gonna reveal the magic trick.

>> Desiree: What?

>> Scott: That starting late and ending early in scenes works. Are you ready? Are you ready for the magic?

>> Desiree: Okay, creepo, just get it over with. Loretta.

>> Scott: If you end a scene with a button moment, with a big moment of bam, we're done, and you start the next scene already in a conversation or in conflict, and that's going to create such an incredible pacing and movement. That's when we stop noticing the scenes have changed. Everything becomes seamless and we stop noticing we're reading because bam, bam, bam, bam, bam. We're just in scene out of scene, in scene out of scene. It creates flow, it creates movement. That is how you create scene structures that work and that, like you said, keeps you engaged, right? Keeps you in the moment and keeps you engaged. So that's, that's the magic trick behind it all. If. Because people are like, why do I have to start late and why do I have to end early? Well, yeah, because it's a movie and it's got to move, right? It's not.

>> Desiree: But it's not like. It's not like a TV show where they have say, the couple coming in for the kiss. Coming in for the kiss. And then commercial break.

>> Desiree: It's not like that.

>> Scott: Well, it is.

>> Desiree: And then after the commercial, we see again, kiss. Into the kiss. Into the kiss. Kiss.

>> Scott: Ah, yeah. It is a little different in television. Right, because you. Especially with your acts, you know.

>> Desiree: Right.

>> Scott: Certain acts you got to start. You got to get to a moment and then. Ma' am. Okay, now we're shifting into the next act. Right? It's a little. It's a little more different, but same.

>> Desiree: Kind of feel though, is what I'm saying. Like that, you know, the. Keep you wanting to watch more.

>> Scott: Yeah. Keep you going. Because yeah. TV is so different because a lot of times you'll show characters walking out of their conference room and then talking all the way to the car.

>> Scott: Well, because. Yeah, because that's, it's boring to see characters sitting in a room talking. And then now they're talking in a car and we didn't have any movement. Now they're in a restaurant and you have to move. So you'll see that in television a lot more, especially serialized stuff, you know, where we're watching these characters moving from their FBI room down to the, you know, this and that and over here and into this office. And so a lot of, you know, that'll be different. But a lot of people these days with pilots and stuff, you're not necessarily writing network television stuff. You're writing just it's a 60 minute movie, basically the first part of a movie. so, you know, so you want to keep that movement going, that pace.

Christopher: If you remove a scene, what's missing later on

>> Desiree: Okay. So like we talked about the purpose and asking yourself with every single line, what is the purpose here? What is a purpose there when it comes to a scene? And I know you've done this a lot where you look at a particular scene and you think if this scene was gone, would it have any lasting effect on the entire script?

>> Scott: Yeah.

>> Desiree: And so that's another thing that the writer can look at too. If you removed this scene, what's going to be missing later on?

>> Scott: Yeah. And that's also like a great way to reverse engineer it because sometimes as writers we're so close to our scenes.

>> Desiree: Or so close you don't even notice. You think something's happening happened because it's happened in your head, but we haven't seen it or read it.

>> Scott: Yeah. So if you remove the scene and then you kind of read through it and be like, oh, wait a minute, this makes no sense. They don't know where that suitcase came from. And then you're like, oh, that's because it was in that scene. That's, oh, that's the reason for my scene. So sometimes that's a way to allow yourself to see why that scene's there. And if that's the only thing that it screwed up, well, make that scene more dynamic. Right. Add more conflict, add more drama, play with a little bit, you know, that kind of stuff.

>> Desiree: So.

>> Scott: But yeah, that's a great tip, great tip. and then the other, like the thing is a lot of people are like, well, if it's an exposition scene.

>> Desiree: You know what's an exposition scene?

>> Scott: Exposition is the characters telling stuff to each other. The audience needs to know. So if we need to know why this spaceship does what it does.

>> Scott: The only way to know that is.

>> Desiree: By listening in is the.

>> Scott: Yeah. Is being told. Right. And so when there's, we want to.

>> Desiree: Be told in like ways that are not in your face kind of ways.

>> Scott: Yeah.

>> Desiree: We don't want to necessarily have to read about it on the screen. It needs to be seen so that we can understand it in different fresh ways.

>> Scott: Yes, exactly. And, and, but the best way to, to have a scene with exposition is to just make sure you're revealing character in it. Great example. I always tell people, Craig Mason's amazing television show Chernobyl. And it's a scene between these two characters, the scientist and the politician guy and the government guy. They're flying to the. To the reactor in a helicopter. It's just the two of them. Politician, government guy says, hey, tell me about how a reactor works and why this might have happened. So then the scientist explains to him, this is how nuclear reactors work, and this is what might have happened, and this is what needs to be done. And then he. So he sits there and he lets him. And we watch the government guy trying to figure him out, why is he looking at him that way and stuff. And. And we understand what's passionate in. In the scientist life. And then at the end, as they're about, to land, the government guy says, okay, great, now I don't need you. Thank you, and gets out. And it was just like such a power play. And that's what we're paying attention to. And at the same time, we got to understand as an audience how a nuclear reactor works, because most people wouldn't know that, and they need to. To understand the rest of the story.

>> Desiree: I know what it's for.

>> Scott: What? A nuclear reactor totally totes McGoats. Okay, that's from.

>> Desiree: Like, what.

>> Scott: What is totes McGoats? I don't even know I've heard it because I've said it before, but I don't know. You look that up, and I'm going to talk about some great scenes, okay? And I want to know if you. I want to know if you'll remember any of these scenes. But when you think. When I think of scenes of like. Okay, that's a scene I'll never forget, right? And you'll always hear me talk about the eggplant scene in True Romance between Dennis Hopper's character and Christopher Walken's character. Unbelievable. Great, great, great scene. Deep conflict, intense, holding your breath. So great exposition, and character and plot, it's just perfect.

There are some great examples of putting conflict in a movie

But a few others. Ethan Hunt stealing the knock list. Mission Impossible, first movie. Everyone knows this scene comes in from the ceiling, hanging on the wires. Oh, well, the guy's outside of the room because he was in diarrhea.

>> Desiree: The lasers.

>> Scott: No. And he's getting down. He can't touch the floor because the lasers.

>> Desiree: I thought there's lasers.

>> Scott: Lasers in that one. But when he. He can't touch the floor. And then his thing. The wires drop because the guy. And he's like balancing, trying not to. And then his sweat drops and he catches it. It's just like one of the greatest scenes and there's really like no dialogue. But it's so great because the conflict is. Every beat is conflict and the stakes are high. Great scene. Great, great example of putting conflict in a scene. But it's fun, right? It's not negative, it's just intense. The opening scene, ah, of us meeting Indiana Jones, right, when he steals the fertility idol and he's weighing the sand and he takes it, thinks everything's good. Then the giant rock comes and starts chasing him. It's just such a well executed scene because it tells us all about who this guy is, what's important to him, how he reacts to things, how smart he is. We learn so much, how cocky he is. We learn all these things and it keeps us engaged and invested. And as soon as we're through that scene, we're in. It's like, I love this guy. I want to see where he's going to go. Great choice to get things going. The big shootout scene in Heat. If anyone's seen Heat after they do the big bank robbery and they have this intense shootout with, these machine guns and everything as they're trying to get out with the money and people are dying and it's just like the most intense scene I've ever seen ever. And it's just so well done. And it keeps you. You hold your breath, it's unexpected. You don't know who's going to get shot and who's not. But it's filled with conflict. Even though, yeah, bullets are flying stuff. But you're like, am I rooting for the bad guys? Am I rooting for the good guys? I can't remember now who I'm rooting for. I hope that guy doesn't get shot and that guy doesn't get shot. It's just an intense scene. It's a long scene. It's cutting back and forth all over the place, but it is like brilliant in movie pacing and intensity and just conflict soaking it. Jack, when he first comes to dinner in Titanic, right, It's. There's so much conflict right when he first comes, when he turns and he sees Kate coming down the stairs, you're just like you feel is Rose. Sorry when Rose is coming. So don't give me that look. When Rose is coming downstairs, Scott has a crush on her when, when she comes down the stairs, when he takes her in when they're sitting there and, you know, Cal is purposely saying things to remind everybody and remind Jack of his place in the world. Jack is taking little barbs here and there to show how clever he is. It's just such a great scene. There's so much conflict, so much intensity, and so much character is just exploding in that scene. So that's a scene to study for. Sure. great, great scene. The captain, my captain scene in Dead Poets Society when Robin Williams is challenging these kids to seize the day and they get up on their desks and they're, you know, it's just, it's the culmination of everything he's been trying to show them

and teach them. It's a beautiful moment. Everyone at my age, growing up in high school, that defined movies. you know, there's just so many levels of, you know, emotion and characters who want to say something but don't. And, you know, some believe it and some don't. It's just so well, well written and acted. The final scene in Dirty Dancing, right, Des?

>> Desiree: Yes. With the dance at the end.

>> Scott: Yeah. Nobody puts Baby in a corner. You know, you think, johnny Castle, greatest name ever in a movie, Johnny Castle. You know, you think he's gone and he comes back and he talks to Baby's dad and he's like, I'm sorry, but no, she's dancing with me. And it's just like, it's the emotional buildup of everything. The dad doesn't like him. He doesn't like the dad. The boss doesn't like the dancers. The dancers in love with Baby. Baby is losing her parents. And like, it's just. There's so much conflict, so much tension. It's a. It's just an unbelievable scene where everybody completes their arc and it's, you know, it just all comes together. Really great scene. And then the declaration of love scene through signs in love.

>> Desiree: Actually, I don't remember that part.

>> Scott: The guy standing outside Keira Knightley's door. I think you're perfect. I'm in love with you. He's a lucky guy, right?

>> Desiree: Don't remember.

>> Scott: Her husband's inside. The best friend's in love with Keira Knightley. He comes to the door, knocks on the door, and she's like, oh, you know, Sam's busy. And he's like, no, no, no. And he has these big white signs.

The first moment I saw you, I was in love with you

>> Desiree: Oh, yes.

>> Scott: The first moment I saw you. Beautiful, scene. Right. There's no words at all spoken. And you can just. There's that conflict because she's like, okay, wait a minute, though. But this is your Best friend inside. You're his best friend. I'm married to him. You seem to hate me, but you're in love with me. And now that you've told me, I can't do anything about it. What do we do? it's brilliant.

Give us a few that are new that you could think of

>> Desiree: Okay, here's my question, though. Yes, these are all older movies.

>> Scott: Not all of them.

>> Desiree: Yes. No, fairly.

>> Scott: Well, they are.

>> Desiree: So what's a new.

>> Scott: I'm sorry, I'm a child of the 80s and 90s.

>> Desiree: Well, you are. So what's something that's newer that you could.

>> Scott: Well, the Accountant two. We saw the Accountant two the other day.

>> Desiree: I know, I'm just saying, give us a few that are new.

>> Scott: So the Accountant too. I don't know if anyone's seen it or not. Not going to give anything away, but there's this scene where we first see Ben Affleck's brother. And we see him in this hotel room, checking in this fancy hotel room. And then he's on the phone. He's. He's trying.

>> Desiree: He's talking with the girl.

>> Scott: He's talking himself up. You think he's like about to call this girl and tell her off and say, I want custody of my kids. You can't take them away from me. He's just. And it's a long scene and partway through it I'm like, okay, what? Like, why are we here so long? Is what I thought. But then it totally surprises us because he gets on the phone and starts talking. Well. And it has nothing to do with custody of a child. And it tells us so much about what kind of guy this is, what he thinks he is. And at the end of the scene you're like, what an amazing scene. That scene was awesome. Right. But it took its time.

>> Desiree: So sometimes it can take its time.

>> Scott: Yeah, for sure. And in so many movies, those are the things you remember, those moments. Right. Those scenes. What's another movie? We saw that Black Bag movie about the spies and M. There were some really great scenes in there. The big scene at the end that makes us think that the kitchen scene.

>> Desiree: Was the kitchen table scene. earlier on. And then at the same time you were like, okay, what's the point of this? Where is this going? And then it all kind of wraps in towards the end of them.

>> Scott: Yes.

>> Desiree: Throughout the whole thing.

>> Scott: But that first dinner scene, those five characters around that table, we needed to know so much about them, their relationships, how they interacted. It was so. It was. It was uncomfortable.

>> Desiree: It's almost like they wrote in that particular case, it's like they wrote the movie backwards.

>> Scott: Yeah, probably. They probably do.

>> Desiree: You know what I mean?

>> Scott: Like, coming up. Yeah, they definitely knew where it was going.

>> Desiree: You had to have had some kind of outline or something for that movie, for sure.

>> Scott: But that. That's so true, though. That scene. I mean, it was. It started when everyone sat down at the table and it was like, oh, I didn't realize everyone was here. It didn't introduce each character as they came in the room, right?

>> Desiree: No, they were sitting.

>> Scott: Most of them were already there.

>> Desiree: They were there. But I think what the similarity between all of these is that there has to be depth in the scene and there has to be layers.

>> Scott: Totally. Yep.

>> Desiree: Like an onion on peeling a layer at a time.

>> Scott: Yeah. there should be. There should be so many different things.

I always think there should be at least three things going on in one scene

And it reminds me of this really great quote by Phoebe Waller Bridge and Desiree.

>> Desiree: Do you know Phoebe Waller Bridge?

>> Scott: Is that.

>> Desiree: Who is it?

>> Scott: She's the actress and writer of Fleabag.

>> Desiree: Oh, okay. Yes. I love it.

>> Scott: Brilliant, brilliant writer. And this is what she says when she's writing a scene. She says, I always think there should be at least three things going on in one scene. Scene at the same time. Meaning that each of these characters, they're not just there in the moment. They have other things that they're thinking about, they're thinking about. Okay, wait, the. If I don't get in the kitchen, then food's gonna burn. But I can't walk away from her because she'll think I'm not listening. And I cannot stand the smell of this guy who's standing beside me. Like, there's. If you know that there's things going on, it's always gonna add those layers, always have more happening in a scene to keep it lively. Even if it. Cause then if it's a slow scene, or it could be a slow scene, people around a table talking. It never feels that way.

>> Desiree: No, because you have enough. Yeah, but I think the thing to remember too is it's better to have more and then pull back and take some of that away than not enough.

>> Scott: Exactly. That's why I would say write long in your first draft. If you have 150 page screenplay, fine. But you. Because then you have all the best stuff in there. If you write your first draft in 71 pages, you're strong. Now you got to try and figure out how

do I fill it up. Right. So, yeah, same thing with the scene. Write it a little bit longer and then play with it. It. Right.

>> Desiree: Like give Me. The whole. Give me the whole entire cake instead of just one slice. I'll have the whole cake.

>> Scott: I'll eat it. I'll eat two cakes.

>> Desiree: Okay.

>> Scott: but no. Yes. Give us the cake and then let us eat it too.

>> Desiree: Totes McGoats.

>> Scott: Yeah.

>> Desiree: And, oh, I know what totes McGoats means.

>> Scott: Oh, you looked it up. I figured.

>> Desiree: I said totes McGoats right there because I. It means totally that I agree with you. Totally. It's used to express enthusiastic agreement or approval. I agreed with your thoughts, so I said totes McGoats.

>> Scott: What? What now? You got to get a T shirt. We got to sell it that says totes McGoats on it.

>> Desiree: It's a slang phrase meaning totally.

>> Desiree: Enthusiasm or approval.

>> Scott: Yeah.

>> Desiree: Do you know where it came from?

>> Scott: No. A movie.

>> Desiree: It did clueless. So it actually makes sense.

>> Scott: Clueless.

>> Desiree: No, but it actually makes sense for me to bring it up because it is movie related.

>> Scott: Way to tie that back in.

>> Desiree: Thank you. I'm tying it.

>> Scott: Paying off a setup.

>> Desiree: I'm paying it off.

>> Scott: People paying in the final act.

It's not that movies these days aren't as good as older movies

>> Desiree: So you don't know what movie?

>> Scott: No, I don't.

>> Desiree: I love you, man.

>> Scott: Oh, my gosh. What a. What a funny movie.

>> Desiree: I love you, man.

>> Scott: Like, I instantly see Paul Rudd slapping the base.

>> Desiree: Jam session.

>> Scott: Yeah.

>> Desiree: It was a jam session. And he used that phrase.

>> Scott: Yeah. Oh my gosh. If anyone listening hasn't seen that movie. Oh, my God.

>> Desiree: 2009. It was made.

>> Scott: It is so funny. It is just. It's the best.

>> Desiree: so 15 years ago, more than 15, 16 years ago.

>> Scott: Older movie. Older movie.

>> Desiree: Totes my goats.

>> Scott: Next time we're gonna have more examples of newer movies. It's just that movies these days aren't as good as the older movies. Right.

>> Desiree: Well, that's your opinion.

>> Scott: Well, there's not as many of them either. Right.

>> Desiree: All of those movies you listed are all of your favorite movies on your list.

>> Scott: Well. Because they have great scenes in them.

>> Desiree: All.

>> Scott: Right, Right. So, yeah.

Always try to make your characters uncomfortable, Desiree says

to wrap up the kind of things I've seen, a few things to think of. Always try to make your characters uncomfortable. Right. If a character is uncomfortable, there will be conflict.

>> Desiree: Yes.

>> Scott: Desiree, why do you need conflict? Because it creates excitement and interest and drama.

>> Desiree: Drama.

>> Scott: There's no drama if there's no conflict.

>> Desiree: There's no drama if there's no conflict.

>> Scott: And you know me, I don't like conflict. I was raised in a way is a wimp to never believe that I should have conflict.

>> Desiree: Let's not talk about it and it'll go away.

>> Scott: Let's just pretend it didn't happen. Let's just not, bring up issues because then people are uncomfortable. And, then I met my wife, brought my wife home, and my wife is happy making people uncomfortable. She will say things that she knows will create conflict. No, actually wrong. Sorry. She will say things because she's herself and people sometimes aren't sure how to take her and that will make them uncomfortable so that they don't quite know what to say or do, which creates conflict.

>> Desiree: It does. And you know what I say to that? Too bad.

>> Scott: Exactly. Be yourself. Create conflict. But be yourself. So be yourself. I don't like conflict, but I love creating conflict between characters because this. It's fun, right? But.

>> Desiree: But make them uncomfortable. Trouble when I create conflict because you're like, oh, you shouldn't have said that.

>> Scott: Well, sometimes be honest. Like our daughter says, you know, for a girl who can't walk, you sure put your foot in your mouth a lot.

>> Desiree: Rude. So rude. Ableist. Ableist.

>> Scott: Ableism. Right there.

>> Desiree: And gaslighter and trauma trigger her.

>> Scott: So.

You want your characters to be uncomfortable in your dialogue

And I just have one example, and this is a new movie, so it's a perfect example. Talking about being uncomfortable is heretic. We watched it a couple weeks ago. Hugh Jack, remember?

>> Desiree: What is it?

>> Scott: It's Hugh Grant as the Mormon girls go to talk to him about their church. They get inside and then the second the door is shot, it's locked. And. And he has a plan and they think that they're going to convert this guy. And. And it's very long scenes in this movie. Long, long scenes.

>> Desiree: But we talked about how Hugh Grant would have had to remember so many lines.

>> Scott: A lot of lines of a Great little monologues. But the best part of it is everything he said you could. You would see how uncomfortable it made each of these girls. And it made them both uncomfortable in different ways. So. But. But they were never comfortable. Even him, he wasn't comfortable. He was uncomfortable because it wasn't always going how he wanted it to. And that was the whole point. So, yeah, you want to make your characters uncomfortable. You want to have them reacting. You want the dialogue to cause characters to react and to want to react. And then we got to see. And we get to see, okay, so that person doesn't like conflict because they're not reacting. That girl is saying exactly what she thinks because she doesn't give a crap. Right? So that's how you learn about character. Make them uncomfortable and see how they react.

>> Desiree: But then it also Gave them conflict because it caused them to question their own values and beliefs, I think. Right. That was. So it was an internal conflict as well.

>> Scott: Yeah. Which was also interesting because neither of them knew that the other one was as extreme about certain things that they thought when they walked up to that door. Can't recommend that movie enough. it was just so well done and smart and effective and Hugh Grant is just. It's just a joy to watch him in a movie like that. So.

>> Desiree: So if you had to sum it up with one thing to say about this entire thing we've been talking about, what would you say?

>> Scott: I would say challenge every scene. Make it fight for its place. No matter what kind of script you're writing, if that scene can't throw down and say, no, no, you cannot remove me because I'm doing this. I am here for a reason. I know I sound crazy, but if you, if a scene can't do that, that, that's, that scene is not going to work for people. Just won't. So if you can challenge it and it knocks you sideways and be like, oh my gosh, like, I can't trim another word from this, then it's going to work.

>> Desiree: It'll be a good one.

>> Scott: But if you just write it and move on and never look at it again, it's not going to work. Work.

>> Desiree: Totes McGoats.

>> Scott: Well, it might, but totes my goats. Totes McGoats. Totes McGoats. It would. Yeah.

Script Reader Pro lets you have a professional rewrite your script for \$15

>> Desiree: On, that note, we're going to take a second here to share some information on one of the services we offer at Script Reader Pro.

>> Scott: Right on. Be right back.

>> Scott: Feel like you've taken your script as far as you can on your own. We know how frustrating it can be sometimes to get the great ideas that are in your head properly on the page. But imagine having a professional screenwriter jump in and rewrite it for you to create a market ready script. Send us your script for a rewrite proposal and the pro of your choice will write up a page or so of notes on exactly how they'd approach a rewrite. Head over to www.scriptreaderpro.com rewrite and use the code rewrite15 during checkout for the rewrite proposal to get 15 off.

>> Desiree: Hey, so that's awesome.

Scott: If someone wants to send in a question or suggest a Subject for the podcast

Now what we're going to look at here though, Scott, at, this time, we always go through the same thing, which is questions and answers.

>> Scott: Yeah. Some questions that we have from podcast listeners. If someone wants to send in a question or suggest a, Subject for the podcast, what should they do?

>> Desiree: You should email at hello@scriptreaderpro.com.

>> Scott: Nice.

>> Desiree: With your questions, comments.

>> Scott: Put the subject line, just say podcast question or whatever. HelloRipter Pro. Com. Send them over.

>> Desiree: That would be awesome.

You want to make sure your script has some kind of movie star role

Here's our first question today. What do they mean when they say they want a movie star role in your script?

>> Scott: That's great. that's a really good question. You'll hear that because a lot of these days, that's how movies get made. Now is. Is they have to get packaged. They have to have a role for a movie star, because if they need \$20 million to make that movie, they need to put a face out there. And then people go, okay, well, that star pulls in this much box office, so yeah, okay, we'll invest in it. So you have to have a role that's going to make a movie star want to pick that project over all the other projects that everyone wants them to make. Right. So that means like, creating a very dynamic, original, you know, unique character that we haven't seen before, because that's going.

>> Desiree: To draw interest from the person who's going to be playing it as well.

>> Scott: Yeah. And a buddy of mine had this great script, and he signed a manager with it, and the manager is going to send it out, and he's like, hey, before we send it out, you got to take this character and you got to. You got to make him more of a starring role. You got to add some more meat to him. You got to give him something that. That the. All these actors we're sending it to are going to be just, you know, drooling to play. And so he did, and so he went back and he elevated this the guy. And it was like, okay, now I can see this actor playing him and this actor playing him. So, yeah, you want to make sure your script has some kind of movie star role. And it doesn't matter if it's a comedy or, you know, a western. It doesn't matter. Right. Is that role something that a major star is going to be able to say, this is the next role I have to play. Play.

>> Desiree: Okay, so that's the. That's the answer to the question then.

>> Scott: Y.

>> Desiree: So how many. Second question is how many pages should a screenplay max out at? I know the answer.

>> Scott: What's the answer?

>> Desiree: 274. Try again.

>> Scott: Do you want to be thrown aside before they try again? Yeah.

>> Desiree: 90. For a romantic comedy, maxed out. No, max would be two hours. So 120.

>> Scott: Yeah. I mean, the thing is it used to be 120. Used to be like the average screen, 120 pages, you know, 15, 20, 30 years ago. But it's a different audience, different world now, different community and. And environment of movies now.

>> Desiree: People don't have the attention they used to have either.

>> Scott: No. And they don't have the time. Right. And so, you know, people will complain now. Oh, my gosh. Like, they'll look at the movie before going. And they're like, it's 123 minutes long. Oh, my gosh. Yeah, there's still.

>> Desiree: You do that too.

>> Scott: I do too. If I'm like, I don't have that.

>> Desiree: Timer two hours long.

>> Scott: And I like a good long movie if it. If it's needed. But, yeah, that's kind of like almost seen as a kiss of death now for a spec writer trying to break in, having a script that's 127 pages long or 132, or even like 119, I guarantee, and I'm not blowing smoke, I guarantee if you have 120 page screenplay, you can even just cosmetically reduce five or more pages off that script, just with creative play and challenging every word.

>> Desiree: And just like we were talking about earlier.

>> Scott: Yeah, I can go into a script tomorrow and cut 20 pages off of it if I had to. And so put it. Think of it that way. Okay. If I had to. If the producer's like, oh, my gosh, I want to make this movie, But I need 17 pages off. Well, then do it. Try it. See what happens. But yeah, that's try. I mean, 100, 110 now is like, that's the length that, movie should know, you know, not.

>> Desiree: Not push, not exceed.

>> Scott: Right? Yeah.

Question three: How much do contests help to sell your script

>> Desiree: Okay. Question three. How much do contests help to sell your script? Hey, you can answer that question. I'll ask you, and then you can talk about what happened with you the other day. That's kind of a neat thing.

>> Scott: Yeah. Like I always say, you know, contests. I mean, it's a personal choice, right. They all cost money. So if you're gonna use your money, use it how you think it's gonna help your career. But if you have money that you're gonna do some contest runs. I did it. Every writer does it. I did well in some contest runs. And, you know, like, for example. So just the other day, I get this email from Coverfly. We're not promoting Coverfly. I'm just talking about it. you know, and for those who don't know, Coverfly is kind of like this site that, that Keeps track of all contest wins. And when a script has a certain number of high quality wins, they get a high score. And so I have, you know, all my scripts are on there that I've entered. And so incision. My one script incisions on there. It's in the top 1% of all scripts on the site in Thriller. And my horoscope. Mine is in the top 1% of all horror scripts on. On there.

>> Desiree: Did you know?

>> Scott: Because it did really well in contest runs years ago.

>> Desiree: Yes.

>> Scott: Right.

>> Desiree: Did you know that mine is in the top 000042%?

>> Scott: No.

>> Desiree: All right.

>> Scott: But I, Suddenly someone just reached out to me, and this producer is like, hey, on Coverfly.

>> Desiree: And I saw your saw.

>> Scott: You're on the red list. Downloaded it. it's not a movie we're looking to make, but I love your writing. What else do you have? Send me everything you have. And so, yeah, so had I not entered those contests, it wouldn't be on cover five. It didn't do well, and it wouldn't have that. So anything that's out there that can help you can help.

>> Desiree: It doesn't hurt you.

>> Scott: So enter the contest.

>> Desiree: Your pocketbook.

>> Scott: Yeah. If you have the money, like, don't, don't, don't not eat for two months, you can enter three contests. There's probably better ways to spend them.

>> Desiree: Probably die by the end. and you wouldn't even find out if you made the contest list.

>> Scott: Yeah. Because you don't find out for, like, nine months sometimes.

>> Desiree: Shoot your dad.

>> Scott: So, yes, can contest. But. But the. The question is, can contests help sell your script? No, not necessarily. A script has to be amazing. The script's gonna sell the script. But contest high placements and wins can help vet your script. So if you tell someone in a letter or in a conversation. Yeah. It won this. That tells them, oh, well, it must be worth reading if it won out of 5,000 entries or whatever. Right?

>> Desiree: So unless the reader was really, really.

>> Scott: Bad, which probably happened to me, probably didn't know what. They didn't know what they were like, oh, this is great.

>> Desiree: Yeah. It was the same reader that read both of those scripts of yours. Same one. They're like this guy's am.

>> Scott: okay. All right.

>> Desiree: Okay, that answers the question.

>> Scott: We have one more question, right?

How detailed should a treatment be? Okay. How detailed should an outline be

>> Desiree: Yep. We're gonna do four. How detailed should a treatment be?

>> Scott: Okay. Super detailed. a treatment is different than if I had an outline.

>> Desiree: Okay. Treatment's different than outline. I do want to say if I had a Scottish accent and I actually read this question which was spelled incorrectly.

>> Scott: Here's my typo.

>> Desiree: Scott. Cuz you're so good with typos.

>> Scott: Read it as a Scottish. I can't wait to hear your Sean Connory accent. Do it. No, every Scottish attempt comes out se Connory.

>> Desiree: No, I will get you to read it.

>> Scott: Do it.

>> Desiree: Just wait. Sean Connory.

How detailed should me SC. Treatment be? How detailed should I treatment

How detailed should me SC. Treatment be? How detailed should me treatment?

>> Scott: Maybe that's, maybe that's like an Irish accent.

>> Desiree: Irish me. So try it. You try.

>> Scott: Oh, details. Should me treatment be me treatment me? Yeah, detail, should be treatment me.

>> Desiree: Why do you sound like a leprechaun?

>> Scott: I don't know.

>> Desiree: Anyways, answer the darn question already.

>> Scott: Okay, so how detailed should me treatment be?

>> Desiree: My treatment.

>> Scott: Usually a treatment is something that a producer wants, because they, they want to see maybe the deeper part of the story without reading the script. So treatment is basically a full prose version of your screenplay. So instead of, you know, it's just basically paragraph, this is this scene, next paragraph. This is this scene, next paragraph. And you just, you're beating that down in that way. Right. Usually. Usually ends up being 20, 25 pages. But normally someone won't ask for a treatment without reading the script. Right. So a treatment is essentially just taking your script, putting it in a document where you're telling someone what everything that happens. It doesn't really have dialogue unless there's like a magic dialog line. Right. but yeah, how, how detailed should it be? Every detail that you have in the script. Don't add extras that aren't there. Right. But have all the details that are in the script.

>> Desiree: Can Scripture Pro help with a treatment?

>> Scott: We can go, yeah, yeah, we do have a synoptist. Synopsis.

>> Desiree: It's a good word.

>> Scott: Synopsis slash baby option where you can send your, your synoptic or your treatment into and we can look at it for you and give you guys.

>> Desiree: Sorry about that.

>> Scott: Yeah, we're a little loopy today. Loopy loop. Toads McGoats.

>> Desiree: We're bringing that back, Scott.

>> Scott: Anyways, check out our website. Script Rooter Pro. We have tons of services, everything you can imagine what makes us different from everyone else out there is we are all working writers in the business. We've been in different situations, different levels at different times.

>> Desiree: And so they can help with the treatment and.

>> Scott: Yeah, and you can, and you can see who we are. You can pick who you want to, to work with. That's why we're different. So check us out.

>> Desiree: Okay. Also, I want to remind listeners.

>> Scott: Yes, there's a glitch in the Matrix today.

>> Desiree: I hated the Matrix. Don't talk to me about the Matrix. I'm gonna have a lot of haters.

>> Scott: Now who are like mail. I love dare you trick is the best.

>> Desiree: Subscribe to our podcast. That's what I was trying to say.

>> Scott: I know.

>> Desiree: Give us, five star reviews if.

>> Scott: You think we got five stars. Just pure Desiree. Five stars. You know it. Yeah.

>> Desiree: Please share this.

>> Scott: Share it. Talk to your friends.

>> Desiree: Caring.

>> Scott: If you think. If you. If you were entertained and informed and you learned something and maybe you can use it going forward, then. Then that's what we're here for. And if you did, then, then, yeah, share. Tell it. Tell your friends and other writing colleagues and. And grandma about us.

>> Desiree: Grandma.

>> Scott: Yeah.

>> Desiree: Okay. Also, you can feel free, like I mentioned, to email us any questions or comments at, hello, Script ReaderPro.com and.

>> Scott: We are Scott and Desiree, and we are with Script Reader Pro, helping writers craft wonder one page at a time.