

Ep #78: Story Logic Part Two

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On this episode, we bring you the second part to the two-part series about story logic. Yeah, this is one where we're tackling that moment that makes you say, "Oh, come on! So listen in.

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

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Hi, Scott. Hi, Desiree. How are you? Hi, viewers and listeners out there. If you're back, this is part two. If you enjoyed part one, wonderful. Maybe that's why you're back. If you haven't seen part one, go check out episode 76 or listen to it because we talk 76, yeah, 77. This is 78, eight. Wow, that's a lot. We've done more than I thought. So go listen to episode 77 or watch episode 77 because we talk about a lot of the build up of story logic and and that idea behind it all. I got to tell

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you guys something too. I'm wearing the same clothes.

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I know because we recorded this right after the last one. Sorry, guys, didn't do a costume change like we usually do.

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Not sorry. Anyway, this one here is going to be interesting because it's the two part series or the second part of the two part series about story logic.

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Yep, it's we're looking at that kind of the back end of it of of when something happens, and the audience has that moment where you're just like, oh come on, or the readers like rolling their eyes, like oh that like why like the lucky discovery. They they just magically oh maybe it's in this drawer and oh look what's this oh the first drawer

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the first drawer at the very front. No rummaging around.

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Okay, this is something you should never do in any screenplay: is have them pick up a flower pot from the front of the house and have the key to the house just under that one flower pot they back up.

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Never happens. I

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understand. Back in the day, you would do that, but this is not a world now where you can keep a key under a flower pot,

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probably not a great idea.

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And it's always they lift the flower pot, and there's the dirt. Yes, which makes around the no

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sense really. Like

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under a pot. Come on. Anyways, better that that lucky discovery, right? The perfectly timed phone call. The person who arrives right at that last second. The one I hate is when they're in. You're in a house. It's like a horror movie or some scary movie, and you're moving through, and then it's dark and it's silent, and suddenly you come around a corner and you scream, and it's your husband, and you're like, "Why didn't you tell me you were here? And it's like, "I don't know. Yeah, it's dark, it's silent. You're not gonna be like, "Hey, honey! Like, I know it's kind of weird. I hate that. So that's the oh, come on.

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That's what we're going to be talking about. But the way that we always start a podcast is we introduce ourselves.

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Oh, for God!

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So I am Desiree.

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I am Scott.

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I am your host for the Script Reader Pro podcast with Scott, my husband, and Scott is a reader writer with Script Reader Pro, and I am not a reader writer with Script Reader Pro.

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No, but you are very smart. Like when I'm done a script, I always give it to Desiree.

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You guys have probably already heard this before. People read it and I rip it

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apart. She usually says, "I'm sorry, hun, but this is awful. This is garbage. Start over. Doesn't help very often.

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You know what he hates? She

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loves. She she's very smart with things.

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I'm smart. Smart. I'll take it. You know what you hate?

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What's that?

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When I do this, Scott, can I talk to you about something?

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No, it's I need to talk to you about something.

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Just wait. Yeah, okay, talk to me. No, I don't want to talk to you about it right now.

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Oh, I hate that.

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Later.

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No, I'll talk about later. I'm like, why? I

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don't know why I even brought this up. This is my notes right now. Half an

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hour. I got to do this first. Well, then why did you tell me you have to talk to me about something? Yeah, don't do that.

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I know it's stressed. That yeah, that logic. So we always talk first about what we've seen lately.

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We watched a really cool document. Well, I

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started it.

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You started it. I sat down. I was

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just you were listening in.

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Now I sat down. I was just like, I'm just gonna sit here for a half hour and chill, and then I got to go do something, and then I was like, "This is really good. I want to know. You had

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your, you know, why I think it works really well with discussing it with this episode is that it's all that whole idea that you talked about with the last episode, which you guys should listen to 77 about having a character do something extremely unexpected. Now, in this case, though, it's a true story. So, if okay, if someone were to write this and it was fictional, I would be like, "No, there's no way that person would do that ever. There's no way. I sounded like a valley girl. That's no way that that valley.

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Period.

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Quotation. Anyway, that's what I would think.

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Yeah,

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but it's a true story.

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I know, and it's funny because I read a script right after we watched that.

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What's it called first?

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The screenplay I read.

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No.

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Oh, the movie. It's called the a preacher, the death of a preacher's wife. Death of a preacher's wife.

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Okay. Yes, and you said. Anyways, I read

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the script, and and it was it wasn't the same situation, but it was a character who was very much two different type of people, and he showed one type of person one for for the public, and then the other part. But they never went

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sometimes life though, but they

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never went far enough. They had the character do something that you're like that's the worst thing you could ever do, and it was hinting that this person was that kind of person, but they they needed to go further. They needed to actually have that guy do awful things and be seen doing awful, and just even have the crack show. And and then I remembered the the what the cracks to that person show.

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He said crack show the

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cracks. I was

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thinking of someone being like,

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oh, it really checked

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out my cracks. Do you remember the show? Remember

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the Beast in Me about the novelist, and then her neighbor was a, and he was just the worst guy. But he didn't show that to. He wasn't a yeah. That's the same

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kind of concept as the pastor.

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That was like it. I'm like, yeah.

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And the outside world, he's. But you

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find out some of the things he did, and you're like,

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this guy though. So

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shocking.

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The outside world knew some of the stuff and was just like, "But we love you, and we still yeah.

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Because it's that old kind of brainwashed.

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Anyway, I I highly recommend it.

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It's really good.

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It's three parts kind of serious, disturbing.

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Really, yeah, disturbing. Anyways, we watched that,

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so it was good.

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Was good.

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So Scott,

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yes,

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we are talking about this, oh come on, story logic. What I think this all comes down to is that logic, the whole logic behind things and behind the writer, writer means that you have to have faith in basically, and have trust and faith in what the writer is putting on the page.

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Yeah, essentially, right. The audience will. You have to believe

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it.

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Yeah, the lonis will. The audience will accept the fiction world you've built if you build it well. Understand it. If you build it well, they need to know the rules. They will come if you build it. They will come. They will stay in there, right? You know, it has to obey its own rules, though, and a lot of times that doesn't happen. Someone will set up a story world with logic, and then the characters do something that doesn't actually make sense for that specific story world, and then you're out.

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Yeah, but this that going to the show we saw that kind of that threw you for a loop. All sorts of things, but

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then at the same time, like you've, we're not going to spoil it for you, right? But like there's this big thing about the sexual preferences and and lifestyle of this character, but and he's a preacher in a church, but he he preached a lot about sex, a lot about about that in marriage and all these rules, and you do do do like so when you find out the stuff that's really shocking. You're like, yeah, I can see it though because he's always talking about that. Like he wants to make sure he's not blamed because he says you need to be blaming your wife. You need to blame like so. Yeah, it that the the logic within his world made sense, right? When it all came together, but that's really what it is. It's it's the audience will go with you on it, right? Like Back to the Future, you're traveling in time. Obviously, doesn't happen, right? But the premise, like even

though it's so impossible, the movie has the rules, it has the setups, the consequences. Like if you don't get your parents back together, you'll start fading away and disappear. Like it's all there. So because it's built so well, we're like, I get it. I get the rules. I get what Doc's saying. Let's. I

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don't.

8:29
Well,

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that's we talked

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about that before. No,

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I I know that, but I don't. The whole logic has to make 100% It has to make sense to me 100%

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in your real world. It has to make sense for your. It

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has to be that it could actually logistically happen. Yeah, and going through to the back to the future in a car that you put whatever in, and don't even start quoting stuff. I'm

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not.

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Your car is not here; it's over there, Scott.

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I was like, "Do I have one here?"

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No, we don't need to show the viewers your car. To me, it just is like really come on, let's do better.

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Yeah.

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Although I did see Doc the other day at Walmart. Yeah, you

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said a guy looked like Doc Brown. Yeah.

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Yeah. Anyway. Yeah.

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So so that's that's the thing, right? You'll stretch your imagination if if they explain it. So something

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so something can be unrealistic,

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then,

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right?

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Yeah,

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like and the logic and the story and everything can still be

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yeah can

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still make sense.

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Yeah, and an easy example to understand is you watch a horror movie. So okay, here's a horror movie. Here's the entity, right? They'll talk about the entity. They talk about the legend behind it. Oh yeah, this person died in this house, and they went through this. So now, when you go in that house, they will right like, oh, you go on the Ouija board, but don't say this because if you say this, that thing will come through, and then you're in trouble. So then they'll go and they'll say it, and the thing will come through, and you're like, okay, yeah, because they explained that to me. I get it, right? So as long as you do that, then your world's gonna then the audience be like, okay, yeah, I get it. They told me that was gonna happen. We are going to go through different topics that you have here within this same kind of thing as it was on the last

episode. So make sure that you check that. And the last episode, you do have all of those things in the show notes as well as yes, the last one as well. You had yeah

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the wrap up, so that's great. So check out the previous shows, previous shows show notes show notes okay number one that you have here is coincidence isn't always bad

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yeah so

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ah well like I think of the Lifetime Christmas movies I freaking love those ones they are very like oh shocking that you would meet there at the farm when you're going to cut down a Christmas card, you know?

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Yeah.

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But then I still watch them,

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right? Well, and and there's nothing wrong with coincidence if it creates the problem or creates like the happenstance, right? It's like okay, I believe that. Bad coincidence is when it solves the problem. It's like you just happen to get. Oh, oh my gosh! There's a number here on the desk. What if we put that number into the safe? Oh my gosh! It opens. What a coincidence! Yeah, that's bad coincidence.

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Oh wow! Right,

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but that never

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so never saw that happen. But you go

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to your girlfriend's new house and you walk in a room and you see you see something that is there. Oh, there's blood there, or oh, you find this note on the floor and you pick it up, and it's about your dead mother. Okay, that's a coincidence, but it then becomes intriguing rather than oh, ha ha ha. What if I'm your mother? It's like oh, okay. Or what

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if her mother is actually his mother

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exactly, but that don't don't don't. And there's just they have that's a good

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soap opera episode for the young and the restless. I bet you it's been done. But yeah,

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so so that's fine, right? It can launch a story, right? It can make life harder for someone, right? There's certain coincidences that do that, but a coincidence that rescues your hero or your heroine to to make the climax work, that is bad. That's bad logic. The thing that's not how it works in life. It's not solved because of. I hate

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to say it, but it is kind of bad writing. It is because that's all you. That's so on the nose. It's like, oh, that's shocking. That's

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all you could think of. Yeah, like like like the that movie we talked about the Tuscany one, right? There was coincidence in the fact that these two characters met. Oh, and they just so happened this is this guy's brother, and you're supposed to be married. Right, that was fine, right, because it's a small town, right. But if that ended up, if the coincidence ended up solving it for everybody, then it wouldn't wouldn't have worked, right? It wouldn't even even it would have been bad, right? Yeah, exactly. So so Fargo, for example, right? Fargo, the movie. It's all about chance. It's all about characters being in the wrong place at the wrong time. They make a bad decision. It it coincides with something else that's going on. That just creates the story and gets it moving. But it's so smart because it doesn't rely on coincidence to fix it. Right? You have to work your way through it. Right. So, so the logic of just something coincidentally fixing your story is is bad. Bad writing. It's lazy. Yeah, it's lazy. So don't do that.

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Okay. So you have a note here that starred that says readers tend to be much more forgiving when luck makes the protagonist's life worse because we want to see bad things because that's entertaining.

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Yeah.

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When luck solves a problem the protagonist should have had to solve, the reader starts questioning whether the ending was even earned.

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Yeah, then that's that's a part of rooting for your character. If your character doesn't have to solve their own problem, if something else solves it for them, then

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that's not even life.

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It's just not fulfilling, though. I would love

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for someone to just solve all of my problems.

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So wouldn't that be nice tomorrow? By tomorrow, I want all my props. So if you're gonna have something luck or coincidence, have it start your story, but not not end it.

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And please not with a genie because that's been done and it's not real. Just so everyone is clear. Number two, we have convenience.

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Yes, death by 1000 little helps. Yeah. So so coinci so convenience is often less. It's less obvious than coincidence, right? It's just like it's one of those things that happen. You're like, oh well, isn't that convenient, right? The the security camera just happens to be broken. Oh, the cell phone just happens to have no signal. But it's like

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I'm sure, like if there's one of those thrown in occasionally, but I think the issue is like that's the whole movie, one after another, after another, after another. Oh wow, the door was magically unlocked by the previous person. Yeah, lucky. Oh wow, he went up to the apartment, and what do you know? The door is unlocked there too.

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Yeah, and then the character just overheard exactly what they needed to learn about this this puzzle, the villain just took too long to push the button, right? The one expert in the room who knows exactly what's going on, they leave that fact out. You know, it's just too convenient. But you know

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what? And I know I discussed this quickly already. It is very much like a soap opera. That's very much what soap. Are

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yeah

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why and people are so hooked on them. I don't

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know, but that's what Hallmark movies are too. It's like it's all these little conveniences. So I guess it

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depends on what you're writing. Depends on the

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story, but but still, like that's why Hallmark movies and those Christmas movies are getting better because they stop. They stop doing that. They're they're making it. They're making the character work harder, right? And and that's one of the big things is never make a story easy on your heroine, right? You always want to make sure they have to work for something, right? An example that work that does this really well is Knives Out.

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Yeah, we've seen all of them. Yeah,

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so the mystery depends on information, timing,

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that one inherent

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coincidences that aren't right. No, and then you think

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that it's going one way, and it completely shocks you, and then you're like, "What? I did not expect that. And that was with the last one that we saw. It

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was really good. Yeah, they saw those. Yeah, yeah, all those little plants, little red herrings that they're they're there to misdirect you. But when you go back and look at them again, you're like, "Oh, that was my fault. I actually believe that was this. We did discuss

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that after too. I remember, and we were like, "Oh, like that was interesting how this and this and this happened, yeah, and that's why I think it would be fascinating to watch something like that again.

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Yeah, so looking

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for those little fun to do pieces, right?

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Exactly. Yeah. So, what's number three?

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Number three is what, what, what con? What is that

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contrivance?

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What does contrivance mean? So,

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when something is contrived, so when something is contrive that is so purposely built, like yeah, these pieces have been put together magically fit. Yeah, so that so so it doesn't feel organic. I've never heard of

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contrivance.

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Well, there you go. What does what

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does it actually mean? No, that's the thing. What contrivance actually means? I guess I should have.

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So okay, so this is what it means. Coincidence is an unlikely event, right? That's what coincidence is. A convenience just means that help they're helpful little circumstances, right? Contrivance is more of a feeling, right? That the writer has manipulated all of the events and behaviors of the characters, where the audience can actually see the machinery behind it. They can see here the character, you know, that everything's so contrived because the writer just built it. They did. They built it.

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They built. It's basically building a set. They built every part of the set to see the entire room, and they've done a good job. That's Knives Out too, though.

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Yeah, but then when we can see all of those pieces, and we're like, okay, well, that let's go into yeah, but then yeah, then you're just like it's so contrived, right? It's like the opposite of organic. So if it's an organic story, everything just feels natural. It it characters are doing things, saying things, stories moving in a way that makes sense and and doesn't make a stop and go. That feels forced or written, right? Contrivance just means that it's easy to see that it's all being put together for a reason. So, so Jurassic Park, another example of one that is does does not do that, right? It it requires really big coincidences, right? Extraordinary events, which likely would never happen. But much of it is the is it's growing towards the big disaster that's coming. So we're so focused on there's dinosaurs that are going to get through these fences and and eat each other and eat eat them eat each other and eat all the humans. We're so worried about that that we're like okay, so they just so happen to shut the fence off and they so happen to have the storm coming and oh there's a storm coming like that's a coincidence but it doesn't hurt the story because it pushes towards the disaster. But

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you know what's stupid? There's what three of them, two of them, and there should have not have been more than one. I'm sorry, because it's like you go and you've now shown all of these things, and it's like, yeah, we get that. Did you learn from the last one?

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Yeah.

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Did you learn from the second, did you learn from the fifth one?

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I know, and that's the thing. Is the last one? Like I went to the last one. I'll go to them all because I did not find right. But I went, I went to the last one, and that was my that was my whole reaction to it. Was we've seen all this?

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Yeah. Did you not do this already? I

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try to put the characters, and I remember Scarlett Johansson's character. She's this like tough, like you know, mercenary you bring in to pull things off. So they bring her in. She's like, "No, I'm not coming in. I don't want this job. I lost my partner on my last one. On my last job, I lost.

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You're like, "Yeah, I was there.

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No, no, no. This new character. Oh, so I didn't watch that. They're like, "Okay. So then you have her backstory. That's her backstory, and it makes it seem like they were partners, like romantic, right? And so she's highly emotional. So then they cut to her sitting out on the boat at night, and she's crying. And the guy comes up, and and you know what's wrong? And oh well, you know he relied on me, and I brought him in, and now he's dead. And I'm just like, they're not even. So they weren't romantic partners. They were just she was a guy that she brought in for a job, and then that was it. Didn't go anywhere further. So what's the

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point? What's the point of like

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we're gonna give this character a bit of back backstory? But where's the bit of that pay off? And another nothing pays off. But there was also like there's that cheesy thing. I I just found this one was bad. Like this one the one guy his backstory was that his kid died. So his kid died and he. I don't know if it was his fault or like he he couldn't stop it from happening. He should have been there and he wasn't. That was his backstory. 30 seconds. So then later in the movie, he has to save a kid, and he has to sacrifice himself to save this kid. And you're like, okay, so there's the logic. There's now we understand he's gonna give his life up for this kid because he didn't save his own.

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And then he goes and turns, and he kills the kid himself. No, but it's like,

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oh, that's it. That's the best you could come up with. Come on, you're like you're like you're Hollywood A-list writers. What are you doing? That

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it-it's like it's almost like it's too easy.

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Yeah, feels too easy. I don't, you know, you don't buy into it. It's not believable, right?

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It's not dramatic. It's not. It's not. It's not clever. How are you going to show? Like, especially a spec script to showcase how good you are at stuff. So why would you put it on a script that just has you doing stuff to make it happen? Oh, I'm just going to do this because I didn't think hard enough or whatever. You you you we you don't you don't want to have your reader be like, well, why wouldn't they just have done this? This makes no sense, right? Like I I don't. You'll hear that in your notes. I don't buy this. You know, you didn't do the work. I didn't believe in it. That's why that's happening because you're not setting up enough in the right way.

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Okay, so like, if you're like, oh wow, that's that's so totally planned. That's convenient. Like, what for you? Like when you're doing your notes and your coverage, yeah.

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What has to happen in the story that makes you get to the point where you're like, "Come on, or "Oh, jeez, now I can't believe this. I mean, it's hard. I mean, it's hard to say, but a lot of times it's just like it's it's simple things. Well, it's the thing where it's like, "Well, that makes no sense for those characters. That's it's always about character. It's always like, okay, well, that character wouldn't have actually gone in that bank to to get that money because they have money. You just showed us have a safe with \$50,000 in it. Why are they going in the bank? Oh, they go in the bank because there's a robbery. Oh, now they're part of a robbery. Now they think they're a robbery. Oh, and they have cash at home. They must be the robber. It's like, okay, fine, but why did they go in the bank? Like so, oh, he sees a girl that he liked. I wanted to get her number. I forgot to. She's in the bank. I'm going to go into the bank. There you go. Now, now it's not convenient. Solved. It's just you're not doing the little things. You're you're seeing too far ahead instead of the early stuff.

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Okay, and then this kind of falls into the next one, which is number four: set up and pay off, Playing fair,

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yeah. So when there's a satisfying moment, right when when you'll hear in your notes, you'll be like, you know, it was the the ending was fulfilling, right? It was worth. It felt worthwhile. You got it to a good place, right? It grows from something that your the script has established off the start, right? It's the setting up of all of these things, like

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bones.

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Yeah, the yeah exactly the bones, the the damage, the trauma, the problems, the the the flaws, what the character has to overcome, right? So, and and a lot of times people aren't quite sure what planting stuff means, right? Planting does not mean announcing this knife is on the table, guys, or hey, remember this person has attachment issues, right? Like it, it can't be obvious. It's showing the characters doing things, having them go through stuff. There's a brilliant one in that movie we watched the other night, The Whisper Man. the The guy was talking to his kid about how he had an imaginary friend when he was little, and he was called Mister Knight, and he would come and he'd take him on adventures, and he'd kiss him on the forehead just before he disappeared. Yeah, yeah, and it was this only time. I'm saying that so it was this really cool story that he told his kid, and then it pays off later, and you're like, "What a brilliant! Yeah, that was a whole way off, right? So that that's what a plant is. A plant, a great plant, is something we don't even realize is a plant. It's just like that's them. We that was really cool, like a great idea

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that we don't want to see the plant.

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Yeah, should be. We don't

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want to see the plant and not the act. I'm thinking of like a green growing plant. We we just want to see the smallest part of the plant, which is the seed. Yeah, before it's even started to grow, and you want to make that plant become bigger and bigger and bigger by like looking for the seeds, you don't want to start with the big plant,

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yeah.

24:05

Because then there's like, oh wow, that's anticlimactic, you know. Like in a garden, you get something out of seeing something grow.

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Yeah,

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same thing for scrub, right?

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Yeah, exactly. And it's just like just it's in little things, like oh, so these two characters aren't on a date, and the one girl says to the other girl, "Oh, you know, I do you like to read? Yeah, I love to read my favorite. What's your favorite book? Oh, Great Expectations, my favorite book of all time. It reminds me da da da. Right? Says said once at the beginning of their first conversation, and then they have their little romance. It goes bad. The character has to do a grand gesture. So all of a sudden, she delivers the girl a first edition of Great Expectations leaves it on her desk at work or something, and and you're like, you didn't hear about it the whole time. They said it once. She said it was her favorite book. Now it's a payoff. We didn't think that's a plant. It's just it's part of the organic revelation of character. Then it pays off. You're like, yes. That's your favorite.

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Gotcha.

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Simple as that.

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Okay. Yeah. Yeah. And I think the I think as a writer, what you need to remember is it's all about your response. Like you want to make sure that your readers are having the response that's like, oh my gosh, I can't believe that happened. How did I miss that in that whole movie? I totally missed that part, but you missed it because it makes sense now in your brain, right? Yeah, you don't want it to be like, "Wow, I missed that because it wasn't in there."

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You miss you missed it because it was so

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cleverly put out that

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it wasn't contrived. It was organic and like that, like the the Mister Knight thing we just talked about from the Whisperman when that payoff happened. It was like, why didn't I think that that's where it was leading? Right. It's that's that's when it's really good stuff. Okay.

25:45

Next one we have number five. The protagonist should earn the solution. Yeah. You've talked about that before in another episode where they should earn.

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Yeah. It's it's kind of like the coincidence and convenience stuff too, right? Like your your character should never have an easy time. They they they have to be the victor in their own victory, right? So so you have to ask who actually solves the story's biggest problem, and it should be your leading character, right? Or if it's an entourage type of movie, you know, an ensemble thing, they all have a part in it, right? But the the climax, it's usually the strongest in any story, when the solution to the problem, right, the answer to everything, it emerges from the protagonist's choice, the choices they've made, how they've grown, the sacrifices, the knowledge, everything that they've gained. It's a classic hero's journey, right? The hero goes on a journey. They meet certain people, they learn certain things, they pick up things, they put them in their pocket, they pick up this skill, this tool. They get to the end of the story and the climax, and they're like, "How do I solve this? Oh yeah, I take this tool I picked up. I remember this thing this person said, and I do this thing because that's what I-that's how it all goes together. And they do it right. If they don't do that, what's the point of the story? Right? It's a whole point of it. Right?

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It-it makes me kind of think a little bit about my new my new obsession with my merging games.

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Yes, yes, your merging games. You like those.

27:07

I never played games ever before, you guys, ever, and now I have five of them going at one time that I alternate through. But it's like getting this one fruit to this fruit to make this, and then that you have to search for this to make this, and then then you put it over here, and it makes a dish of something, and it continues on.

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You're like, "What's the dish going to be? What am I going to use that dish for? I think, and you have to figure it out. And if it just figured it out for you, what's the fun in that?"

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Yeah, there's no point.

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So, so that's a lot of what you want to be doing, right? Like a reader can feel the difference between a protagonist who actually is the one who wins the story because of what they've done, or or a protagonist who's been handed the win, right? Nobody wants to see

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that. Like even with things like the Olympics, it's like, do you hound the medal and be like, "Here you go, you know, by looking at everybody, I guess you're kind of the best. Here's your medal. Yeah. No, you win the medal.

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You have to fight for it. You

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fight. You take years of training to get to that point. Yeah, and so they have gone through heartache, through good times, through pain, through injury to get to the end result. Yeah,

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and and it feels

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more fulfilling.

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Fulfill. Yeah, you lose the fulfillment if that's not happening. And and that's the thing. Like it's also hard to root for a character if they aren't the ones who are making the big choices, like they can be helped along the way, but they have to figure things out. They have to make that big decision. They have to choose to do what they're going to do. Yeah,

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for me too.

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What's the point? It

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has to feel more fulfilling emotionally for me too.

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Yeah.

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So, okay, next one we're going to is the logic chain.

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Yeah, and

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then it's because forward slash therefore.

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Yeah. So you need to you want the script you want to strip your screenplay down into the major beats and connect them with because and therefore rather than and then right this happens and then this happens and then this happens because then it's all

28:58

linear

28:58

yeah everything should happen for a reason. So this scene happens because that scene happened. Therefore, this must happen. It's ebb and this happens because that happens. Ebb

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and flow instead of linear.

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Exactly. So so this happens. Therefore, the protagonist makes a choice because they make that choice. The antagonist responds. Therefore, the protagonist is forced into a more difficult choice. So it's always because, therefore, because therefore, right? Okay. That's what you should not just and then and then and then. If it's and then and then and then, it's not going to be as connected, right? So a simple plan. If you haven't seen a simple plan, watch. Go find it. It's an older movie, Bill Paxton. It is. It's. It's just so great. It's just a really good crime thriller. So good. Anyways, in that movie, it's so smartly written. One discovery that they make leads to a choice. That choice then requires a big lie. That lie creates another problem. That attempt to solve the problem. Makes everything worse, just like when a kid has one lie to their parents, then they got to make it up. Like it's gone through it, but it's a it's a really clean example of a plot

that becomes a trap for the characters through cause and effect of what they choose because they did this, therefore this happens because this happens, then therefore this has to happen, and because that like it's just that's how you instead

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of saying and then yeah and then this happens. It's like okay, nothing against our kid, but I hated those stories at school. I was on the playground, and then there was a bee, and then after that there was a little boy who came to play with me, and then it started to rain, and then the bell rang, and then we went into the school. It's boring.

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Yeah, it is.

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It's boring. Yeah, I

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mean, if you can connect all your beats of your story with "and then,

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yeah, but it's one

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of the quickest signs that your story is just episodic, right? That it's it's not causal. It's it's causal. Yeah, like things are not being, things are not causing things to happen, and I always stupid word. You've heard me say this plenty of times on the podcast, but if you can pull something out of your screenplay, if you can remove it, it doesn't really cause enough to crumble around it. It's not, it shouldn't be there, or it's not doing its job. That's because you've done it, and then and then this character does this, and then we're going to go to this scene. Got it. Right? It's every single thing's connected. Everything should be connected. So that will definitely keep your logic of your story in check because these things can only happen and do only happen because of the things you've shown us. Not just and then he walks into a room and there's the key. Okay, and then what? Right.

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Next, the last one we have here is number seven. The remove the writer test. Is this one?

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Yeah, this is crazy. Okay, so any and this is I mean maybe it's a little complicated, but any specific any suspiciously convenient beat in your script, right? When you see a beat that's kind of like convenient or coincidental, you're going to ask this. If I were not trying to force the screenplay toward my next planned scene, right? If I wasn't trying to make sure it gets to the next scene, what would these people realistically do right now? Right. It's it's the same example as when you're looking at dialog to see if it's on the nose. If there was no camera, if no audience

was watching, what would they actually say? These characters would talk to each other. Right. That's how you can tell if something is organically in there, right? If the writer is seen, or if it's just you're seeing the characters and what's happening, right? Compare that answer, right? Your answer of what would they do compared to what is actually in your scene. What's happening? If there was no one watching, if that was not happening right now, what would they actually do? If your answer to that is different than what you've put on the page. Then you have the wrong thing on the page. It's kind of like a person who is one way, and I'm. I have to be honest with you guys, and it's not that I'm a different person. I just tone myself down differently, dependent on who I'm with. Yeah, and it makes me think of that a lot. That it's like, is this authentically who that person is, or are they putting on an act because the camera is there? Yeah, and a lot of times, and and and this is why it's so hard for especially newer writers to to get notes and understand what to do with them, right? And that's a big, that's one of our services that we're putting in place. Check out our website, all our new tiers of services, by the way. But but a lot of times, it's hard to understand. It's hard to take notes and be and have them be actionable. Okay, I got my notes. They're telling me all these things that did or didn't work. Now, what do I do? How do I do it? This is a great way to figure out how to do it. Look at the scenes. Look at that note because sometimes it's not. Well, that scene didn't work. It's not because the scene didn't work. The scene probably worked really good. You just didn't do the work to get us there, right? You didn't, you didn't establish certain things. You didn't give us the logic of why a character is going to do that. The scene doesn't work because that character. I don't believe their decision. Okay, so it's not that the scene didn't work. You just have to make us understand why they made that decision. Who are they to make us believe the decision, right? That's rewriting. You could challenge everything, but but that's you know that's the remove the writer test that you can do for you. You know that's a great way to learn how to have an analytical eye for your own work to see it from the outside, which is really hard to do. So

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last thing the last thing you have written here is the goal is not to make a screenplay perfectly realistic; it's to make the chain of cause and effect feel earned. You want the audience to think. Of course, that's where this had to go. Not, I guess that's where the writer wanted it to go.

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Exactly

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right.

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A

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difference between confidence, having confidence in the writer, and like questioning the writer. Yeah,

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that's a great comment. Is great word as because that's the thing: is once you when a when a reader sees things like that, especially early on, you lose confidence that the script is going to work. Yeah, right. Page three, you're like, I I've lost all confidence. This this writer knows what they're doing, and they're not going to be able to get me there now. Yeah. So that's a big good good point. Good point with that word.

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Okay. Well, that's that's a lot to

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ponder. Yeah. It's in the show notes. I know it's a lot. I'm trying my best to kind of like teach you guys things, pass things on that you don't necessarily find in in a book or or a class or something that's a little more like try and understand in a different way. So so let all that soak in. Take a break here, and we're gonna tell you about one of our services, and we'll be right back. Desiree's got some questions from all of you guys And girls

35:22

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

36:05

Okay, we're back. Thank you so much for joining us. Whether you're listening or you're watching us on YouTube or both, well, yeah, I would think possibly. Yeah, unless they're blind, like you were saying earlier. Yeah, maybe, which is fine. Which is fine. Then we hope that you're listening. Yep. These are questions that have been previously submitted by listeners and viewers like you.

36:30

And so, if you have a question, I would encourage you to email us at hello@scriptreaderpro.com. First question today, Scott. Yes, Curtis from New Jersey. He says, when you get the same note from several readers, obviously you should pay attention. But what do you do when three different readers give you three completely different solutions to the same problem? That's a good question. And if you go back and listen to our podcast with Aaron Faulkner, who wrote a really great movie called Maintenance Required. Great podcast. She's fantastic guest, fantastic writer. She had. She said one of the earliest things she learned that was the best thing she learned was when you get notes. When you get notes, you have to think everything that that person tells you is isn't working. They are 100% correct. That's what you

need to be think. That's a that's the mindset. Every solution they give you is 100% the wrong solution. That that's great advice. If there's a solution, you're like, holy crap, that is brilliant. I'm going to use that. That's the one you go with. If all of them are like, I don't know, none of them really speak to you. Don't just ignore them. Do

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it, yeah. Unless it's going to work for the story. Yeah, and your characters, yeah,

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but you have to also believe it and own it, right? But but that's can't

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write something you don't believe,

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yeah. So answer to this: rule of a dozen. If someone tells you, if a few people are saying this isn't working, think of a dozen different ways that you can play with it to try and make it work. Okay, if and you don't have to go with one of their solutions. No.

37:56

Okay, we have Sayid from Vancouver says if someone options your screenplay, what actually happens next? Are you involved in development, or can they basically take the script and make changes without you? They can do whatever the heck they want to do. Basically,

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when someone options their screenplay, what comes next is you actually sit there for years waiting for something to happen.

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And sometimes it never does. Sometimes

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it never happens. Sorry,

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grab some tissues.

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Sometimes two months later, it's in production. It, it, you never know, right? I have, I currently have seven things optioned, and none of them have moved. One of them has been in movement for 10 years and and and been all over the map, and it's still not being made. And what an option does is allow you as a writer to sit there and think. I guess I am pretty good at this. I should keep going. Just take that. Take it as a win. Your medal validation. If it turns into something great, if it doesn't, no problem. You'll get it back, and then you can try with someone

else. But that you know, it it depends on the person, right? Like I've had people option that don't want anything to do with me. I've had some option be like, "Hey, let's do this. Let's do this. Let's work on it together. Let's right. So it really depends on who's optioning it from you and what that option actually means. Some options are more like shopping agreements where they're like, "We're going to option this, so you can't try and sell it to anyone for a year while we try to see if anyone's interested. Sometimes that's where it ends. Some people are like, "Okay, I love it. We're making this. We're going to option it for a year, so we can get everything in place when we're going. So let's go, right? So, yeah, it's kind of all over the map.

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Okay, next question we have from Petta from Saint Vincent and the great Saint Vincent. That's

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cool.

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Is it a problem if my protagonist isn't the most interesting character in my script? My supporting character seems to steal every scene they're in. That's fine. We watch lots of movies.

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Yeah, but if they're

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still like they're still interesting.

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Yeah, but if you're if you're writing your movie and that's happening and your main character isn't as interesting as this other character who's just like that's stealing

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the spotlight all the time,

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make it their movie.

40:00

Yeah, that they obviously

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want that movie, and your brain is telling you that's the person that you want to spend time with. That person, I've had that happen. I wrote this one movie. It was okay. This movie script was okay, but there was this character Priscilla, and she was like ridiculous, like clinical, over the top, OCD controlling her life, and she was just a side character. And I was like, I don't even want to write this movie anymore. I want to write a movie about her, and so I'm going to write a movie

about her, right? So sometimes it's just what happens. They take overs. Listen to your characters. If they're poking at you, that's one you're supposed to grab.

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Last question comes from Gary from Salt Lake City. Gary says, "If a producer or manager asks to read your script and then you hear nothing, how long should you wait before following up? And how many times is too many?"

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Wait, wait a couple months, maybe. Like if someone requests your script, it doesn't mean they're reading it as soon as they get the email. They might have 39 scripts on their desk, and yours is now 40. And then their intern doesn't show up, and they don't have time, and it takes them a week to read too. You never know how long. If they asked, they wouldn't have asked for it if they weren't interested. It that's the thing to remember, right? Because why? Why ask for it? They don't have to say no. It's easy. So if they've asked for it, just let it be. If they, if you don't hear anything from them, they probably didn't like it. They don't have enough time to get back to you and say they didn't like it. I sometimes I've submitted a script and I hear back from someone two years later. I heard back from someone saying, "Hey, finally got around to your script. I love it. Let's talk, right? So you never know. So follow up. Maybe after a couple months, follow up once. If they don't get back, they're done. Okay. Don't waste your time. Move on. Sounds good. That's it. Move on.

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That's it. We're moving right now. We're going to

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move on.

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Can I get you guys to please give us five star reviews?

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That would be one if you believe we deserve them. We are. If you were entertained, if you feel like you learned something, if you are walking away from this thinking, "Man, I'm going to use that, that's great. Pass it on. Subscribe. Check out our website, scriptreaderpro.com. We have some new services on there when this episode is airing. Check them out. We're restructuring, trying to give you guys everything. A lot of different flexibility. A lot of different options to to make sure you're getting exactly what you want, so check that out. scriptreaderpro.com.

42:05

Plus, we also don't use AI, which is very important. We do

42:09

not. Do we? We are all people. We're all writers. We know how hard it is to write a script, and we know how hard it is to get feedback. So we are people doing the feedback in the way that we know it needs to be given. So that is what makes us different. We are all about helping writers craft wonder one page at a time.