

Ep #46: Mapping Your Screenplay

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On this episode, we're talking about why some ideas instantly stand out, while others feel like something we've seen 100 times. Today we're tackling the spark,

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yes, that first moment where your story either lives or dies. It's time to start our exciting four part series on crafting that feature script from start to

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finish. 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. We're doing something a little bit different today, aren't

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we, Scott, we are. This is going to be a four part series about mapping your screenplay. Mapping.

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Why do you sound like a DJ? Mapping your mapping your screenplay.

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I don't know, but see, Desiree makes fun of Scott. That should be our new title for our podcast,

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really. That's all you come up with as a writer.

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No, that's lame. See, who are you? I am Scott. I am one of the team here at Script Reader Pro, and we are here to educate you, entertain you, perhaps pass on some stuff about screenwriting that you haven't heard in a way that's made sense to you, that hopefully it makes sense so

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and if it doesn't blame me, and if it doesn't keep continuing on, there's probably one you'll get I'm in a mood.

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You are in a mood. This is gonna be our most downloaded podcast episode yet.

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Do you notice most the most downloaded ones are the ones where I'm the rudest and stupidest and make no sense.

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It is, yep, exactly. Desiree is the entertainment value. She is. Why you tune in. We understand that, and we thank you.

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Why do you have to do that with your mouth?

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People can't see my mouth. People are now wondering, What is this mess?

2:01

I don't know, but thanks for tuning in. If you're still here, yes, if you haven't

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shut it off, we're going to talk about how to map your screenplay from beginning to end. Bet you never guessed that. Nope. So before we get into that, what do we usually do when we start our podcast? That's right, we watched a movie called Champagne problems. Do you remember it, yes,

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but I didn't know it was called Champagne problems. I don't remember the problems part,

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yes, that's there was a line in there. You say, yes, yes. Remember the drinking game? There was a line at the end that she explained that she's like, Oh, just champagne problems. And the French guy was like, what? I don't know what that means. And she just said, well, because they're problems that to most people, they don't see them as problems. You know, there's bigger things in life. So these are these little problems, these issues, these are champagne

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problems, interesting, because I must have fallen apart, fallen apart, fallen asleep, just for that brief moment, because maybe remember the problems, maybe. But it was good. It was such a good it was such a good movie with a holiday theme, yeah.

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But there were some really great dialog in it. I just kept saying, like, Oh, that was a great line. Just really good, really good stuff. You actually wrote the line down and then you texted it. Yeah, I did, because it was just such a wonderful piece of dialog. What was that? I can't remember.

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I can't remember everything we're asking you to remember.

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Do you remember? Remember the line when she said the explanation of champagne problems? No, exactly, but it was good. And, and I thought, Man, I'm gonna look up this, who wrote and directed this? And, yeah, and it was, I was surprised, not surprised, but the writer wrote the original, grumpy old man. That was his kind of first big, big script. He went on to write some early Marvel movies, Daredevil and Elektra, and now he's back into comedy again, romantic comedy. Anyways, yeah, it was really good. I'd recommend it's on Netflix. It was very well done. And I also noticed there was a lot of like they did a lot with the unspoken, rather than just having the characters just, you know, going on endlessly about their feelings. There was a lot of just unspoken stuff, stuff moved through looks and size and anyways, it was really good. I'd recommend it. It was, it was well,

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I would too. And it wasn't well, didn't we say it kind of we thought started off a little bit differently, and then it ended up being really good. No, that was a different movie. Oh, never mind. Then I'm trying to find the question that you asked me. The question, I mean the line of dialog, I think that you like that. You like the the one line, the one line, all I can come up with is, I move my dentist to 515 Monday, so no need to rush tomorrow. We can podcast and not be rushed.

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That wouldn't be the line.

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No, anyway, if you think of it again,

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okay, yeah, if I, if I, if I think of it while we're recording our podcast, I'll let you know.

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Yes, and my nephew always thinks I say. Again. So stupidly, again, most people say again. I say again. Yes, you do. For those of you that have not noticed, Hey, Scott, yes, this is different for us to do a podcast where we have a four part series. Yes, it is.

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I think it'll be fine. I mean, it's a lot of times there's a lot of information to get out, and I feel like I don't always have enough time to get all all all the ideas out on, on some big subjects. So I feel

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like you have too much time, oh, to talk about this honestly. But we are going to be talking about it anyway, even though he has too much time to talk about this. Yes. So why don't we get going? That's what I'm trying to do. That was my that was your segue. Segue, okay. Well, segway also like an interstate where people drive like, you know, what is

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it called? I don't know what are you talking about? No, but I read a book. This is another side note. You're just a mess. Today, I read a book

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period about a, not it was, it was like an interstate, but it was in another country, and they called it the autumn, the Audubon,

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yeah, it's in Europe. It's a, it's a, it's a freeway system that has no speed limit.

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Ah, that's what I was thinking about with the Segway, autobahn,

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segway. Do

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they mean the same thing? Point taken, Hey, Scott, yes, let's talk. First. You had a note here about making an idea worth writing.

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Yeah, that's what we'll start off with. Talking about is, is it all comes down to the idea that just goes with what? I just a really good auto bond. What?

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No, but it's the whole idea of making an idea worth writing. It was, my idea was worth saying to segue into, what makes an idea worth writing?

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Yes, this is brilliant. This is brilliant podcasting. Brilliant material. This is your first time listening to our podcast. Keep listening. Please go. All right. So here we go. So what makes an idea worth writing? That's That's what it all comes down to, when you're going to plan your next feature film, it should be an idea that gets you excited, but also that you can see that there's an audience for it, right? So a lot of writers think that their idea must be perfect, right? Like it's the perfect idea to get people going, but all it really needs are three things, potential, uniqueness and heat. Heat, yes, meaning that it can generate movement. It can get people Yeah. And like, passing the script up, like you tell someone an idea, they read your script, they they can easily

tell someone above them that idea. They can get excited about it. Oh my gosh, I read this script and had this and this and this, and it generates that heat and that movement, right? So the big difference when coming up with an idea, a lot of times, writers get confused and think that a premise and a concept are the same thing, but if you think of it this way, that a premise is just a situation, right? So it's you and I sitting down for a podcast, that's the premise, right? The concept is that situation, right? The premise, the situation with the conflict baked in. That's the concept. So it's not just about you and I doing a podcast, it's about you and I doing a podcast as a hurricane is coming that's going to completely obliterate us, and we have nowhere else to go, so we're going to talk

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about life, right? Because a plane podcast on its own was be, would be so boring, right? So the only way our podcast be entertaining is if I looked out the window during a winter storm and thought that's a hurricane, exactly which would also be a blizzard

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in the winter, a blizzard, Hurricane with sharks in it, a blur. And you know what that movie would be called? You know what that movie be called? It would be called Shark cast, cast podcast with sharks in the blizzard.

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No, no, okay, but I see what you're saying. So the I the premise is the situation, but the concept should be something more profound.

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Would you say something that has, that has the conflict to shake things up?

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Right? More profound? Something more interesting? Yeah, exactly.

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But at the same time you want to, you want to keep market considerations in mind, right? Is it marketable? Is it something that you can tell someone, in a sense, and they get excited about it? Is it something that you can understand? This is the audience, right? The audience these movies is going to the audience that sees my movie, right? But you don't want to be chasing trends. That's a big thing that people do, chasing what trends. So, okay, so contained, contained, time travel, romance movies are in for example, blah, blah, blah, I don't know. I just threw something together. Contain time travel romance movies. Can you have a, I don't know, time travel movie. I don't know. But if it's suddenly in you don't want to just be like, Oh, that's that's your Trend. I'm gonna write one, right? And so, so another thing to think about is, are you just chasing a trend? Right? If there's something chasing a what a trend. So if there's something big happening in the moment. Like, I don't know, hunting movies are huge. Everyone's doing, like, a people hunting people movies. And you are like, Okay, those are popular. I'm gonna write one. That's a bad idea, because movies take forever to get made, right? Oh, by the time that it

comes out, the trend is gonna be done, or probably by the time you finish writing the script, that trend is gonna be done. What about contained romance? That is a time traveler

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that's trending?

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If that's trending, then, then I don't know what to tell you, because I don't know what world you're in. I don't know how you would write a contained romance, try time travel romance movie.

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So you got to think about what is the future, basically, not necessarily time travel, but what the future might have in store for where movies are moving to. Because if you're if it's in if it's in style, no, not thinking of a pair of shoes if it's in style and trending now it might not trend in fall of 2074

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Yes, so you have to get in your time machine, I guess, and go into the future to see what's trending in 2074 No, the thing to do is write something that's going to connect to your voice, right? To who you are as a writer, to what you want to say, to what you want to put out there. You want

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to do your voice before you think about current trends exactly, more than

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anything, you want to be true. Like, I know some like, I know writers would be like, oh, you know, you know, horror movies are huge right now. I'm gonna go write a horror movie now, but they've never written a horror movie, right? But they're just chasing that trend of, well, horror is popular, so everyone's got these, never has got these Instagrams or they, all they talk about is horror movies. And, you know, yeah, horror will never go away. It's, you know, but don't chase what's not you right?

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Have it your voice, so that it's unique, so that someone is interested in wanting to see that voice come to life exactly,

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yeah, exactly. So the kind of big questions you want to ask yourself, What's the story engine behind the idea? Because it's fine to have a concept, right? Yeah, not a present. You gotta sorry, yeah, you have a premise. You've got a concept, but where's the story, right? You might like, for example, I had a I had a concept of how a guy on a plane hijacks the plane by No, hijacks the planes on a plane through blackmail, no. And so there's, and it was like, there's a, there's an Air Marshal on the plane, and he has to stop this guy, because he's gonna, he's gonna blackmail

the pilots into doing whatever, right? That was my concept, but I didn't have a story, right? And I was like, Well, I don't know where it's going to go and who's going to be involved. What's the premise? What's driving that? How do you drive that tension for an hour and a half on one plane? Right? And then I didn't write it, because there was a movie that came out with Liam Neeson, that was the exact concept. So I had the same concept, but I didn't have a story, right? So you want to make sure that you have a concept that's exciting you enough to be able to process a story and turn it into something that's going to take you some places, right?

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Also, the thing though, too, is you haven't completed it yet. So it's like, a lot of times we'll go and you'll be like, Oh, that was my idea. Great. That sucks. Well, it's like, how many people's other ideas was that it's not just the idea itself, it's the entire picture.

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Yeah, it's that idea of a premise, right? And then, and then the concept is your unique twist, all right? And then that you have something that's going to be driving the story. A lot of times, I'll read a screenplay where it's just like, there's nothing, there's nothing pushing this anywhere. It's not moving forward. It's not propelling. There's no momentum because it doesn't they have a concept, but they don't have enough story to fill it, right? So the biggest question is to ask, why you why now? Why is this the story that you need to tell? What is your unique perspective that makes this only a story that you can write and not other. And you mean none of their writers or what are you saying, yeah, like, that you have a unique point of view and that you can take that concept and make it different, right? Like, because, like, like, you just said, a lot of people have the same ideas. Sometimes you'll see your concept and be like, Oh, crap, I was gonna write that. Now I can't, because someone else did it. Okay, yeah, basically the concept, but that doesn't mean the story would be anything like yours, right? So it's a matter of, why is this a story that you can write, that no one

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else can do? You think that there's a you know idea that comes out there that's actually a produced movie, and you're like, okay, yeah, that was my same idea, but my whole story is different. Do you think you still should, in quotations, waste your time just to make it your own, still your own version of that? Yeah, difference, it's hard to say, yeah. Do you know what I'm saying?

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I do know what you're saying, because that's happened to me, and you've seen that happen to me, right? And it's like, there's times when I'm like, Oh, I just give up. And I'm like, no, no point writing that now, right? And then, well, that's the thing. But do you then, then years go by and you're like, you know, now that I've seen that movie, my story was nothing like it, yeah, it's got the similar type of concept, but the story, the characters, nothing's the same. So if you feel passionate about it, and you think, you know what this is, this is going to be amazing for for for me, right? That I can tell this like no one, no one could then, yeah, try and maybe just look at the

concept in a different way, or pitch it in a different way where it doesn't sound like, Oh, that's a sixth sense, right? I've seen that before, right? Do you

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sometimes, then, when you have an idea like that, do you sometimes just continue on doing it, just as a way to get through that and put that story kind of in a way to rest. Or do you have the whole idea in the back of your head that this has to be the great one that's going to sell?

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I think you know what I'm saying. I do. I do know what you're saying. And I think I mean time and and experience in screenwriting will teach you that script does not have a shelf life, right? Like I've written, I wrote a script 15 years ago that is now getting people interested, because it's just the idea sparked with someone and it's getting some traction again, that romantic time traveling. One Yes, my contained time travel. Romantic, yes, but yeah, it's just a matter of, if you feel like you can do that idea justice, then write it right? You never, never know how it's going to turn out. And a lot of times, when we're writing a story halfway through, it'll become a different story. Yeah? It becomes something, Yeah, different. So the idea is to find an idea that excites you, that you see an audience for, and that you believe you can tell better than anyone else

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well, and I think, tell it in a way that isn't going to bore us, that by page like 30 are like, Hey, I don't know where to go now with this, yeah, it's got to sustain us throughout the whole yeah.

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Can it sustain an entire 100, 110 pages kind of thing? Right? Right? Yeah. And a lot of writers will be able to crank out that first first act, but then not really get nowhere to go or get lost in that, that long middle act. So having an idea of where you're going and keeping that excitement level high, that's key.

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So question then, we've talked about this in past episodes, about finding your voice, and you've already talked about a little bit about your voice today, and how the trend or idea connecting to your voice. But let's for the listeners who maybe haven't heard that episode, how do you even go about finding your voice? Let's maybe, can we talk about that for a little while?

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Yeah, for sure. So just, just to kind of reiterate what, what we said about voice before, voice is basically what you bring to any kind of story that is different from anyone else, right? So it's it's your worldview, right? We all have different worldviews based on where we were born, what culture we grew up in, what our socio economic standing was, what our families were like, what like, what opportunities we had or didn't have. So your worldview is different than anyone else around you, or anyone else in the world, right? So what is different your tastes, right? I have very different tastes in the kind of stories I like to tell, just like you have very different tastes in the stories that you like to, you know, to enjoy, to watch, and that kind of thing. It's also about

your truth, your rhythm, your personal viewpoint on on life and living, right? Your any great author, any great writer of novels, even they have a specific voice. It's, it's the way they tell stories, the types of stories they tell, like Nicholas Sparks is a perfect example. Nicholas Sparks, his voice is about sweeping romance, but not cheesy. It's just a romantic, heartfelt, make you cry, type of stories. It's right, and it's sweet, and it's about love and, and it, you know, makes it, it's a it's emotionally, it's designed to emotionally affect you. That's his voice. If he, all of a sudden, writes a horror script, or, you know, write some politically driven thing, it's just not going to feel like that's his link, right? Be like, well, where's the sweetness? Yeah. So it's about who you are and what your stories are, and and why you why this story is for you to write. And it doesn't mean if you've never written in that genre, and you've normally written other stuff, but an idea really hits you, you can still tell that story. Just tell it in your way. Don't try to be like everyone else out there.

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Do you think your voice also, though, can be like, like the experiences you've gone through will ultimately shape your voice. Right? People who've had their own traumas or their own things that they've gone through as a result of that have such a unique voice only to them.

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Yeah, and that's the thing, is you looking at your own life, you want to find those little. To tune into that, yeah, you want to. You want to find those nuggets that have shaped you and and put them into your stories.

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Use them to your advantage, instead of using them to tear you down. Maybe you use your past traumas to build you up. And that's how you write.

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That's your voice. That's where your voice comes to script. Like, you know, yeah, like we, we you and I, we adopted our daughter, right? And so we have an understanding of what it's like to adopt someone who's a different race than you, who is not you know, born of your blood and and how you react to that, what the bonding experience is like, like we've experienced that. We've experienced the looks we get from people. We've experienced that. Oh, you're so She's so lucky because you adopted her now, you know, we're lucky not, you know, like we understand

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why that she looks nothing like her father. Oh, thanks.

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But we have that distinct worldview. So if I was going to put that in a script, I have a specific viewpoint of what that is like. You have a voice, and that's what shapes your voice, your experiences, right? So you find if that idea is going to fit your voice, and if it doesn't, find a way to have it fit your voice, right? We've seen, you know, like I've seen so many scripts, where, as I

read it, I can tell, man, this writer has a passion for this subject. They know it well. They they did the research. They obviously read hundreds of pages of something to really get excited about this. Find your obsession and put it into a story. I always been obsessed with sleep, right? My whole life. I'm like, I need to find a way to sleep less. I want to sleep two hours a day. How's that working? Or I'll never get anything done in my life, and so I've always been obsessed with that. And I'm I'm always searching for a story that has to do with sleep. And a lot of times, you'll find in pretty much every screenplay I've written, there's some kind of theme or a character is dealing with sleep in some way. What I never even noticed that I did, because it's me, right? You when,

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when name with name your one? Well,

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my one, I'm writing deprivation, right? It's all about sleep, right? And not being able to sleep like in mine. No, because that wasn't my that was someone else's story, but like in mine, for example, after they come into mine, a lot of these characters are dealing with issues, to be asleep and stuff. So it's just something that I sometimes don't even notice is there, but it's because that's a piece, that's something I obsess about. So you're more messed up than I thought. Yeah, I am definitely. So those are the things that you can you can do to kind of, you know, mine, your your own experiences, your own obsessions, your own interests, even the things that you're afraid of. I'm so afraid of the dark. I'm so afraid. I can't watch a horror movie at home because I'm just then I can't sleep because I'm afraid of what's looking at me. But I love writing horror movies, so like even obsessing over the fears that you have and exploring them, that's your voice. That's what makes you you. So finding that idea, finding a way that it fits with what you want to put out there for people, that's the stuff. So these are so so. So some of the things that you can ask yourself, What personal stories do you avoid? But keep circling back to right? So many people, so many writers, have these ideas, and they're just like, No, I don't think I could write that yet, but you keep going back to it and going back to it, try and see if there's something there that fits in, an idea you've come up with, our concept you've come up with, with characters or stories that you've thought of before.

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But is that like, in a sense, though? Do you want writers then to have it be almost like a therapy?

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Writing is definitely, definitely therapy. Yeah, definitely. But you

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don't want to turn the script into too much therapy, though. Do you? No, you don't want it to be like a preachy or where this happened to me, then this happened to me in, in like, your writing way, right?

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Yeah, yeah. Or like, or like, almost like, allowing your like, traumatic events to bleed too much into your script. Like I read the script I was working with this writer once, and like, kept writing these sexual abuse scenes. But in like, overly descriptive ways, where it's like, no one wants to read this. It's sad that they've gone through that, yeah, and it's like, there's clearly, there's clearly trauma there in some way, but it, it doesn't belong in that story in that way, right? So you don't want it to bleed in and to be like, no one wants to see the story, but unless it's like, needed in the story, right?

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Right? But then there's like, too much detail where you're like, oh gosh, like, people will actually probably leave the theater. I would

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stop reading. I you sometimes you hit a script, you're like, I really don't want to keep reading. That's very too much this, this person. There's something wrong, something wrong here. There's a balance there, yeah? So there's a

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balance, for sure, trauma and, you know, yeah.

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So a lot of times that that, that stuff will will circle into your ideas, right? If you're looking for ideas, looking if you don't even kind of know yourself, like, what things drive you, what, what things keep you up at night, go and look at your Google search history, right? What are the things that you search at your Googles, or even your chat? GPT is history like, even if you just look at the things you've searched, it'll, it'll tell you, these are the things. Is that you're really interested in these are the things that you keep circling back to. So even circling back to some of the things that subconsciously you know you have going on is a great way to find ideas.

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Hey, I have an idea for you. Then, yes, we're going according to my chat, GBT history, you could then write a script about how somebody's gallbladder tried to kill them

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while eating sourdough bread and understanding how wheelchairs have issues

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while wearing a pair of Converse running shoes. Yeah, questioning the surgeon, could I please wear my Commerce running shoes during this surgery? Yes, yes, you can have all those kind of things, guys. My Side note my gallbladder did try to kill me, yeah? And I just underwent a two week stay in the hospital, yeah?

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And now she has a giant, 10 inch scar across her abdomen.

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It's like I'm a pirate, yeah? Except it's across my eye you together? So I crossed my eye, and I couldn't wear a cool like pass.

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You could put it like a patch across your stomach, like an eye patch, like a big one, the heck. Anyways.

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Side note, no, but I was saying use your lived experience exactly.

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That's where. I mean, not that that's where you have to find ideas, but when, when idea hits you, that's how you find your story closer to home, right? That's how you find your story premise. Story engine is the things that you're interested in that can bring that idea to life.

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And not, not to say that this is a good thing, but while I was in the hospital for two weeks, I really probably, even though I'm not a writer, I could have probably written a really good script about my gallbladder trying to eat me as a horror script, especially considering how much morphine I was on. Yes, you probably could have, there was a big man in my room. Across my room, he could have been the lead character

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and this, yeah, there is a big guy in the corner. Desert is like, I don't like this stuff. There's a man in the corner, and he's stealing my Converse. Exactly.

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That could be such. That's a horror movie for you that is horror, yeah? So yes, using what you know, yeah, to circle back to that, to that, invest it in a script,

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yes, because then what that will do is it'll help you avoid been there territory, right? Been there. Been there, done that. Because we don't want to see stuff we've seen before. You can give us something that we've never seen before, because no one's seen a girl in the hospital whose gallbladder is trying to kill her crying about a guy in the corner stealing her Converse. Only ever right never been done. But that's the thing, is, you want to find you want to find that because most scripts will die because they just feel like generic versions of everything we've already seen. And I always say, people, people ask me, sorry.

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Go ahead. No, I was gonna say and it goes back to what you were saying, ultimately, finding your voice. Yeah, we've talked with so many times, but finding your voice and who you are, and

if it means like, watching movies that you've seen time and time again, and looking for that particular writer's voice, yeah, right, that can help too, and finding the voice, because sometimes you just watch a movie at the end of the day, and you're like, trying to pick it apart.

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Yeah, yeah. Like even the one we watch champagne problems. It's like, it's a holiday, romantic, dramatic comedy, a little bit of comedy, but it had the same tropes and cliches. Here's the career woman. She gets her opportunity. She has to go to another country. It's set within wine and champagne. Oh, she meets around guy in a bookstore. Oh, he turns out to be the son of the guy at the company, right? It's all stuff we've seen before, but it was so unique and unique and how the characters were, and that writer was able to bring

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something different, different but I was gonna say because you told me all the other scripts that that writer had written, and for me, it's like, knowing a lot of those movies that I've seen myself to what champagne problems is. It's like that writer really found, I think, their voice. You could see this success, like, how they the succession, yep, through the years of where it's like, yeah, yeah, good, good, good, good. And then it's like, whoa. Those couple scripts, you can see your voice. That's where your voice is

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meant to be, yeah? Because remember, I said the he also wrote this other one that was about these two, these two people who rented the same bed and breakfast or whatever, and you're like, Yeah, that was okay, but this one was so much better. So it's like, that was a step into that romantic comedy. But this is elevated. But it was like his voice crept in, even, like we've seen all like they talk people talk about Die Hard in Christmas movies all the time, like, oh, Die Hard, the best Christmas movie. And so he did that in this script. But what was so unique about it is there was this German character, and so the German character is talking about Die Hard and how it's a tragedy, because Hans Gruber was so misunderstood. And so they had this little back and forth argument about it, which was, like, that was unique. So it's like, that's how the writer's voice came into that, right? You know? It's just finding those ways. And then I was also like, Man, this writer obviously took some kind of motivation from Pretty Woman. Did you pick up on that? Give me. Idea, because she was at the hotel, she was dealing with the concierge. The concierge guy was helping her. So it was like, not, it wasn't pretty, but it had that little bit in there. And I was like, Ah, okay, yeah. So you could tell where

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the inspirations came from that, I bet you anything that that writer,

30:14

that's, I was gonna ask him if I were an interview him for a podcast, that's one of the questions. Like, did you was that in there? Yeah. So that's the thing. Is, it's a romantic comedy, holiday movie we've seen 1000 times with the same setups, but it was just unique because of who that writer is and what they brought.

30:32

And not only that, but I think the thing to look at with that is look at characters we've seen before, look at situations, but then make them unique to you, and then basically different by flipping everything, right? Like, flip, flip it on its head, yep. Make it different so that it's unique something we haven't seen before.

30:50

Yeah, exactly. So a lot of times they'll be like that, like, Okay, think of a movie, oh, Die Hard, for example. Okay, now let's flip it. Let's make the main character, woman instead of a man, instead of John McClane. It's Joanne McLean. Okay, let's see what we can do with that. How is she going to get in there is instead of a instead of German terrace, an apartment or in a giant office building. Have it be in a hotel? Like, what can you do that is like, Oh, yeah. It's like, Die Hard, but Die Hard meets Nanny McPhee, or, I don't know, stupid, but that kind of thing, right? You want to find the something in the familiar and make it unique, right? It's that idea of everything has been done, but not everything has been done your way, right? And that's the thing is. That's how, like, people always ask me, oh, what? What make? What makes you give a script to recommend. And I mean, I've read 1000s and 1000s of screenplays, and there's not many that stick with me forever, but those ones that stick with me forever, I feel like I've never read that writer, that voice, that writing before. A lot of screenplays feel like this could these, this 100 screenplays could have been written by the same person, but the two that I remember and I will remember forever, feel like only one person could have written that. That's, that's voice, that's what's different. So find what it is about you that you can put in, that no one else can, right? So you know what's, what's the expected approach? You know, like, for example, champagne problems, what's the expected approach? Hit all those tropes that that specific audience that would watch that movie would want in there. But then how can you twist it to make it different? In that movie, a lot of, a lot of it was, it wasn't just about the woman, it was about the man too. He had a lot issues. He was dealing with a lot of emotional stuff, with his parents, with his mother, with his father. It wasn't just about her or just about, oh, the relationship. It was giving a good balance of everything so that all audiences could enjoy it. So find what is in there and what is fresh. So some exercises. These are some exercises that you can do to test an idea before you decide this is the idea I'm going to invest the next year of my life on, right?

32:59

Like things just spark new ideas?

33:01

Yeah, so, so, so, there's three. There's a what if, mash up and flip, okay, so what if exercise, what if, think of, think of ideas like, what if someone built a time machine, and when they went through, they were stuck in one room in a building, and there was another person there and they started to fall in love. That's the time travel contained romantic movie you mentioned, right? But just like, what if? What if the world's most anxious person was the only one who could stay calm during an alien invasion? And I think there's this new TV show. Don't quote me on it. It's Vince Gilligan's new show. He did Breaking Bad. Can't remember the name of it, but it's a new

TV show, and something to do with the world's happiness in the world is in danger, and the only person who can save it is the grumpiest person in the world, or something like that. So like, what if try trying to think of unique situations, because that's your viewpoint, right? So what if a hospice nurse discovered one of her patients was an undercover spy? Okay, if you were a hospice nurse and you discovered that person was a spy, holy crap, you would just that would be the greatest thing you could ever do, because you're so nosy, you want to know everything. But your version of that story would be that hospice nurse would be quite different than if I were to write that story about a hospice nurse in a spy would be so different from yours.

34:20

You know, the most fascinating thing about being in the hospital yes is listening to the stories of others. Yes, for you, especially because I'm so nosy. And even No, I can almost see, like, leaning around your curtain, like, what did you What did he say? Did you hear that? Oh, he's been in here. Why did he see in

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here? How did he get here?

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Hammocks around everything. Why is that person had no one come to visit them, yet it's when people call their loved ones and then it's like, how they talk to each other, even listening to that dynamic. And I'm like, that's weird that her husband is just finding out that she's just gone for surgery on this when he's like, Oh yeah, I forgot about that. Surgery? Yeah, totally, really. How'd you forget your wife was just dynamics, yeah, where you're like, Oh, weird. That is a different relationship. You can get lots of

35:10

that's probably one of the best things you can do, hurt yourself, go to the hospital, get yourself in for a week and just listen to everyone around in the different beds. Yeah, it's just No, but it's true. And that's a lot of the thing too, is even just sitting in coffee shops or restaurants or at the library or whatever, and just being like, listening in on people's

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stories, that's how you get a new idea. It is right? Yeah, that's the and then you think, what if that person met, that person did this?

35:34

What ifs fill a book of what ifs right? Fill a whole book. The other one, mash up. Yeah. So that's where you kind of, like I did, like I just did, right? Die Hard, meets Dani McPhee, whatever, stupid, but like, take tones and genres and even eras, like time eras, familiar concepts we've seen, one of the things that people love, and you'll always see it out there are what we call swap movies where you either swap bodies with someone else, like freak your Friday, or all of a sudden you wake up and you're older, like big right? People love those. So try and think of that's a familiar thing, but the kids, that's, yeah, classic, classic. But try and find but then we watched

one the other day, and it was about a woman who went to a yoga tent or something as an older woman or a young girl, and she didn't like confrontation or whatever, and she went to a yoga tent, came out as an older lady, and then went and saw her friends, and we stopped watching it because we were just like that. One was we did, yeah, we stopped watching it. But it's the same kind of thing, right? You all of a sudden step into something that changes you. So those are fun, but find your version of it, what you know, yeah, mash it up. Make it a science fiction one. Make it a comedy, make it a horror movie. Like, try and flip things around just to challenge it, not saying, like, you know, you'll hear me talk about the rule of a dozen. A lot. Think of a dozen different ways for that to go, right, and then the other one is flip the unexpected. So things like expected, or, oh sorry, flip the expected into the unexpected, right? So like making your villain the hero of the story, right, which is always an interesting way to go,

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or thinking that they're the villain, and then they end up being not the villain. Yeah? Have it be a surprise? Exactly?

37:06

You frame it that way, because everyone has good and bad in them. Yeah, right? Like everyone could kill someone if they had to. Yeah, good. I have more. Thank you. Thank you, honey. Yes. Thank you. I appreciate that. You know, unexpected, you always say that subvert your expectations. So set the story in a location where that type of story shouldn't ever happen. Like, it, like, I don't know, the kindergarten, Kindergarten Cop was a good idea, right? Is taking this hardened cop and putting them in a kindergarten classes, undercover as a teacher that shouldn't, you know, there shouldn't be an undercover cop in a kindergarten class, right? So, good, yeah. So, like, I know, and it's funny because Schwarzenegger said that his favorite movies were movies like kindergarten, yeah, because, because they're not a hardcore action where he gets hurt all the time, things like that. But, and then change the emotional genre, right? So if you have a thriller situation, throw it in a comedy. If it's a murder mystery and someone's dead, well, make it a comedy, right? Like things like that to come flip things on their heads, right?

38:03

Well, like, a lot of times, there's murder mysteries that have romance in there too, right, yeah, but that's your typical that's not something that's unique, yeah?

38:11

Or like, take, like, take like, the tone and the tropes and stuff that we normally see in, like a western film and set it in high school, but in that different kind of tone, you know, like, have the, have the, you know, the classic, you know, this guy's the Outlaw, and this guy's the the hero, and there's the jock, you know, yeah, like, the jock is, like, the the sheriff character, and, you know, like, but just play with things until something, something hits you as

38:34

random ideas, too. We're not saying you have to write this, yeah, beginning to end.

38:38

No. But this is how, this is how you begin to map your screenplay. This is how you begin to form. It all comes down to the idea. You always hear that idea is king. It has to be something you can tell people that they get excited about.

38:48

Okay. So then the tools, like you said, to spark new ideas, we have to do the what if exercises, mash up exercise and flip the expected,

38:57

yeah, and don't be so hard on yourself. That's kind of the takeaway here is ideas come from your perspective, but it's not designed to be perfection. And a lot of writers think, oh, like, talk to this writer. The other day, I'm like, Yeah, this script feels quite early in its development. And the writer was like, but I've been writing this for like, two years now. It's, what do you mean? It's early in development. I decided. I'm like, well, it didn't, I didn't say it is. I said, that's how it feels. A lot of times, new writers think that their first draft is their final draft perfect, and you can't do that, and that's why it's so great to interact with people. Get people to read your stuff. Bounce ideas off. People get feedback, because you get new ideas from that, and it's always evolving. And so don't ever think your idea has to be perfect. You will hit things along the way that just make you, make you excited. I was reading this article about this author whose books that he wrote are now being turned into a movie they're producing, which is awesome. And he wrote that world of characters for about two years, playing with it, until he realized that this little girl that was just a side character, he could never stop thinking about her. He could never stop figuring. Turn her out. And then he finally said, Wait a minute, I think this is her story. And so he then made it her story, turned it into this big, like Kid detective thing, and it launched a series of, like, a dozen books, and now it's becoming a movie. Because he wasn't stuck on that idea of that this has to be perfect. This is where it has to go. He just kept thinking and listening and let the characters do they're talking Exactly. So don't think it has to be perfect. Okay? So the other one, your voice, is your competitive advantage as, just like an athlete, you know, your specific way of doing some or a singer, the way you do something, or or whatever, a pianist, the way you play. What is it that makes you you? That is what makes you the person that needs to get that job. That's what makes you the writer of choice over all the others. What you bring to the table in your when you're in Hollywood and you're working writer, and they're you're going for a big job, you go in a room and you give your take, right? Your take is, this is my version of the story. This, I think would be cool, right? If everyone had that they could just hire whoever was the best, highest paid writer at the time, or the popular writer? No, they're gonna. How do you think new writers break in? New writers break in because they bring something new. They bring a voice that hasn't been heard. That is what your competitive advantage is, something fresh. Yeah, so freshness equals a variation on something we've seen before, a new twist to it and authenticity from you, right? Don't try and write something that you wouldn't write. Don't try and do things that you Oh, your friend said you should do, or some others, you got one note saying, try. You know, this is how you should do it. Be authentic to yourself, right? Put you know, like Desiree is

the most authentic person I know. I watched this video and I saved it on Instagram to show you, and it's that favorite lady of yours, Nadja, I'm not

41:44

supposed to was that the one that you said, I don't think you should watch it, right?

41:47

No, no, it's a different one. It basically it said, Stop trying to make yourself small, to make others comfortable, right? Which you've done a lot of your life, and so have I, but you're you don't anymore. You're like, I'm sorry, but this is me, and if I'm too big for you, you're not my person. Sorry, goodbye, then, right? But you are authentic, and you have to be that way in a script you have, but you have to be that way. Have to be that, be that way in life, right?

42:12

And just through from beginning to end, yeah? Like this situation that I'm writing about right now, I'm writing a letter of complaint, yep. Okay, now that's something that I've gotten really good at, is advocacy, right? You were like, maybe, maybe you can let this one go, or maybe you don't have to, but it's ingrained in me and it's in it's like, that piece of me is now the what's my soul, that is the authentic that is the soul of me. So for me to then say, No, I can, no, I'm not going to do that, that is me being untrue to who I am and who I become. And for me, it's like, yeah, maybe for you, you don't think I should invest this time for my own soul and my own well being. I have to. I have no other choice but to do that.

42:59

So that's I've learned that over life, don't tell Desiree not to do something.

43:03

Well, I'll do it if I want to do it. Yeah, that's what it is. Now it's like, and I say because you were told all your life not to do something, and you didn't, and I and I didn't, I listened. And so that's why my little friend Everly, my whole saying with her, she's nine now, is, I say we can make up our own rules. Yeah, very bad things. Yeah, teach a nine year old that we can do hard things and make our own rules, but

43:24

it's true, yeah, but yeah. And that's, that's, that's, that's your that, but that is your voice in life. That is your authenticity, right? And some people like your voice, and some people don't, and just like in writing, some people like your voice, some people won't. You can't control that. All you can control is what you put on the page, and it must be authentically you.

43:41

So hey, Scott, during these four series, this four series that we're going to do, which is very new, yeah, you're going to have homework, I guess, yeah, just, I'm sure listeners are going to love that they have love. Yeah, I'm not going to read your homework, though, but it's for yourself, right? But these are just some things to do work. Yeah, you could always submit a script, you

43:59

could you could we? And we also actually have a what's called a concept, concept game plan. It's where you have a couple sessions to just kind of walk through, you know, over, over the phone or zoom, or whatever. Yeah, brainstorming. Talk about your concept, get some ideas, bat things back and forth, test it out. So feel free to use that. Take a look at that service and check that out at scriptreaderpro.com and our website. But the homework here, this is just to get your mind, to get your mind moving. So what are the two things that we're telling people to do?

44:26

Dez, you have write 10 ideas using what if mash up and flip, yeah.

44:32

And I'd say, write 10 of each just to play. Who knows, one idea might really spark something in you? Are you gonna have those in the show notes as well? Yeah, we'll have those in the show notes. The homework number two, yep, pick the top three of those 30 that you've written and expand each into a two to three sentence premise. And remember, there's a difference between the premise and the concept, right? The premise is the kind of situation. And then once you, if you, if you have that situation, one, really sparks, sparks. That's what we said we're after. Start looking for that spark, then see what that concept can become within that premise, so that that's your homework, and that kind of wraps up our episode stuff here. So just hang tight. Listen to this promo for a second, and we'll be back with some listener questions.

45:16

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 forward, slash rewrite and use the code rewrite 15 during checkout for the rewrite proposal to get 15% off.

45:59

Hey, we're back with the episode, and at this part of the episode, we're almost near the end. Unfortunately, I hope you guys have all had a great time, yeah, and found out some use

46:09

and learned some stuff. And excited you get you excited and inspired.

46:13

So we're back with the question section, and this first question comes from Ellis from the Philippines. How do I rewrite without destroying my script?

46:23

Ooh, that's a big question. Alice from the Philippines, from Philippines. That's awesome. Yeah, you can write from anywhere. I always say geography does not define talent. That's Alice. Alice at the at the Alice from Manila. Is she from Manila or somewhere else? Don't okay, I know she's a Filipina, Filipino. Sorry, Filipino. How do I rewrite without what? Destroying your script? Destroying my script? Yeah. I mean, you're never going to destroy it, but, but obviously, save your past for versions. I know someone who, like, just would rewrite their script and didn't realize they could save a previous version, and they just kept losing all the things. But don't think of it that way. Don't think you're going to destroy your script, right? If it needs a rewrite, it's probably not ready, it's probably not quite working. So you're not destroying it. You're playing with it. I always say, if you're changing something in your script and it doesn't make it better, then it's not worth changing, right? Don't change it just to make it just as good, make it better. So I would just say, if you go in with that mindset, right, how do I make is this? And have that little post it on your screen? Is this? Screen? Is this change making it better? Then you're going to keep that soul of what you really love in the first place.

47:28

I think sometimes putting it aside and then coming back to it as well, instead of completely pulling it apart and ripping it to shreds. Yeah, because maybe it isn't, doesn't need as much work as you think, but in that moment, it's still so fresh to you.

47:39

So yes, putting it and get feedback and numerous feedback, so you can track consistencies and focus on those. Okay.

47:46

Question two, we have Ben from Phoenix, Arizona. Oh, nice. What happens after I finish a script? What do I do then sleep? Please. No. But what do you do now?

47:58

Okay, first the first thing, yes, the first thing you should do is celebrate the fact that you finish. Finished a freaking screenplay. It's a big deal. So that's the first thing you do. I think your question obviously, is, what do you do with it? First of all, get like, do you market it? First of all, get feedback as much as possible. Once you feel it's ready, you know, try and get it out there. There are a number of ways. Some will work for some people. Some won't. We've got, you know, you've got the contest and the fellowships, and you've got pitching, and you've got film festivals, and, you know, you just got to try everything possible to get it to anyone who will read it, because that's the only way you find your person who's looking for that. But we've got lots of podcasts, lots of videos on our website, blog, stuff about marketing, about putting things forward, about, you know, tricks and tips on how to get there, but, yeah, that's, that's, that's a really loaded question, but I do believe that we, you know, if you just look through some of our stuff on our website, there's things there.

48:50

Okay, question number three, we have Paul from Illinois, but it doesn't say where in Illinois? Okay, not that I know where Illinois is. Anyway. Is it even a state? It is. Jokingly, yes, okay, I don't know if

49:06

my script is any good. Well, if someone besides your mom tells you, then it might be good. Also, if you're asking if your script is any good. Paul, well, the whole point is people will tell you, right? If everyone's telling you it's no good or it's not ready, it's probably no good and not ready. If you've got more than one person telling you that your script is good, then it's probably good. My thing now is a good script will not do anything for you. A great script will help you a little bit. An undeniable script is what makes you change your life. And so until someone tells you that this is undeniably one of the best scripts I've ever read in my life. Then, then, you know, keep going, right? It doesn't mean you're not great, but you still got to push yourself every day. It's so competitive in the WGA, there's like 50,000 scripts a year that are registered, and like six get bought, right? So you have to just push for perfection. But. Off the start with your idea, eventually in the end, right?

50:03

Okay, final question here, gene from we have, oh, Montreal,

50:09

Quebec, Montreal, Quebec. Quebecois. Putin is probably eating poutine right now. Why did that selfless and sound like Tony Montana? I don't know. But in Canada, Montana, from Montreal,

50:22

okay, counters in the house. What makes a great antagonist? Ooh, we know a great protagonist. What great

50:29

antagonist send shivers up your spine? They're the ones that you're just like this person is so evil I can't handle it. I would never be able to overcome that person. I would never want to find that person in a dark alley. They They just make you afraid for everything, for the hero, for everything. So that's a great antagonist. If you can make your antagonist like, think of like Javier Bardem character in no country, for old man. That's a perfect example of an antagonist that you see after, after a couple moments, you've watched them do their thing you're like, that is one of the worst people I've ever seen in my life. I would never want to meet them. That's a great antagonist. So, and the antagonist that believes that everything they're doing is right, obviously, that makes a great antagonist, right? They believe that what they are doing is the right thing to do, right? So, so that's it. That's Those are questions. Hey, Scott, yes, if the listeners liked this podcast, yeah, share it with their friends. Is what they should do.

51:22

Make sure they should also subscribe. But we want you to also make sure that you set it up so that you are not missing any of those.

51:28

Yeah, subscribe parts, subscribe. Yeah. Watch out in our next one. Our next one is actually going to be talking about how your story starts long before you outline anything, right? It begins with The Spark. That's kind of what we talked about here. So we're going to follow that up with how to package that spark into a killer log line and a one sheet and all that kind of stuff to get people to read your script. So that's kind of the stuff we're tackling. So make sure you tune into that next one

51:54

and email or send email us with any comments questions that you have any ideas for podcast episodes in the future. At Script Reader Pro.

52:02

Hello@scriptreaderpro.com. Yeah, and check out all our services on our website, because we are here to help writers craft wonder one page at a time. You you.