

Ep #66: Showing Versus Telling

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On this episode, we're talking all about the difference between showing versus telling.

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Yeah, it's something that a lot of writers just don't quite understand. 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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Hi everybody. Hi, hello everybody. How are you? How are you? How are you? Hello everybody, and how are you? How are

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you today? Is that how it ends?

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No, that's the song, that preschool song. I don't know

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preschool songs. Hey, Yes,

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Scott, yes. This is the Script Reader Pro podcast.

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It is. You are the host. I am so good at your job. I couldn't do this without you. It would be so boring.

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Thank you. What do you want? What do you

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want now, I don't know, a hug and a kiss, maybe,

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if you're lucky. Okay, I'm Desiree. I'm the host of the Script Reader Pro podcast. This is Scott.

1:01

Yes, I am Scott. I'm one of the team here at Script Reader Pro. I'm a writer myself, analyst mentor. I've provided notes on over 10,000 screenplays in my career so far. So I'm taking all of the stuff that I've learned over time as a writer myself, dealing with reps and producers and all these kind of things, as well as what I see in screenplays, what works it doesn't. That's why I'm here to hopefully pass stuff on that you know, helps you become a better writer,

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and hopefully it helps you decide whatever you're trying.

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She's back, folks, Desiree's on fire today. This girl is on fire. She is this girl. So how do we know where you start a podcast?

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Well, first of all, though we are talking about showing versus telling, which we're going to get to in a moment, but we always talk about what we have seen lately, right? We were discussing what we should talk about before we started airing, and I said I don't think we should talk about that one, because I found it to be kind of lame. Yeah, it's a movie

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you watched the other night. What's on Prime it's called bad guy,

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bad guy, bad guy. Yeah, what you gonna do, what you gonna do, and they come for you, bad guy,

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bad boys. Is that song I'm really in. The lyrics you are, yeah, I don't know what's going on, but the the show starts stars Sean and William Scott, but you haven't seen in something for a long, long time. And this actor, his name is Johnny Simmons, and it was, you know, it's a decent show. It says based on a true story. And was it a true

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story or facts? True Facts that's based on a

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true story. And it was about this narcotics guy in Texas who came or Tennessee, yeah, Tennessee. And he's like, oh, you know, we're got a big drug bus. We're gonna deal all this in this really small town, crappy Police Department.

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Loser. Something to lose? The blues to loose the lapu pluza,

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I don't know. But anyways, it was okay. Interesting note about Johnny Simmons. Which one was Johnny Simmons. He was the, the main cop, the main officer with the beard, the one who was one girl, yeah, yeah. Anyways, he was in, I don't know if you remembered him, but he was in this movie that our daughter watched endlessly, called Hotel for Dogs. He was in it. He was the the guy. Is he the dog? No, he was the guy. But anyways, so then, When? When? Damien? Damien, you don't show how smart you are. The guys who made the movie whiplash, he shot, it's a famous thing. He shot a short kind of proof of concept of what he thought his feature would be, and it's about the drums and the drum teacher who's mean and awful. Anyways, when he shot that, he had JK Simmons, who ends up being in the movie as the band instructor, and the guy the drummer, was played by Johnny Simmons. And then when he was getting the funding to do the movie, they said, No, even if he wanted to use Johnny Simmons, and they said, No, won't draw enough people in. Not a big enough name, replaced him with Miles Teller who obviously big, big movie star. So I was wondering what happened to this guy, and he was in this movie. So anyways, a little tidbit that desert doesn't care about, but maybe the people who are listening, who like movies and trivia and all that kind of stuff. Anyways, you lost me, Scott.

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It was just a rambling podcast.

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Is not for you. This

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is always about me. It's about you,

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but it's not for you. So that's what we watched. It was okay, check it out if you want. Wasn't like, mind blowing, but wasn't

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super engaging. Slow. It's like, but it wasn't slow, but it was but it wasn't it was slow. We're just like, hey, what's gonna happen? And I like truth based on true stories. But hey, I watched the other day. Yeah, I watched an episode about this dude in Canada, yeah, well, this dude went in, like, I think it was like, what was it the 50s or something? I don't know, 50, 6070s, yeah, one or the other, 131, or three decades went into a bank. Uh, attached dynamite to himself, and then ended up getting 100 grand, walked out of the bank, and then blew up.

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Blew Yeah, he became just a busy he exploded piece

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of dynamite, and then all of the money went in the air, and people went crazy. And then they were like, no, no, no, please. Captured all the money. They still do not know. I guess there was body parts.

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I walked in to the part you were watching, and this guy's like, yeah, me and my buddy were there. We were like, teenagers at the time, and all of a sudden, my friend has this guy, a piece of this guy's body, just like, slap land on his forehead. He pulled it off, and he was grossed out. And he's like, I think it's a large intestine.

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That's what he thought it thought. He thought it was an intestine. They said that pieces of this dude's body flew for over two blocks. Wow. Fast forward to when they were recently in the 2000s 2006 I don't know, something like that. They were renovating one of We're redoing one of the buildings, or tearing the building down or something. Someone went on the roof, okay,

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roof, and there was a piece of

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a guy, not a piece of body that would have been disintegrated. Yeah, it was his head. No, it was not his head. It was one of his pistols. Oh, it flew. It had flown and landed, and it was still like it looked like it had been blown up, yeah, but it still had bullets in the chamber, crazy.

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So lesson here,

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they don't know who this guy

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is, because there's nothing to collect it.

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They've tried to ask people for DNA if they can do it, but there's a lot of steps do you have to go through? Yeah, and it

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was so long ago, yeah. But lesson there is what, it's probably not best to strap explosive, explosive stuff to your body when you burn a bank and then have a smoke after, when you leave, have a smoke.

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He didn't smoke. But the thing is, that's crazy is people were like, oh, suicide he was doing. And it's like, why would he steal 100 grand for suicide? Makes no sense. No, he wanted to be like threatening, and that's what it does. And he didn't,

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it didn't, yeah, and then it just something went

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wrong when he left. And something went really, really wrong.

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Wow, yeah, he's got yes

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after that happy story, happy, happy body parts of detail. Are we gonna? Can I segue that into something about

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body parts? Do it segue your way?

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I don't know. We're going

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to be talking about so someone can tell you about what a human body exploding and body parts all over the street looks like. Someone can tell you that, or they can show you completely different experience.

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God, I can't even give you enough credit for that. I normally do that so well, but I didn't know what we were really talking about, because, as the listeners know, I only get the notes. He only gives them to me 20 seconds before we start.

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Yeah, because that loves to do her prep work.

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Anyways, Scott, I

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thought this would be a good, good podcast. We recently did this rewrite accelerator course, and one of the writers I was working with, he got a note on his script from someone that said the script needs to show more than tell. Right now, it's telling a lot more than it's showing, and he had a really hard time trying to understand what they meant, where they kind of meant it was happening, and his idea of what show versus tell was didn't quite equate to what it actually is. So a lot of writers, I think, might struggle with that, because you feel like you're showing it, because you're having your character do something, or whatever that we can see, but it's the way you're writing it. You write it in a way that is telling what we're supposed to understand,

rather than showing us what we're supposed to understand. So there's a there's an art to it. You have to be subtle about it. But it got anyways. These are going to be a lot of tips. We'll explain some stuff. And then I've got, like, a mock up of a scene that the first, first time we look at the scene, that's everything that happens in that scene is telling. And then you we're going to see the difference in showing and we'll post that in the show notes as well. So you can take a look at that, bring it up. It up on your device, whatever you're listening to, if you want to as we go through it. So here we go. You ready?

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Yes, it says showing versus telling in Screenwriting. Yep.

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So what is the first thing people need to remember that what film is,

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let me sound like I actually know what I'm talking about. I think, Scott, what look at your notes, and I think what it actually is, if I'm, if I'm actually thinking, honestly here, I would say it's, it's, it's quite a visual medium.

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Yes, it's a visual medium. Yes, we need to see what's going on. It's meant to turn into something that is shot, that is on film, that is in motion, and moving right a motion picture. So basically, the thing to keep in mind is, if we can't see it or hear it, meaning, if the audience can't see it or hear it, it doesn't exist. It doesn't happen, right? We don't see it. And then there's, there's little things that obviously there's, there's little tricks and cheats you can do, right? So basically, in your action, if you want to. Write a sentence in a way that is specifically for the reader, right, to keep them entertained or having fun or something like that, then that's fine. What the rate you know certain things we just know aren't going to be there. But if you say something like this, character was just at a bank that got robbed, and he's coming in to tell his girlfriend about it, and then the scene goes on. Well, no, why are you doing that? Just you can't. Are you at having Why are you telling us, this is all the stuff that he did before he can show us? Well, we can't see it anyways. So the audience, you're

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saying, if you're just reading

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the script, yeah, so the reader shouldn't

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get something. You need to say, reader, then, because I thought you were meaning like, Oh, I'm sorry, yes.

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So the reader, so if the reader is reading that in this script, right? This is what the

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character they're not gonna be able to see it obviously,

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until then it shouldn't be there. So that's kind of like a good rule of thumb. Give another example of what shouldn't be there, yeah? So we're, I mean, there's a lot, lots of little things right now, but basically saying Desiree is furious. Well, what does that just tell us she's furious. So you wouldn't write that. You would show you would you would say you would have Desiree do something that shows she's furious, like when you when, when someone comes in and they slam a door so hard it almost breaks it off the frame. That is an action that makes us understand, holy crap, that person's furious, instead of just having it say that person's furious, right? So that's the difference.

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So it's basically the word you're missing is an action, right? You missed that in that whole blab of blab blab

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blab blab. I'm sorry, nobody,

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it's an action. Yes, it is. So instead of, instead of, instead of writing down what that person is feeling, or what it is you need to show by having

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them do something exactly. Yeah, that's it. End of podcast. Understood, done. Good job. Desiree, but basically, like, okay, so, so telling is when you're writing internal states, right? Like, I just said, Desiree is furious, so she feels anxious. You can't tell us how she feels. That's for a novel. That's for something else. This is not, this is a movie script. You can't tell us how we never see

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because we never see feelings Exactly. So we see

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feelings we we do in

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action, right? But we never see feelings on the page. So, and

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that's the tricky part, because you know someone's reading this, but you can't give them that. You have to only give them what the audience is going to receive, right? He is heartbroken. No, don't just say he's heartbroken. Have him in a crumbled mess, crying on the floor that's heartbroken. Right? Over explaining in action lines is another big one, right? So you say, you know, whatever, Scott walks into a room and he does what he's doing because he's insecure.

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What is he doing? You can't tell that.

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You can't tell the reader he's doing well, whatever he's doing. You can't even add that on because he's insecure. That can't be seen by the audience.

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You can't shoot that, no, but you could have him hiding around the corner, and then someone that he knows comes and pops out, and then he kind of ducks back because he realizes that he's a mess and hasn't showered in five days and smells so he's insecure about that,

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sure, right? Yeah, exactly. Or, like someone, someone's about to be on a date, a guy's waiting at a table, the girl is coming and and you want to show that that guy's insecure. So you know he's he's tapping his fingers on the table. You can see his hands a little shaky. He's having trouble breathing, those kind of things. You show us what he's feeling right. So on the nose, dialog dial is a killer. Dialog is a killer. And this is the biggest thing that the writer I was referencing the beginning was missing, is that in dialog, a lot of people just make the mistake of telling us everything instead of showing it in the dialog. So on the nose, dialog that is telling is, I'm really angry at you right now. So that character is just telling that person, telling the audience specifically exactly what they're feeling right and you know, I'm really angry at you right now, instead of you are such a frickin idiot. I can't believe you would do that. You know, you don't want to just have that thought, that subtext, just blah out there that is telling you're telling us too much. You have to entertain.

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I want to go get a coffee with you. Can you please put two shots of espresso, an extra cream, and five sugar free vanilla syrups in there when we go and walk for the coffee. Now, when we go for coffee, let's do that.

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That's on the nose dialog, yeah, you wouldn't say that to me. Yeah. No, I'd say, Let's go for coffee. Yeah. But if instead say, Let's go for coffee and I need like, four, like five shots of espresso in there, it

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would tell you that your need to be up for some reason, right?

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That person's tired, needs energy. You're not going to say, oh, because I'm so tired, I need energy. You're just because I know

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that well last night, because I was up until two in the morning because I couldn't stop watching this episode of Dateline, or this episode where they killed this dude and his body parts were flying everywhere. So now I'm feeling very antsy, and I really feel like I need to pick me up. So let's go for coffee. Yeah, exactly, so

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you don't over explain exactly, exactly so. And then backstory dumps right characters explaining, instead of revealing right? The worst that this happens all the time in scripts is where all of the exposition, all the backstory. Oh, well, why is she? Why is that person so defensive? Oh, well, let me tell you. And then you big, big explanation of their backstory. You want that backstory. You want the things that are wrong with that person. You want that brokenness, those flaws, to be shown if you can show it, show it, right? Just so that's, that's the biggest that's, those are the things to avoid. Okay, you know what else you should avoid?

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Yes, it says backstory dumps. You should also avoid trauma, dumping.

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Trauma dumping in life. Don't Trump a dump

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to be no but I'm saying it is kind of related. Relatable, right? Yeah? It's like, well, that's giving way too much backstory. We don't need. We just met you on the street. Yeah, don't give us over explaining and backstory of everything exactly. Just let us find out who you are first, not that you're a mess, who needs serious hours of counseling, exactly, and mental health, yeah, exactly.

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So there's say, there's these two guys here, maybe, maybe they're they're dads, and their kids are playing soccer, and they're on the sidelines, and one guy comes up to the the other guy, and, you know, the second guy's nervous that at this guy coming up to him, and the guy then kind of moves his his hand really quickly, like, because he's gonna, like, shake, shake the guy's hand, and the guy just immediately, kind of like jolts and jerks. That's something that can show this guy's reactive, something the way he lifted his hand. Maybe this guy's been beaten recently, like you're showing us. We don't even need to know that backstory in full. That's, that's, that's what that's meaning. So, so basically, if it relies on explanation, yeah, instead of behavior, is it showing or telling?

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It's telling exactly, yeah. So okay, so here it says, Here, now you have showing what works. So you talked about telling what to avoid. So we're not talking about what works with telling, because nothing works with

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telling, no, no, exactly.

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So just all telling is avoid all telling, show, don't showing. And you're gonna go over what works.

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Yeah, these are the things. These are the things to keep in mind of what so when you're looking at your stuff and you're asking, Are you showing or telling right behavior over emotion? Right? You show someone's behavior. It tells you their emotion, right? That's the thing is, you're showing it so you don't have to explain it. You don't have to overdo it, okay? Subtext in dialog, like we went over. You don't just dump everything out there. You show us how that person is making what they want to tell someone known effectively. Now I know why that you

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get frustrated with me because you're always like, don't play these games. Just tell me what you want. Yeah, that is a writing thing, and I'm going to attribute it to writing. And that makes me mad. Okay? Because sometimes I am telling

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you, okay, Scott, I just bought this plant at the store. It's so beautiful. It's perfect. How much do you think it was? I don't know. Dad's like, 17, nope. More like 19, nope, almost there. Keep going. I don't care how much was it. No, keep guessing. I don't know. 2021, 7520 and 180 that. And then I'm like, I don't want to play this game anymore. Just tell me how much it is

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that I don't like that.

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Okay, well, I don't know what we do about that.

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Well, I don't know either.

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Compromise in some way.

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Maybe you just listen to my me Blab, because I have to listen to you blab every time we have I guess you do. Yes, no, I do. I'm with writing in general. You can't get away. Okay, so,

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so also visual clues work, right, props, a setting that they're in, certain habits that someone has that tells us about them by showing it to us, right? Like stuff, but you're showing it to us so we understand. Okay, so not just

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that this guy named Scott likes to eat gumballs like he's a kindergarten child. It's that we're showing the piles and piles of chewed gum that are sitting on the floor, that are sitting in a used cup, that are sitting on a piece of Kleenex, that are sitting on the chair next to him. We're just showing the gum. Yeah, exactly.

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And then when Desiree walks in the room and sees the pile of gum, does she have to say anything? Or what can she do? She can roll her eyes. I can be like, or even just offer one word, like, ridiculous, right? Instead of being like, you know what? I'm so sick and tired of this gum habit you have, and how many gumballs you eat, like, right? You got it. That's a perfect example. Perfect example pointing out all of my

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flaws, all of your flaws. There is, there is many listeners. So, just so you know, to the listeners, many flaws. There are, there. There is many, there are many flaws. Okay, yes, so visual clues. And then you have, and then

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this one, you already said you have, action reveals.

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This is written down, I

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swear it's like you read these this time, I didn't read it. Action reveals. Action reveals character. So we learned. Learn character through what they do under pressure. That's the best way let's understand what someone does under pressure. So that's the best way to showcase a character, right? We don't need backstories and a whole bunch of explanations and this and that about a character. Put them in a moment, like if it was our daughter. For example, you send our we your audience needs to know everything about about our daughter. All of a sudden, our daughter walks into a room, and there's 87 people in there, and they all stop and turn and stare at her. You can then make us understand everything we need to understand about about our daughter and how they react in that under pressure moment. I will tell having to explain anything,

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no, and I will tell you guys the exact image to see in your mind. It's when the camera, the video camera, they're making a motion picture, and the video camera pans over and stays on one character who doesn't want to be filmed, and that would be Garth from Wayne, and Garth, and he's like, you know the part, yeah, that's our kid.

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Yeah, that's that is. But, I mean, it's even as some simple as our Asha, Asha, but Asha walks in the room. Door closes behind them. All of a sudden, we cut. We look at their face like, I don't want to be here. And then we cut, and we see all these people looking at the at ASHA. And then the camera goes back to Asha, and the doors closed, she's gone. Yeah. That tells us everything we know. Or when you spend so many things you can do,

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when you span back to Asha, you can see just the end that she's like, ducking and trying to run away.

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Yeah, yeah. All you see is like a little bob of Arrow hair going under the camera. Yeah. So in in action, under pressure. Best way, if you can do that, you don't have to tell us all this stuff about them. So it's perfect. So some quick examples of the differences right, between telling and showing. Okay, so telling is, do you want to read these? Dez, so telling

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is, Sarah is nervous.

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Okay, so you're telling us she's nervous. Showing would be what Sarah

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hovers over the send button, deletes, rewrites, deletes again, right?

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Telling us she's nervous about this email. You're not just telling us, right? Another one telling they don't get along, yeah? So if you wrote that on the page in the script, they don't get along, you're just telling us that audience can't see that. So how would you show it?

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They said at opposite ends of the couch, the TV blares. Neither looks at the other. You know what else is a good one. They go out to a restaurant to eat dinner. Yeah, and they're both on their cell phones, yep, the entire time. Exactly that drives me nuts.

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I know exactly. It's ridiculous. So next one telling

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he's furious, it should be he's furious. Exclamation, no.

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Well, you're still telling us. So that shouldn't tell you there, right? Well, how would you show it, right?

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Now you have nothing, because you haven't look at the next line. You have a space. I just like to give you a hard time trying to save space with your flaws. Okay? With your flaws, showing is he sets the plate down too hard. It cracks right?

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So he's doing something that showcases easier. Last one, telling

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she loves him, showing it. She refills his coffee before he asks, right? You do

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that all the time. Must mean I love you.

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This morning, you made my tea. I did.

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So those are examples of the differences between telling us something and then actually showing it, so we can understand it that way. So characters rarely say or do exactly say what, exactly what they feel, right? So you, and that's not just about dialog, right? Unless you're

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Desiree, unless you're Desiree, well, yeah, but, but a lot of people do say how they're feeling, right, yes, but we want to be able to see it.

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Yeah, exactly. So like that last example, right? You characters, not just going to walk up and say, I just love you. I love you so much. I mean, some people do, we do that all the time, but like, I love you so much. Instead, she comes up and she just, he's working away, he's writing or whatever, and then she just refills his coffee. She doesn't have to say a thing. She doesn't have to, because you don't. You normally don't. It's what

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you do, right? I know, I know, I know I normally don't. I'm a little bit on the short side, so

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you are. So let's look at some practical screenwriting tools about this. I got five of them. Okay, so the first one, do you want to do the title? And I'll explain

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the first one is cut internal language?

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Yeah, and again, this will be in the show notes for everybody. But cutting internal language means you remove everything, like feels, thinks, realizes, all that kind of stuff, right? Ponders, anything, any of those, internal pieces of language, okay, replace it with action and behavior, just like we outlined in those different examples of being furious and and putting a plate down too hard. Okay, so cut all that stuff out. The next one, ask yourself this critical question, can a

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camera capture this? Yep, if no, then you. Have to rewrite,

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and if yes, then you're showing exactly you're doing it right. Number three, use physical behavior to showcase how someone is actually

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feeling like fidgeting,

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yes, avoiding eye

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contact over tidying. Oh, why do you think I put that in there? I love that one so much,

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but that says a lot. Well, you like, Okay, so that's the thing, right? When I walk in a room and Desiree is cleaning and not stopping and cleaning and cleaning and tidying, what does that tell you? She's upset about something, she something happened. She wants to get out of her head, all that kind of stuff that. So you're using those you're using physical behavior, because that defines what someone

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I did talk to my friend, Haley about this issue.

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Yeah, yeah. I saw an Instagram video about this woman, and it was just the caption was me wandering around my house looking for something to throw out. I don't know what it is yet, but I

will find it. And I was like, that is so you okay, let me check the fridge here. Now I don't think there's anything in that. I'm gonna

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throw something out. Yep, that's a good topic.

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And what were you saying to Haley about over tidying

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that I think that we should get you a ladder from the library, like the old libraries, right? We should attach it to the side of the kitchen, upper cupboards, so that you have to climb up there with your toaster to have your toast up on the

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toaster, on the on this in the space between the cupboard and the ceiling to avoid crumbs on the counter. Crumbs, yes, yeah, see you doing that. You telling me to do that shows me. But you if I walked out and there was a ladder there with a toaster, what is that? And you're just like, see for yourself, and I would climb up the ladder, and I would see the toaster, and I would know exactly what? Yeah, exactly. So if you remember to

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climb up a ladder, yeah, let

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objects, oh, sorry, what is the next one

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Desiree, let objects tell the story.

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Yeah? So, for example, right, a messy room equals an emotional state. You're showing someone's emotional state in some same

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thing, if someone's in there and then they're throwing crap randomly, yeah, exactly. That shows that they're like panic trying to find something over tidying. Yeah, right, no, I wouldn't throw things, no, but it's only tied date, right? Yeah, but definitely not

27:09

no on open mail equals avoidance, right? That showcases this person's avoiding something without saying, Oh, I'm gonna do my bills are all over past due. I can't figure out right there, just here's some stacked mail, right? Are you an avoider? I am such an avoider. It's not even

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funny, since we're talking about all of your

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flaws today, so flawed, it's ridiculous. I would make a great movie character, wouldn't I?

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Yeah, is Desiree an avoider? No, completely

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frickin face of whatever it is she's

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needing to I don't even wait. I'm like, No, if

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you don't have something to avoid, you try not to avoid it.

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I know. I know, showing

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someone's packed suitcase sitting there waiting, that shows

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intention or laziness or on the run or

27:54

whatever, right? So, yeah, it shows a lot of different things. So you're showing us, so let objects be part of what tells your story. And then number five, use conflict. Yeah, don't explain character. Force them to make a choice on something right? Use conflict, because conflict creates drama. Drama creates tension. Tension creates engagement, on and on and on. That's why

28:16

you guys listen to us, because we

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we are always conflicting

28:21

with something, no, with each other,

28:23

yeah, but in a fun way, right? Because not all conflict has to be negative, no, but

28:27

they don't know. It's fun. Yeah.

28:28

So those are the those are five things, right, cutting internal language, asking, can a camera capture this? Using physical behavior, letting objects tell the story, and using conflict, okay, so common mistakes that writers make instead of using those tools are

28:45

writing like a novel, so inner

28:47

thoughts, you said, or like pages of nonsense that don't need to be there. Yeah, over directing emotions so constantly, and we'll see this all the time in what is called the parenthetical Desiree. Are you familiar with that? That's the brackets, yeah, brackets which are right underneath character's name, yeah. Before their dialog, most writers will constantly tell a reader every emotion someone has, right? They're saying this annoying, sadly, annoying whist like whispering is fine, because that's specific, but, yeah, constantly saying what that person's feeling. No, that means you're a bad writer. Unfortunately, that's what that means. Sorry, because if you're a good writer, you'll have written it in a way that we can understand how that character or that line, because we, we've, we've seen how they're feeling right, that we can feel it exactly, telling us they say it angrily is a cop out. You need to show us they're angry first. So next one

29:46

dialog that explains instead of implies. Yeah, so that's what you hate

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about me. Yeah, I do you imply stuff. So you explain and explain and explain. Mm, hmm, right. Mm. But you never really explain. You always imply something. And I got to figure it out like it's a game.

30:04

I know that you know why bad?

30:07

That is bad in life, but

30:08

great in a movie or TV script. Okay, that's great, Scott, but it's because I wasn't heard as a child. I don't so the thing is, is it's deep, deep, deep down, your characters have to have some kind of substance. So maybe you have a character that's like that, that over explains, and then that's the back story, is that they always felt unheard as a child.

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Yep, exactly, right. Yeah, exactly. So that can

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carry forward, not in just one conversation or one thing that that character is doing, that carries forward in every single aspect of what they

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do, everything. Yeah, that's why they are. Understand that's who they are, how your character was built, right? And a lot of people just don't get that. But, like, I've said it many times, and you say it again, because it's the best thing you can do for character, is understand what piece of their childhood or youth defined them as a human being. And it doesn't always have to be bad. A lot of people are like, Oh, well, not everyone has trauma. Okay, not everyone has major trauma, but everybody. I mean, if you were in in grade seven, you were teased, like, to such an extent that you were just, you were self conscious all your life, that and that right, there is enough to set up an understanding of why you are the

31:21

way you are speaking of trauma. Yes, I did watch a session that was free last week on past traumas. There was something very important when you were saying about traumas, doesn't have to be big trauma. He said, trauma is not about what should have happened, it's what didn't

31:49

that is so true.

31:50

That's so true, and it's not all the time, but what happened? It's the hugs you didn't get, the reassurance you didn't need, the feeling of being seen. Yeah, that's what trauma is. And so for people who are like, Well, my character doesn't have trauma. Everybody carries some trauma. It doesn't necessarily mean something bad happened to them. It means that something good didn't

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happen to them, yeah, or something they wanted, or something they felt they deserved, or whatever,

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right, yeah, or that they needed. So, so true. So every character, when you're looking at that, every character exactly

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like, Oh, my, my parents didn't support me when I said I wanted to go and be a ballet dancer. You did no. But that lack of support that that really does affect you forever. It does. People who

are supposed to hold you up and support you don't. They don't. Yeah, and a great way to show that, instead of having them just know we don't want you to do that. We're not interested. Is that ballet dancer has their first recital, and they're sitting there waiting and watching for their parents, and their parents don't show up. Wait, there you go. You've showed us without having to say a

32:52

single thing about it. And the person who's in ballet is now a 42 year old adult, yes, hoping that their parents will still show

33:00

and they're and they're famous, and people have come just to see them

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because they're so good in there, right?

33:07

Yeah, then, and you don't have to say it in that you haven't told us this, no, it's just shown us. So, great example. So, and then the

33:12

last thing for common mistakes here is you have not trusting the audience. Yeah, I

33:17

end up putting a lot of that in a lot of the notes. Or mentoring I do is saying you have, you can trust the audience a little more, that they're smart enough, that they're smart enough to put this together, they're smart enough to understand how that character is feeling. They'll get it on what they've said or done. Yeah, that they get it. So you have to trust the audience over and that's where the over explaining comes in, right? That you're, you're like, Okay, I don't think the audience gets this. So I'm going to then have a character explain what just happened, right? So that's, that's, you know, a big part of it. So what we're going to do now is we're going to go over this scene. So we have the first, and they're short, right? The first version of the scene is the telling, okay, so we're going to go over that, and then we're going to go over the second scene, which is showing Desiree, you will play Lena, and I will play mark. And there's not a lot of you know, there's narration, so we'll go through that too, all right. So here we go. Version one telling interior kitchen night. Lena 30s is upset and frustrated. She feels like her partner doesn't care about her anymore. Mark enters, Lena says,

34:23

I'm really upset because you never listen

34:25

to me. Mark says, That's not true. I've just been stressed.

34:29

You don't care about this relationship anymore.

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I do care. I'm just tired. They both feel hurt and distant. So that scene, basically every action line told us they were how they were feeling. Here is how you show the same stuff, but in a very visual and interactive way. Here we go. Number two, interior kitchen. Night, the sink is full. One clean plate sits on the rack. Lena scrubs the same spot on the counter. Hard Mark enters, drops. His keys, they clatter.

35:01

Mark B clatter to the floor, and everything in his bag falls.

35:06

This isn't me, okay. Mark, did you write this? Yeah, Mark, you did write this? Yes. Mark enters. Drops his keys, they clatter. Mark says, hey, no response. He opens the fridge, stares, closes it. Mark says, you eat? Lena keeps scrubbing. Lena says, There's food. Mark looks at the empty stove. He says, right. A beat. He then says, I said I'd be late. Lena stops, doesn't turn. Lena says, You

35:42

always say that silence.

35:46

Mark says, Did you even read it? Mark freezes, I will. I made a mistake there that was supposed to be Lena.

35:57

That's why I said I will. Oh, wait, did you ever read it? You said, Did I even read it? I say, I will.

36:01

I will, yeah. Lena exhales, almost a laugh. She says,

36:05

yeah.

36:06

She scrubs again, same spot mark. Sets the glass down too hard. It cracks. So the first scene just told us they really didn't even say much to each other, but all of the action said she feels this. He feels that she's up. She's had enough of this. He's had enough of that. Second scene. It's all about the physicality, right? Like her sitting there, scrubbing and, you know, doing that same spot in the stove, not looking up that he's come in the room. He's saying all just really short, one or two word sentences. That tells you, right there, they're upset at each other, right? She's upset at him, he's upset at her. Sorry. There's confusion with that mistake there, but that's

it, right? That's although, even, even just the fact that they're using one or two word answers that shows us that they're pissed, that they're uncomfortable, that there's something wrong. So, so that's short example of the difference, yeah, and I'll fix that before it goes in the show notes, for sure.

37:03

Yeah, that would be nice if you fix the correct so, so

37:04

why it works? Okay, no one states their emotions in that second scene. They show them, yep, they show them, right? Like, his line, like, did you even, I think it was her line, did you even read it? And then did you even read, I think it was her, because it's supposed to be her, right? She's like, Did you even read it? And he reads,

37:20

what was it supposed to be?

37:21

Whatever she wanted him to read.

37:22

Did you even think this up? No, you don't know.

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No, I doesn't matter. I want to know. The end, probably his screenplay, her screenplay. She wrote a screenplay shot. I wasn't ready yet, so she's like, Did you even read it? And then Mark freezes that tells us he didn't read it without him having to say

37:39

it's kind of like when I send you text messages. It's like, exactly, that's where it came from. Is that really where

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it came it is because you, like, did you get my message? You didn't respond to my message? Oh, oh, when did you send? When did you send it four hours ago? And then I just, it's silence, yeah. I said, try to figure out an excuse if I didn't. And then I'm like, I will.

37:58

So that's, yeah, I will. But then Scott will say, but if you'd like, I can recite all of the last 35 movies that I've seen in order chronologically, A to B, C, D,

38:10

okay, yes. So anyways, he says, she says, I will. And then he says, I will. And then Lena exhales without almost a laugh. And that's something you can like, yeah, exactly. You

understand how she's feeling. It's a physical action. And then she's like, Yeah. So we there's a lot of story, a lot of things happening that it's exact same scene, like, exact same what the intent is, but they're both very different. So behavior, all their behavior, carries meaning, right? That the grunt, almost a laugh, right? All of the things that they're doing, Mark freezes. It carries meaning, I think,

38:44

also too, like things change depending on where they are at a given time, right? Are they in a restaurant that's a busy restaurant where they can barely hear each other? Are they at home and falling asleep like it? Yeah, that changes.

38:59

It does. Or they're at, maybe he was supposed to meet her at the at the cafe to buy her coffee. They wouldn't have the same conversation there. So, yeah, environment definitely reflects the amount of tension someone can reveal. And then objects, you'll see that a lot in there. I used a lot of objects to express the emotion, right? You know, scrub the plate cracking.

39:19

I really related to the washing dishes and scrubbing the counter. That's me. Well, guys, I'm right

39:26

now comes write what you know, right? And I'm clearly mark. So those are the things, right? So, how you create emotion through showing that it's a simple formula, okay, behavior, plus the environment, plus the subtext that is involved, right? All of the lines that delivered, they were loaded. There was subtext in there, right? So, like, even when she's like, did you read it? She knows he didn't read it. The subject, I know you didn't read it, I went.

39:53

She disappointed me and let

39:55

me down. Yeah, exactly, yeah. I'm so frustrated.

39:57

Promised something,

39:58

and my answer. Instagram message I sent you an hour ago, right? So those, those are behavior, right? Plus environment, plus subtext. So like you said, depending where someone is, the conversation is going to go very different,

40:10

divided by two squared times 5x brackets,

40:17

plus save the cat somewhere. Okay, so somewhere in there. Tip here, right? That's what I'm gonna leave you with. The first version. First version of something tells you what's happening. Okay? The second version makes you sit in it. That of those two versions, right? First version tells you what's going on. The second version makes you sit in it, meaning you've made the audience feel like they're in the middle of that moment. They're uncomfortable. They're like, I really shouldn't be here. This is just not a good place to be in this moment. That's, that's the difference, right? In screenwriting, you don't inform the audience, ready for this. You involve them.

40:54

Mind blown, boom. That's your post

40:57

it note, boom. Chuck a lock up on your laptop, right? But no, that's, that's the thing. You don't inform the audience. You're not informing them. You want them to be involved in it and feel it. Feel the best screenplays I read. I feel like I'm there with the characters. I'm in that room, I'm on that path. That is how you how you have a reader, forget they're even reading, because they're watching the movie unfold. If you're telling them everything, they're reminded they're reading. So those are the things to keep in mind. That's the difference between showing and telling. It's not just about what is written in the action line. There's so much more. And if you ever get a note saying you're you're telling more than showing, or you need to show more than tell, here, you have to kind of read between those lines and try and understand why they say that, right? It's not just about, oh, you told me something. When you can show it, it's the nuance of it. It's the art, right? It's the involving the audience. Make them sit in those moments with the characters. So while you digest all of that, we're going to take a quick break and tell you about one of our services here.

42:00

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.

42:43

And we're back.

42:44

We're back. Scariest moment of my childhood, setup, trauma. Where's that from? That's, I don't know. It's like, I don't know. It's a mixture of things in my brain. I don't know. But one of the worst things in my childhood that ever happened to me, and it probably define why I write what I write

was my sister, when she was babysitting me, she made me watch Poltergeist, which is, I mean, you look back at it now, yeah, it's still a creepy show. A lot of scary things happening, but like it traumatizes me to a degree that I can't I've been afraid of the dark for my entire life. From that I cannot swim in a pool that I can't see the bottom of because there was a pool outside that when it rained, it was being dug all these bodies started to come out that were buried under it. And like shadows. If I see shadows out of the corner of my eye, I think something like, I'll jump. I'll be in the kitchen writing, and I like, I'll jump. And I know we know this, right? Because in the movie, that's the thing, there's a branch out the window, and is it moving? Is it coming? So anyways, that was one of the worst things that ever happened to me, that instilled a lot of the fear I have my entire life. How old do you think I was when my sister made me watch poltergeist five? Six years old, pathetic. Six years old, pathetic, pathetic.

44:08

Anyways, do better. People do better. So we've got some

44:11

questions here. If you have a question you want to ask us Desiree, what should they do?

44:15

You can email us at hello@scriptreaderpro.com

44:19

Yes, questions. What I love to hear is things you want the episodes to be about. What do you want? We're on episode 66

44:29

now, I don't know, but we barely, we barely get anybody

44:33

Well, we know. I mean, we get a lot of these. I base on on that kind of stuff. But we're, we said this today. We're like, hey, well, what are we gonna talk about next time? And you know, I'd love, we would love to have some listeners say I would love to hear a podcast about this. I would love to learn more about this. So please, do we want to be different and specific and not just talking about the same stuff everyone talks about?

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And feel free to, if you would like a whole episode about me. We can do

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that as well. We can. That's because Desiree is like the ultimate movie character

44:59

that's very doable. Cool question number one, though, yes, where does this come from? Comes from, Donald in Austin, Austin. What's more important? A great concept or great execution?

45:11

Well, both, I would say, if one of those

45:16

fails, I would say concept, then, because concept is everything, if you have the the if, like, sometimes the ending, sometimes the ending will be like, Oh, that's disappointing. But yet, the whole movie was good. The concept was there. It just fell flat at the end. Whereas, if the idea isn't great, the whole concept is crappy, but then they executed it. How do you even begin executing something if the idea is crap, yeah, yeah,

45:43

I heard a quote once. I can't remember who said it, but he's like, you can you can make a really bad movie from a great script, but you can't make a great movie from a bad script, right? And I think the reason I think concepts, why I agree with you, is that sometimes people will buy a script just because of the concept, even if the script is bad, because they know they can take that concept, buy it, own it, and write a new version of that movie. So I think it doesn't, yeah, it doesn't matter how great something is pulled off. If no one is excited to read it because the concept makes them yawn, it doesn't matter how great it is. So it has to be both. Obviously, you have to have a great concept and great execution. It has to be undeniable these days, but concept is very important.

46:27

Question number two, how? And this one comes from Vanessa in Virginia Beach. Vanessa, how do you avoid making every character sound like yourself? I think not every character will really, do you think someone?

46:43

I think a lot of the time when I when I'm reading a script and it's like, okay, I don't know what these these characters all talk the same. There's no specifics, there's no personality. Everyone's the same. That's probably what's happening, is that they're, they're all just the same as the writer. Easy way to do it is when you're writing a character, just think of all the just pick one of the people you know and make their voice match that person, okay, and then no one will sound like you because you're for I mean, some friends sound like you, but they all are very different. If I was like, Okay, I want this character. I'm gonna have this character sound like Desiree, no, I'm gonna have this character sound like my buddy. Ryan, no, I'm gonna have this character sound like my mother in law. They're all going to be very, very different and nothing like me. So you know, what's

47:24

interesting now is that if I think about all of my friends, they all sound a little bit like me in different ways. Not all of them, not.

47:36

I disagree. I could not. I know which one, no, but I'm not. I'm saying. I could not hear this one friend over here saying anything the same. I get it person,

47:47

one friend, one friend, one friend.

47:49

Out of my sounds very much like, you know,

47:53

the other friends do too,

47:55

no, but not to the same degree, right? Like, I sorry. Anyways, that's a good way to do it is think of the people, even the people you don't like, or an old boss

48:03

or like, Whatever I'm saying is typically when you find friends, and when you make friends, they obviously, they end up being similar to you, or else, why would you even want to hang out with someone boring, right? But their voices are, yeah, okay. Next question comes from Samantha in Australia, Samantha says, Do you outline everything first or figure it out as you go?

48:29

Me, personally, I outline not everything, but I definitely outline before I write. But that's only my process. I never tell someone, this is how you should do it. If you are struggling and you're can't quite figure out where to go in a script, or you're just meandering, and you don't have any direction that's going to show up in the script when someone reads it. But if you're having a struggle, I would just say, step back from the script and just kind of like, scribble things down. An outline doesn't have any specific format. It can be a notebook with it's just a whole bunch of crap written in it. I have a notebook when I'm planning a script, you even when I go in and read, I don't even understand half the stuff that's in there, because it's just this you're putting your thoughts out there, and there'll be this drawing in there, right? So it's not about it being perfect, but getting kind of your thoughts all kind of thrown together in one place of where you see it going, what a major complication will be the character and what their flaw is. If you build that stuff at least a little bit ahead of time, it's going to make it an easier process when you get to those script pages. So if, but if you build want to just go, go.

49:30

If you build it, they will come.

49:31

If you build it, the pages will come.

49:33

Yes, okay. Last question is from, we have from Beth, from Toronto, Canada. Oh, Hi, Beth. Beth says, What's the fastest way to improve as a screenwriter?

49:45

Oh, what would you say? It does the fastest way?

49:48

Fastest way to improve as a screenwriter? I would say, Read screenplays.

49:52

Bam. Boo, yeah, that's the answer. Boo, can't tell you how I started to get when I ask a writer, oh, how many screenplays Do you read? I. How often did you how many scripts do you read? And they're like, oh, I don't really read screenplays. I just like, watch the movies. Figure it out. I'm like, Okay, fair enough. But why would you not study all of the amazing writing that is easily accessible? It's not 1976 where it's really hard to find scripts. You can, you can download a script in a second, one second it can right? So, read, yeah, read, read, read, read endlessly. I challenge every screenwriter to read at least, at least one, if not two, screenplays every single week, and not even just that. Doesn't have to be a produced one. It can be your friends, or you can pull it off line and blacklist or whatever, and just read scripts, right? But that's how you get better, because you can implement all the things that it teaches you. So that is my answer, and that Scott is the end.

50:46

I want to remind the listeners, if you like the podcast, to please share it. Give us. Give us five stars. Star reviews, email, email us with any questions, comments, ideas for podcasts. At hello@scriptreaderpro.com.

51:01

that is right. Check us out. There lots of services, anything you can need.

51:05

Yes. And before Scott does his final, I have to end by saying goodbye everybody and how are you. How are you, how are you Goodbye, everybody and how are you. How are you today.

51:19

You know what that is called in screenwriting,

51:21

there is a word for it, bookending. I just book handed your butt

51:26

who everything came full circle. And get excited, because over the next few weeks or month, we are going to be introducing video to our podcast. We will always have the audio version. I don't want to do it. Going to showcase Desiree. I'll be off to the side. You'll maybe see my ear,

because everyone's gonna want to see Desiree, not me. I have to get ready. Have that. It's gonna be fun. You know, it's just, it's different. Hearing you talk about stories. It's just a complete other experience. To watch you lie and to watch just how you articulate your facial expression. Watch how you look at me when I'm talking about screenwriting. It's another guys are. So it's just adds to everything.

52:12

No, it's I have to, I have to tailor myself back a bit, because if we're doing a video and I'm like, what like with my actions? Yeah, oh, I can't flapping. I do this two fingers and a thumb up, and I just do small circles.

52:31

Yeah, exactly. So watch for that. Check us out scriptreaderpro.com, like we said, because we are all about Helping writers craft wonder one page at a time.