

Ep #76: Top 10 Tips From Your Reader

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On this episode, we're talking all about 10 tips from your reader. I've read and covered over 10,000 screenplays in my career, so I've got some good stuff for you. So listen in.

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

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Hey, everybody! This is Desiree. I am your host, and this is the Script Reader Pro podcast. I'm here with Scott.

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I'm Scott. Hi, Scott. Hi, like my shirt. I know this is your favorite one I wear. Goonies never say die, baby.

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I hate this shirt, you guys. I I hate it with a passion. Why? Why? I don't know why she hates it so much. I think it's the two tone hood. It's the coloring. It's it's the color of poop. Let's just be real. It's nice. Poopy's the color of brown. Poopy and poop. How many things in life are brown, and you have to say it's the color of poop? Oh,

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I think it's just because I just I just don't like it. I think that's the thing. But it's the color of poop, and the hood is the color of pee. Oh,

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is it? Okay,

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great. Now I can't ever look at this without thinking of that. Thank you, Desiree. Thank you. Hi, I'm Scott. I'm one of the team here at Script Reader Pro, one of the readers, writers, mentors, all that kind of stuff, helping you through things. So helping you through things, helping you through. Yeah, this is the this is our podcast, and yeah, we hope that you're entertained, that you're you're you're educated, you learn something, and you have fun. That's what we're all about. Dennis is here for the entertainment value, and I'm here for the talking. Even if you don't learn something, just lie and say that you did learn something. That's all that I'm asking. That's not a lot to ask. I'm kind of focused right now on your Back to the Future car. Why does it look like it's damaged?

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It doesn't. That's my remote control

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one. Oh, it's plastic. Sorry. There's a remote control one, and then there's another one. How many cars do you have that are back to the future cars in here. 123, Times up. 456-789-1011, 11 DeLoreans of different shapes and sizes and sequels.

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And we think this is normal. Yeah. How many Converse do you have?

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So on this episode,

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we're talking about tips. Tips from readers. Readers look for certain things. Every reader has their own kind of idea of how something should be. You can't control certain specific pet peeves or what a reader does or does not like. Some readers will hate if you use we see. Some readers don't care at all, so you can't control everything. What do you mean we see?

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There's an issue that a lot of readers have if it says we see Desiree walking past the window, right? You don't have to say you shouldn't say we see. They're then taking us out. You just say Desiree is walks by the window, or Desiree is seen walking by the window. So if you use the word we, a lot of people have a problem with that. I don't. Why don't ever care? Why though? I don't know. That just because it's not because you you shouldn't be directing the eye like the camera. You should just be telling the story visually. Oh my gosh! Some people have a problem. Some people don't. So you can't control those things. But it's like what? Like do we need another thing that people have problems with? It's always been a big thing. No, I'm just saying. I'm not saying about we see, but it's just like

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it's getting to be to to be too much. Just let it go. Just be. Just be.

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Just let

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it be. But I'm I'm going to pass on some tips. My biggest tips. Some of my biggest tips. I have hundreds, but some of my biggest yes hundreds as a reader of of things that I will immediately think. Okay, the writer needs to know these things, right? A lot of them pop up a lot in screenplays I read, so that's what we're going to pass on today. So it's going to it's going to be going over things that you repeatedly see

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as a reader that they need to remember or things that they could work on. Yeah, well, yeah, things to keep in mind, things to make sure you understand and that you've learned and that they're they're just basic and you don't they become second nature for you because it just becomes a tool that you use in the right way so just kind of gets you a little bit of a leg up okay hey Scott yes our daughter got two jobs two jobs I know she's a go getter

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I would not call our daughter

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well she has to be now. I would not put our daughter

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as a go-getter in the same sentence as our daughter. Yeah, yeah. I would not. No. Sorry, I would. I just would not. Because you say, "Hey, can you go get something? And they say no. So I guess that's the that's the opposite of a go getter.

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Anyway, I'm really proud. Yeah, that's pretty cool. Pretty cool. Pretty. It's like weird because it's like now we have an 18-year-old who has two jobs. I know that means nothing but laying in bed all summer to two jobs. And guess what, you guys? What

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Ash's feet are really sore. Yeah, they're sore because they've never been on their feet eight hours working a job. It was after sitting.

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At their desk at school, or laying in their bed. So yeah. Okay. Well, I don't think you can lay in bed for work. No. Well, let's not go there. Yeah. Let's see vocations that you could, but let's just keep this G rated. Speaking of speaking of those vocations, Asha has numerous times said, "Hey, guess what? I could always just do this instead. Just create a feed pics page online for a job. I'm like, I know what's happening. Hey, Scott. Yeah, we always start the podcast the same after we've talked a little bit. Yep. And as you say, chit chatting, chit chat, chit chit chat.

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Can you not? Okay. And when you go,

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that's annoying. I never do that, so I don't know. That's annoying too today. So it's the shirt and just you in general. It's the the head in the shirt that's just

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too much. Okay. Anyway, we always start lately talk about what we've seen. We went to the theater for this one. We didn't. No, we tried to go to the theater for this one, and it was you said tried the first time we did say tried. We played for like four days, and then you really wanted to see it. Yeah. So then it was on streaming, so we watched it. It's called You, Me, and Tuscany. Yes, such a good show. A little bit G flat rated, I thought in parts. I thought they could have pushed it a little bit more. I was talking to my screenwriting group about it, and I said I don't understand why it was in the theater. I don't understand why it had big movie stars in it. It was lifetime quality. Yeah, it was very much a hallmark Christmas movie.

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You know, woman goes away to Italy. It's always Italy. Goes away to Italy, meets a guy who owns a vineyard, and then they sort of get together, but something happens and they don't, and then that's what they eventually end up together. Like, oh, you just wrecked the walls. Oh, yeah, not predictable at all. But it was just like, no, you found out a lot of in the preview. You got all of that information. I didn't even see the trailer. Oh, I did. But I, but I knew everything that was coming. Like it was, I was just like for a move, and then I was like, I see why this is only in the theater for like four days, just because of the the stars. Yeah, but it's like that that that's all they could come up with. They couldn't give it anything new. The best part of that entire movie,

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the ending, bloopers, the bloopers at the end of the ladies and the line tour and the jokes they were cracking that were too inappropriate to be. Theme was so good. That was the best part of the movie. It's kind of bad when you think it was. Well, it was an okay movie, but it wasn't like like I'm glad we didn't go to the theater and spend the money on it, right? So, anyways, it was okay, but like

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for for the people, I don't know. I just expected more. Yeah, yeah, I get it. It was entertaining, a little slow though. I found yeah, there are a couple fun moments. Best moments were like the secondary characters, like the cab driver guy. We talked about that on a previous podcast about just how secondary characters need to stand out. So, anyways, that's that. So, today, what are we talking about, Desiree? We are talking about 10 tips. Yes, from readers like you. Yes, and I mean these are mine specifically, but I, you know, I, I mean, I talk to other readers, talk to other readers at our company,

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different readers I know,

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producers, whatever, to kind of keep on top of like, hey, what what stands out for you? What makes a great screenplay? So these are some of the things that that I think are very important that they don't always teach in in screenwriting classes, courses, things like that. These are kind of like the things you learn as you go

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within the industry, so so why don't you count them down and say what it is, and then I'll talk about it. Really, we can interact with throughout. I I don't. Does that sound good? I know you haven't read any of the notes, so it's a little bit on the fly for you. But what if I don't want to hear you talking?

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That's been done in another podcast. I know I still tried to, but your your joke landed better, much better. Yours was lame, lame. Can you lame? Can you also stop shaking in the table? Oh sure, because it's a lot.

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All right, top 10. Here we go. All right, Scott didn't get a lot of sleep. Number, are we starting one or starting at 10? I don't know. Are they in a certain order? Start at one. Okay, number one. Be a storyteller. Yeah,

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yeah. This is, and I mean, I saw this a lot. I think a lot of people saw this a lot when COVID happened. We saw when we see, we see when COVID happened. A lot of people were just at home and they had time in their hands, and you know, time between shifts. They didn't have to commute to work. A lot of people are like, "I'm going to be a screenwriter. I'm going to write it. I'm going to write that TV series or write that that movie. And that's great.

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But and I say this: it's one of the things I say to people.

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You can teach someone how to be a screenwriter, how to write a screenplay. You can teach someone how to write a screenplay. It's a it's formulaic. There's certain rules you have to follow, but you-I don't think you can teach someone how to be a storyteller. You are either a storyteller or you're not. And if you aren't a storyteller, and you're just going to piece together a script because you read that this chunk of pages is supposed to cover this, and this is supposed to cover this, and something should happen here, it's gonna-it's gonna read flat.

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If you don't know how to be a storyteller, read some of the best storytellers. Read books on writing. Read the classics. Read, you know, Hemingway and you know Plato and Socrates, and and and learn how stories are supposed to be told. Because even though it has the structure of a movie, a three act or five or whatever, you piece it together with sequences, it always comes down to it being, you know, a beginning, middle, and end. You have to bring us into the world, set us up. You have to introduce the hero or heroine. You have to cause obstacles and struggles, have them overcome, have them learn, have them set down whatever's been holding them back, and then be victor victorious in the end. It's it's not that hard to understand how a basic story is is to be told, but don't go and start writing a screenplay and think, "Oh, I'm just

going to write a screenplay. If you don't know the basic mechanics of of like telling a story, like you should. When I think of what's a storyteller,

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it's that person around the campfire, sitting around the campfire, like, "Hey guys, I got a story. Come here, let me tell you a story, right? And then then they just they're charismatic and how they explain the story, and you get just drawn in, and and it's just it's it's one of those organic things, right? It's like you it's like you you're either a good liar or you're just a bad liar, and you can't. Yeah, it's the same with anybody. Everybody has their pros and cons, but with storytelling, though,

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I don't necessarily think going and reading stuff like you're saying, oh, go read this, this, this. I think some people just are not meant to be storytellers. No matter if they go and read something, how is that going to improve though? If they aren't a storyteller, how does that like that you're not giving information on? I think it's more like studying, like studying the work, like read the work, kind of like we did in that detective series we did. Read the work and then and then break it down and be like, why you know this hit me really hard. This made me really engaged. Why? What did they do? What was the mechanism within that storytelling that really draw drew me in? To sort of think of like one of the favorite books you've ever read or favorite movie you have. What was it that draw that drew you into that? You have to if you're not a just a natural storyteller, you have to kind of go to school for your for for it for yourself. So it's this one of the big things I see is like this person doesn't know how to piece a story together. It's just random scenes, and they're trying because they read Save the Cat and they have the basic structure.

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But that's what what really can make or break a script. Yeah, but at what point are you like,

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yeah, I'm just not really? Then don't do it. I mean, do it if you want. You have to be honest, I think, with yourself. Yeah, if every if the feedback you're getting from people is, oh, it just doesn't feel. I don't. I'm not feeling the story, or it was a bit bit flat, or left me cold, or whatever the the stuff is. If you if you find that you're not growing, you're not becoming a stronger storyteller. I'm not sure this is the best thing for you to be doing, especially with how hard it is to find success. And I do want to mention too, like for the listeners or the viewers out there,

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you can reach out any time to Script Reader Pro because there's a lot of services, and if it means that they you need help with story writing or yeah, even like a mentorship to have someone one on one kind of teach you how to tell a story and find your strengths and weaknesses, you can't always get that in notes. Yeah, so that's a good point. Yeah, for sure. Yeah, finding a mentor can help you as well to to learn how to tell stories. But it's the it's the big one, right? If you're going to be a writer, you have to kind of have that piece. So, key number

two, yes, know the craft, and we're not talking Desiree kind of crafts. We're talking about the craft of screenwriting, right? Yep. And this is kind of like the flipped, the flipped image of number one, right? You might be a fantastic storyteller, and you know how to get people excited and think up really cool ideas and thoughts and characters, but if you don't know the craft of screenwriting, it's not just format and structure, right? Like it, it isn't. It's just okay. Here's the format. Format's pretty easy to learn. It's you can all do it in a program that does it for you. Structure, it's pretty basic. If you you know you're it can get complicated if you make it, but it's a pretty basic movie or TV structure.

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It's the craft of of visually telling a story, setting up a scene, knowing when to start that scene, what is needing to be achieved, how to hit that great moment at the end to pop us to the next scene, how to build suspense, how to leave things out,

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how to how to show and not tell. That's the craft of screenwriting, not the the rules, but the craft of it, the art of it, more of the details,

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more than anything.

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It's

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okay. So try to put it like this: I read a lot of screenplays where I just think, "Hey, this person just thought they know how to write a screenplay, so then they just they they don't they don't need to be told, they don't need to learn. They're just going to do it the way they think it needs to be done. That is a bad choice because this is a business, right? Movies, TV-it's a business. Everyone who's reading screenplays, they read a screenplay to see if it's the next movie or TV show they can make. That's why they're reading it. And if if if it if

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it can't be filmed as it as it is, if it doesn't make it come alive in the way that an audience.

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Going to become more and more engaged. It's just, it's just not going to work, right? It's kind of a waste of time.

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It's like the person who just is like, I'm going to read a screenplay, and they don't even look up what a screenplay looks like. They don't understand what you're supposed to use, the tools you're supposed to use. That's bad. That's a bad choice. I'll get a script that's like the first four pages are like nonstop, thick paragraphs of description. That's not the craft. It's a, it's not a

novel. It's a screenplay, a screenplay, a script. They're, they're a very specific. So it's kind of, but it is kind of format. It's kind of the format in the sense of like all the little rules that you need to know throughout what makes, like you were saying, the scene going in the scene, leaving the scene. Yeah, the description. Yeah, it's the deeper choices of craft. It's like it's kind of like the inside of the cake, not the icing. True, or like it's like a woodworker, right? You're a woodworker, and you like, oh, I'll just I'll cut some two by fours, and I'll just bang them together, and it'll make a box. Okay, logically. But the craft of it is fitting those joints perfectly using the right glue? Do I use a staple? Do I use a nail? How do I make it seamless? How does this fit together? What kind of sandpaper do I use? Does this edge need to be softer? That's the craft of woodworking, of cab, of of building things. Right? It's that kind of thing. How do you put this all together? It's some people will say, "Oh no, I know format. It might. It is in format. Yeah. Okay. It is in format because you have a scene heading and you have a an action thing. But that action description is 27 lines long. That's not the craft. Right. Right. So that's the difference. It's it's really studying screenplays and reading great things and learning how the greats do it that then dictate to people saying I got to make this movie script right. So, so gotcha. Yeah, that's it's it's knowing the craft. Okay, that kind of goes into the next, which is understanding structure. Yeah, and and I think too many people fight this. Too many people think, oh, I don't want to follow. I don't need to follow structure. I know the basic structure. I'll just I'll do it as a how I want to do it. Are you saying like structure being like the ax, or what are you saying for structure? Yes, the overall structural form of a script, like not the so not the scenes and stuff, but yeah, the acts. So your your first act, second act, third act, right? The basic basic structure. How long should a first act be? Yeah, how long should a second act be?

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How long should the third? What should happen when should the most important moment happen, and when exactly that's that would be considered that yeah, and that's and again I said that it's easy right because there there are endless books on on basic three act structure or if you if you if doing it in sequences speaks to you do it in sequences it doesn't matter but learn the basic structure but beyond that know the structure of your genre, because every genre has a very unique structure of its own. Right, a horror script is designed to grab you instantly, freak you out, pull you in, slap you across the face, and just not stop. Right, so a first act in a horror movie might only be 15 pages long, and bam, we're gone. Whereas, like a drama, slower, it might take 30 pages for your first act to change. Yeah,

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or like you don't even end a little bit more and set the characters. That's what I was going to say. You don't know the characters. Sometimes by 30 pages, we're still getting characters introduced, right? Exactly. Yeah, and like a comedy, right? You need a comedic beat pretty much every page, right? You need something funny, funny, funny. You're not going to have something dramatic, dramatic, dramatic! Scary, scary, scary! Every single page, right? So it's knowing your genre, and the best way to do that is just if if you're going to write a horror script, watch 10 horror movies, read the 10 screenplays, and you'll know. Okay, so makes sense. Yeah. Next one is don't be a novelist. Yeah, you get this a lot, Scott, because like you'll say this person wrote like three pages of description, and there was no

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no talking at all, no conversation, nothing. Which I think, in certain things like a historical, like war movie,

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I mean, you might have three pages of yeah. There is going to be going to be scripts that have more action and dialog, action than dialog, right? And but it's more. It's not even like like that's the worst when you get when your your your script is just filled with just pages and pages of details. It's not needed, first of all. If you want to have details in a script, write a book. Yeah, like write a novel. If you're going to write it like a novel, write a novel. But it's even the smaller things. It's like you enter a scene. I see this all the time for some reason. You enter a scene. Scott and Desiree are sitting at the table, and Scott is telling Desiree about what they're going to do tonight. And then Scott says, "So tonight, I think we're going to do this. And it's like, "Why did you just tell me that what we're talking about if we're going to talk about it? You say Desiree and Scott are sitting at a table. Scott says, "What? This is what we're going to do tonight. You don't you don't give that extra detail of what characters are doing or no. But wouldn't it just be that you say what we're doing tonight? That's what he said. Yeah, Scott Desiree's sitting at the table, and then Scott says this. Yeah, not Scott is talking about this, and then like I see that a lot.

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But it's it's like it's those.

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Inner dialog things, those those inner monologs, right? I just noticed I have a hole in my arm head. Don't show everybody. That's embarrassing. Jeez, and you make fun of my shirt. I know. I just noticed

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it in the. But but it's it's like you know, as as Scott's talking, Desiree's thinking about how she was late for that appointment this afternoon.

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That's that's that's something in a novel. How can you show that that's what Desiree was thinking? Is that it has to like novels tell? You could take you can have 17 pages talking about someone's thought. Novels tell. If screenplays show a big difference. That's the big difference. If people got to

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experience what I say in my head, no, thank no one needs to know that. It would be very, very worrisome. You would be arrested, likely. I wouldn't be arrested, but in a madhouse, people see me as such a certain way, right? Because I advocate a lot with kids, and I'm I help with a care home, and then they're all like, "You're so positive, and you just see such good. But in my brain, you guys. Someone says you're so positive. You're just like, yeah, screw you.

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You guys have no idea. It's a scary place. It is. I I agree. I've seen it. Um, but yeah, show don't tell. If you're gonna tell, red book. He doesn't want to hear me telling anything else about my scary head. Yeah. Okay. Next one, which is number five. Yep, get to know your characters. You have to know your characters inside out more than you know yourself. Yeah, and and my best advice is know their dirty, gritty pieces, broken pieces. I like the dirty, gritty pieces. So it's more interesting, right? What is and who wants to order something boring? What's their baggage? What's their trauma? What's their issue? What's their inner, like Desiree? Like, what what is really going on in her head? You know, like know your characters deeply. I read a screenplay recently, and it was a good script. Like it was written well. The dialog was really great. But at the end of it, I sat there and I thought,

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I know absolutely nothing about this character. Like, I don't. I didn't learn anything about them. I don't know if they're even any different now at the end of the script than they were. All the the all of the interactions were entertaining, but there was no depth to it. And I and it feels like that's because they didn't know their character enough. They didn't know what their issues were. They didn't know they had a flaw to overcome. And so then they can't overcome it. So if you don't know your characters, then how can you find the little gold nuggets that let your audience know who they are?

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It's this balance of we learn about characters in movies and even people in life about part of it is their actions and the other is their voice, right? So a lot of people will reveal who they are by what they react to or the physical thing they do or the choice that they make, and then the things they say, how they say them, the words they use. So you can't know how a character talks, you can't know how they act, you can't know where they react in situation just because you know their favorite color is blue and they like dark coffee. That's not enough. You need to know what broke them. You need maybe nothing broke them. No, but everyone has the dreams, and they've been let down and have regrets. Like, figure those pieces. That's the problem. I think is that some people think

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that people just don't have flaws.

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Maybe everybody has a story, and everybody has something that they carry with

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them that they don't necessarily want the world to know. No, that's everyone. You need to know as a writer. So true. You need to know what that is. Doesn't necessarily mean you're going to portray it, but if it's in the back of your mind all the time, when that character says or does something, it can reference some something to do with their past without even saying it, right?

Instantly, and if you don't know that, then that, and that's part of being a storyteller. If you're a storyteller, you you you know that you need to have an understanding of character, have an understanding of the people in your story.

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Otherwise, you're just telling us events. You're putting the characters through events. You're not actually telling their story, right?

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You know, like imagine just imagine your favorite some of your favorite characters in your in movies and the things that you learn about them that make them come alive and be real and how they react and stuff. It's just like that; those are the characters that live and breathe as real people. They're the ones we think of as being real, right? So that's just know your character

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deep, deep, deep, and and you want to be, I think, rooting for your character too. You want them to overcome something or face something, you know, or grow in some aspect, whether it's a protagonist or an antagonist. I still think there needs to be some kind of change or growth, you know. Yeah, that's a great, that's a great tip, and and I think that's a lot of times, like writers don't want to hurt their character. They don't want to make it hard on their character. But I don't want to like I don't want to throw them down the stairs. Throw them down the stairs. That's exciting. That's dramatic. Like what what are we doing, right? You you want to you want to do that, and and you will then really get to know your character if you do things to them and make them have to overcome just.

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Play with them, bring them to life. A lot of times, I just don't see that happening. Okay,

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this is a job that I wanted to do. This next one. Okay, me too. Interestingly enough, you did.

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What? When I went to university for those couple of floating around wasted times, I was studying psychology.

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Shocking. I just find it fascinating. I find people fascinating. I find brains fascinating. I don't find brains fascinating at all. I just am nosy, and I like to know details. I do, and I'm a natural fixer. And if I can provide you a solution that I think might work, then I will tell you. Yeah, and I will tell complete strangers that too. Yes, and I mean, I think the way you're the way you are seeing it too on your end is you. You see yourself as a psychologist. You're like I. I need to know how to help people. I need to study. I do see myself like that on my end. It's I need to understand how that person is broken. I need to understand why they are doing what they're doing. Right. So we see them in different ways. We have different interests in them. But that's the typical. Yeah,

that's interesting. Study psychology of human beings. I never thought of that before, but yeah, because for me, it's trying to help someone, and you're more like, what else? What's what's going on in there? Yeah, yeah. Like when we watch your true crime shows, you watch all the time. When we watch them, you're like trying to see, like, oh, okay, yeah, like I love how the investigation things go. I love how they're trying to get in his head, and I'm just like, why is that guy broke? Why did that guy do that? How is he? How could he possibly live with himself? Like, what? What happened to him? So we see it from different ways. Interesting. Yeah, I study psychology if you can. That's number six. Yeah, take some courses online. Understand human behavior. Right.

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It's hard to.

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It's just hard to try and examine why a character is the way they are, and then decide these are the things they would probably do if you don't understand why we do things. It's it's the it's why we see the basic things in most movies, right? Someone's an alcoholic. Okay, yeah, it's not boring and old because there's a lot of people who are alcoholics, and people turn to alcohol for all sorts of reasons, and so understanding why you don't want to face something, why this this character went through this event, they were held hostage for 19 months, and whatever. Now they're in public. Now they're they don't want anyone to know they've moved on. They're an adult now. They don't want to ever face that. Well, if you don't understand how the human brain reacts and how it changes based on certain things. Then you can understand authentically why that character is going to make the choices, why they are hiding, why they are masking, why they will

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fight to keep their secret, why they'll kill someone to not have their secret come out. You don't know that, and so it's that's what just helps the realism in your work. It helps with believability and authenticity, and that's what makes it really visceral and hit your reader. Where you're just like, oh my gosh, like I'm not going to forget this person because they just feel so real. It's understanding that. So I mean, there's a you know, there's there's so many. I mean, there's a simple book, you know,

27:57

psychology for screenwriters. I think it's called. Just learn psychology as much as you possibly can. There's so many videos online on Instagram, things that pop up, or it's just like, did you know that you act like this because of this? Just study it, be lock into that because because that's going to just add so much depth to your stuff. Lock into it, but maybe not with a serial killer. No, no. Well, sure, why not? I mean, it could be very interesting. That new show that I'm watching, well, it's not new, but it's on that ID on demand. Yep, is all about talking to the killers. To the killers, yeah, that's so fascinating. Like what, like, and just the lack of remorse. I know. It's like, well, why did you do that? I don't know. I just felt like shooting them. Yeah, it just the lack of remorse. Like, there's like that human aspect that is sociopathic person as a broken narcissist.

It's like it didn't connect. No, something don't connect right. Yeah, yeah. Anyway, the next one we have is seven, which is swing for the fences. I don't know what you're trying to say here. Write a script that

28:57

is so so memorable that a reader is going to get to the end of it, and think that is one of the most original things I've read. Ridiculous! I don't think anyone could ever film it, but I'm never gonna forget it. Right? I always use my buddy Phyllis as an example. Wanted to write that, you know, like very over the top adult Santa Claus movie, and he's like, I don't know. I'm like, do it, like do it, like you're hilarious. It's gonna be hilarious. Just write it, you because the the

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the fact is that pretty much any spec script, which is a script you write on speculation that someone might buy it when you're done.

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Any spec script, not not everyone, but pretty much most of them that start a career don't ever get made. Those are not the movies that get made because someone reads you and they love your writing and your voice and what you bring to the table, but they're not going to make that movie. They have a movie they're wanting to make. Yeah, it might not be the ideal

29:46

choice for them. Yeah, but they like your writing and they like who you are. Yeah, which is why you want to make good first impressions at all times. Always, but it's like then, oh, we just we just got rights to this IPP material. This is the writer we're waiting for, like the.

30:00

Comedy or the voice, like the like the just originality. It's going to work so good for this. Like that's what happens. So

30:07

a lot of writers, I think, are just too safe. A lot of scripts I read, I'm like, I don't know. Like, how is this a movie? Like, why is this the movie that's so exciting that people are just going to be like, I have to fight for this? That's what you should be writing. Write something, even if it's like, no, no one could ever make this because it's too over the top or it's too offensive or whatever it might be. Just do it to showcase who you are and what you bring to the table. Okay. So swing. That's what mean when swings the fence. It's just don't be safe. Safe is boring. Gotcha.

30:33

This

30:35

one, the amount of times that you've been asked about this, just about like the business side of things, but this specifically is understanding how budget works. Yes, yeah, it's huge, and and I'm

I I don't encourage writers to be like you know I don't say Kate just don't don't don't take chances just write because you you you want to make sure that the budget is feasible. Yeah, like you're saying like

31:00

what I think you're saying with this is

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maybe don't blow up 15 skyscrapers in the middle of LA.

31:09

You can if that's your movie. Yeah, but I'm saying budget wise, that is. But if it's okay, so what I would say is, so your story is about a family

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who are just trying to survive after the apocalypse, after some big attack on Los Angeles, right? And it's like 10 years down the road after that's happened. Don't stop the story. Go for a two-page flashback for the scene where all of the skyscrapers are exploded and and stuff in LA, and then go back to the movie that it is. That scene is never going to be made if it really doesn't impact what's happening to the story. So how would you show that in another way? Then you would have one. You would have you could have a newspaper headline, 15 skyscrapers, some pictures of the explosions. You could have a a character, you know, just in in bed and and a flash of a dream of like an explosion that you can take a stock image of, and then he wakes up and looks outside, and yeah, the all L.A. skyline's gone. Like, there's a lot of creative ways to do it without. Oh, here's this is a \$2 million scene, right? That's the problem. Okay,

32:16

don't like. Yeah, you can add scenes because you think, oh, I need this scene because I need to understand this. Okay, so if this is what they need to understand, what are other ways you can have them understand it? Right.

32:27

You're not saying just by showing either. No, sometimes you can say depending on how it's. I think it's depending on how it's delivered. Yes, exactly. And I mean, a lot of writers don't realize that until you're in the business and you see how movies are made.

32:40

It's like, oh, here's a cutaway. We're gonna go out to this landscape area. Okay, so you got to get all your cameras, all your crew, everything, all out for this one shot. I've seen it a lot of time. One shot. Okay, so you got to pay all those. That's a whole new day. That's a whole new camera setup. You got to get new lighting. You got to get all these people. You got to get crew. You got to get extras. We got to get this person here. We got to get permits for this, it's like if that's going to cost a bunch of money, they're just going to cut it anyway, right? So you have to also be mindful of that because you want your script to be as production ready as possible. So

write for budget, meaning don't add things that are going to cost money for nothing. One of the best tips I ever got was from Darren Scott, the director made *Menace to Society* back in the day, great guy. We were going through my script, and he's like, "Hey, so see this? See how you have the bartender? Bartender has one line, right? That one line. That now is going to cost a lot of money because that's going to need a SAG actor. We're going to have to pay union minimums. We're going to have to pay that character more. We're going to have to bring him in. We're going to have to put him up in a hotel. Maybe we're gonna have to do casting. We're gonna all these things for one line. Give that line to someone else. Just give give to someone else who's already spoken. The bartender doesn't need a line. It's the little things like that you just don't think about. Right. Those are the things you want to ask yourself. Is this gonna be something they'll spend money on? If not, take it out. Okay. Writing, keeping those kind of things. A lot of novice screenwriters just don't have a clue that that is the reality of it because it has to be made into something. Yeah, and you have a note here saying everything must fight to be there. Yeah, if you can pull something out and it doesn't actually change enough, shouldn't be there. Yeah, it's just going to cost them. Okay, makes sense. Yeah.

34:16

Number nine, take criticism, which I suck at.

34:21

That's my favorite thing, right? When a writer does really spot because you don't take criticism well either. But I don't fight it, and I don't argue, and I don't get defensive in screenwriting. Oh, I like how you have life. I don't care about life. Take I don't care to take criticism in life. But if you want a career and you want someone to work with you and invest their their reputation, their savings, everything on you. Don't don't fight criticism. Take it, learn from it, grow from it. Nothing worse than when you provide a writer notes and they argue with every single thing that you're suggesting and tell you that you're wrong and you didn't read it, obviously, and you don't know what you're talking about. It's like, okay, I'll never help you again. I'll never.

35:00

Read you again. No one's going to work with you if you do that. You have to be gracious. A movie isn't a movie or a TV pilot, whatever it is, is not about the writer. The writer, you don't you don't write it and then go make it yourself with no one else, and that's it. It's yours unless you have all the money and you want to do that. A movie or TV script is made by hundreds and hundreds of people who all have to get on board, all offer insight. Cinematographer will have an idea. It'll change everything. You can't be precious and critical about or and not you know not take criticism on things. If you if you can't push that aside, this is not the business for you. You will hit rejection 99 times out of 100. You have to learn to take it because it's part of it. So you have to learn to take criticism and either just be like, I don't agree, and throw it away, or say, okay, I'll try and learn from it, but you don't fight back. It's just never gonna, never gonna go well for you. No, makes sense. Yeah. Hey, guess what? What last one? Last one. What is it? Always remember. Actually, it says always. Oh, there's a typo.

35:59

I always have to point them out. I don't know why. I feel like I. That's how you can tell I don't use AI because my mistakes all up for my stuff. They always, always kind of like frustrated. Yes, frustrated.

36:13

Always remember your script only exists to be filmed. Yes. Can you say that again? Because it's so important. Always remember, your script only exists to be filmed. Yeah, I'm so tired of reading screenplays that are so written. They're so like overly written, trying to be like some classic novelist or like this is going to be art when I'm done with it. Nobody cares. No one reads screenplays for fun, like I do, because I'm a screenwriter. But most people buy screenplays and read them like you do books. Like a screenplay only exists to become something.

36:51

It's it exists to be filmed, whether it's a pilot TV short, whatever it is, movie script, anything. It's only made. It's only written down so it can be shot. Don't have stuff that can't be shot. Don't tell us all these crazy little details and all this is like if it's going to if it would appear in the movie if they can shoot it and the audience can actually experience it, that should be on the page. Everything else, every every sentence you've read written in your script, go back and read it and read it out loud and think: Will the audience be able to see that? If the audience can't see it, it means it cannot be shot on film, and then it shouldn't be in your script.

37:28

You you need to write your script well so it's an an enjoyable read, right? You want to have voice in it, but voice also makes the movie come alive or the pilot come alive in that person's head. But it has to be able to be shot because what's going to happen is okay. You write the script and it's beautifully written and it's you know really it's it's very literary and then they want to make it. Can they shoot it tomorrow? Nope. They got to get rid of all the junk that doesn't need to be there. That's then they're they're like usually the answer will be yeah we really love it but it's not quite ready. Develop it further, and then come back to us. No way, man. Do you want the answer to be holy crap? I love this, and I could shoot it tomorrow, untouched. That's your job, and that's what you should be doing. So just just challenge your thing. Fight for that. Fight every piece. Have every piece fight for itself. That's the best thing you can do. That was the biggest compliment I ever got. Where it's like, I okay, I think I'm on the right track. Was when someone said, I read your script and I thought I can shoot this tomorrow. Like, it's which one was that? It was Incision. Yeah, yeah. Incision. Darren Scott said that to me. He's like, I read scripts all the time. I read this script and I thought I could, I could, I could actually go in the morning and we could shoot this right now as it is on the page. And I was like, okay, that was the biggest thing that made me go, I get that now. So that's why I'm trying to pass on these tips because a lot of these things you just don't learn until you see people reacting to things and and teaching you things as you go. So yeah, that's kind of my point. And can we have can we have these listed in the show notes as well? I will have them in the so that the listeners and viewers can put it on sticky notes on their computer. If there's one that stands out to you. Put it on your Post-it, stick it on your computer. Yeah, yeah, and that's it. So those are those are some tips. There's always more tips, and and that's what we try to give you here. But let that marinate a little bit and listen

to this little promotion of one of our other one of our other products here at Script Reader Pro, and we'll be right back.

39:22

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39:52

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39:56

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40:00

The rewrite proposal to get 15% off.

40:05

Okay, thank you for staying with us. This portion of the podcast, we are going to answer questions that have been previously submitted by viewers and listeners like you. Yeah, thanks for thanks for writing in. If if someone doesn't know yet and they want to send in a show ID or a question, where do they do that? You can email us at hello@scriptreaderpro.com.

40:27

Easy enough. Easy enough. First question today

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comes from Evan in Austin, Texas. Nice. Wonder if Evan was at

40:37

the Austin screenwriters. Yes. I wonder if Evan knows that our new nephew's middle name is Austin.

40:45

Probably not. We have this new little baby nephew Scott. He's from Austin. So adorable. Why would his name is Remy Austin? I'm just. It was just a. It was a joke. He's not very good at jokes, guys. But this kid is so cute. It's not. He looks just like Scott. It's kind of creepy. Weird. It is weird. No, my kid.

41:03

That would be messy. Well, as I say,

41:06

okay, Evan from Austin, Texas. How do you know when you're starting your screenplay too early in the story? Oh,

41:15

well, if it's taking you too long to get to what your movie story actually is, and that's that's how I explain it to people. This is all good stuff and it's entertaining, but your movie story starts when this event happens. So get us there as fast as possible. So think of what is like. What would we see in the trailer, right? We if everything up to page 29 wouldn't even be in the trailer, then it's it's just not needing to be there. Think of what it is. What's the thing that makes your movie story really start? If that's taking too long, you're taking too long. Get in earlier. Get it up closer. That's my answer. The thing I want to say to Evan too is, if you're questioning if you're starting your screenplay too early, it's probably too starting too early. Yeah, I don't know. But yeah, if you're getting that comment like, oh, it's just taking too long. There's too much stuff. If it's backstory, like backstory has a place, but not in the first 20 pages of your script. You can filter in backstory elsewhere. You want to put us with that character in their current normal world, and then make something happen to them. Gotcha. Okay. Question two comes from Marisol in New Mexico.

42:22

Marisol says, "I've heard that every scene should either move the plot forward or reveal character. What about scenes that are mostly there for atmosphere, relationships, or just letting the story breathe? That's a great question because there are a lot of those scenes where nothing is really happening. But the thing is that you just don't think things are happening when you're watching it. The great scenes that are there that do feel like a breather and do feel like we're just there to kind of like have some fun witty dialog. Go back and watch them again. You will learn it's as little as one of the characters doing something that that you're just like, well, that's weird, right? It's like, oh, that whole scene was to entertain us while we picked up on the fact that that character,

43:05

I don't know, stutters or that character was scared when someone said a certain word. It's it should always have something happening. Otherwise, what's the point, right? the the The way you can figure out if your scene is just filler and there is not like nothing in there that makes it important is remove it and see what happens. If you remove it, and even just one little detail is that that was important isn't there that moves the plot forward or tells us somewhat of character.

43:33

If if you you'll find what it is, and then if you find it, then you can say okay, so that's the important part. Now let me go back into the scene and make sure there's not a whole bunch of other stuff that's not needed. Yeah, makes sense. Yeah. Last question: How do you write a character making a bad decision without making the audience think the character is stupid? Here's my answer. Who cares? Yeah, that comes from Brett in New South Wales. New South Wales. Yeah, I mean, I mean, it depends. Do you want us to think that the character is stupid?

Because this is all then whatever. Yeah, or is the character stupid? Or like, it depends on this. Like, it depends what the story is. The whole reason for the story, right? If the character does something that's clearly stupid, you need to make sure that the the the bigger question is: it doesn't matter if we think they're stupid. It matters if we believe they would have done it. True. Good point. Like a lot of people do stupid things, but why did you do it? And what did you think would happen? And what was your motivation behind it? Yeah. Because if the motivation behind something stupid makes sense, then I'm like, yeah, that makes sense. So not as stupid. We do stupid things. All I do stupid things all the time. Like, well, I was stupid. Okay, but what was my reason for it? Right? Yeah. Doesn't matter. I don't think anyone's going to judge your character for doing something stupid unless it it feels like well, I don't believe that character would have actually done that based on what you see, what I've learned of them. So you just the writer needed something to happen, wanted something to happen, and they just had them do it. That's bad, right?

45:00

Good writing is you you you paint that character in a way that the audience is like okay that was really dumb but I kind of get why they did it so make sure there's enough layers there that that that's how it's coming across. Gotcha. Guess what? That's the end of this episode. Nice. What did you think of the episode?

45:17

Was it good? It was good. Not too dry. You learned some things. I did learn a little bit, so that's always good. That's good. I hope writers learned. I hope that's our whole hope is that you learned something, you were entertained. If you were great, pass it on. What should they do if they really liked it? I would love it if you would give us great stars, five star reviews. That would be wonderful. That would be great. Share the podcast with those that you know that are fellow writers. Yep, and subscribe. Yeah, subscribe. Scribe to our our podcast wherever you listen to podcasts. Subscribe to our YouTube channel. Yeah, all the visual versions of this,

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