

Ep #40: On the Nose

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On this episode, we're talking about on the nose. Yeah, not what's on Desiree's nose or Scott's nose, but what it means to be on the nose. 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 the Script Reader Pro podcast. I am your host, Desiree, and I'm here with Scott. I happens to be my husband. I happen to be yes, not sure For how much longer nice I'm irritated.

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Yes, you get irritated in me all the time. Yeah, it's called marriage, love and marriage. And marriage, if the wife wasn't irritated at her husband, it

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goes together like a horse and carriage.

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Nice. Am I the horse or the carriage

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that was from love and marriage? What was the name of the show?

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Are we taking bets on whether or not Desiree can remember the title of something? What was the name of the show has to do with Mary being married, married with children. There you go. That's a throwback. That is a throwback and a half back and a half, yes, if you hear some clip clopping around in our episode, it's our dog, Gracie. She tends to be quite old now and anxious, so she's starting to pace a lot.

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She paces. You might hear a little clip clop. So what's your excuse, then, for pacing all the time and anxious. Anyways, that sums it up right there, on your nose. Nothing is on my nose. Seems like there's something on your nose. No, Scott, are you trying to get to the point of why? What we're talking about today talking about being on the nose, you're not doing a very good job. This is my job. This is that's

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an example of on the nose dialog, specifically saying what you need the audience to hear, but not in an entertaining or engaging

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way, right? So it would be like me saying to you, oh, that shirt is very interesting. You probably got that in this in the Lucky Brand store.

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Hey, yes, that would be very on the nose. Number one, because it says Lucky Brand. That's what I'm saying. And number two, because you were with me when I bought it in the Lucky Brand stores, you very, that would be very on the nose dialog, rather than saying, Remember when you bought that

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shirt. I know at the Lucky Brand Store said, but I think Lucky Brand closed.

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I don't know. Love Lucky Brand anyways, that is not a paid sponsorship, but we're talking about, but if you want to sponsorship, feel free. Feel free to sponsor. Yeah, I'll take some Lucky Brand.

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Me too. Lucky Brand. Here it was a purse from Vegas that first got me stuck on Lucky Brand. Anyway, we're talking about everything on the nose, not about purses or, you know, yes, we

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will be getting to that, not just about dialog, but lots of different examples of everything in a script falling victim to be on the nose. But before we do that, what do we always talk about when we start?

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We always talk about me.

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Yes, that's a given, but we also talk about something we've seen. So we talk about what we've seen. So we went to the theater. I know, because we love going to the theater, we have to mortgage out our house to go to the theater now, pretty much, yes, but we saw a sequel, and Desert is like, I don't remember seeing this first movie. And I said, but we saw it, like a month ago, all of us at home. I made you guys watch it because the sequel was coming out. Yes, and you're like, nope. And I gave you the title, and you were like, nope. And I watched the previous I started telling you remember this and this and this and this and this happened? Nope. I sit here watch the trailer. So she's watching the trailer three quarters of the way, I say. So do you remember it? Nope. She remembered nothing about it. And it was a really good show. So the sequel was number two. So it was called nobody, nobody,

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number two. But listen, even after all of that stuff, and even after watching nobody, too, still don't remember nobody,

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yeah, which, I mean, I don't know if that's a thing to say it was just wasn't memorable, because it's mostly an action movie, right? 90% action, some character. It was a

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big nobody

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to me, yeah, but, but the second movie, what did you think of it? Well, what did you think? I thought it was entertaining. I thought it didn't measure up as well to the first one, right? The first one was obviously better. Which is normal, am I supposed to have an opinion if I don't remember the first one? Did you enjoy it? I'm trying to remember it. I really enjoy pieces of it. They a large part of it takes theme park and the park things like booby traps and stuff, but the old hotel, yeah, but there was two major problems with it. I was talking about

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Matty Phil, about we're talking

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to bloody buddy Phil. I heard was blah, blah, blah, that's all you usually hear me say. But it was talking to my buddy Phil about it. And there's two things that that it was a casting thing. So number one, Tom Hanks son. Which one is

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Tom Hanks, his son? The sheriff? That's Tomlin Hanks. That was his son.

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Yes, but I have a problem with that, because I cannot take Colin Hank seriously as a bad guy character. That's what you said already. Yeah, say something new. I said that to who me? You told me this over we're on the podcast, right? Sorry you guys didn't hear that conversation. But he's wearing that baby face, and I just he's a nice guy. Just, I don't know. I couldn't I wasn't afraid of him. Isn't really a nice guy. I don't know he seems like a nice guy. Does he like volleyballs? Probably, yeah, but maybe they're triggering because his dad was away for too long. I'm wondering. Okay, maybe, but the and the other part was Sharon Stone's character, the the evil antagonist behind everything. I don't know what was happening in the movie or what she was doing, but she was so over the top. And just like I was like, again, why is anyone even like taking orders from her? It wasn't believable enough.

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It was kind of over the top, Barfy, almost like her character was kind of like, why are we watching you?

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Well, they're like, talking about, like, there's this voiceover, right? The main character asks this other guy, well, what, what is this woman gonna do when she finds out that I did all this stuff to her business? And then the other character starts talking about how evil and awful she is, and you wouldn't believe the thing she does. And while that VoiceOver is happening, they show her in her office, dancing, doing some weird techno dance for no reason. It was just so. So those pieces kind erect it.

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It's kind of frustrating me. You just talking about it again. It's kind of frustrating me. So it was slightly frustrating in parts. Yeah, I don't know it wasn't as

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good as the first one, but it doesn't matter, because you don't even remember the first one,

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so it wasn't as good as the first one. Me and Asha both, even though I don't remember the first one. Yes, it wasn't as good. Yes, I'm just saying it. So anyways, that's what we watched. So we're talking about everything on the nose. Yes, today we are talking to see what's on my nose. Everything. Nothing, nothing. Freckles. My dad's having something done with his nose.

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Yes, he is. He's getting a nose job. Weird. He's like, 7772

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he's 70 wide. Okay, come on, all right. He is not just getting a nose drop. He has breathing issues, so the guys can do a little bit of NiP, NiP, NiP, and his tuck, tuck, tuck.

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And he has a very big nose. He has a lovely nose. He does so we're talking about on the nose today, and we're going to be referencing a specific movie that we watched recently. I do remember this one, and if you haven't seen it, it's probably best to not see it. It's probably best to watch never watch it again. Okay, watch it so you can understand what we're talking about today, how crappy it is. Sorry. And again, we don't like to bash movies. Oh, bash. Scott doesn't like to bash. What was around in this movie was just bashable, unfathomable as to how it was actually agreed upon that that was good enough. But a lot of it, pretty much everything in that, in that movie, was on the nose in so many different ways. So we're going to be referencing that one a lot. It's on Netflix. You can watch it.

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What is the rating on Netflix? I don't know. What about on IMDb,

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I don't know, but you'll probably look it up, because that's what you tend to do. I do you guys. So we're talking about that. We're going to be talking about different areas that can be on the nose. And so a lot of times you'll hear basically just that note about dialog, right? The dialog was on the nose because of this and that. But I also find that different elements also fall into that category when it comes to characters, story details, plot twists, and how easy the script ends up solving problems, and talk about a lot of that stuff.

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What I can say, though, what made me interested in the movie in the first place, which always makes me interested, and if you've listened to our podcast before you know that I'm interested, is it was based on a true story? Yes, that took place in Amsterdam. I think it was, yeah, Amsterdam. So I was like, right away. I was like, Hey, I'm game for this. It's true story. It could have been done really well. Yes, it could. It could have been done really

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well. It's like they were trying to do too many things and do it in a very like, it's almost like they had the cookie cutter checklist, box of okay, we must have a backstory for this character. We must have some emotional thing happening with this character. We must have ties to the outside world with this character they

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were checking off. We must have humor that is unnecessary,

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yeah, yeah. And like, yeah. Anyways, so that's what it felt like, which is being on the nose, right? It's trying

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too hard, and you could be on the nose, though. Sometimes, sometimes it works, yeah,

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sometimes it could work. Sometimes there's no way around it, but doing it cleverly is the important

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part. So it actually says it dominated the Dutch headlines. So the story itself, you know, oh, because

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it was a true story about a guy who went into an Apple Store and pulled out a gun and took some hostages. Okay? Because he wanted a payout.

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Is but it says it dominated the Dutch headlines, which immediately gives the movie a certain weight, right? You immediately think, hey, that's gonna be interesting. Got 5.7 out of 10 on IMDb, 10% Rotten Tomatoes. What's letterboxed?

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It's just another rating system, 2.2 out of five. Okay, oh, that's saying 2.2 out of

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10. When a gunman enters an Apple store in the heart of Amsterdam, the police face a delicate challenge to resolve the standoff. Yeah, that sounds much more exciting to me and interesting than what the movie actually was,

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yeah, and I, like, I would have liked to have, like, I wish I understood their original language and was able to actually listen to what the dialog was, because the subtitled stuff how it was dubbed and subtitled. And we read this after that, someone said, this is a perfect example. What happens when you use AI to dub a movie. This is why AI is not good all the time. Yeah. But and then the more I thought about it. Lot of the dialog was like, Yeah, you know what? Because it was so flat, right? It was so not just the delivery, but just even the dialog used so and that can happen sometimes when one language doesn't have the exact same way of putting sentences together as another language, right? But even still, a lot, most of the, most of the stuff that ended up bad wasn't just dialog, it was just the choices throughout the story. So we're gonna reference that, but we're gonna also talk in general about what, what being on the nose

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exactly. And we want you to use your own opinion. Watch the movie if you're interested the movie. Love the movie. But also, when I'm looking here at IMDb, here are some other opinions. Okay, these are always funny. They're reviews the worst movie ever. E, V, E, R, it feels awful to lose two hours just like that. I am confused. U, T, F, was that? Yeah, this was the biggest waste of time. Boring movie, no plot, no explanation. This is a terrible movie. Who decided to watch it?

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That person, but yes, so anyways, like I said, don't like I said, don't like to bash people's work. A lot of people went and put that together and stuff, but there were just choices that just made no sense. And we'll, we'll reference some of those. So again, it would be good to kind of give it a give it a quick watch to as an, as a training

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tool, right? Yeah. We want to know what you guys think too. Yeah. So let's

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get into it. So the first thing we're going to talk about is examples of what it means when dialog is on the nose. So desire gave an example of that, talking about my shirt that she was with me,

knowing the store, knowing the brand. She would not say all the details, because I already know them.

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Did you know I just came out with that instantly, of course you did.

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What would I like? It would be me like saying, because Desiree and my anniversary is coming up here. And so if I said Yes, sir, Hey, did you know our wedding anniversary is coming up on September 14? What Right? Like, I would never say that,

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because we better not well, we might not get the next anniversary, man,

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because we both know the date of our anniversary. So saying that would be on the nose, the opposite of that means if somebody else was in the room and that person needed to know, like, you need the audience to know the date, so that person can be used to provide the date. So if I say, all right, hon, we didn't book that reservation for anniversary, and the other person in the room can say, oh, when's your anniversary, right? And then one of us would say, September 14. That's not on the nose, because it makes sense. You're giving

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us something. You're giving us information without, like, being in, blatantly, in our faces.

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Yeah. So you need to find a way, if you're like, This is a detail the audience needs to know, because it's important for this reason. And this reason, you find a way to do it that isn't on the nose. Isn't two people talking about something they already know, right? So that's the kind of, like, the easiest way to explain it. The other part of it is, is sometimes on the nose is someone saying exactly what they're thinking. And in life, people don't say it while desert is but most people don't say exactly what they're thinking. They will say it in ways that are kind of like cloudy. There's subtext there. They want to say, I really don't like that shirt on you because it's too short and your stomach is showing but you would say it in a different way. I really like that other shirt that you had on first. The subtext of that is, I don't like this shirt, but I don't want to tell you that your feelings, right?

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Looked better in the other dress. Yeah? So rude. I sent this to you the other day, speaking about saying exactly what you're thinking. Yes, you probably didn't even see it because you now that you are older, you don't acknowledge when I send you messages anymore, or tell me you've received anything for some reason. So it says, Just be yourself, yeah. And then, okay, well, I did, and now I gotta apologize. Yeah, that's what happens when I say what I'm thinking. Then I

have to backpedal and pretend that I didn't mean to be rude, which I actually kind of meant to be rude, but kind of in a sarcastic way, yeah, which

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is, which is trying to be clever. Sometimes, sometimes it's on the nose. But in a movie or TV show, TV script or movie script, you need to make sure that every single line of dialog is inventive and unique and not specifically working, not as it would in real life, right? You always want to say, okay, so if it was in real life, would these characters still say it in this way? Right? If there was the, I mean, the best way, the best solution, to prevent all on the dialog is pretend nobody's watching. If there's no audience, what would that? What would those people be doing and saying, if there was no audience watching, that's how you want to have the the dialog run to prevent,

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right? Like you wouldn't go to coffee shop. It'd be like, it's so nice that we're at this coffee shop. Yeah, exactly. So it's so nice that you're drinking coffee now and I'm drinking tea. Yeah, yeah. Instead of like, how's your how's your drink, I love your vanilla bean, the vanilla bean scone that you have that you're eating right now across from me at the table.

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Yes. So an example in this i hostage movie is you've got this one group of hostage negotiators, and there's three of them in a room, and you don't know who's kind of in charge that this one woman's brought in. She's supposed to be important. So they're on the call. All three of them are listening, and one is talking, and she says something to the guy, and then he just hangs up on her, and she looks at the other hostage negotiator, and she says, He hung up. We just they're all listening to the call like it was like,

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what? Are there. They are there. We're missing

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it. So that's the same time. That's the example. You wouldn't have that line. You can have them also at each other and like, and then cut away from the scene like,

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you also wouldn't have her say they hung up, or like he hung up. You wouldn't even have her a hostage negotiator saying that, no, no, they wouldn't say he hung up. Well, especially if two other people are also listening, and we would just go and try to call and try to call again or make a decision to do it, or

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something, right? Like, so that that was very on the nose, we just kind of looked at each other and like, why does she tell them they're listening? Be different if they weren't listening, right? Or she looks out the window to the supervisor outside who's waiting for a report, and she like,

makes the motion, like, he hung up or something, right? So that that's an example there. The other piece is talking about nothing to do with the story, right? Having characters just talking for no reason, giving dialog that they're using, isn't like, just, oh man, sorry, I'm late. Oh, that's okay. Why were you late? I was trying to get on the bus, and then this, like, this person you know, was holding things up because they didn't have the right change. I don't know. It took like, an extra couple minutes. Couple minutes, and then by going on, it went around, and it's

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like, why do we need to know this? Does this have to do with the story? Yeah, exactly. I mean, that's

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not necessarily on the nose dialog, but it's bad dialog. And it's on the nose because these people are just telling each other every detail. Because in real life, we do that, right? Oh, why are you late? Oh, we do, but we don't need to see that. But in actually movie, every word's important, right? You should only be telling us what moves the story forward or reveals important information. If he's telling a story about the bus, and then we find out that you know some big thing about the character that is going to affect the

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story. Got hit by a bus when there's 12 and now they have one foot.

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And exactly, it's trick, man.

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I was like, What the heck they got hit by a bus? And how this but okay, that anyway, so, but also it's a whole piece too, like you said earlier about talking, unlike human conversation would normally be right, like not having it be realistic, like you've, I don't know, maybe you don't. I listen in on conversations all the time. You don't really listen in the same way I do. I go and I run across them all while you're waiting for an elevator for 20 minutes so that I can watch a bunch of security guards taking a guy down. I'm interested in that kind of stuff and nosy, yes, right? So unlike human conversation, it's like that would never happen. People don't talk that way,

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right, right? And it's also situational, like, again, in this i hostage movie, it's like this intense hostage standoff, and there's like, people upstairs in this building, and it's like, life or death thing, and there's this big, bad hostage leader, guy, their SWAT team, leader, whatever. And they're talking about delicate stuff, and how are we gonna get this? And if the boss bomb goes off, we're gonna those people are gonna die. All right, guys, we ordered 100 pizzas. You'll be here in a second. It's like, dudes, I forgot about the why? Like, why? Okay, sure, they gotta eat. But why are you, like, in the middle of this important stuff, we got the voiceover too. It's like, hey, we

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ordered 100 pizzas. Guys. Do we have to see them eating the pizza?

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Right? Well, I was gonna bring that up later, because this, you know. But yes. So then, then later on, these other two guys, which we don't really know anything about are sitting having this big emotional conversation in the car, yeah, in the car, yeah. With their full ski masks on with their pizza. For some reason, they had to wear ski masks the entire time, and then they didn't take the ski masks off when the pizza came. But they're having this big, huge emotional conversation about his wife. Oh, my wife. I don't know this is dangerous. And, you know, my kids are worried, and then, like, they're not even fully done their conversation, and there's a knock on the window, and they open it, and they're like, pizza here, and they just hand them boxes of pizza. And it was just like, what? So anyways, that's, that's what it means that it's not like humans would interact. It's not, it doesn't fit the moment.

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But there's an opposite to that too, which you have to be careful of as a writer, that you're not being too like, cryptic, that you're not like, Okay, I'm so confused I lost there's a happy medium there where you're just like, not like, Okay, what did I just listen to for two minutes? Because I have no idea where this is going or what is happening. Now, I'm way out of the movie. You've thrown me out of the movie, and I don't even know if I'm gonna get back in.

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Yeah. And a lot of that too, is like, that's what you see happening. That's what I see happening a lot of times in screenplays, is people, you know, like, I'm reading a scene and it's like, a page and a half, two pages, and I have no idea what's what these characters talking about, because it's trying too hard. It's trying to be too clever. It's trying to be like, Oh, I'm gonna, like, keep this secret. But then it's, like, Okay, now I'm, like, lost in the story, because I don't know if I was supposed to pick something up there or not. So you don't want to try too hard and have character unless it's like, you're keeping a secret and they're talking about everything that's secret. Well, that's cool, you know, it's, it depends how you do it, right? But just having characters talk about stuff and it doesn't make sense. And then we go into the next scene, and we don't know where we are that that's also, you know, that's the opposite of being on the nose. So you got to find that balance. Of that's really sad, happy medium. Yeah. Speaking of characters, you said we're talking about characters as well. Yes, that's so we went over dialog. We did so characters, right? So I mean this, I mean again, I don't know everything, and not everything. I say is exactly, you know, outline. Thank goodness he. It's this. But when it comes to like character stuff, being on the nose, I think a lot of it comes down to like stereotypes, cliches, characters who were just there because you think they're funny or cool, but they really have nothing to add to the story. That's all being on the nose too, because it comes down to making it, making, you know, not giving it a unique enough twist. So, for example, the cliché characters, right? The police captain who yells and slams his fist on the desk and calls his people names until they you know, go on. You get you, you do that job. I got the mayor breathing on my neck. It's like we've seen that before. It's been done several times. It's cliché.

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Can you throw out a movie that other, like the people might know, give an example of one, because this one is fairly new, like, a classic. Is there a classic movie you can think

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of like Beverly Hills? Cop, okay, right? The police captain and Beverly Hills? Cop, he's just, he's yelling and screaming and throwing things all the time and then, but it works, though it worked in that movie, but then so many times it's been done again, and it's just like, Okay, I've seen this before. It's not unique, it's not different. It's just you're copying what you've seen in a movie. It's not working. Or the FBI agent who just is, you know, knows every single thing they could ever know about a story. It's like, well, that's no fun. You got to take a character who doesn't know how to solve the

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problem, okay? But with Beverly Hills, cop, though, we're back to that in that particular movie, it fit. It was the it felt right? It felt like it belonged to that movie. Whereas with this other one, it didn't necessarily feel like some of the scenes belong, yeah,

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or even served a purpose, like in this i hostage one, right? They have this head guy who comes in like he's in charge of the place, and he's kind of like, yeah, he's not yelling, screaming, calling people's names, but he's just, like, ordering people around. But you could literally take him out of the movie and nothing would change, right, right? Like when the hostage negotiator came in, he's like, you're gonna fix this? And she's like, I'm on No way. I'll get it done, boss. And she walks to the room and the next room, and then he calls her name, and she turns around and he says, get it done. And that's what she just said, yeah. They just, I know, you know, you know, he's like, he's like, this heavy handed guy, like, but he didn't do anything. He just sat there and and then, you know, this is taking too long. But so anyways, so characters cliché, you know, guy in charge gonna be angry and stomping and telling people what to do, but it was ineffective, because it led

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nowhere, right? And so with characters, just so I make sure they shouldn't have clichés, unless it's fits, right? There's there. Should the character should be there for a reason. Yes, they should add something to the story. Definitely not over the top. Yeah?

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Unless it's like the Navy done, then you're gonna need, you need that over the top. Yeah? And characters again, they also shouldn't talk like a

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textbook. Yeah. What does this mean? You have a note here that says dynamic is of is

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so like the dynamic between characters sometimes is false. Like the the lead guy in in I hostage talking to the hostage negotiator. It's like that dynamic. You know, when she went in that room these other two hostage negotiators that she was working with, she did not seem like she was in charge. All of a sudden, the one guy starts talking to her like he's actually the one in charge, but it was false. You didn't get the hierarchy there. You didn't get the dynamics. So it just the situations, the dynamics between the characters. They were all trying to be in charge, and no one seemed to know who was in charge, which is a problem with the writing, because there should have been something happening that everybody knew. This is the personal

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right? So, okay, so next one we have is story story details. So we've gone over dialog, characters now story details. So we've talked about the pizza thing.

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Yeah, we talked about stupid stuff, like the pizzas out of nowhere.

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Reiterate, this isn't necessarily. We're not just talking about this movie. We're saying these are some of the things you should be careful to potentially avoid when you are writing your own script or you're writing your own Yeah,

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that's what we're trying to point out here. Yeah, how to avoid these things? Avoid these things. So one of the biggest ones is setups that have no payoffs. Oh, this I consider on the nose, because you're deliberately giving us a big setup of something.

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You're giving us breadcrumbs. In the end, we're following the bread crumbs in hopes of finding the loaf of sourdough bread. We follow the bread crumbs, and we come to the end of the bread crumbs, and All there is is an empty bag right that the bread was in. And you're like, I want the freaking sourdough

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or you sit there and be like, Well, what the hell was the point of giving us all the bread crumbs, if it went nowhere? So like this example, an example in this movie, because it's an easy one. It opens with this guy who's supposedly the main character. He's the guy who gets taken hostage, but you don't really get to know anything. But it starts off with him having this conversation with his wife, and it's like there's problems. She wants to buy an apartment or something, and he's stressed, and he's traveling and he doesn't, you know, that's why he's there. He's stressed about money, and he lost his earbuds. Oh, I forgot about this. So that's the whole reason he goes to the Apple Store. So I remember. So there's this conversation with his wife, like, Okay, here's the emotional setup we're gonna get all, okay, what's there? How are they gonna solve this? What's going on? And then you get to the end of the movie, and he doesn't even, he doesn't even have any kind of finished car. Station or anything with his wife. He just it's over,

and it's like, okay. And then the other character, this cop who has this emotional thing with his partner, they show him going on vacation with his family. And then he gets a call that there's a hostage thing. So he pulls over. And then this next scene, it cuts to him getting in a car with these other guys in ski masks. And then that's it. And then you never see him go back to his family. You never see any kind of like wrap up there. So it's setting all these things up to just get us interested in thinking, okay, these are the characters that have to have something, and then it just kind of goes nowhere. There's no payoff. Another example of that same thing is in the we talked about the New Jurassic Park movie, Scarlett Johansson's character has this big emotional thing, how she lost one, she lost to one of her partners in this, you know, he died in this last, you know, violent thing that she was involved in. And then they set it up. And initially she the guy goes out on the boat, and she's staring off into the stars, and she's crying like she lost this person. And you're thinking, it's like her boyfriend or something. So you're thinking, oh, there's some love interest thing. And then you find out, no, it's not. It wasn't her boyfriend, it's just one of her co workers. And then it never goes anywhere. It never gets set up again. Her character doesn't go through some emotional thing about losing. It's just, it's just there to try hard to set up an emotional connection with the audience, and then it goes nowhere.

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So, but you shouldn't have to try that hard. It should just come naturally, almost, if you've written, well, yeah, if you've written, well, the emotion, the emotional connection you want the audience to get, should just be natural, right?

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But it should also finish, and it shouldn't be forced. It shouldn't be forced. It should also finish up and have a reason for being there. Otherwise, just don't have it in there, right? So a lot of that, that's the you know, you're not, you're not following through, right? It's on the nose, because it's one of those check boxes that says you must have a setup right character, and so you put it there, but then you don't do anything with it. So if you're gonna put something there, make sure it affects them and affects the story.

26:49

And same with like. So would that go along the same line as things happening for no reason? Yes, exactly, right. Like you, you're just like, okay, yeah, there's gonna be something. And then the movie, the credits roll, and you're like, Okay, I'm just, why did we not see that again? Yeah?

27:05

Like, nobody, too, for example, right? This, this evil woman character. Why was she doing all this weird stuff? Like, there was absolutely no reason for it. And, like, walking in, this guy's killed all these people, this huge operation, and you finally are facing him, and you're leaning up against a wall whistling, why are you not just pulling out a gun and shooting him in the head? It's dumb. It's stuff happens for like, trying, trying too hard, trying to be too clever, you know, it's just that that is on the nose. It's just like, can you not just give us, you know, what needs to happen in the story and entertain us, right? Yeah. So you know, and again, not closing something off in the end, you have to, you have to finish it. You have to pay it off, you know. And it just makes it,

makes the whole experience be like, what? Why was I? Why did that waste my time like that? What was the point

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of it? All, you know, what drives me crazy is when I watch a movie and I it's like, the the words that they choose, or how they speak, is so complex that I almost need to get a dictionary to understand what the 17 words are that they just said in a single sentence of 19 words

28:10

exactly, exactly. And that, I mean, it can be fine if, like, someone starts talking like that, and then someone's like, Okay, wait a minute. I don't get what you're saying. Can you explain it to me like I'm dumb? Yeah, layman's term. But when that doesn't happen. And it's like you have to remember your audience, right? You start talking to all this technical stuff, and you don't do it in a way the audience can get it. Then there's no point. You've just wasted

28:29

your opportunity. You're not writing like a non fiction book. No, exactly. But if you want to write a non fiction, something non fiction, write something non fiction, write a textbook for school. If you want to give that kind of information and show what you know, but a lot of times it's not meant for

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script, yeah, like, if there's like, specific experts on something in a story that's different, well, that's different. But experts will also, like, they will also be like, Okay, what are we doing here? And this is all tactical information. They're talking all this and that we're going here, we do this and we do this degree and blah blah. And you're like,

29:00

what? I don't get it. You don't need all of it. Either. You can give just bits and pieces to be there to make it authentic. You don't need seven pages of dial dialog explaining how DNA works. Yeah, just show this. This, this, oh, that's DNA. Okay, done. Move on.

29:18

Yeah, make it easy. All right. So, yeah, it's, it's like, it's like, when you go to, like, we go to conferences a lot for for the disorder that my wife has, the group that they all get together, and they'll have people talking and doctors talking and stuff. And you're just like, the nucleotide measures with the auto Sami, immunocompromisation, blah, blah, blah. And you're just like, No, the cells kind of die off because there's a hole, okay, could he not have just said that the seven die off because there's a hole, right? It's that example, right? You need to make sure that the average person is gonna understand what's going on. Plot twist is the other one you had here. Yeah, plot twists are tricky. My big advice, piece of advice for people who are gonna have a plot twist is, imagine there isn't that plot twist. Look at everything up to there and. Ask yourself, if that plot twist doesn't happen, is it still a great story? If it is, then the plot twist is gonna make it amazing. If it isn't, and it relies on the plot twist to be great, that's a problem. Couple examples

are usual suspects, right? With Kevin Spacey, brilliant movie, brilliant twist at the end. It's literally there for the last 60 seconds of the story, right? It's a big payoff. But if that didn't happen, it still was an amazing movie, because you were hooked and you wanted to know, you know, who's this And who's that perfect example. That's a plot twist that worked. Saw, right? You've got these two guys in the room. There's a dead body in the middle of the room. They're trying to do their thing. He's got to cut off his foot. That's good enough as it is, right? Yeah, it's amazing. And then he cuts off his foot, and it's just like, Oh my gosh. And then in the very last, like 10 seconds in the movie, the guy, the dead body, the middle floor, just gets up. And I know guy who who put everything together amazing plot twist, but the movie was amazing up to that point. So if you're gonna have a plot twist, don't just have it to be clever. Don't just be like, Haha, I misdirected you and made you look all these places so you couldn't see that the bad guy was right here, and then you when the when the reveal happens, if you, if you stop, and you think back and be like, Okay, well, that makes no sense now, because that person knew it was going on, so they wouldn't have said and done that. In reality, they only did it to make us not pay attention. It's fine if the misdirection is there. And it makes sense, because when you look back at it. Yeah, that makes sense, because he actually knew what was going on. But a lot of the time it doesn't work that way. And then that just makes it, just takes all credibility out from him. So that is making your twist too on the notes.

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But then sometimes too, I think if you have a, like, a bunch of twists like that, working backwards is probably good too, right? Yes, for sure, is like, read the script in a sense, like, Do you know what I'm saying backwards?

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Yeah, yeah. You have to reverse engineer it, yeah, make sure that, because all

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those pieces fit. And we've talked before about the show that I don't remember the name of, of course, of the lawyer in the that was locked in the thing,

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the lawyer that was locked in the thing that's pretty generic. Can you give me more? Yeah? Department? Q, yeah, yeah.

32:03

Reverse engineer, you have days they would have had to every single, tiny, little bit and piece would have had to be thoroughly checked, yeah? And it's

32:13

a who done it for sure, yeah? Like we watched that Netflix. One recently untamed. Do you remember that one? Nope. It's about in the in the National Park, and the guy was trying to the girl died. They found a girl at the bottom of the cliff. Yeah, right. And as you get to the end, and they reveal who was actually responsible, it was amazing, because you were like, I never

thought it was going to be that character, because they had us looking at all these other characters, but all the other characters were bad, but they were bad for different reasons. And then when they got to the big revelation, no, not, but you got to the bigger revelation, you're like, my gosh. And then you play it all back in your head, and you're like, every single choice that character made that now is so easy to see that they were the person who was guilty, but you never saw it coming. So it's important to make sure that if there is a twist like that, if there is a payoff of oh my gosh, that you have the red herrings that make sense, you have the misdirection that is clear and clever, right? Yeah, this person's pulling the string, so they're going to have the character do that. It seems like the reason they're doing it is legit, right? And it does, even when you play it back. But at the same time, there's that subtext to it. There's that I'm actually having you go this direction because I don't want you to go that way, right?

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But not being blatant about that so clever, not being like, oh, misdirection.

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I hate that direction for the sake of it, yes, yeah,

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you notice that next one we have is easy factor,

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making everything too easy. So this, this is a simple one, right? Everything just wraps up too perfectly, right? The protagonist runs in there, and every single antagonist is there, and they have just the right amount of bullets, and they never get hit by a bullet, and they never, you know, and they get right back to the end, and oh, there's the bad guy. Bam, easy, right? It's just

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too then someone is following behind the bad guy with a broom and a mop and cleaning up the scene after

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you get to the end, and the bad guy thinks he's won, so then he tells a five minute monolog about every single thing he did, the reasons for it, how he did it,

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hahahaha. That's on the nose, yeah.

34:09

And then they, and then they, they end up getting caught, and that's a confession. And it's like, come on, you know? Like, oh, it's just too bad. Just tells you everything about about why they're doing what they're doing. It's like, you have to be more inventive than that if you're going to wrap it up. Have the protagonist have figured it all out and be like, actually, I know why you did that, because you need this, and then you needed this, you know, like, use it to to deepen character

or something. But just don't make it too easy. You know, this being too making a story too easy on your characters isn't necessarily on the nose, but it's those things at the end, as you try to wrap it up, that it's just like, gosh, okay, let's lay it out blatantly, blah, blah, blah, right? It's preaching to the audience. It's hitting the audience on the head with the information. You have to trust your audience a little bit and let them play along and let them try and figure it out, rather than just pointing it out specifically, right? That's, that's one of the big. Things there. You have to trust your audience. So overall, you want to trust your audience. You want to not be heavy handed in things. You don't want to overwrite stuff. You don't want to over explain things, and you don't want to try too hard, right? A lot of like, like you said, a lot of people just fill out that checklist, like, oh, well, I have to have this dynamic in there. I have to have this piece in there, so I'm just going to put it there. And, you know, you just, you try too hard, and it's easy to see. There's a lot of on the nose too, is trying to direct on the page. So the audience doesn't get an opportunity, a reader doesn't get an opportunity

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to see, put it through together themselves in their own way. Yeah.

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So that's kind of like, you know, the big piece of it.

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So, so not being on the nose, basically, would be having your story feel like it's

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real. Exactly. That, is it? That's a perfect definition, right? Imagine if this was happening in real life. Would it go this way? Would the character say this? Would they react that way if it was real life, right? Because that's the thing, is, a lot of scripts, that's when you'll get the note that, Oh, this feels too written, right? It's not organic enough. It's too written. It's because you're, you're reading it, you're like, This is not real. This would not happen. Characters don't speak like this. People don't talk like this. People don't react that

36:12

way. But people could, and you've done this before with your own stuff. They could have it read out loud. They could have, you know, people read it for them to see if it feels like a great thing to do two on the nose. And you've done that with when you had the table reading.

36:26

Do a table read, even just with, if you can't get people together, have your friends come over, get some pizza and some beer and be like, Hey, we're having a table read. And just sit there and listen to people read your script, but not just the dialog, yeah, but the action and the narration,

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and see how it flows the whole thing too. Though there's lots of, like, apps and different things that you can have something read to you, right? Like, how many times you go to webpage and it's like, read the story and it reads it out loud,

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yeah? But people are different. Like, because what's interesting when you emphasis, well, no, but yeah. But when you do a table, it's interesting to see people who just to see how people would actually say that, or what how they think that line is to come across, or if it's even clear, you'll really pick up on those things. It's hard to do all of this just in your own head, in your own little bubble, and get it right all the time, right, right? So, yeah, it's a great way to do it. You need to learn. I mean, one of the best tools that I've ever picked up, and just this happens when you read and do analysis and give people notes a lot is you start to understand how to see your own work from that outside viewpoint, right? So you're not so close to it, and that's a that's a great tool. So having people read it, that's a great way to step back and actually see it and hear it for what it is. So, so those are some tips and tricks. Okay, awesome. Hopefully this was helpful, not beyond the nose. Yeah, all right, so we're gonna have questions after this quick break.

37:44

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38:27

Okay, so let's get to the question and answer section of the podcast. Now, just a note, if you have any questions at all, or any ideas for topics that you want to hear us discuss, you can always email us at hello@scriptreaderpro.com subject line podcast, you can always tell us what you thought to anything like that. We'd love to hear some feedback. Yeah, that'd be great. Yeah. So these questions have come in. First question we have, should you give your character specific ages? Yeah?

38:56

I mean, I think this is a personal choice, but a lot of times in scripts, you don't usually see someone listed as 34 years old. It'll be it'll be early 30s or 30s. If someone's in their 60s, it'll be 60s. Usually, teenagers will get an age right? Because, if someone's 12 or someone's 17, big difference there is, yeah, but I like to give specific ages to my characters because I because I think there's a big difference even between being 21 and 26 right? 21 and 22 not much of a difference. 21 and 23 Sure. But you know what I mean? Or, you know, someone who's 19, someone who's 23 like, there's a big thing. I think

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characters changed, definitely depending on the age. Yeah, you don't want to, you're not going to have a 15 year old probably saying or having the same kind of mindset as a 27

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year old, right? And for me, a large part of it too is I always look and see what major historic things happened when that person was like that, that age where it changes you, like someone's 1314, years old when 911, happened, you kind of need to know if they were, if that happened four years before they were kind of in that place where they would have understood it, that that's a little different. Right? So to me, you don't have to. It's all personal choice. Okay, yeah, and then when, just so, but don't leave no age. Don't just introduce a character and not give us anything. Okay, so

40:09

just to be clear, when you're it's when you're introducing the character that you would say the description of who they are, and then their age, right? Then, yes,

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Desiree, beautiful, quirky, 38 do they get points?

40:20

No, I'm 35 Uh oh, I'm 44 Yeah. In the intro, yeah, 44 getting old. Hey. Question two, should you always note when something needs subtitles? Yeah?

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I think what someone's meaning here is, you know, if there's going to be a script where there's a lot of different languages being spoken, maybe that after the character header, before they speak, you say, in Hebrew, or, you know, Hebrew in subtitles. A lot of people will always list in subtitles, in subtitles. And to me, I'm just like, well, obviously

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there's gonna be subtitles if it's Hebrew, unless you speak Hebrew like, or everyone in the audience speaks, or the reader, like, 99% of people speak Hebrew, you know, yeah,

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I know, but that's the thing. I think for me, I'm like, it's an annoyance. For me, I'm like, okay, clearly, right? But if it's important, like two characters speak Swahili and one doesn't, yeah, noting that they are both speaking in Swahili, that lets the audience know, okay, they're talking a different language. You know what? Subtitle doesn't need to be there. You know what that means the language, it's a little bit on the nose, that is, it is saying it's been what they're thinking, unless it's those strange movies where sometimes you'll watch one and they'll have two characters talking in another language, but they don't put subtitles on, I know, because they want the audience to almost

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I like that. I don't like that choice. I don't like it, yeah, but

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I think it's a it's pointless on the page. All right.

41:35

Question number three, should I write for a producer for free, if it is from scratch?

41:39

Ooh, that's, again, the personal choice, right? A lot of people in this business Don't you worry, for free, I do. I will, if I believe in a project,

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a project, and the people and someone who just randomly comes up to you, and I was like, Can you write a story

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about my life? Now, I'm sorry, like, I had a really good life when I was, like, traveling in my truck across the entire studio.

42:04

Sorry, I'm busy by but, yeah, it depends. Like, you have to, if you believe in the person, say, like a producer reads the script, they're like, I love your writing. I don't, I'm not gonna make the script, but I have this idea that you'd be perfect for, but I don't have the funds to get it going. Is something you want to work together on, you know? Like, go with your gut, right? But don't allow, Don't set yourself up to be taken

42:21

advantage of and used, and secondly, put a contract in place, yeah, oh, for sure, I would say that is, like, always, it might not go anywhere, but you need to cover

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if it sells, I get this much, you know, like, those kind of things, right? And we are going to be listed as CO writers, and not just on that, on napkin, right? You have to have something, and it doesn't have to be from a lawyer, no, but something on paper, yeah.

42:43

How do I know? Question four, how do I know an option that I'm offered is legit? This comes up a lot.

42:49

That's kind of like the last question, because, like, a lot of times, someone will option your script, meaning that they're going to basically rent it for a period of time, so you can't try and sell it to anyone else, because if they're going to invest time and money and energy, they want to make

sure it's still available. So if it's legit, it really comes down to just doing your homework. You know, who is the company? What have they done? You know, if someone's not willing to even just pay you 100 bucks, for example, can you trust them that they're going to get any money together to make a movie? Once I had a writer ask me, oh, this person, yeah, they want to option my script for like, you know, two years. And I was like, no, no, that's way too long. If they can't do it in six months or a year, they're not going to do it. Going to do it right? So then they went back to the producer and said, Actually, I'd like to do it for a year. And the producer lost it on them, lost it. Who the hell do you think you are doing? And I'm like, Well, that's the first thing walk away from because they're never going to treat you, right? They're never going to pay you anyway. No. So, yeah, scary, yeah. Do your homework. Trust your gut. Ask people you know, and if it comes down to it, just ask an entertainment lawyer. A lot of times, an entertainment lawyer will look over paperwork and stuff for you, and not as a fee, but like a percentage if something happens, and also just

43:49

interesting search, because the response that that the producer gave is almost like unexpected, like the I hostage pizza. It's you're just like, what? Whoa. Where did this come from? Yeah, you know what I mean. Yeah, unleash the beast. Yeah. Hey, guess what? What? That's the end of our questions.

44:06

Nice, weird. That was good. I'm hearing people learn something today.

44:10

It's a beautiful, sunny day. I'm staring outside the window, and I'm like, sun, sun, sun. Mr. Golden Sun, Please shine down on me.

44:20

On that note, thanks for joining us. I hope you had a good time again. Give us a rating. You can subscribe. Give us some stars. Share the podcast. You enjoyed yourself. Learn something

44:32

like I said. You can email questions or comments or reviews or anything that you want to discuss to hello@scriptreaderpro.com

44:40

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