

Ep #62: The Supernatural Element Across Genres

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On this episode, we are talking about the elements of supernatural across genres.

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Yeah, what's important and what you need to keep in mind if you go

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that route. 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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Hello everybody. And how are you? How are you? How are you? What are we in preschool? How are you today and up next?

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This is a song that never No, oh no, okay, Baby shark.

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DTD, no, Hey everybody, this is not preschool.

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No, it well for some people, for maybe preschool for writers, if you're preschool for

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writers, this is Desiree, and this is the Script Reader Pro podcast, yes.

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HOST, yeah, and I'm her husband, but I'm also a screenwriter, and I'm here to dish out some advice, some hopefully, knowledge, and tips and tricks to help anyone listening become a better writer. You're also

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known as Daddy shark, yes, that could be actually seen as inappropriate. Who's Your Daddy shark? Are you my Dani? Shark, are you my Dani? This has

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gone off the rails, and we're like 45 seconds in. It's not promising.

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We're not making any promises here, guys, but you will learn some valuable tools, hopefully in some hopefully,

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and desert will entertain you as I speak.

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Well, I will try my best. She will try. Hey, hey, hey, Scott, hey, hey, Dez. Wait. We always start the podcast everybody, yes, who's listening out there in all the if

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this is new to you, if this is your first time listening, we always start by talking about what we've seen this last week, after we

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sing preschool songs and teach the ABCs, then we talk about what we've seen lately, and lately we've seen a show called eternity. And Scott's gonna say, do you remember that?

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You remember this because we watched it literally,

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like two days ago. That doesn't mean anything in my world, but you remember this one? I do remember it. It was good. Actually, the crazy thing, it's interesting that you're talking about supernatural today, the elements of supernatural, because this was a supernatural type feel to me of a movie. And I

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typically do not like, hate

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anything supernatural. If

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you're like, if something can't logically happen

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in my world, I'm out. I'm out. And I actually, when we started watching it, I thought, I don't know if I'm gonna want to watch this movie, like a like, partway. And I did actually think, I don't know if I'm into this. And then it completely changed my view. It's funny,

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because I was like, oh, maybe I'll pick a different movie, because des isn't like these kind of shows, but it was a romance, and I think that was the thing that that, I think you can handle supernatural when it's romantic. Yes, ghost and City of Angels, things like that, right? You can, you can suspend your belief for that part.

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So basically, this was a movie because you

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believe in afterlife and

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that kind of stuff, right? Yeah, true, yeah. This was a movie about a husband and wife. One of them dies. You find that out early on. I'm not ruining any or like, how it starts giving spoilers, and then they go to this interesting world where they get to decide where the afterlife is going to be, where they're going

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to choose eternity. And it was really clever with all the different types of eternities. There was like, beach attorney, yours,

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you wanted to a no men allowed eternity?

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Yeah. I said, like, I would be an 80s eternity, forever. We were talking

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about that. You were like, Oh, if that's how it is, make sure that you come to 80s eternity.

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You know where I would be. I would be in 80s or movies. And then you said, Where would I be? I said, you would be in puppy eternity.

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I would be. And I said, Wherever my puppers is, don't I don't I don't

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want to talk. Okay, so anyways, yeah, so the one, the husband dies, and then he's like, trying to figure out this place, this kind of limbo place, and he doesn't, and his wife's dying of cancer, so he doesn't know kind of where he's gonna go. He wants to wait for her, and it's all about that. But the clever twist in it is that her first husband from 67 years prior, who died in the war is there waiting for her. And so it's like the whole idea of who do you choose? And it was just really, really clever, really heartfelt may describe a few times more.

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So you it's on Apple TV. Yeah, Apple. It was really good. Was I liked it?

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Yeah, it was good. So that kind of spurred me on to think, hey, let's talk about supernatural stories. And because every genre has a different type of supernatural story. So that's what we're digging into today.

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Well, I know nothing about it, so Scott, I am so excited for this episode, I could barely even continue this help you guys. I'm so excited. I'm so excited.

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Yeah, see, it's funny because we. The other day, we watched a movie called, Ready or not, because our daughter wants to see the sequel. We hadn't seen the first one, and it's a very real movie, right? It's not, it's not supernatural, it's not magic supernatural. It's about people trying to kill someone, but it is super. But at the very end, there's like, a super, I'm not gonna give it away, but there's a supernatural twist that goes really far, and I could just tell that you were like, All right, now I'm done. If that had

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been earlier on, you would have been out early, I would

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have been out. But for me, I was like, so 95% of the story was real world.

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I don't get I didn't I don't understand

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why they had well, I didn't think they needed that. I thought it could have been done in a different way. But anyways, I guess we'll know

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when we see the second one. Is it a continuation in some way?

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Yes, it is. It's about the girl, and now there's more people, because, huh, the curse or whatever. Anyways, it was good. It was fun. It was over the top and bloody. But anyways, yeah, so supernatural. So it's always important to make sure that if you have supernatural in your story, it's not just out of nowhere. It's kind of like, my big thing. So we're gonna talk about that today.

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Okay, that's how what we're going with that direction, yeah. So this is gonna be a really interesting one for me, because I so love supernatural. No, but I think it will be interesting

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because you'll, I think you're gonna learn some stuff, and you're gonna think of certain movies and shows differently, that you're like, I didn't really think that was supernatural. So anyways,

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well, digging like when I used to watch days of our lives, and Marlena was possessed and could climb on the ceiling, and

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Stefano was like,

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hey, controlling her people, if, if you're saying things like Stefano, people know right away that that you watch them. Yeah, your money,

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because you always say that you can do you don't you can't suspend your your sense of belief. And then my daughter says, Yeah, my mom, you watch Young and the Restless that like, so like, where kids go away and then they're, they're 10 years old, and they come back from rapidly a being Aging Family Camp inside four or someone dies, and then they come back to life. But they actually had a twin, and then they had a triplet and like all these crazy things that would never

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happen in real life, I wonder one, one of my favorite shows right now is Sullivan's crossing. And it just aired the first episode I have, I have it recorded, nice. I wonder if they're going to have any of that character come

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back. Probably not

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in a supernatural twist in Sullivan's crossing. I doubt it. Hey, for those of you that haven't listened solvents or watched Sullivan's crossing, so good, but then the music,

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oh, music is so good. We talked about

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that before. Yeah, I know. I'm just, I'm just reminding everybody, okay, Scott enough about my blabbing. Can you talk about

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what we're talking about? So, so since I'm saying the word supernatural so much, I have to do a shout out to Shannon Scruggs, one of my mentorship alumni, Shannon. We're not talking about the TV show Supernatural. Never seen someone, so I won't say obsessed, but so passionate about a show as as her. It's insane, but it's insane fandom that they have. Anyways, that's not what we're talking about. We're talking about supernatural pieces of genres and films and television. I mean, mostly films, because television is just such a if it's a supernatural show, it's just, that's what it's all about, right?

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But, like, what was that one that you saw where they were

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like, Stranger Things, for example, yeah,

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Stranger Things. But the one where the explosion on the toilet that we've talked about before.

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Oh, yeah. Why? No. What is it called? Gen Oh, Gen V, yeah, the spin off of the boys.

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Yeah. It's a supernatural. Well, anything

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with, see, there's a big superheroes and stuff. Yeah, nothing supernatural. A lot of times people think supernatural is just ghosts, yeah? But it's not Harry Potter supernatural, because it's magic, it's fantasy, but it's also it's, it's, it's above natural elements in the world. So, so it so

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you said, just to go into the episode, you said it's different depending on genre, then, yeah, I mean

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things to keep in mind, right, when you're going through the genre. So for all of them, though, it's always important, like in any type of story, that you are focusing tightly on creating emotion, right? And it's that's the biggest thing. And I always talking about that with with writers I work with emotion is everything. If you cannot emotionally connect to the story, you're done. I'm out,

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I'm that way. I'm totally,

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that way, totally. And it's funny, because in eternity, the subject matter you're not necessarily into, but you were emotionally invested character people. It's the character it was. It's probably one of the most amazing moments I've seen in a movie in a long time, is when the main character comes through, right? And she's in this like Limbo place, and then she sees her original husband there, and just her face and like, she didn't just, she didn't say a thing, no dialog was needed. She you could just feel everything she was feeling. It was so wild. I just, anyways, really connected to her. And that was like, Man, I feel what she's going through right now. So emotion is everything. It's also about building tension. You. No matter the genre, you have to build towards something. You have to put the building blocks in place. So it doesn't matter what genre you're in, even though it's super natural, it has to reflect real world things, okay, so grounded things that the human characters are definitely going through. Like, give me an example, so the boys that we talked about for example, right? So it's all about superheroes and how they're bad and, you know, this, the good guys are trying to stop them, but it's all about the political system and and, you know, clashes and judgments and all this kind of stuff. It's all real world stuff that we can all identify with. So as crazy as over the top as it is, it's dealing with real world things. And that's, you know, even, like, I mean, you look at a movie like The Conjuring, right? It's about this family who got most horror movies, right? Family goes out. They get in this house, the house is haunted, but they can't I mean, it's always that question, why don't you just leave? Like, if I was everyone, I said, just leave. Okay, there's always something going on. Like, in the conjuring, they couldn't leave because this guy, they have no money, he has a job. He's driving truck, he can't be home. They invested everything in this house. They have nowhere to go. It's real world problems, right? Yeah, so it has to be grounded in that. But you know what?

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I think the number one thing is, like, emotion is definitely important. But I think more than anything, you've got to be able to connect with the audience, be able to connect deeply,

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yep, and that's just all about having characters that reveal themselves enough that you can connect with them. You can feel the pain they're going through. You know, a ghost, you can feel the loss that Demi Moore feels in that movie. You can feel the brokenness. You can feel how broken he is on the other side, that you just can't reach out and talk to her. Communication is like the biggest theme in that story. He can't say, I love you. He only says, ditto and it, and it becomes a big payoff, but you can feel the love that they have for each other. So you have to be able to connect with that. You have to convey that it's hand in hand, character connection, emotion.

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But you said supernatural is not just about ghosts or magic, though, right?

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It's not, yeah, you're gonna have, you know, a lot of different elements, but basically it's that they need to work together psychologically and emotionally, right? So the the supernatural aspect of

it is usually a psychological Not, not, not to say that it isn't real and it's just in someone's head, but it's a psychological thing. When we think of ghosts, we don't think of how they make us feel. We process it logically. We try to figure out, how is that real? How is that working? How can that actually happen? How can I touch them? How can I talk to them? It's not the emotion tied up in something, because it's not always a love story. Sometimes it's not sometimes it's danger, and you know, all those kind of things, right? But it's how that supernatural element serves the story, right? It can't just be spectacle. So many of these horror movies, especially like the dumb ones, like, what was the one

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with the lady in the nighty, the Lady, lady in the night of the zombie, or whatever, I don't know. Remember he came in and then choose

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when he beat up the old lady. Yeah? That was day shift. That was a vampire movie. Yeah, supernatural, yeah. But, like, when you've got a, like, a lot of the dumb ones, I mean, like, like, Asha, like our daughter watches, right? Like, haunted sofa with, like, a chair that eats people and stuff, it's like, there's nothing to that, right? It's just spectacle. You want to make sure that whatever the entity is, whatever the supernatural element, if an angel comes over and has to interact with the human, it has to be about the characters in the story, not just the spectacle. And a lot of times I'll see that in scripts where it's like they work so hard to just make it so over the top and like, scary, but it's like, it doesn't connect to anything,

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right, right? Right? There has to be or it doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense either. It's like, Why did you throw that in? That was weird?

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Yeah, it has to connect deeply. So it's all how you tailor it to your audience, right? So why are we so obsessed with ghosts in horror movies, but in drama, it's angels, right?

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Just let me think that, okay, ghosts in in a

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horror movie, it's usually ghosts, right? Ghosts or demons, yeah? But in any other genre, they're not just comedy drama, yeah? They're angels, angels, yeah, so, or superheroes, which is, you know,

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but or No, but I can't even think offhand, but there have been those few where you see like a drama, and then all of a sudden there's a ghost in there.

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Well, like, Yeah, but like, like, ghosts, right? But like, I'm saying funny, yeah,

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no, I'm saying, like, sometimes spoofy, right? Like, they'll go and they'll throw a ghost in there, and you're like, Oh, that was

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spoofy, yeah, throw one liners in things

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like that, you know, in a comedy type setting, a ghost, you know?

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Yeah, exactly so. So it's a matter of finding out if that audience is watching that what, what is that audience looking for in that genre, right? So if it's a horror movie, probably not looking for angels. If you're gonna you throw a nun in there, and you make the movie The nun, because the nun is evil and right? So it always has to serve, serve the genre, but you always want to. Keep your audience in mind. A lot of times you read a script, you'll be like, I don't know the audience for this. I don't know who's going to show up and see this, because this is, you know, designed for this type, but it's not touching on the right element. So, so we're going to break down each of these kind of, each of these elements. And it all, all starts with a relatable idea. And a lot of the things it's it's always going to be concept. What can you pitch to someone? How can you explain something Angel falls in love with a human and has to decide if they're going to give up being an angel so they can be with them, or if they're going to, you know, live their destiny and stay as an angel and walk away. You know, that kind of thing, right? Do you have like when

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it comes to the writing aspect of it? Are there different ways that you want to write as well? Then, depending on the genre, or, you know, the supernatural aspect, is there different ways? Yeah, I mean, there's lots

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of do's and don'ts on what you should do. There's a lot of common mistakes that writers make. So, but we'll talk about how to elevate it beyond the cliché, right? Because it's always that cliché, like, like you said, Oh, Angel falls in love with the human and wants to cross over. So that's a story we'll constantly see that one gets old. It does get old. That's the thing is, you have to find a way to go beyond the cliché.

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You know, where you see that a lot, where

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Hallmark movies, Lifetime movies, Hallmark Christmas. Yeah, a lot. It's, it's, and, I mean, we'll see that all the time that so many movies have been done before. So many stories have been

done before. It's always about finding the unique angle, right? So it's all about asking what the audience wants from it, like you say, Hallmark movies, right? What do you want from a Hallmark movie about a Christmas angel who comes to earth and falls in love with a human What do you want from that movie?

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I want that person to not be an angel anymore, right?

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You want them to cross over and fall in love, like, so, yeah, it's cliché, but that's what the audience wanting, right? Like, Hallmark movies are better now, but they used to be like the bingo card movie, right? Here's a you know, businesswoman struggling goes to her tiny, little hometown. Oh, who's this new lumberjack guy is running the place? Oh, my ex wants me to come back. I don't want to be with them.

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And how it still is not really change.

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It is elevated a bit because it's, you know, it's a little more original with the times too, but that's why you watch them home the audience horror movies. When someone who goes to a horror movie, for example, like who just loves Gore, blood and killing, that's why they go. So, yeah, it's cliché. Here's a guy who's just gonna kill everyone, but that's what the audience is expecting. So a lot of times it's not about breaking the mold completely or trying to just do it. Do it, you know, because it's different, and it's do this, you still have to understand what, who your

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audience is, yeah, so doing and meeting their expectation, expectations and maybe possibly

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exceeding them, surpassing them, yeah, for sure. Yeah for sure. Yeah. So, so that's what we're gonna cover. We're gonna go over a few different examples,

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genre, genre by genre. Yeah, we'll

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just kind of pop through genre, a

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French word genre,

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it sounds like it and it looks like it. Probably, you'll probably look that up while I'm talking like usually do. I don't know. Okay, so the first thing we'll look at is horror, because when people think something supernatural, that's usually where you go, right? I'll give you the and butter of it. I'll give

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you the name of the movie. Okay, there's either a movie that is like the exorcist or conjuring is what you had listed here. Yeah, that's what I have. Oh, I thought

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you were giving me a new one or something, reading what I wrote, listen, I don't you're like, Okay, I'm gonna give you the name in the movie. I'm like, and,

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okay, so are we talking movies or TV here? These are just

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movies, right? TV's so different when it comes to, like I said, the supernatural, usually it's the concept, and they just go with it, right? And it just characters come and go. But the concept, you know, like Stranger Things, right? It's Supernatural, because there's this other side, and it's fantasy too, but it's still, it's kind of wrapped up into one.

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So we're gonna, we're gonna be talking about the exorcist. Yes, exorcist pondering. Those are a couple examples. You know what the movie mind?

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Yeah, that's a great horror screenplay. It's not a movie yet. Unfortunately, it's yours. It's mine. So the purpose, okay? The purpose of horror, supernatural stories. It's about the fear of the unknown, right? We talked about this before. I am so afraid of the dark because of what might be in the dark. I know there's

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nothing there. All the listeners know you're afraid of

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the dark. I know it's a thing, right? But to me, it's what, and that's why I say it's fear of the unknown, because and a lot of times in horror movies, once you see the entity or the ghost, it's never as scary as you think

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they Oh, sometimes it was no,

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the jump scare scares you. But if you watch like there's this clip online from the nun, one of the scariest scenes in movie, but they have, like, preschool music playing instead of the horror movie, and it's not scary at I know

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it's everything together, music and everything,

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but it's the, you know, a lot of times it's what is unseen like, like, for example, The Conjuring right? Little girl's in bed all of a sudden, something unseen grabs her. It yanks her off the bed. We don't see it. The best part of that, the payoff of that, is she looks at the door, and the door is half open, and it creaks a little bit, and it's just shadows behind it, and you can't see anything, but you know something's there. That's scarier than if we just saw someone standing there, right? So it's it's the fear of what we can't see, what we can't touch. How can you fight a ghost if you can't see it? Right? Well, it's true. So it and it always represents something you always want to think of that deeper angle, right? So the fear of the unknown. People are so afraid of the unknown, like loss, right? How am I going to handle this loss? I don't know what my life looks like without that person or that animal in my life, right? The loss of control, right? That people fear, if you don't have control on something, what's gonna happen? And that's exactly what a supernatural horror movie is all about. You don't have control. You think you do? Oh, we're moving into a new house. Oh, life is gonna be so great. Oh, why are there scratches on the back of this door, right? Why is there a under my bed? Right? Like, right? It's like, it's my now, I don't have control

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of this anymore. You know what? It makes me think of

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the Stillwell Oh my gosh. We'll tell that story on another podcast. We'll do a podcast all about the Stillwell Hotel in Los Angeles. Man, it

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just made me think with blood on the under the bed? I was like, How about blood on the bed? What about blood on the sheet?

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Yes. So it's a loss of control, right? It's, it's the horror movie. Supernatural represents death, grief, guilt, right? A lot of times, the best thing you can do is have that main character going through something that the ghost represents, that the ghost brings about in them, that that that issue, like you see in any movie, that what is holding that character back, right? But the rule, biggest rule in a horror film, and that's why there's not a lot of dialog in horror films, is you have to keep the mystery until until the very last possible moment, right? You can't over explain. You can't have it filled with exposition. You have to keep us scared and guessing, like what? That's

why I say unspoken, the unseen is always the best thing, because we don't if we know it's there, it's sometimes not as scary. Then, well, then we're not

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invested to find out what happens in the end. Yes, we already see the bad guy.

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I know we and it's, yeah, it's just, it's not like in the movie, insidious, right? So, such a scary horror film. But once they showed the the demon character, he was like, had like, red face and black eyes, and I was just like, Ah, why does he look like a Star Wars character? I wasn't scared. But there's this moment where they go and this lady's in bed, and she's like, she's like, staring at the ceiling, like, like, scared to death because of this thing that's watching her. And then the guy, I don't know if it's a priest or maybe, comes in, and he's looking up, and the room is lit funny, so you can't actually see the vaulted ceiling. You just see darkness. But she is so freaking scared. You see nothing I would It's so scary because you don't you know something's watching, but you can't see it, so don't give it away immediately. Wait until the best possible moments you can my script mind, for example, as I was writing, you don't see this entity until, like, the last 20 pages. Everything that happens, though, happens because of her. It's the presence, it's the lurking, it's the the power that it has, right? And so the audience wants connection with the characters, because you skew, you feel scared. When characters feel scared, right, you need to have that connection. And a lot of times you live vicariously through these characters, because it's it's fun to feel scared after, but not in the moment. The other night, I had an episode. Never have, I know I was

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gonna wonder. I was wondering if you never have

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in my life. And I think because I was talking to my talking to my rewrite accelerator group about about my one script I'm writing, and sleep paralysis. And, oh, you worked, I was talking about, but I experienced sleep paralysis for the first time ever, scary as hell. I thought my daughter was scared and came and, you know, came into the bed, and it's like, you know, a dad, dad, and put her arm around me. And, you know, I was like, trying to, am I asking her, what's wrong? What's wrong? What are you okay? Okay? Wrong? What are you okay? Okay? If she wasn't answering, and I couldn't move, I was laying on my side, and her arm was across my shoulder, and I felt like I had the 1000 pounds on me. Couldn't move. Eventually did, and obviously nothing there. But it's, it wasn't as much this, the fear of it is as what is on me. I can't see it. I don't know what's there. It's that unknown thing. And it's catharsis that the audience craves in that that's the deep, deep core emotion feeling is catharsis. They want to get through the other side and learn everything. They want to know what that ghost is about. They want to watch that character. What's catharsis? Mean catharsis? Look it up. Okay, well, your your screen will probably define it better, but it's essentially someone needs to overcome something, someone needs to grow, someone needs to move past whatever's holding them back. It's the

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process of releasing and providing relief from strong, repressed or pent up emotion.

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Yeah, you're. Holding on to something. You can't get over your loss, you can't get over your grief. You need to move on. And so many people have dealt with that, and that's why horror works so well for such a huge audience, probably the biggest audience everyone goes to horror movies ever.

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It's the biggest genre, really. You would say

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it's the genre that never dies. I would

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say more action thriller. Well,

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no, what? Those are more expensive to make. Horror movies are cheap to make a lot of times, but there's always a horror movie in the theater. Movie in the theater. There's always tons of horror movies on on streaming. It's a genre that's always there because everybody has has emotions that supernatural elements and horror movies prey on, and so that catharsis of getting through something and getting past and surviving, that's a big part of it. So that's, that's what you want to have been mind and horror, yeah, drama, couple examples, City of Angels, which we talked about, right? Heaven, Earth. Angel Falls for a human what do they do? Right? What Dreams May Come. One of my favorite movies of all time. Man's wife dies. He's not ready for that yet. He wants to cross over to the other side, because he has to tell her something that he didn't get to tell her. And it's such a beautiful movie is like living in a painting, and it's just amazing, right? But it's all about emotional metaphors, right? What they're going through this whole like, What Dreams May Come, for example, is he's moving through all of this. It's this idea of how he saw his life as a beautiful thing. It was like a painting. It's something that he was like living out something that didn't seem real, and now, all because of how much he loved his wife, and she's gone, and he never, you know, he can't function. He can't figure it out. So he goes into that painting, essentially to move through it and try to try to get to her. And it's just such a beautiful, beautiful movie. But, you know, much like horror, any supernatural element.

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It represents, like, grief and stuff too. Yeah, grief,

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it's usually touches on grief memories, right? Like you can't get past a person you love, so something comes and tells you here we're gonna get through this, like, loss of some Christmas Carol, right? With Scrooge, it's like these supernatural elements are coming, because he has to

deal with all these things. Why is he so angry? Why is he greed? Let's go look. Let's learn some lessons. What happened in your childhood? Right? It's, it's unresolved feelings a lot of times. Right? Most dramas with supernatural elements, this person died. He didn't get to say goodbye. Right? Field of Dreams, perfect example of one of the most amazing supernatural dramas ever, right? The baseball player comes. If you build it, he will come. It's all about him, never getting to play, never getting to have that one last game of catch with his dad. That that's what the entire movie is about. Don't cry about it. I'm just got shivers, but I had a feeling you did, but that's what it's about. It's not it. It's not about baseball. It's not about this corner.

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There's a different theme. But, yeah, but you know what it all comes down to, for me as an audience, is it's that feeling of being able to relate and the feeling of connection.

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Yeah, exactly. And that's why supernatural drama is such a key genre, because everybody has lost something, right? Everyone, and that's the fun. Like, for me, I talked about this. I don't know if I talked about the podcast, but my whole life, I've had a problem with understanding death to the point that I don't get why people get so bothered by it, why people get stuck in grief. I have, you know, like I'd lost some people, but like, my grandparents all died when I was, like, under five. Like, I'd never, I've never, I never had a pet, all these kind of things, right? And I would see you lose people. You lost a lot of people since we've been together. And every time, no matter who it was, it completely broke you. And some took you longer than others. Some you were broken for, I don't even know how long, and I never understood it. I was like, I don't get it. Like, come on, get get past this. And then my dad died, I know, and that's the first time I'd ever experienced an actual loss of someone I knew that I was close to, and it was a split second thing, heart attack gone. Didn't get a chance to really say goodbye, and it hung on me for a long, long time, and it

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still does. I think it's unresolved, not being able to say what you wanted to say you wanted to do

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exactly that whole idea of, oh, if we only had more time, I would have done this more when, right? And so now I can understand it, and it's made me a better writer, because now I can understand when my characters go through loss, or I'm reading a script, I get that, but yeah, a lot of times that that's what it is, right? And and it's just how we move through it, right? So, really, really key, important there is that, what is that touchstone? What is that like? Field of Dreams? It's a movie about a guy who never got to play one last game to catch with his dad. That's the whole movie. And when we get to that point, boom, catharsis, connection, emotional

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breakdown. Okay, I'm gonna cry, so let's move on.

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Okay, moving on. So romance, right? Romance goes hand in hand with drama, right? I mean, sometimes it's a romantic comedy, sometimes it's a romantic drama, but it's a little bit different, right? Ghosts, heaven can wait. You know these, these movies just about, you know, eternity, like we just watched, right? It's, it's all about Fate, destiny. You. Soul connection, like We're soul mates, right? Ghost is one of the best movies ever done. And like I said, it's because you can feel the love that those two have for each other. And the clay scene, right? It's like the most sexiest romantic scene ever, because you felt the passion between those two characters, like it's insane, and so you are with them for the long haul. They are soul mates. You're like, yeah, I believe it. There's no way he can move on until he knows she's okay. He can't, and he's not gonna move on. It's that thing I'm gonna hang around forever in eternity, right? This, this husband, he hung around 67 years waiting for his wife to die so we can see her one more time. Man, like, that's insane. And then it sparks those like me and you then have the conversation. Like, of all the like, oh, wait, find out. I don't want you to, I don't want you to wait for me. Or I don't, you know I want you. I know.

30:46

I said we're moving from the crying stuff on to the non crying stuff here.

30:51

Yeah, I know. Sorry. I'm not trying to make cry, not trying to make the audience cry. But romance, supernatural romance, are designed to make you cry, right there, emotional intensity, exactly because you bond with these people so and a lot of times I'll say that to like, I'll say it to Randy, you know, I didn't feel the chemistry. I didn't believe you aren't getting me to buy in to why he is willing to go to the ends of the earth for her, I don't feel it. And a lot of times they don't understand that. But that's what it is. You have to show the characters in a way that we just feel everything they feel. And I say that, you know, pretty much anyone can write something, that you can make us see what you need us to see. You just describe it. But the great writing is when you make us feel what you need us to feel through showing us right? And so drama is really big in that they want the audience. They want that emotional intensity, but they also want that magic. There's nothing more magical in life than than falling in love with someone, right? And it's, it's a lot of times it's just impossible. Like, if you, if you had to explain love, what? What it feels like? How would you explain it?

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Ah, that it's almost like, it like, makes you feel giddy, like you're a little kid again, like it brings, like, a different level of excitement to your day to day life, right? Like you just, it's like you have something to look forward to. Sure, I don't know

32:12

every and that's the thing you ask someone, everyone's gonna explain it different? Yeah, how would you explain? I can't. For me, when I think, what? How do I explain love? I say everything like, it's everything the feeling that you get when you love someone in different situations remind you how much you love them. All I feel is everything, like I can explain it and so it's that universal thing doesn't matter. That's why dramas play so well internationally and overseas,

right? You can watch a movie in another language and still feel it right. So it's that romantic connection, right? It's that and when it's supernatural, it just adds that other element of this love is so strong that they can't even like to bring in two worlds together, right? Right? So, okay, the

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next one here we have is thriller, yeah? And you have the sixth sense and shining, yeah?

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And I put those because a lot of times people will say, Well, what genre is the sixth sense and shining? They'll say, horror, but it's not horror, because it's not, they're not scary movies, right? The shining, the shining, is all about this descent into madness that Jack goes through because of the shining, because of what his son can see on the other side, how they can make things happen, horrible things that went on there. It's not a classic horror movie, but it's, it's a thriller, because it builds in pace. You're watching this man descend into madness and have this, you know, this hotel. It's haunting him. It's taking him over. So it's more of a thriller, right? Sixth sense, it's a psychological thriller. It has supernatural elements, right? He, you

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know what I when I come and I think about one like when, when I found out about 30 minutes ago, we were doing about supernatural because that's when I found out, the first movie that I thought about was the sixth sense, Oh, interesting and that. And I think it's because that one, to me, isn't so supernatural. You know what I mean? Like, it is supernatural, but it's like, could that really,

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yeah, like, it's, it's more, well, you're because you're paying attention to the characters. It's the relationship between this man and this kid and this man and his wife, and it's all in your like, it's, he's a psycho psychologist, so it's all a psychological and, yeah, there's a couple of jump scares, because this kid, you know that the whole premise is, I see dead people, you know, but, but it's not a classic horror movie, so, so in those kinds of stories, it's, it's more about doubt and ambiguity than it is about, there's a ghost scaring the hell out of us every five Minutes, right? It's about, it's about that ambiguous understanding of, is this real or is this not? I think

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that's the piece for me, is, is that I'm like, Yeah, that's kind of that couldn't really be real. But then I'm like, but could it be real? Yeah, that's when I will watch a supernatural Yeah. And this is the kind

34:57

of movie I love to write this piece with. With the idea of it being actually a psychological thriller, not a supernatural thriller. For me, I love setting something up that you the audience, thinks this is supernatural, there's this ghost, there's this thing, and then in the end, you find out, Nope, it's in their head. They're broken, you know? Like, I love that. So it's like, oh, it's actually a psychological thriller. That's just, I just really get a kick out of that. But still, it's still it's still playing

in the supernatural genre, because you're making the audience see what the character sees. And you you know, so, so it's all about that idea. Is it real? Is it not you're you're using uncertainty to build the tension. That's the difference between that kind of supernatural, kind of Thriller, Horror, and then a darker supernatural, right? And then comedy, right? This is hidden gold. This is like, when anytime someone hits with a really big spec script that is a soup that there's a supernatural comedy, it usually, usually does, well it does, yeah, because it just represents really funny thing. Like, I was just thinking of all these examples, Shaun of the Dead, yeah, it's a zombie movie. So it's kind of like fantasy, but it's, it's taking supernatural situations and making really funny Beetlejuice, again, will maybe think that's fantasy. I see it as a supernatural comedy, because it's blending Earth with the afterlife, right, and in really funny ways. Ghostbusters, it's a stupid movie about a bunch of idiots who have a machine they can suck.

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I know the thought of hologram, okay, you know, like, it's stupid, right? You love it. What's fun thinking about it, too. Back in the day, like that was huge. Do you think it would do well now, well, it did.

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They came up with two Ghostbusters, I know.

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But do you like? What do you think like? I mean, they had to make it more. They had to make it different. I saying, like, back in the day, it was, like, so simple.

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If there was no Ghostbusters and someone came up with that specific script today, it would, it would, no one would pick it up. I don't think they would no, because it would and, and that's why, personally, I felt the latest Ghostbusters movies, they don't work no

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because they they have to add in so many, like, it's a lot of, like, what am I trying to say, animation type stuff?

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Yeah, ghosts, right? You know, it's glowing. It's like, that's not scary, right? And I get it, but like, it's, it's 2025 it's not 1982 right? Like, it's 2026 well, when it came out, I'm saying, but like, the latest Ghostbusters with Paul Rudd, like, that was better because it was more about the characters, and it was, you know, it got back, but it's still, it's that idea of, okay, why are we still doing ghosts? The only reason that the ghosts were like that back then the 80s is because we didn't, because that's all technology could do, right? And so I know, but I kind of love that,

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because it's a classic. It is, right, okay, here's one that I have a question, though, just as a side note, where does it fall? Is that drama

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that I would say that would be supernatural drama? Yeah, more. So a supernatural coming of age story. Coming of age is, like, its own genre, is it really? Yeah. I mean these, I think Goonies, right, yeah, Goonies coming of age. You know, that's not supernatural, but wow, like, back to the future, I guess, sci fi. So there's all this, like, you never quite know gremlins. Gremlins would be a supernatural comedy, right? Or dramedy, right? Both these creatures that come to life, it's supernatural, but it's also fantasy. So it's they kind of go hand in hand, but, okay, but supernatural rather than fantasy. Fantasy is usually like, there's this whole world that is fantastical and different. Supernatural is there's elements of the real world, like the real world, there's elements of these things, okay? So basically, in comedy, you just want to, you want to key on, on a mixture of absurdity versus the supernatural, right? So the like Bruce Almighty, perfect example, classic, the guy all of a sudden is, can he has a power of God and he and the whole movie is just about him doing ridiculous, stupid things, because he has to ever answer every single prayer that comes in. It creates comical situations, and so you run with it. But it's the absurdity of regular life mixed with what supernatural can do that's what makes the great comedies when there is that

39:01

supernatural Same with the movie, yes, man,

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yeah, yeah, yeah, exactly. It's a touch of magic. It's a supernatural element because he cannot say yes, yes, everything. Liar, liar. He can't lie, right? It's, it's a magical touch. You know, same thing you see those body swap movies like 17 again, right? You're, Oh, you're 45 Oh, something happens now I'm in my 17 year old body again. What do I do? It's, It's Supernatural, but it's designed to create fun and games. So, so, so with a

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writer, then what does a writer need to like? We've gone through all these genres. What does a writer need to remember then and or keep in mind, I guess, yeah, when they're going to be writing or the supernatural aspect or, or what I

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have, I have five things, okay, five things a writer needs to keep in mind. And they're very simple. Number one, rules matter. Doesn't matter if this goes there, you have to under you have to know the logic of your world. You need to know the rules, the borders, the logic of it all. And sometimes I hate it when it's a stupid set. Up, like, oh, this ghost needs to learn how to move through walls, and he needs to learn how he can pick up a cup. He's standing on the frickin floor of a house, right? He didn't have to learn that. Like, I hate that, because it's like, well, that makes no sense. Okay, so it's all about making sure that, and that's been done, and you just accept it movies, but it's about knowing the rules. Okay, so what can happen? What can't

happen? What are the consequences? Right? If there's inconsistency, you push your reader out and they're done, okay? You don't have you can't have movie magic where you're like, well, just this is just how it is, right? Number two, you have to have more meaning to your story over how cool or clever or wild that that entity or that angel or whatever it is, is, right? There has to be meaning, ghost, all these like, you don't catch the elements, but it's all

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meaning and emotion.

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Yeah, it's all about guilt. I didn't do enough. I left her too early, right? Magic is about control or power. So if it's a supernatural story with magic, it's not about the magic. Don't get caught up in the gimmick. Key in on the idea of control, the idea of power that magic gives you. Harry Potter, it's all about who has the power. Who's the most powerful wizard. Right? About The Magic?

41:10

It's about the power. What about when it comes to time travel,

41:14

normally, when you like, back to the future or something? Yeah, back to anything. It's about it's about regret. A lot of it's like, oh man. I wish I could just go back and try again with that girl. Or I wish I could just go back and see my dad one more time. It's about the regret of of timing and choices. So as you know, back to the future, right? As gimmick is time travel is it's like, oh man, I wonder what my parents were like when they were my age. That's, you know, that's the thing I he's not, he's not connected to his parents. His parents don't understand him. He goes through this journey and he comes back and he's like, I now get my parents. It changes him. And that's the meaning, that's the truth in it. All the rest of the DeLorean doc, it's all gimmick, right? So don't, don't, don't just key in on that. You have to have more. So, so, so that's important. Number three, the tone has to match the genre. Read of genre script. It's like, this is a horror movie, but I'm not scared at all because there's no scary tone or elements.

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It's just, this is a ghost story, yeah? And if the listeners want to know all about tone, we've done an episode on tone, yep, so. But you need to be TERR.

42:16

You want to you want to be terrified reading a script, especially if you haven't seen the movie, read The Conjuring, my opinion, one of the best horror scripts ever written. Read it that has tone that is terrifying. Terrifying things are happening. Okay, in romance, you know, the tone you must have, like a comforting, you know, swooning, I would say we have to fall in love with your characters. Falling in love, real or supernatural, we have to, we have to be pulled in and feel comforted that these two have to get together. If they don't, I'm never gonna be I'm never gonna get over this if these characters don't get together. Right? Comedy, awkwardness, awkwardness everywhere. The tone should be awkward in a comedy, especially supernatural comedy,

because that's where all of the fun comes from, right? The freaking out because the ghost does this, or does this, or the magic did this. Or all you know, that movie we watched, which was very understated movie, I don't think anyone even knew was out. But remember that movie, Genie with Melissa McCarthy? I liked it the Christmas one, yeah? And she comes through as a, as a genie, and, you know, it's, it's supernatural, but it's all about the awkwardness of that she brings to the table. So, always important, right? And they're all the same elements in all the stories, but it's all about execution. Okay, then less is more. That's number four, okay, less is more. Most of the time. I'm not going to reiterate it. Went over it, the whole idea of, you know, what is unseen more than seen, right? Don't, don't try too hard, right? Keep it subtle. And then number five, be aware of your audience. Okay, you need to know, are they here to feel safe, that there's an afterlife. I'm going to be okay, right? I'm watching this movie knowing my wife's on the other side, waiting for me, right? What? What do they long for? Right? And depending on, do they love being scared? Did they make them feel alive? Do they you know that? Are they sad they want to be you know they want to believe in love again, right? Those kind of things, right? Do they want to cry? Do they want to escape? Do they want to laugh? Do they want to just get out of the real world for a while and suspend their disbelief into into another, another place? Those are the things to keep in mind. So to wrap everything up, you want to ask three questions. When you're writing a supernatural story of any genre, okay, what does my audience fear? Again, doesn't matter the genre. What do they fear? What do they long for, and what do they believe or want to believe? Most of the stories in supernatural stories, people don't believe in ghosts, because if you believe in ghosts, it's not that scary if a ghost is talking to you, right? So, so what do they, what do they what do they fear? What do they long for? What do they want to believe? So align all of that, align your supernatural element to that, and you will be golden. So digest that. I know it's a lot. I talk fast sometimes, but digest that while we take a quick break and tell you about one of our

44:56

services, 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.

45:39

Okay, and we're back, and in this part of the podcast, we get to do the question and answer section where listeners like you have submitted questions previously. You can do that by emailing us at hello@scriptreaderpro.com first question comes from Damien from Dublin, Ireland, Dublin. Damien says, What should writers focus on first? Writing or networking? What do you think does? Well, you have to be good at writing, yeah, before you network. No point networking.

46:15

If you're not a writer or a crap at writing or don't know what you're doing yet, you're just wasting opportunities. So master your writing first.

46:22

Okay, that's the answer. That's the answer. Okay, question number two comes from Victor, from San Antonio, Texas, and Victor says, How do you give every character a purpose in the story?

46:37

Yeah, that's a good question. I mean, not every character needs a purpose, but, you know, like all of them, kind of main important characters, they should all have a reason for being in the story. That's that's kind of how I think of it, because sometimes it's hard, like, well, what's their purpose? That's kind of a hard thing to wrap your head around. But instead, if you say, what, why are they in this story? What do they need from

46:58

this or what are they trying to tell. Yeah, what?

47:01

What's their story? Yeah. Why? Why are they going through this with these other characters? What do they bring to the table? Right? So a lot of times it's not, what's their personal purpose, but what? What are they there to be of purpose for the main character? So if you ask that question, why are they here? What happens if I remove them? What am I missing? Oh, I'm missing the fact that now this can't happen. That's their purpose. So it doesn't have to be a deep, existential thing for all of your characters. You just need to know why they're there and make sure that they're they're, you know, making that happen.

47:29

Okay, makes sense. We're gonna do three questions today, because you talked a lot. You talked way too much. Sorry. So third question is from Leah from Winnipeg, Manitoba, the peg and Leah asks a question, how much backstory is too much in a first episode? That's a good question, and we're talking TV

47:53

pilot scripts. Yeah, how much backstory is too much? If you feel like you're overloading,

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like, if I think, if you're questioning, if it's too much, it's probably too much, maybe not, but

48:03

like, Okay, so in a movie, we need to know everything we need to know for that next hour and a half. In a television series, we learn as we go. You don't have to give us everything away or give us everything. You don't have to tell us everything about this person's life. Find the most interesting tidbits that shed us a light into, wow, I want to know more, right? It's all about setup,

setup, setup. So you don't need a ton of backstory, but little kernels to just make us think, okay, there's more going on here. So I think that's, that's a good way to do it.

48:31

Yeah, no, that's, that's good to remember. That's it. We're done. We're done. I'm out of here.

48:35

I'm leaving. You can finish up.

48:36

So today we talked about the elements of supernatural, and hopefully some of those tips that Scott gave were useful for the writers out there. Hope so I want to remind you as well. You can give us reviews online. We would love our reviews.

48:52

Yeah, give us some stars, maybe five

48:55

or six. You can share our podcast, which is great, sure. Yeah, any questions, comments, ideas for future episodes. You can always email us at hello@scriptreaderpro.com.

49:06

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