

Ep #41: Set Ups and Payoffs

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On this episode, we are talking all about setups, yes, and the magic and fun ways to pay them off. 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 the Script Reader Pro podcast, and I am your host.

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Desiree I guess that I'm school.

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What? I forgot my name for a second. So Desiree,

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what are we talking about today?

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So we're talking about payoffs. Hey, before we start discussing what setups and payoffs are all about, and not the illegal payoffs that happened under the table. Kind of payoffs. What have you seen lately? We went saw the final mission impossible, and that's when they say it's going to be the final mission impossible.

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Seemed like it was the final one, but it'll continue on the franchise. But that group of people, I think, are done. But, yeah, it was, I mean, it was a lot, like, did you find I found it that was like, a lot. It was like, the first 20 minutes were seen, short scene, short scene. Cut here, cut there. Who's this? Why are we here? What's going on? But I think what they were trying to do is tie all those loose ends that the first like, that that previous movie had there, because the previous movie was like, is like, basically a big chunk of exposition, the whole movie, setting up, what was going to happen in this version in this triquel Seven Quill, whatever it's

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called triquel Seven quill. It's like NyQuil, but it was good. It was entertaining.

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There was lots of fun, lots of information. But I really enjoyed how, how well they cut between different scenes as they were explaining what was going on. And I just said after the movie to my wife and daughter, I said, I don't I think that's the first mission impossible I ever actually cried in not cried like all, but like, Tom was tearing up, like constantly, like he was under, like he was breaking, he was he had, he he's like, I can't do this anymore. Like, this is just too much.

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You cried three times. And I, after you told me I cried three times, I was like, what? Like, I didn't know. I was not emotional at all in it. But maybe it's because I wasn't. I'm not invested in those kind of movies really.

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Yeah, and me and Asha, our daughter, we are. We watched all of them many times. And so, yeah, we've seen the different teams, and seen Tom's character grow. And there's some really great moments that brought, like, everything full circle, like from the first from the very first mission, Impossible movie. There were so many things that reappeared and came to the end. So that was really cool to

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see. Here's a question for the listeners. Do you think Tom Cruise should die or should not die in the newest mission? Impossible? Yeah, that's

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a good question. See, because they did it in in the last James Bond movie, they actually killed Daniel Craig, and he sacrificed his life to save everybody. And that that was, like, so surprising. Um, but yeah. Well, there's one detail. I don't know if you noticed it, but I thought it was thought it was so smart. But I did notice how everyone was sweating, which made sense because the end of the world was literally coming, and they all couldn't figure it out. Like it didn't matter which situation, if it was the president and the Joint Chiefs in the room, they were like it was dripping on their faces. So I thought that was a really kind of clever detail.

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If it was the end of the world, I would not be like sweating and stuff. You know what I would be doing? What? Eating all my favorite food? Yeah, because calories wouldn't count, they wouldn't, wouldn't matter anymore. No, no, just eat that chocolate. Man. Yeah. But anyways, it was enjoyable. It's one of those movies that's really worth seeing in the theater. You know? It was fun. So anyways, let's move on. Let's move on. We've, we've talked about some setups. There were some good setups and payoffs. We didn't talk so much about the payoffs with Mission

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Impossible, because we don't want to ruin it. Well, I did, because I said everything came full circle. So the whole movie was paid a payoff about everything through all of the movies. So yeah, it was really cool, but, but setups and payoffs is what we're here to talk about.

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What are setups and pay off?

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So essentially, as you're moving to the story, there will be a number of things set up that will come full circle. So the easiest way to explain it is you will see, like, for example, a knife with a blue studded handle, kind of like laying there somewhere, or in someone's, you know, pocket, or whatever, and then we won't see it again for a while, but then it'll show up like 6070, 80 minutes into the movie, and that's the payoff of, oh, right, that knife, that person had it. We thought it was this person, but it was actually that person. It's just putting information there that's going to set it off, pay it off. And we're going to go through through a number of examples later to kind of just show how certain shows and movies do that, but that's basically it, and they're important because they create anticipation and engagement, right?

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That's funny that you said anticipation because I did look up what the definitions are. Of course you did. That's who you are. What are the definitions? Well, it says set up in storytelling. Setups are details or clues introduced early in a story that might seem irrelevant but later become important, creating suspense and anticipation. Payoffs are the moments when those early details or clues come into play, revealing their significance and often leading to a twist or resolution.

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Exactly. So, yeah. I mean. One, one great example, because it's a movie that pretty much everyone has seen in this world, is the sixth sense. Right through that movie, you're constantly seeing Bruce Willis playing with his wedding ring. You always see his wedding ring. It's noted. It's focused. You wonder, okay, well, you know, why are we seeing it? Are they still married? And maybe they're not, right? And then the big, huge twist moment comes when we see the ring rolling across the floor. And if he did, if we didn't see it all the time, if we didn't pay attention to it, if it wasn't getting our focus, then that would not have been as epic of a moment. So that's the that's an example that's kind of easy to show how a setup will lead to something.

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Yes, it's it's basically like, if you think about it, it's like a clue for what you're going to see later.

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Very much, right? Yeah, and, like, investigative thrillers like that, like any kind of, like, you know, crime thriller is going to have characters investigating, picking up clues. All of those clues will lead to a payoff, hopefully, right? But every genre, you need to have them in there, because it, like you said, it creates anticipation. The audience is like, cool, okay, oh, why did they show us that? What? What what is that? Why did they do that? And why did he say that? And why does she look at that person that way? So it's all those little things that create that engagement, right? You know, it drives me nuts, though. What's that? Not? So, what's that when you think something's supposed to be set out for something later on, and it never comes? Yeah, that's

annoying. It is. That's annoying because, like, the way that the director will go and, you know, it'll be zoomed in on a certain item or something, and then later you're like, that's got to have something to do with it. And then it never comes to fruition, yeah. And sometimes it'll be, like, a big piece, like, Okay, that was a really big scene. They talked about this thing, and then it doesn't, you're just like,

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you don't circle back to it. So that's the thing for the listeners out there. If you're gonna do something like that, and you have, you know, our eye seeing something in particular, like, say, a gun, constantly, someone's handling a gun, gun, gun, gun, and then later, you don't bring the gun back to give us a payoff with the gun, probably take that

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gun out. Yep, exactly. And, I mean, when we see in movies a lot of time, it's like, okay, so they, they, they cut that out of the story later on because it didn't work or, and then they forget to take out the first part, or there was something else really important in that scene that they couldn't cut away. So a lot of times in a movie, it's not done on purpose. It's like, they know it's there, but they can't fix it. But in your script, you need to have that,

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yeah, but do you think sometimes they do it just to make you think, oh, that's gotta be late.

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Sometimes there's misdirection. There misdirection is a setup.

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Yes, it's a setup, because the the payoff is, if there's nothing to it, but do it? Do it well, and I don't think do it very often, right? Like it's done a lot in error.

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My biggest annoyance with misdirection is misdirection that's there just for the sake of misdirection, right, where you're only doing it to make the audience not look a certain way. But then when you play it back after, after the reveal comes, you're like, well, that actually made no sense, because the characters would never have done that, because this is the truth, where you just made us look at them doing that, even though, you know, like, those are tricks that just don't work. It has to be able to be played back where you're like, oh my gosh, I can't believe yes, that I see that. That's perfect. Yeah, yeah. For sure. For sure. That's a great point. So a lot of people ask, how many setups are needed per payoff? How many setups are needed? Yeah? So, like, you can have one setup that leads to one thing, or you can have three or four setups that all come together.

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Like, are we talking about, like, with your saying the ring, seeing the ring several times? Are we saying several different setups coming to one payoff?

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Yes. Like, four different clues all coming together, right? Like, seven is a perfect example, right? The Seven Deadly Sins. They're they're collecting information. They find the seven deadly sins, and those all lead up to that payoff of this is why the guy is doing it right. So that's very much plot, but without it being set up with each little piece to have us leaning in more and trying to figure it out, the payoff isn't as strong. So it doesn't matter. You can have as many setups as you want, just don't overload it so that we forget half of

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them. When you're looking at setups and payoffs, when in a script, do you set up and then when do you pay off?

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Yeah, well, it really depends on what your story is trying to do. Some setups can have a payoff a couple pages later, right? Some setups can happen on page 10 and don't pay off until age 95 right? But the key is, after halfway through a movie, you shouldn't have any more setups. No. I mean, there is you can. You can, though, but, but you want to start paying them off, right? You don't want to continuously have setups forever and then pay them all off at the end.

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It's like having a birthday. I'm going to surprise you for your birthday. Are you so excited? You can't wait. You can't wait to see what I got you. Wait till you see what I'm planning for supper. Wait till you see the cake that I got you. Yeah, and then it's like, you never get to have that payoff.

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Yeah, exactly. So, I mean, we talked about this movie before on previous podcasts, but remember that movie, The Life list about the girl and her mom left her a bunch of DVDs, telling her, go do this and fill your list out. That was a great example of the setup. This. Setup was the list. This is what you need to do in life. The other setup is her mom's recording videos. So the setup is, you complete a task, you will get a reward of seeing another video. Yes, but that was a payoff every single time.

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That's what I was gonna say. It's it was within itself, because every time they saw the video, it was a setup exactly pay off exactly.

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But at the same time that movie had a really big setup and payoff in it, right? They set up the family home and how long it needed to sit on, you know, that you can't sell it or rent it out for this amount of time, and then that amount of time had that payoff of this is why, and this is why the house is in that position, and that brought it all together. So it had one big setup with a huge payoff, but little setups and payoffs throughout, you know, like I said, there really is no magic

number. You just want to make sure, or like a timeline. You just want to make sure that if you've set something up, that you're paying it off, pay it off, right? And try and do it in, like, a dramatic way, whether it's a big laugh or something emotional or a huge explosion, right? You want to have it constantly churning, because that just creates a pace and a momentum to the

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story. If you take a loan from the bank, yes, you want to pay it off.

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Yes. And do you pay it off at the very end in full? No, you pay it off as you go. As you go. It's like

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little breadcrumbs, right? Yep, exactly. Paying off with little crumbs here and there. So you're dropping clues for someone to pick up exactly like a breadcrumb. Yeah, that's a perfect analogy. But picking up a breadcrumb is hard. It is because it crumbles. Just saying, Yeah, okay, so if we're talking so you said you want to try to pay it off as you go. Now, what about when it comes to movies and pilots? Is there a difference between the two? Yeah, do you set up differently in a movie versus a pilot? And do you pay off differently?

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For sure? Yeah, for sure. So, like I said about movies, right? It's all about setting them as much as you can before you get through right or the mid Yeah? Because then that's the momentum. The character is now active. You know, they're not getting as many things set up unless they're setting them up, but then the payoffs are going to come, right? That's what builds towards a climax. If you, if you pay off everything too early, this loses the anticipation, right? It's like, yeah, so, so it's like the Hobbit, right? He's going on this journey. He's got it. He has a specific goal. As he goes, he's going to go up and down and up and down and up and down, through all these obstacles. And each thing he learns, each person he meets, each item he collects, those are all the setups, and they lead to the big climactic payoff, right, where all of those things come together in a TV pilot. The TV pilot is all about setups. You are sent that's, that's the whole intention of a television pilot is set up, all the people, all the clues, the world, the complications, this item, that item, and then you can pay it off. You can have a small payoff. And again, this isn't just like perfect and gospel and for everything, but overall, right? Then you can have one small payoff in the cliffhanger.

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Well, you want to have a small payoff because you want people to come back right and want more right?

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But it doesn't necessarily have to be a payoff. It can be a final setup, like, you know, someone's dead, and you're seeing all these people, and you know about this weapon, and then the last shot shows the person we never thought it would be dead in the water or something. It's like, what? That's the payoff of all of those things, right? But at the same time, it's a setup. So having

you don't want to, you don't want to pay pretty much anything off in a pilot, because then you there's nothing to come back for, like you said, right? So that's the big difference. Is a payoff. Payoffs and television come as the story progresses

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through episodes. Every episode, you get some payoff, yeah, exactly what's the point of concern, and

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then it leads to another setup, right? And that's what creates longevity, is, which is what a pilot is supposed to be setting up, whereas a movie has to finalize everything

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well. And I think too, when you're setting something up, it comes down to making an impression, right? Something that you can remember,

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yeah, for sure, yeah, like visuals, right? Visuals are important. You see something specific and you're like it, you know, like, if you're going to put it in a script and you want something to stand out, right? For example, on the page, like I said, there's a whatever, a knife with blue jewels on it, or whatever you want. To make sure you don't just put that in a paragraph of everything else, right? He walks across the room and he sees this blue handled knife, and he stops, and he picks it up and, you know, and is that blood on it? I'm not sure, but then bang, and he turns and whatever, right? But you don't want to have that all in a big paragraph. You want to have, you know, he walks across the room. Something catches his eye. New paragraph, is that a knife? Question mark. New paragraph, he approaches it, and it sparkles blue in the light, right? Something like that, where you make our eye pay attention to specific shots and details.

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If you're throwing it in within the paragraph, then it's get lot gets lost, right?

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Especially if we're gonna, we're not gonna see it for 4040, more pages or something. You want it to make an impact, right? Make an impression memorable. Yeah, so whether it's a line of dialog, whether it's a clue, whether it's, you know, like in Mission Impossible, for example, they kept saying this line, and different characters would say it, it is written. I was like, Well, I don't understand why everybody is saying that, but by the end of it all, you're like, Okay, I get it, because this is about stopping something that's written, where history is going to go. So another great way, and this is an example everyone knows. Even people who haven't seen the movie great, a great setup can just be what's called a MacGuffin. What's a McGuff. Finn what is a MacGuffin

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Desiree. It's what they sometimes, when they run out of them at McDonald's, they serve you McMuffin

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instead of an Egg McMuffin name, it's a McGuffin. McGuffin because it's fake or what?

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Well, when they run out of McMuffins, then they serve, serve mcguffins. Okay?

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No. McGuffin was. McGuffin was a term coined by Alfred Hitchcock, basically saying, put a bomb. If you put a bomb under the table where a couple is sitting and having a conversation, and you show the audience the bomb goes off, show the bomb. Show the bomb, but show

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the McMuffin on the top, yes,

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but if you show that bomb, but they never talk about it, they never, maybe even know what's there, but we do, and nothing ever happens to it. That's called the MacGuffin. It's just, it's just something put there to create intrigue and to create conflict and tension, or, you know, create, create a situation. So in Pulp Fiction, Marcellus Wallace has this briefcase, and a large part of the story is about this briefcase. And eventually he opens the briefcase, and it's lit up inside, and you see his reaction to it, and then he closes it. And we never know what is in the briefcase. We don't know what's there. No one ever talks about it. It's just something interesting that makes us want to know what is in that case. So the payoff is mysterious. The payoff is just the fact that it's a MacGuffin, right? But it creates that anticipation. So you can do that. I did that in my script, incision, in incision, they find these pieces of some device inside this cadaver. And you know, they got to try and figure it out, as bad guys are coming to get those pieces, to get that device. But I never tell you what the device is. They never find out what it is, right? It's a MacGuffin. It's there just to create that tension and give them something to do to be pushing

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forward, forward to it says it's an object, a device or event that is necessary to the plot and the motivation of the characters, but insignificant, unimportant or irrelevant in itself.

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Yeah, exactly. That's perfect. That's a perfect I pulled that from my brain, and it's also good with ketchup, like an egg McGuffin. I don't like it with ketchup. I do. So that's, that's something that that can also be used well to create those, those those tense situations, and get you invested, get the audience be like, Oh my gosh, what is in there? What is what that holding? So, so that's a great

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way to do it. They say, they say, too, though, that when I was just looking, guffins were used more in older movies. Yeah, they were, yeah. What's the like, why? Well, because

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Alfred Hitchcock was making movies a long time ago, and he put stuff in. He was the first person to kind of do that. So then other people did it. But, you know, if you use it too much, it's, it's cliché, or, you know, it's just, it's a mechanism, and people just can see it coming, right?

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That's in stuff like the cheesy movies, like *Scream*, are there macguffins

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in that? No, not necessarily there. It's more about, you know, misdirection, making this killer. This might be the killer, right? But, you know, misdirection is a great way to do it, like, like *Scream* for an example, right? You know, you're, you're making us think it's this person, and then something will pay off, that it's not that person, maybe it's this person, and it just makes you cycle through so you never quite can you know zero in because you don't want the audience to know ahead of time, who the who the killer is, right?

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So what like? What's another movie example, where they use misdirection?

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Yeah. So the *Glass Onion* is great. It's the sequel to *Knives Out*. If no one knows what it is, it's like that. Who done it? Murder Mystery thing? And they show us it's a it's great because they show us the this character getting shot, you know, laying there being poisoned, bleeding out and dying. And then the our investigator finds her. And then we go back into the story, and as we get later in the story, we see that moment, and see the setup of it, that it they didn't actually get shot. They didn't die. They poured this hot sauce in their mouth, and they just started foaming at the mouth because it was so hot. It was a setup that was just complete misdirection. So the audience thought that person's dead. So then when you get to the end and you're like, I was all just a big game, because everyone needed to think she was dead, but so did we, because if we know she's dead, then it's not as much fun that's using misdirection, well, that's using it in a great way. So let's get into some examples then to kind of, you know, really put it to practice. So if I say to somebody, the one of the greatest setups and payoffs is the girl in the red coat, most people are going to be like, I know exactly what you're talking about. Do you know? No, because I don't know what the girl in the red coat is so in *Schindler's List* the movies in black and white. But there's a scene where you see a little girl, little girl, little Jewish girl, and she has a red coat on, and it's and it's blood red. It's the only color in the movie. I vaguely remember that. And then later in the movie, when they show this big pile of bodies being taken away or dumped, we see the red coat, okay, right? And that like that is a perfect setup and payoff, right? And it, and it hits you hard with emotion, set up and pay off. But, no, but, I mean, it's effective, right? But it's the same thing as making us pay attention. He made sure that we would never forget that color, so when we see it later, it's there. In our faces, and we feel, oh my gosh, that's

the, that's the, that's the power of all of this, right? So that's a great example. What if you're colorblind? Well, it's still going to be a different color, right? No, unless red turns up black and white for you, and then you would, you would miss it. But I'm sure someone would tell

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you, but that was a side note. Yeah, I know whatever comes to my mind, I have to, have to say. So let's look at some examples of some newer movies. Okay, you have a list here, so I'm going to ask you, I'm going to ask you with the movie, yeah, the movie, and I'm gonna tell you the setup in pairs. I have no idea what some of these are. Okay, okay, don't move,

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yeah? So don't move is about a girl who was given a drug and then she couldn't she all of a sudden had no use of her body, and this killer was going to use that to because that's what he does. He's a sickle. In the very first conversation. Within five minutes into the movie, these two characters meet, and he says something about how his fiance or his wife died in a car accident, and I'll never forget the last thing I said to her, but he doesn't tell her, and then that gets paid off. At the very end of the movie, he finally tells her what he said, and then the double payoff is at the end, when she kind of like, do you want to turn the ending? I'm not gonna give it an ending, but she turns the tables on him, and she delivers the same line of what he said to his wife. So it's a great example of, like, setting it up in the first five minutes, but holding on to it until the very end. But it was the way that it was pointed out. Made it really like emotional important. You saw how she reacted, you saw his reaction. We understood exactly what they were, what they were feeling, okay, so that's that Okay. The next one is my Italian father, yeah, we watched this the other night. I forgot this one. Yeah, it was, it was, it was okay. You wanted to stop it partway, yeah. Well, I was just like, I don't know how good this is going to be, but we made it through, and it had some good moments and stuff. But the whole idea was that right off the start, the guy starts talking about his dad and how embarrassing he is and how cheap he is, and it kind of we kept seeing different reasons why he is embarrassing, why he is cheap, and then the whole payoff of it came in the end, when he realized that that's who his dad is, and he loves him for it, and he isn't embarrassed of it, because it because it made it who made him into who he was. So that was his journey of trying to, like, accept that he loves his father for who he is and and he's his hero. They, they played on that a lot, right? It was a consistent setup of more and more and more and more. So it had a worthwhile end. So, so that's an example in that movie. The other movie here is known as, yeah, that's the one about, just watch that one, yeah, with Vince Vaughn and setting up a restaurant with Italian grandmother's cooking. But there's this beautiful scene that opens the movie where he this, this little kid is watching his grandmother in awe as she makes her gravy or her her spaghetti sauce, right? He's watching her. He's trying to figure out what she's putting in it, and he doesn't know. So that sets up his grandma's recipes, the best recipe, right? And we want to know what we want to know what it is, right? And a lot of the time through the movie, he's trying to figure out what that missing ingredient was and where's the recipe, and wish he could make it. And then eventually there's a payoff in the end of what you know, what that means. So that worked well, because it connected it emotionally to the character. So part of it was keeping their memory alive, and he wanted to find that they didn't kind of disappear, so that that was a great use of setting up again right off the

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start. The other one you went to not too long ago, thunderbolts.

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Yeah, the new Marvel movie. I really enjoyed it. A lot of people said to me, oh, it's crap and but it's it was a different kind of superhero movie, because it dealt with mental health in a big way, about how hard it is on people to do these things that they do. And these two characters meet, and she's trying to understand them, and they're both dealing with this depression, and they talk about the void that is inside of us, and how sometimes all you have to do is just let the void take you, because you can't fight it. You have to get your way out of it. And then the rest of the movie is all about this void, and then it pays off out of it, yeah, and it pays off on how we come out of that void. And there's a message. And so, but again, that was very early on in the story, too, setting up how much of a struggle this young woman is going through, and how the action she does affects her. And so it all built to something quite big, which led to the big climactic finale points. So, so that was that that had a, you know, people seen that, that that'll make sense

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to people, okay? And then heretic, which we saw not too long ago, yeah, see, sometimes

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you'll, you'll have a setup that's also called a motif, right, which is an image set that we see or experience through the entire movie. So, in heretic, it's blueberry pie, because he says to these girls, oh, yeah, come in, my wife's just in the kitchen making a blueberry pie. And then there's a blueberry pie candle on the table, and the girl starts to realize maybe there isn't a blueberry pie this guy's playing with us. And then, as it gets forward, then he actually brings out a blueberry pie, like it went right to the end. So it paid off in a big way too. Why he made that pie so that that, you know, that it's just a small, you know? It's a motif that continues, but it leads to something bigger as well, right? It's not just there to be there. Wolves, yeah, wolves, a simple one, that's the Brad Pitt George Clooney one, where they're both cleaners, right? They come and clean up crime scenes, and they both kind of go there, and they talk all the time about their guy. I gotta call my guy. He sent me here. I gotta call my guy. You sent me here, and then as you move forward, you find out that they have the same guy, but it's not a guy, it's a woman, and it just creates a nice payoff. But it's not at the end, it's halfway through. But they built it well, and then they have to deal with the fact that they both are, this is kind of the same guy, right? Okay, so that one worked well. And then, you know, some TV shows. We can show some examples of some TV shows, but we just finished White Lotus, right? White Lotus. I mean, White Lotus is just everything about it. Everything you see in that story, especially in part three, is a setup. Every single thing they show the character doing something, and you're like, why is he doing that? Why is she doing that? And then eventually, whether it's episode two or 10 or eight or whatever, it pays off. But the one that stood out to me to be the biggest one was the blender, right? This rich family, this one kid, is all about making his protein shakes and and they talk a lot about it, and we're not gonna, not gonna give it away, but they talk a lot about it. The two brothers have conversations about it. They talk about it all the time. We're constantly seeing the

blender turning on and off and being loud and annoying, and then it pays off hugely. So that's a great example of setting something up right that leads to the big finale. So in a pilot, you're not going to write your whole limited series. I mean, you can if you want, but you got to make sure that those setups that you do think will lead to that finale of why you're writing in the first place are in in that first episode,

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it's almost like with that one that they wrote it backwards, you would have had to. You would have had to know what the script or what the series was like all the way to the end, Oh, for sure, before you even started,

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yep, because every single character, yeah, had a bit like all of their big moments in the end. They were all intertwined the whole way. And if you didn't know, yeah, they're guaranteed he knew how that would end.

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You have, you have to know. You have to know there's no other way around it. What about the show? Breaking Bad?

26:44

Yeah, this is great. This is a, I mean, this is the easiest way to do a setup and a payoff, right? Breaking Bad opens with the end of the episode. You see this guy in this trailer running out in his tighty whities and a dress shirt or whatever, and and, you know, this car is flying away, and he's standing there with a gun in his hand in the middle of the desert, and you're like, what? And then it cuts and takes us through Walter White's introduction, all through his story to that point in the end that we started with. So that's a great way to have a setup lead to a payoff by just how do we get back to that

27:16

point? And the interesting thing is, and I know this, everyone's going to be like rolling their eyes, but 90 days, okay, they do that all the time, where they show, they showed the wedding at the very, very beginning, first episode. Now we're at the last episode, and there's a wedding, and it's like we did see that what's gonna

27:36

happen. I never noticed that in any of the other No, neither this one was like showing us that their wedding's falling apart, but they did a different Yeah, but then you were, but then, as you're getting towards it, you're like, whenever you see that, but everything's going so well, what's gonna Yeah? So that yeah

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for sure, yeah, yeah, okay. And then Mandalorian, yeah.

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Mandalorian is a good kind of, like, you know, I guess a slow burn or, like, a take your time, set up and pay off. They spend a lot of time over the first few episodes, building the legend of what this, you know, this Jedi character that they need to find to protect what he's all about, what he could be. And you're expecting it to be this big force, this, this, you know, huge character who's just like, you know, makes an impact. And then you eventually, when they reveal it, you just see the Mandalorian standing in front of this little contraption in this tiny, little baby Yoda hand pops out, and that was it. And I mean, from there, next episode you see him, but it sets up a great payoff, because you're it builds a legend, and gets us be like, Okay, well, this is like, you know, this is the greatest force in the universe, and this person has, you know, like they build towards it. So all of those conversations people are having about this character, this chosen one, it leads to the payoff of who he is, or, you know, and what he's going to do, and that kind of stuff. So it's a good example, too.

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So basically, like when we're talking about setups and payoffs, it really is about giving the audience something to, I guess, be excited about and be interested in and invested in and something to

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worry about. Yes, yeah, exactly.

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It's all involved. What's going to happen? Like, what is this going to come to?

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Yeah, because if you're just going through the drama of everything, you're just one scene needs to leads to the next, leads to the next, leads to the next. It, it. We have nothing to hang on for, right? But you set something up, we want to know the answer. What does that lead to? How is that going to go somewhere? Right? It creates that engagement. And again, it doesn't matter the genre, right? If it's a romantic comedy, you're going to have them. If it's a horror, you're going to have them. Faith based. Doesn't matter the genre. The setups are there to engage the audience and make them keep turning the pages. That's and like you brought this up about white lotus. Reverse engineer your story. If you know what your big payoffs are going to be, if you can figure those out, it helps you think of really cool ways to set them up earlier, right? So a lot of people just don't think of where they're going. They just go, which is fine.

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And then a lot of times too, the movie is like one dimension. There's not a lot. Yeah, yeah. And it's like, the twists and turns are exciting. It makes you engaged. It makes you interested you want to stick around for, right? But like, is there, would you say when it comes to genres, then, is this specific to genres? Would you say? Would you see more less setups and payoffs depending on the type of script it is? Well, the type

30:19

of story, I think, more than the type of script, right? But, but, I mean, it's just everything, even like, it's even setting up how this character has a crush on this character, right? Okay, so this character has a crush on this character, yeah, you know, what are you? What are you going to do to set that up enough so that you know that when the other best friend comes in and starts dating the guy, we get an emotional payoff for that, because we know that, no, because this, this characters have a crush on this character. So, you know, in romantic comedies, a lot of time, for example, it's like, about relationship stuff, right? It's about characters more. These are pieces of character setup and issues and worries and backstory, right? Whereas horror, it's a completely different kind of setup and payoff situation, right? You're setting up who the killer might be. This is what the killer does. Why do they do this? Why do they eat people? Why do they skin people alive? What is this? This? This cop is an alcoholic. How's that going are they going to slip up? How's that going to affect

31:12

things? Well, like murdering someone too. That's a setup, right? Because, on the payoff is to find out who, who did it and the motive behind it.

31:19

Yep, yeah. And then, like, those clues, like you said, right? That, like the red herring clue of, let's look at this person. Let's look at that person. You know that that's all going to be, you know, leading us somewhere, right? Action movies usually start with, like, a big sequence that's like, bam. It sets everything up. Like, who these people are, the risks involved, what their MO is, how they're going through this, whether they're going to kill people or not kill people. You're going to set that up so that it can start to then build towards that big climax of this is why. This is how we stop them, etc. So, yeah, so every genre has kind of different formulas, like anything. They're still going to have setups and payoffs. It's just a matter of, you know what those setups are focusing on, right? So, so

31:59

if you had to sum it up. Then in a few words, what would you say setups and payoffs are?

32:04

It's the key to all great storytelling. Okay, that's, that's what I that's what I would say. It is kind of how, how you keep that engagement level high? If I'm reading a script and I'm pulled in and I don't even notice what page I'm on, that means that they've set things up in a way that keeps me leaning in further and further and further and further. And I want to know where this goes. And doesn't matter the genre, right? Even if it's like a slow burn Western, if there's enough setups of character issues and a lot of times character too, like, why is this character built the way they are? What are they doing? Why are they experiencing it this way? What? How are they going to handle it? Those are all setups too. It should be laced in setups and payoffs, and payoffs. And if you do that, you're going to have an engagement level that's really high. Awesome.

32:44

Yeah, okay, well, hopefully that helps the listeners with some setups and payoffs and understanding what they are, yeah. And if you don't go get yourself a McGuffin sounds

32:52

good, why don't you take a quick break here and hear about one of our popular services here.

32:57

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 we'll 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.

33:40

Okay, so we are back, and now we are doing this section of the podcast, which is questions and answers. Yeah, and I will mention that if you have a question or an answer, now, if you have a question, you can submit them to Hello@scriptreaderpro.com. First question, Desiree. First question is, why do producers accept my submission and read my script, and then ask who I have attached and how much I have packaged in

34:06

Yeah, a lot of writers know, or myself, too, are seeing that a lot. You'll have a producer, it'll you'll pitch them to or whatever, and they say, Yeah, send the script over. They'll read it, and then they'll say, or even before they read it, they'll say, yeah. Do you have any who do you have attached to this? Do you have any budget? Do you have any investors? Have you packaged it like that's not a writer's job, right? Never was a writer's job. A writer's job was to write the script and send it out and sell it or get it picked up. But it's like having more of their job now, isn't it? It is. No one wants to do the work of that. No one wants to, you know, they want to have something already moving that they can get their fingerprints on, right? So that's why, that's what that that is why they are doing it and all if you don't, all you can say is no, and they'll either say, okay, just, I was just curious, yeah, send it over anyways. Or, okay, well, come back to us when you do right this. You know, it's just how the business when you do though, but that's like, it's hard. It's hard to get hard. It's hard to get talent attached to the script. It's just really difficult.

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Okay, so question two, then, how long should I wait after. Someone asked to read my script and I've sent it to then follow up, yeah, that everyone

35:03

always asks that, oh, because, I mean, you send it and then you're just on pins and needles waiting to pins and needles. I said, pins and needles. You're honest. You're on pins and needles

waiting for them to get back to you to tell you they love it, or whatever. You know, when someone asks for your script, it means they want to read it right. Otherwise they wouldn't. No one's going to say, Yeah, send me your script if they don't want it, right? But it right? But it doesn't mean they're going to read it that day or even that week. You know, they got to send it to their assistant, who has 172 scripts to get through. Right? You don't know how long it's going to take them to read something if they like it, they'll get back to you. If they don't, they either won't get back to you at all, or they'll say, No, thank you. But if you if a month has gone by and you haven't heard from them. There's nothing wrong with sending a message. I wouldn't do it. I wouldn't do it sooner than a month, if a month's gone by, they've probably read it in the past, but I've had I've had someone ask for a script, and then eight months later they get in touch with me. So my best advice there is send it and forget it. That's what I tell everybody. Just send it and then move on and keep marketing. Keep writing. If someone likes it. Look it back to you. It's not like they miss at that No. And if it takes 99 notes to get a yes, you're gonna sit there with every submission, waiting and waiting and waiting and waiting for for no reason, right? So, so, yeah, so that's something wait at least a month if you are gonna follow up. And if you do, you know, just check in. Okay.

36:15

Uh, question three, should I adapt my own self published novel into screenplay?

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I read a lot of screenplays that that were basically, say, on the front page, adapted from the novel by this person. I'm like, well, that's your name, so probably it's your self published novel. But thinking that, it depends. Why, if you think it, it can become a great movie story or TV series or whatever. Yeah, go ahead and do it. Make sure you understand screenwriting, though, and don't, because a lot of times when people adapt their own stuff, there's way more words in that adaptation than are needed, plus the story might need to change, because it has to be cinematic, it has to be different than a novel. But if you're writing, a lot of people think, Oh, well, I'll write my script, and then it's already been published as a novel, so then there's IP attached to it, and that makes it more attractive. Well, if you've had seven downloads on Amazon for your novel, that isn't going to make anyone pay attention if you have self published your novel, and have you had 10,000 downloads and five stars, blah, blah, then, yeah, you can point to that, but it really depends on what is making you feel that that novel would be worthy and not as good

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as another meeting. Yeah, makes sense. Okay? And then final question, Should I write different scripts with different writing partners to increase my chances?

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That's tricky. That's a tricky one. I know a couple of writers who have done that, and they've been and they've been, they've been successful because they have so much material out there. But you write a script with someone, you're tied to them. You don't know who they are, right? You can't market it without them. They can't market it without you. If they try to be like, Oh, can I take our script and turn it into a book myself? And you got to be like, no or yes or whatever. But

also, it's hard to, especially if you're like, trying to find a representative, right? How does that Representative know that what in that script is you? How much of you is in that script, and how much is it some other

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I don't think you can look for representative if you're, if you have two of you

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attached, well, you can, but then you guys are writing part forever. Yeah, you're not two writers who just randomly wrote together one day. You are sold as a writing Yeah, if you have a partner, try and stay with one partner, right? I think, anyways. But I mean, if you want to do that to pump up material more, go ahead, right? But just understand that. You know, a lot of a lot of success in writing comes down to who you are as a person to someone, and if you don't know that person on the other side of you very well as your as a writing partner, you don't know how that's going to go. So anyways, that that's my advice, but, but that's it. That's that wraps us up. That's it for today. So what should people do if they enjoy this today? Well, if send you some converse in the mail,

38:32

yeah, no, I haven't gotten a pair yet, which really makes me mad.

38:35

It's a lot of episodes without a pair of Converse, I know. So anyway,

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you should subscribe to podcast. Yes, please give us a five star review. If you feel like

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I am good enough. Gold stars for Desiree. Don't, don't. There's no negative stars. Unfortunately. Hey, share the podcast. Share it with your friends and colleagues. You know, if you enjoyed it, our whole idea here is we just want to educate and entertain. What we say isn't gospel, it's not perfect, it's not the end all and be all. It's just our take on things. You know, my experience in the industry giving this to you so you can hopefully learn a new skill or a new way of doing things. So if it makes sense to you, that's my hope.

39:10

Great. And then any questions or comments, feel free to email at Hello@scriptreaderpro.com,

39:17

yeah, and check out all of our services. We have everything you could ever want to find as a writer, and you know, that's what we're here for. We are all about helping writers craft wonder one page that time you.