

Ep #63: The Use of Desperation in Prestige Television

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On this episode, we're talking all about desperation and how it fuels prestige television series. Yep, they're the best of the best out there. So we're going to pass some stuff on for you. So listen in.

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

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Hey everybody, this is Desiree, and I am your host for the Script Reader Pro podcast. And my husband, Scott, is here. Hi, I'm here.

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Hi, I'm here. Hi, I'm here. Hi, Scott. Hi. How are you? I'm okay, good. My face is a little itchy today. Oh, why is that? Did you burn your skin off your face for fun I did today is actually, is driving me crazy? Yeah, well, it was driving me crazy when I walked in the bedroom and saw what happened to your face. Seriously, has anyone ever fallen asleep and got a sunburn on their body in any place where it starts to, like, blister and seep and you're like, I think I need a Skin Wrap or something wrap. That was my wife's face for about four days because she had a CO two treatment to basically burn the first layer of her skin off. And now she has no freckles. They're all gone. They'll come back, but she looks like five years younger. Really? No wrinkles on your forehead. Do I really look five years younger? It's actually crazy. I say, I said to Desiree the other day, I swear it looks like you have a filter on, like, you know, and like it looks like you have a filter because your face is suddenly so smooth and clear. Not that your face wasn't smooth before, but, you know, it's just this flawless. It's like you're wearing, you look like you're wearing full makeup, but you have none on. It's crazy. Yeah, it's kind of amazing. But let me tell you, do it again. I would not do it again. I would probably do like, little spot areas. But, yeah, I mean, today I was just looking up before we started about how long I should be having itch and stuff. I mean, it says it's still inflamed for two to three months. Crazy. It's still red, yeah, like yesterday was a little red in the morning, right? But it's so bad that, like, So Desiree went and put, like the Vaseline all over her blistered face, and I had to stand beside the bed with her hair dryer on cool mode, blowing cool air on her vast face for about 45 minutes. It wasn't because you were dying. And you were like, I want to scratch my face. And you're like, putting a face cloth on it, and then, like, tapping it with your nails. You were just like, losing your mind. I'm like, This is not worth it, I know. And then my good friend, who's the one that did this fractional CO two facial. Then she says to me,

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I've been thinking that I should probably try this. After she does it to me, you haven't tried I'm like, you haven't even experienced this, you jerk. And then they're not that bad. There were days in she's like, Why have you not messaged me yet today? And I'm, I'm like, we're no because I'm debating if we are still maintaining a friendship after this. Like, literally. So yeah, I am tapping my foot to see that right now. Hey, Scott, yeah, I have no clue what we're talking about. I know we'd spent about five minutes trying to get Desiree to understand the title and what a prestige show is. And if desperation is a title of a prestige show, I don't know. We'll talk about that in a second, but before we go into that, we will talk about what we've seen lately, which is something we're still watching called our friends and neighbors. Yeah, we just started it. It's on Apple TV with Jon Hamm, and I'm loving it. It's great. The pilot is one of those shows. You watch the pilot and you're you look at each other, like, next episode, you're like, Yeah, and we just watched, like, three episodes in a row. It was just so good. It was just such a different world we hadn't seen. I think most audiences like it, but I love it when, when something pulls the curtain back on something, right, and this pulls a curtain back on the kind of rich and wealthy lifestyle and just how messed up and broken all these people are, and it's all just hidden, you know, by the wealth, right? That, and that's but that's true life. That's true story a lot of the times, right? Even poor people or middle class or whatever you want to call yourself, you know, if someone actually you think you know someone's life, but in if they peel the curtain back and you see it, it's not the kind of life you probably expect. So this couple so happy all the time, but they're dealing with trauma all the time, right? That's what I was gonna say, is that you always think somebody has it better than you, until you see under the covers, and then you see it's completely different. Yeah, yeah, true story. It is perfect example. And I just saw this yesterday online. And I don't watch The Bachelor and Bachelorette shows, but it was this article, the newest bachelorette girl that they're about to or maybe they shot this season already. Or.

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Or they were about to it's been canceled. Why? Because a video came up of her, and I watched the video of her freaking out on I don't know who this guy was, was her ex husband or whatever, but like beating him, throwing chairs at him, she grabbed a kitchen chair and threw it at him, and her daughter was like, sitting on the couch, like, five feet from this and she threw the chair at ricocheted, and it hit her kid. She's punching this guy and there, and he's like, he's recording. He's like, this is domestic abuses. And I'm just like, Yep, so here's this perfect woman, quote, unquote, as the bachelorette everyone should want to date because she's beautiful. And why did that not come out until then in real world, underneath everything? Well, she's a different kind of person, and it's just like, you never know, right? You never know what, what's behind the curtain. So I love those kind of things. Yeah, that's interesting. Did you hear I said, whoa, whoa. Chandra says,

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I love that for you. She says, not a lot of time. That's the lady who did my CO two. Okay, so Scott, yes, I know we usually only talk about one, but I did go to a movie myself this last week. Oh yes, you did. Called reminders of him, uh huh. And so good, to the point that I said to you that I want to watch it again so that you can watch it. It was so so, so good. I highly recommend

it. It's out in the theater right now. Yeah, and it's a, what is this? An adaptation of what was done. It was a book. Yeah. What's the author's name? Again, Colleen Hoover, oh, right, right. Which is weird, because I don't have a memory of any of these things, nor do I read yet. I remember the name of the title and the name of the author of the book. That means it hit you, yeah, it was that good. So I recommend that recommendation. What I don't recommend is talking about this topic today without having any knowledge about what I'm talking about ahead of time, because I legit do not understand what desperation and prestige television series is past what it means. Well, let's fix that. So first of all, our friends and neighbors is considered a prestige television show. Okay, that's why I thought I ever watched it. I'm like, I want to talk about this. So I'm going to get you to read off the names of all of these television shows, and then you can see if you understand what they all have in common, what kind of thing they're all dealing with. So go ahead, read them out loud. What if I don't know a lot of them, most of them, you do, okay, sopranos, Mad Men Breaking Bad, six feet under Deadwood.

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SOA sense of anarchy. Hey, good job. Fargo, Handmaid's Tale, Ozark, euphoria, Vikings, shotgun, Shogun. Shogun, no, T in that word, Shogun,

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also shotgun

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Dexter and the pit. Yes. So what, what kind of thing do you feel or think of when you think of those shows, they're all stuck in a situation. They're stuck they're in something that they have to try to get out of. Well, that, yeah, that is in there. That's, that's the whole idea, we're told, that's, I think you think of, yeah, that's good and, and so basically, prestige just means it's, it's television that's never been done in that way before. Sopranos, six feet under. You say sopranos or sopranos depends on the day. Depends if I'm American or Canadian that day. Sopranos, sopranos,

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but, but it's, it basically, HBO changed everything for television when they came out with a lot of these shows, it's where it's it's not just the regular old television shows we've seen. It's more cinematic. It's bigger. It's deeper. There's heavier things happening, bigger, bigger story arcs, intensity. It feels more like a movie world that you're in, right? And that's kind of what all of them, all, all of these ones you don't have in mind, and the pit, which you and I have to watch. What is it? It's a new television series. It's medical drama. It won, like every Emmy. It's fun. I think it's funny, because Noah Wyle is in it. He's the star, and he was a doctor on Grey's Anatomy. He's the young guy, and now he's in this, not same character. I don't think I haven't watched it, but it's like, it's, it's a it, the whole show is, it's

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like a back to back, like, here's eight hours in an emergency room. It, that's the show. Oh, that's interesting. It's one section. I would love that, because when I was in the emergency room for

my surgery stuff, when I was sick not too long ago, I remember saying to you, it would be so cool just to, like, sit here and observe what happens in an emergency room and what people come in for and the personalities and the care, yeah. So that would be really interesting. So we got gotta watch it. Supposed to be amazing, and it's everywhere, so we'll watch it. But that would from from kind of thing. It.

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It's, again, it's breaking the mold, kind of like 24/7 was procedural, but it was, it was prestige, because, no, it hadn't been done, like one hour at a time over 24 hours. Like, it's building a bigger thing, right? So what about that one that I'm watching, that I don't remember the name of, with the lawyers, the female lawyers, yeah, that's, that's more just, that's more just, that's a procedural. That would be considered a procedural, because it's like, here's a bunch of lawyers. Each case is a case of the week, kind of, yeah, but they're females, though, and yeah, it's a different twist on a concept. But it's not a it wouldn't be prestige because it's because every week it's like a doctor, lawyer, hospital, fire station, cops, those are all wouldn't be considered prestige, because every week, you're dealing with a different a different

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patient, a different fire. You know what I mean? Like, situation changes each week, whereas something like the wire or the shield, for example, those are cop shows. But it's about a bigger story. You're gonna need three seasons to tell this story. Kind of thing, right? One that we watched, that we've talked about on here before that we really liked, with the girl that was kidnapped and the police officers it was, it was a British show.

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Oh, yeah, department. Q, yeah, yeah, exactly that one. That's definitely that one. There would be prestige, right? Yeah. And pretty much every limited series now would be considered a prestige, right? I love the limited series More Than I Yeah, because you're getting a bigger story, whereas you watch something like even, you don't have to invest so much time either, yeah, but even, like, shrinking, for example, it's a comedy or whatever, but it's, it's every week. It's about a new patient, it's about a new subject, right? It's not as much of this is a cinematic world, and we're watching the whole thing be explored, and we're gonna learn little details and make it richer every time. That's what all these shows like The Sopranos Breaking Bad. That's what they did, and that's what's different. And so when you're writing a spec pilot, most of the time, that's what you're writing as a writer, right? You'll, you'll still, you want to break into television sitcoms. You're gonna write a sitcom. You want to get in a one hour cop procedural. You're going to write a one hour cop procedural, right? But most of the time as a writer is trying to showcase their voice and their skill. It's about world building, character building, tone, voice, so you're writing more of that prestige thing and Desiree. What is that one thing that all those shows that you listed, and pretty much every prestige show has in common? What is that one feeling or driver of that that they all have

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out of all of these? Well, basically what the episode is about, they're they're desperate, desperation, exactly a desperate situation, right? Sopranos, Tony has a panic attack that he had a heart attack. He's gonna die. He's anxiety under control. He goes to a therapist, a psychologist. That's the whole thing. The head of a mom, family is going and sitting down with the with a therapist, right? That's the hook of the show, Breaking Bad. A guy has cancer, can't afford to to fight it. He's gonna turn he's a chemistry teacher, so he turns into a drug lord, drug dealer, drug lord, right?

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You know, Ozark, a guy is going to be killed because his buddy was funneling money through,

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you know, the organized crime, narcotics and stuff. So instead of being killed, he says, I have a plan. I can launder all your money. I can do it in this way. Don't kill me and I'll make you millions of dollars. So it's about him trying to now function and a split second decision, okay, now I have to actually do this. How do I launder money and not die? Right? Would it be this same desperate he's like, I'm gonna die. I'm gonna do this. Would it be the same

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as the one with, with Sylvester Stallone? Yeah, Tulsa King, Tulsa king would be, would it not? It would be because they're kicking him out of the crime family. He's like, No. They're like, you're not going to be here anymore. You got to go do something, and we're going to send you to this little place I know where, in Tulsa. And so then he's desperate, and he doesn't just want to be a thug anymore. How do I become my own boss? Right? I need that, and have legit, like, a legit way to launder his money, basically, yeah, how do I get everything back that I lost? I don't want to just be right, yeah. So, so that's the thing, right? It's, it's, you know, even, like, Yellowstone, you know, it's, it's a prestige show, because it's about a big, big ranching in Montana, but it's really an organized crime, criminal underworld, right thing? It's it's doing it through a different lens. So is it not so much then, when we're looking at something like this, is it not as much the action, you know, and the twists and turns and that kind of thing? Is it less about that than when we're looking at something like this? Yeah, definitely. I mean, that's what you fill it with. That's what you're going to move through. But the kind of the idea to think of is, when you are writing your pilot, your prestige type of pilot, the best thing you can do is think, here's my character. This

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is everything I know about them. How do I make them desperate? How do they put them in the position where they're so.

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Desperate, they make this decision, and that's the story, right? If you look at every one of these shows, it only becomes a story because they do something, they can't desperation, and they can't go back on their they can't go back on what their decision was. Basically, yeah, bang on. They make a decision, they can't go back from and then that becomes the show, okay, but

here's the thing, I totally would do all these things. I know you would. I don't know if, like, a lot of people would do. You think a lot of people would? Well, I mean, give an example, like, what's something you probably think you wouldn't do, but you would, in this kind of thing, sell drugs. There you go. No, I'm serious, I know. But if suddenly you were faced with cancer. I'm leaving my family disabled, son, you got to try and figure out how, no, I soon falls in your lap. I'm really good at this. I can make money.

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I hate to say that I like I would in that place of desperation, I probably would do something that I typically would not do. I wouldn't kill people. I would inadvertently kill people. You would just make the drugs that might might kill people. But I'm saying with Dexter, like I wouldn't go and kill the bad guys, right? I mean, that's not so Dexter isn't as much about desperation. He does what he does because of his trauma, blah, blah, blah, but

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if he gets found out, his life is over. So everything he does is out of desperation to keep his secret. That's the show, right? So it still comes down, not just it's not you know what he does isn't desperate, but his choice he makes and where, you know where he does it and how he does it, it creates desperation. So that's what we're gonna and so we're gonna look at our friends and neighbors as the example, because it's a brand new show. Second season's out. If you haven't watched our friends and neighbors yet, I would watch it either before listening to this or when we're done. I'm not going to give everything away, but just so you can understand, because it's a perfect it's a perfect case study in here's a character, here's their life, and now here's something that happens now. They're desperate that makes the show right. The concept is all based on the desperate thing that's happening. So the crazy thing too is that, like for writers, basically, once you have a concept like a concept doesn't have to be super high level, super intricate, all involved you have a concept, like you do with

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our friends and neighbors, for example.

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Easy to go from that, once you have that concept, yeah, you know, you can, you know, yeah, like, it's interesting when you look at it, because there's, there's the concept and then the premise, right, which we talked about the kind of the differences. But the premise is, here's a guy top of his game on Wall Street. He does something that gives his boss that wants to get rid of him a reason to get rid of him, and all of his money is locked up in that company. So now here's a guy who's extremely wealthy. He has nothing. He has no job. He has a non complete cause for two years. He has an expensive life.

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Because, right? So that's the premise. Here's a guy. Let's take everything away from him. What's the concept within that? The concept, well, basically, he's going into all of his friends and neighbors houses and stealing a bunch of crap that they probably most likely aren't even going

to notice that they missed exactly, and then he bonds it all off, and that's how he's going to afford his life. Afford his life. So he doesn't have to change anything, right? And that is all fueled by his, well, he's needs money, and he's desperate, desperation, exactly. So that's, that's, that's kind of how you you can find your premise and concept and have it speak to, you know, you know, a desperate type of situation. So it doesn't hook you with the plot, right? The plot is going to unfold, right? It hooks you with the desperation.

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This, the show does it so well that we like this. This isn't a bad guy. This is a nice guy. No, I like this guy. He's a good guy. He has this moment he's talking this young girl comes up to him at the bar, and he's like, you know, he's talking about how he's divorced, and she's kind of hitting on him. And you know, it comes up, have you ever cheated on your wife? Nope, never cheated his wife cheated on him with his best friend. You learn that right off the start and and it just shows like, yeah, no, I didn't, and I didn't do revenge. And, you know, I let her have everything I'm paying child support like he's just a good guy, and then he's in a bad situation, and it wouldn't work as well if he was a sleazy scumbag. No, you wouldn't market guy who loves to take everyone's money, right? You wouldn't care for the guy as much as you do, because he's a nice guy. You do. You seem to care more. You're more invested with him. Yeah. So then when he he's a nice guy that wouldn't do bad things. So then when he does a bad thing, you still, well, you still side with him, because you feel bad for him, and you understand. And it works, because you're like, Oh yeah, I can't believe he did that. I would never have thought he would do that, right? The thing too, in real life, then you are able to relate to it, too, and think.

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I would I have done that? You start to question your own morals and yourself. Would I actually go that far and and I think if it was if he was a bad character, you wouldn't question yourself and your motive to do things if it was different, yep. But at the same time, they do a really clever thing in in the idea of, I don't know if you noticed this or not when we watched it, but he makes an excuse for everything he takes. I'm gonna take this \$250,000

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watch because he has so many watches, and I don't even remember. I don't remember last time I saw him wearing it. When did he even I haven't even seen him wear it. Yeah, we're gonna steal this painting because the person who bought it didn't buy it because they love the art. They bought it because it was a good investment. They don't even care it's there. So he's, he's telling himself it's okay that I'm taking the things I'm taking, justifying everything exactly because he's a good guy, right? He's not morally corrupt. He has, he has guilt, right? That's what it is, yeah, but also he's having fun, and he's enjoying it, and he's, he's starting to see

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what he was like, he sees all these people like, I can't believe how ridiculous all these rich people are. So it's taking that and then, and then it's, it's not a like, you don't watch the video to be like, Oh, okay, well, what happens next? Because you know he's gonna keep doing it. The question is, how far is this person going to go? Right Breaking Bad, he starts off, that's what I

was gonna say. He starts off one way. And that's the same with any of these movies. They start off one way, and then the longer than they're in this situation, it just implodes to something so much larger, yeah, and I mean, in Breaking Bad, he's a mild mannered teacher, working every job he can. He's not complaining about life and and he turns into, like the worst human being. He doesn't care about suffering. He doesn't care. He's just greedy, and he's just power hungry, right? So it's not about, oh, what happens next in the drug stuff, no, how far is this guy gonna go? Is he gonna kill people? Is he gonna like, how far will this guy go? And it changes too from what the original motivation was. It was to fund enough money for your cancer. So then that changes pretty quickly when he has plenty of money for his cancer, and then he, you know, he takes it that much further he should be done, yeah? But he can't, because he grabs a hold of him. He wants that power, yeah? So, so that's why you tune into the next episode. That's why you want to keep going.

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So, so when it comes to desperation, Desiree, what? What do you think? What do you think is a good definition way to explain to someone that idea of of a character in a show being desperate? What is it like? What is desperation? Yeah, like, what do we mean when we talk about desperation? I think that it's like for the character. It's like, they feel like the clock is ticking and they're running out of time really, you know, they don't know what they're gonna do, and they're in a state of desperate, desperation. Yeah, they're running out of time, running out of money, running out of options, running like, running out right? That's kind of like a good way to to explain what we mean by someone is desperate because they're running out of blank, right? The interesting well, and the interesting thing is that you look at a lot of these

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shows that I mentioned earlier, the majority of them, when it comes back to

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options, you know, running out of majority of them are all money related, yeah? Well, because money, money is everything, right? Yeah. But what I find interesting, and this is, again, if you did this for your your pilot, you did this for your character, it just makes them so much richer. So in a movie, it's different. Wants and needs are different. In a movie, character wants something, they go after it. They don't realize what they actually are needing. So they want something, they go, they get it, they realize, oh, actually, this isn't what I wanted. This is what I wanted. It's actually what I need. That's the whole idea of a movie, in a TV series, a character. It's not about them wanting something, not even needing something, right? It's, it's when they, when they they surpass that. They go beyond it. Walt doesn't want to become a drug dealer, but he needs to do that to make money. Tony Soprano doesn't want to see a psychologist, but he needs to if he wants to keep running his his organization, right? Marty doesn't want to launder money in the middle of nowhere, but he needs to in order to survive. So, you know, it's all Dexter doesn't necessarily want to kill people. He needs to to fuel this blood trauma that he has. So he finds a way to do it that isn't necessarily wrong or hurting people right, hurting good people. Yeah, exactly. So that's the kind of thing to keep in mind, is, is have it's not that they want to do it right. They need to.

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We all do things that we don't want to when we need to, when we're desperate we all do, right? It's just how it is. So, so that's the thing to keep in mind.

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So desperation is basically when it when a character believes that if they don't act on this right now, they will lose whatever it is that they're that they're really, really trying to, to hang on to. So, like, Desiree, if you like, what's the situation you just talked about how you would probably do some of these things. So what's the situation that you've ever had in your life where you're like, Well, I don't want to do this, but I need to, because of whatever. Right? I'm desperate. Oh, like, do this. A lot of it is advocacy. Right? I'm tired of advocating, and I don't want to advocate, but I need to advocate, not only for myself, but for other people,

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because of the person, the people coming after me, I need to try to do whatever I can to ensure that life is going to be easier, possibly in certain aspects of life, right? Yeah, and so I'm exhausted the majority of the time. I don't have the fire in me

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to want to continue on, but I have no other choice. I have to because if you didn't, you would just be in a desperate situation. Well, I'd feel like I'd feel bad, is what it is. I'd feel guilt, because there's something that I probably could do, or somewhere I could help, and I'm just not utilizing those skills. Yeah, yeah. I mean, on another fundamental level that I see is that you don't want to ask for help. You don't want to ask people for help. You want to be able to do everything on your own. But sometimes, well, I have to, you get stuck in a parking lot in the snow, what you're just going to sit there and freeze to death. You're desperate, you're running out of time, you're cold, you have to ask someone to help you. Right?

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For me, I went, I mean, I don't care. I'm not hiding anything. I don't care what people know about I went no contact with my family. Not too long ago. Did I want to? I didn't want to. I didn't want to be like, I'll never talk to my mom again. I didn't want to, but I needed to, because I was so desperate to remove that toxicity from my life. Yeah, so out of desperation, I did that so we all can understand, right? The audience can understand what it means. I My family is in trouble. I have to do something. What am I going to do? Whatever? Right? Like that doesn't mean a bad thing, even, right? But that doesn't create drama. I'm going to go get four jobs. Okay, well, that doesn't make a show. No, it doesn't make a show. I'm going to start robbing my friends and neighbors houses, that makes a show, right? So what? What is prestige compared to other things like Desiree was, was uncertain off the start. It's, it's slower paced, right? It takes time to build through. It's character driven. It's, it's less reliant on big twists early on, right? So it comes from that erosion of their world, right? Rather than, you know, explosive, explosive moments, right? That's like, a good example of that is Sons of Anarchy. Then with, like, the whole thing, you don't get a whole bunch at the beginning, but then throughout all of these seasons, you get

bits and pieces, and you're just like, what? Yep, yeah, exactly. And that's the thing is, Jack's his whole life. That whole season is about his life eroding under him, what he wants, what he hopes for, all the stuff to do with his mom and his wife and like it, his world just falls apart. And it takes time. So, yeah, like a really long bike ride across route 66 or whatever, right? Just takes time. Good, good metaphor.

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Okay, so there's a few things here

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to kind of like, keep in mind. Okay, so well you have here

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how it uses desperation. So the first thing you have is surface versus reality, yeah, so like in friends and neighbors for specifics, right? So the surface, right? We talked about surface is wealth. Everything's good, Rich. We have money. Life is perfect. But the reality of it is, everyone is just hanging on. Everyone's hiding something. Nobody is is, you know, they don't they're not liquid. You know, everything's tied up in investments, and I own all these things, but I have nothing, right? So that's it. They're beautiful, controlled environments, and social image matters, and we see that with a lot of people, right? They don't want people to see what's behind the curtain.

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So in this one, he is, he's desperate because he needs to maintain appearances. He doesn't want people to know that he was fired or that he's being sued for this and that. So he's doing everything he's doing to keep everything together, to keep it from crumbling, right? He he's just, he's desperate for many different reasons, right? Like to keep his family. He wants to still provide for his family. And he's also in love with his wife still, and he's trying to get his kids to, you know, respect him. Well, yeah, because he's not been in their lives really. Yeah. So he's, he's he's doing it for a lot of different reasons. Then, then we have internal pressure. Is the second one you have. So you have surface versus reality, yeah? So, so it's where Karen, you know, characters aren't just reacting to things, they're actually just, they're cracking to pieces inside, like, that's what when, when you're desperate, that's what.

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I mean, that's what I think it feels like you are literally falling to pieces inside, and you're like, how, how can I keep this together so people don't know? Right? Like, it's with anyone who deals with like an addiction, right?

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Whatever you you're an alcoholic, and you drink all the time, but you, you do everything possible to show up so that nobody knows you know. So you're always trying to hide so you know, your identity starts to slip in this show, moral lines are blurring. You know, I wouldn't steal, but now I'm going to steal, but, but it's from rich people, so it's okay. He loses control, right? And

that's, I think, also key, is that, you know, like we see it in our lives, too Desiree, right? When you try to control something too much, you can't control anything, and you think something is going to go gonna go well, and then it's like, Well, that didn't go like we planned it was gonna go. It's that loss of control or lack of control, and all you can do is do your best to handle it right through it, face it. You know, as kids like writing, I always say to people, you can't control it. All you can control is what you put on the page, you can't control all the other things. It's impossible, right? In life, it's impossible to control everything. Yeah, so it creates a quiet desperation. And why is it a quiet desperation, Desiree, that who knows that all this is going on? Well, it's all internal, like you. It's personal, right? You're holding it in. Yeah. He's the only person who knows that all this has had, well, pretty much, right? He's the only person who knows that he's doing these things. And, you know, nothing connects so, so that's, that's kind of an important takeaway there. And then the final one, what is it? Is the Time Bomb effect, yeah, so, and that doesn't mean ticking clock, right? But that's the best thing about secrets, is what will usually happen to a secret. It always comes out. Yeah, yeah, usually. And the longer you hold your secret, the worse it gets. That's the thing with all of the like, the documentaries that you know, that I love and I watch,

31:56

that's the stupid part, especially about spouses, you killed your spouse,

32:03

and you're trying to maintain a secret about it, it's gonna come out. It always, like you think about it, always comes out. I don't know why these people think the one chance that maybe Mike this won't come out. Yeah. Is it worth the risk? You know? Yeah. And a lot. I mean, some people are some people take secrets to their grave. Yeah, yeah, but like in Breaking Bad, that's why I love about the moment that Skylar learns that that Walter isn't the man she thought is, when he goes in, and this is later on in the show, but he goes in for his surgery, and he comes out, and he's still all loopy from the esthetic, and he says, I need my phone. Guy me my phone. And then she does, and he says, No, my other phone. She's like, your other phone, because he kept a phone in his classroom and right. So then she's like, Who is this man? What is done? Right? That's when the secret comes out. He was really good at keeping it until he was under anesthetic when he right. So they always come out, right? So secrets can can surface, and that you never know when that Secret's gonna come. The relationships can break some people right? Like

33:09

sometimes people just can't keep doing the same thing. Like in Tulsa, King that hired, that hired. What

33:18

is his name? Yeah, the the Italian guy, he's working on the farm. He's the one working on the farm with the horses on the ranch, yeah, and his, he keeps this nice looking life with his wife and his kids, and then it comes out that he's still involved in all of this crap, and then his whole family leaves him, yep, exactly, because, because because he can't keep it together forever, and you

can't, you can't predict what other people are going to do. So that also, right? How do you juggle all those things? It just creates drama, right? And then, as we all know in life, and we try to teach our kids what is inevitable, sorry, what is inevitable in life,

33:58

that there's going to be consequences. Exactly. There's always going to be consequences, whether you pull something off or not. So those, those are kind of important things to keep in mind when you're putting that prestige show together. So here's five tips. Okay, these are the five takeaway tips you can put this in the show notes for you. These are the rules to kind of keep in mind. Okay, not rules, but like things to keep in mind. So number one, Deseret give them something to lose immediately, right? If you don't get something to lose, then you're gonna get desperate. Well. And the thing is, what's the point of the whole series? Then, if you don't have something to lose, yeah, everyone. I mean, Tony Soprano, if people find out he has anxiety, do you think he's gonna be the head of that family anymore? No, right? If Dexter gets caught killing someone, you think he's gonna be able to keep doing his code thing? Code thing. No. So give them something that is important to them, they can lose what's number two, remove easy options. Yeah, never be easy on the character. Never. I mean, in friends and neighbors like he tries everything there's, there's no easy options. He can't access his money. He can't stop this case against him. He can't you.

35:00

Oh, he sits down with his buddies, like, you still in for my, for my fundraiser, two tables. And the guy's like, oh, yeah, that was what, 200 grand, or something stupid, yeah, 200 250,000

35:10

for the two table, whatever it was, right? And he's just like, I don't think I can do it right. Now, this guy's got nothing. And then there's always, there's always something coming, right? You can't be easy on them. Number three, three is trap them socially or emotionally. So what keep them invested, or what keep it so they can't just walk away? So it's not easy to walk away, right? Because, like this guy, John Hamm's character, yeah, he loses his money. He could probably go, go to another city and find another job, but what would he lose? He can't be around his family, can't try to be in his kid's life. Can't like he can't He can't just walk away. There's too much going on, right? Number four, four is make the pressure internal and external. Yeah, it can't just be bad. Things are happening, right? It's got to be what that person's dealing with, the desperation, the fear, right? The identity crisis, the consequences. I can go and steal this stuff, but what happens if I get caught? I go to jail. So, you know, you have to have pressure everywhere, internal, external, all around, yeah. And then the last one, number five is force a decision by the end of the pilot. Yeah. This is the golden this is your post. It note, Desiree, on another post on your screen of your computer when you're writing your prestige or any pilot, but in prestige, one for the desperation the character must act, even though they know it's the wrong choice. They have to, they have to make that decision they can't undo. I call it the point of no return moment, right? They're facing it. They make that decision, and it's one that they can't undo. No, they have to suffer the consequences. Yeah, exactly. So in friends and neighbors, he steals the watch. He goes to a pawn shop, finds the right pawnbroker who's shady, sells the

watch to her. Now he can't go back. He can't return the watch. He can't this lady knows what he's doing. He can't become anonymous anymore. He's made a decision. He can't go back from if that didn't happen before that pilot was over, then there's no what's the point of the story? There's no point in the story. They have to make that choice. So desperation reveals the truth about who people are and what the situation is. It strips away all the masks that people wear, right? It makes characters unpredictable, right? You put me in a desperate situation. You're not gonna be able to predict what I do. I won't even be able to predict what I do. As humans, we don't know until we're in that moment, right? Someone's got a gun on you. There's your child right beside you. They're five feet away. The gun points at them. What are you gonna do? Yeah, I know exactly. Some people won't jump in front of their kid. Some people will try to take the gun. Some like everyone, some people will try to keep all of the kids safe. Yeah, yeah. Like it's yeah, it's unpredictable, so you got to keep them right. We will connect with characters. We don't

37:58

connect with them when they're at their best. We connect with them when they're at their breaking point. That's when you're like, Okay, now I'm What are you gonna do? Right? Yeah, yeah, exactly. So that's a lot to digest. Think on that for a second while we tell you about one of brothers services.

38:15

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

38:47

nd use the code rewrite 15 during checkout for the rewrite proposal to get 15% off.

38:57

Okay, we are at the part in our podcast, where we get questions from listeners, and Scott tries his best to answer them, although they're not always good answers. Yeah, but I remember we were like, hey, Desiree, you're gonna answer these questions today? No. And then what happened? It sucked. Your world fell apart. I'm not doing it. You became desperate. You started tapping your face with your fingernails, and you were like, I cannot function. I can't answer questions about screenwriting Exactly. I'm never doing it again. Okay, how about you read the questions, then I can read the questions. The first question here comes from Peter, from Australia. Peter says, how flawed should a protagonist be? I think

39:36

it depends on the on the the genre and stuff. No, do you think it could like if a

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I don't know. Do you know what I'm saying? I I think I do,

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but my answer, what's your answer? As much as you can possibly make them flawed, like

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you want even nice people, regular people. No problem. I know it sounds.

40:00

Is exciting. I know, getting a genre, but so many flaws, but Scott in certain genres, though protagonists can be,

40:09

you know, they can have flaws in so many different ways depending like I would think that a protagonist and a thriller might be more flawed than a protagonist in a romance. The flaws might come out more and affect more, but every human is more. I know they're all wired. They're wired like some like, Liar, liar, right? It's a comedy. It's about a lawyer who lies for a living, and his daughter's like, I don't like, like, lie all the time. I wish you could never tell a lie. And so then he wakes up and can't lie, but he is, if you look at all of the things that that he does, he's incredibly flawed. And the only way to if you don't give a character enough flaws, they don't have enough to change into something different, right? They don't have enough going on to make them see themselves as they really are, or grow? Yeah, exactly. Yeah. Grow, change. They have to move over their story. So you look at any character in any movie, and you should be able to just list off the flaws you learn. So answer, there's never too many flaws for a protagonist to have. None of them. All have to make themselves known in big, apparent ways, but they will shape your character. You can't know your character if you don't know everything wrong with them. But there are, there are instances where there's too many flaws if you're looking for your significant other, yeah, right flags, man, that definitely yeah. I mean flaws in human relationships. Yeah, you want to try and find someone who's not Yeah, but you wouldn't want to watch them in in a TV show or a movie. No, right? Next question comes from Angela, and Angela's from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Angela says, What's the most realistic way to break into the industry right now? Oh, we get this one all. No, it's such a hard answer. We do get we do get this a lot like, I mean, everyone I remember, okay, now we're done. My scripts ready now, how do I do how do we break in? It's,

42:01

it's kind of impossible to answer the way to do it, because everyone has a different way. I mean, the stupidest answer you always hear is, Well, write an amazing screenplay. Write an undeniable screenplay. Okay, Okay, done. Checked off the list. Now, writer, you've written the most undeniable screenplay. Okay, so now, what? How do we break in? Man, it's so hard, but there's so many you have to like my my answer is, think outside the box. Be as creative as possible. To make people pay attention to you, you have to invest in your writing, right? Whether you're you're paying someone you know, someone like Arthur is for notes, whether you're

entering a contest, whether you're posting on some site that can put your script in a certain place. A lot of times, screeners like, oh, no, I shouldn't. I don't have to pay this. I always say, look at actors, right? Look at an actor. Do you think that it costs them nothing and they have no investment to try and get movie roles or TV roles? They have to go and take acting class. They have to work out or, you know, do some kind of regime regimen. They have to travel to auditions or now you're just self taping, but you have to invest you have to get into the character. You have to spend money on headshots and all these things, right? It doesn't matter in any crap you look at artists, you think they don't have to pay \$800 for their giant canvas that they might never sell, that you have to invest in it. And so the best way to break in the industry is invest in yourself. Make big choices. Be brave, put yourself out there. Go to networking events, go to film festivals. Even if you're not in Hollywood, you have to try to connect with people in the industry. Write letters, be creative, make people pay attention. Okay, makes sense? It's, I mean, it's hard to answer, yeah, especially today. It's harder and harder, but basically so my answer write an undeniable screenplay. Oh, that's the starting point. Yes, I know I get that. Third question comes from someone in Idaho named Scott. What did I gotta do, honey? Okay, no. The question Scott asks is, do you start with character or plot first? Well, Desiree Scott wants to ask you, do you start with character or plot first?

44:07

I think it's all about character.

44:10

That's my answer. Character is everything, yeah, but you still have to have a plot. You have your mind your plot first, yeah, but if you build your plot first, it can find your characters. Your characters need to help you that plot. So, I mean, you have to have both. But for me, I think it's always about the character. Even if you think of the plot, you're like, hey, now we got to build the character first. So character first. For me, last question comes from Marco, from LA California, Los Angeles.

44:40

Marco says, What separates hobby writers from professional writers?

44:46

Hmm, what would you think I would say the time invested

44:53

i because, to me, a hobby writer is like, Oh yeah, I'll pick that up. Oh yeah, I'll work on that. Just like any craft or.

45:00

Right? Oh, yeah, I'll do that. But if you're really invested and you're set, you set specific times and, yeah, I got to be consistent with this. To me, I think that's what makes more of a writer, okay, professional. I mean, I yeah, I mean, I can't disagree. I think for for me, it's, it's more about being proactive. You want to get better. You want to get feedback. You want to be challenged.

You want to learn from your mistakes. You want to market yourself. You want to try and do all these things. The hobbyists are the writers I see who just sit in their basement, write their screenplays, move on to the next one, share them with their cousin. That's it, right? So people say, What do you Oh, I'm a screenwriter. Oh, okay, so you're not actually trying to rise above, you know, nothing like that's kind of like, I want to be like Simon Cowell, sometimes when a writer, not when a writer's script isn't good, but when you offer them. Okay, so here's some stuff that I think you can do to make yourself better as a writer, and better, you know, make your script better and and it, all they do is turn it, turn it right, turn the volume down, right? That's a hobbyist screenwriter, someone who's not willing to grow and be challenged and be told this isn't working. Work harder, right? Or the writers that just enter the contest train every year with the same scripts and just, oh, I mean, okay, no, they told me, here's all the reasons. Oh, I didn't even place in the quarter finals. Well, the next year, I'm going to submit my script again, and I'm going to do 7000 rewrite skills, perfect. No, I'm just going to submit the same script again, right? That expect to win. Yeah, that's a hobbyist, right? Yeah, you have to take it seriously. You have to be proactive. You have to remember that people like you have to steal someone's job. You have to take a top screenwriter and move them aside and take their spot. You can't do that if you don't take it seriously. No, exactly that makes sense. So that's my answer. Hey, Scott, and that's it. We're done. I want to remind the listeners that they can go and give us five stars. We like five stars. We do. We love stars. Yeah, subscribe. Subscribe to the podcast. Share the podcast if you can. And like I mentioned earlier, if you have any questions, comments, idea for future episodes, please email us at hello@scriptreaderpro.com Yes. And if you are desperate for more of this, we've,

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