

Ep #56: Erin Falconer Interview

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On this episode, we are talking to a fellow writer, Erin Falconer is writer of a new show on prime so we're going to pick her

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brain. 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. Thank you so much for listening in. Hey Scott, guess what? What? We're almost at 60 episodes. Holy. We're getting up there. We're old now, almost as old as you. Scott, no, yeah, it is. No, I'm, I'm

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younger than 56 Come on now, be nice.

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I say 60 thinking, you know, Hey Scott, yes, I'm so excited because we get to talk to Erin today. I know it's gonna be fun. We haven't done an interview in a while, so it's gonna be nice. Well, also it's my favorite genre. It is, which is slasher, horror films,

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yes, yes, no, no, it's, it was a romantic cause, more of a romantic drama, right? There was some fun stuff. It was fun stuff. Yeah, but, yeah, yeah, romantic drama.

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I guess we could, yes, we could, yeah. And other than that, are you doing good?

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I'm doing good. Yeah, I'm. We've been watching a ton lately. They've been some, really, some nice, cool content come out. But yeah, today we're going to talk. I'm Scott. I'm part of the team here at Script Reader Pro me and Desiree do this podcast. Our hope is that you are number one entertained, number two, that you're that you feel you're learning something. And maybe, you know, I always say I'm not a guru or anything, but maybe if I've said something that resonates with you in a different way, that then what you've heard it before and it helps, then that's that's my goal. So today, you know, we're just going to talk about about writing, about different kinds of writing, and get some kind of, you know, behind the scenes experience from

from a writer who's had her first movie produced. So, hey, we should bring her on. No, not yet. Well, I really want, okay, let's bring her on. I think because we always talk about something we've watched

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this week, I know, and I feel like it's only right, Scott, that that we have. Erin, well, we

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might as well, because what we what we actually watched, was sweet little movie called maintenance required. Erin, have you seen

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that? Erin, no, but

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you haven't actually watched it yet. No, did you watch it?

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No, I've watched Okay. I've watched numerous cuts of it and went to the premier.

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Oh, fun. That's awesome. So, yeah, so that's who wrote this movie that we watched was maintenance required, but it's on Amazon primer. It's on Amazon Prime, yeah. And we actually, yeah, we me and Desiree really enjoyed it, you know, we thought it was entertaining. We thought there was great character work. We were just really enjoying the back and forth and the side characters and the originality of it kind of flipped all the expectations, right? It's, it's about care these characters who work in auto shops, and it was an all female auto shop, which was, is that what a movie called an auto shop?

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I think so. Or an auto body shop, or, yeah, I think all of those.

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Yeah. So it was just, it was just cool to have, you know, all the mechanics were women. And, you know, it was just, it gave it a nice, fresh twist to it.

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It so did, and it was a different idea than you typically don't see, like, you don't typically mash up a woman in a typical, I hate to say, man's position, yeah. But men tend to have more, be more in that field. And so that was kind of what was fresh about it. I thought, yeah.

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And it was just, I love the retro angle of it. And I was like, Oh, man. Like, I wish, I wish the garage. I went to look like this garage inside, not just because of the women you wanted it,

because it was just cool, like, it was a cool building, and it was just, like, it just had a great kind of like feel to it, and a very nostalgic feel.

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No, you know what you wanted. You just wanted it to be that so that you could go get a, like, a pedicure or manicure at the

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same time. Yeah, I thought that was clever. They threw up a nail nail salon in the, in the, you know, in the area where you're waiting, you can get your nails done while you waited for the vehicles. And I thought that was cool. And I loved the I loved his friend with the plant shop, the plant guy, and how he was always spraying his plants, carrying his plants around. It was just really fun characters. And I think what stood out to me the most was like, this is a very present movie, meaning that we're seeing characters that we see in our lives today, right, people dealing with specific issues and gentrification and acceptance. And, you know, yes,

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the acceptance piece, I was like, raw, yes, rah, rah, rah, yeah.

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And yeah, it's cool. So anyways, yeah, we really enjoyed it afterwards. I'm like, I wonder if we could get this, I wonder if we could interview this screenwriter, because we haven't seen a movie like that, especially in that kind of romantic dramedy kind of frame. We hadn't really seen something that we really enjoyed lately. So I was just like, This is really great.

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So yeah, have you noticed, Erin, that there isn't a lot of these types of movies anymore, like, they were big for the 80s, 90s,

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they were, yeah, they were. They were such a staple in movie theaters, and then they kind of died off as I think streaming was finding its footing. And then a couple of years ago, when Sydney Sweeney had that really big, really big hit, although it was critically. Yeah, yeah, critically, not well reviewed, but, and had kind of got off to a weak start, but then became this kind of behemoth. And I think that's where everybody got, you know, the streamers got paid attention. Was like, Oh, wow, this this, if you know, it's done right, this could really tap into a big market again. And so, yeah, in the couple of past couple of years, I've seen more and more coming out, but I kind of attribute it to that, that Sydney Sweeney moment,

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yeah, for sure, that was kind of the resurgence. It made like a million dollars or something. Yeah, it was crazy. They had a really, had a really good marketing play. They were playing like they were dating and they were magically involved. Oh, were they, I didn't even know. Yeah, they admitted they actually weren't. And, yeah, some really clever stuff. And it was, it was a good

movie, like it was enjoyable and fun, but it wasn't like, we've never seen this before, right? But it was just the way it was handled. And, I mean, you put Glenn Powell in anything, and it's, yeah, he's a movie star. He's the new Tom Cruise, you know, like, yeah, he knows what he's doing. So, yeah, that's great. So we're gonna ask you some questions. We are but I want to introduce Bill hasn't even told us anything about you. I know. I just thought, I thought, give us a little insight into who Erin actually, I

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sure can Scott, sure, but I did want to bring, I thought it was only right that she comes in to hear the part about her own movie. Yeah, for sure, that's the exciting part. Okay. Erin Falconer is an author, screenwriter and psychotherapist. What is a psychotherapist? Scott we're going to find out in 2022 she released the much anticipated how to break up with your friends finding meaning, connection and boundaries in modern friendship, which was named one of 2022 next big ideas by Malcolm Gladwell as a follow up to her 2018 critically acclaimed self improvement female empowerment book, How to get shit done, why women need to stop doing everything so they can achieve anything. Most recently, errands need to stop doing everything. Oh, once. Most recently, Erin's first feature script, sorry, guys, maintenance required, was sold and produced by Amazon Studios MGM. Her book, how to break up with your friends has been optioned for both a television series and a feature film, and she recently completed her first book adaptation, Loretta, based on daredevils by Sean bestall For stadium films. Erin is a Canadian living with her son and husband in Venice Beach, California. We're so happy to have Erin here.

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Yeah, this is fun. I love talking to is because desire doesn't like hearing about screenwriting. I talked about screening and all the time, and she just zones out. So it's nice to have someone else I can talk screenwriting

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with on this thing. What is your what is your husband? Think of the screenwriting? Is he? Of course, he has got to be supportive, where you probably wouldn't be with the guy, right?

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Yeah, he's, he's very supportive. And actually, he was in the entertainment business. He was a kind of obscure job, which is called an aerial ground coordinator, which works between airplanes and helicopters and the director. And so you're gonna love this fun fact. I actually wrote him a part in maintenance required, and he is the French guy that tries to buy Charlie's truck from her.

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Oh yeah, he was like a jerk, right? Yeah, I'm not gonna drive it. That's him. You put him in there. Oh, one quick fun fact before we continue, is we were watching it, and the scene where they were at the Auto Show, where they were showing off all the cars, and the yellow, I don't know what kind of car it was, but it was like the neon green one that they did the tires on, yeah, but the driver steps out, and he starts walking across, and I'm like, Hey, that guy looks way too

familiar to not have a part, because that's got to be a big part. And then we were like, Who is that guy? And figure it out. Desiree says, I know it love island. He was on love Island. That's Rob, and so we had to, like, pause it and, like, rewind it, and then, yeah, that was kind of fun that he showed up in there.

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I wonder if it'll be, like, his debut. It'll be like, I don't know if he's acted in anything else. Was kind of cool to see him.

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No, yeah, he was friends with the lead actress, and so I guess he was gonna be that most of the movie was filmed in the UK, and he was happening, he was in, happened to be in the UK, and she was like, Oh, my friend. And I didn't even know anything about love Island. I mean, I heard about the show, but I did never watch it. And she's like, No. He's like, everybody knows Rob, you know? I was like, okay, and it turns out, it's true. Recognized everybody's like, saw that cameo.

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Yeah, that's awesome. So my first question is, I just want to know, because you obviously, you've been in literary work for a while. You've been writing these self empowerment and improving books, but what, what is it that inspired you to move from those style of books and that style of writing into writing to choosing, I'm gonna write a screenplay?

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Well, to be honest with you, so as you mentioned at some point, I am Canadian, and I grew up in Canada, but I moved originally to Los Angeles about 20 years ago to be a screenwriter. And so. I actually started screenwriting. I, well, I started in Toronto, but I moved down here to, like, make that my full career, and kind of failed spectacularly. I had a couple of scripts that I got signed with William Morris. This is, like, pre William Morris Endeavor. And I had, you know, had a script I wrote, optioned, and I had some early on buzz, but nothing materialized, and kind of found myself very down and out with no real plan in LA and long story short, ended up working for, you know, 15 bucks an hour at a self improvement startup that had a blog called pick the brain, and I started working on that blog, and got into the blogging world very heavily when it was just taking off. So I was always kind of writing, right, like I was from screenplays. And then I got into the blogging world. I still have that blog. It's and it's a fairly big blog, and then was able, because that blog got had a huge readership, got my first book deal. So then moved into writing books. And then after all of that, and I kind of continued writing screenplays, off and on for that period, but really, you know, it started to really, really dwindle, and then I had written a television pilot that won a couple of national awards, and that kind of put me back on the map. And I was like, Oh, I really, I got to try and make a go of this. And then, anyways, that's kind of the trajectory. So I've always been writing, but, you know, I like to say, I'm, like, an overnight, you know, screenwriting success, but that overnight is 17 years, like it took me 17 years, yeah, yeah, over a couple decades, yeah.

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And I'm glad you said that, because that's how the important thing, right? People here, oh, this is their first feature, you know, feature sale or feature, and people think, Oh, it was the first goon play you ever wrote,

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or that you ever sent to anyone, that it's like, the first person you sent to, then they're like, Yeah, sold. I love this. It's like, that's not the real word.

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That's the important thing, right? So, yeah, overnight success. Because when it, when you finally do get that success, it's like, boom, right? But it's not, it didn't happen overnight.

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You've put in your time, right? Yeah, yeah, yeah. So I put in a lot of time, yeah?

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So, like, Okay, going back to the psychotherapist, I want to know what exactly that is and how that works within your writing. Then is that, do you use part of it when you build your characters? Or how does that work?

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Yeah, absolutely. So I forgot that part of this the story, so I started writing these, my my first book, How to get shit done, as you mentioned, and that did very, very well. And it was also kind of Instagrams blowing up at that time, and I found like wellness influencers were really blowing up. And I was like, Oh, God, I hate, I hate all of this. And I don't feel like people are really credentialed, and they're giving a lot of advice. And then I was like, Well, why? How am I even really credentialed? It's like, I, you know, I went to McGill, but I didn't study therapy or anything like that, or psychology, or blah, blah, blah, so I actually went back to school and got my master's in psychology, and then also my license to practice as a therapist, and the psychotherapist is just, like, to not be confused with, like, if you say therapist, like, not like a physical therapist or whatever. So it's in the world of psychology. And so, yeah, it absolutely, certainly informed my second book. And then, yes, it's a super important. I think it's a really critical piece to understand, even in a rom com, which seems like it's, you know, light and bouncy and funny, but you know, it's to really have those beats hit. I think the more you understand what motivates character psychologically, the more you kind of will resonate with the audience, or at least that's the goal.

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Yeah, that's why I was I always say every, every screen editor, should study some sort of psychology, yeah, get some books even, and read about it because, and I thought it was very clever desire. Actually pointed it out when we were watching it. She said that was really clever. How we got his backstory there, when he was at the when he was talking, I can't remember what was leading characters name. What was his name?

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Again? Sorry, the actor's name is Jacob, and the character's name is why am I blanking? Oh, my goodness. Why am I blanking? I just know that the actor so well, Jacob, now I can't separate it. Oh, my God, you're

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welcome, you know what? If you've ever listened to the podcast, I never remember a single thing, yeah, nor do I remember movies, but I remember that. But it was

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when that woman walked into the shop and said, How dare you, you know, take this business away. And he's like, Hey, listen, look, this is basically my backstory. I was started as a mechanic, and I was able to move up, and that's what America is about. And it was just like. Hey, it was like, that was really clever, how we got that because, you know, it was just we were waiting to find out what his story was, how, why he was this closer, why he was so high up in the company, if he's just has this passion for fixing but

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it wasn't on the nose. No, it wasn't. A lot of times it's on the nose and you're just like, oh, another one of these. You just like, tell us that. That's, well, let me tell you a bit about my backstory, right?

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Because, yeah, I noted this was one of the things I wanted to ask you about, too. Because you, you know, you, you gave us a lot about about Charlie, right, the leading actress. She, we heard a lot. We knew a lot about her story, her, you know, her story with her father, and what he set up for her, and her plan and her dream for taking this, this Bronco, and putting it on the road and taking that road trip. So we got a lot of that backstory stuff. A lot of you know this is, you know, she has walls up because she doesn't want to lose anyone, you know, those kind of things. So it was just that he didn't get all that, but that then he gave us everything we needed in that moment. So, so that was really smart. I liked that.

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And it all, it all was from a female perspective,

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yeah, well, it's interesting, because it, I'll tell you, it was a trial by fire, really understanding the process of having a movie made, and they say, and I learned on this project that there are really three movies made that's the one that's written, the one that's shot, and the one that's edited. And so, you know, as somebody that is was involved, of course, in writing it. It was, at times kind of hard to wrap my head around some of the choices and some of the not. Now, I'm not saying that in a negative way. It's just, you know, there's multiple, you know, 100 people working on

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this in your head, right? You're like, that's right, supposed to look right? Yeah.

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And so there was originally more of Jacob's backstory in the original script. Yeah, there was even, there was more shot, but for a whole handful of reasons, the final cut did not reflect some of those, you know, some of those scenes, but it was good that, you know. So just a little backstory on this. The movie itself is loosely based on, you've got mail and, yes,

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you've got see how excited we got. Because, okay, that was one of the first movies we ever watched. We met on a telephone chat line because

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we're old before internet, so internet existed, we just sent messages back and forth to each other. So when we watch You've Got Mail, it was like it

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was our second movie. I think we watched was You've Got Mail and we put it in the VCR at exactly the same time to watch it. Yes. Thank you. Back Story. Continue on. Yes.

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So, so if, obviously you know that movie, and it was very like almost 50/50, split. I mean, it's led by Meg Ryan in the closing of her bookshop, but it was very bouncing back and forth between him and her. DOM Hanks and Meg Ryan story, you know, in almost equal measure. And so the original script was more along those lines. Oh, interesting, yeah. And then the reason that, and I have to, I absolutely have to share this part, is that I co wrote this with the director of the movie, who was a journalist at formerly and and a director of Doc, a documentary directors, and she had actually shot a documentary short about a female mechanic out of, I think it's Philadelphia who had this all female auto body shop. And she just fell in love with this woman. She shot it, but she shot that Doc, that short dock, maybe, like, 10 years ago, but never forgot her or her story. And so she actually originally pitched me on this kind of high level idea of, like, what about a loose adaptation of, you've got mail, but it's set in the the auto body shop world and so and then we began to kind of spitball and what that could look like. And so that was, like the true Genesis, but, but, yeah, I think the original question you asked is, like, Jacob's story was a little more flushed out visually and scenes in the original script.

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That's interesting. Yeah, that's great. It's interesting to hear it wasn't a spec, it was a it was more like a writing assignment, because someone came to you and said, Hey, you

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want to write this with me? Well, yes, sir, yes and no, because she had also never, she had never done a narrative, or a feature narrative, or anything like that. We were friends, and she

kind of pitched me on a bunch of ideas previously, and they none of them really felt right, you know, they're all great ideas. But I was like, I'm not sure that I'm the right one for this, you know, blah, blah, blah. And then when she talked to me about this, and I was like, You know what? There's I love, you know, my book writing is very much in the female empowerment world. And it was like, I do. I love this. I think we could find a really original. Voice. And so we did write it on spec together, and then this is collaborative, yeah, yeah, very, very, yeah, like we did. Nobody had bought it was just like, well, what if? What if we try this? And then this is, this is kind of a Hollywood story you guys might appreciate. We sent it over to our agent, sorry, our manager, who happened to be having lunch with an Amazon Exec. And they were that exec was upset because they had just lost their project that was going to film in July. This was this was that this lunch happened in March, the end of March, and as the managers, I mean, as the Amazon Exec is telling them, that we send over the first draft of maintenance required, which was like a gut check it was not meant to go out at all. It was like, Is this something, you know, that kind of thing. And he said, Oh, you know what, I just got sent the script. And he knew the high level of, you know, the log line of what it was going to be. And they were like, oh, that sounds interesting. Can you send it over? He sent it for it over? He sent it right at that lunch cut to two weeks later, and the phone just starts ringing off the hook. Who has the rights to this dude? And we ended up getting slotted into that July shooting thing, which is, like, unheard of in the business,

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literally fast track, for sure,

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unheard of and but so we ended up having to shoot it in the UK, because that's where the original deal was set up that fell through. And so it just Yeah. And so they built all the sets to look like San Francisco. And so, like that auto body shop was something that was like, built. It's not a real auto body shop. It was, it was, it's at a studio that they built, and they built, and they built the whole street to duplicate the whole street was built, yeah, too. And then, and then, that's awesome, yeah. And then we went to San Francisco to shoot the exteriors and a couple of the interiors, but really that was like just a week of shooting. So it was just to get the real authenticity of San Francisco. But yeah, so anyways, it was, it was a complete whirlwind, honestly.

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So did you you got to be there the entire time then, or were no, I went only for part of time.

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I was there for two and a half, I think, two and a half, three weeks in the UK, and then I was there for the whole week in San Francisco,

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okay, yeah, and it was shot for how long, over what span of time?

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So, it shot July, the end of July, July, like 30th, I think, and then it was done the second week in September. So fairly, so about six weeks, yeah, wow.

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That happened fast. And the thing is, it's all like, Scott, you've talked, because I'm not a writer, but you've talked a lot, too, about how it's the right time, the right place, the right moment, right yeah, that everything lines up.

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It's not Yeah, but it's not what it takes. It does. You still have to have a great script and a strong commercial, yeah, you know concept to get Yeah, to say, oh, you know what? I like that idea. Send me the script. But still, yeah, everything still has to line up. That's great. So I love, I mean, I love the fact, I don't know if I've never called myself a feminist. I don't even your eyes all the time saying, Oh, I'm a feminist. No, you are. Never said that, but you are. I love the female perspective. I try, like, pretty much every script I write, there's a leading female character or a co lead. And I was like, I don't know if I'm writing this woman, right? I'm not.

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I don't know, right? Pro, you're pro. Like, everything. You're like, throw it in for non binary person. Let's do

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this like I said, it's life. It's current life. It's important, right? That everybody sees themselves. But what I found interesting, and this is I mean, so many writers are get so confused about what voice is like, what's what? How do I know if my characters all have different voices, my answer to them would be watch maintenance required and watch these three women in this car shop, because all three of those characters were so completely different. They speak different. Their personalities were different, the their, you know, the way they deliver words, even their dialog. Like, like, my thing with dialog is, you shouldn't be able to take one character's dialog and give it to another person and have it don't work, right? And, yeah, these three characters, I don't remember the names, but, like, the right, you know, like,

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Brian, yeah, yeah.

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I remember her from the Star Wars, like the, I can remember that, which one she was in on, on, on Disney. But I was just like, she's, she catches her eye. And then I was like, Oh, her eyes are so cool. And, and and then, you like, and this is just expectations, right? But I expected that she was gay, and then, because of just, you get that expectation, and she's muscley and she's, you know, doesn't seem very feminine. Make the assumption, and then this hot guy comes in, and she jumps on his back, and he's one in guys in a rotation, and you're just like, there you go, subverting expectations, you know, like, and then. The other girl. She was so, you know, she was so prissy, and she, you know, doing her nails. But she was just like, really. She was just

like, a really down to earth good friend, and, you know, saw things in an interesting way. And it just was like, you know, so caring about her friend and this, everyone cared about each other, but they did it in a different way. And I was just like, that is a perfect example of how you make three characters are all doing the same thing and are always in the same room. You can't mix them up, no, right? So, yeah, I love that. And I mean, I don't, I don't just the way that you wrote it from that female perspective. It was just so interesting. And I think was important how you showcased how people, not just men, but people in general, view something like that where they would it's normally a man's type of job, right? Yeah, how they were looked upon as differently, and maybe they aren't worth the time, and let's go to the other place, and that kind of thing. So, yeah, obviously, there's some messages. What was your important message that you wanted people to hear in this?

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Well, I just think it's, it's, it's that to challenge the way you see the world, to challenge, you know, to challenge what we've been conditioned to believe, to to see women in these different roles really kind of fight for it and have authenticity. And I also thought it was important, you know, that that Jacob Bo Jacob's character, really embraced, you know, embraced who she was and who she was trying to be. In the end, obviously it didn't, you know, didn't start out that way, but was able to kind of see kind of some of his own truth through her being, so, you know, authentic and who she was. And so I think all of those messages are kind of important.

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That's great. That's great. So did you ask as Do you had a question about the dialog, about dialog, the different dialog of characters,

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yeah, the with it being about voices and stuff, because dialog obviously is super important. And you were talking Scott about having the characters all sound differently when you, like, were, like, attending or even filming or watching it after Yeah, would you say that like the characters that you made and who you saw in your head? Do you think that they were brought to life enough in a way that validated who they are? Do you know what I'm saying? Yeah, Master matched your vision, yeah?

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I do. No, no, yeah, yeah, I do. I absolutely loved Jacob's take on beau. I thought he brought a lot of humor and kind of compassion to it. But one of the things that was really and really I loved is that Mateo Lane was cast as Jordan, the best friend, and Jim Gaffigan was obviously cast as the boss. And these are two very, very good, funny, funny comedians. And I felt like so much of the cast, Katie O'Brien is hilarious, who plays cam, and so there was an improv element to it. I mean, obviously they were sticking within the parameters of the script, but I think one of the reasons you find those kind of the voice does feel so authentic is because they, the director, Lacey, allowed them to bring some of their own, you know, their real take on it, and, you know, really lean into what their vision of the characters were, which I absolutely loved and was. And I loved how it, you know, how it came out. I love the character of of Jordan, Beau's best friend. He

had a lot of funny scenes. And actually, I wish there would be a kind of a Director's Cut release, because actually, Mateo was in a handful more scenes that ended up being cut just due to time. But they are so fun. He's so funny. And was, you know, I love the element of humor that some of these, these actors brought. And so, yeah,

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he has a great charisma, like, very with every scene he was in, yeah?

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And he's authentic. He's, he seems the same actor, like, that's he would be as a real person

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in real life, yeah, he is. He is.

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He's so funny. I mean, he doesn't walk around holding plants and stuff like that. He's like, that. He's like a much, I was hoping he would have liked, no, yeah, but he is an unbelievable he's a very, very funny guy. But beyond, I mean, has a big stand up career right now. But beyond that, he's like, such a renaissance man. He's an incredible painter. He's an incredible chef. He has a, he has a cookbook out right now. He speaks four or five languages. I mean, he's a very impressive person, and so kind and very funny. Like, just very, very funny.

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Yeah, there was some Yeah, just Desiree, no, I was

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gonna say that. Like, I'm interested to know this from what you originally had written with your partner, with you guys writing together, and to what it ended up being at the end. How far off base was it like? Was it changed 50% would you say,

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from the original? Yeah, from the original, original script. I mean, I'm obviously kind of guessing here, but I want to say it was probably changed, like, I don't know, maybe like 30. Percent. But then Lacey and I were actively doing rewrites as notes were coming in. This thing happened so fast, as I said, like we were like in rewrites almost the whole time. You know what I mean, pivoting. There was, you know, obviously the exact Amazon executive voices in the mix. The the lead actress, Madeline Petch, had final script approval. So she was in, you know, she had a voice in it. And so we are, you know, Lacey and I always had our voice remaining in it, because we were the ones actively, kind of rewriting it based on notes and feedback and all that kind of stuff. But from the original, original script, yeah, I'd say it's probably like, again, I'm kind of guessing, but like, you know, 30%

30:44

that's great because it's tough. It's tough for a writer too, to go produce their baby, in a sense, yeah, and then have another writer go and basically change it and move it around, rip it apart, yeah, and then to see the outcome, and you're just like, what even happened? Like, you have no idea where the original story even wise,

31:02

because it's so far that's important for writers to hear that too. Because I have so many writers I work with, they don't want to make any changes. Like, no, I don't want to do that. I want to leave it like this. I'm like, okay, yeah, fine, go ahead. But get used to people telling you to change stuff. Yeah. Person who comes on the project is going to want something changed. And, oh, and writers need to remember, it's a, it's a collaborative, fluid thing, right? It's always changing. Yeah, yeah. And then, like, in in the movie, I loved a lot of your reveals me and Desiree kept sitting, kept there, and be like, okay, when is she gonna learn? When is she gonna see the bronco? She asked to see the bronco. Something's gotta happen with it. When she gonna see it? And then when she walked to the bathroom in the house. When she got a little expect her to see the Bronco that neither I was like, and then she went, and I'm like, oh. And as she went to open the bathroom door, I was like, I bet that's the garage. And it was, and it was just a really good, yeah, really good moment. You wanted hanging

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us on, yes, we wanted them to meet when they were when was it when they were meeting up, or something. We wanted them

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to we went. What I thought was gonna happen, I think you did, too, is when they went to that car show in the end of the fancy cars, and she was taking all the pictures and going around. I'm like, I bet you they're gonna end up at his Bronco, and then she'll be like, and that was his reveal. I'm like, No, but he didn't want to tell her, so he kept it secret. And yeah, it was, yeah, it was really interesting, really interesting reveals, you know, even about, you know, even when Charlie went and started her car and stuff like, it was just really good moments of like, this is working. So, you know, it definitely paid off, kind of those setups. And you did a great job of layering all those setups in and then paying them off, you know, in ways that weren't just for the plot, but also, like, she's ready to move on. She can stop holding on to this dream. She can let go of the idea of your father, like, a lot of those great psychological aspects of the character that I find in a lot of these romantic comedy movies are just forgotten about. Like, oh, they don't matter. We just got to have the cute meat and Girl Meets Boy loses or, you know, so it's really great to see that these people are allowing these movies to have this depth and not just getting rid of them. So, you know, it's great to see that that process is still happening.

33:03

What is your I'm curious to know what your process is like. Do you guys do when? When the two of you said, like, obviously she had done the documentary, you said, so you had that piece that she wanted to and the story idea. But do you guys? Do you outline? Do you does one of

you take five pages and then the other does the next five? How do you guys do something collaborative?

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Or, like, Was this just your one project? Or have you?

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No, we're working on your own. This is the first project we did together. I normally write, I have historically written alone. This was our first project together, partnership. Well, it was, you know, what? We sat down, and we really, really, like, at a very granular level, beat out all of the scenes. So, you know, obviously we started look high level. And then said, Okay, well, what, where do we need to be for? Act One, act two, act three, generally, you know, where do we want to go? And then within those acts, we just got really like scene by scene by scene by scene, and in in terms of not writing them, but just structurally beating them out. And then I wrote the first draft based off of those, all of those, you know, we basically written the script and from a structural, you know,

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right concept, she had written a script before, so, you

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right, yeah. And then I went, and I wrote the first draft, and then we, you know, just from there, she got in it, we kind of pulled it apart. We, you know, and then along the way, you go, okay, that's not working. This is working. We need more of this, less of that. And so we just, that was a very back and forth, back and forth. And then we arrived, you know, where we arrived, a place we were happy. And that's the version that got sent to the manager. And and then we, I, since then, we've written another, I think, like three scripts together. And. That is a formula that, I think one of those, we beat it. We did all of the granular beats, and then she wrote the first draft. And then, you know, we, it was kind of Converse. And then, you know, we're just, that's kind of our formula. But it's very, very granular on the we have agreement on where the story it needs to go kind of at every second and every frame, and then one of us goes and writes the dialog. It worked

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for you. It doesn't work for everybody. It's hard

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sometimes to get that, that

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it is, it is, and actually her and I work in a very different I'm kind of laid back and a little more, you know, in my head about things and, like, you know, kind of the therapist in me really, kind of pulling things apart. She's very quick and rapid fire, and likes to, which is good, because it like, gets me at a different speed, you know, and then I think I'm kind of like, where I slow her down,

be like, hold on, hold on. We gotta, no wait, we gotta tease this out a little more, you know, we gotta, you know. So it's, it's, it kind of really works in that way. But, yeah, I mean, certain there are growing pains with everything, you know, just it is really tough to find, to find the right rhythm. And also, if you have creative differences, like you, you it's not like we agree on every single beat of like, where the story should go. So it's like navigating, well, you know, who's quote, unquote, right? And there isn't a right, you know what? I mean, it's, it's like, so those moments are a little challenging, but it's, but, you know, we have a lot of respect for each other, and it kind of just, you know, we've always, we've always worked it out.

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So it kind of sounds like a very good marriage. Yeah, it is, it is.

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It would be interesting too, because I'm sure she's viewing everything through that director's lens. Sure, sure, it's really helpful, yeah, the writer's lens. So that, yeah, cool. So, as far as, like, speaking of process, so you've recently, like, noted in your bio, you did a movie script adaptation of a novel. That's very different thing to do. How did you How was, what was that like? What kind of experience was that?

37:08

Well, it was really, it was really tricky. I thought it was going to be kind of on the easier side, because, in a way, obviously the stories mapped out. And by the way, I actually got that job. I was hired to do that before maintenance required came out. I got that job because I wrote the pilot that won that national writing competition. Yeah, and, and I'm friends with another director who's who's rep by this commercial director who's rep by this production company called stadium films in Los Angeles, and they were looking to the one of the principals there loved this book called daredevils by Sean Vestal, and they were looking to have it written. And my other director friend was like, Oh, you've got to read my friend's pilot. She just did just one, you know, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And they read the script and absolutely loved it. And then they were like, Yeah, okay, we could you give us a take on what this could look like? So I read the book, gave them a short take, and then they hired me to do that. And it was, it was so interesting because, as I said, I thought it was going to be kind of easier, because there's an idea that's, you know, obviously already mapped out. But actually it is so difficult, because within a book, there are obvious, so many ideas. It's probably like a 400 page book, and it's just very difficult to know it does. It's not in an act structure. It's, you know, much more free flowing. There's no start, middle and end. I mean, there is, but not in the way a screenplay kind of is, is, is written or presented. And so the idea of like, Oh, what do I take out here? What do I keep what's true to the author's and you don't have to stay true to the author's vision, but it's important to understand, get an understanding of what you think the author's vision is, and then either depart from that or stay true to it. So that's also another decision that you don't have to make when you're writing screenplays. And then, as I was going through it, I kind of you start to it's not that there are flaws in the book, in the sense that like, like, what needs to happen for screenplays, it's mostly things need to be tied up. And in a novel, or at least in this novel, a lot of the things that were in the book were not tied up. And so I felt there were big conundrums of like, how do I

make this storyline work? Or this part of this storyline work, because it's not addressed in the book. And so then it becomes a complete fabrication of my own kind of mind and creativity, and then lining that up with what you know the author may or may not have intended. It was kind of a bizarre experience,

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and finding and finding the movie story,

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yeah, right, really, really tricky, but such a great process. I'm super happy with where the script landed and that. That the script has been submitted. The author didn't have final approval on it, but the but they he received a draft of the script and loved it and really released, which was just, you know, really nice to nerve

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wracking for sure, to, like, give them their piece back in a different format, and be

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like, hey, look what I did to your stuff. I hope I did it. Okay, well, it's, it's, it's so great to hear so many stories and so many different, so many views from different angles of the business that you've been in different little facets of the writing business. And it sounds like you've really kind of found your lane, which is fantastic, as far as, like, we always, I always want to ask what someone who's found success and is working through success, what would be their biggest piece of advice for for beginning writers, but, but even like writers who are, you know, because I know a lot of writers who've sold something or option, a bunch of stuff, and then something died out, and they've had that little taste now they're now, they're back again, and they're drawing board, which I've been there so many times, and sucks to stay motivated and that kind of thing. But what would be your kind of piece of advice for writers, you know, above everything, to kind of keep in mind?

41:07

Well, I mean, the thing is, if I look at my own career, it's just I never gave up. I never quit. You. You have to be your biggest cheerleader and really believe in yourself. It's, it's I, although subsequently, why I think I came to the success is that I found a different path. You know, as I said, I was in the startup world, in the blogging world, and that kind of, the idea that I would just exclusively be writing, like when I first moved to Los Angeles, and just just do that, even though it wasn't working, I think would have burned me out in a way that, like it's so it would have been so imperative for me to succeed right off the bat that I don't that's so much pressure, pressure, I don't know if I could have handled it. So I think for me, it's like, I have, I had a couple buckets, right? And it's like, then you really have to rely on your own discipline, to never let the writing portion go, to never give up, to constantly be trying to be better, to watch great movies, to read great screenplays. I read a lot of screenplays. So movies I like, I immediately go and I find the Script, Script, the screenplay online, and I read as, how do they do that? How did you know? How did they show not tell? And it's like kind of doing this non stop education, self education, of

understanding the market, what is buying, what is selling. Like that is completely incumbent on you. And with streaming, it is the wild wild west. Now there are so it's almost overwhelming because there are so many options. But if you look, if you're looking at it with a critical eye, and say, Okay, what is selling now? And you don't want to write. You got to write authentically. But I also think you can't write in a vacuum, you know, you need to know like I knew the reason, you know, I'd been pitched, as I said, you know, 567, ideas by Lacey the director, and none of them really stuck with me. But when she pitched me this idea for maintenance required. I understood that rom coms were having a very big just on the precipice of a very big comeback because of the city Sweeney thing. And I knew that. And I was like, I obviously liked the idea, but it was those two ideas. Like, I wasn't gonna like. I was like, there is a chance to get this made right. If it's the right, if it's the right screenplay, it has to be a good screenplay. So understanding the market a little, I think, is, is to your advantage. And then, just like one of the actual tactical pieces of advice that I, I I heard about four years ago, three or four years ago, I cannot remember who said it. I kind of remember who said this. But when you're giving your work to people to read, like early drafts and stuff this, this person said, I gotta remember who this is. They said, When you give your work for somebody to read, to give feedback on if they come back, when they come back and said, X, Y and Z, I had a problem with or this didn't quite work. Right here, here and here, this didn't quite work for me. They are right, okay. But often what happens is when the person says, this, this, and this didn't work, and here are suggestions for how it you might fix it. They are wrong. And often what happens is you start getting off track with people's ideas and suggestions. The The thing is, if, if somebody's reading your script and they're getting stopped, you need to pay attention to that, like getting stopped at points, or like, you know, wait, taking pause at moments, you have to really, can seriously consider that, but it is up to you, then though,

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to solve a solution,

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to find a solution, right? Advice, yeah, and that that's the and you that that's what I tell writers all the time. First of all, I say, when I give someone my script and I want. Notes. I'm I want to know everything wrong with it. I don't care how much what you like. Like, yeah, tell me what you liked, but tell me what was wrong and, and, yeah, I'm not gonna take and I like, when I give advice and notes to writers, it's like, here's some great suggestion, here's some suggestions that maybe can fix this. I don't, I say, but don't, don't do it like that. That's just a suggestion to get you thinking, find your way, right? Like, don't just do what I said,

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because your voice as a writer. Yeah, that's great advice,

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and that's how you can start really getting off track, right? And like, I think, like, you can have a great idea and a great first draft, but you start getting influenced by people's fixes and you and then you get sort of farther, and your drafts start to get you lose control of them, and it's not in

one big swoop. It's kind of like death by 1000 cuts. And then that's how I think you can end up spending so much longer in a script, and then it's not selling, and then it's or, you know, it's not, and it's not quite working, and you don't know why. And it's like, understand that when they say there's a problem, it's right, but when they tell you how to fix it. They're absolutely wrong. Don't even listen to a fix you know what I mean? It just like, Okay, great. They're getting stopped here. How can I fix that? What's the solution that I come up with?

46:09

Yeah, and that, because that's what happens a lot of times. I'll be reading a script and be like, hey, now it's this suddenly feels like a completely different movie, right here, right? Happen, right? It's because of that someone said, Oh, Travis. So then they don't change anything else. They just throw that idea in and it just doesn't fit. So yeah, that's a great that's a great piece of advice. That's awesome. Well, we're kind of at our time here, but we're gonna get Erin to hang on a second. We're just gonna take a pause for a quick promo, and then we're gonna be back and we're gonna go over our questions, and Erin's gonna join into that. So hang tight.

46:38

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

47:21

we're at the part of the podcast episode here guys, where we like to ask questions, and we get our questions previously submitted by listeners like you. You can submit your questions to Hello@scriptreaderpro.com we have our first question from Illinois, from Brett in Illinois. Brett asks the question, how do you know if your idea is a studio or independent type of project? Oh, that's a good

47:45

question. That is, again, what would you say

47:49

that is, that is a really good question. I think, I think again, kind of knowing the market is, is really important. And so this is a great question. I think, you know, the the world of like, let's say, even if it's on stream, like a streamer, they're big budget movies. And I think so the idea where there's kind of, if you're going to have more set pieces, if it's going to be a really big cast, if it's going to be a broader story, it doesn't that does. And broad stories don't mean there isn't character development, of course, development, of course, done in it, but that's where you're going to probably get the most traction. With a commercial film. I think the films that are smaller much more character driven, as opposed to set piece driven, where you're looking at just deep, inter

relational, you know, interpersonal relationships, or inter like, within a character's personal emotional journey. And that's like the leading arc, as opposed to, let's say, you know, situational stuff, like, for example, Charlie's there is a situation, right? She's about to lose her auto body shop, and you so it's time sensitive, and there's a clock ticking, and she needs to figure it out that's situational. And we're watching her for her character emerge around that situation, but the more independent version is like without that situation, and it's just what the what's driving it is the character's inner arc and their need to solve something that's going on with them personally, and then everything else, everything else revolves around that, as opposed to the personal understanding, the personal journey around a situational setup. So I think that kind of is more the difference, yeah,

49:42

yeah, yeah. The way I kind of view it is, I think a lot of it is concept, right? If you can, if you can pitch someone the concept, you know, in a sentence, then people can see, oh, movie, yeah, oh, there's a bomb on a bus. And if it drops below 50, it right, okay, that's a studio movie, right? Two cousins travel to Germany to walk the path of their ancestors from the Holocaust. That's not necessarily as flashy, so that's probably something that an independent studio or independent producer would have to make, right? So for me, yeah, but yeah, your explanation is very visual, and it makes a lot of sense on that bigger scale as well. Yeah.

50:19

Cool question two comes from Rachel in Missouri. Rachel asks the question, what type of contest placement is worth advertising about?

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Oh, well, here you go, see me, me and Erin. We both won contests. I won, I won the page contest way, way long ago, and it was we screenplay, we screenplay, cover, fly, yeah, yeah. And so you're so yeah, and worth advertising about. I think, like, for my answer would be a very high placement, like, a win, right? Yes, yeah, yeah. The bigger contest, not

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like one. You got the 71st out of, you know what? I mean, yeah, anyone, yeah, you

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were right. You were finalist. Number 598, out of 7000 it's like enough of a mark. But yeah, like, Yeah, I think the advertising idea, like, you can use it to your advantage. Like, how did you take yours? Yeah? And do you use yours? Because you said, once you won that, it kind of got you a bit more traction. How did that, yeah, how do you use that?

51:16

Well, to be honest with you, it really, it really, you know, I was kind of talked into by this. Screenplay was loosely based on this pilot. Screenplay was loosely based on a real character. Very, very loosely. You have to squint to kind of see it. But anyways, I wrote it. I've written it five years or seven years prior, and then it kind of went nowhere. It had some buzz. But then

ultimately, this is, it was actually an, it's an Asian lead. And at the time, when I'd written, and everybody was like, well, there's no and when we just can't sell this, you know, there's, you know, Asians just can't carry shows right now, there's no market for this. And then now cut to, you know, a couple years ago, when you look at like, beef or Crazy Rich Asians or, I mean, it's, you know, there's so many great shows with Asian characters. And so the market shifted, right? And, and so I anyways, the person this is based on, was like, You got to, we got to bring this back. We got to bring this back. And I was like, I don't know how. I don't have bandwidth. I don't want to be rejected again. Like, I don't want it. Anyways. He was like, I've heard about this competition. I think it's, like, I vetted it. I think it's a real deal, you know, blah, blah, blah, blah. So he convinced me to put, to put this screenplay in, and I won. And so, yes, it that. It mean, first of all, which is great for me. I mean, literally, got me back in the game, and then it was wind in my sails, and it, I used it, or it was used for me by this director, as I, as I said, he pit kind of presented me to this production company. Was like, she just won this thing. This is a great script. You should read it. And so I think, you know, it helps cut through the noise, if it's, if it's a legitimate competition, that's kind of, you know, I mean, I don't that's, that's not that people have kind of heard of. I don't think it has to be, like the biggest ever, but like something that's like, been around and people know about it. I think it helps cut through the noise, like, I do think it helps get you like, especially if you're sending an email, I would if you've won something, I put that pretty high up, you know, I like it tomorrow, I would absolutely, yeah. I put that pretty high up, yeah,

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because I think, I mean, a lot of people like my, my manager once said to me, yeah, he's, like, people don't care about quarterfinals. Like, especially if it's us, if it's a script in there, they 20 top 25% is 5000 like, they don't know if you're number 987 or if you're number four, you know. Like, absolutely, you know, semi finals and a big one or finals, for sure, that's gonna make some that's gonna cut through the noise, for sure.

53:48

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. And sorry, go ahead. No, no, I was gonna say so I ended up winning that, that competition, and then ended up being a finalist in, like, three other ones and, like, and then a semi finalist. I can't remember the exact breakdown, but, like, you know, it was, that's a good little package. Of course, I read with one, you know, blah, blah, blah. But I yeah, I think if you, if you make it in a fight, it's like a finalist in a couple things like, I think that's also, you know, I think the thing is, it's just so noisy, and there's such a lack of direction, because there's so many options. I think anything you can do to cut through the noise, and that would be one of the good way you absolutely you want to lead with it, because it's like,

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especially if you've got, like, a few, a few, a few loretz, right? That's like, oh, I won this place. Tie in this and send me in this. It's like, okay, it's basically says

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this reading, yeah, right, yeah, that's you totally

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Yeah, yeah, for sure. Desert. What's the last? Well, we're gonna do

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one more question. And this one comes from Paul from Mill Valley, California. Where is Mill Valley? How far is it?

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I think it's in in Mill Valley

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in California.

54:58

Question is, how. Do I know what the current rating of my screenplay would be if it should be a rated R or PG? Oh, you don't rate it.

55:07

No one cares. I mean, if I see a call out for, like, a family movie, you're not gonna, you're not gonna do one with 17 F bombs in it, right? Yeah, yeah, yeah. Maybe that's what they're asking. But, I mean, I don't think anyone cares

55:18

when no nobody cares. Have you noticed, though, like, I mean, I've noticed we've had this discussion, Scott, but Erin, have you noticed that what they get away with now is so different than what they gotten away with years ago when it comes to rape now? What?

55:33

How is this? DG, like, how am I kid right now? Yeah, totally. But one thing, okay, so, and this is something that really bugs me, that, and I don't understand that. Maybe you can answer the psychotherapist. I read a lot of screenplays where it's like, it's a horror movie, or it's like, violent people are dying, they're sex scenes, but they don't swear, and the characters swear. And I'm like, I don't get it. Like it's not, this isn't an episode of Law and Order on NBC. Like this is like, you're, you're some guy got beheaded, and then you won't drop an F bomb. It makes no sense to I don't, I don't understand and how far something's going.

56:06

I completely, I completely agree, as somebody who has a very foul mouth, I don't, I don't understand how you land there. I don't get it.

56:14

I'm like, It's not realistic. Like, it

56:16

doesn't feel real. It's like, it's like a spoof. Is this a spoof type? Yeah, or

56:22

stabbing someone and saying, golly, that wraps it up. If you. Thank you, Erin, for coming on today. I learned a lot for me. I'm sure everyone else did. If you want, you want to keep no one when our podcasts come out, subscribe to us on whatever platform you're listening on. Rate us. Desiree likes five stars. Watch for our video transition. We're gonna start doing videos so we'll be landing on on a regular podcast, on audio only, like usual, but YouTube

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as well. And questions, comments. Any suggestions you have for future podcasts, you can email us at Hello@scriptreaderpro.com definitely check out maintenance required. Yeah, check it out

57:02

if you haven't seen it. It's really fun. It's enjoyable. You will enjoy yourself and check out our website, scriptreaderpro.com, thanks again for for being with us. Erin and yeah, we are here to help writers craft wonder one page at a time.