

Ep #49: Mapping Your Screenplay Part 4

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On this episode, we're talking about taking your story from idea to movement. Yes, part four of our series, we're going to talk scenes and dialog and getting it all in motion. 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, everyone. This is Desiree, and this is the Script Reader Pro podcast. Scott is my husband, and he is joining us today on this episode. I am joining you today on this episode. I think without Scott, we would really not have an episode. Let's just be real here.

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No, it would just actually be you talking, and you like talking. You like hearing yourself talk too. That's really rude, but it's true.

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Hey, guess what? What's that? I am kind of excited. We're kind of a little sad today. Why? Because you sound so why? Because it's the last part of our four part series.

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Wow, are you sarcastic or what?

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And I'm so sad that it's coming to an end, because I love anybody who's listening has who's listened before. You know how much I love talking about scripts and movies and writing and what

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we're not talking about the business stuff today. We're talking about fun stuff, all the good stuff. Yes, we Yes first. If you haven't listened to the first three of the series, go ahead and listen to them. But we talked about coming up with their idea, getting your log line and summary stuff in place and moving into character. So now we are going to move on to the part about putting it all together, how to get that structure in place, how to get your scenes and what you really need to keep in mind. And then the hardest part for most writers, the dialog.

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Yeah, exactly. And you have called this one the craft in motion,

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yes, yes, that's pretty that's pretty good title, the craft in motion.

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Do you have to do it like a DJ? The craft in motion? Can you not? Hey, for those who have not heard our podcast, thank you for joining us. If this is your first time, what we always start our podcast with though, is what we have watched lately. And Scott has a title here of something that I have not watched lately. So we should have it say, What did Scott watch lately?

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Sometimes we just talk about what you watched. Very rarely, I just finished up. Finally, the final season of the Vikings. Amazing show. What it is amazing show? Well, what do you think it's about?

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What network is it on?

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It's on a bunch Well, what? Well, you can see it in a few places, but it just landed on Netflix the final season. So I

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I'm gonna guess it's about two partners who fall madly in love and then end up having something bad happen, and then they turn on each other and start hitting each other with these tools back from the Middle Ages, it's called kings. Yes, some of the tools, like the Thor thing, what's the Thor

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hammers and what's the Thor thing? Hatchets, that's called Monier. Chisels, chisels and knives and swords and shields and

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guys, that's a really crap story.

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Well, yours wise, yes, but Vikings was amazing. It was a really good series. Spanned a whole bunch of decades of time and really good character stuff. Did it take place in the Viking era? Yes, it was about the Vikings. Is it kind of Denmark and how they, you know, started to, you know, move and get on the water and explore and trade and grow and go to war and all these kind of things. It was just a really good, really

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entertaining show. Were the were the Vikings? Only? Where were the Vikings? Where? Where are they all from? Just Denmark,

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Norway, the whole area of Norway and Scandinavia, all that area. So when you hear about people call the group of people called the Danes right Patty, our mom always, my mom always talks about how Danes are just built. They're huge, and they're big, strong people, and that's they all descended from the Vikings, okay, yeah, all right. Anyways, really good show what's lots of bloodshed, lots of mentality, bloodshed and brutality. Because Vikings were pretty brutal with the things that they would do, yeah, like chisels and their hammers. And there's this one thing that they did called the blood eagle when they were gonna kill someone. And. Uh, basically what they do is they they cut their back open, broke their ribs, all of the ribs, well, had to break the ribs off the off of the spine at the back so they could pull the lungs out. And then they would place the lungs. They would put the ribs back, put the skin back, place the lungs on their back like wings so it'll look like an eagle as they as they died. It's like the most painful way to die, I guess. Why? What's the point to be to have an incredibly painful way for someone to die? Point of even sealing you back up at the back so they could, she could look like an eagle? I don't know other Vikings.

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They're crazy. That sounds like a great show.

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Yeah, if you like that stuff, watch it. If you love

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watching someone's lungs being ripped out of their body and attached to their backside, they

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only did it once in the show. Then watch Vikings, and it was the but, but that kind of stuff made people afraid. And no, yeah, Lee, yeah. Because if you heard that, that's what Vikings do, right, exactly. So they were smart that in that way. So anyways, I watched it, finished it, except the last season bothered me, because I, I obviously they thought they were going for another season. Don't tell too much. No, no, but, but there was, like, four or five different storylines that just kind of like we're set up and getting momentum, and then it was over. So I was like, Oh, I guess we don't get to see where all those storylines go.

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So why did they, why did it just end? I don't know.

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They mustn't have, I mean, they one of the main characters was killed off in like, the fourth season, and so I think Season Five and six weren't as exciting for people, because everyone kind of watched it for of watched it for him, and then I think it just kind of fizzled out, and so they moved on. Happens Anyways. Anyways. What are we talking about today?

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Desiree, well, we've talked about how we're talking in the four part series. This is our four part series of mapping your screenplay. Yeah, structure, scenes, dialog is what we're talking about. And so how do you want to start this? Well, we're

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talking about moving on. So we're going to be talking about setups and payoffs. That's a huge thing to keep in mind when you're putting your story

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together, moving on what you said. We're talking about moving on.

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Yes, moving on from the first three things that we learned, and talking about, talking about moving on, moving on, from the things that you've already got on the pages ready to go, you're moving on to Now, putting it into an actual screenplay. You just confused yourself. You confused me, because I don't remember the words that I said four seconds ago. That's a problem. But we're, we're talking about the setups and payoffs, which is the promise delivery loop, right? So you're, you're setting up stuff in that first act. You're setting up a lot of promises of what's to come, what the story is going to be about, certain things that people are holding back, certain questions that are hanging in the air. You're setting everything up in that opening act so you can deliver on it later in the second act. In the third act, you're putting in in this loop in place. And if you can keep that in mind, that if you put enough stuff out there, enough questions, enough bread crumbs, enough things that get people wondering, okay, how is that connected? And who is that person? Why did they say that? And are they together? Are they not and do they have a secret? Those kind of things, as you're putting that first act together, you're gonna have an audience leaning in and wanting to know how that all came

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about, right? How that all pay off, pays off, right? Yeah, like, even

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just like an opening line or a voiceover saying, you know, the first time I killed someone I was 12 years old. And then it goes back, and you're like, Okay, I need to find out what that's about, right? Just having those setups off the start so you can get to those payoffs. It's about planting character flaws, right? Making sure that all of those flaws are seen, so that the audience understands certain objects, or, you know, goals and kind of trophies that characters are going for, right? Whether it's the girl or whether it's the job,

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should not be trophies.

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Okay, I didn't mean it like that. I meant you want to win a girl's heart. That's That's your trophy that you're going for, not you're gonna get a girl to be a trophy and but you want to understand that there's motivations, that there's goals, that there's reasons for this character to be going through that story. Okay, so

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yeah, and the thing too to remember is that we have talked about this before. In a previous podcast. Was it specifically about setups and payoffs? We've talked about setups and payoffs breadcrumbs. We've we've talked about that quite a bit. Yeah, they're really important. Yeah, it is, because that's ultimately what makes the viewer want to continue viewing. Yeah, and if you have nothing, then what's the point of watching the TV show or the movie?

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Yeah, there's no point. There's no point at all. So they're so important, yeah? So. And and remember, this is we're mainly talking about features in this it's mapping your screenplay, not your pilot. For this four part series. Talk about PILOTs and other episodes in the past and lots to come. But you want to kind of set up that by the end of that, at by the end of Act One, you want to sit, you want to have an idea of what promise Are you making to the audience, right? What is it that you're setting up? What is it you're putting in motion? What is it that hits the end of that first act that has your character going in a new direction, right? What is that? What are they after? What is that promise he is going to go and kill that guy that killed his family, or she is going to go and explore her journey and end up in a small town, and when there's a blizzard, as we've been watching, we've been watching Hallmark and Christmas movies. I can't help but it's in my brain now.

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I guess the whole thing is it, the whole point of it is what keeps the audience moving forward? Yes, exactly. That's a that's a so we are done a podcast. We don't need

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to assess anything. That's all I really need to know. Yeah, just keep going forward, keep moving. Yeah. But the another big thing to keep in mind is that you want to make sure that the payoffs that you do have coming are surprising, right? Talk about it all the time, especially like a romantic comedy. You know that the characters are on 99% of the time, they're gonna end up together,

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except for that movie that we watched not too long ago where it was the best friends and they were, like, trying to connect, and then they got together for a little bit, and then they traveled somewhere, and then it was like, he went his own way and she went her own way. Do you remember that one? No, he's like, has like, five o'clock shadow. They were on the edge, like overlooking a mountain scene or something. Do you not remember this? And then we talked about it? You don't I can see by your face,

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if everyone can see me and I'm just staring blankly, if my wife remembers

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what this is. And then I remember after we were like, That's weird that it ended with, Oh, I do now remember, I don't remember what it was called, but we were like, but every single time, they're supposed to end up together, and we wanted them to end up together, and they kept trying to find each other. They'd find each other, and then,

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yeah, man, we had to look it up after and we're like, what's the point? We had to look up. What was the point of the movie? And the point of the movie was, there's a moment in life, and if you don't take that moment, you can never get it back, you'll miss out. Yeah. And it was Yeah, and they just kind of burned. And the ending was just like, we thought, you thought they were gonna get together. And then he just kind of walked away, and she walked away. We were like, what? Then they showed her in the car, and she was crying, and then was over. Like, yeah, I remember right now. I don't remember it was called anyway, so we want to have, what a useless example we just gave the audience,

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okay, but you said 99% of the right, but 99%

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of time. But that 1% though it makes it, it's unfulfilling. It is, that's why, right? Because we're invested in it. We're like, okay, they're gonna get together, and then if they don't, you're just like, what? Or it's like, he's gonna get it, you know, they're gonna get their justice, they're gonna find the person, and they're gonna take their revenge, and, you know, like, if they don't, then it's just kind of disappointing, but it

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falls flat at the end. It's kept you, it's kept you going the whole way, and then you're just like, ah, that's disappointing,

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yeah, but, but the thing is, you want to make sure you know, because 99% of time we know the hero or heroine is going to win, right? There's gonna, you know, depending on the genre, we know what's gonna happen, right? There's gonna, yeah, all these people in a horror movie are gonna die, but there's gonna be that one person who lives like, we know that's gonna happen, right? The trick of it is doing it in a surprising way, having the payoffs come in ways that we don't expect, right? Not just the same old thing. So you want to have enough of those setups in there breadcrumbs, yep, that when those payoffs come, we're like, Ah, yes, I knew that they set that up. That's what the character needed. That's why he couldn't be in a relationship. Now, here's what he needed. You know, like all those things, you're making those promises along the way,

that you're going to lead us to that place that pays off and gives the answers to those questions. Does that make sense? Okay?

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So that's all about setups and payoffs. What else do the listeners need to know?

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Well, everything, everything that makes a script move, that makes a script work, that makes a screenplay. Screenplay are scenes. So scene work is really important when it comes to choosing scenes, when it comes to how you put that scene together, how you start it, how you end it, if there's a reason for it, if you're just wasting time, if you're sitting around, all those kind of things. So what's a scene?

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What is the scene? Yeah, like, for people who are new with writing, and maybe they're just not familiar with it, like, is a scene, a fade in, no, that's the beginning of a script. So scene is a place, right? Yeah?

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So basically, it's something new happens, right? We're moving to see something else, yeah, so me and you were doing. Our podcast, and suddenly we're in the kitchen upstairs, having a conversation about something else, scene. That's a new scene. Yeah, so new. So, so a scene is just every new situation, right? When we leave a moment and we get into the next moment, not we're in the basement and we move into the hallway. Now we're in the hallway and we move into the stairs, and now we're upstairs, but we've been talking the whole time the camera's been with us, that's still a scene. Just because we've moved doesn't mean it's a new scene, right? It's new moments, if you can think of it that way, good sense

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for people who don't know, there you go. You're welcome. Thank you. But there's

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four things that the to keep in mind when you're putting a scene together in order to create movement, and that's the thing you're you know, as we said, this is titled The craft in motion a screenplay is all about movement, right? When movies were they're called movies for a reason. It's about it's a motion picture. It's about movement. So you want to keep that in mind. And there's four things to help you keep that as your focus. The first thing is that each scene should have a clear goal. There's always at least one reason for a scene existing. There's you should have many more reasons, but there should always be that one main reason for that scene to exist. Okay, so you need to know that goal. What is the goal of the scene? Not as what is the character's goal? You always want to think about that too. But these four things are just to kind of keep you understanding that we can't just be sitting around waiting for something to happen. Okay, so every scene a clear goal. Why is this scene in the script? If you remove this scene, or you didn't put this scene in, what would you be missing? If you're not missing anything, then it's

obviously shouldn't even be there. So you want to have that clear goal. Okay? The second is conflict. Now, Desiree, you love conflict. I hate conflict. We don't. We had a whole episode on conflict. Go back and listen to it's actually really good. Talks about how conflict isn't necessarily a negative thing. And that's the big thing people get caught up on, is that they think conflict is a negative all the time. But you should always have a conflict, right? Something that isn't perfect, something going on,

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something and not necessarily a conflict externally. It can be an internal conflict too. Yeah, I've been listening to the podcast. That's good.

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That's good. Actually, glad you're showing up.

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I sometimes thanks for the support. I try to not listen to you. Don't spit your tea. I won't I try to sometimes zone you out. That's regular life, not podcast. I did catch that part.

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Okay, good. But yes, conflict, yeah, it's good to say like, internal conflict, because sometimes the scene is one character in a room reading through something, or looking for a file, or crying, right?

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Like, unless it's saw, then sometimes it's internal.

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We just said as, like, internal, like you're getting a saw cut through your body, like the movie saw. Yes, there's external there too. There's external and internal conflict in everything.

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Well, I know there is, but I'm saying especially our marriage,

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yes. So then the third thing to keep in mind is steaks, right? What's what? Beef steaks? Not beef steaks. Steaks is an S, T, A, K, E, S. You want to have something at stake. You want to have something that a character wants to gain or lose. If there isn't anything going on, if there's no reason for that conversation to happen, that sequence to happen, I

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know what you should do. What? Cut it out. Cut it out. Cut that whole scene out. If there's no reason for it, there's no reason for the season,

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cut it out. Yeah, and if there's nothing, yeah, like, that's the thing is, that's like you said before, right? If there's no goal, if there's no conflict, if there's no stakes, if those things aren't in a scene, then there's either you're not either you need to put more work into that scene or the scene shouldn't be there. No, right? I always say everything should be able to fight for why it has to be there. You should not. It should be like you should go to try and rip it out. And your page should be gripping every single thing on that screen so you can't pull it away with it, because everything will fall apart. That's the true test. You're creepier than I think. Well, you could picture that. You could see the little pages and the words turning into hands and grabbing the side of the screen. No, I guess my mind just works that way. So the fourth thing, this is important, this is probably the most important one, is a shift. Something changes. Something changes in the person. Something changes in the scene. Something changes with an object, like a murder weapon goes missing, like something changes inside that scene. If, if you don't have the story being affected in some way and some kind of and the shift is a perfect word, if you don't have a scene being affected in some way with some kind of shift, then there really is no reason for it, or it's just not effective enough. You can create drama and you can't create movement if everything stays the same, right? So I also like the word Pivot. Pivot is good. Yeah? Pivots a great word, you know, yep,

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something from where you were at, yeah, yeah,

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whether it's an emotional thing or care. After information or a secret is revealed, or whatever, someone dies, like something has to happen, there has to be a shift. So those are the four things, and these will be in the show notes, okay, but a clear goal, conflict, stakes and a shift or pivot where something changes. Pivot, you put my word in there. I know, because it's a smart word, because you're smart, you're so smart, all right, so that's what you should have in there. And a lot of scenes that we see when we read, like, I read this script once, and I swear there was like, maybe, like, 15 lines of description or action in the whole script. It was all dialog from beginning to end. And that's not a movie, right? That there's no movement there. It's a stage play. Stage plays are mainly dialog, because you're stuck in you're stuck in a situation, yeah? But even in a contained movie, screenplay, there has to be something to see, right? Yeah? Like, if we're just sitting there, we call it talking head syndrome, right? When all that's happening is two characters are sitting or standing or whatever, walking even, but all they're doing is talking, and there's nothing being described or explained. And it's fine to have a scene or two like that in a story, but not the whole movie, you know. So dialog should not be the primary mechanism in any scene, like one of my favorite scenes I've talked about it before, called the eggplant scene in True Romance, where, remember this Dennis Hopper, Christopher Walken there, you know he? Christopher walken's This mob lawyer, and he's looking for Christian Slater's character, and Dennis Hopper's his dad. And so they have him in this trailer, and there's like to see six mob guys around him, and they need something from them, and it's a beautiful dialog scene, but there's so and it's a long scene. It's just a conversation between these two characters, but there's so much movement. So So you know, there's conflict, there's a goal on both sides, there's high stakes, and there's a shift because of the dynamic. So go watch True Romance if

you haven't seen it. Watch that scene. Study that scene. It has those four things in it. It's one of my one of the best movies I've ever seen in my life. It's amazing. So just keep that in mind that it should not be right. We've talked about dialog before. It's it's there to reveal character, it's there to move the story forward.

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So there's got to be a balance to between dialog and just what you're seeing, right description? Yeah, it should be a good be all description. It shouldn't be all dialog. It should be a happy medium, but it should be what works within the genre too. Yeah, because there's some genres where you need to have more visuals, yeah, right than others.

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Yeah, exactly. And we talked about this like you, let me say, you know, sometimes it's the unspoken is more powerful, and then the spoken. And we talked about this a couple episodes ago in that movie, we really liked champagne problems, right where, in the end, when the characters finally, you know, come together, and it's like, oh, here's their moment where they clear up miscommunication stuff. They barely said anything. They just kind of were looking at each other, and, you know, is, she's gonna she's crying a little, and he doesn't know what to do, and he just walks over to just walks over to her and, like, there was hardly any dialog at all. But you knew that everything was good. And so, you know, sometimes, sometimes writers just rely on dialog. Or they, they, I mean, as writers, dialog is the most fun thing to write, yeah, and you just enjoy it. And sometimes you get kick out of it. So there was, sometimes you'll write a scene just to, just to have characters talking, just to have fun dialog. But if that's all it is, if that's the primary mechanism, if that's the reason for the scene is to have characters talking, then it there's, there's not enough going on, right?

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And also, you want to make sure, too, that it's not on the nose as much as right when, right dialog, yeah, that it doesn't want to you don't want to have it be like, so blatantly, like you're like, Yeah, I can see that myself.

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Yep, yeah. And here's a post it for you to stick on your computer screen. Desire to just roll their eyes again at me, but that's the thing, is dialog, write your dialog as though nobody is watching your characters, right? Like there's no audience, then they would not say things that you're trying to make them say, right? So, like I said, Oh, remember when we got married on September 14, and we were in Arendelle church and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, and I give you all the details of our wedding day, right? For because I need the audience to know all those details, I wouldn't do that if no one was watching. I'd say, remember when I got married, right? So that's the thing. Is, you want to that's, that's a good test is, what if no one was looking right? Yeah, you always want to make sure there's at least something or someone in the scene that doesn't have that information. So anyways, just don't make it the primary mechanism. So those are the things to keep in mind, if you have those four things and you're and you're paying

attention to those, then your scene should have what they need to create that motion and create that movement. So Desiree you want to ask about a couple of questions this time that we can

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ask some discussion questions. Oh, do we Nice? Which on the other episodes of. The series, you'll remember probably and hate us for the fact that there are questions to ask yourself. Yes, there are Yeah, and there's homework later. Remember his question is, what is the value shift, yeah, in this scene

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or pivot, right? So what is that value, that valuable moment, that basically the scene can't exist without right? Okay, right?

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So ask yourself, ask yourself what that is, yeah. And then can the scene be cut without harming the story?

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Yeah, as we said, if you can take it out and it causes no ripples, it shouldn't be there, right? And that's the thing is, oh, well, that, you know some a lot of times they'll say, that's like a mentorship client, and you can tell that the silence afterwards, when I'm like, Well, if it isn't like, if that script, if you can cut that scene out, it doesn't cause any problems, then you're not doing what you're supposed to do. And sometimes it's silence, and they're like, offended. It's I'm just but it's just how it is, right? If you can cut it out and like, it's like, life, if you can cut a person out of your life, and it doesn't actually affect your life anymore, talked, well, yeah, then they shouldn't have been there in the first place. You do not need that relationship, because it's not causing any issues in your life. If they're gone, that's the same thing in a screenplay, better things exactly it will and just like in a screenplay, everything will get better. So those are the things to keep in mind when putting your scenes. Okay, so the next thing we'll talk about here is your

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Are you have, you have listed here turning points and tension arcs. No clue what tension arcs are. I'm guessing turning points, yeah, that's kind of explanatory,

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yeah, yeah. And these are within scenes, and kind of like bigger ones with an act break, so micro and macro. So micro turning points and tension arcs in your scenes is just those, those, you know, obstacles or power the I was kind of like the power struggle, right, where a character, you know, because every character thinks they're in control, or wants to be in control, like they want to, oh, I want to lead this conversation. I noticed the other person is now leading it. I need to take that power back. You'll see a lot in times in the movies, they'll use staircases and stairways to show that turning and that tension arc is you'll have the character step up, one step and, you know? And because if you're above a person, you're in control, right? You're the one with the power. And I actually saw this on a guy on YouTube. I can't remember the name of the

channel, but it's something about my screenwriter husband, and and it's always these videos of him pausing movies and then say, okay, honey, I'm gonna explain to you why they do this in this movie. And I'm like, Desiree would hate me if I did that.

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Please don't ever share that with me. I was just gonna say that.

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Anyways, he talks about this in a couple as well. But yeah, you want to have that, that power moving back and forth between different characters. A great movie that does this and desire. It's she hates it. We've talked about this, Glengarry, Glen Ross. It's a great example of of turning points, tension arcs. Things are constantly, people are constantly. It's like a it's like a ping pong match, right? It's like everyone's trying to take control so

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nowhere else is like that. Wolf On Wall Street, yes, yes, Wolf of Wall Street,

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yep, it is. There's so much going on in that.

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Do you want to tell the listeners what I just did?

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You were like, so you, you surprised yourself. Your face was like, quick story about Wolf of Wall Street. I went to Wolf of Wall Street, watched it, and thought, oh my gosh, this is amazing. Desiree has to see this, because a lot of times I'll go to a movie that you're like, I don't want to see that. And so we came back and went to the movie. And as it was starting this this man came in with his two kids, yeah, and they were little, like, four or five years old, like they were little kids. And he sat down, and I was like, I remember how the movie started, which is essentially a scene of Leonardo DiCaprio snorting cocaine. Was it a bomb out of someone's orifices? Yeah? So, yeah. And I was and then, like, so anyways, that's the very first scene, and then it just goes to hell from there. You know, F bombs, like 25 of them, the first two minutes. So I said, Hey, I'm not sure if you know, this is definitely not a movie for kids, so there's a lot and they he just, like, lost it on me. He just told me off, told me to shut up, mind my own business. And I was like, I don't remember. Oh my gosh, I know you don't. So then the movie started, and I was like, Okay, I'm gonna see how long it takes this guy, literally, two minutes, and the guy got up and left with his kids, and I'm like, I just, I tried to help you now that those kids are going to be like, Daddy, what was that exactly? Anyways? Yes, lots of unexpected twists and turns. So you want to have them with this within the scenes, and then you want to have the big ones as your ACT breaks. Right? I got an email from a guy the other day asking to explain those major plot points and major beats and stuff in his script, and I think that would be good to do a whole podcast episode on, but that when you're thinking your ACT breaks, they should be identifiable, right? We should be able to see them and understand that that is a shift, that is a turning point.

That is a tension arc that is changing directions. So big ones in your ACT break, small ones in your scenes.

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So micro turns within scenes, macro turns at ACT breaks.

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Yes, and you want to keep the tension rising right, even in the quiet dramatic scenes, right. Tension should always be building. When you go through a movie, you should be like, you just want to picture like, leaning forward more and more and more on the edge of your seat, waiting and waiting. You're building. It's building. You're leading to some climactic point. Otherwise the audience is going to be slumping back, and they'd be like, Oh my gosh. And this is sagging. Why is this taking so long? Nothing's happening. And then that, especially for a reader, that reader is just going to stop reading.

30:44

Okay, so that's all good stuff. Now we are at the point in this part of the section where we now ask questions again, yeah. What are a couple questions you can ask yourself down here. What is the emotional trajectory of this act?

30:59

Yeah, so you, I mean, emotion is everything, right? Don't ever underestimate the power of your audience, connecting emotionally to your story and your characters, right? That's incredibly important. You want to ask yourself, Where, where is that trajectory? Is it going up? Is it going down? Are we getting excited? Are we getting sad? Are we getting angry? Right? The emotion of the audience is something you want to keep in mind, not just the characters, but the audience.

31:23

Okay, yeah. And second question, Are you turning are your turning points character driven? Yeah.

31:29

I mean, this is my hack for structure. Hack. This is my number one hack sticky note. This is a sticky note. Yeah, structure, your entire screenplay based on your character's choices. Okay, not. You know, here's the bare bones structure, first act, second act, third act, inciting incident, like your turning point shouldn't be plot driven, right? You shouldn't be any your act and going into your direction for the plot your character should steer. It, their choices, their reactions, their decisions, right? That's what should be steering so that that is a great way to make sure that there are exciting turning points, that there's a lot of tension, that things are constantly, you know, moving back and forth. Yeah, so, so those are the kind of things to keep in mind as you're putting your story together and plotting things and making, you know, putting your scenes, figure out what scene is important when we're going to, you know, go through things when we're getting interested in something, right? Those are the things you want to keep in mind.

32:25

And especially, like, what I got out of this whole series today was dialog. The dialog is so important.

32:33

Yeah, it's important to reveal new and interesting pieces of character and move the story forward. Right? It should not just be there to be there. Okay, so

32:42

what else? What else can the listeners? What would you say that they should take home out of this entire episode? Okay?

32:50

So first of all, like we just said, dialog is the last tool, right, not the first, right? And then when I write, and everyone has their own process, and I never say someone should do something that they have to do it a certain way. Okay? I share my way, just because I've tried many different ways, and I find it works for me. It doesn't work for everybody, but when I do my outline, right, I call it my it is essentially my first act. Sorry, my first draft. It's my entire screenplay, but there's no dialog in it. It's all my scenes, all my character work, everything that happens in every single scene as it goes because the dialog is last. It should be last. You shouldn't, you know, it shouldn't be the first thing. Because if you're having characters talking, and you're, you know, plotting all that out, and you don't have anything happening in the scene, it's not a scene you can, you can in my in my outline, I have, like, these characters going to talk about this. And, you know, if I, if a great line of dialog comes to me. I throw it in there, but dialog should be your last tool, not your first. Number two, the scenes must shift the story forward. Don't take the story backward. Don't make it stagnant. Don't have us sitting around waiting for something to happen, okay? And the third is that structure is emotional logic, okay? It and I say it that way because, like I just said, your structure should be based on your character's choices and emotion. Desiree drives choices. I say it like that because Desiree is a very, very emotional character. I was gonna say

34:16

I am a very emotional character. I am,

34:20

but not that it's a bad thing. No, no, you wear your heart on your entire skin, not just your sleeve,

34:26

I know. And I think about my most recent lovely visit at the hospital, yes, with the doctor that I did not get along with, no, and the first day was very emotion based, very like I was very upset and frustrated and overwhelmed to then my emotion being almost like determination, and I don't want to say rage,

34:51

No, you were fierce. That's what I say.

34:53

You're ferocious, okay? And for my friends who are Nigerian, yes, they say. I should have been born in Nigeria, yes. So there is that component where they're just like, Are you sure you're not a Nigerian?

35:07

Yeah, you're fierce. I have a backbone, you do. And like I said, like I said, one of the other episodes that that your whole, your whole quote is, do not make yourself small for other people anymore. Yeah, right. But, I mean, there's nothing wrong with that. But, yeah, characters drive the stories structure. They should if, if the plot steering the characters, and the characters are just reacting to everything, then then go do something. Emotion is emotion, emotion. Emotion. Because if we see, like, when you see someone crying, what do you feel? You feel something. I want to cry. You just start crying with them. Yeah, I don't, because you always say, look at the heart. Is like your soulless. I'm soulless. I just don't cry a lot. I cry. I cry in movies all the time. That's where I cry. But, yeah, you see someone cry, you see someone angry, you see someone scared, like you react emotionally. So that should be there. So those are the things to keep in mind. Now, as I said at the start, here's the exciting part. You got homework to do as you're putting your movie together, right? We've mapped the screenplay over these four parts, right? The first was all about getting that kernel of an idea the best one you can find, then making those marketing choices of, can I sell this in a lot in a one sentence log line? Can I get excited people excited? Can I get someone to hear this idea and want to tell other people, right? And then the third one was about character, right? Because character is everything, how to build your character and now, how to take those characters, put them in scenes, have that create momentum and move forward. So little bit of homework, audit one of your scenes, and you can do this in a screenplay you've already written, right? Go into that scene and ask yourself, can I Why is this scene here? What about this scene is important? Where's the reason for this scene? Here it is. Here's a piece of information that's needed. Here's the character detail that I had to get out there. What is it? Once you've got it, look at it and say, Am I done? Or do I stick around for a page and a half? Find that moment, right, and audit that scene. Then, for fun, try and swap the dialog. So if it's Scott and Desiree having a conversation, right, take Desiree's lines and give them all to Scott and vice versa, right? Just change the character headers. That would be so boring. No, this is the test of whether you're not your characters have dialog that makes sense for them. If my dialog can be given to you and years being given to me, and it still works. It's not specific enough. You don't say things that I would say, and I don't say things that you would say. I don't want to say things you say at all, exactly. But that's that's another one, another way to kind of play with your scene, test your scene, see if it's working. So, so try doing that, just to see. And then look at three look and see if you can find three setups in your first act, and what their payoffs are, and where those payoffs come. Setups and payoffs are huge. Setups and payoffs create momentum. They create questions. We just watched a movie, and we're talking about this in our next podcast. So if you haven't seen wake up dead man. Watch it before next week, because we are going to be talking about it, and we're going to have spoilers, because I

got to talk about all the crazy things that happen in it, because it's going to be about surprise, but you want to see, and it has so many setups, like the very first moment is a setup that has a payoff later on.

38:17

So did I watch this one? Are you actually serious? Right now? I don't remember the name.

38:24

We just went to the movie theater two days ago and we watched knives out. Wake up, dead man. Is the title? Oh, I thought it was knives out. That's knives out as series. Anyways, yes, so look at your setups and look your payoffs. That's your that's your homework. So, so that's it. So that is the, that's the that's the spiel

38:44

in this part of the podcast. We are going to pause for our promo.

38:51

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.

39:34

And we're back. Thank you so much for tuning into this final four part series with us. We really appreciate you listening in I want to remind those listeners that you can always submit questions to us, which is what we're going to get to next. Yes and your questions can be submitted to Hello@scriptreaderpro.com we

39:56

have four questions today. We do okay. Who is the first question from?

39:59

We. Have Caleb from Denver, Colorado. Hey, Phil, Phil. Our friend Phil is in Denver, Colorado. Oh, does he live in Denver? Yeah, what is, what is this question is, what makes a screenplay good?

40:12

Whoa. Now that's a big question.

40:16

Caleb, thank you for such a deep, oh, thoughtful question.

40:19

Well, see, I always read a screenplay, and when I get my notes for script, like a lot of times, you'll hear this old, ai, ai, doesn't have personal bias. You know, every reader has, oh, if this reader hates this, they're gonna hate this. Yeah, there are reader biases. But the good readers, the great readers, I think of myself as a great reader. I go into every script thinking, this is gonna be amazing. I can't wait. That's how I go into every script. And when I go in there, I don't get annoyed, I don't get offended, I don't be like, Oh, I hate when people do that. I just read it for what it is. Okay. So what makes a screenplay good is it makes me see it in my head as a movie. If I'm reminded constantly that I'm reading then it's failing,

40:59

or that there's five pages of description, and you're like, Wow, this is ridiculous,

41:04

unless that description is so freaking cinematic and epic that I that I'm lost in it, right? That's, that's the big difference, right? A screenplay should make you see something like your director's eye, you're watching something unfold. That's the basis of a good screenplay. Okay, so if you want to make sure you're doing that you're you got enough visuals there to really make it come to life and forget that that's on the pages, that's, that's, that's the true test.

41:30

Okay, question number two, yeah, Who's this from? This question comes from Marcus in Chicago, Chicago. Marcus asked the question, what happens after I finish a script? Oh, I

41:44

think we had this question before for someone else, too.

41:47

I think it was worded a little different, maybe.

41:50

So basically, when you finish the script, the whole idea is, try to sell it right, yeah. But you want to finish the script. But how do you know it's finished? Yeah? But I think this more is meaning, well, yeah, I guess we can answer it both ways. So if you think you're finished, you want to tell yourself that you can't do anything more to it. You just can't. This is the best version of this story that you can tell right now, but you can't. You can't ask yourself to do more than that. So that's what that's the question. Ask yourself, right? If you don't feel it is then you keep going. And then the other part is you have to market it. You just have to, no one's going to find your screenplay sitting on your computer. You have to try and force it out there to people. So you if you're not willing to do that, if you are not built that way, and I'm not built that way, I hate selling. I hate marketing my stuff. It's the hardest part. I'm a creative I just want to sit behind my computer and bring things to life. But if you can't do that, then it's not going to be successful, because people can't find your script. You have to make them read it

42:41

makes sense. Yeah, makes sense. Hey. Next question, how do I stop overthinking everything?

42:46

This one, I don't know. Desire is this a question from Desiree.

42:50

This one, though we should be friends. Avery, uh huh, from Portugal, Portugal. Nice. My solution to this is good luck, because I have no clue.

43:02

Well, when it comes to screenwriting, right? I think that's a big thing, is you're always questioning yourself, oh, is this good enough? Did I do a good job? Oh, are they gonna like it again? Like you can't control any of that, I think is the thing, right? There's no point in overthinking everything, because you can't control it. If you're overthinking a scene and you're just you're trying too hard. You're trying to force stuff in. It's going to feel that way, right? You just, you have to trust your instincts, trust your gut, if you are a true storyteller, right? If you took up screenwriting because of covid and you were bored and you can't put a story together, and all you're doing is using a template for unsafe the cat and think you got it, then it you're, you're, you've, you're not thinking enough. But if you think too much, if you challenge everything too much, you will never finish your screenplay. If you're a good storyteller and you just know how to do it, and screenplay format is your medium, then just go with just trust your gut. And if someone reads it and says they didn't get it, or didn't like it, or they're missing something, then go from there. But you you'll never get to the next scene. If you're if you just keep, keep challenging, overthinking, every single

44:09

thing makes sense. Yeah, hey. Final question, yes, we have from Mason, from Florida. Mason sends in the question, how do I write better dialog?

44:18

Ooh, that's what we did. It was so we first of all go back to our podcast on dialog. But how do you write better dialog?

44:26

I'll tell you. Yeah, you go and you research by listening into people thinking about conversations you've had. That's a good, good thing. Yep, eavesdropping. Drop, drop,

44:37

yeah, being nosy, essentially, right in a couple episodes ago, we were talking about you in the hospital and how you the best part of house, of your hospital stay, was just listening into other people's conversations. And it's so true. One example was like, This guy's talking about his wife and how she had surgery, and he absolutely he forgot that she was having some life faltering

surgery that that day. And it was like, You. Okay, so that's a character like, I forget a lot, right? Like, I forget he was busy. He was busy. But I forget a lot of things. I forget why I walk into another room the second I walk in that room,

45:10

yeah, but yet, you can remember that the what the last three episodes

45:14

were on this I remember everything to do with something I'm interested in.

45:18

But yes, you're not interesting in my birthday or our anniversary?

45:22

Well, yes, I always remember that. But this is the thing is, here's a character, this guy. There's a whole world there of a guy who didn't even remember that his wife was having surgery that day. That's a bit so that tells you a lot about that person. So live in the city, right? So it's that's one, that's a that's a great way to write better dialogs. Just listen to people and not be like, No, don't take your dialog and think, Oh yeah, I'm gonna write this like a regular conversation. Because sometimes people just sit and talk about nothing, and that's not a movie. But listen to the things that make you pay attention. Listen to how someone says something. There's so many people that I'll listen into. I'm just like, Oh my gosh. I want to know that person or that they delivered that so well. Or, you know, oh, there's a lot in that thing that he just said to her, right? So you can really pick up on that. And then, just like, have a little notebook or a little record. I mean, don't record people's conversations, but like yourself, right? You can say something to your recorder after you listen to someone talk, or whatever. But I

46:17

don't even think recorders exist, Scott, I think that you're on your on your phone, there is an audio recorder. There is. But do you remember years ago, I bought you an actual recorder with the little mini tapes?

46:27

Yeah, because I was working as a parking lot attendant in a booth, and I was, I was walking the parking lot all day because there's nothing else to do. And so you add you bought me a record before cell phones or smartphones. And yeah, I would just sit there and I would just, I would talk out my entire screenplay, and then when I got home, I would type it all out. So weird, yeah, but Yeah, listen to people study great dialog and great movies and TV and that that should help. So, so that's my answer, then, for the

46:53

questions, I want to remind everybody, if you haven't subscribed, subscribe to the podcast,

46:57

yes, give us a rating. Five stars would be wonderful. That's already loves them. We've got good ratings so far, good reviews. Yeah, almost five stars. So if you can kick up those five stars, if you like it, if you were entertained, if you learned something, I think that's worth a five, five stars.

47:10

And like I said, Any questions or comments can be submitted to [Hello@scriptreaderpro.com](mailto>Hello@scriptreaderpro.com), yeah, check out our website. All of our services are there. If you are a writer, we have a service for you. We have pretty much everything you could you could imagine, from going over your log line, going over your synopsis, break your help, and break down your concept with you on some some phone calls. We have some exciting programs coming up with some pretty intensive stuff for rewrites, for writers who want to have that guided plan so they can go in and tackle their rewrite themselves with, you know, because a lot of times people get notes and then they're just not quite sure how to execute them. That's, that's part of the struggle. So you get notes and then, and then we get on there with you. We're like, Okay, this is how you do it from here. So watch for that. Check out our website. I thought I was, I thought the exact same thing. As soon as I said that, I'm like, I heard, I heard, yeah, Montel Jordan sings, yeah. Anyways, that's That's it scriptreaderpro.com, because we're here to help writers craft wonder one page at a time.