

Ep #39: Building a Character from Scratch

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In this episode, we're talking all about how to build a character. Yes, we're gonna put Desiree on the spot and force her to become a writer. So listen in.

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This is the Script Reader Pro podcast, hands on advice, insider hacks and deeper discussions for the screenwriters who are serious about breaking into the industry.

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Hey everybody. This is Desiree, and this is the Script Reader Pro podcast. I am your host of this episode and every episode prior.

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Yes, yes. Who are you? I am Scott. Thanks for introducing me.

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Host. Do you spell your name, S, C, A, U, G, H, T.

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I thought of changing it to that. Don't ever do that in a script. When you're writing a script, just spell a character's name like it's don't change it. No one's gonna see it on the screen, no. So don't make it annoying

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to read. Yeah. Like, what

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was the like Chad with two Ds, or Brad, B, A, B, R, A, D, D, different. Yeah. But why? There's no point. Don't do it.

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What was there? Is there any other unique names you can share? I have

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a unique name, fine, but your name is okay, even if you're like unique name, not an unique spelling of a name. And then if you're going to spell like, Courtney is usually C, o, u, r, can spelled with a, k, no, but some people like that. On that 90 day fiance, it's spelled C O R, so there's no O, A, there's no u, right? Well, that's fine, right? But don't be like, yes, it's the character's name, Scott. She's about s, you spell it, S, C, A, U, G, H, T, Scott, don't do it unless it's like, for reason, right? Like mistaken identity or something. But, yeah, wow, mistaken identity.

Anyways, hi, welcome and talk. I am here to share information on Yeah, and try to pass on some tips and tricks and education. As Desiree tries to keep it light and fun, because she says, I'm boring.

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Well, it's the one time twice a month that you can actually talk to me about screenwriting, and I have to actually sit here.

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Thanks. Thanks. Laugh. Well, that's funny. You say that because this episode, because those are your never reads the show knows, never knows what an episode is going to be about. She's a super prepared.

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And I you guys, I don't like reading big words either that I don't read very often, so if I come across them, I'm legit like, I will be like, I don't know what that means. How do you say that?

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Yeah. So you asked me a lot of questions have put me on the spot a lot. So today, it's all about you. We're gonna put you on the spot today. No, we're gonna use your brain. We are going to have some fun. Because this, as we said, is going to be an episode all about how to build a character. So we're gonna build a character from scratch, scratch with Desiree. So this is kind of how I go about building a unique character and understanding a character, because the worst thing that writers can do is not know anything about their character. Okay, well, that's what we're gonna get into. But interesting, what do we normally do to start off an episode?

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Well, it says here that you have a show we watched with nothing, right?

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So exactly putting you on the spot. No, I don't

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like being put. What very funny movies. I'm not the one

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that recently watched. Shut up. You want to talk about No, and

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I don't. I don't even I don't prep these podcasts. I don't write these notes. What have you watched recently? I have a big problem with love Island. Yes, you are all about the love Island, and it's actually your cousin's fault. Okay, then

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who are we talking about? Think it's your cousin. What is their name? Sydney? Oh, yes, that would be my second cousin.

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Your second cousin? Yes, she was mentioning it when we were had our reunion. Okay? In crime, thanks, Sydney, yeah, in British Columbia. And I was like, love Island. I've never heard it, yeah. And there's, like, way too many episodes for a season, like 33 or 34 episodes. And so I binged, I could only watch starting a season four. Binged the crap out of it. Yeah? Now I'm on halfway through season five, yeah. And, I

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mean, it's, I mean, the watching reality is good for creating characters, because a lot of these people, did you know I was gonna say this? No, I had no idea. Okay, because now you're going back to the character thing, yeah? Because the thing is, and Desiree doesn't like to hear this because she doesn't want to believe it. But these people on reality shows are not 100% who they are, what they are, a mixture of reality and fiction. No certain elements of themselves, elements, certain elements of themselves, but they are very dramatic. They do things and say things to create drama. And I love drama. I love drama. So it's a good if you watch your reality just you like, I can't even make a character like this because, like, there's I would never have expected someone to act like that or say that, or react in that way.

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Yeah, and I will, okay, I will agree with you, because I did notice in love Island when I was starting season four, because again, I couldn't watch season 123, and I'm not watching the UK version. I'm watching the US version. Just be clear. Okay, they leading in when they were introducing all the characters, they were like. I'm this blah, blah, blah, blah. I like to do this. And then then you're like, you get to know the characters. And you're like, doesn't even seem like what that person is like, Yeah. And you're like, that person is a nurse and cares for the elderly,

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being like, I like to pop bottles. I like the I like F boys. I like to did it. And then you're like, I'm a nurse on them in my fourth year, mastering my nurses, doctors, nurses. And you're like, what

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they don't fit. And a lot of it is. A lot of it too. It's like a doctor, whatever. I mean, there were, there hasn't been a doctor yet that I've seen. Maybe you guys can tell me that

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Tarzan guy with the long, curly hair, he just got his PhD, or he was getting his PhD, I

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don't know, but one person in the episode, in the one I'm watching down this season, is a microbiologist, yeah,

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and then that's the thing, is that one guy who came in and he was talking all I thought, and he was like, and I'm like, Who would like this guy? Like, he's such a douchebag. And then later on, you find out the girl that he's with at the end of the season, they like, nerd out, talking about microbiology and genomes and all these things. And I'm like, That is not the same person that was there. Yeah. So anyways, this it's, it's interesting to see. Anyways, watch some reality TV, just just to get some tips on creating memorable characters that people want memorable and see again.

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But those that watch reality TV, I'm eating a one of my horse eating, when you're talking vanilla, being stoned, seriously, and having my cup of tea. Oh, God, sorry. Let me just I'll talk while, you know, finish chewing something really

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good to say. Nice etiquette. There's podcast etiquette, you know, no

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one. I never had to fill out anything before I signed up for this deal.

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So anyways, we're talking about

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how to build a character. No, I'm trying to tell you something. Oh, sorry. Were you busy? I don't remember what I was trying to tell you earlier. That's okay. No, it was something about reality TV, memorable characters. Yeah, because you know what, you guys, let's just be real here for a minute. Because I'm never real. I'm gonna be real real talk. Here's some real talk, real right now and tell you, isn't it amazing to watch reality TV, because then you're like, you know what? My life doesn't suck as bad.

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Yeah, my problems aren't as big. My problem, relationship issues are nowhere near this mess.

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It really gives you some massive self esteem. Yeah, yeah. That's all it is. It's a self esteem booster and nice people to look at, and that's it,

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yeah, and that's the thing that the biggest takeaway

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for me, because you don't watch reality, never, do you ever. Okay, this

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is the thing. I can walk into the bedroom while you're watching it, go to the bathroom and leave and see that 15/32, snippet and know exactly what's going on for the rest of the season, right? Because it's just so repetitive. It is not. It is so repetitive. Anyways, the reason that reality TV is so interesting, and the reason you love it and get drawn into it is because the people are a mess. I love I

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see people. Everyone know why? No, but everybody does wonder, why? Because I'm messy, right? But I There are so many levels to me, so many levels to my personality.

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Like your shirt right now that says sappy and stabby.

8:04

That's you. But there are so many levels. Like, sometimes you will get like a sweet girl, sometimes you'll get a crybaby. Sometimes you'll get someone who's really, really mad. Just depends. Bag of

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tricks, yeah, but nobody like, it's not interesting to watch someone living a happy, shiny life, there's, there's no fun. There's no entertainment value in that. People like to watch messy, Plex, complicated, magic ridden people, right? That because that creates drama. If everything is happy and sunshine, there's no drama. That's why a lot of drama doesn't a lot of no drama doesn't sell no and a lot of times that's why in reality TV, you're like, Okay, well, that whole situation was set up, because I'm still gonna appreciate some drama. There's still reality in it, but the situation like these people are gonna go have a conversation about how their marriage might be ending. Okay, let's go up. Wait, don't talk about it yet. Okay, we gotta go over to the beach, and we gotta set up the lighting, and we gotta have the lighting guy holding the reflector. Can now talk about your marriage, right? So, you know, it's set up, but it's still reality. It's messy. So today we are going to, you said, we're talking about character. We're going to build a character from scratch. Okay, these are some of the things that I ask my characters, that I asked to get to know my characters that I think are important beyond like, What's your favorite food and what's your favorite color and where did you go to your

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weird Scott, because most people do not talk to fictional characters. Most writers do, nor do they dream of fictional characters. Most writers do, nor do they have friends as fictional characters. Most writers do. Their world does not revolve around fictional characters. Okay, so enough about me. Tell me how I got into this mess in the first place you married started with I do, I do not. I do not. Remember signing on a dotted line about all this crap. You know, as a screenwriter, before we even met, you were not a good screenwriter. Wow, thanks. Just be real now, guys, let's be real. See, messy. I'm the first to admit. Admit I'm messy.

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Okay, so this is what. We're gonna do. We are going to build a character from scratch.

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Okay, screenwriting, because maybe tell their voice.

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So the reason we're going over this is because everything ends with character. Everything begins with character. People come back for television for character. They don't come back to see the plot. They're going to be interested to see how the plot moves the characters, but they come back to see the people that they love and they hate and that they want to see how this relationship is going, what's going to happen to this person or that person. That's why you come back. You go to movies, when you when you finish a movie, what do you talk about to people, to when people, oh, how was the movie? What do you talk about the character? The characters you don't talk about the the plot in the story. You might talk about the big twist, but you talk about the people, you remember the things that the people did and who they were and how they acted, and that's what you remember,

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okay, breakdown, but it doesn't begin and end with character. What it begins with care and ends with actor.

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Okay, that was dumb. Can we edit that out? Oh, I

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feel dumber now, Dumb and Dumber. So no editing, okay?

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No. Ed sees, no. Ed

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sees. What do they say? The girls are like, no, no. They say something, no, sick. Grade six friends, no, yeah. What is it? No, I don't know. Now people are gonna be like, Why does she have great students?

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She hangs out with these grade six kids realize her, because I have all their home, yeah, she helps out. First.

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I also took a care home, and I bake for the coffee club there on Tuesdays for the care home. And now explain,

11:31

and there was a this care home as a program where a group of kids goes for grade six and they do their whole schooling there with these elderly people. Yeah, we met them, and they thought she was the coolest girl ever, because they loved her OTD, which I guess is outfit of the day. I learned she always has cool it's a match or converse, if you're just tuning in. Desiree has over 80 pairs of unique converse, 87 Yes, over 80 and so anyways, they became they just want to hang out with her. So anyways, they're telling her they have all this lingo and and I'm like, how was your day? She's like, well, I guess I slayed, whatever that means. Anyways, true story, we are going to ask a whole bunch of questions. You're gonna answer them, and if you can't figure an answer, I can always help

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you. I don't do good with these. I'm not good on the spot. But we'll have some fun, and

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we'll see who this character is by the end of this, and how that will dictate into whether it's a TV show or a movie, or what the genre might be, and that kind of thing. Okay, so everything does go back to character. It does everything's on character, if and when you're I mean, obviously a lot of times when you're creating something, you come up with a concept, right? But you immediately have to find the character for that concept. Or other way around is you come up with a character that you think of, and they're in your idea book, or someone you've always thought of, or whatever, and they, they end up dictating concept,

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right? Because at the end of the day, you really want it doesn't matter if you like the character. But the point of the whole story is that you want to see where that character goes.

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Yep, exactly. And if you hear some little clip clapping in the background, that's our puppy, Gracie. Our puppy is over 15. She's an old lady, and she's very anxious and kind of losing her mind a little bit, so she just paces, and we don't say anything about it, because we don't want to make her more anxious. So that's just life right now. So anyways, Hi, Grace. Say hi to grace. Everybody. She can't hear. She's deaf, so she's fully deaf, yeah, but feel bad for her. Oh, no, she doesn't. If you feel bad for her, give our, uh, give our podcast five stars, and we'll let her know, and then we'll give her five cookies. Good deal. She prefers toothbrushes. Okay, so here we go. Are we building we're building a character. Is it going to be a man or a woman? We're going to build a man, a man that's unexpected. I thought you were gonna say women. Me too, but then I thought I'm gonna, I saw your mouth started to say woman. Okay, so it's a man. How old is that man, 92 this story's got longevity to it. People, you're gonna go with that final answer,

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no. Okay, can I change to a woman? Sure I knew it. Did you really know

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he's not gonna do well with this man? 92 year old.

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Man, sorry, guys, I'm indecisive. That's what makes me

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have character. Okay, so it's a woman. And how old is this woman?

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44 seems like a good age.

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Okay, just to be clear, we're not building a character that is you, okay? No, it's too easy. You're trying to get out of having to think of things just gonna build

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yourself. It's too early in the morning. I haven't woken up enough. Yeah, I have my caffeine with my tea.

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Okay, so she's a woman. She's 44 okay, what is her ethnicity? Spanish? You're not Spanish. You look Spanish, but you're not.

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I know that's

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why you said it. People always think of Spanish. Okay, so she's so she's 44 in Spanish, yeah. Does she have a religion, or religious

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beliefs? She is She believes in Buddha,

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so she's a Buddhist, or she just believes in the practice. No, she

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doesn't believe. She just believes in the goodness of people and their beliefs.

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Okay to believe in. Does she believe in a higher power or just the universe?

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She's spiritual.

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Spiritual. Okay? So she's spiritual. Now. Does she have any special abilities or disabilities that the.

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Line or makeup who she is. She uses hairspray canisters to fly.

15:05

Okay, do you remember that movie? My secret No, not my secret identity. There was a show and you did

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that wasn't the same.

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Jerry O'Connell.

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Wasn't Jerry O'Connell in Encino

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Man? No, that was Sean Astin, No, the other guy, Brendan Fraser, oh, yeah, Brendan, no, they even look alike. No. So Is that your final answer?

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I don't know. It's kind of lame. Okay, I but I was first thing, okay,

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okay, so superpower, it says abilities, the next one is superpower, but I meant superpower, like, not a superpower, but like her superpower is her kindness or

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like, something like that. Abilities, just wait, I'm going back to abilities,

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too many special ability or disability abilities, because disabilities are actually abilities. They enhance other abilities, as we know in our family, yeah, abilities or disabilities. For this woman, visible, invisible, give me one. I don't know. She's, uh, genius. She's a prodigy. She plays piano like she can just touch it and play anything she hears. I don't know. She's Spanish. She's Spanish, Mexican, Mexican. Okay, he doesn't play piano. She plays what's the guitar, not the guitar. The other thing, the ukulele. Yeah. Okay, so she's a ukulele player. That's her special, yeah? That's more of a talent, I guess. Well, I didn't say that that, but Sure, she's smart, you said, so she's really smart, that's what you said she plays. So she's genius level smart.

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But can we play ukulele? She doesn't know any other other instrument

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sounds good. Okay? What? What is her superpower? Her human superpower? Your superpower, for example, is you can talk to anyone instantly like you're their best friend, and they tell you everything that you don't want to know. That's your superpower. But I'm saying so that's an example. So what does she have a superpower? What's her

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superpower? She's able to know when someone is in need. Okay? She can just tell someone's and pick up on that. Yeah, she can sense things like that. That's cool.

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That's a good that's a that's good. That can dictate a lot of what she does. Okay? Does she have any specific diagnosis, any kind of medical, whether it's physical or internal or mental diagnosis, like, she's a super she's a genius because she was hit in the head when she was a kid and it activated a certain part of her brain. Or, why is she super smart? Like, where is there? Does she have a brain tumor? And the brain tumor, like, accelerated something, make her incredibly smart? What, what might be a diagnosis

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for her she had when she was little, she had a monarch butterfly crawl into her ear.

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Okay? And what did that monarch butterfly do? Lay eggs and there's a butterfly in her head like

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she uses her hair. You see? What? I live with everybody? Well, she flies. She uses her hairspray. That is the superpower you're using. No, I'm not using it. I don't know, Scott, this is frustrating me.

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Come on now, this is, this is writing. You have to be. You host a writing

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podcast. I did not sign up for this writing All right, listen. Do I'm gonna help you out as we go. Just wait. So what are you what would you say that she was not

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be her smart like? Does she have a diagnosis? Does she does she have some rare thing

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that she has, something where it's an extra chromosome on the x, y, z, w, x, f, q4, Gene Okay, so it's just she have to take kind of drug for it, s, n2, Gene depletion. This isn't you. Does she have? Does she have some kind of drug that she's Yeah, when she takes the job, when she takes this specific drug for her disorder, that's when she becomes super

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smart. Also, the drug that she takes has an effect on her brain that activates certain pieces of her brain to make her genius level smart

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and be able to sense when things, sense when someone's in need, but not the normal sensing when someone's in need to like, she like, feels it like it hits her, yeah, and it controls her, and it almost sounds like a jolt down her spine. And then she's like, That person needs me and can't do anything else until she goes to that

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person. So her world has to stop, and she can't move on until she helps that person in need. Yes, that's cool. You see how this is like? This is why it's really cool to help build characters with someone else, right? Because you you just come up with things that you normally wouldn't come up with by, you know, riffing off the different stuff. So she don't know what her disorder is. Doesn't matter. Whatever she takes to her disorder affects her brain. Is XYZ, W, some made up infarction. So it's a heart attack. Infarction, Yes, Mark myocardial, yeah. We talked about this in a previous podcast. I forgot. I'm not surprised. So she, she has this she takes this drugs. For some reason, it affects her brain, and it makes her feel things for people incredibly smart, but can also pick up on that someone is in need. Okay, cool, all right. Does she have any addictions? She's addicted to chocolate. Fair enough. As are you these? A lot of pieces of you are slipping in, and that's part of it, right? When you build a character, a lot of yourself goes into a character. So, okay, so she has an addiction to chocolate. It's good addiction. Has she lived through any major tragedies? Yes. Can you name one? Can you just name one? What's the tragedy she went through?

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Her parents, both? Died when she was young.

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Okay, good, at age six. Okay, so her parents died when she was six. Does she have any trauma?

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They fell out of an airplane. How do you fall out of an

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airplane? Or maybe the door flew off an airplane. They got pulled out because they were sitting right in those seats.

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Sure, someone flew up to the airplane. No. Someone jumped to the airplane and offered a pizza, and then they went to reach the pizza and fell out.

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Okay, so anyways, laughing about her parents dying, there we go. So her parents, So does she? So the trauma? Did she experience any major trauma? Not. I guess that would be her trauma.

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That's her trauma. And she's also afraid of flying. Okay, okay,

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so she is afraid of flying. That's good. That's a fear. Good characters needs fear because it's good to know a character's fears because that'll speak to their flaws. So what is her job? What does

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she do for a living? She is a flight attendant.

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She can't be unless this is turning into like a major dark comedy. She's afraid of flying, and she's a flight attendant. Overcomes it by choosing a job to face your fear.

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Dani, she helped. She helps a lot of people that that's the whole thing. Okay? She helps a lot of people because she encounters a lot of people, so she senses things. Okay, so this is actually turning out to be quite good. Okay, I'm glad I didn't go with the hairspray, because that

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was okay. So what is her ultimate want in life? What does she want more than anything

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she wants to. She wants to be able to get rid of this ability. Why were you gonna laugh? Because I thought you're gonna say

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something like, she wants to be a pilot. So she wants to, that would have been two on the nose. She wants to no longer have this ability to feel what people when people are Yeah, because she can't.

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She can't move on with her own life help herself, because she's always helping out, right? And she wants to be able to, she wants to be able to live, and she doesn't feel like she can live right now because of this

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always pulling her. But if she stops her drug, then this disorder takes over, no, but that No, but that's that's good, because then if she takes, if she stops taking the drug, she won't have that, she won't feel this need that people have, right? But then she will die or get sick or whatever. So it's like that, right? That's good, that's good. So that's her

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want in itself, right there, because she knows that if she stops taking the drug, something bad will happen. But at the same time, she's killing her, yeah?

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Because she just can't find herself. Maybe, yeah, yeah. So then when you know what some What a character wants, you have to find out what they actually need, right? And as a writer, as a writer, developing something you need, you should know what their need is, right? So her want is to no longer have this feeling that you know, identifying what people need and how she can't move on until she helps them. So what would she need? That's the want. Just stop that. But what's the need?

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She needs to feel wanted and loved, not just for her ability to fix things

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for other people. So she wants people to see her as good and see who she is without having that, without just because she helped them, right? Okay, yep, so that's the need. Is the need to be seen for who she is and love for who she is. The want behind that is having this idea go away, of this feeling that she gets, which

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is important, sounds very familiar? Yes, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to do that. No, it's

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just that's leading to our characters. But that's the thing is, so over the course of a story, she will, you will, you will, have that character achieve that want, like, okay, good. Now it's done. I can actually have this stop, but then you realize that what you needed wasn't for it to stop, because still no one sees her, right? So the need is actually to be seen and to be able to be herself, in love, for who she is, which ties into her parents and the trauma and all those things, right? So them falling out of a plane? Yeah. Okay, so now getting into more some detailed stuff. So what is her childhood defining moment? What was the thing that happened that made that made her go, that's who I'm gonna be. Anything. No. Was it when her parents died? Well, no, but that we already talked about that. So what happened when her parents died? Did she go live with her

aunt? Did she go live in an orphanage? Did she live on the street? Did her estranged father take her and there was an abuse situation? Did he lock her in a basement? Did she have to run away? Okay, this is giving like, how? What? What led her to become that person who moved forward and did something cause her disorder? Did she always have the disorder? I don't know. One other thing, what's up? I mean, it's hard. It's one of those things. That's why I was like, Don't got anything, anything, because it's not something you can just snap a finger. You really got to think it out. You got to build that person. Because, as we talked about in the podcast before, there's always a moment in our lives when something major happens, and that is where we understand who we're going to be and decide who we want to be. As people

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decide it just happens. Just happens. Sometimes we force them to who we don't want to be. Yeah.

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So that's the thing, is, yeah, those questions were all dark that I was throwing out there, okay, but

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maybe she was bullied, okay? Maybe someone bullied her, okay. And then, as a result, something happened, and then that's what caused her to have this brain issue in the first place, and being able to be really smart and eating them

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that, yeah, that could be cool. It could be like when she say she was six or maybe older, maybe after but maybe she was like these kids locked her in a closet at school, and then. Left, and she was left there, and no one knew she was over the weekend, but no one knew. No one cared, because her parents just died in a plane crash, and she was in that closet when it happened, and so she got out of the closet, all traumatized, went to go home, had no parents. Had to learn her parents were dead. That changes you right? No one so. So then that can also speak to this need, because she needed someone, and she had nobody, and so she needed someone, and no one was there. So now she becomes the person that who is there when someone needs something. So maybe this whole need thing isn't even caused by the drug. Maybe it's all subconscious and it's in her head. Oh, and maybe that's what she learns over the story that you know what I mean? Okay, so anyways, that's why I asked these questions, and kind of like lead to different things. So who do they see if someone made a story on their life, who would they think would be the perfect person to play them in a movie? What's her name? I don't know. That's pretty that's pretty generic. Remember, she's 44 and Mexican.

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What was that girl that was in the is it Princess Diaries? Yeah. Anne Hathaway, yeah, okay, but Mexican or just Anne Hathaway, good play here I see Anne Hathaway, sure, yeah.

26:07

Okay. What special talents do they have? Besides being able to fly with hairspray cans, we took that out. Yeah? Ukulele, right? She plays the ukulele. So that's her talent. So you see, I put after this word, like 25 different question marks, secrets. What? Obviously, everyone has lots of secrets. But what is her biggest secret that she would never tell anybody, and if anyone found out, she would not be able to come back from it. She can talk to dead people. Okay? So she's like a medium. She feels people. Maybe that's how she picks up on the fact that someone needs something, she sees someone around them or feels someone around them. Yeah, that's a complicated character. This is a complex character. Okay, so that's their secret. Okay, have they ever killed someone purposely or non purposely? No, okay. Would they kill someone if they had to, if they had to be able to kill someone, not like, in self defense or whatever, but, oh, like, someone's trying to kill you, so you stop them. But like, would they have it in them? Because someone,

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no, okay, because she's too nice, she's too nice. And some people on other

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people, some people couldn't, like, if you whatever, she was drafted and had to go to war and had to fight and shoot people. Would she? No, she would never apply for a drop like that, not apply. But sometimes you're forced into it, depending where you live, okay, no, right? My answer is, No, I couldn't. I could not imagine taking a gun and shooting someone. No, I couldn't, you know, I mean, even if someone broke in my house and was gonna be like, kill my family, I don't, I could, but I'd be like, there's got to be a different way out of this, you know, like, I'm just not that kind of No, hands down our pillow. Yeah, instant, yeah. I know. I know you would. Thank you. No, I still would do it, but, but I'm saying it's like some people wouldn't even hesitate, because they don't, they don't care so, but that's

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called a sociopath. Yes, I know

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you just said you would kill without question. I guess

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I'm a sociopath. Okay, recognize

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if they had to kill someone, how would they? How would they do it?

28:00

Pin them in their

28:03

wheelchair. He's thinking, wheelchair, no, but some people would kill someone with hands off.

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Pin them in a car. Pin them so drive over them. Yeah, okay, okay. I don't know why we need to know these things well, because

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it, I mean, it's a it's like someone who takes prescription drugs or not, right? Some people have a very specific way that they will or will not take prescription drugs. That tells you a lot about a person, right? I don't understand those people who can take a pill without water. You see it all the time in the movies. They'll take a pill bottle, they'll pop it in their mouth, and then they'll be like, hard swallow it. And I'm like, What the hell, man, I can't even take pills with water. Like it defines people so that that's just something like, you know? How would they kill some someone would do it with a sleeping pill. Someone would do it close with a knife. Someone would not be able to keep their eyes open. You know what I mean? Like, yeah. So I think it just defines a house how human someone is,

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right? I could kill a person before I could kill an animal. There you

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go. See, that's, that's what I mean. That's exact. That tells you a lot about a person. So only if I was forced to, you're forced to, yeah. So what is their body count? Come on, you watch love Island and you don't know what? Hey, what's your body count? How many people they've slept with? None, none. There you go. That's a very specific thing about someone. What's is her favorite quality about herself? She likes her smile, okay. What does she hate about herself? She hates her eyes. Okay. What do they hate in life, in the world. What they hate the most

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unsympathetic people?

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Okay, what do they love most about the world? Do they love the smell of fresh air? Do they love the smell of fresh cut grass? Do they love the clouds? Do they love the

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water? About the world? They love that there's so many, that there's so many different people that make up the world, that live in such different lives and different surroundings than they would never even imagine. Just difference. I don't

29:48

know. She just loves the diversity and difference in the world. Yeah, good, okay, would they sacrifice themselves for someone else? Depends who it is, good answer. So not a stranger, maybe. But. Someone they care about or not, a 92 year old man, but maybe a six year old girl,

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yeah, okay, it depends.

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Do they lie? No, ever. No. Do they steal? No, they didn't go to Zellers and shoplift makeup in the back of their scooter. No, okay. Are they loved by anyone? No, interesting. Do they consider themselves alone in life, yes, by choice.

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No, this condition has caused them to try to not be around too many people.

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So by choice, yeah, okay, good. And do they consider themselves to be a bit messy?

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Did you not just hear the last 30 minutes of conversation?

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Yes, so that is a messy character,

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okay, yeah. So how does this relate to writing?

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So that is a great way to understand and build a character, because everything we just talked about in those 2025 minutes, imagine the complexity and depth and layers of the different possible stories that you can make from that specific character alone. Right? That character may not, as you continue to develop, it be the same. Things will change. Things will be added, things will be taken away. Maybe she doesn't pillow ukulele, because that has nothing to do with anything in the story. Maybe it's something you just know as a writer, but just doesn't appear in the story, but allows you to know your character, right? A lot of the same thing, a lot of the stuff with the trauma and the things they love and hate, they may not show up in the story, but they help you understand how they see the world, right?

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That's why you need to know all these things. Because I was wondering, I'm like, Well, what is this happening? This have to do with if I'd kill someone?

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Yeah, and these are just sample questions. Like, I probably have 1000 things I ask to get to know someone, and sometimes it lets me understand more about who they are. So let's just it

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doesn't right clear this is to get to knowing someone in your mind and not in real life, because you suck at getting to know people.

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I don't care about people I don't know. I don't want to know the details of everything that you know. You'll go up and ask them like, 17 different questions to know them. But this is just like you should. You shouldn't just think of a character and be like, Okay, I'm gonna write this script about this character. No, you need to know them, because if you don't know who they are, to their core, to every piece of them that makes them them, then you don't know how they're going to react in a situation, and that leads to bad writing. That leads to on the nose writing and on the nose dialog. It leads to contrivance. It leads to a story that is feeling written and predictable. If you force a character to go somewhere because you need the story to put them there, then it's going to feel written if you need them to be somewhere, but then ask, how do they get there? How will they respond? I need them to end up here. So if they're going to respond this way to this situation, then I need to make sure that the next situation forces them to look this way or decide that they're going to go that way. That's why it's always great to just kind of leave a story open and let the character lead it right when you're mapping out your story, always ask, how is my character going to react to this, this character that we just talked about, if she's walking down the street and she hears a sound of a plane above that doesn't sound good, how do you think she's going to react

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if she's walking down if it doesn't sound good, she's going to take cover underneath whatever she can, right? If she's

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walking down the street and well, she's going to freeze, it's going to trigger her, right? She's going to like, Who knows what'll happen if she's walking down past the schoolyard and there's a six year old kid being bullied from some from a couple other girls, how is that gonna affect her? What do you think she's gonna do? Right? These things, if you didn't know any about that character, you're not gonna know, right? You're not gonna know how they react in a situation. A lot of, like, 90% of what is here that you talk about is pieces of you, different ways, though, right? Like, Oh, she's a very sympathetic person who will help anyone in need. That's you. This isn't you. This you don't have a disorder that you take a drug for that affects your brain. It makes you feel and see dead people around someone that says this person needs help, right? Like, no, but there comes from aspects of you.

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I guess that's what it is with good writing, right? Is that you see yourself. You should see yourself in pieces of the character, yep,

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and pieces and people you know, the people you know as well. You know

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those characters because you legit know them, yep. And what you know is easier to write than what you don't know. I think

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it is. Yeah, exactly, yeah. So knowing, and that's why, that's where real heart of character comes from. It's the realness that you put into them. So don't just write a character, a stock character, who's just there doing and saying what they need to say. That's just not good enough. You need, especially in this market and with AI and all these things that are happening, the only way you're going to stand out is the unique perspective and voice that you bring to characters and stories. So do the work take the time. 90% of writing is more thinking than writing, so you need to really take the time and slow yourself down and build a character that's unforgettable and memorable with so many complexities that you can't get enough of writing about them.

34:33

So making making the character, then really by making asking yourself these questions, and are you going to put these questions in the show notes? Yeah, I'll put this list of up in the show notes. I mean, that might be helpful to listen, for sure. But by getting your character, from there, you could go, and then from that, you could know your genre, right? Yeah.

34:52

It defines your genre, what your story is going to be, what the what the point of the story is. Because once you know a character like Well, you got to put them through a story for a reason. In, right? So now you know your character, what do they need to change? Like, that's why, I guess, what are their wants and needs? If you know what she wants and what she needs, then you could decide what the point of her story is, and what happened has to happen in the story together

35:11

to a place to achieve this, and what happens the thing is, is and what happens to the character. And I guess the thing is, once you have that character built, and you've asked your all these questions of your character then, and you've said this before, then what you do is it's almost a matter of like you sitting back and then just letting your character take over and lead the whole story exactly.

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Let let your character lead the story by having them act as they would in the different situations you create. Ask what the worst thing that can happen to them is, and then do it and make them go through it. Will create a dramatic narrative on its own, and that is how to build a character, some tips and tricks, and we will put those in the show notes. So we're gonna take a quick break for a little piece of information.

35:52

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.scriptreaderpro.com/rewrite and use the code rewrite 15 during checkout for the rewrite proposal to get 15% off.

36:35

Okay, thanks guys for joining us again, and we're back with the question and answer period of the podcast. Nice and someone has a question. What do they do? Just so you know, you can submit that to hello@scriptreaderpro.com with the subject line being questioned for podcast, or something along those lines. Thank you to all of the listeners out there who have submitted these questions. We have four of them that we're gonna be going over today. So first question, how do I know if I'm overwriting,

37:02

oh, if you look at your page and it's all large chunks and paragraphs of text, then you're overwriting a screenplay is designed to be shot. Anything that is not on those pages that can be shot is going to be removed when they move to production. Anyways. So you might as well just pare it down, cut away words you don't need and do it also, if your scripts like 180 pages long, you're overwriting, okay? And if someone tells you that you're overwriting, you're overwriting, don't

37:29

argue. Okay. So just that easy. That easy. Okay. So question two, that caveman, can I explain wardrobe and style of a character and all the things they wear each time we see them? What do you think? I think, if it's something that makes that character like, if they're known to always wear a pair of Converse, that's kind of cool to say wearing converse,

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yeah, or today she has on converse with sunflowers, right? Today she has black ones on, yeah, but it's important to the character, if it makes the character. But just to say, you know, if you don't want to set the whole wardrobe every single scene, no, but if she's a fashion designer, well, yeah, but it's different, I think. Like, generically, yeah, right. Like, overall, like, you can say a character gets out of bed and they're in their pajamas. You don't have to say they get out of their bed and they're in pajamas with a Hello Kitty top and flannel, right? Yeah, yeah, too much detail less. That's important. So, yeah, so if it's important, then, you know, yeah, if it defines who they are and whatever. But I don't I mean over too much again. It goes in with number one, overwriting, right? Too much detail is

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overwriting as well. Question three, how much swearing in a script is? Too much depends

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on the script. I guess if you're writing a script for Angel studios, you don't want to have F bombs all over the place. If you're writing Glengarry, Glen Ross, if you're writing a hard R action thriller, you'll whatever, right? If you're, if it's a drama about it's, if it's another an adult drama, then people

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swear. Except you notice, when we went to that movie the other day, I was like, there wasn't really a lot of swearing. And then there was, like, a couple swears thrown in, and it took me out, the fact that there weren't swears the whole way through. If you're going to swear, if you're going to have a few in there, swear the whole way, yeah, that's what I'm thinking, yeah, if you're not going to swear, really don't throw one or two words in, because it took me out. Yeah, it can be both ways. You can swear, good balance, yeah, or not enough, like, decide there's

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like, an F bomb in every line of dialog from every semester, because character beginning to end. It's boring and it's more creative too much, but I'm saying, but it has to fit the situation, right?

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Like, I do you know was that nobody too Yep. And it was just like, and I was like, well, that came out of nowhere. Yeah, when you haven't said anything else the whole movie,

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and sometimes it's like, oh, they'll allow us 2f words and a few of the others. So let's use them. You know, you don't have to use them, no, but it should fit. I mean, it's like, you look like television, like network television, nobody swears, no, and it should fit. You take a medical drama and you put it on streaming services, everyone's swearing, right? Like, so it's, it has to fit what you're writing. Well, it has

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to also fit the character. Yeah, exactly the character. Is a pastor at a church with 5000 people. Yeah. Do you think he's going to be using the F

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bombs if he did outside of the church and every conversation? That'd be cool. It would be because you don't expect,

40:09

not expected. Okay. Question four, I am told to keep my script under 120 pages, but I can't get it any lower than 143 no matter how hard I try. Why is it such a stringent page number maximum. Okay, so cats is not a word.

40:24

You may think you can't get a script less your script less than 143 pages, but trust me, you can. That's one of those things with learning to see your script from the outside, is is not being so precious about your words, your sentences. I challenge you to take your sentence count, count the words in your paragraph. If your paragraph has 113 words, try and get it to 110 100 and 101 and then 92 just challenge yourself. Even if you can remove one line from all your paragraphs, you're gonna drop 10 pages off your script. People aren't interested in movies that are longer than two hours. It's just how it is. It's not the 1970s or 80s or even 90s anymore. And don't compare your script. While Christopher Nolan does it. His screenplay was 193 pages. 93 pages. Doesn't matter. He's Christopher Nolan. You have to have a reader at the base level of a company be excited to read your script. And if they see a script 143 pages, they're gonna put it in wait and put it and grab the next one, right? So if you're writing a movie, you need to know your guidelines. And some movies are bigger and they need more pages. But no, no script really needs 143

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pages unless it's been hurt. Yeah.

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Do you even know what that is? No, you don't. But all right, yeah. So anyways, yeah, try and keep it under it's just no one wants to read something that long. If you need help with that contact script for your pro, check us out. We have people. I mean, I can go in and cut down a script any I do that a lot, so you it can be done. Don't tell yourself you can't challenge yourself to do it and look for some guidance. Check us out. Scriptreaderpro.com. We have everything that you could ever need. If you liked our podcast, if you felt entertained and educated and you learned something from it, pass it on to your friends. Share it. Give us a five star rating. Subscribe. You know, whatever podcast you're listening platform you're listening to this on like you mentioned. Email us at hello@scriptreaderpro.com any comments, if you want us to talk about a certain subject on a podcast, anything like that they didn't hear. Oh, I'm sorry.

42:07

Hello@scriptreaderpro.com thank you. You're so welcome.

42:13

Yes. So check us out. We have all the services a writer could ever need, because here at Script Reader Pro, we are all about helping writers craft wonder one page at a time you.