

## Ep #75: Be a Movie and TV Detective

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On this episode, you're going to learn all about how to be a movie and TV detective. Yes, as a writer, you should always be trying to figure out why it works. So listen in.

0:15

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.

0:27

Hey, everybody! This is Desiree. I am your host with the Script Reader Pro podcast. This is Scott.

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I am Scott.

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He is a writer at Script Reader Pro, and thank you so much for joining us.

0:39

Yes, I don't know if you watched the last episode, but you're wearing the same clothes as last episode. At least I changed. I have new glasses and a new hat on.

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You have a different hat on, which is so so weird. It's kind of like freaky, freaky. It's kind of

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how did that happen?

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It's almost like what you said in the last episode about calling yourself from tomorrow and being like, "Hey, dude, wear something different. Yeah, wear a

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different hat and glasses that freak everyone out.

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No way, freakers! Desiree's

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like stuck in the same dimension.

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I am always stuck in the same dimension, but I have a noticer too.

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Yeah,

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you are not even close to your noticeer.

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I don't notice.

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No, and I notice everything. And the second he came down, I was like, "Yeah, he changed his glasses and hat. I knew instantly. Yeah,

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I wouldn't have if you had different glasses on. Be like, hi.

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No, you don't even know why I changed my hair. Most

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men, I think it's just a guy thing.

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Don't put guys in that category. Not all guys are so useless like that.

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Thanks. So, so I'm part of the team here at Script Reader Pro. My job here. Not my no. She she she is my wife, and she is funny and entertaining. And so I said, hey, why don't you host the podcast?

1:41

Let's be real though. So I use an electric wheelchair, and so when we actually do the podcast, he makes me come down here to my movie theater. My joystick away from my wheelchair. He takes me down the elevator, and then he shoots the elevator back up, so I can't leave until I'm done the podcast. I'm

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horrible. Yeah, but I'm one of the team here. I'm a writer. My job is to pass on some information, teach you some things that we maybe heard in a different way this time that helps you kind of understand it better. So that's my goal. And then Desiree is here to make fun of me and to drop

really, really great pieces of wisdom. She's really smart. So the way she the way she says things sometimes it's like yeah, I can't even touch on that. So,

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what did you want?

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Brownie points.

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Do you maybe want to go on a Hawaiian cruise for 17 days?

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Sure, let's do it. So, maybe

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want to go on october 2 next year?

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Sure. Yeah, let's do it. So, sold. Today, we start the episode like we always did, where we talk about something we've seen.

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And I see you have here nothing.

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Yes, it says over your dead body, and that was a movie that we watched. It's with Jason Siegel, which you like, fun and funny, and I think Samara leaving, and it's about a married couple who go away, and they both intend to kill each other. We talked about this

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last episode. I touched on it briefly. Yeah, so it's good that we're talking about it now more in depth.

3:02

Yeah, exactly. And it was it was weird. Like it went to some really weird places. It got really strange, but it was constantly surprising.

3:09

It was surprising. I did find a lot of it to be a little bit slowish to me. Yeah, it was, and it's kind of a little bit repetitive.

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Yeah, and as it has the whole idea of coincidence, like both of them just so happened to be wanting to kill each other while they were away, and but it was entertaining. Mainly, I mean, Jason Segel is so entertaining all the time. But it had this mechanism in it that I really enjoyed.

3:31

Mechanism.

3:32

Yes. So the story is going on, and you're like, "Oh, where is this going? And all of a sudden, this thing happens where I won't give it away, but something happens that makes you go, what the heck is going on? And then it says, all of a sudden, it cuts, and it says five days prior, and then it tells that portion of the story and how they got to that spot. And then when they get to that spot, then it's like two weeks ago. And then you know, and it keeps as it introduces new characters. But it was so. I thought it was just a really great way to tell the story because every time you thought you had it figured out, they'd add another element, another layer, and it would just make everything that much more engaging and and surprising, right?

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Well, then at the same time, I was like, okay, let's stop the cheesy train.

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Stop the cheesy train. I've never heard you say that before. I

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just came off of it.

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It's a good text because

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I'm married to a train. I got a shirt

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that says that. Stop the cheesy train.

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Stop the cheesy train! Love

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it. Anyways, yeah, it was good. It was worth it. I did

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get to the point where I was like, "Okay, enough is enough. Let's move on now.

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And then it got like brutally violent, like not just a little violent, like like shotgun exploding someone's entire face violent. It it was it was unexpected. I was like, I did not know it was going to that place because it seemed like maybe a dark comedy. You know,

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faces.

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Yes.

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Look at these little faces. Oh,

4:51

these are cute. These are cute little eyes. Well, this these are I collect action figures. You probably see them from behind me. But this, who does this look like? Everybody. Who's this? Hi. Yeah.

5:02

Let me see. Hi.

5:02

Hi. Hi. Let me see

5:05

her. Hi. Let Let me see. Look. Does it look like me?

5:09

Yeah, I think so. That looks like you. And then there's this one.

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She's cute.

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Yeah. Then there's this cute little guy. Um. This is this. See. Oh, he's got a hat in his hand and a computer. Oh, he must be a writer.

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Whatever he is,

5:22

huh? Huh? Huh? Huh? Yes. So Desiree actually made these. She got these little dude. It's my dad. My dad passed away last year, and I don't know if you can see it in the picture. Oh, oh, he's falling everywhere. I don't know if you can see it, but he kind of looks like me.

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He looks identical.

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He's kind of like old, and you know, but he's bald, and and the difference between him and me is on the on the no on the back of his head. You will see if you look carefully. You see that there's age spots on the back. I don't know how that, but anyways, there's not age spots. There is look.

5:57

Oh, that's hanging. Yeah, you did have age spots too. You did. That's

6:01

anyways. Yeah,

6:02

here's a little sign.

6:03

This is his cat that they were inseparable. They both passed on now. So, anyways, this our little memorial. He was always a big supporter of my writing. He was the one person that just got Desiree the second she met him. Never, never saw her wheelchair. Never had an issue. Some people have issues when when you decide to be with someone who has a disability. He didn't, and man, they he would just make fun of her, and she would fire it right back. And anyways, those that's our little that's our little shrine. That was my family. That was

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my segue into speaking of pets.

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Speaking of heads, okay.

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Also today, guys.

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Yep, we

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are talking about how you can become a detective. I love that idea. I'll see if I can relate this to what I like about being a detective because I watch detective mystery shows constantly.

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If you could, you you you would be an amazing detective because you love uncovering. Like I remember when Ancestry.com got big and you could do the DNA test. Holy, she uncovered like 17 layers of her family tree. She got in touch. Oh, here's this fifth cousin living in Ukraine, and here's this 17th cousin over here, and and it's just anyways. Yeah, you'd be a really good detective. But we're gonna break down movies and TV. We're gonna start with movies. Just I I want to try and kind of like drive the point home of how once you watch something and you've enjoyed and you thought that was really good, I would love to write something like that. How you can go back into it and the types of questions you want to ask, like if you were a detective and you had to get to the bottom of something, how would you do that? And each kind of movie speaks with a different kind of like. Here's something in in you know here's an action movie. In this movie, this is the kind of thing you can be looking for. In the TVs, it's like this is the kind of shows in TVs. In television, this is the kind of show it is. So how how does your mind wrap in there? Because you can't have the same mindset for every genre. They're all going to be a little bit different, you know. Try every genre to write to see what what works for you. But anyways, that's what we're going to be going through. So got a lot of like stuff that we're going to be reading off of our notes, which you don't normally do. But my brain just kept throwing all this stuff down, and I thought it was important. Remember

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stuff like that. Yeah, but hopefully you guys find something useful out of the podcast

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for sure. Yeah, but how to be a detective? So yeah, yeah, for sure. It's about it's about always processing what you're what you're learning, what you're watching, and taking in. So so we're

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going to go over movies first now. Doc here has assignment number one, which is Top Gun Maverick. Yes.

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So so for for me, the thing to take away here before Maverick's final mission, right? Which you see in a lot of action movies. Here's here we go. It's building up, building up. Now here's the final mission. Before he gets there, you want to write down every skill, lesson, or even small moments that later become essential to the climax. That is all about setup and payoff, right? Topic of Maverick is an excellent movie to do that with because there is so much happening in the training of these young people in what they what they are expected to do. The pressures of you have these many seconds only, and and there can't be any mistakes. And you know he's teaching them to do this, and every single thing that he teaches them comes out in the in the end, but in in ways that you're not expecting. So you want

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so you want the listeners and viewers to go write down every skill of Maverick.

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Yeah, every skill. Yeah, every skill lesson or small moment for him and for others. So

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and the purpose of these activities.

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These are assignments. This is like this is work.

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This is your assignment. This is

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what you are doing to work to learn skills. And

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then it'll be like in that cartoon where then it explodes. Go the gadget.

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Yes.

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Okay. So you want this is one example of an assignment that they could do.

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Yeah. So as a detective, your detective questions are all about investigating the links between everything.

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Okay. So asking yourself, so you've watched this. Movie.

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Yes.

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So asking yourself, Dan, and just let me so that I can understand. Yeah. The whole point of this is why

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to get your brain processing things like a detective, figuring out how did this work, why did this work, what did they do,

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why though.

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So you can put it in your own. So you can learn those skills.

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It's the skills. It is, yeah. So so you will read these

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kind of questions. So you watched Maverick. You go back in. You write. You start to write all these things, just like a detective would. I'm going to go over the crime scene. I'm going to go over the evidence, and I'm going to try and figure out how everything links.

10:34

Okay. So here's the questions, though. It has detective set up and payoff questions. Yeah. So you want to investigate the links. So you want to look at what link leads to where. So the question, the first question you have is which moments are actually setups? Yeah.

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So going in and identifying, okay, this setup, this was a setup because I remember it paid off this way. This is a setup because it paid off this way, and and write them down and figure out where they were placed, how many were in the first 10 pages? Then there was one on page 13, one page 2126, Where were those plotted? Where were those paced? Okay. Were there certain ones that you thought was a setup, but it didn't pay off? It's all about breaking it down, studying, and growing your understanding of writing.

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Are you wanting them to do this setup? Like, are you wanting them to go and write this as they're after they've watched the movie, or you want them to read the script because you just said on page 60, page 20,

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or minutes or whatever. As a screenwriter, when you watch something, you see the script in your head, right? So you've watched the movie, you're going back to now do the investigation.

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You're going to do the investigation part. So, but some people do this differently. Me being one of them.

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Yes, I know you're overanalyzing everything.

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So I already am thinking, okay, I'm just going to read the questions ahead of time, watch the movie so that I can look for these things.

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Yeah, you as I

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watch, and then if I have to watch the movie, the movie again, I'll watch it a second time. You can do

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that. I encourage to watch the movie first because then you get an organic understanding of what works for you.

12:04

Okay, got it.

12:05

Right, because you'll recognize, oh, that paid off huge because he set up that that was gonna, you know, they can't hit that speed because if they do, this will happen, and then that happened, right? That kind of thing. Okay, so so just read those questions. Of these are the kinds of questions you'll have.

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Got it. Okay, so then the next one is what what becomes major payoffs? So do we need to touch on that at all? No,

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these are just some of, and these will be in the show notes. No, these are some of the questions. Yeah, yeah. So we

12:28

touch on.

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So, so like I just said, there's a setup of oh, if you hit this speed, this will happen to your body, and then the payoff is that character has to hit that speed to live because they're being chased by a jet. So you've told us their brain will explode if they hit that speed, but now they're going to hit the speed. That's so. Then you'll mark that. Here's the setup. Here's the payoff. You're going to mark. I'm going to mark his head. Yeah, payoff. Yep. Okay.

12:51

Feel like you've taken your script as far as you can on your own. We know how frustrating it can be sometimes to get the great ideas that are in your head properly on the page, but imagine

having a professional screenwriter jump in and rewrite it for you to create a market-ready script. Send us your script for a rewrite proposal, and the pro of your choice will write up a page or so of notes on exactly how they'd approach a rewrite. Head on over to [www.scriptreaderpro.com](http://www.scriptreaderpro.com) and use the code rewrite 15 during checkout for the rewrite proposal to get 15% off.

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Okay, so then the last part that you have here is what did the filmmakers prepare you for without you realizing it.

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Yeah, and this is why you need to watch it once and then go back into it because that's when you're gonna realize like you won't realize at the time because you don't think oh I didn't realize that. But when you go back in, you're like oh I didn't I understood that in the end, but I forgot that they planted that there. That's and again these are all just tools for you to put in your box to be like, okay, so when I'm going to do this kind of thing, I know that it worked in this scenario by putting the setup in this situation, that kind of thing. Oh, sorry, Scott. So yeah,

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you could almost like think about the kind of movie you want to write to determine which TV show or movie that they should be analyzing.

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For sure, if you're going to write, say, an action movie, go and watch some of the best action movies and break them all down, study them, and use what they use. And the thing is,

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these questions too, though, can be used for any movie,

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anything

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that's similar to Top Gun Maverick, for example.

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Exactly, they're just an example.

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Okay, I get it. Kind of

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just to illustrate that point of thinking about it in a different way, right? Like a detective.

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We shadowed a briefcase or something here with detective tools in it.

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Okay, I don't have any. I have a little tiny briefcase, but it's not. But you know what would have been good to

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put on our set here is a stack of envelopes that you have there. It's kind of detective-ish looking.

14:56

Oh yes, it is. Yeah. Yeah.

14:58

Okay. Next. Movie that we have here, assignment two.

15:02

Yep, second assignment is

15:04

Oppenheimer.

15:06

Yes, Oppenheimer.

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So here you said watch the first hour and keep a notebook.

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Again, this is after you've already watched it once. Oh, always watch something to enjoy it, and then go back and study why you enjoyed it.

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Can you have pee and M and M's with popcorn?

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You have to. Yeah,

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with a diet Pepsi, yeah, not Coke.

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No.

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Watch the first hour and keep a notebook. The detective character questions. Here are the questions, and then I think what would work best if I read them on and then you explain after. That

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would be good. Yeah.

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Okay. Every time a new character is introduced, ask why are they in the story? What information do they represent? How might they affect Oppenheimer later?

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Right. So that's why I chose Oppenheimer because there are so many characters in this movie. It's a big movie. In the first hour, you kind of meet everybody that you need to.

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Yeah.

15:59

And it's a good way. Like that. That the first one was about setups and payoffs. This one's about character, right? That's the example. So that's the character questions you can ask, and you can do all of these for every movie. You don't have to just do oh, I can only ask these questions. I have to look at this character. You put them all together, right? This is just some tools to help you. So you ask those questions, right? You write it down. Oh, here's this character, and then think why are they in the story? Oh, they're in the story. They're serving this purpose, right? How will they come? How do they come back and hit Oppenheimer in the end? So you spend that first hour marking all the characters. Then you can go back in and be like, okay, now let's see if what I thought. Oh, I think he's going to go this way, or you know, it made me think this, right? You're you're going to do that. So after you're done and you watch the rest of the movie and you put it all together. You can kind of see: Did they make use of that character like you assumed they would, or did this character have the impact that you thought? Or maybe like doesn't mean every movie is perfect. You can be like, oh, well, what I would have done is this, or I would have done is that. Whatever. That's your brain trying to understand how a movie like that uses character and how you can use character, how well they're set up as individual people, that the scenes they're in are impactful, that you can't remove that character if like that's that's another great

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and decide which characters should stay and which ones should go.

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Just like a detective, you've got all your suspects right, and you're like, okay, so that one's right. So if I pull this suspect off the wall.

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How many others have to do with that?

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Does everything still work? Does a piece of evidence no longer fit? Okay. Well, that character and then that suspect needs to stay there. If you pull that suspect out and it doesn't, nothing falls. Then that's probably a character you can remove from your movie, kind of thing, right? I don't know if it's a great analogy, but I just thought it's a great way to kind of visualize the process. Okay,

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sounds good.

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So this next one is about showing and not telling.

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Okay, so this one here is a quiet place. Yeah, your assignment number three. It says this film is a masterclass on showing versus telling, like you've mentioned. You want to watch how tension is created without relying on dialog.

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Yes,

18:01

because there's no dialog.

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There is dialog, but it's so like a so many so limited, and they use sign language. But it's a perfect example of how you tell a story without telling the story. You show it. It's sounds. It's reactions. It's faces. It's. I think of the quiet place, and I just think of. I think just because his nose moves, I always liked how it did, but I think of John Krasinski. He's the main. He's the dad, right? And I just see him seeing his daughter across the aliens there, and he's just like, like all he has to do. You see the fear in his eyes. Do not make a sound. It's such a brilliantly done movie. It's just so well made. Anyways, so in that, and this is the perfect scenario to to wrap your head around. How do you show it and not tell it?

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It's a perfect scenario because there is no not a lot of telling, right? Okay, so your detective work is to count how often suspense comes from silence, camera movement, the way that the character reacts, and sound design, sound design is huge,

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huge,

19:09

because you can be like, "Oh yeah, not too scary, and then yeah, and then you're like, "Ah,

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yeah,

19:17

something's happening. Yeah,

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and like it does such a brilliant job of using silence, right, and and and creating tension in all these different things. Most people have seen it, but it's you see the backstory of the family. They're walking down this train track. The youngest son is in the back. They don't know that in this grocery store they just went to to raid for food and things that he found a toy plane, and as they're walking down the tracks, he's kind of straggling behind. He turns the plane. He doesn't know it has a sound. It makes a sound. Everyone turns back. There's no dialog. Everyone turns back. They start to run like I got to get to that track. the The alien comes and just kid's gone, and the mama's gonna scream and. You have to cut her in her mouth because if she screams, they're all dead. It is so tense, and like I'm getting chills just thinking about how that was. Like, imagine seeing your kid, and you can't say anything, do anything, and they're gone. It's just that is all. So, so that's what you're asking. Where does that suspense from come from? How do they do it? You shouldn't have to rely on dialog to create suspense, it's a visual medium. If you can show it, show

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it. Okay, and then I mean, you have here. Notice how much storytelling happens, like you just mentioned on the bridge with the toy before anybody speaks or says anything at all. Yeah,

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exactly.

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And you instantly, just from that first couple scenes, you're captivated.

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Oh, totally. You're stuck in the earth.

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You're zone in the zone.

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Yeah.

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There's no going back.

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Yeah. It's so it's so good. Like, and there's this other scene in the movie. No dialog. Husband and wife, they can't communicate really, right? Like they can't talk and and stuff. And so they're kind of struggling. And he he pulls her over and he puts an earbud in. He pulls her close and and Harvest Moon by Neil Diamond is in in their ear, and they just start dancing, and it's just like the most beautiful scene. And in that scene, you're thinking something bad is definitely going to come here because they're doing everything possible to have a moment of silence, but that means something, and it's so tense. It's a beautiful moment, but holy, it's tense. So watch that movie like 20 times. It's it's like if you're if you struggle with use with relying on dialog. If you've maybe got notes from people saying there's too much dialog, they're telling us too many things. It's too on the nose. Watch a movie like that and learn how they do things without words. It's that's that's the investigation that you want to do. So that's movie, case movie stuff.

21:45

Next, we are gonna.

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But just wait. What? This is the big point of the movie stuff.

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Oh, do you want me to say this?

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Yes. The

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first two words are caps.

21:52

Yeah.

21:53

Do this.

21:54

Do this.

21:56

Or do this.

21:58

Yeah.

21:59

Or if you're in a quiet place.

22:05

Yeah. So do this, and

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you're no longer just watching. You're watching it like a filmmaker.

22:11

Yeah.

22:11

Okay. Are you gonna do the next part now?

22:13

Yeah. Oh,

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I'll do the last part.

22:15

Good TV. Let's do TV. These are shows you've seen. You you haven't you haven't seen all of them, but you've seen okay The

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Last of Us. Yes, assignment number one for TV.

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So good. The

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challenge is building a world through character.

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Okay, that's the that's the detective challenge. How did they build that world through character?

22:36

Got it.

22:36

Right.

22:36

And then it's what you have here is watch the pilot and track how the show introduces its worlds with world without stopping the story.

22:48

Yeah, it's there's a lot to set up, but the reason the opening works so well is because you connect with the characters, right? Like I don't know if you remember

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it. I do not.

22:58

So you will remember it. There's a it's this guy and his daughter just alone. He's got his brother who comes and they head off to work and then something weird going on with the old lady over out you know next door and then the the dad and the brother come back and they shout her get in the car we gotta go we gotta go and they go and there's a zombie outbreak and they're driving through the streets and everything's exploding and then and then the main character he takes his daughter and they're running, and then a soldier is there. He's like, "Stop! Stop! No! Don't shoot! And he shoots, and he kills his daughter. And they're in the dark, and he kills his daughter. And then his brother comes, and they take off, and then you jump ahead in time. But it's so emotionally and so so viscerally affecting. You just you you feel for these characters because you they took the time to set up how close they were. That's right. So some of the things, those are some of the things. So what are some of the questions you can ask after you've watched the show like that? These are the detective brain questions.

23:48

What do they call it in the UK again? Di.

23:52

Yeah, detective in charge. Dic. Yeah, dice. DCI. DCI. CI John Lufa,

24:01

if it won't be a John Lufa,

24:03

yeah, DCI, DCI John Lufa. Okay,

24:06

here are your questions.

24:08

These are some questions.

24:09

What do we learn about the world?

24:12

Yep.

24:13

What rule does it have?

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Anything sci-fi twisted like that. Get under the rules.

24:18

What information is revealed through action instead of explanation.

24:24

Visual showing, not telling.

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When does the story stop being about the apocalypse and become about characters?

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That's the thing people forget about that show. Well, not everybody. A lot of people recognize that, but the reason it works is it's even the game. It's because a relationship.

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What's the characters like the apocalypse is what's happening, but you're not paying attention to that. You're paying attention to the character stories.

24:47

Relationships, exactly. Yeah,

24:48

yeah, perfect.

24:49

Okay, and what does the episodes? Why does it spend so much time with Joel before the main story begins?

24:58

Yeah, and

24:59

Joel. Joel's the

25:00

leading character.

25:01

The dad. The

25:01

dad. Yeah. So we. So those are the kind of questions you want to ask yourself, right? Like that's why these are kind of longer questions. It's like this is the kind of thought process you want to go in because it'll help you be a better writer, right?

25:11

Well, and then it talks here too about tone. We've talked about the opening sequence teaching us about the tone, how important tone is not just in the opening but throughout the whole thing, yeah,

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you know this can be an intense, intense

25:22

one. Yeah, you know pretty well, right when you start.

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Yeah, so don't just introduce the world, right? You have to give us an emotional reason to care about the world, and what is the emotional reason we'll care about the world?

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Well, the daughter die.

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The people, right? The relationships will die. Everybody know

25:37

what's going to happen to them.

25:38

Yeah, yeah, and then you see this guy in the future, and you can just see him broken. He's just broken. It's been years, and he's just. I think I

25:44

remember him in the future than being all like gruffy and stuff, right?

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He was, yeah. I mean, it was a gruff future, but he, you could just see like that's why he's such a great ass. Yeah, he was scruffy, but he was just

25:57

scruffy, gruffy. Why did he gruffy?

25:59

But he was just you could he was just like a vessel of sadness. He was like, "I don't care anymore.

26:03

Yeah.

26:03

So, which is brilliant because then they bring a young girl along that he has to protect and get through this, which brings him back to life.

26:11

Right. So, okay. So, a sonic number two.

26:13

Yeah. And again, these are questions you can ask about anything you watch. That's why I'm putting them here for you. This is an example so you can see how you process.

26:21

Just an example of specific movies that you can reference. Thinking back

26:24

and TVs,

26:26

TVs. Okay, this is the bear. Did we watch this?

26:30

You haven't watched it. I watched the pilot. I said we got to watch this together. It's about in it's in the kitchen. It's a kitchen show.

26:36

Okay, we should watch this song. Yeah, creating conflict without a villain-that's the challenge. That's

26:43

what you're challenging yourself with understanding here. That's what this show does. Creates a show without a villain.

26:47

Okay, that would be hard.

26:49

It is hard.

26:50

Okay, so what you want people to do is watch the pilot and track every source of pressure placed on Carmy.

26:57

That's the leading character. Okay, the guy you like from Shameless, the the young brother grew up and chair in the alley or something.

27:05

Yeah. Okay, so here are your detective questions. Who wants something from him? Is what you're going to ask. What problems existed before he arrived? What problems does he accidentally create?

27:18

Yeah.

27:18

What does Carmi want versus what does he actually need?

27:22

Yeah, pause you there for one second before you finish the rest of questions. These are the kind of questions you want to ask because it's always important to know what a what what a what a customer what a character brings to something that's already in place. You have to know what is going to happen when this character gets into this position, gets in with this group of people. What was going on before they arrived? How does that character specifically, not just anybody, it has to be about that character? What is he personally going to bring that is going to either disrupt what's there or work with them?

27:54

Okay, got it. Why is the kitchen chaos affected instead of confusing? How does the pilot make ordinary situations feel urgent, and how do we understand Connie's personality without a traditional backstory?

28:09

Yeah, those. If you ask yourself those questions when you watch that, you will. I think you will get. I'm not tooting my own horn. Whatever, maybe you won't, but you will get a really solid understanding of character. It's a story in a kitchen, in a busy kitchen with cooks and chefs and

line cooks. That's all that's happening, and it's and it's chaos. And I think part of me says that you are going to hate it because it is so chaotic,

28:33

chaotic, and you hate chaos. You hate things out of place, but it's like there's nothing. It's just it's just the energy in the room-it's the characters you just get to watch people. But yeah, it's a-it's a great example. I mean, and it won a whole crapload of Emmys for the first season. It's a-it's a great thing to learn, and that's another reason I wanted to do a podcast like this-is because a lot of writers aren't reading enough. They're not reading enough screenplays. They're not studying what works and what doesn't. And you really, really need to because it just makes you better,

29:01

okay. And then you have just overall to remember that conflict does not require a bad guy, just like this one without a villain. Yeah. Sometimes the environment is the antagonist.

29:14

Yeah, especially in TV. A lot of TV shows, TV shows, you don't have a specific antagonist.

29:18

No, it's

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not like in a movie, right? It's like oh, an ER. Oh, the antagonist who's the antagonist. It's the corporate head of the department. He's like, you cannot do these things, and we are going to. Yes, that person will die because we can't cross it. Like that becomes the villain, right? So it really depends on the show that you're doing. But yeah, like the villain, the antagonism is usually just things around the character,

29:39

right? And a villain doesn't always have to be a per a person. No, no. So think about think about that. And like, a villain could be a disease.

29:48

Yep,

29:49

COVID

29:50

could be could be COVID could be a really a really pissed off customer. Right. That's that's the villain because they're making your life hell. Right. It it yeah. As long as there's antagonism. Doesn't necessarily mean there has to be intent and antagonist. So great example to to draw from.

30:05

Final one, the third one that we have for TV. I don't know if

30:07

you've seen this show.

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I love this show. Oh, what I have to watch. I have some of them recorded. I'm going to watch them all. Sullivan's Crossing.

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The

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challenge is to create emotionally emotional connection through character and place.

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Yeah, I chose to find

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a place.

30:25

Why?

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Because it makes you feel like home. Like, oh, I I wish I had that place to go to when I was young.

30:31

Yeah, it captures nostalgia.

30:33

Makes very much when you're a child.

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Very much like yeah, very but also very much like Everwood did, where you're like, oh, I wish I lived in a town like that, or like Gilmore Girls. Oh, I wish I lived in this pool of community, right? It's it's and that's and that's the thing is it's not necessarily a high concept idea like Last of Us. It's about the place and the people and and so that's why this is a great one to study to understand how you bring something to life to get people's attention when it's really just about the characters and the place.

30:59

And so this one here is a character's life is disrupted and forced back into a world that they've left behind.

31:06

Yeah, classic. Like we see that a lot, right? You got to run

31:09

away from. Yeah,

31:10

you got to go back home and deal with it. It's it's a generic thing, but they do it in a different way.

31:13

Okay, so some of the questions for you as the detective: What does May you want at the beginning of the episode?

31:19

Yeah, should know that

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what emotional wounds or unresolved issues does she carry? What does returning to Sullivan's crossing force her to confront?

31:29

Yes.

31:30

How does the setting influence the story?

31:34

Yeah, and and that's that's the important thing to to really pay attention to. Watch the pilot go back in. Pay attention to these things because it does it in such a great way that it just pulls you in and you're there. Like I haven't watched the whole thing, but I watched the pilot, and you do it invites you in. You're like, I want to go camping there. I want to hang out. I want to spend time there. These people are so nice, and like, right? Like, it makes you wonder why did she leave? Like, why would she run away from this? It's so idyllic, right?

31:59

How do the writers make us care about Maggie before we fully understand her past? And how does the plot pilot introduce the idea of confronting who you used to be?

32:10

Yeah, and I think that's why it resonates specifically in the pilot and first season. Why it resonated with so many people, right? Because you're actually, you know, the character is forced to confront who she used to be, who she ran away from, why the people she ran away from made her not the person she wanted to be. All those things, right? And as humans, we all have to confront those things, right? That's how you grow as a person. You look back at the things you never want to think about, the things you've gone through, the choices you've made, and not all of us make great choices all the time. We don't always do the right thing. There's everyone has regrets. Everyone's done something they shouldn't have. It's confronting it that makes you grow, and confronting it creates drama because now you have to face it. And that's what television and movies are all about. You don't have a character hide from their drama, hide from their conflict. They have to face it. It's real life. It is. And so studying a show like this in that way, you're you're you're trying to deconstruct it and be like, okay, so if I like, I was so if I did it, what would I have given her? What would I have had her run away from? Just you know, these are all just ways to change your mind. And because as a screenwriter, one of the hardest things to do is to turn on that analytical mind that you have for your own work. It's so hard to step back from something that you've created and see it for what it is. It's really difficult. So doing things like this allows your brain to retrain a little bit, right? And then you can look at your script and be like, "Okay, I'm a detective. Let's build my murder wall. Right? Who are my important players here? What do I learn about them? Do I set this thing up? Do I pay this off? What's where does the evidence go? What is like that? You know, if you can separate yourself by just picturing, okay, I'm putting a detective hat on. This isn't my script. That's a way to see what is and is not working, right? Because as writers, we believe everything in that script is doing what it's supposed to; that it should be clear and easy for someone. But sometimes it's not, and if you can identify why that might be or how, you know what? I actually left a little. You know, I know this detail, but I now realize I didn't put that detail in. So now people are going to be confused. Usually, you can't see that till someone else points it out in screenwriting, unless you're getting coverage and notes from people. When you submit a script, they don't ask you questions about what they didn't get. They will then set the script aside and get the next one.

34:30

They don't have time to ask questions. No.

34:31

So your job is to do everything possible to prevent anything from having a question. It's a hard thing to do, literally impossible. But doing things like this, reshaping your mind, looking at it differently-that's how you become a stronger writer.

34:45

Right, and I was thinking when you're talking about the brain, there was something that I read this morning that I wanted to tell you. They say that a way, a very good way to clear your brain. This is a side note.

34:56

Yeah,

34:57

I have lots

34:57

because I have a very cluttered, cluttered brain. I do. I'm not gonna. I'm not gonna lie.

35:02

You do. A very good way to clear your brain is to allow yourself to be bored for 20 minutes a day.

35:10

Oh. Okay.

35:12

So they say no screens, no games, no TV. Just sit there in your surroundings.

35:21

Okay, because then you'll think about things, and then you'll sweep some stuff out of your brain, and that's a good idea.

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And for the time that we're in right now, we don't allow our brains to do that anymore. No, they're just filled with technology to constant

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simulation. Yeah,

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so that's what they suggest. That might

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be a really good thing to do before you sit down and write too.

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That's what I'm thinking. Yeah, and not even 20 minutes. If you give yourself 10 minutes and then you're like, okay, just gonna sit here instead of jumping in, like clear some of the clutter, get the cobwebs out, figure out what part you're gonna be accessing that moment. You know,

35:57

yeah,

35:57

and then just go. And I think something like that could work a lot in a lot of situations.

36:03

Totally, yeah. Clear your mind out, and then when you go back in to do your writing, then you're more focused and think about just what's going on rather than oh crap, he does this one in 20 minutes, and I didn't do the dishwasher like I was supposed to. So now,

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but when you're thinking when you're sitting there and you're bored, it doesn't mean you're going to sit there either and run through all your lists.

36:21

No,

36:22

it's just like you. As soon as you start to think of something, just no, just in the moment. Do in the face. I

36:28

like. I find that really difficult. I know I don't. Even with meditation, I'll do a meditation, and the meditation is like if your thoughts want, or recognize them, and then come back to the moment. And so I will. And then as soon as I'm back in the moment, I'm you're back off. I find it so hard because my brain, like I read so many scripts, I got just 10 endless stories and people. But maybe that's all

36:48

it is. Is even a try two minutes. Yeah, just clearing. Just start kind of like

36:52

grounding yourself. Anyway,

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it's worth a try.

36:54

Smart. Okay. Well, this TV stuff. If you do this, right? If you do this, you will learn the difference between a premise and an actual series engine, right? It's one of the biggest things that that aspiring new writers or or even feature writers moving into TV don't quite grasp, but think, okay, I got a concept here, good go, okay. But yeah, it's cool concept. It's different. Got some new characters here, but the biggest thing to to to to make sure is there in a in a pilot is the idea or the the feeling of longevity, right? That when we get to the end, there's so many places it can go. I can see what's going to drive the engine. I can see how Maggie is going to have to overcome that. She doesn't want to be at home, but maybe she should be at home, and she can't go back because she has this malpractice. And how is she going to juggle all these things, right? It it says there's somewhere to go, right? Even like a crazy thing, like Last of Us, crazy

idea, big idea. It's it it's all about what is driving the engine. You know what drives the engine? It's not the zombies. It's not the constant fear of death. It's the relationship, the healing, the journey that the leading character goes on to become the man he was before he lost his daughter. That's everything, right? And so it's about what is the engine that drives it. So that's a big difference between movies and TV. So, so that's it. So that's a lot to take in. You've got your show notes. I'll have them doctored up for you, and let that ruminate while we take a quick break, and we'll be back With questions,

38:22

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](http://www.scriptreaderpro.com/rewrite) and use the code `rewrite15` during checkout for the rewrite proposal to get 15% off.

39:05

Okay, welcome back. At this part of the podcast, we have questions that have been submitted by viewers and listeners like you. And if you want to have your questions submitted, you can email us at [hello@swordtreaderpro.com](mailto:hello@swordtreaderpro.com). Let us know if you have any ideas for future topics,

39:23

yeah, or questions you want answered. Just shoot them over, and we'll do it. We'll get to hear from you. What's the first question? Yes.

39:28

If you could sit in on a making of any movie or TV series just to observe the creative process, which one would it be and why? And this one's from Caleb from Charlotte. So if you could sit on the making of any movie or TV,

39:44

what would you be? What would you do?

39:50

Movie or TV?

39:51

I don't think you would. I think if you saw all of it,

39:54

I don't think I'd want to watch movies or TV.

39:56

I think it would take the magic away from you. That's

39:58

why I don't like knowing. These things

40:00

for me, I I don't want to take the magic away either, and so there's certain movies I won't watch featurettes and stuff because I'm like I just want to I want that movie to live rent free in my brain forever as it is, right? But then there's movies that I'm like ooh like I really I would love how they got that shot. Like for me, I haven't seen The Odyssey yet, new Christopher Nolan movie that's breaking the world, right? But the the different things I hear about it, I'm just like, I want to see how they did that. Like, I wish I was on set to watch that happen, to watch a brilliant mind go to work. Anyways, yeah, for me, that's probably what it would be because yeah, all my favorite movies out of one. I know all the stuff. Like,

40:37

yeah, it kind of ruins it. Yeah. Question two comes from Jasmine in Salem. Jasmine says, "What are producers and managers really looking for when they read a screenplay?"

40:48

Oh,

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no mistakes.

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No, they don't care about that.

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They don't care about mistakes as much.

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If you have a mistake, but your story is perfect and your characters are amazing, and they can see Brad Piring in it, they won't care. Mistakes can be fixed easy, right? Characters can't a unique idea that's never been done before. That's part of it. That's for producers specifically. I think producers and managers look for different things. Producers look for what's a movie I can make that I can instantly hear the idea and see the audience in the dollar signs. And when I read the script, I'm like, "Okay, let's do this. That's what producers are looking for. Managers are looking for a writer they can have a lifetime career involved with, right? It's it's can I see myself with this writer? Are they clever? Do they have a different voice? As well as do I have a free spot on my roster? I have five horror writers. This is an amazing horror script, but I have five horror writers. I can't add another to compete against them. So they're kind of two different camps, but at the core of everything, everybody in the business is looking for a unique voice

that tells a story that's never been told in a way that's never been told. Okay, you do that, you're you're you're done.

41:52

Our third question comes from Finn in Ireland, and Finn says, "If you could give one piece of advice to the version of yourself who was just starting out? What would it be?"

42:05

Get a diagnosis for ADHD. That would be it

42:08

for you. Yeah,

42:09

like like yeah. I mean, obviously, there's a lot of screenwriting. So much different. I can't even imagine how much of I would have gotten done.

42:15

I know.

42:16

That I mean, that's number two. Don't procrastinate. Find a way to not procrastinate. And I know writers are bad for that. You'll sit down and then go on a tangent, but yeah, as far as like skills and oh, I wish a writer told me this or I wish I told that. There's probably lots of it, but I also grew up in a time where internet wasn't just there all my life. So if I wanted to learn something, I'd have to actually really find a way to learn

42:36

it. Yes, yeah.

42:37

So either jumping ahead, having the ability to time travel to learn more, stop procrastinating, and and and understand that ADHD is something that, if in check, allows me to focus.

42:49

Yeah, good,

42:50

personal, but that's what it is.

42:51

Yeah. Last question comes from Elena from Athens, and Elena says, "How important is networking compared to writing a great script?"

43:00

Networking is probably zero importance

43:06

as to

43:06

overwriting a great script. Yeah, for sure. Doesn't matter how many people you meet. If you suck, you suck. If your script is bad, it's bad. No one cares, right? If you write a great script, you will meet people. I don't talk about my stuff that much, my successes and stuff because I'm here to teach you and stuff. But I have this script I wrote years ago and it did really well on the contest run. Hits you know nickel semifinalists winning winning some big contests. Anyways, that script people always tell me is great. They read it, they never forget it. I never still to this day it hasn't been made yet because it just hasn't. But I keep. I still to this day I get phone calls about it. Is this available? Hey, I was talking to this person. Is this available? A great script will create network for you. So write a great script that that everybody, not just that you think is great or your your mom thinks is great. My wife will tell me if something sucks. So I'm lucky that way. But have people you don't know that know what makes the script great tell it it's great. That is the key. So that's it.

44:08

That's the end of our podcast.

44:10

What should they do if they liked it? If you liked it, what should you do? If

44:14

you liked it, we'd love for you to subscribe, share the podcast, give us five star reviews. Bye bye bye. Yeah, and if

44:20

you're just listening to this on audio, we're on video as well. So if you do want to see Desiree, don't need to see me because who cares? But if you want to see Desiree and she has a great laugh and she's fun and she lights up a room, so if you want to see her, come check out her video. It's on YouTube. It is on our YouTube channel, Script Reader Pro, and our website ScriptreaderPro.com. Everything a writer could ever need, anything. We're all working writers. You get to pick your team. We care about you. We are human first. We do not use AI to generate our notes or our feedback or anything like that. We care about the craft, and we we take you and your investment seriously. So, check us out at Script Reader Pro. We are all about helping writers craft wonder one page at a time.