

Ep #77: Story Logic Part One

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On this episode, we're talking all about story logic, and this is the first part.

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Yeah, two-part series, and logic is something that can make or break a reader's experience. So

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listen in.

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

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Hey, everybody! This is Desiree, and this is the Script Reader Pro podcast. I am with Scott, a writer with Script Reader Pro.

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Yes, and a reader, and a mentor, and a person. I am not just a writer. I am also a person.

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Shocking,

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with a soul.

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Is this how this is gonna go? Why? It's off to a great start.

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Good. See, I'm human.

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Whatever. Thank you guys for joining us. We are on episode 77.

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Wow, that's a lot of episodes. Yeah. Yep, a lot of episodes.

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That's a lot of me having to listen to him.

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That's a lot of me trying to figure out what can we talk about next time too. So it's yeah, there's a lot of topics, and and this one's actually inspired by a question we had last time. So

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interesting, and I want to just mention really quickly, if you guys have any questions, comments, or ideas specifically for podcasts, please email us. It would save Scott's sanity.

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Sanity, yes, it would. It would save my sanity if I had more things to think about.

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So, for those that are new to the podcast, the way that we always start is we talk about something that we've watched lately.

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Yes. What

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are we talking about today?

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New movie we just watched called The Whisperman. The Whisperman. Whisper Man. It was actually really good. Robert De Niro, Adam Scott, Michael Keaton has a cool little part in it, and I

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know he looks so old. He

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is old. I know. How old

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is he?

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Probably in his 60s, maybe 70. Not sure, but he's old. That's for sure. But yeah, it was a good true crime, or not true crime, but like crime thriller, kidnapping, serial killer kind of thing. Considered kind of a true crime? No, because it's not true. But it's based on a novel, which a lot of the the movies are that that get made. But yeah, it was it was well done. A lot of layers to it. Really cool father and son part of the story, and lots of emotion. And Desiree got really upset when a certain character something happened to certain character. She was upset that it happened, and so it got us emotionally in there.

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That's what I was going to say. Is that I was very invested, obviously, in the character, which means it was damn good writing. It

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was it was damn good writing. It was a lot of great setups, a lot of really really good payoffs. The payoffs were really strong.

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I kept saying, "Oh, that's the breadcrumb. And you notice I said to you so many times, Scott, did you not see what happened? That's what's going to happen because this is going to happen. I know it was role reversal. I always

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get in trouble, and I do that, but you didn't. I didn't give you trouble because no, it was

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you were not with it last night. You just I was just

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watching the show. I was into it.

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All right. Well, it was very good. Highly recommended. Yeah,

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recommended. It's on Netflix. Yeah, good, good, good story. So,

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so Scott.

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Yes.

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Today, yes, we have our first part series, Story logic,

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yes. And

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then you have here, but why would they do that? Yeah, that's

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kind of the theme. Not, not. Well, it's kind of like two two pieces to it. So why would they do that? Meaning, a reader would be thinking, why would the writer do that? Why would they do that? Doesn't feel authentic. There's no logic to

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it. Really, you're talking about it in the authentic side of things, not why did they do that. Like in the movie we watched, and I was like, why did the writer choose that?

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Either way, but it's that the one side is that viewpoint of the reader thinking, why did the writer do that? But more importantly, it's why did the character do that, right? That's where logic issues come. Is you see a character do something, you're just like, why did they do that? It makes no sense

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because of the character that they are.

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Exactly. Okay. So that's what we're going to be digging into today. The second part is the subtitle is, oh come on, like makes no sense now. The character would never do that, right? So big. We're looking at both sides of it, but the whole why would they do that thing? That's what we're going to concentrate on today. So there's these are the moments that when when you're a professional reader, as Desiree is a professional reader, feel free to to ask her to read your script, and she'll say no. No. But it's when they stop being immersed in the story, right? Because you start seeing the writer manipulating it, right? It's not the characters doing what they're supposed to do; it's the writers making them do stuff, right? And so the goal of story logic, right? And every world has its own logic, right? Depending on their genre, real world logic doesn't make sense, but it has to make sense within the story. And within who the character is, but the the goal of story logic is to keep the writer invisible, and that's probably the best piece of advice I could give someone is you want someone to read your script and just feel like the writer is invisible. You don't notice the writer, right? Because the characters are doing things that they're supposed to do. Everything makes sense. That's when you push a writer out of your stories when they start to see the writer manipulating things that don't make sense. Make sense? Yeah, makes sense. Okay, sounds good. So, the first thing: Why do they do that? Right? If the reaction is like a lot of times when we're watching a movie, does you would say, "Well, I wouldn't have done that, right? That's not the problem, right? If if you see a character and you're like, "Well, I wouldn't have done that. That's not an issue.

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It's more so asking yourself if the character would do it.

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Yes, that's exactly it, right? Because if you're thinking, "Well, I wouldn't do that, you're already invested, right? You're not worried about whether or not that made sense. But if you don't, if it

doesn't make sense that the character would do it, then then you're out, right? You you lose the reader. So you don't believe that that character would do that. So character logic is not the same as real world logic, right? Characters they can be reckless, selfish, impulsive, frightened, highly emotional, maybe irrational sometimes. Watch yourself, right? But the audience just needs to understand why the decision is made, right? Why it made sense to the character in that moment, right? So, example: Breaking Bad. Okay, you've seen Breaking Bad. Did you like Breaking Bad?

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Yes.

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Yes. Walter White. What do you think of Walter White?

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He's fine. He's a flawed character, and his character changes a lot throughout

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it. Definitely does. When he's going through that story, what he's repeatedly doing is making choices that most viewers would never make. Right. So there's no problem with that. You're like, well, I wouldn't do that. I wouldn't sell making create crystal meth to leave some money for my family because I'm going to die of cancer. I probably wouldn't become a drug manufacturer, right? I don't

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think you would. I don't

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think I would

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until you're put in that situation, right?

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But but a lot of viewers wouldn't make those decisions, right? But but Walter White, you know, his pride, his resentment, his fear, you know, his his his his main thing is he wants to be powerful, right? So he has this appetite for power that grows and grows and grows, so all of the choices that he makes makes sense because we watch that character change, like you said, right? They change, they grow, they move through, right?

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Yeah, that makes sense. But for you personally, would you yourself ever get to that position? Do you think?

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I don't know. I mean, I'd probably do a lot of things for my. Like someone was asked me the other day, you know, would you ever be a soldier? Like, I wouldn't because I I would never want to be in that position where I have I have a gun in my hand enough to kill someone. But so like I'm not I'm not a hunter. I don't like to kill even like little insects, things like that. But if I was forced to, if my family's lives depended on it, I would probably have no problem, right? So,

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like, make like you'd have no problem making an irrational choice, basically.

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Yeah, probably. Yeah, I think you're if you're pushed to it, right?

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Yeah, but if you make that choice, though, the important thing is to really make sure that I think it's believable to the audience.

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Yeah, for sure. So if I was in that situation where you knowing me, right, where I suddenly had to kill someone, or they would kill you and Asha, right? How would I do that? There's certain ways it would be believable, right?

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For you, there would be no stabbing or gunshots.

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Brad, as I'm saying, I wouldn't grab a knife and just stab someone 100 times. I would

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pills.

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Well, no, like in a moment of like life or death. Oh, I would probably I don't know say I'm strangling someone. I wouldn't just sit there and strangle the strangler. I'd probably be like I don't want to do this. Your eyes would be closed, but I'd be cry. I couldn't. Yeah, exactly. Right. So you wouldn't. I don't even want

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to picture this because I I know what your cry sounds like, and it's hilarious.

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Thanks, honey. The

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cry with the choking.

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Yes, thanks. Thanks for you. Everyone needed to know that. But but that's the thing is, even though there's a choice, you have to this person has to kill this person. There's still a choice that has to be made of how that character would do it, how they would react to it, what kind of things would be

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done,

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right? So that's where that whole irrational, you know, irrational for that character, but but it's also in the actions. How would they do it, right? Otherwise, it's just not believable. So the more we know the character as the audience, the more we're going to believe how they do something. Believe the choice

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that they make, basically. Exactly.

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So I'm gonna go through a number of things that kind of outline the different story logic issues. Okay, so you have one is called

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you have something here called the Muppet Problem.

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Yeah. So basically, picture like a Muppet.

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Why does he? What does he

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do? What are the

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guys up in

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the? I don't remember their names. Yeah, that's a good one. But yeah, so picture a Muppet, right? You got a hand in it. Someone's controlling that. Very animated, right? Yeah. So they stop behaving like a person, right? In in a movie or or whatever they are, they stop behaving like a person. They start behaving like a device, right? Whose only job is to get the writer to the next

beat. That's bad writing. The character. So the character isn't. The character stops being a living, breathing person that makes believable decisions, and they start doing things that you can tell someone is just making them do, right? You're like the writer needs them to get here, so they couldn't figure out a way that the character would get there, so they just make them go there, right?

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So you're basically saying that the characters that people are writing, because they're writing them, they're like the puppeteer.

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Yeah, but yeah, but you should never see like when you watch them up. It's you never like they're so good you don't think that anyone's moving them. Right, you don't see the arm.

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You don't see the arm, and you don't see like strings and stuff. Right,

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exactly. So that's what can happen when the logic doesn't make any sense, right? So you you start to see that there's someone manipulating it, and that's when you lose your reader, right? So an example: an intelligent intelligent character suddenly ignores an obvious danger, right? Someone goes to an unsafe location for a convincing reason. When your dyslexy audience are like, they would never do. Why would she go there alone? Why are there no lights on? Why are they walking into that room right now? Right? What are some of the things you see people do? You're just like, okay, this just makes no sense. It's stupid.

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Probably, probably someone that would, I think, trust someone so quickly, and you're like, why would you trust that random person when the character seems mis like to distrust people? Yeah, you know, too eager to jump into. Oh yeah, I'll go in the car with you.

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Yeah, you're like more like what? You

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didn't even want to go into the store and talk to that other that person working, and now you're going to jump into a car with this stranger.

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Yeah, exactly. So it makes no sense, right? Makes no sense for for the character to do that. Or or a lot of times you'll see someone forgets information that they've been told or they know, and they're just like, oh, like my the best one I it's in the Goonies, right? And so Corey Feldman's character, he speaks Spanish, and he speaks Spanish fluently, and it's a big part of the opening of the story. The maid comes in the house, he starts telling her where the cocaine is, and and all

these kind of crazy things because he's playing with her in his perfect Spanish. Then they find a treasure map in the attic, and he reads the Spanish perfectly in English. Then, at the end of the story, when the maid finds all of the jewels and she's trying to tell them, "Don't sign, don't sign, don't sign the contract, she's saying, "Don't sign in Spanish. And Corey Feldman's character is just like, "I don't, don't, don't, don't write, don't, don't do, and it was like that. That makes no sense because he fluently spoke Spanish and he read Spanish. Oh, then

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why did they do that? I

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don't. It's a story logic thing. It was for drama, but it should have been that his character was maybe over, didn't hear what was happening. One of the other characters had to try and figure out what it was.

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Connecting the dots, but missing like numbers seven through 10.

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Wait, it's it's that example of the writer, they forgot that this character spoke perfect Spanish earlier, right? And it's hard to say why it happened. Yeah, but they shot that part at the end or at the beginning of their production, and then later on they filmed the other scenes and realized that Corey Feldman's character, you know, as an actor, he could speak Spanish. It's hard to say why, but it ends up being a big story flaw, right? And that takes you out, and you're like, "Well, that makes no sense, right? So that's one of the one of the things you want to really kind of watch for, right?

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Okay, so we went through number one, which was the Muppet problem. Yep. Number two, you have here motivation versus justification.

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Right. So so this is when the writer has a reason for an event, and it's not the same as the character's reason, right? Say that

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again. The reader,

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so the writer has a reason for a specific event to happen, okay? For

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something to happen.

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Yes, and it's not the same as the character having a reason to cause that to happen, okay? So it's the there's motivation from the writer needing it to happen, but there's no justification in the story, right? It's just another one of those examples of making a character do something that they wouldn't do, right? Okay. So, like in Stranger Things, for example, the kids are routinely entering dangerous situations, right? And a lot of the time, you're just like, hey, when I was 12 or 13 or 10. There's no way I would ever have done that. I don't care what's going on. I would never have gone into a room that I or crawled through a tree trunk that I know is going to take me to you know, an underworld, right? But the characters have reasons. They have proper justification and motivation. Their best friend is in there. And the whole theme of the show was about friends. Would you crawl through a tree trunk for any friend that you know right now, knowing that you may die if you do so?

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Crawling might be a little hard, considering I'm in a wheelchair. Would you roll

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your wheelchair right through that tree trunk hole?

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I don't know if the tree trunk hole. If

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it was big enough and it fit, would you? Is there and it was wheelchair accessible? Yes. Is there a friend. This is a very good example, Scott. Go in there for.

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Yeah.

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How many?

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Not a lot.

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Right. So there's six. Maybe two. There's five of these characters, right? And all of them are willing to go because of their friend. Because friends don't leave friends behind. Friends don't die. So they still

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let friends drink and drive,

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right? Yes, or bicycle and drink and bicycle, but that they set up that these friends will do anything for each other. That they are their ride or die. They are a crew, right? They they can't exist unless it's all of them. So because it's set up so well, we believe that they will go into anything to try and save one of them.

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Okay, so you as a reader, like you're talking all about how it's not likely that this would happen with this character. Right. As a reader, how often does it happen where you're thinking, "I wish this writer didn't make that character do that, because I cannot see that character doing that. Don't do that, and then the character does

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it. Not all the time, but there are times like

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like I'm saying out of say, I like numbers and percentages. Out of one to 100, how many scripts that you read are like that? Where there's like where it's not believable, and it's like takes you almost. It take would take you out of the story.

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I would say

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how what percentage?

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I would say it's more. It's more about the writer didn't do the work. There more work needed to be done to pay it off. Yeah, not not. It's not as much like out of the blue. Like oh well, like whatever. They they go into a house and it's dark and they need they know a killer's in the basement so they're gonna go in the basement okay so why is this woman gonna go in the basement knowing there's a killer there when she has no weapons she's not a police officer there's nothing going on why would she go there she just then decides him gonna go down there that's what you'll see and be like why okay so she doesn't have to. Why not call the cops? But yes,

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that movie that we watched last night, I felt that when that detective lady went into the room alone and didn't seem properly trained even to what's it when you go through the house, clear the house? Yeah,

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and I was like, really, this is stupid.

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Yeah, that's exact. That's the exact example. But then they that what they did, they just did it too late. So then, when she was finally clearing the rooms, what did she hear? Well, then she heard the kid. She heard the kid. She didn't know for sure that the kid was there.

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No, I know that, but no,

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but I'm saying so for her to then go and try and catch him in the house.

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I get it. So the writer made it so that she would hear the kid. That was the whole motivation, but it wasn't. It wasn't the. It wasn't completed well.

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No, like she should have heard the scream immediately, right? As soon as that guy threw hot water in her and ran, and she called in backup. She

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have to wait. She could have just waited. He has

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nowhere to go. He's in the house. Yeah. She, if she heard the kid call out, then we would have been like, "Yep. We wouldn't have even thought twice about him, right? So the there's motivation to get her looking to try and find the killer in the house, but the justification is she heard the boy scream? That then locks you in. So a lot of times, a lot of writers forget that they don't set up enough of that. They don't give the person a reason for doing what they're doing. So that makes sense.

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Kate, number three, we have is emotional logic.

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Yeah. So you're you're you're you have a lot of emotional logic in in your life, Desiree, a lot of your logic, a lot of your decisions are based, yeah, right. So, emotion. So people do not always behave rationally when they are in a heightened emotional state, right? So when a character is in that state, a lot of times we will just believe whatever it is they do.

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I have an example.

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What's an example?

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I had a friend with me in the summertime.

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Oh gosh, yes. Uh huh.

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Who often never cries.

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Yeah,

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never ever cries. Yeah. And we were downtown. It's a little sketchy downtown, and there was a man that seemed to be on drugs or something mentally going on there, he had a full soda and a full meal, and he looked back at me and tossed it at me. The cup splashed everywhere. She got so mad that she started going after the guy, and I was like, "We don't do that." Downtown, we don't do that, but emotion took over, and it was like a fight or flight, and it was a definite fight situation.

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Yes,

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not. You guys are both

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lucky he didn't turn around and lash out at you guys.

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Not a normal response for her to do this, though. So it was like, who is this character? I wouldn't.

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Yeah, exactly. I'm like I don't believe. If I had, she told me that story. I don't believe that she did. Well, we

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did tell you, and you were like, I didn't

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believe. I thought yeah, made no sense.

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You know.

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Yeah, but because it was such a her emotions are so high, she just reacted. Right? It wasn't rational. No. It was irrational, and that is fine. So if you're going to if you're going to like like put your characters in emotional states. Yeah,

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like here I

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push them to extreme. Here I

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just looked up, and it says that fear, grief, shame, pride, jealousy, guilt, love, and desperation can make a terrible decision feel inevitable.

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Yeah, exactly. And a lot of times, like that's what you'll see, especially in in movies and TV, is people will kill someone out of rage or jealousy. They'll walk in on their partner with someone, and they'll they have a gun, and they'll shoot the person. Like people react, right? Crimes of passion.

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You know, one of the shows that I well, you never really watched it with me, but had a lot of that was the show Shameless.

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Oh yeah, with the family, yeah, the messed up family, right?

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And just a lot of, but it was written so well that all the time, there were those moments that were unbelievable. But it was constantly like that, where that you just expected there to be situations that came up like that.

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Yeah. So because everyone's so emotional in that, and alcoholism was part of that. Yeah, it all from

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past traumas. It was such a high

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conflict show all the time, all the time.

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So you expected

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it. Yeah,

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it's the unexpected when you're watching something and it's just like, what just happened there? That should not have happened.

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Yeah,

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or should it have happened? What's your motivation, right?

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Yeah, yeah, motivation. Yeah, exactly. So emotional logic is is really important, right? And and a reader doesn't have to agree with the choice that they make, right? The reader just needs to understand kind of the the reason

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or the purpose.

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Yeah, like the emotional equation behind it, right? Like these are the emotions, this and this. It equals this. Okay, makes sense, right? Yeah, I'm on board with it. So that that that is a lot of time why logic will work. And if you forget to have that emotional piece in your writing, then it just doesn't make sense. You're like, no, wouldn't do that. But so next one to have that. Next one

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we have number four is the just talk to each other problem.

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Yeah. So I mean, so miscommunication it kind of becomes contrived or forced, right? When one honest 30/32 conversation would solve everything, right? And you see that a lot in like Hallmark movies, right? It's always a misconnection, miscommunication. Someone overhears someone saying something, and then you're

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like, just tell the person already and move on. But then there would be no movies,

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right? But I'm just saying, but but yeah, I'm just saying that as an example, right? But it's it's kind of the bigger example, right? Like in the White Lotus, for example, great story, right? And and all of them, this works in. But the characters often avoid saying something that would just clarify the situation, right? But it does such a good job of telling us who these characters are and what they're all about that the reason they don't clear things up is because of their they have a fear that it'll change their social status, or they're embarrassed by something.

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It's deeper, a deeper reasoning,

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right? So, so that that can really work. But if it's like, oh, we just have to believe again. It all comes down to believing that the character wouldn't talk to that person about

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it,

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right? Instead, you just avoid it, and then that's when the audience is like, okay, well, why, like, just why aren't you telling her this? Or why why won't you tell this guy exactly what the problem is? Like, just do it, right? So then, we need to understand more about the characters. We need to understand why they struggle with the truth or what they're afraid of. Yeah, if we don't understand that person's fears or why they have a wall up or something, right? If it's just they're not telling this person how they really feel, and that's just it, and we're just supposed to trust that and believe it, then it that's when it feels contrived. That's when it feels false.

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If a character is like keeping information to themselves, right? How do you know if it's the character keeping it to themselves, or like if it's something the character would actually do, or if it's the writer,

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well, so you know what I'm trying to say. So it's the writer, like the character

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legit would do it. Their behavior tells

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us that, yeah,

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you know, or maybe not that they wouldn't do it, but that the writer is making them. Do you get what I'm saying?

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Yeah, yeah, and like in this example, so the writer doesn't want them. The writer wants miscommunication because that writer wants those characters to not solve their problem easily

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because they have something around the next door seven scenes. Right, but they don't do the work. They don't.

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They don't do the work for it. the The writer doesn't know how, or they just didn't figure out a way to do it. Oh, you're

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saying that they don't. Right.

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So that so that writer. Needed us to believe that she won't tell him that she knows he cheated on her because whatever she just doesn't, or or that he stole from her. But if the writer took time to show us that the last time this this character was honest with the person they cared about, everything fell apart. If you give us that, then when the situation comes up, and that character can tell that person and solve the problem, and they don't. Then, then the audience is like, okay, yeah, I get it. She's afraid because it all fell apart last time.

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If that's there, no logic problem. If you don't show us that, and you just say, and she finds out, and then she just doesn't say anything about it, then you're like, that makes no sense.

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Well, it's almost like having someone hand you a birthday gift without it being previously wrapped with a bow. Here, open

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it. Yeah.

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But it's like, but I want to have the exciting parts of untying the bow and opening the gift and taking my time instead of just been here's your gift. Yeah. Right.

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Yeah.

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Okay. So the next one we have is five planting the psychology of a major choice?

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Yeah. So, and this is when it's a story that has something really big that the character is going to have to choose that will change everything for them, right? And this is where understanding your character and having the audience get to know your character makes everything more dramatic, right? So, if a character is going to make that big extreme choice later, you need to establish the psychological ingredients for that very early, right? What do you mean psychological ingredients? So, in *The Godfather*, for example, classic choice because Michael Corleone, he is set up as the guy who is not wanting to be in the criminal part of the family in any way. He goes off to war. He's a soldier. He's a hero. He comes home. Wants to settle down with this nice young lady and just live his life and and go that direction, and and he fights it tooth and nail every beat. He does not want to be involved. He does not want to be all this. Then there's a choice that someone in the family has to shoot, has to kill a guy, and Michael sees that the only if if any of these other ones do it, then that's it. That they're not going to be able to. Some will happen. They have a dirty record, whatever. He realizes, okay, you know what? I have to. So it's against everything, and and because it's against everything that they've set up, you're just like, no, Michael, no, you like don't, you can't do it. That's that's doing that work. If you don't set up that psychological those psychological ingredients, right? If you don't really show us who they are, is it going to be dramatic when they make a choice? It's not going to be dramatic at all. Yeah, exactly. I remember one of my favorite instances of this is. Do you remember the movie *Hacksaw Ridge*? It was about

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sounds familiar, but I don't remember. Yeah, it

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was about a guy. He was a what is that called? When someone won't go to they they can't go to war and be drafted because they are something observer can't remember the term, but he he was just he will he was would never do violence he will never hold a gun so his whole thing through that movie is no even in basic training I'm not holding a gun so why is he there well because he had to, he had, he was drafted. He had to go to war, but he's like, I'm not, I'm not going to shoot anyone. So there was a really big deal. I think you

28:06

saw this one by yourself.

28:07

Maybe, but anyway, so it's it's near the end of the story, and and I'm going to ruin it a little bit. But anyways, there's this moment that comes where he picks up a gun, and you're like, and I'm just, I'm just like, no, like like I remember telling me well? And I'm like, he can't, he can't shoot it. But then he takes it and he puts it against a guy's leg and he uses it as a splint. I remember, and I'm just like, like it was, but it was such. Without if if all of that work hadn't been done, that moment would have just been another moment.

28:36

Yeah.

28:36

So that would so then a large part of the logic as well in in making emotional payoffs for for an audience or a reader is making sure that we have all that work. You you do those little tricks and those little things that we don't think about at the time, so you can hit us with that big moment.

28:51

Does

28:51

that make sense?

28:52

Yeah. So it's I know I've used this analogy before, but it is kind of like a puzzle, and just having the pieces all come together for one final piece, right? All of your scenes of your character to then come to fruition with the whole purpose of what you're trying to achieve.

29:10

Yep, exactly. And sometimes it's not even the big, big ones, right? I think of Jurassic Park, so they set up these two paleontologists, right? And and they're just they're passionate about about digging up bones and teaching and talking about them to kids and like how cool they are and they want their funding and it's it's their life right finding these bones. They they do such a good job of setting up how important this is and how this is it's inside them to the core that when they first see those brontosaurus's and he gets up and he pulls his sunglasses off, and his hands are shaking. You're just like, this is this is the most visceral moment this person's ever had because it is their life, right? So if that wasn't set up and it was just okay, let's bring them to the compound, let's go, and then they see a dinosaur, it wouldn't have been as as dramatic. So

29:56

it's anticlimactic, right?

29:57

But that's also story logic because then you're like. If he reacted that way, when we didn't really learn about his whole history as a paleontologist, we'd be like, "Why is he like? Why isn't he just like? Oh my gosh, this is so cool! Like someone else, right? It just shook him to his core. So that's part of logic. It's not just about, "Oh well, that makes no sense in the plot. It's it's what it's every single little thing a character does.

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Yeah, and here you had a note to make sure to tell the listeners the useful things to plant in the story.

30:29

Yep.

30:29

So like values, fears, loyalties, resentments, weaknesses, boundaries, desires, and the thing the character cannot bear to lose. Yeah, that's usually a big one.

30:39

Yeah, if you know nothing else about your character, and you can only know one thing really well, know what it is they cannot bear. They can't lose.

30:49

Yeah.

30:50

What would your answer be? What is one thing in your life you were a movie character, yeah, or TV character? What is one thing you could never bear to lose one thing?

30:58

You.

30:59

No, not me. What if it? What if it wasn't me?

31:01

Why can't it be you?

31:03

Well, that's just because that it's it's anyone would say that. Oh, my spouse. Oh, my okay.

31:08

Probably my voice.

31:09

Your voice. There you go. So if you in the sense of

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in the sense of like obviously not singing, but I mean I do a lot of good stuff with being able to speak and share. You know.

31:22

Yeah, like your advocacy is who is really big part of who you are. Yeah.

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So if I didn't have my voice, I mean that, and in the sense of just being casual too, and being able to converse with friends, and just having my humor, it all is tied into

31:37

into your voice,

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into my voice. Yeah.

31:38

So if I was writing a movie about you, and knowing that that is who you are, then taking away your voice would would would create a story.

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Because I always felt I never had my voice, right? And then once I found it in my late 20s, I was like, oh my goodness, I can do a lot with this piece that you know that I became more courageous. What about you?

32:00

Yeah, it's funny because I was having some issues with my eyes lately, and to go to the doctor and it was so funny. Well, thanks, honey. Not funny, ha ha. But but it was it it really put a lot of really really deep fear into me because if I all of a sudden lost my eyesight, I mean, I obviously try. You don't have to function, and I'd find a way. But that's like the one sense that I have that I could not. I just couldn't be. I just wouldn't be me anymore, right? Because movies, watching movies, reading books, like I could still listen to the things. But that's just everything for me. And I'm a writer, and I got to see my words and like, and and I I have a wife who uses a wheelchair from mobility, and so I need to be able to see my world to make her world as as as good as as it can be for us, and all those things, right? So for me, it would be my it would be my vision, right? If I if I lost my ability to walk or smell or taste or hear

33:00

walking is overrated. It is

33:02

overrated. I see that all the time.

33:03

Well, it is, and people like have this whole mentality that, oh, I don't know what I do. I just killed myself. I

33:09

ended up in a wheelchair. I

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don't know that, and I've been told that. I've been told that by many people. People

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are awful.

33:14

And it's like, come on, like, not the end of the world.

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Yeah, but yeah. So, so that that for me, that that's the one sense that that scares the hell out of me to lose. So yeah, so if you know that about your character, man, just imagine how much you could do to that character. Exactly.

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Okay, number six here. If you're done that point. Yeah,

33:32

this this is the final thing. This is just kind of like the wrap up. These are practical rewrite tools.

33:36

Yeah, the character logic check you have, and then you have asking yourself these questions: What does the character want right now?

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Yep.

33:45

What do they believe right now?

33:48

Yes.

33:48

What are they afraid of? Or like we just talked about, the one thing that they cannot bear to lose. Yes,

33:55

you should know that.

33:56

What information do they actually have? Not what the audience knows. What alternatives are available to them?

34:04

Yeah, always know what options are there. Right,

34:06

you said a dozen, right?

34:08

Yeah.

34:08

What do they reject? Why do they reject those alternatives? Like, why is the one thing? Why does it work more than the others?

34:16

Yeah.

34:16

And is this decision coming from the character or from my outline?

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Yeah.

34:21

So knowing your character again is what it

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is. It's everything, and I think that there's such a like a lot of a lot of things that you learn as a screenwriter when you're first learning and and getting to know, you know, the craft and stuff. So much is about structure and format, structure, scenes, you know, conflict and all-all these-it's so many people are so focused on structure, and structure is important, but it all starts with character. All comes down to character. If you don't know your character inside out, you don't even know where your story goes. That's when, for me, that was when I was like, "Oh my gosh, I think I get this now." When I was writing a script and my characters just started doing things that I didn't have them do, which sounds weird. I know you said that before that

35:08

you're like, I can't believe I just wrote that. I don't even remember writing it. Yeah,

35:11

but it's just like, oh, I I can't believe I thought of that. Yeah, I never would have thought of that. That's when I I was like, okay, I get it now. So yeah, character is everything, right?

35:20

I think too, like the goal isn't so much making the character and the decisions of the character rational decisions. I think it's more just that the character is authentic to who they are.

35:34

Yeah, like their like their choices feel inevitable.

35:38

Yeah, that's who. That's what they would have done.

35:39

Yeah, yeah, and and I mean that's a great way to make sure that the reader, they they never have to stop and try and see, they they never stop and see that the writer is pushing them somewhere, right? And that that's the that's the biggest thing. You you want you want it to be invisible, right? You want the reader to be in there watching it unfold.

35:58

And it goes back to that Muppet thing. You don't want the reader and the viewer to just see the puppeteer and the strings. You want them to have a flawless experience where they can just be immersed in that experience.

36:12

Exactly. That is all we need to say. So we're going to take a quick break, and we'll be right back with some questions. Listen to one of our services that we have here.

36:21

Feel like you've taken your script as far as you can on your own? We know how frustrating it can be sometimes to get the great ideas that are in your head properly on the page. But imagine having a professional screenwriter jump in and rewrite it for you to create a market-ready script. Send us your script for a rewrite proposal, and the pro of your choice will write up a page or so of notes on exactly how they'd approach a rewrite. Head on over to www.scriptreaderpro.com/rewrite and use the code `rewrite15` during checkout for the rewrite proposal to get 15% off.

37:04

Okay, so we are at the question and answer period right now.

37:08

Yes.

37:08

So we've had these previously submitted from listeners and viewers like you, and if you have a question, you can submit them to hello@scriptreaderpro.com with the subject line being question podcast whatever you want to say.

37:22

Yeah, questions, ideas that you have, things you want us to talk about. That's the email to do.

37:26

I'd also love if you guys could let us know if you have any comments about this. That would be a lovely to hear. If you're watching

37:33

us on YouTube on our channel, if you are, go check it out. If you are, feel free to comment on there too. We'd love to love to see that. Shoot us

37:40

an email. Let us know where you're from. That would be awesome. First question here comes from Bill from Santa Fe. Bill asked the question: If you've been querying the same screenplay for a year without getting anywhere, how do you know whether to rewrite it, change your approach, or finally put it away?

37:58

Rewrite the query or the script.

38:02

If you've been querying the same, does that mean sending the script? I think they're talking

38:05

about the script. Like, should I rewrite the script? Should I change how my approach is? Or just

38:09

because someone's getting not getting back doesn't mean it's not a good script.

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It's hard to say. So you

38:14

have no feedback.

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Like I, I would say, don't worry about the script. Don't touch the script. I think it's might be your your query might be the way you're approaching how you're querying someone, what your actual query or pitch letter is, and what it reads like. If you're not getting any bites at all, it's hard to know what's not working. Right.

38:33

That's the thing. It doesn't necessarily mean nothing's that it's something's not working anyway because you've had so many things out there and then you're like really, like not even a response, and you've like you have accolades following your name. Yeah.

38:46

So sometimes that's query letter. Sometimes it's not. It's nothing. Sometimes it's just

38:51

it's just the business, which

38:53

is yeah. You go with your gut. You go with your gut. You test it out on a handful of people. Say, hey, if you got this letter, what does it make you think? Does it get you excited? Do you like the concept? What you know, people will tell you.

39:04

And if you need help with that, Script Reader Pro can definitely help you with that as well. We have that as one

39:09

of our services, so the the marketing kind of contact. So

39:12

question number two comes from Sammy in L.A. Sammy says, "Can the midpoint of a screenplay be subtle, or should there always be a major event that you can clearly point and say that's the midpoint?"

39:27

Yeah, it doesn't necessarily have to be like a big event. It's more of a feeling, right? For for like a midpoint is when your character finally sees that they can no longer just be reactive to everything. Now they have to. They can only get through this if they choose to drive the story. That's usually something will happen that makes them see that. But subtlety is better, right? If you if we stop and go, oh, that's the midpoint, then something's wrong, right? We shouldn't even realize it until we're already moving into that next phase.

39:59

When you were saying. I was thinking about a mountain that, well, and Price is right.

40:05

Yeah,

40:06

you know the climber, and then when you're writing the story, you're like you're climbing. It's taking a long, long time, right? And then you're at the midpoint, and it should feel like it's just kind of cleaning it up and coming down, like the other side of the mountain, it's easier than the midpoint getting to the midpoint. Is that true or no?

40:27

Yeah, like a lot of times you'll get halfway through and you'll notice something happen. You're like, okay, now I can breathe. Now, now it's going to get excited going down the

40:34

mountain. Right now

40:35

we're over that first. Yeah, you're under the right. Yeah, and then you get over and then you see, oh, I wasn't even close to the. There's another valley, just like

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in so many true stories when it's like

40:46

alive, the plain.

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Yeah,

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you know, and you're like, oh, there's just down there. There's houses.

40:52

Yeah.

40:52

Okay. Question number three comes from Brenda from Ohio. Hey, you know what? There's a new song that I love called Ohio. Oh, Ohio. It's such a pretty song. Check

41:03

it out. I don't know who sings it. Desiree doesn't either. Okay,

41:07

Brenda from Ohio says, "What do you do when the most realistic version of something is also the least dramatic version? How far can you bend reality before it starts hurting the script? Writing a script. I mean, you can bend whatever you want to bend. Yeah, as long as it makes sense for the character. Yeah, as

41:24

long as the logic makes sense of the character and the world. Yeah, I mean, if it's if if you're if you're like this is the most realistic thing, but it's so boring, then it shouldn't be there. Shouldn't be in the script. Find, come up with something that's not boring. Okay, right. Even if it's a true story, true stories you have to have dramatic license. Not every true story or biopic out there is 100% true, right? You have to no, because then no one would buy it

41:45

and no one would make it. It would be boring. I'll just watch someone in my life.

41:50

Exactly.

41:50

Whatever. Okay. Question four comes from Alexandra in New York, and Alexandra asks the question: If someone asks what else you've got after reading your script, what should you have ready? Another completed screenplay, several pitches, log lines, or all of the above?

42:07

All of the above, I'd say. But at least two, at least two other screenplays. A lot of writers make the mistake of getting their first script done and being like, "Okay, I'm gonna take it out now. Everything's be awesome, and then they they take it out and and if someone reads it and be like, "Hey, you know, yeah, like this, not really for us, but like your writing, do you have it? Can you send us something else? And you're like, "No, I don't. I just have some ideas. I have a logline of something else. You've closed the door that has been opened. So you always want to have at least a couple of other other scripts as strong as the one that you are sending to people, and then as much other content as you can.

42:40

Gotcha.

42:41

Guess what? That's it. We're done.

42:43

Can you guys please, like I said, email us any questions that you have, any comments to hello@scriptreaderpro.com. Please give us five stars review, five star reviews. We love five stars. Love five star reviews. You can check out our website at scriptreaderpro.com for all of the services that we offer. Yeah,

43:00

we have tons of stuff. Anything a writer could think of or want. So check us out at Script Reader Pro. We are all about crafting wonder, one page at a time.