

Ep #42: Interview with Mentorship Client Phillip McSween

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On this episode, we are talking to Philip of McSween. He is a successful mentorship client, and he has lots to share about that experience and more.

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So listen in.

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

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Hey everybody. This is Desiree, and this is the Script Reader Pro Podcast. I'm joined by Scott Parisian, hi.

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Hi Scott. Hello. How are you? Why are you talking in a radio voice? Does everyone know I used to be a wedding DJ back in the 80s and 90s? Here we go. It's time for throwing the garter. Let's go, ladies,

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what about Well, before we can continue on the garter, let's talk about the guy who's trying not to lose his like self. Yes, he's like, we have a guest today. Desiree, introduce our guest for we have film McSween, nice. How was that?

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That was amazing. That was amazing. Hey, Kate,

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going back to the winning thing. Hi, Phil, you're not as important as this wedding conversation. We'll talk about in a second. Scott, what I remember? Because I used to go to these weddings with you all the time. The classic was the change of the change up from like 15 minute increments, from the guy who was dressed really nice with the tie and then suit jacket, to then loosening the tie, uh huh, unbuttoning the first couple buttons of his shirt, yeah, then the next 15 minutes was taking off his suit jacket, yes. Then it was like the tie was just hanging around his neck, not no longer tied, right? And then we quickly progressed to the it then being tied around his head, yeah, every drop

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every there was always a guy with his tie right often, and then the tie off to the

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side, not around it, not down, his face, like around, like a Rambo headband, side, a side ponytail from the 80s, right foot to the side, yeah. And he was like the he thought he was the coolest guy. He thinks his life is a movie. He took the ladies home. He probably took the bride home. He probably was the

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groom. Probably tried to take sometimes he was he was the groom, sometimes he was probably Phil. Anyway, this is a Script Reader Pro podcast. If anyone doesn't quite know yet,

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I know it was kind of like touch and go there for a minute. I was like, what kind of podcast are we? I know, what is this? Are we putting out there today?

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But we are talking this is just entertainment value, right? It is. We're trying to do we're trying to wake you guys up. Today, we are talking about our mentorship program because we have one of our very successful mentorship clients on the podcast today. His name is Philip McSween and we're gonna, I call him McSweeney, and we're gonna, we're gonna get to Phil. He's got a lot to share with us. Gonna have some conversations about writing and other things. But before we get going, what do we usually do?

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Desiree, I don't know, Phil, what do we normally do? Do you remember this part of the podcast, Phil?

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I don't actually, wow. So Bill

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not talking to Phil to know.

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Thank you guys. I'll see myself out him now,

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usually talk about something that we've seen. For those

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listeners who actually listen to our podcast, we talk about what we've seen lately. All right, desiree usually doesn't remember what we've seen

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lately. No, she doesn't. And Phil sees like a lot, you watch a lot of movies, but I bet she hasn't seen this. Oh, we just, this is a new movie on we watched this two days ago that's in the top 10 called she said,

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maybe, I don't think they'll see

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Bill, you seen it? No, see it was, it was a Turkish movie, okay? And it was dubbed. And said dubbing was actually, really so good.

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Bill actually does talk in that, in that he does

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Turkish, Turkish, Turkish. Do you speak Turkish? Though

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he also speaks Spanish, Portuguese,

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all the things, el fuego, el Tando, Gato,

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those things. Roger that, Roger that. This movie

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was actually pretty. I mean, people would say this falls into the Hallmark type of drama, but it was

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actually really good. There were some close sex scenes there.

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There were, we were, like, that got pretty, like, pretty. You're like, that was like, it just kind of Yeah, it's like, oh, everything was like, silly. And then there's like, music and like, together, and then it cut away, and I was, I was like, but it was actually pretty fun. It was pretty good. There was this, there's a couple characters. There was this, like, cousin who was like, he was like, the fashion he was like, the gay fashionist cousin guy who was all into but he was over the top. He was. Over the top, but it was so funny, but it was unbelievable. It was very applicable, but it was actually really well done. You said it was like The Princess Diaries. Dad had a Princess Diaries feel, but more adult, you know, but it was actually, it was actually well

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done, well written. It's on the list of, like, the top down. No,

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it's good. It was good. It was just, you know, classic rom com, but very, you know, unique and different. But have

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you noticed, Phil, that there's not really very well made and very good rom coms as late it's like they've sucked here big time. Yeah,

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they've been pretty dry, kind of formulaic, honestly. Yeah,

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that was a big word.

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I know. I know I gotta, I gotta slow down. We got a lot of time left.

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What the meaning is? I'm gonna look up the word. I would bore myself to death and fall asleep. Thanks for such a good word. Phil, it's been really crap lately.

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Yeah, they've been up and down, but it's just, it is nice to see rom coms back, though, because they disappeared.

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They did. But considering that, I don't know movies very well, the one that stands out that I do not remember the name of is the one fighting the crocodile in the bed.

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Yes, you always forget that it's called, cordially invited with Will Ferrell and Reese Witherspoon. Did you see that one? Phil,

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no, wait,

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cordially invited. And it's, it's about these two families. They Reese is a mom, and Phil's a dad, and they both book the same small island to have their kids wedding on, because they both have been there. Gosh. And, and it's Will Ferrell just being desperate. And, and it's just so

funny. If you like Will Ferrell, it's love. Will Ferrell taller? Hard not to laugh. Yeah, he's a humorous kind of guy. Yeah. Anyways, check it out. That was good. Yeah, we talked about that before on here, but yeah, she said maybe was, was the show, so okay, it was good.

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And she said maybe she'll talk to Phil today, if he's a nice guy.

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That's what she said. That's what she said. That's what she said. Yeah. So anyways, getting into it,

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I like it. How you have this as our 42nd episode? It is 42 the name of this episode is McSween. That's it. That's the whole title. For those listening, they're gonna be like, What the heck does a McSween mean? It'll be like, some kind of writing thing, like, well, what you do is when the main character, like, totally surprises you, and then ends up, like, kissing the protagonist. It's like, called a McSweeney,

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okay, that's it. You know something. You know how you throw things, and then you're like, what does that even mean? And you give me all these like a meet cute, right? And I'm like, What the heck does anything? This is a McSweeney McSween. I just mixed meaning. I love it. Copyright, trademark, sorry, Phil, you can't make any money off of it. It's all ours, all right. So Philip McSween, a lot of people who listen to the podcast probably feel like they know Phil a little bit because Desiree talk about Phil all the time. I don't talk about Yeah. I do, yeah. Everyone knows the infamous story I told about Phil going to a manager's house and slipping his screenplay under the blood one, and then having blood cut his finger and blood on the script. And just, I just see him standing there and just staring at it in defeat, like from this side, the security guard dive tackles them off camera. Picture it, and I probably embellish that like a lot. I know that's not really every detail what happened, but anyways, he was

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actually two security guards, that's what? Yes,

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welcome. Glad you're here. I've known you a while now. You were one of my earlier are we clapping? We're clapping for Phil. Phil is one of my earlier mentorship clients, and yeah, and it's just great to have seen the girls. So Phil, tell us about yourself, kind of, where you're from, what you what you're all about, you know, what you what you like to write that kind of stuff.

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Yes, well, first and foremost, thank you so much for having me. This is awesome. Yep, I'm Philip McSween, married with a crazy 21 year old son. I live in Denver, Colorado, but I grew up in Durham, North Carolina, as I discussed with you guys earlier, Scott and Desiree, I've been

writing for man since I was six, since just after, you know, I learned how to read and actually write. Started with novels. Loved Stephen King as a young individual, you know, from the time I was eight years old on, well, you Well, I was reading pretty early. You're reading, Steven, I'm telling you. I'm telling you, yeah, I, you know, I was, I was a pretty advanced. Reader. So, you know, I just kept reading more advanced books. And you know, Stephen King was, like, my favorite growing up, and then I got into sci fi and fantasy, but, you know, all that good stuff, but we're gonna say

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no, did you put so? Did you hide this Stephen King books under your mattress? Like, like other boys?

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No, because you know, it's funny my mom, my mom, I grew up in a single parent household, and my mom, like, encouraged it, you know, she was or she

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bought it, both, both, both,

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actually, you know, she's like, Hey, you know what you need to become a man. You know,

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I don't think those joking, but maybe I

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don't think he's joking.

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By the end of the episode, I'll let you guys decide. But, but no. So you know, I've been writing for a long time. Screenplays are something that I recently shifted into within the last, I would say, eight ish,

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years. Yeah, that's, that was one of the things that was gonna start by asking you, is, yeah, because I remember you had said you started doing, like, like novel writing, like pros and short stories. So why? Like, I'm like, everywhere I love, I always want to know, Why did someone get the screenwriting bug? Because as far as I know, once you start screenwriting, it's, like your favorite medium, anyone who tries it. So why? Why did you choose to go into the screenwriting Avenue instead of novels and

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stuff? Um, well, you know, I'll just say it like this, you know, for for the novel writing aspect of it, it, I enjoyed it, but it always felt like a little bit more of a chore, because my favorite part of

writing novels was the dialog. And so, you know, my fillers, you're, you're, you know, where you're setting the scene, you're describing characters, all that good stuff that was just a means to getting to the dialog for me, and I was shifting more into loving movies than I was enjoying reading. I was watching way more movies, and took a couple classes in college, and I just fell in love with it from there. That's awesome, man.

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My question is, though, how does your wife feel? Yeah,

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what's it like being married to a writer? I want a different

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opinion. How does your wife I want a different opinion? Because, I mean, we've talked about my opinion and how much I love being married to a so smooth freaking writer thing in the whole world ever. So I'd like to know your wife's perspective. Where is she at right now?

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She's, she's out of earshot. So here's, so here's what I'll say. I think,

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yeah, it's, it's kind of be honest with us, Phil, I'm coming. I'm coming with the honesty, I think for her, I don't know if she realized getting into this, like, how this, that this wasn't a hobby like that. I was really, truly into it and dedicated. And when you're dedicated to something, when you're truly dedicated to something, it takes hours, days, weeks, right where you're just locked into that thing and and it's not even just about the time that it takes. It's a lot's also about the convert all the conversation centering around it, and you know, you wanting to get back to it, even though you're doing something else. So she's a very patient woman,

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I will say that rolled so far back that her head dropped back. Her head out now, dropped back

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now, here's what I'll also say,

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fortunately, me and your wife become best friends,

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form a support group. You know,

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I just thought that's a good idea for a movie about a about the support group of spouses of writers, that would be so good.

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But, yeah, she's, she's a, I mean, she works 5060, hours a week herself. So it kind of, it kind of, you know, there's a balance

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there. Yeah, you and I both lucked out for sure, for sure. Phil, definitely cool. Well, I just want to jump into the just talk about some mentorship stuff for a bit, because I just that's, I mean, why I love mentoring writers, and I've done this all my life, whenever I found the opportunity is just to watch someone grow, not just in their skills, but like in their confidence, right? Like there's nothing like having someone who's trying to champion you and tell you, Hey, you are doing good and you're doing better, and look at you go, and it just helps, like, it just helps a right. Like, I wish I had that growing up. That's why I love to do mentoring, because as I was growing as a writer, I wish I had someone who could have told me, This is wrong, you're doing this wrong, or this is great, or you're doing this great. What if you did this? And how about this? And just to help develop your writer mind,

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right? Well, I did do, I do. To do that for you. When I met you, you were still young man, 2223

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I wish I could go back there

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and that that's that was the time. And I told you you sucked at writing, and you should do something else. Yeah. Oh, you've

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never told me that. I would have walked away. But I remember Phil when, you know, when we were in the mentorship, it was, it was like a number of sessions in and you finally said to me, man, I was just so nervous and not sure if I was good enough to join the mentorship. But then you said you were, you kicked yourself because you wish you had done it sooner. What made you choose to actually take that step and put yourself, make yourself vulnerable and just be like, hey, I want someone to read my work and just be honest with me, what, what took you to that place?

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Well, I think for me, just thinking back to when I wrote novels and didn't see a lot of success, right? I thought I was really good. And I feel like, you know, I was pretty talented from that aspect. But I think the large reason of why that didn't pan out, or I didn't amass the success that I was looking to was largely because I didn't see and, you know, coming up as a as a salesperson on the corporate world side, you know, there's this, you know, King Kong beating your chest mentality right? Where you feel like, okay, I have to figure this out on my own. I have to do it myself, right? And that's kind of translated into my writing. And so early on, I didn't seek

help, and as a result, I didn't really get anywhere. And so I decided, when I shifted into screenplays, okay, I'm going to do this different, but I'm going to get a lot of eyes on this thing. I'm going to ask for help. I'm going to embrace, you know, others opinions for myself to get better. And so this was, this was just perfect for me. This this mentorship opportunity, you know, I talked myself out of it 1000 times, and then finally I said, No, I'm doing this. This is happening.

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But isn't it like, I mean, aside from screenwriting, a huge thing to be for any situation to get to the point where you realize it's okay to ask for help, right? And I'm going to talk about it just in general, with anything in life, right? You get

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to that it's almost like we're encouraged not to ask for help in this life,

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especially man. I will, especially man, especially men. Yeah, that it's like, no, you can't ask for help. You got to do it yourself. If I went through like there and listeners know that I that I use a wheelchair to get around, but if I went through a day and I didn't ask for help, I would not be leaving my house, because it's like a constant thing, I will ask for help for absolutely everything. And it's like to the average person, like an outsider, they'd be like, wow, look. She asked for help. For me, I see that as a sign of strength and that, like, look at how empowering that is for me, to be able to be like, This is my world. This is my life. I'm taking control of it, instead of being hindered and stuck somewhere, yeah, not asking for help and not growing into the person you're supposed to grow into, yeah, which is exactly what Phil did by asking for help,

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right? Yeah. And I know we're talking about screenwriting and silliness and stuff, but like, real talk, like everyone out there, if you ever, if you need help with anything, if you're dealing with secrets, if you're dealing with trauma, if you're like, I have to handle this all on my own mental illness, right? Anything, anything. Life is hard. Everyone has a problem. Everyone has issues. Just ask for help. Find help somewhere, ask for help. So anyways, that's the real talk. Seriously, it really, it really is announcement, but yeah, but yeah. Phil asked for help. Feels like you know what? I want to go on my writing. I want to get better. And and he did. So, so what? So once you did start the mentorship, how did it get you fired up? What did it get you thinking? How did it help or change approaching

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things? I just before he answers, I do want be for the listeners that don't know, maybe, maybe they're tuning in for the first time. What is a mentorship? Oh yeah, okay, good. Let's just talk about that quick, because we're talking

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about the mentorship. So we have a lot of services here at scriptreaderpro.com right? One of our our awesome ones is a mentorship program. So essentially, it's like a one on one master

class with one of us on the team. I'm not the only one who does it. A lot of our team does do the mentorship. So you get to pick who you, who you want to, want to, want to do mentorship with, yeah, if you feel like you vibe with like there's a bio for each tells you all about us. That's what makes us that's what makes us different than any other service out there. So you actually can see who you're going to choose and work with that person. But you know that you can get six sessions, 12 sessions, you know, that kind of stuff. So it's essentially a one on one master class with one of us, and it's all about the writer. And we read your pages, we give you advice and feedback and throw suggestions out, and then you go off and. Do your rewrite and or your next phase, or whatever you're doing, and then you come back, and then we have another session. We go over everything, and it's just a way to get that instant feedback. It's much deeper, much more involved than just getting notes on something my favorite program we have. But anyways, if you have any questions want to check it out, we'll talk more about Yeah,

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I will say too. It's not just like you. There's different packages you can get. Am I correct with the amount of mentorship?

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Yeah, we have like three, three session one, business stuff. We have six, we have 12. But Phil, what? What got you fired up there? When? When you started going?

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So I'll be honest, this was kind of a crossroads point for me, getting into the mentorship. So I was thinking to myself, either this person, now we know it was Scott, is going to meet with me and give me some feedback on what to work on and how to get better, or he's gonna, he's gonna tell me, it absolutely sucks. And I'll go back to novel writing, right? And so for me, it was kind of a heat check for where I was in this thing, because this was my first screenplay. And so I just wanted to get a feel for, okay, do I have the chops to even do this, right? And so meeting with you, and that, that first initial meeting, where I was like, Dani, is this dude being paid to tell me all these nice things, like, What in the world? But that, but that, like, really, that really lit me up, right? Because you had, I mean, it was, it was like 20 minutes at least of just giving me all the good feedback of what made the script great before we dove into improvements naturally. But, I mean, you didn't sandwich that you you hit me with the, with the, with the beauty stick, like, right off the bat, which was, which was great. So for me, that got me excited. Like, okay, maybe I can do this,

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right? That's awesome. That's good to hear. And yeah, like, everyone has their own style, but man, if you're ever anyone listening, if you're going to read a script, if you're going to work with someone, you're going to PAL up with a colleague and just be like, Hey, let's read each other stuff and give feedback. Excuse me, you always have to get the good stuff first. You just, you have to, because that, as we just need that right, and then the stuff that needs to be worked on. But I

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think as a creative person, to that do like it can make or break a person definitely right. Going, you go and you, you go in attack mode, and then, I mean, you could really crush someone's hopes and dreams instantly. And

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I guarantee that happens to a lot of writers. You know, especially new ones are getting first few back on a first script and and they just get hit. Get hit in the face with the ugly stick rather than the beauty stick, right? So, yeah, important, but, well, it

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doesn't necessarily mean just because there's things that need to be worked on doesn't mean you can't still be an excellent screenwriter,

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right? And that's why I always say like you to look at it like it's so hard in screenwriting, even as you grow in success, to find people that champion you, right, like that. I mean, that's the great part of finding, like, a manager or something, because you feel like, okay, this person's championing me. They see my they see what's good here, and they're risking a lot on me. That's huge. And so even getting a sprinkle of that as a writer, as a screenwriter, especially, right? Because screening is that business where it's like, it's not like a book, where you write a book, you put it out there, and put it on Amazon or whatever, and people will read it, and you can get reactions. You can see if they liked it or not. In screenwriting, no, it's like you sent a script off and it's like yes, or, you know, 99% of the time No, or that's it, 90% of the time no response, right? So, so having someone actually tell you how they reacted to it, how it made them feel, that's huge, everybody, that's that's a huge thing. And so, yeah, I mean, mentorship is great that way, because you get that, you know, you get that type of experience.

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So well, I will say, too, don't you, and I correct me if I'm wrong, don't you record the sessions too, so that they can play it back. Well, I have

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ADHD, so if I remember to, then, yes, there's been many times I've forgotten to. So if you're a mentorship client, always ask your mentor to record so they can play it back. They can play it back. Yeah, so, you know, but take notes and, you know, all that kind of stuff. But no, I mean, they're good. But what I really this is one of the reasons why I want to have Phil on there. And I've talked about this specific thing in examples, in our voice podcast. But I, you know, Phil started out first script that he wrote We was, like a side was, like a big budget, huge sci fi, kind of, like, heavy theme of, like, brotherhood and connection. What was this one about? It's called harnessers. Well, Phil, what's the log line for harnessers?

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Oh, God, you just gonna, just gonna put me on the spot like that.

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Well, not, but what's it about? And not in like, seven minutes, but like, what's it?

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Oh, no, no, no, no. So, so harnessers is a sci fi story about two brothers who actually inherit this, this superpower, and they have to team up to take that. This powerful entity.

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Yeah, so as cool as sci fi, lots of cool sci fi things. And you know, that's one we started with, and then his next script that he had been working on. It was called the last human chef, and it was sci fi as well, but it was like a family sci fi. It was about a younger kid who wanted to be a chef that no one cooked anymore, because it was just robots and stuff that did all the cooking. And, you know, it just was, like a heartfelt, fun story. But what I had picked up on as I was talking to Phil, and I'm sure everyone's seen it already, but over the time, just over a few sessions, is this guy is one of the funniest guys I've ever talked to in my life. Like he was just on the ball funny. He was like, You, I always say, feels like a male version of you. Yeah, he said things. He just has this knack of charisma to just make you laugh. It's like he's, you know, like, I always say, Man, Phil got a chance to pitch in his in a room with a studio, people would just be throwing money at him before he left, because everyone would want to work dollar bills, right? Maybe dollar bills, maybe more.

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He read Playboy So,

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but, but I was like, okay, but, but I was like, but his screenplays aren't about that. I was like, they were good. Like, I didn't know the writing was good with this guy is cinematic. Sees movies in his head. This is working. But I was like, I don't I'm not feeling Phil in these you know, not that he's not in there, but not the Phil I was getting to know, what do you wait? Yeah, like his voice, like, who? Like what he brings to the page. That's different than everyone else. So I remember this moment where I said, What are you working on next? He said, all these ideas and desire. You will remember this moment because I came to you in the bedroom and I said, Oh my gosh, in the bedroom. Yes, I just my new mentorship client, Phil. He just pitched this idea to me. Phil, can I say the idea? Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. He said, it's, it's a Christmas movie. It's about all of there's a whole bunch of Santas. Not just one Santa. There's a whole bunch, yeah, and they're there. The movie is about the black Santas who have to work in the shadiest and roughest neighborhoods and hoods in the country. And it's about their struggle. And so I said that to desert, and she's like, Oh my gosh. I see a scene right now where Santa takes his slave on a roof, and he goes down and he delivers presents, and he comes back and someone stole all of his sleigh things, whatever they're called, like, they like that. Actually, they stole his tires off of the sleigh. Did that? Did that happen? I told Phil, and he put it in there. He just started laughing. And I was like, I was like, I was like, you know, what was my it was I'm like, if this, if he writes this, and it's anything like my head is telling me this is or now it is going to No, I

remember saying this, this is going to launch your career if you nail this script. This is the script that everyone reads and thinks this is a Phil McSween script. I have no voice, right? It was his voice, but I but I remember I had said to film like this is and that's what I tell writers all the time in this business, in this market, especially now, you're the script you write isn't necessarily you're writing it ready to go and producible. You're writing a script that makes people not stop thinking about it. They get to the end and they're like, I cannot stop thinking. And I was like, that is what this script has you got. You got to push it. You got to be raunchy, you got to go full tilt. You have to make this an adult. And you were already on that vibe. It's not like you did what I said to do. But you were like, yeah, that's how I see it. And it's like, and then you wrote it. And I was like, Oh my gosh, this is a Phil script. This is his voice. This is who he is, not that the other ones weren't. But this was like if Phil was a screenplay. This is Phil, right? So I watched you, you know, find that voice and move through the different sessions. How do you feel? How did it feel to find your voice? How do you now keep that voice, but still try new things and try to be different, because I know you don't write the same stuff all the time,

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right? How did you even get to the point where you're like, the other stuff was good, but it was not my voice. Like, how did you know? Like, how does that even change?

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How do you know? How does that how does you understand that? I don't get it. Yeah.

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So the turning point for me, which was interesting enough, I was in a hotel room in Chicago, and this was right before I started Christmas. And I usually do an outline before I start the screenplay, right? So I draft up the characters and put the plot together and all that good stuff. And I was just blocked, you know? I just could not figure out, like, Okay, where do I want this thing to go? How do I want it to be? And I think a huge part of the reason why I was blocked was because I wasn't allowing to Scott's point, just my voice to like, really shine, and so I was trying to still stay in that original script box and not really brand. Out. And so finally, before, before I left that hotel room, I was like, I'm gonna, I'm gonna bang out these first 10 pages, and it's just gonna be unfilled, unfiltered, unbridled, it's, it's just gonna be me raw, and if I need to go back and fix it later, I'll go back and fix it later.

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Yeah, it's funny that you say it was so raw, because that's, this, is that script, to me, that's your Eddie Murphy's raw, like, that's it, that's the defining that. That's That's it, that's the, that's the level you raised to.

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I love it. I love it, yeah. And that was the so after those 10 pages, right? I said, Okay, if this is where I'm starting, then let's just blow the doors off. Yep. And so from there, from that script on, it was just a promise to myself. I'm just going to be true to this thing and true to me, and just, you know, write what I call my brand of writing. And I've, yeah, I've tried to do that ever since.

30:58

That's awesome, yeah. So like you, you've completed the mentorship. Yes, you've grown even more. Santa's Candy Cane has grown. You've you've written harder. Santa has grown. Yes, you've had some success. Okay, so how does, how do you see your future unfolding with with writing and why

31:30

so? So here's the thing, I feel like every day, I'm continuing to get better and better and better, just in terms of stacking up against my peers. And, you know, just, just the feedback I've gotten from Scott, how do I see my career unfolding? I wouldn't be doing this if I didn't think I could be the absolute best of the best, and maybe that's the salesperson of me, and maybe I'm just super competitive, but I'm doing this to be in the upper echelon of screenwriters. I'm not doing this for fun. Like I could, I could go play tetherball or something. I know, right? But I'm old Desiree.

32:15

I'm old. Do you know hazard now? Like, they're like, a safety thing because there's like, a rope and a chain and like, like, kids are whipping each other,

32:24

see? Now, this is where that, this is where the old man, to me, comes out.

32:27

You know, who are listening to this? Or, like, what's a tether ball? I know what it tells us. Like, what is it like? Yeah, it's a rope. So it's very much.

32:41

It's actually my safe word. That's why it came to mind first. No, but man, I yeah, I watched these. I watched the Academy Awards. Every year. We actually doing an Oscar party where we do a pool of predictions and all that good stuff. And I see these, you know, screenplay writers get up and accept an award, and I think to myself, that could absolutely be me one day, and I'll believe that will be you one day.

33:13

I love it. Yeah, I'll never and this is, like this, one of the most exciting things. I'll never forget the moment, and I'm sitting there reading or writing. I don't know what I was doing, but I get this phone. I get a phone call from Phil McSween on my phone. I'm like, I've never talked to this guy outside of mentorship. Like, why is this man calling me? And he's like, I just had a manager ask for the and the title. I always love the original title. Phil, tell us the original title of this script. Oh, snowballs deep. Snowballs deep. And it's funny. Phil sent me this like, pitch video he was doing, and he had this like, ugly Christmas sweater on, yeah, and it has said, snowballs deep. And while he was pitching this script, and I was just like, that's your title, because it was something else, like, that's your title. And then he went out with it that way, and it got attention like so

anyways, I it's, he's finding success with it, which I knew he would. And, you know, he's doing great. So, Phil,

34:07

so, well, no, I have a question. I get excited. So I get excited talking to Phil after you were like, and Phil called me, and I was like, I'm not answering the phone.

34:19

Oh, desire, right? You should have heard Desiree. You should have heard how he answered the phone. He was like, hello.

34:25

Like, yeah, totally makes sense. But I have a question, like, because you've obviously found success. So if you could give new writers advice on like, the success you've had, or the characters you've written, or how you create, the stories you do. What would you say

34:47

the biggest thing is, don't get stuck on one thing. I think that's one of the largest pieces of advice amongst the many that Scott has given me. And just going back to the novel writing side of things, I wrote this Sci Fi series, and I just got stuck to it. I didn't write anything new. The new stuff that I wrote were sequels to that original. And on the screenplay side of things, it was okay, I'm going to write this, and then I'm going to write something else, and something else and something else. And everything that I've written to this point has been extremely different from the last thing, and that never would have happened if I hadn't been stuck in my former mindset of just getting stuck on okay, I'm going to write this thing, I'm going to try to sell it, and then I'll move on to the next thing. So, yeah, that's my that's my biggest piece of advice is just don't get stuck on one thing. Try new things, branch out. And just, yeah,

35:53

a lot of writers, they think, like, they stay in one lane, right? Like, you were probably gonna stay in that sci fi. That's my lane. I'm writing sci fi. Love sci fi, yep, and you wouldn't have pushed yourself. And now, like, I mean, but it's funny, because everything you write, no matter, even if it's not pure sci fi, there's sci fi and fantasy elements in everything you write, like the Santa one, it's about Santa right after the

36:11

Santa after the Santa one, though, like, so sci fi, sci fi, then the Santa one, everyone after that. Has that been it hasn't been evident that you have grown and that your voice has changed? Then are you like? This is who I was supposed to always be as the writer. Are you still like? Well, I don't know if I found who I am as a writer yet.

36:31

Well, I will say this is a two part answer. I would say number one, I'm still growing, right? I'm still trying to find out who I am, right? But I will also say that that Christmas is a mother script is what

opened the box. You know, it's what led the genie out of the lamp, essentially. So I mean everything the present with the bow. Yeah, exactly, you know, I think so. So for me, it's like, okay, I want my mark my DNA on every single script. So even down to the log lines or the the descriptors of how I like describe certain settings, you know, I have one that's, like, big ass diner, right? Like, just, just random ass, like, things that scream, this is me, right? Like, this is me, yeah, and so that's, yeah, you just got to be you. You just, you have to, you can't try to pretend to, you know

37:39

exactly, but it's the same because you're such a you have such a love for fantasy and sci fi. So even, like your follow up, I remember reading your follow up after after Christmas as a mother, and it, you know, and it was about these aliens that were living on Earth, and it was in the future, and they could, like, peel their skin off and all these things. And I remember getting to the end of it, because you're like, Oh, this is crazy comedy. I'm like, Phil, I don't know if you realize this, but you just wrote a love story. This movie script is a love story. It just has sci fi and fantasy elements in it, but it's a love story, and you're like, I'm crying right now, but it was, it was like, yeah, so, so even though you're you're trying different genres, you do it different things that love for sci fi and fantasy is going to creep into everything, right? And doesn't matter what you're writing. So yeah, that, I mean, that's part of your voice. Is that that genre element, just like me, like I with, with writing horror and thriller and the darker kind of things like it creeps into everything, no matter what genre I'm doing. So it's just, it's just, once you get that understanding of who you are, and you're not afraid to put it on the page and you want to own it, it will change everything for you. So what's one piece of advice that you can give writers when they're thinking and choosing their next idea, when they're going through their ideas? What would you advise writers to do as they're sitting there trying to figure out which what do I work on next?

39:00

So two things, number one, don't put so much pressure on yourself, right? I think a lot of times, some of our best ideas come when we're in our most relaxed settings, whether that's watching a movie, a date night, you know, just just chilling, playing video games, whatever the case may be, just don't put so much pressure on yourself to say, Okay, I got to find that next thing. And then I would say the second thing is, focus on what is that story that really resonates with you? And you just can't let it go like you. Think about it, when you're in the shower, when you're brushing your teeth, when you're petting your dog, you know, what is that story that's like, I have to get this on paper. It needs to get it on paper immediately. That is, that's the one that you want to do next, because you're going to you're going to dedicate

39:59

as much. Love as you can to it cool. Well, one other thing I want to ask you before we kind of close, close this part off, is writer's block. Writers talk about all the time how they get stuck, how they can't get moving. And you and I have, like, like, hey, fail. So what have you been writing? What's new? And you're like, Dude, I haven't written for like, like, three weeks here. And I'm like, I haven't either. Like, I don't, I don't know what's going on. You know how? Like, because you hit that you hit that place. And I think a large part of it might have been because you were finding

this success, and you're like, this manager, you only want to work with me, and I got all these ideas, and I don't know where to go and, and so you were just kind of like, you know, trying to figure out, you know, what do I even do next? How do I follow this up? And you you know, you admitted you were kind of stuck, so how, how are you able to get through that? And now you've written, like, two other scripts and shorts and all these things. So how did you move past that?

40:47

You know, in terms of writers, writers block, I think for me, it's realizing and this has happened so many freaking times to this point where I'm just like, Okay, this has got to mean something. A lot of times when I'm blocked, or I can't figure out what to move to next in a script, or what's the next story going to be? Nine times out of 10, the answer is a lot simpler than I'm making it out to be a lot of times, like when we watch these movies, right? These these complex movies with all these moving parts and these, these great, amazing, deep characters, it's like, okay, this is what this has to be, right? And sometimes the answer is just super simple. I remember when my manager gave me a ridiculous amount of notes on how to improve Christmas before he started shopping it, and I was just stuck. I was like, How in the world am I going to how the word am I going to figure this out? Like, I don't know what he's asking me. He's asking me to add all these things and cut the story that don't even make sense. And, and I took a step back, and I tackled it one thing at a time, and I just realized the answers that I was looking for was extremely simple things that just required a tweak here, a tweak there. So that's, that's what I would say, is just, you know, don't try to complicate it. You know, sometimes that answer is really simple,

42:23

yeah, yeah, that's awesome, and that's a great tip to this is one of those posted, known things you put on your computer at Desiree hates that. I see there's so many posted but when you get notes from someone, it's not about making that like doing exactly what that person said, word for word, right? Because that's not you. That's what that person wants you to do. The trick is, okay, here's what they said to do. How would I do it? How does this make sense for me? Keeping your voice, yeah. Like, because that's not the note. The note isn't, Oh, this isn't working, so redo it how I would want you to do it. No, it's like, this part, I think we need to work a little bit better, find a way to do it right. Like, that's the thing. Otherwise, like, why are they hiring you? Why are they paying you? Why they want to make your thing if you're just doing verbatim what people are telling you there, it's because you're original, and so they want you to do it the way you would do it. So, so keep that in mind. New writers, as you get notes, don't just go ahead and change it exactly like that person suggested and don't return it back two days later. Don't do or like, 37 no later, right? Like, that. Take your time.

43:22

Well, I want to know what I to close up. I just want to know what's next for you. Like, what are your what's next for Phil?

43:28

Oh, that's a great question. So I actually just finished up a drama that takes place in my hometown in Durham, it's about guy, gangster, former gangster, that has a daughter, and he's

trying to go straight, but the life is just calling him back. So that was fun, because again, you know, that was a huge test of keeping my voice in that despite it being something out of the realm of what I usually do. And then I'm actually working on my first horror feature. I'm about to start that in the next few days, which is going to be, it's going to be a fun one. It's called my soul to keep and it's, it's going to be very much, along the lines of, I would say, comedy horror. So think, like, Zombieland, Shawn and the dead, that's kind of the realm that it's gonna, you know, fall in the lines of, so I'm super excited about that.

44:33

I'm stoked. Like, it makes sense, comedy and horror are so much the same in how they pay off things and, like, that's why so many great comedy writers and comedians move into horror, like George totally, because it's just, it's the same way of, you know, it's timing and payoff and the big one liner, but in a darker way. So that's awesome, yeah. And I think it's great to see you moving from from, you know, over the top comedy, into into drama, into other things. It's like the amazing. And, you know, Craig Mason, right? Like you started writing, like, scary movie and parody and all these crazy things. And then he writes freaking Chernobyl, you know. And then he writes, you know, The Last of Us. And it's like, you know, comedy, if you if you can write comedy, I always say, if you can write comedy, if you make people laugh on a piece of paper, you can write anything. So, yeah, I think it's great. I think you're on the right track. So awesome. Well, we're just going to take a pause for one second, as you guys can hear about one of our other services here at Script Reader Pro, so hang tight.

45:30

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

46:13

Okay, guys, thanks for tuning in again to the Script Reader Pro podcast. We have this section of our podcast that we're going to do some questions and answers that have been submitted from

46:23

listeners. Yeah, and we'll have Phil give his hand a trying to these two.

46:26

We'll see Phil is actually a screenwriter, like he says he is. Here we go. What's the first question? Okay, first question is, what do I need to do when it comes to AI Bill, do you have any it's a pretty broad question.

46:43

This one, take it and throw it in the trash. You know, honestly, it really is and AI is something that is just continuing to cement itself in our everyday lives. I mean, I use chat GPT on a regular not for writing, not for writing, but you know that to ask it various questions about, you know, things like, you know, why do I have more energy after I poop? You know,

47:17

I would love to see a screenshot of all of his question, oh, because a

47:23

rabbit hole. The one thing I do use it for, I it has zero place in the creative process. But after a script is finished, I have plugged it into chat to just see what the budget would be like. Give me a sample budget of what, yeah, what it would be for the script so that, so it's been helpful in that respect,

47:45

but not from where they can help you. But, yeah, not yet. Good, good

47:49

thing. So question two, should I create a web page for my TV or movie script? A web page

47:56

like a whole I've seen that, like some people do web pages just for their I think if you're like, I don't know, like, if you're well, if you want to be a director, if you want to direct it, if you want to try and get out there yet, yeah, you got to create everything. You need to get it going. But if you're just a writer, and you're thinking, well, if I have a web page, someone can come here and they can download my screenplay, it's probably not going to happen. You have to try and force people to find your screenplay, right? So, yeah, I mean, if you want to do something, go ahead and do it, but don't invest a bunch of stuff in something just so you can feel good about what it's there for. Make choices. Spend your time, energy and money in places that actually can help you grow and get better. So that would be my answer.

48:37

And whatever you decide to do, just make it look professional, right? Like, I like, I've seen a number of script submissions where they do like a title page, and they have, like a graphic designer, design, you know, mock up a title page, and it looks awful, like it, so it's like it, just to me, that detracts from what could be a brilliant script. Yeah,

49:01

especially if someone's not, like a graphic designer, someone they try to put together themselves. Like, what are you okay, so I can see that you took, like, you know, a clip art here, and pasted on this. And I can forgot to take the white background out of the box that it's sitting on someone, like, a hat that that person's wearing has a white box around it, like it just makes someone go, well, this person, obviously the scripts can be bad because they don't know, you know,

49:27

yeah, it was kind of like that, going back to the AI thing that I sent that I showed you the other day of the lady, yeah, her arm moving, and then in the back,

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like the hands were like floppy, like they weren't even touching. And I was like, That is clearly not real. Like, yeah, just like, I can't take that seriously. Question three, yeah. Question three,

49:44

how do I leverage a contest or festival screenplay win for my career?

49:49

Yeah, Phil, you answer this because you, I know you had some success at festivals and things, and you kind of went and how do you what do you think a writer should do to leverage any kind of like accolade?

49:58

I think when. You're querying other managers, agents, whatever the case may be, yeah, feel free to call those out. I mean, that you don't want it to be, you know, I won first place at this Podunk, you know, Punxsutawney Film Festival. But if it's, I mean, if it's one of the big boys, right, like that should be in your query when you're when you're reaching out to managers and agents. And that was, yeah, that that definitely got me some attention from, from some wins, Yep,

50:28

yeah. So that's it,

50:30

hey, those are the ends of the those are the end of the questions. Are done. Yes, perfect. I want to say thank you to thanks.

50:38

McSweeney, thank you. Needs we have. We're here to help you. Not just read your final draft of your script, but help you out from the beginning. Help you bust your concept. Help mentor you. Help teach you about the business. Help read your outline, your treatment, whatever, right? But, yeah, check it out. We have tons of stuff on there. And what should people do if they love this episode,

51:00

if you loved this Why did you say, like, I love this episode. I don't know if you like this episode. Could make fun of me, I guess yes, that you please subscribe to the podcast. Yes. Give us how many stars, five gold star, if you thought it was great, yeah. All right, well,

51:15

hopefully this comes out around the holidays, but yeah, if you liked it, if you were entertained, if you learned something, that's why we're here. That's what we want to accomplish. Have fun, learn, tell your friends, tell your colleagues. Share it with people and come back, because here at Script Reader Pro, we are here to help writers craft wonder one page at a time.