

Ep #44: Read the Damn Screenplay

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In this episode, we're talking all about why you should read screenplays. As a screenwriter, you should read screenplays. That's it. So listen in.

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

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Hey everybody, this is Desiree, and this is the Script Reader Pro Podcast. I am your host, and I'm with Scott my

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husband. Yes, I am Scott your husband

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in a very, very nice salmon colored shirt. Thank you. Yes,

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you look very never compliment me. I'm always complimenting you on these things. That's nice. Thank you.

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Present that there's a stain on the front of the shirt. No, there's not there, sure is. There's a Desiree hair, nope, down at the bottom. Oh, darn it,

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toothpaste. No, that's that stain that

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shows up on all your clothes in the washer. Yeah, what is that stain? I don't know. It's a mystery. It's like it's a mystery dark stain. Geez, they get come. So even when

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you watch so much for AI being effective, it doesn't even take the stains out of my clothes from my smart washer. It is a smart washer. Anyways, I am Scott. I am one of the team here at Script Reader Pro screenwriter, reader, helper, all those kind of things. Help her. Yeah, I help people. Help people with their their writing. I try to explain things in a way that maybe hasn't been explained, that might help you learn something more that you can put in your toolbox. And

desire is here to make fun of me and interject, and I already made fun of you. I know that's exactly so

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it's perfect. That's perfect. Hey, Scott, yes, today we're talking about reading screenplays. The name of the script is, or the name of the podcast is read the down, screenplay,

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yeah, just do it. So many writers fight, and you can tell, I can tell, when a writer hasn't even read a screenplay. Why? Because screenplay doesn't even look like a screenplay. It's not in format. It's like you didn't even try like, like, start over Word document. Well, yeah, no, but PDFs fine, but a Word document or just like, nothing is like or written. It like a stage play. It's like you have no clue. You didn't even look at a script, which is just lazy, as far as I'm concerned, because there's this thing called the internet, and you can just Google, what does the screenplay look like? And bam, it shows you.

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So damn,

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read that. Bam, screenplay. All right, so that's what we're talking

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before we start talking about that, we always talk about show. We've watched a TV show or a movie. Yes, I have not watched this TV show slash movie, slash TV show slash movie. No, I went

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and saw this the other night, one battle after another. I was excited to see it. I remember when it first came out, the preview came out, like six months ago, when they shot some scenes, and I was just like, this looks like a weird movie. How are they ever gonna get their money back? Because this kind of must have been really expensive because of the talent in it. Really, how expensive was it? Did you look it up? I didn't, but it's Leonardo DiCaprio Benicio Del Toro, like it's got and Sean Penn, like it's got bankable money actors. So it had to have had a big budget. I'm like, I don't know. This is weird looking movie. Couldn't tell if it was a comedy or what. But, man, am I glad I saw it. It's so well done. It's exciting to see something. Yeah, it's written by the director, and he's a famous director, so it's gonna get greenlit, probably. But it was original and it was different, and it was unexpected, and it was surprising, and it was just, you know, Leonardo, like, I don't know, a bad movie The guy's ever been in. He just knows how to pick he also doesn't age. No, he looks, he's aged in this movie, really. You can see the lines, you can see the wrinkles. You can see. I mean, he's 50, almost right, like he's up there. But yeah, I mean, he looks,

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he's up there. Scott, almost 50. Oh my goodness, so old. You're coming on

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anyways, I would recommend it. One of the best movies, the best movie I saw this year, one of the best in a while that I've seen. So isn't it

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weird? Isn't it weird back in the 80s and 90s, when you were like, that person is so old, and they're like, 40, then they're 45 or 15, you're like, that person is so

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old I can't imagine being that old now. When you're that old, you're like, all those people that were that old back then are now dying because you're as old as they that's depressed. It's true, though I know all these people are like, depressed. That person I thought was so like, they live forever, right? And you're like, I didn't realize that whoever was 90 years old, like Robert Redford. It's like, what I had no idea is, you don't think of it until they're gone. You're like, oh my gosh, yeah.

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You know life. Samuel L Jackson, he's alive. What are you talking about? Which was one that I said that he died, no, that he didn't die. I said something like, Oh, I'll ask him. And then you're like, Oh, he's dead.

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Sean Connery. Connery, that was years ago. Yeah. Oh, Sean, yeah. Sean Connery, anyways, we're just, you know, go see it, if you can. It's just so good. It's just Yeah. I mean, not for everybody. There's a lot of, like, political aspects to it, and revolution and fighting back and all that kind of stuff. So not everyone's going. Be into that type of story. But anyway, just just the writing is incredible. The acting so great. It was just really good, really good.

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Well, today, yes, we are gonna be actually reading the down screenplay.

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Yes. Okay, so the reason I wanted to do an episode on this is because, like, I remember our conversation I had with someone like, 20 years ago with this guy, and I was like, so how many scripts have you read? Scripts Have you read? And he's like, I don't read screenplays. I'm like, what? Why? I don't have to, okay, why? Well, because I watch movies, I study movies. I'm like, fair enough. But why? Why? Why would you not read a screenplay to see how, how is written, to get enough people to say, Here, let's throw money at this, because this is a this is amazing. And he's just, he was just adamant, no, I'll never read a screenplay. And I'm just like, Okay, fine. I see him now I look and I'm like, Okay, I've never seen anything from this person. You know, maybe they're busy reading screenplays. Well, yeah, he's a reader too. I know he's a reader now he's a reader. He has to read. But yeah, it's just, why would you not? So that's what we're

going to be going over here. And like I said off the start, I can tell when someone hasn't even opened a screenplay, because if they did, they'd at least try to have the formatting. Even if you're making it in your own template or writing it in Google Docs, at least you're putting your margins where they are supposed to be, but yeah, you can tell that most people just don't. Well,

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it's just like saying, like, Yeah, I'm a surgeon. Have you ever operated on someone?

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No, I've never even seen a body, never even examined a body, but I'm gonna cut it open and do brain surgery on it. Right now, I'm

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gonna do surgery. Yeah? So do you want to be my next patient? Yeah? Like,

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it makes no sense, right? Like, personal medical school is going to sit in class and study and learn and but if they never touch a cadaver, how are they going to ever do surgery just by seeing it? I know, you know, and you know, explain to them

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it's the same with anything, right?

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Yeah, it's the same. You know, would you be? Would you attempt to be a novelist and never, ever read a

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book? Then how could you be a novelist if you don't know what a book is exactly, if, just because people that I know, though in my life, who I mean, they they could claim that they know how to do everything,

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those are called narcissists. Yes, we know them. I highly a narcissist. Should not be a screenwriter, because if someone doesn't like their script, what's gonna happen? Whose fault is it gonna be if they don't like what they read? Well, not their own? No, it's gonna be the reader's fault. Yeah. How dare you so stupid. How do you not understand this? Why did you read that

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sentence the wrong way? I didn't intend for that sentence to be exactly that's on

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you. So if you're a narcissist, don't be a screenwriter, or don't be a narcissist, one or the other. You can't be both, or it's not well, you can, but you're thinking,

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narcissist knows what they're narcissists, they don't. So how could they not be a narcissist?

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So if someone tells you you're a narcissist, you're probably a narcissist. No, because you're gonna say you're not a nurse, but you probably are just so you know, all right, so just because screenplays and pilots become movies and TV shows. It doesn't mean you don't need to read the script. You need to understand how to move people with words on a page. If you're directing it and making it all on your own with your own money, fine. Don't understand how a script works. Just shoot your movie. But if you're going to want to be an actual professional screenwriter, you need to take it seriously, and you need to read screenplays. Because if you went to screenwriting school, you went to college, university, whatever, online thing, whatever, you're not going to go through that having never read a screenplay. They're going to have screenplays for you to read, to study, to understand why they work. If you're not going to school for screenwriting. Why would you not still have to do what they do there? Right? Yeah, you can teach yourself. I taught myself. I never went to school for screenwriting, but I read a million screenplays, right? Like I've given coverage on over 10,000 screenplays now, so even unproduced screenplays, that's a lot. I mean, that tells how old I am, but that's how many screenplays I've read and written notes on so and I still learn from every screenplay I write. I still read every screenplay, every every new movie that comes out. I'll read the screenplay because I need to know why this. Like you see all these spec sales, what's

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happening new in the industry. You need to be on top of what's new and what's working well and what isn't working well.

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Yeah, exactly. And I mean, you see all these spec sales this year, like they've gone, it's exploded, right? Like, \$3 million spec sales and stuff you need to, like, why would you not try and track down that screenplay and read it to understand, okay, what made someone want to spend \$3

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million on this? And we're not talking just story, though. You're talking the formats execute, how it is executed on the page. How does it look like? What do they do to make this scene go to the next. And how do they make this sound? And how do they

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because, I mean, a lot of people love movies, and they can, you know, they understand movies, and they can break them down, they can critique them, and they can, they can probably make their own movie. But, you know, they might be a great storyteller, but they may not be a great screenwriter. There's a big difference. Yeah, right. Big difference. So, uh. These are the kind of things that I want to kind of point out to keep in mind, of why you should read screenplays. And

if you don't want to read them, then fine, don't right. But why would you not right? Like, well, if you want to be in this industry, yeah, I mean, why you should be reading your colleagues screenplays. So even if it's not a produced screenplay, you should still be reading screenplays, right? It's just something you need to I'm not going to tell everyone they need to do something. They're gonna have to do something, but, but you should, because why not? Right? It'll make you better.

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Also, like, get into a group, or get a couple of friends together that are also writers, or find a couple people, yeah, and read each other's work. You do that all the time with your group of people that

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you have. That's what you're supposed to do, right? You got to build your community. But, like, watch a movie, if you like the movie, read the screenplay. Like, why not go and study the screenplay and see how it translated? What's different about the script and what's different about the movie?

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Or watch the movie and follow the script after you've watched the movie, yeah, watch it

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again while you're reading it. Right? You need to find out, you know, it's the best thing that you can do. I mean, if you're going to be the actual writer, you need to understand how to resonate with someone how to make something feel, someone feel something with words, right? It's not an easy thing to do, so studying great screenplays, or even you watch a really bad movie, get the screenplay and find out why it was so bad, right? Because a lot of times the script might not be bad, it just turned out bad because of how many people or who's so read the screenplay. And if it's still like bad, then ask yourself, How the hell did this get made? It's bad, right? And like final things not to do, don't do this, don't do that. Do this, do that. Use them as your textbooks. And that's how I you know, that's how I would view them. View them as your textbooks, even if you're not going to school. That is your textbook. That is what teaches you. That is your biology textbook. If you're going to cut open a body, it'll you read that screenplay. It'll show you what to do, how to do it well, if it's a really great screen

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but with that, but with the script too, it can help you to figure out what you could possibly have done with that script to make it better. Yeah, great point. You know,

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it helps you find your style too. Yeah, yeah, yeah, and it's fun to do that all. I wouldn't have done that. I would do this, but sometimes, like, I couldn't have done that any better. Every year the blacklist comes out, which is the usually 100 or whatever I can remember, but the most liked scripts that were read in Hollywood by agents, managers, lawyers, that kind of stuff, right? So

they come up with the, you know, they do the survey, and it'll be like, this is the this script was liked by 87 people as the best script they read every year they come out and they post them, and not usually public or everybody, but you probably know someone who gets them every year the blacklist comes out. I read every single script on the blacklist because I want to know why people love to screenplay. Sometimes I'm like, I don't understand why they like this. I really, don't really, yeah, sometimes I'm like, that's just mediocre. Like, I read scripts like that all the time. They're like, those are good, but they're not like, holy crap, that script I read this. Why? Why are they getting pictures? I don't know. I don't know if it's like, sometimes political stuff is in there too. Like, oh, I'm a manager. I want my writer to, you know what? I don't know how that all works, but, I mean, a lot of times you're like, This is great, right? But anyways, that's that, right? There is a great resource, because you need to know what works, right? And if you don't want to, then you got to put your ego aside and realize that you may not be as great yet as you think you are. See what greatness is. See what is succeeding. But don't just read them. And this is the big part. Don't read them. You need to study them. You need to read scripts of movies you love and then find out why you love them. Movies You hate, find out why you hate them. Read award winning screenplays. Read the screenplays that all won the Oscars and the Golden Globes and the festivals right. Read those screens. Read the blacklist screenplays, read the scripts that are working right? That's what will help you understand how to do things better. Read scripts in the genre and style that you want to be successful in. So if you want to be a horror writer and you've never read a horror script, then bad news. You're not probably going to pull it off. Well, right? If you want to be a horror writer, read every horror screenplay you can get your hands on if you want to be a comedy writer, read every comedy. Find out why it made you laugh. Find out how they do it, how they pulled it off. Where's the timing? Where's the one liners? How did they produce them? How do they play? You know, pull them off. You need to study it. You need to break it all down. Okay, so here's an example of how to break down what you're reading. You want to look at every single scene in a script. Don't just sit there and read it from beginning to end. Read a scene. Stop when that scene's done, and break it down.

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You're saying like a scene with everything, like the dialog and the description, the whole scene, everything one

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from the scene heading to the next scene heading read that screenplay, and then ask yourself, and I'll put these in the show notes as well, ask yourself some of these questions. Okay, how did the scene start? Just ask it, okay, the scene started this way, but then ask why? Why did they start this way? Did it start late in a conversation? Did it start with a bang? Did it start softly? How did it start and did that make. Make you feel something. Did you did you stop even noticing you were reading? Because it made you see images really well, right? How late in that conversation or moment did the scene start? Did it do something that made you pay attention? Where was the conflict in the scene? We've done a whole episode on conflict, how it doesn't necessarily need to be a bad thing. There's good conflict as well. But where is the conflict coming from? Are you able to identify it? Did they point it out? Well,

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how? What about dialog?

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Sure, yeah. How was the dialog used? Right? Did it move the story forward? Did it reveal new and interesting characters, or was it a waste of time and just two characters talking about nothing, right? That is important. I mean, people point it all the time. Oh, well, Quentin Tarantino, he just has characters sitting around talking about nothing for 10 minutes. He's Quentin Taran, no, but even though, but he doesn't, because that's all you're seeing at first. But if you actually dig deep and you read it and you study it, it's like every single line the character says there's a reason for it. It may not seem like it is, but there's a reason behind it, because I don't like incredibly smart I know you don't, because they're just too all over the place for you. Yeah, but, but that's the but it said, Though people use that example for dialog, but it's smart dialog. That's what you should be doing. Did it make you stop and hold your breath? Did it make you laugh? Did it make you cry? Did it scare you? If it did, how? Why? If it made you laugh. How? Why? How did the screen play scene end? Did it end in what I what I refer to as a button moment, right, where you like something happened, where you're like, boom, you're out of the scene, right? A great line of dialog, a visual, a cliffhanger, something. How did they end it? Did they stay around too long? Did you feel like, okay, they could have got out earlier. Study it. Mark that down. Learn from it. When did they when did the characters leave the scene? Did characters have exits? Do they have entrances? Did the scene start and then they came in the room? How did that work? And this isn't just in great screenplays. This isn't any screenplay you read, even for a friend. Study them, right? How few words were there, right? Did they do a lot with very few words? If it's a professional screenplay, you'll notice there's usually a lot less words than there are they get to the point exactly. How did they capture the tone? Did you understand if it was supposed to be tense, it was supposed to be funny, it was supposed to be scary or fearful, right? How did they style the page? You can you can voice. You can create your voice and style on the page by studying style. That makes you think, Oh my gosh. I loved how they made that sentence. I loved what they did with one sentence. Action lines there. How did the dialog reveal character? What did you learn about the characters in that scene? Did you learn enough? Did you learn something more? Did they trick you did? Does that? Did that character come across as they don't want to tell everyone anything about themselves. Are they a liar? How did they react? You're studying. You're not just reading it like that's the thing. You don't skim through a screenplay, study it, and then the biggest thing is, Did anything surprise you? Were you surprised by anything? And that's one to ask yourself again when you've read it again, go back and read that scene again and ask yourself, Okay, was there something surprising? You should always have something surprising in any scene that you write, because it keeps us on our toes. It makes us want to know. Okay, wait a minute. Why did that character say that? Or was that something we're supposed to pay attention to? Right? You want to be surprising. We're just going to go through a scene here. I just took a random scene from one of the greatest movies ever. Greatest movies ever. And I don't think desire has even seen this movie. It doesn't matter, but most people have probably seen it. It's called the Dark Knight. It is the second Batman movie in Christopher Nolan's trilogy. And we're just going to kind of go in this scene and move through it, but we're going to pause and talk. I'm gonna say, Okay, this is what I noticed here.

This is what I noticed there. Desiree be like I noticed this. Okay, so it is the scene where the Joker is in the interrogation room

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with Batman. Desiree will also notice when it's the end, yes, she will, because Desiree doesn't like superhero movies,

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yes, but this isn't super these characters do not have superpowers. They are hero and villain. That's really all they are. All right, Batman's considered a superhero because he puts on a cape and does things, but he's not superpower. He's just a guy. He's just a rich guy, and the Joker is just a bad guy. So Desiree is going to be Gordon and Batman, and she has a great Batman impression. Not gonna do Batman. She's gonna be Batman, and we the Joker. And I'm gonna even try to do Heath Ledger's Joker, because it's just too iconic. But I'll, I'll, I'll try a little bit. I'll try and

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also try and do something also, yes, I don't know what I was gonna say.

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That's okay. You can interrupt me if something happens. We're starting right after the line that's crossed through where it says interior interrogation. MCU Gotham central night.

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Are you reading that part I just did? Oh, also, that's what I was gonna say. This will be in the show notes, right? Yes, they can. And follow along.

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Yeah, we'll paste this in the show notes for you, for sure. Okay, so I'll do you want me to read the action as well? Or do you want to read the action? No, you go and read. Okay, here we go. So the Joker in near darkness, Gordon walks in, sits. First thing I notice is in near darkness that sets a tone and a mood. It's an interrogation room. There aren't bright lights everywhere. It's a dark room where dark things are probably going to happen. And that entire section there the Joker in near darkness, Gordon walks in, sits, four words. Gordon walks in, sits. The average writer is going to write. Gordon walks in the room. He closes the door behind him. He stops,

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he looks at the chases the chair, which chair he wants to sit in, yeah. Walks over, takes a pen out of his pocket, puts it on the table, sets his coffee on the right side, beside the pen. Uh huh. We don't

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need any of that. That'll be figured out later. It's the actor, like all. We have to set the Yeah, and we're just getting right into it, right? And who talks first here? I always thought was interesting. The Joker says,

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evening Commissioner. Then Gordon says, Harvey dant never made it home. Of course, not. What have you done with him?

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Me, I was right here. Who did you leave him with your people, assuming, of course, that they are your people and not maronis, Does it depress you, Lieutenant to know how alone you are? Gordon can't help glancing at the mounted camera. So what that does right there, when I study that is the Joker is getting the upper hand immediately, because he starts the conversation off too. He starts a conversation and he starts saying things to show knows, yep, they

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and he knows that they're gonna jab him the wrong way. Yeah, he's trying to get

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he's manipulating him. Yes, gaslighting him. He's a narcissist. Yeah, yes, yes. And he knows exactly what to say. And that also tells us this is a smart guy. This guy's not going to lose this conversation

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Well, and he, I don't remember seeing this, but he already knows the guy's name. Yeah,

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he's the police commissioner, so the Joker just, yeah, I mean, this is the middle of the script. No, I know. But, yeah, right, yep. But. And then the last line, Gordon can't help glancing at the mountain camera. And I'm like, okay, so why? Why is he glancing at he doesn't want people to know. He doesn't want to show that he's worried, he's scared, or is it for some other reason? So that small interaction there, this scene isn't even about these two guys, right? It gets it's more about what happens next. So Gordon can't help glancing at the mountain camera. So lots happening in half a page there. Then the Joker says, does it make you feel responsible for Harvey Dent's current predicament?

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Where is he? What time is it? What difference does that make,

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depending on the time he might be in one spot, and then he smiles, or several

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Gordon stands, moves to the Joker. Oh, now I'm reading this. Yeah, undoes his handcuffs. Okay, so that's risky, it is. And then Gordon says, if we're going to play games, I'm going to need a cup of coffee.

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Okay, so that then shifts it again. Now it's like, okay, so Gordon is actually getting the effort. Now he's in control. He undoes the handcuffs, which says, I'm, I'm in a power position here, and I'm not worried about you, right? That's, that might be what he's doing, am I not

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well? Then why did he look at the camera? Then that's what we're trying to figure out. No, I'm saying that's what he's maybe he wants to do something bad, yeah?

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Or maybe that was a nod to be like, Okay, come you know, like, I'm done, like, it's like, I'm gonna do something to hurt this guy. Yeah, I'm gonna shut off the camera, or the cameras on, so I can't do what I want to do, those kind of things, right? So, you know, we're gonna need a cup of cup of coffee, and then Joker, you know, the good cop, bad cop routine. Gordon pauses, hand on the doorknob. Not exactly straight line, right? Because it's like, not exactly. That can mean so many different things, but it's like Gordon could have said anything there. So I always think, okay, so what was Nolan doing? What was he wanting us to understand or react to by that delivery, that way, that line is just simple, two words, right? Not exactly. He could have just left and not said anything. Because what happens right after that, Gordon steps out. The overhead lights come on. So now it's like Showtime. That's what I thought. Here we go. Batman is now behind him. So Batman was there the whole time, and he didn't know it's not like he's magic and can appear out of nowhere, right? The Joker blinks in the harsh white light, wham. The Joker's face hits the table, comes up for air, crack, crack to the head. Batman is in front of him. The Joker stares, fascinated, bleeding. So that is such a beautiful description. And you see it, you feel it, you hear it, you see it. And Joker stares fascinated, bleeding. So he's hurt. He's telling us that he's hurt. Right? But he's over the deep end. Well, he isn't, yeah, and he isn't even thinking about that. He's just fascinated, because he's like, okay, so I'm in this interrogation room. I shouldn't, they shouldn't be able to beat me up. And how is this person behind me? And I didn't even know he's fascinated, right? So it really tells us a lot about him and about the dynamics of who is in this room, right? So Joker then says, Never start with the head. Victim gets fuzzy. Can't feel the next crack. Batman's fist smacks down on the Joker's fingers. And then the Joker stays calm and he says, see such he's like, I'm in power here. I don't care what you do to me. I'm going to be teaching you things, right? Never start with the head, like he's showcasing just how crazy he is, but how he has control. He's in control, exactly. And that's the thing. You might just read this and be like, Oh, that was fun. That's entertaining. No, no, you got to ask, Why? Why did the writer make this choice? So then Batman says, desire, you're up Showtime here.

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You wanted me

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here I am nice. I wanted to see what you do, and you didn't disappoint. I don't remember his laugh. You let five people die, then you let dent take your place, even to a guy like me, that's cold. Where's dent? Those mob fools want you gone so they can get back to the way things were. But I know the truth. There's no going back. You've changed

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things forever. Then why do you want to kill

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me? The Joker starts laughing. After a moment, he's laughing so hard it sounds like sobbing, like you just feel that. You hear it. You can see him laughing. You can see you can see the difference that thin line between laughing and crying, right? It's so perfect. And then it's like, why is this guy, why is this guy laughing? Right? Like, yeah, he's a joker, but why is he laughing? And then the Joker says, kill you. I don't want to kill you. What would I do without you? Go back to the ripping. Go back to ripping off mob dealers. No, you. You complete me. It's such. It's the theme of the story. It's the idea of Jack of the Joker and Batman. They can't exist without each other. Criminals cannot exist without police. Police cannot exist without criminals, right? It's that idea of yin and yang. They complete each other. They're kind of like the the both sides of the human psyche of good and bad, dark and light. So just and then, that's such a cheesy you know, You complete me, but it's his delivery. He's purposely saying it that way. Batman then says You're garbage, who kills for money, right? Because Batman can't admit that they are the same, that they need each other, right? Don't talk like one of them. You're not even if you'd like to be to them, you're a freak like me. They just need you right now. He regards Batman with something approaching pity, but as soon as they don't, they'll cast you out like a leper. The Joker looks in a Batman's eyes, searching, so I'm like reaching into his soul, almost. Yeah, but why? What's he searching for? That tells me that trying to see if he got a reaction from him could be that, yeah. I'm thinking, in this moment when I read it, I'm thinking, he needs to understand him. He's trying to figure out, is he is this? Does this make sense? Is he right? He's looking for something, but he he's also looking for a weakness, like he's he's searching, right? And that's just it, right? The Joker looks into Batman's eyes, searching. This is a great tip, because a lot of writers that I will read will be like he's searching his soul, or he's looking into his eyes, searching for some kind of understanding about this man. You don't need that searching. That's all you need. It's a great and this is the thing you don't pick up on this by just watching a movie. You have to read the screenplay. It's what makes people see what they're about to make searching like that's a great textbook example of this is how you cut a brain open, right? This is how you deliver a line with depth with one word Joker then says, they're mortals. They're code. It's a bad joke dropped at the first sign of trouble. They're only as good as the world allows them to be. You'll see, I'll show you, when the chips are down, these civilized people, they'll eat each other. See, I'm not a monster. I'm just ahead of the curve. Batman grabs the Joker and pulls him upright. Think we just end there. I don't think we need to keep going. It's a perfect example of when to cut out of the scene. That line right? That line that the Joker delivers. See, I'm not a monster. I'm just ahead of the curve. That's how he sees himself. And that's the thing with with, with villains in any story, they don't see themselves as the villain, right? And that's you hear that

tip going back ages, that the villain is the hero of their own story. They believe what they're doing is right.

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But it's also, let's talk again about the narcissist thing. What you just said, they believe what they're doing is right. Yeah, they believe everyone else is wrong, right? And that's what the same as a villain. Yeah, exactly. They are exactly.

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And most villains are sociopaths or narcissists or psychopaths. But every, and this is where brilliant writing comes into play, is that the way the Joker explains things, it's hard to argue with him. He sets up His argument. He's saying he's very convinced he's charismatic. You will like you. For example, I'm not saying you're the Joker, but you have such charisma when you speak that people just listen to what you say, and then they're like, Okay, I believe it, because she believes it, and I understand how

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I think it's all the way that you present it, too, though. Yeah, just like the Joker, right? The way he presents himself. Yep, he's just so sure of himself Exactly. He has a confidence that most people don't have,

30:47

yeah, which is exactly he knows he's getting out of this room, like he knows he's not worried that he's staying he's not worried he's been caught. He even says, he says the first thing to the cop that comes in, right? He knows he's not in, you know, he's not in a position they think he's in, even though Batman was behind him and he's in. And he's in this room, the dialog reveals more about character here and more about where the story is going, right? This isn't just an interrogation and Oh, where are the clues? No, no, this is let's get to know these guys. Let's see how they click. Let's see why they are very similar, right? That's the whole in my opinion, that's the point of this scene, is to showcase these two guys. If you flip them, they could, you know, they could be the same, right, in the other, in the other position. But what makes them so connected is they have, you can tell here that you can tell, for the Joker anyway, there's, there's trauma there, right? He's been, he's lived a life that's told him, this is how I have to be. This is this is what the world has done to me, and now I need to do something to balance the scales, right? And and Batman, he's gone through trauma as well. He just turned out on the better side, but just that line, well, I'm not a monster. I'm ahead of the curve. It just puts us in his brain instantly, without him having to go into some monolog or, you know, expositional backstory about this, and

32:04

it's almost like he's like, I'm not gonna let my past take control, because I'm in control.

32:08

I love that. You said that because you don't know this movie. You don't know what happens outside of these scenes. But a large part of what the Joker does throughout this whole movie is people ask him how he got his scars. Okay, because he's got his smile has been cut open, and he tells people how he got his scars. But every story is different. He never tells the reason behind his scars. He tells the first time you hear the story, like, oh my gosh, that's That's horrible. I can see why. But then the next story comes, you're like, oh, wait a minute, that wasn't truth, or maybe this is the truth. And the next one, he needs to be in control of his own narrative, right? And just like you said, which is great, because all you've seen is this scene, and it's this scene, and it's telling you everything you need to know, that you learn over the whole movie.

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That's how you found that. But that's how it is in real life, right? When people go through something, they need to feel some sense of control or power, and that's the way that they feel, that is by being able to have their own narrative the way that they want to have

33:02

it. Yeah, exactly. And that's and that's that, that psychology of trauma, right? And that's why, I mean this episode is all about reading screenplays. But another thing that you should do as a writer, study psychology, in some way, doesn't mean you need to go get a degree in psychology, but read books about psychology, read books about the human mind, read books about sociopathy and psychopathy and narcissism, and study and learn, the more you learn about how people are and why they are that way. And go to therapy yourself, because

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you almost feel bad, like you feel sad for the Joker, right? Totally, you're like, there is something, yeah, you're not necessarily a nice character. You have flaws like any other person, but there's something underneath the words, yep, that makes you feel sad for

33:43

him, yeah. And that's the thing is, you see, like most of these people, like serial killers and stuff, it's like, you look at their pasts. They didn't live a good life, didn't live an easy life, they had trauma, and the trauma broke them too far, and their brain was wired differently, and they become who they are.

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Some people, though, use that trauma for power in a good and they end up turning that past and make it something good to help others. Other people can't get past that grip that holds them down too tightly to their past, and they're

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going to hurt the world because they will or people around them, yeah, yeah, yeah. But, I mean, it's just, this is brilliant writing, and this is why Christopher Nolan is Christopher Nolan. He's just so great, right? And, and, I mean, he wrote this, you know, part of it, but yeah, so, so that's, I mean, it's a short scene. Was that three, two and a half

34:38

pages? No, either, if they didn't read the script, right? And

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that's what it is, right? You should be able to read a screenplay like this and do what we did just over one scene, right? It was two and a half pages. We talked about it for like, 1015 minutes, because we're studying it. And your gut, that's the thing, you ask, why? And now, as I'm reading it, I'm like, okay, so that line See, I'm a monster. I'm just ahead of the curve. I'm not a monster. I'm ahead of the curve. I'm gonna learn. Learn from that. I'm going to use something like that myself. I'm going to think when I when my character is going to be talking about how they see themselves. How do I put that in a scene where it's just organic in the response, but it tells me so much about the character, right? That's the type of thing you will learn by reading screenplays, and this stuff translates into the movie. But, but, but it's so impactful on the page. Well,

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just it creates more depth, right? And causes the audience to have to read between the lines, yeah? Which causes the audience guessing? Which is what makes you want to stay connected to that script?

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Yep. And it gives the acting talent something to play with. And that when, I mean, a lot of times when there's a movie I want to see that's coming out, or even when I'm like, Okay, I'll see it. I'll find the screenplay first, I'll read the first 80% of the script, and then I'll go watch the movie, because I don't want to ruin the ending, but, but it's different when you read a script before seeing a movie, or even knowing kind of like, how someone's going to play it, because you will see how that character comes to life, how you see them, how you have that dialog because the actors delivery. I mean, the delivery is different than the way, exactly. If I didn't see Heath Ledger in this Joker role, it probably would have had those lines come to me, maybe differently, right? But it's all about studying. Read screenplays. Study screenplays. They will make you a better writer. They will make you more effective. They are your best tool, right? Read screenplays from any source you can find. There's endless websites where you just Google a screenplay and you will find it. We have article blogs on our website, one of them, and we'll put this in the show notes as well. The best screenplays to read and study in every genre. So if you're having trouble finding them, click that link and read. I mean, read I mean, read a script a day. It doesn't take long to read a script, right? Takes long to study a script. So read a script and then spend a couple days studying it. Then read the next one. You should read at least one. I challenge everyone listening. Read one screenplay a week, just one a week. If you watch movies and TV all week, read one screenplay a week and study it. Okay?

37:00

So, well, I can guarantee you'll become a better writer. Oh, guaranteed, hands down, right?

37:06

You will also become a more analytical writer, because you one of the hardest things we can do as writers is take a step back from our work and see it as it is to the world that doesn't know anything about it, right? You know what's coming you know the 17 things that happen between scenes. You know what's coming next. You need to be able to step back from your screenplay, when you go back in and do rewrites and and get that analytical view where you can then challenge every line and ask yourself, Okay, what did this? What is how is this going to come to someone? What is this going to mean to someone? Is it gonna land like I think you know that analytical brain, that's what you will gain while reading and studying screenplays. So don't write a screenplay if you haven't studied how to write a screenplay, respect the craft, respect the work, respect yourself and invest your time and energy wisely. Don't go writing screenplays without learning how to write screenplays, or how screenplays work, or storytelling or all that. Don't just sit there think, Ah, I can do it. Yeah, fine. You want to be a hobbyist and do that, but if you want to take it seriously, do the work. Do the work. Never forget that movies and TV are really what Desiree a business, a business people don't go and make TV shows and movies to make to lose money and go bankrupt. They do it so they can keep doing it, so they can be a business. Treat it like a hobby that isn't worth the time and effort of doing it right, and it will always be a hobby. Treat it like a professional skill and business, and you have a shot at being a professional. I look at Desiree's baking, for example, of this, okay, a lot of times through baking and stuff, it's a hobby for people. It's for people. You know, I'm gonna make some stuff for my kids, or I'm gonna have people over. So make a pie, whatever, right? You never baked before. You didn't start baking until a few years ago. Even, right? Like, yeah, someone, you tried someone's cookies. You're like, oh my gosh, I love those chocolate chip cookies. Can I have the recipe? And then you tried making those cookies. And then from there, you didn't, you don't treat it like a hobby. Look at your sourdough making, for example, right? You don't treat it like a hobby. So many people have these sourdough recipes, and then they make them, and they just like that. Does not look like a good loaf of bread where you're like, I'm gonna perfect this. You ended up writing, like a 17 page booklet on how to make a perfect sourdough. And you would make loaves, and you would upload it to like, chatgpt and say, score my loaf and and you would and if you made one that wasn't better, you would try again and try again, and now you're like, a 9.8 out of 10 best bread I've ever eaten in my life. Anyone who tries is like, this is the best bread I've ever eaten in my life. I know people because you treat it like you're a professional baker. You don't treat it like a hobby. Everything your biscotti, your cookies are like, Okay, I gotta make my biscotti better. Okay, I gotta make it better. I gotta make it better. I gotta try. You're trying things, you're learning, you're watching videos, you're playing with the dough, you're trying things that is how a screenwriter should be treating their screenwriting. So if you want to be great, be like Deseret, yeah, and. And T shirt. If you want to be great, be like Desiree. Fade Out. Bam. Fade out. That's it. So that's all we got to say about that. We're going to take a pause here and tell you about one of our services.

40:13

Feel like you've taken your script as far as you can on your own. We know how frustrating it can be sometimes to get the great ideas that are in your head properly on the page, but imagine having a professional screenwriter jump in and rewrite it for you to create a market ready script.

Send us your script for a rewrite proposal, and the pro of your choice will write up a page or so of notes on exactly how they'd approach a rewrite head on over to www.scriptreaderpro.com/rewrite and use the code rewrite 15 during checkout for the rewrite proposal to get 15% off.

40:56

Well, this part of the podcast, we go to our question and answer.

41:01

Questions, where we talk about,

41:12

if you have any questions, comments, ideas for podcasts, please send them our way. At Hello@scriptreaderpro.com,

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yeah, put a subject line in there. Question for the podcast, show idea, feedback, whatever. Give us feedback if you like what you're doing, if you like what we're doing. Let us know if there's certain things you really like, certain things that maybe you don't think need to be there. Let us know, because we're here for you. That's why we're here to help you, and that kind of stuff. That's why we do this question. One question,

41:38

one Yeah, is, what would a note mean that says my screenplay comes across as Mason misogynistic.

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Well, I'm not being rude. I'm not trying to be rude when I say this is gonna be bad. No, no. If you have to ask the question on what, what a note means about your screenplay that it's misogynistic and you don't know why it's misogynistic, then that's misogynistic. That means that you're putting things in your screenplay that make it look like women are not important, right? Like every woman is just a sexual object. There are no women in your screenplay. You know, no one of value. You know that that character really has no depth to them. They're only there to look pretty. You know those kind of things, right? You're describing every character, every female character. You're describing their body to extreme detail, but no man gets a description of detail. Okay, yeah, you know those kind of things.

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This is interesting because it says it comes from the Greek word for hatred and woman.

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Ah, well, there you go. Yeah, misogynistic means you don't value them. That's not a possible hate women, but you don't value them. And so

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it's contempt. It says contempt, yeah, or prejudice against women or girls,

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yeah. So, you know, if something's misogynistic, if you're getting that note, then you need to look at it. And my first thing would be, look at every woman in your screenplay belittling. It says, Yeah, make sure, like, I mean, it's if you're writing a movie about that, like, you look at, you know, Wolf of Wall Street and stuff that that was the time. That was part of the point of the movie. You know, you were writing a world war two drama on the battlefields. Obviously, there's not gonna be a lot of women in the battlefields. You know, things make sense in context, but if you're, yeah, if you get that note, look at every woman in your screenplay, or girl or female at all, and see if they are there for a reason other than their body, sex object? Yeah, an object of some sort. So that's my answer. Question two, should new writers get excited about the recent spec boom? Yeah, so for those who don't know what a spec boom means, first of all, spec script is one that you've written on speculation that someone will buy it, right? No one's hired you. It's your own spec script to put out there. The boom recently, there's been some big original spec sales this year. Think there's like nine in one month, and high priced ones. Yes, it's exciting, because there means that people are willing to take risks on original material. But a lot of new writers like, oh my gosh, I'm gonna sell my gosh, I'm gonna sell my script for \$3 million now this is this finally happening. Every single one of those spec sales were done within the system from high level agents and managers and writers who've been working for a long time, even ones that are like, Oh, it's my first script sale I've been in. They've been interning and, you know, being assistants to writers and all these things, right? So it's not, doesn't mean that all of a sudden, all these amateur screenwriters are going to be getting checks thrown at Right, yeah. But the good thing is, yes, keep writing original work, because people are now realizing that originality is what things will come back to.

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Yeah. Okay. Question three, how do I get on the industry blacklist of the favorite unproduced scripts of the year? Yeah, we

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actually talked about this in the episode. So good. So I don't have to explain. It again, except to say, kind of like the last question, every writer on the blacklist has a manager or agent or both already. These aren't. These aren't. Nobody's if you're Yeah, your script has to be floating around Hollywood and being passed from desk to desk to desk to desk to agency. To lit management companies. That's the reason that they're getting read and voted on as the best scripts. It's not an unknown writer thing. So if you have so how do you get on the blacklist? You write an amazing script that knocks everybody over so that it gets people's attention. It gets to a representative. That representative wants to sign you. They start sending your script out, and you end up on the list because it's the best they've read. That's how it works. So, yes, that's a goal. I would love to be on a blacklist. You know, I'd love my rep to be passing it around to everyone. You have to be at a certain level, and you have to have a lot of movement by your people. So it's great to want to be on there, but it's not an outside the

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system thing, right? Question four, what does the length of a script or why does the length of a script matter? Who cares if it's 83 pages or 137 pages? If it presents a great story? I think what it comes down to is it's not a great story. It's if it keeps your audience, what's engaged? Yeah, yeah. Like, within reason, right? Like, I don't want to sit and watch necessarily a romance, unless it's Titanic that. But that had a lot of information. It had to cover too,

46:09

yeah, like the movie that I saw the internet, one battle after another, it was, it was two hours and 45 minutes long, right? So the script is obviously long, but it sure didn't feel long, right? I bet you're reading the script. Didn't feel long. It was fun. It was entertaining. Sometimes I'll read a script that's 120 pages long and I'll be like, Oh my gosh, I can't believe that was that long. Like that went live so quickly, right? So, yeah, it really depends on on the writing. If it's 137 pages and it looks like a novel on every page, no one's even gonna read. Oh, if it's 37 pages and those pages are fast and clean and it's like one line of action at a time. The dialogue's crisp and, you know, then, yeah, and it moves. People aren't going to notice great in great writing. And I'll tell you this right from the horse's mouth, that's me, I know. And this is this, to me, is the bar of any great screenplay that I read. I don't even think or notice what page I'm on until it's done, because I'm so engaged and so wrapped up in what I'm reading. I'm not I forget I'm reading because I'm watching it in my head as a movie or a TV script. I don't notice. Not notice if someone are like, oh, there's too many pages. They're not engaged enough because they keep looking at the page number, that's the problem. But,

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and it's not just the reader that's the problem. If you have several people saying, Ooh, it was a really long script, chances are it's a really

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long script. And, like, Don't defend it and complain. But like, when Oppenheimer was 180

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pages and, well, did you say Titanic? Yeah,

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exactly. I'll use those examples, because those are all. They're one of and they're big directors that no one other What, no one else would be able to get that green lit right? So yeah. So you want to make sure that you are delivering the shortest possible version of your script. Hands down, if you can write a script 137 you should be able to cut it to 107 if you can't, then you're in the wrong business. You need to be able to cut your stuff, and you need to be able to understand that this is to be shot. It's a blueprint for a movie. It needs to be clean, and that's it. So that's the number that

48:01

those are our questions for today. Thank you guys so much for joining us. I want to remind the listeners out there to make sure that you subscribe to our podcast. Give us five stars. Five stars would be great. Share the podcast. Share it

48:12

with your friends. If you learned something, if you had fun, pass it on your other writing friends. If you don't have writing friends, find some

48:17

writing friends. Yes, and like I mentioned earlier, if you have any questions, comments or any questions that you want submitted, please email us at [Hello@scriptreader pro.com](mailto:Hello@scriptreaderpro.com)

48:27

Yeah, and check out our website scriptreaderpro.com every service you can imagine is on there anything you'd want, anything a writer needs, because here we are about helping writers craft wonder one page at a time you.