

Ep #35: Opening Pages

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On this episode, we are talking all about the opening pages. Yes, people really liked when we did that before. So we've got some page ones of some produce scripts. 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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So today we mentioned we're talking about opening pages.

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Yes, yeah, first page, obviously the most important page of the

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screenplay. Well, and I didn't understand opening pages. I thought you meant like the set of pages we've read, like a series of first

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five pages or 10 pages, yeah, but, I mean, they'll probably name it something better. Oh, that's just what I named my episode in my notes. Okay, opening pages. It's a yawner. Maybe first pages might be best. Who knows? Anyway, thanks for joining us. Thanks. We always thanks. It's like you're thanking me for joining No, you have to be here.

1:01

You don't have a choice. Okay, so we always start off the podcast the same way, you making fun of me. No, not making fun of you. We're talking about what we've seen lately.

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Yeah, we watched we went to the theater and watched it. We're actually probably one of the best shark movies I've ever seen. Did you know that's what I was talking about with the title dangerous animals?

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Nope, actually, when I first read it here, right before you said that, what? When you said, like, three days ago, and you said, we went to the theater, I was like, What? What did we see recently? Is what I'm thinking when I first saw it. I saw Dangerous Minds, okay, even though it says dangerous animals. And then I thought, did I watch a show on the Discovery network, Discovery Channel. No, I didn't watch anything, but ain't dangerous animals. Okay, this

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animals. The tagline on the poster was, you're safer in the water, which is a great summation of what, what the actual that's a big word for you. Summation, yeah, maybe, what does it mean

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to sum things up? Oh, would have never known.

2:01

Okay, well, you're not a lawyer, so a lawyer provides their summation at the end of a trial. Wow, did Does everyone know I have my law degree? I was first going to be a lawyer, and I went and got my law degree passed the bar. No, I'm kidding. You're dumb. I sounded like I

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was true. You did for a second. I was like, you're like, wait a minute, did he No, I thought, don't you have to graduate elementary school first? Oh, mean,

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see, make fun of me. But no, it was, it was a really good movie. We should get a sort of drums here. We should hit the ghost, boom, boom, yeah. But you know, if anyone who's listened before, our daughter is absolutely obsessed with shark movies, but like dumb ones, like sharks from the moon and Sharknado, 72 things like that. But this was, it was more about the people than the sharks.

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Well, I came across it because I was, I wanted to go to Lilo Yeah, and stitch Yeah. And then I came across this, and I was like, oh, and I hate shark movies, but I took one for the team, because I know that she likes them so

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much, but it was so good, entertaining. Yeah, it was about a girl who gets taken by a guy who videotapes it's no it's videotapes him feeding women as sacrifices for sharks. But 95% of the movie is not about the sharks. It's about the people. The people are worse than the sharks. It's just so good. It was very well done. So well well acted, actors written well like it was just it kept you in it the whole time. Anyways, recommend it. Go check it out. But really good for a shark movie.

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So do you know who wrote it? No idea. We should look it up and see if they've written anything else. Yeah, we should. So anyways, really good. That was good to me. Recommend Yes. Today we are talking like we said about opening our first pages, and you have a series of how many different scripts.

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I think we got six. We're just gonna let's go through 1234566,

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the opening pages of six feature films that were produced over the last couple of years. And Will these be in the show notes? We will have them in the show notes for you to download. So if you don't have them in front of your eyes, already pause and then run and open them each up, and then you will be able to see on the pages, because we talk about why it's working on the pages, what stands out to us, all that kind of stuff. So this is just to help people understand, you know, what, what a first page should have in it. And some of these might not even be like, Oh my gosh, that was an absolutely amazing page. Like, they might not be right, but these are from produced movies. Some of them might be like the shooting script, so the spec version that someone first read and that, oh, I want to make this. It may not have looked like this, but this is just to go through and showcase examples so people, people understand. Okay, all right, so let's get started. Are you ready to go? Okay, so this first one we're looking at is a complete unknown. This is the complete

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unknown. That's what it's called. Oh, it's called that. Yeah,

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funny Penny. But I was just thinking of how your friend Kim laughs when she finds something funny.

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Painter can. Yeah, we can't even do it too loud. It's too loud

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thinking of Kim, I don't know. I just, I don't know, because I laughed, I pretended, that's totally it. But louder, you just have to laugh. And she laughs, okay, so a complete unknown, yeah, and this is a Bob Dylan biopic. It's a biopic, by our biography picture like a movie about a

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person, because biography and picture were too long of words, yes.

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Okay, so this one starts. You'll notice on this page there's no fade in, there's no Scene Heading when we start, it's just words. So we hear, why is it just words? I don't know, just the choice that they made. Probably it's over black or something. I would assume over black, like just black screen, someone might usually put over black as a, as a, as a beginning. But we hear a tinny wire recording of young Woody Guthrie, his voice sharp and true. I'm not going to read this. This. These are just the lyrics of the song. They're in an italic, so it tells me it's the song. And then the sound of traffic and news radio hits us as we cut to interior, station wagon, wet day, winter 1961 through the rear window, marshlands of Secaucus. Overpasses and steel rails converge and swirl knees against the glass. A slight young man 19, stares at the world his back wedged on a guitar case among luggage. This is Bob in caps. Right. Introduce the character. He

holds Dash. Dash, a small notebook filled with scrawlings, Song for Woody in bracket or in quotation marks. It says on the top of one page up front, a buzz cut man 50 drives beside him. His wife, a large woman, his hair net, holds a map through the windshield. The Empire State Building pokes over the Lincoln Tunnel entrance up ahead cut two exterior 10th Avenue, same wet day, moments later, the station wagon pulls away, leaving Bob standing at the tunnel exit with his bag and guitar case. Bob looks at his surroundings, Hell's Kitchen, harsh and gray, taller buildings looming uptown, the spire of the Empire State towering over it all on the corner, a cop and a Puerto Rican driver argue beside a double parked truck. Bob turns up his collar and looks at a clipping from his notebook. He considers things, and then heads southbound end of first page. Okay, so what? What stood out to

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you there? I'm not interested. No, sorry, yeah, I'm being honest. Who's Bob? What did you learn about Bob that we know absolutely nothing about Bob.

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We know he's plays guitar and writes songs and he's being dropped off in New York

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alone. But then, like, we're just supposed to assume what Hell's Kitchen is, though. Like, is that? Is that, I think, the assumption that all of these things, because, to me, like, yeah, Empire State Building, that's a well known thing, Hell's Kitchen. Not everybody knows Hell's

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Kitchen, but, I mean, it'd be, but if it said Brooklyn, you kind of have an idea. Oh, I've heard of Brooklyn, right? Or, you know, if you're in, if it's in San Francisco, the Presidio, it's like you've heard these names, even though, but it doesn't say Brooklyn, no, but I'm saying if, instead of Hell's Kitchen, if it said Brooklyn or the Bronx or Manhattan, I feel like I could see most people, most people have heard most people would know Hell's Kitchen is a New York thing. But I wasn't interested. This didn't get me interested after the first page? No, and maybe, maybe it won't for other people either. Maybe it will for some though, no, but the details on there, right? Like, like I said, there's not a single word of dialog. There's not over explanation. We talked about this in one of our previous episode about character description. All we get is Bob, a young a slight young man, no, but we got,

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here's the thing. I know more about the bus driver and his wife than I do about the description of Bob. He's

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a thin man, yeah, yeah, buzz cut man. His wife, a large woman, hair net, yeah. Like you could see them better maybe. I mean, the thing to keep in mind is this, this was a script probably specifically written in mind for the actor, like, this is Bob Dylan. So people are going to picture as they go into it knowing, oh, this is Bob Dylan. So maybe that's why it's different when a director

has also written the screenplay, because they, you know, they have a certain vision and and that kind of stuff. So, but, yeah, there's not a lot happening on this page, but it sets us. It sets, I think it sets a tone. Well, you know, it's just having wet day, right? Instead of saying, drop up the street and it's raining, it's just, it's wet day, right? And he makes some choices in here, like not having, you know, not having the script start with something above a piece of description, right? He uses, we we hear, we see, which people on the internet you cannot use ween and, oh, really, they don't like that's a big argument. And people, but people but people don't really care. Don't argue with us. We don't care. But, yeah, so, so it's, uh, anyways, that's that page. So what did you

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think of it, though? Did it intrigue you? Did it make you want to read more? It didn't

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necessarily want to. Made me want to flip the page, but it did make me see where we were. I could feel the cold. I could feel the overwhelming, big, big city. With this single guy who has nothing but a nothing but his, his, uh, guitar, right? It gives you. And I was like, Oh, I like this guy, yeah? And he's got this, I like the word about his, about his, his notebook filled with scrollings. I thought that was a really good choice, yeah? Or, like, filled with words, right? Scrollings kind of says what that songwriting book might look like, right? Anyways, so, you know, interesting choices may not grab everybody you know, but visually, you can tell a director's seeing this in his head, right? Because it's all you know the you know, Empire State Building, you know, taller buildings looming uptown Empire State towering over it

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all like he's setting that gives you, like, a gloomy feel like, that's why I said it feels kind

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of so. Anyways, that's that one that is a complete unknown. The next one we're gonna read is called heretic, and we talked about this on a previous episode. Really cool show, you know, Hugh Grant in a great role. Anyways, this is heretic. And I thought when we watched this, this was a really interesting way to start a movie. It got me interested in knowing other people. So here we go, exterior park bench, afternoon, Sister Barnes in bold, the character introduction names are in bold, which is different, different, right? Why do they have them in bold? Could just be how they do it. Okay, but you'll see that like sometimes the character name and dialog will be bold every every single one. But anyway, so sister Barnes 20 and sister Paxton 19 occasionally look at their shared phone. They are early for an appointment. I'm just going to pause here for a second when I read sister Barnes and sister Paxton. I picture nuns into a habit, me too, but it doesn't say that. But I just picture that, okay, my picture. So I'm like, okay, nuns,

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except that they're 20 and 19, so they're too young to be nuns, I would

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think, or in training. But, anyways, maybe, but, and there's that was the first assumption I made. So I'm picturing

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your knits. I think, okay, but anyways, that's

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the image that's now in my head. Okay, so Paxton is bubbly, but sheltered Barnes is intelligent and edgy, while edgy for a Mormon missionary, there you go. There. We know now we know they wear long overcoats, skirts that fully cover the knee, modest attire that does not draw attention to itself. And then we've got Peoria, Illinois, November, so in the middle of the page, bold like that is probably going to be like the type on the screen will tell us where we are. Two bicycles lean near the park bench where they uncomfortably sit. The park bench has a full sized condom advertisement on it that says bigger just got better. Paxton says I heard Magnum condoms are basically, essentially, basically the same size as regular condoms. Nah, that. It's all just marketing. Yeah, no. Makes you think, what else do we believe? Just because of marketing? Like, if you grew up being told that the Book of Mormon was fake, you'd believe it was fake just because that's what you were

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told. Magnums are huge. My sister said her ex husband had a scary, big pain like frightenedly, frighteningly big, and they had to use magnums a peen laughing at peen. Sounds made up elephant trunk. That's what she would call it. End of page, God told me not to read this before. Now I know why you were the one that was laughing at peen. I wasn't even laughing at peen. Such a child. You said, peen.

13:16

Oh, okay. So Desiree, what do you think of that opening page? Would that make you want to keep

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going? Um, very, very, very, largely, we would want me to, you know, big way and a big success, substantial elephant trunk kind of way. Oh, no, it would. Except that these, the bolds really are throwing me off, because it's like, okay, well, you said, Well, this is probably going to be written on the screen, but then their names are bolded, so it's kind of like, where am I supposed to focus my eye? Yeah. Do you know what I mean? No. Fair enough. It's holding me towards the top of the page. More Fair

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enough. I mean, I read hundreds of screenplays a year, and so it didn't, it didn't pull my attention as a reader, but what I loved is the contrast. I don't know, I'm just saying as a reader, right? As a non reader, it's interesting to though, to see how, how you see it, but there's so much contrast on this page, right? Like we're told that they're sisters, we're told that they're Mormons, they're missionaries, and then they're talking about Magnum condoms and elephant trunk sized peens.

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It's like an oxymoron, right? Is that what an oxymoron is? No, is that what it is? No, not specifically, but what is an oxymoron

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like a description of something that is not that, like, like you're a genius, like a

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rude No, that was a wrong choice. Are you mad at me? Says the husband, I'm

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not even explaining it says, I love you. Nope, I love you. Good for you. You're supposed to. I'm not even trying to explain it. You can look it up on your dictionary, like you normally do on a podcast. No, but I'm saying an oxymoron. But like, well, it's just going against expectation. That's what it is. So there's a word for that, subvert. You're subverting expectations so you're delivering something in a way that's. Unexpected, right? And so it's a really smart move, because, I mean, what would normally you would think that that Mormon missionaries would be sitting on a park bench talking about because if you watch, if you watch the movie on the next moment, they start talking about porn. And how much you know, do you watch porn? And it's like that just sets a tone immediately, and it tells us about these two characters, right? Like Paxton is saying, Ah, you know, like she's being very analytical about this. And you know, maybe we're being, you know, you know, we're being told the things are real and fake, even though they aren't, just because we're being advertised, which is essentially setting up the entire theme of the story in in the first page. But had I not read this whole script by the end of the page, I want to keep going, because I really enjoy the banter and dialog. Yeah, the banter is, I don't want to know, what are these missionaries all about? Why are they Mormon missionaries? And, you know, maybe this is going to be like, That stupid show you were watching about mom. Mom Talk is like, oh, a bunch of Mormon influencers and stuff. So I was like, oh, maybe that's who they are. Like, having, like, swinging and all those kind of first episode. But, yeah, so did. What did you look up on your phone there does? Well,

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I It's actually with the word I was trying to think of is contradictory. Like you see what you see, you see two Mormon missionaries, and then what you think you're talking about here, and see just completely different, contradicts itself, right? Yeah, but it says is a com oxymoron is a combination of contradictory or incongruous and congruous, incongruent. Say that incongruous. Say it five times. Nope. Try good for you, such as cruel kindness, something such as a concept that's made up of contradictions. So there you go, yeah, is the contradictory like contradicting itself definitely is what I'm thinking of, yeah?

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But I mean, the writing is just great, because, you know, this short interaction, you know, two thirds of a page, and both characters are so different, right? You see them differently, and their descriptions tell us, right? Paxton is bubbly, but sheltered Barnes is intelligent and edgy.

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And I like it that it's snappy, yeah, it's not drawn out. It's just you feel like it's, you don't need much more than that,

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yeah? But, I mean, it's also good that they that they show the advertisement was there of the condoms, because then why are they talking about condoms? That's a weird thing to just be talking about. So anyways, I thought this was a good page. It sets a unique tone. It's a kind of edgy itself. And anyways, I was excited. I'm like, Ah, that's a good page. Yeah, it's entertaining. Yeah. Okay, perfect. So that is heretic. All right. Next page here, you're going to bring up the one called the last showgirl. I am going to read Jodi's words and Desiree will read Mary Ann's words as we talk along. So I don't have to say things like and Marianne says, and Jodi says, you can just read along. Make sense? Good? All right, so here we go. Over black a musical number is coming to an end. The lyrics saying something along the lines of, I've got my top hat and my tails and hundreds of beautiful girls. We hear dancers coming off stage breathing, hard, heels clacking on metal stairs, hallway chatter, the puzzle of dozens of women fade in interior, la razzle dazzle backstage. Night, the number ends as many dancers, including Marianne 35 and Jodi 19 run off

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stage. Did someone raid a cemetery for this audience, I left the word out. The

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F bomb out. I did as the dancers funneled through a Dory Marianne rips her costume on a door handle. Shoot,

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go, go, go. Hey, hey, it's

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dual dialog. That is called dual dialog. Oh, that is how you will format it when two characters are game. Then, okay, so Jody says, go, go, go strip. And then we move to the backstage corridor continuous. Marianne and Jodi hustle through the labyrinth like underbelly of the theater, past huge set pieces. Dot, dot,

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dot. When did they install that new door handle? Three months ago,

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hallways lined with shelves of feathered head pieces

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that things like asking to get ripped costumes. Are you sure is it really ripped?

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Okay, end of page so Desiree. What is your reaction to that page? Anything stand out to you? Did you find it interesting? Anything specific? Stand stand out?

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No, but I really liked, well, what I liked was I liked the description of labyrinth, like underbelly of the theater. I thought it was very good description. Yeah,

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the description is great. Like that opening part, you know, just telling us what we're hearing. And, you know, clacking right, breathing hard, the heels clacking on metal stairs, like I hear my high school teacher coming down the hallway, right? Hallway chatter, the bustle of dozens of women, yeah? Like, really good descriptions. And then all we get from Mary Ann and Jody is their age, right? So, yeah, as they funnel through the doorway, yeah. So, really good descriptive stuff. I mean, one's old, one's young, not old. Like, not that 35 is old, but one's older and the other one's Young. Her. So to me, and I've never seen this movie, I don't even, I think panel Anderson stars in it, but it's about, obviously, it's about showgirls, because of the title, and it's going to be in this experience of what it's like to look behind the curtain, of what being a showgirl and possibly Vegas looks like, right? So, I mean, both of them have, like, a bit of personality, I think, but you can't quite hear it,

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no, you can. You can. I think because with the older person, Marianne, you can feel that she's lived longer because she's more into the fact that she ripped her costume. That's more whereas the other one is just like, hey, let's keep let's keep going, yeah. And then the other young one is like, hasn't lived in experience before, so it's like a ripped costume. Big deal. Just let's move on. Come on. What's the issue here? Yeah, where she's so focused on, oh, yeah,

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true. And I also find it. I also found it interesting that Mary Ann, the older one, is the one who said, did someone raise a cemetery for this audience? Well, she also is the one that swears. Yes, true. Yeah, that's true. It says a lot of person when some people swear and some people don't, but yeah, I thought that's probably like, I think her initial line of dialog is the entire story of this movie. Did someone raid a cemetery for this audience? This is a movie, I'm assuming, black show girl. This is a movie about her being phased out, that she's the older guard, and there's not many around for the new and she's gotta end up in that show world cemetery for right? And so I think that does a good job of telling us what movie this is. Very quickly I would have, I think there could have been more entertaining dialog between them, more of a banter, maybe, but I'm sure it turns out, no, but I'm sure it turns into that. But yeah, you're right. It does. Their lines are very specific to who they are. Kind of got that. I think there's good voice in those characters there. So

yeah. And then it's funny, because in the last one, when there was no title at the top, I said, What's probably over black. And then this starts with over black. And the one thing that this script uses a lot of that no one, none of the others, has, is the as the ellipses, right? What are the ellipse ellipses? Again, ellipses are the dot.oh right. So like, they use that over black, do they need to? It could have just said over black. Usually when you do it, like a dot.it like you're leaving something hanging, like you're like, right? And so like, past huge set pieces, dot, dot, dot. And then they talk a feather head pieces.dot.so, I don't know if the entire screenplay has that after every sentence. It kind of doesn't. It doesn't need to. It's one of those things that if you use acting, it's overused, yeah, if you use it too much, then it loses its impact. And it's personal choice, right? Personal writing choice. Okay, so that is the last showgirl. Okay, here we go. Next one is the order. And I watched this movie down at Austin, and the director and the writer were up on stage and had a cool Q and A after. Anyways, it was a fun experience, but it is a true story. And it I'll read Alan Berg, you read caller, sure. Okay, so title card over black. This is a true story. If you're writing a true story, it's a great way to start right and put on the title page.

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Do you know that when I see that it's a true story, often I'll look at you and be like, it's a true story. It's

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true story. You will choose a true story over any other movie I will. I love the true stories. So this is a true story as a credits roll, which is also an interesting choice to talk about the credits and, yeah, why some people do that? Some people don't. I think it's just, I don't know. I mean, the director had a part in how the story was told. But anyways, as a credits roll, voices are being heard in the darkness. No, no, I'm listening. Go on. You were saying Jews use the blood of Christian babies for what was it?

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Well, for their services, their rituals, or dinners, so they can take over the world

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for their dinners. I see So is it? Do they serve it in cups? This Christian blood? It's a it's a drink, or is it more of a condiment, like a gravy that we can pour over our food, because I've never been in one of these rituals. So

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are you making fun of me? You son of a

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No sir, not at all. You don't need my help for that. I just want to know how I can take over the world.

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Me, see, you're trying to bait me, but I'm just trying to answer your question. You dumb.

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All right, that's enough. Cuts to inside the studio, and now we see something Alan Berg, the infamous shock jock in the flesh at the mic chain smoking Paul malls as he wraps up his broadcast. Title card reads 1983 Alan Berg, whoa, we've got a lot of anti semitism cook in here. End of page. What do you think I'm very

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uncomfortable. It's uncomfortable, isn't it? Yeah, I don't wanna. I didn't wanna read the word I know. I was like, No, I refuse to read the word

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I know. That's intense. Hey. It's like, holy, okay. So, yeah, I'm instantly uncomfortable, intense conflict, tension. And it's like, okay, so Okay, here we go. This is going to be about, it's gonna be about something about racism, in some way, about, you know, all that kind of stuff. So, man, yeah, really, really impactful. And it's in the dark. It's just voices right until we cut in. So it makes you focus on that. Yeah, yeah, wow. Amy's really, really. Yeah, really cool. I thought one thing I noticed is that title card over black is in bold up top, and then title card reads down below is not in bold. I'm sure they just had that up top because it's first few words. But okay, yeah, I mean some different choices here, right as the credits roll, yeah? And why 1983 it's to set so that the audience knows we're in 1983 which,

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if you're aligned, though, and underlined and like, it's just a choice. I

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guess you just say yeah. I think it Yeah. It means just, that's just a choice to make us pay attention. I mean, I use bold or or underline when I want a reader to pay attention, right? Like you need to know this, which I thought was interesting, because in in the previous page, we looked at it for a complete unknown. They put 1961 in the Scene Heading, which I always tell people, it's probably not a great idea if we need to know that, because a lot of readers won't soak in every detail of a scene heading, right? So if we need to know it's 61 or need to know, like here, 83 put in bold so we see it right. Have it in the middle in a title card. So that was a great choice, but yeah, that tells us, okay, we're in the 80s, but, yeah, it's, I don't like this collar. I really don't like this caller. I don't like the color either, but, but I like Alan Berg. I liked how he was like, Okay, wait a minute. Like, do we serve it in cups? Is it like a gravy? Like he was being facetious. And then the guy's like, Are you making fun of me? No, you don't need my help for that. Like, it was a really good like, I like this character. I love back, right? Which is super smart, because something happens to that kid. Happens to that character and it this makes us like them

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immediately. So, yeah, well, in the fact too, that it's 1983 it's like, when you see that, you're like, Ah, I could see why this would happen in 1983 Yeah, whereas,

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but again today, maybe not a few years ago. It's not just but again today, yeah, like, It's life's all over the place, but yeah, it's and then, as you can hear, or as you can see beside the characters names, as they're speaking, it says on a radio, that's a specific kind of sound. It's like, when someone's in a conversation, you can kind of hear that quite right here, yeah, but it's telling us so we understand, okay, it's on a radio, so that's not gonna, obviously, be on the screen, right? But, yeah, this is interesting, because the writer and director were talking about this. They worked on this script from when they first had an idea. We're gonna we're gonna work on it was like a four or five year process, like it was a lot of time. And this, I told you the story, this is the movie that that really kind of broke me for a little bit, because I had written pilot for a guy, a former FBI agent, who worked on this group, the order, worked on a lot of this stuff in white collar crime, and so he came to me, and we thought up this idea, and I, you know, I wrote the pilot, we put the pilot together and put it out there, but then this came out, and it's pretty much exactly the same thing. It's the same it's not the same people, exactly, but it's all based on the same thing, based on the same people. So that kind of, like, killed it is like, Okay, we can't really do this now, right? Yeah, no one's gonna market this because there's a movie. So now, right? And just as a writer, if that ever happens to you, it's happened four times for me now where projects is like, Oh, I guess I'm, I guess I'll stop writing this one, or I guess I won't write this one at all now, and, you know, but when that happens, yeah, it's gonna suck. Embrace the suck, right? Just let it be. But the good thing you can take out of that is, okay, well, at least I'm coming up with the right kind of ideas then, right? If that idea made, you know, it happened then, then obviously I'm on the right track,

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right? Yeah. Speaking of that kind of in that sense of things, too, what's really cool, too, though, is when we've gone to movies, and you're like, Okay, I swear I've read this script before. Yeah, that's happened a couple times. And you're like, I know exactly what's going to happen in the script. This is what's going to happen. And then it ends up happening. And it's like, that's

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crazy. And then I go home, and I go through my files, I'm like, Oh, I found it. Yeah,

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you read which is kind of flip side, it's kind of cool. It

28:41

is cool, yeah. So that is the order, Okay, this next one is first page of a movie called a real pain. And this is a Jesse Eisenberg film. It was nominated for an Academy Award, which is cool, because a very independent had, like, a \$3 million budget or something. But anyways, Desiree, I will do the description. You will speak David's part. Okay, so here we go, interior JFK Airport morning as the credits roll again, some credits, right? I think that's just the director feeding in as a credits roll, we very slowly zoom in on a young man sitting alone on a bench at a busy airport. Q Chopin's Nocturne op nine, number two. We get glimpses of the young man's face as

morning Travelers pass in front of him. This is Benji Kaplan. He has an absent look on his face that borders on melancholy. When we finally arrive in close up, the title appears over his face a real pain exterior. Brooklyn Street, day in a verdant Brooklyn Heights neighborhood, David hustles down the street. He is on his phone leaving a message for someone. Hey,

29:41

Benji. It's me. I'm just leaving my apartment. Remember, we gotta be there three hours early. Just ring me when you get this exterior,

29:48

B, Q, E, day following David's Uber from behind as it's stuck in traffic. Interior Uber day, David is in the back seat, harried and leaving a series of messages,

29:58

hey Benji, I hope you left over. Already I'm stuck in a little traffic on the Bucha. In case you can avoid it, just ring me when you get this. Another message, Benji, it's me. Good news. Traffic just cleared up. In case you were worried. Anyway, ring me when you get

30:11

this end of page. Okay, cool. So yeah, I mean, this is written and directed by Jesse Eisenberg, so I think that's why there's like, here's our shot. Like he wants to say, this is what we're seeing. You know, it's normally people say, Oh, don't do don't use camera directions, things like in a spec script. I don't think you need to. You can even just say, as we get closer or as you want to remind you want to for you don't want to remind us where we're reading something. You want to keep us in it. But big difference from pretty much every other script we've read today is that there's not a single use of

30:39

bold on this page? No, and there's only one character, but no two characters. We got Benji. Yeah, Benji, but we don't see, we don't really see very much about David.

30:49

No, but, well, I hear I disagree on that, because the way he's calling and leaving these messages tells us a lot about this guy. I know he's friends. He's an over thinker. He's worried. He never stops. Yeah, exactly. He's, he's essentially you. He's a male version of you. Very detailed, detail oriented, on top of things you didn't hear from you. You better answer your call, nervous energy, all that kind of stuff, right? No, I'm saying we didn't visually like we can't visually picture him yet. We can picture him enough by what he says, yeah, it doesn't say anything about what he looks like, yeah, we see that there's a young man, yeah. Like, we get a lot of Benji, right? Absolutely melancholy, yeah, so, but, yeah. But, I mean, you still see the guy based on his franticness, right? But, yeah, I mean, this tells us a lot, like, obviously, like that other one, there's so much contrast here, right? David is, it's like he's on speed or something. Like, he's just go, go, go, and Benji's just, like, chilling, but melancholy. Like, he's a bit sad. What's going on with this guy, right? And why is he not answering David's calls? He's just sitting there. I think

it sets up a lot of questions right off the start. So agree, yeah, I'd keep going and be like, Oh yeah, okay, yeah. I can see I understand these two guys very different. They're coming together. Be interesting to see how they come together. Anyways, that is, and it was a really good movie. Don't watch it if you're sad. We were sad. My father passed away not too much earlier than we watched this. Didn't know what it was about, but it's about the grandma dying and then them going on this, like pilgrimage thing. It was better. Yeah, it was it was hard. But it was a good movie, though. It was well done. Really strong theme hit all the characters. Well, definitely one you should I can see why I was nominated for Best Picture. A real pain. Is that real pain? Okay, our last first page. This one is called Thelma, and I remember when you saw the preview, because it's this old lady on her scooter who gets screwed over by scammers online and decides to get on her scooter and find the people who did it. I wish I had watched it with you, yeah, because it was so good. Yeah, you and John. I watched it. No, I watched it myself. I thought you this was the one where you and John went to go on the cruise, but some people were in your way. Yeah. All right, so here we go. And I know to see like I'm so old school, like I love starting a script with fade in, because that's, I mean, I have a tattoo on my arm of of typewriter keys that says fade in. So that just means I have to write fade in forever. But now that they get rid of it, people are

33:07

like, what's that mean? So maybe, if you have fade in, maybe when you die, I'll get a tattoo that says, fade

33:14

out. Yeah, it's put on my forehead. No, on me, on you when I die, yeah, put it on your forehead. I thought you meant like, for me, like, I'm FA I faded out. I'm done. Gee, okay, I love you. All right, it's my line. Good for you. Good for you. All right, so interior, Thelma, interior, Thelma condo office. Afternoon light streams in to illuminate a wood paneled office like that just tells us everything. We just need to know who lives there. It's a wood paneling 80s. It's 80s, yeah, full. Or it might. It's probably today, but this person is in an old house, right? This person's probably old or kitschy or eccentric. So full but neat. That's a really good way to take three words and tell us exactly what we need to see, right? Full but neat. A lifetime of tchotchkes encompass, encompass the shelves, but all services are meticulously ordered. It's like a mixture of me and you. It's like meticulously ordered stuff and kitschy tchotchkes of all my action figures, and then you having every surface under them be free of dust. Yes, that's me. Yeah. All right, so in Thelma 93 this is awesome. You never see mean characters who are this old 93 so fun. Thelma 93 sits at her desk, finger outstretched toward her computer screen. She is in tough. She is tough and elegant. In her old age, she wears a wide, necked, flowy silk blouse, blouse only old women wear blouses. I don't think they don't call Oh, I like your blouse. I like your top. I like your fit. You don't say I like your blouse. Like me saying to my buddy, hey, I like your slacks. I like your pleated slacks, all right. Remember when corduroy was popular? You used to wear a lot of corduroy. Yeah, you liked the corner. Now. Aging me very well. Okay, so back to the page. Her grandson Daniel, somehow washed up at 24 Oh, man, I know a lot of people like that, but that tells us what we can see, but an all star grandson peers over her shoulder, lovingly assisting. Oh, I like Daniel. Then she watches with me. Okay, let's

35:17

do it this weekend. So what are we looking for? Bobby's email. Scroll up. I'm scrolling.

35:23

You're not scrolling. Look. This is scrolling. Daniel scrolls through emails. They begin to rush by. Okay, wait, wait, wait, what? Stop. No. Stop fussing with it. She scans the emails with her finger like a phone book. What's this? This is an ad for Neiman Marcus. Get rid of it. You don't have to trash it. It can just stay in your inbox. I like the dynamic between the two, yeah, and, but he's so patient, yeah? He's just, yeah, I like this guy, and I like her. And she's like, every, every person that generation who's just like, Okay,

35:56

how do I do this on my phone? And am I supposed to people aren't even of that generation,

36:00

yeah, that you've told 17 times how to do something. How do I do this? How do I get the bluetooth earphones to work on the television?

36:09

I don't want to hear it anymore. Anyways, none of our family or friends really listen to your podcast. I

36:16

have no support because and for those but we have all you which support us, which we love, because you're happy, and you come, come and see us all

36:23

the time. But if you guys support if you guys, if the people who we say don't support us actually heard this, then they can tell us they heard it. They heard the comment that we said that they don't support us, yeah,

36:34

and then we're never gonna hear it. They'll say, they'll say, I don't like that. You said that we don't support you. And then your line would be, well, you don't know good for you, all right. Well, that's the last page. So those are truth hurts. Yeah, it does, yeah. See, we just, we drop truth bombs all the time here. So okay, so last page that was cool. I like it. What stood out to you? I just think, kind of talked about it, but very, very clean page. The one thing that is on here that people probably like, Oh, why did why are they doing that? So you'll see that the you there's a use of continued on the bottom portion of the page, as the different characters continue talking with the description line, breaking it up. Now that's something that used to be like a you must do this thing right? Same with like cut two at the end of a scene. It was just part of it. But now, you know, people rarely use cut two unless it's absolutely needed for like, impact. But continued. People just, you don't have to have it there. I personally don't like it there. I think the great

writing. Anyways, I won't need to know that that's that same character talking, because I'll already hear their voice, right? Well, you see their voice too, but I'm saying you see their name right here. Why would it be continued, though, and then continue to gain if it's not actually continued to the next line where Daniel talks, because Thelma has continued. No, Thelma has continued the first time. Yes. So it says, Stop fussing with me. Continued, right? Yeah. And she goes to what's this again? Yeah. She speaks next. Says, What's this? Oh, because that means that character is going to talk again after a break. And what was, you know, what I'm saying. It's because Thelma is here. I think it's because of the dual dialog, because it has Daniel talking, and then Thelma and Daniel talk at the same time. And they put continued in Daniel's dialog because he was still talking, and then they did continue with Thelma because she talked in the dual dialog. For me, it's just like, it's too much. It's too busy. It's just extra words for no reason. Yeah, it's like having, it's like having Kristen Cameron as the character's name and the dialog every time, every like, first and last name for every character, don't do that. It's just a waste of space. Two names are for, like, Detective Pullman, you know, like someone with like a title, or if it's like, you need to know their first and last name, but it, it removes the personal touch, but it also, yeah, it's just too much. Anyways, good page, interesting. I want to go watch this movie now. So that is it, and that is called Thelma, and that is the last first page. So we're just gonna take a quick break here so we can tell you about one of the services we have here at script reader Pro.

38:51

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 on over to [www dot script reader pro.com](http://www.scriptreaderpro.com) forward, slash, rewrite and use the code rewrite 15 during checkout for the rewrite proposal to get 15% off.

39:34

We're back. Nice. Did you miss us? I missed us, but we're moving on to our listeners. Actually, we've got some questions. How can people send questions in you can

39:42

submit your questions, comments, reviews to hello@scriptreaderpro.com Make the subject line be podcast that would be helpful, yeah, or question, or something like that, whatever it is, and we'll get that. So first question we have from the listeners is, do I have to buy a writing program or can. I use pages or word,

40:02

yeah, when you're using so if you want to be a professional screenwriter, I mean, if you want to be a screenwriter as a hobby and never have anything made or sell anything, fine, whatever do your hobby. But if you want to be professional, you want to actually have this take off and be something, then my big question is, why would you not just use the software that does it in the

way it's supposed to look right? This is one of your big frustrations. Well, it is, and I think it's because everyone in the industry, the second you see that a script is not written in exact, proper format, with proper margins and spaces and all the things that needs to be, you're like, Well, I can't I you lose confidence that that writer is going to be where they need to be. That's the big thing. So you want to set the right impression. So, yeah, you can write them, but then you should upgrade to an actual writing program. It deals with pagination properly. Pagination, yeah, so, so, meaning every page is going to run about a minute. And obviously not all of them do, but they it's a screenplay is meant to be shot. And so, for example, pagination in like a Word document, type of, you know, word processor, you get to the bottom of a page, and if a character is still talking and their dialog will then spill to the next page. In a in a word processing program, it'll just have the dialog keep going on the next page in the margin you've set but it needs to actually end on the previous page, like whatever that sentence, you end it with a period, and then on the next page, you will have the character's name again, right? But it will say continued, because it's a second page, and then it will continue their dialog. A word processing program can't do that if they're going to shoot that one page. They kind of need to know how it starts a news talking, right? So, so that's the main thing that a writing program. It locks those things in. There's free ones, there's ones you can buy, but you should have

41:38

something, okay. Two, how descriptive is too descriptive in a script? You we've talked about this quite a bit, but

41:45

it's a short answer. If you are wondering if you have too much description, you probably have too much description. Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's it. That's the answer, right? Just remember, it's it's a blueprint for a movie as flowery as you want it to be, as stylistic and everything fine, but they're going to change all that when they shoot it. So why would you not have it ready to

42:04

be shot and remember that you want to keep your eye flowing down the page, so you want it to look as pleasing and smooth as possible.

42:10

Vertical writing, right? You should be able to look at your script and see that it's moving downwards, not left.

42:15

A good example is Thelma that we just read back to me. Looking at it is nice and clean. Kate, third question, what's the difference between a sitcom and half hour comedy TV show? Yeah, that's a good question,

42:26

because I had someone tell me they wrote a sitcom and then they sent it and it wasn't a sitcom. A sitcom is something that is on a stage. It's called a multi cam show, meaning, like friends, for

example. Cheers, yeah, anything that's on a set with an audience, right? Or maybe not an audience anymore. There's constantly shooting it right? Cosby Show, yeah, yeah, yeah. Or, I don't know, these days, like there's, like, whatever. There's, yeah, there's, we just don't watch them because, like, Big Bang Theory, right? Like they're on a stage in a set, yeah, that's a sitcom. It is a very different format on the page, completely different. Half hour comedy would be like the fabulous ms Maisel or whatever, where it's just, it's a half hour comedy show on television, but it's written like every other piece. So that's the big difference. If you say you got a sitcom, someone's going to be expecting it to read like a sitcom. So big

43:12

difference. Okay, last question, how do I break into the business when so many screenplay competitions are closing up

43:18

shop? Yeah, we're seeing a lot of that. A lot of the big ones, they kind of merged and stuff. I think because of the AI thing, I think a lot of companies will just start just using AI to read scripts, which sucks. You know, nickel fellowship, the biggest screenplay competition that could launch your career. They completely changed what they're doing, and then they sent it over to blacklist website where it's just like, not even the same kind of process anymore. So it's it is getting harder to break in. It all comes down to you just got to try and pitch your script to every single person you possibly can until someone says, Okay, I'll read it. It's not easy, and there's tons of tricks. We've got some podcasts on that you can check them out, but, yeah, that's it. That's my answer.

43:54

Okay, that that wraps up question number four, and unfortunately, we have to say goodbye. That's it. We're out of time. Good. I need a nap. We really hope you guys enjoyed the opening first pages podcast this episode, yes, again, feel free to subscribe to our podcast. Give us a five star

44:11

review. Yeah, if you enjoyed yourself and learn something, tell your writing colleagues and friends. Check out our website, scriptreaderpro.com, all of our services are on there. Everything that we offer. You know we want you to check it out. That's why we're here. We're here. We are all about helping writers craft wonder one page at a time. You.