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Letter from the Editor

Who are the Finalists in the 2012 PAGE Awards? Find out September 15th when the list is posted at PageAwards.com! The Judges tell us it was a very strong field this year and narrowing it down has been more difficult than ever. The Semi-Finalists are an exceptional group, so if you've made it this far, you deserve congratulations on writing a superb screenplay.

We hope you had a relaxing summer and feel rejuvenated, ready to rededicate yourself to your craft, and creative in that uniquely autumn way. September and October are my favorite months for writing! In this edition of **LOGLINE**, we go "back to school" and explore important ideas for craft-conscious screenwriters to consider. 2010 Silver Prize winner Shane O'Neill discusses the development process writers must undertake when the industry takes an interest in their script, as it did with his. PAGE Awards judge Stephanie Striegel poses the question, "Is it better to focus on one script, or write another?" John Truby turns his careful study of genre mechanics onto summer sequel *The Dark Knight Rises*.

Dave Trottier is the master of all aspects of script formatting, so you can rely on this essential primer for flashback sequences. **LOGLINE's** industry insider, Marvin V. Acuna, offers an antidote to the fear and self-doubt that afflicts all scribes from time to time. Finally, we serve up a helping of hot leads from InkTip.com, where production companies post information about the types of scripts they hope you have written and will submit!

Happy reading,



Latest News from the PAGE Awards

- ◇ Laurie Weltz's 2010 Bronze Prize-winning drama *Scout* is now in pre-production. The movie is being produced by Beverley Gordon and Diana Lesmez, who discovered the script through our terrific co-sponsor InkTip. Laurie will direct and India Ennenga, Jason Ritter and Cloris Leachman are attached to star.
- ◇ Louis Rosenberg's 2010 Silver Prize-winning sci-fi script *Upgrade* has been turned into a graphic novel and is now available on Amazon. In addition, Louis' spec *Monkey Room* is being produced by former Paramount exec Monica Chuo, directed by Marcel Rasquin. And Louis and his writing partner Joe Rosenbaum have two more scripts in pre-production: *Mindplay*, produced by Echo Lake Entertainment, and *Paper Trail*, produced by Sidney Kimmel Productions. Louis and Joe are repped by Paradigm and Zero Gravity.
- ◇ The new young adult novel *Lucky Fools*, by 2008 Bronze Prize winner Coert Voorhees, was released this summer, published by Hyperion and now available on Amazon. *Booklist* raves "Voorhees has penned a hard-hitting, biting satiric yet poignant tale of a senior year from hell." Coert is also the author of the award-winning novels *The Brothers Torres* (2009) and *Storm Wrangler* (2011).
- ◇ 2008 Gold Prize winner Simeon Goulden is now in the midst of writing and filming the second season of his hit series *Spy* for Sky 1 TV in the U.K. Simeon writes: "It's a longer second season with 10 episodes and an hour-long Christmas special. I really hope you enjoy it when it comes out." You can watch the first season of *Spy* on Hulu, and view a great interview with Simeon [here](#).

The [2012 PAGE Awards](#) Finalists Announced September 15, 2012!

Lessons from the Developing World

by Shane O'Neill

A couple of years ago, my screenplay *The Narrow* won a Silver Prize in the Thriller/Horror category of the PAGE Awards. Within a couple of days of the announcement, one of the judges, Alison Haskovec, contacted me asking me what my plans were for the script and whether I needed any help. I said I did. The next day, we started on the development of the script.

A writer from Melbourne, Australia, Shane O'Neill won the 2010 PAGE Silver Prize for his thriller *The Narrow*. His short film *Oscar's First Kiss*, starring Paul Capsis, won awards at a number of Australian film festivals. Shane recently signed with Los Angeles manager Neda Niroumand and has two TV series and another feature film in development.

When I'm not moonlighting as a screenwriter, I'm a business analyst. One of the good habits I've picked up from my professional life is "versioning," allowing me to keep track of when and where I've created a document. I don't even have to flick over to Movie Magic Screenwriter to know that I'm up to "v0.15" of *The Narrow*. If you know about

versioning, this will tell you two things. Firstly, I've been through 14 major rewrites of the document. Secondly, it has not yet been released to the marketplace (which is when it ticks over to version 1.0).

Fourteen rewrites over 18 months. That's a lot of time and effort for one document. It's been a long road (nearly there!) and I've learnt several valuable lessons along the way.

Lesson #1: This is an endurance event

Finding a producer who wanted to help make my film was nowhere near the end of the process. I'll admit to being lucky at the outset. Sure, writing a script that people like is not "luck," but finding a producer who understands my limitations (I live in Australia, I have a full-time job) and also "gets" my script was particularly fortunate.

Eighteen months later, I would estimate that we've sent close to 100 emails across the Pacific, plus dozens of Skype calls at all hours, due to the time difference. People have asked how I keep up my energy levels. It's simple, really. I've been tired and frustrated at times, but the script still has its heart. I've never stopped loving it. And I know that each new draft and polish brings it closer to the screen.

Lesson #2: I've got some baggage

The Narrow is the fifth feature script I've written. My first script caught the attention of an award-winning director. We argued about whether a scene should be in. Amazed at her audacity, I put my foot down and told her the scene was critical. She told me that I could keep it if I wanted, but she wouldn't shoot it anyway. This was the moment I realized that, as an emerging screenwriter, I was not leading this dance.

Much of my baggage is a product of the Australian film industry, which is mostly government funded. You spend a lot of time writing grant applications.

The system has its strengths, but for me it's been trouble. I like to please people, so when faced with a panel of film illuminati and bureaucrats, I would take on all of their feedback. I've been through that wringer with two scripts, and both times I came out the other end with something I didn't recognize as mine. I didn't stick up for my ideas and vision, mostly because I was desperate to get a film made. Afterwards, I felt powerless and slightly ashamed.

Since then, I've tried to navigate a sort of middle ground. I think I'm much better now at filtering feedback, mostly because of Lesson #3.

Lesson #3: Be prepared!

Based on my formative experiences, I now write a scene breakdown that includes a justification for each scene, beat and arc. It's grueling and often seems like overkill, but it actually flushes out some things that don't work.

I did this early on for *The Narrow*. It has provided me with a strong base from which to defend my script against the slings and arrows of outrageous feedback. While Alison is kind and gentle in the way she suggests changes, the scene breakdown provided a sense of security over the course of the development process.

Lesson #4: Time spent planning is time well spent

I prefer the U.S. film industry because it allows me to spend more time writing, but one good thing I've learnt from the Australian system is that it's important to have a structure in place. I have to know what I'm working towards.

I did the right thing early on and asked for Alison's plan for the film. Together we mapped out a timeline that has allowed us both to manage our expectations and understand our limitations. It's also given us dates and objectives to work towards. We don't always stick to them, but we don't beat ourselves up over it. It's part of the healthy relationship we've built.

Lesson #5: I need a little love now and then

When I'm neck-deep in the drafting process, I spend most of my time focusing on the negatives. I work mostly on the things that need fixing. This can get depressing.

I know this will sound trite, but one of the best parts of working with Alison has been her ability to make me feel special. I know she has other projects – of course I'm not the only screenwriter she works with – and yet she has such excellent attention to detail, such a great knowledge of the script, that I feel the love every time we speak.

Lesson #6: Hard work pays off

I recently met Alison face-to-face for the first time in Los Angeles, where she helped me find a literary manager and set the wheels in motion to take the script to market. I'm heading back to L.A. in late September, when we're finally going to unleash version 1.0 of *The Narrow* on the world.

And of course, if things go well, 1.0 won't be the last version. With a little bit of luck, version 1.1 will be my first pass at the shooting script. They say the development process isn't done until the film hits the theaters. If and when that happens, all those rewrites will have paid off!

Writers Write

by Stephanie Striegel

The art of screenwriting reminds me of mapmaking. Via a screenplay, a writer creates a new world and maps out routes that an eventual movie will follow to tell its story. A finished screenplay is the thing every crewmember, actor, department head, and producer refers to when they embark on the challenging journey of making a movie.

Stephanie Striegel began her career at Tim Burton's production company during the filming of *Ed Wood* and *A Nightmare Before Christmas*. She has since worked her way up through the ranks, serving as a Story Editor and Creative Executive at New Line Cinema, Vice President of Production at Spyglass Entertainment and Identity Films, and Senior V.P. of Development & Production at Bigel Entertainment.

A really good script, despite the awkward format, is a joy to read and can transport you to an incredible world with as much emotional and visual power as a novel. And to get it right, the key to commercial and creative success is creating many, many screenplays.

This past week, I spoke to a dear friend of mine, Gary, who has been a struggling writer for well over a decade. He's talented and his latest script won awards. However, he has

never sold a script to a major studio and is in the same category that so many gifted writers are in: "unproduced." A couple months back, he asked me to help him get representation, as he thought it was the single element keeping him from the lucrative rewrite gigs and relationships that would lead to getting his original material produced. It wasn't.

What I came to learn was that Gary hadn't written a new script since the award-winning piece that got him all that attention three years ago! I was gobsmacked. A writer needs to be a lot more prolific than one screenplay every three years. First, this is important for the sake of your creative muscle, which must be continually trained, flexed, tested. Second, no agent or manager wants to sign someone who isn't constantly making hay. They don't care what you wrote last year or even last month. "What are you working on now?" is all anyone wants to know.

Gary has a big-budget script that a producer is trying to finance, and my fingers are crossed for him. The problem is, instead of working on something new, he spends a lot of his day tracking the producioral progress of this project. He wants to find out who is looking at it and what agency has it for their weekend read. He spends a lot of time wondering which movie star is right for the lead role.

None of this research really changes anything in his immediate life, and more importantly, none of it is within his control. **All that energy and thought would be much better applied to a new screenplay.**

On the opposite side of the spectrum is another writer friend, Frances. She had some early success at New Line, where I was a studio executive when we met. It was a very independent and distinct project with a movie star attached. Like most screenplays, it never got made.

Years later, she had a project at Fox Searchlight and a couple rewrite jobs sprinkled here and there to keep her

afloat. She has always been a working writer, but she is still struggling and, like Gary, she is still unproduced.

The difference between Frances and Gary is that Frances is crazy prolific. Frances writes two to three specs a year on average, in addition to any writing work-for-hire she is lucky enough to swing. She doesn't wait around for lightning to strike on a great spec she wrote three years ago. She's focused on whatever she is creating now.

It's a tough time for writers, as it is a tough time for almost everyone in this country. Earlier this year, Frances really felt the pinch and started writing copy for a food show. We all have to make rent. But while slogging away with new and interesting ways to describe a pot roast, she was still writing specs.

The inevitable "What are you working on now?" query came up at a party recently, and Frances told me about this cool supernatural thriller she was working on. I was hooked just hearing the logline and general setup. I told her it had all the right bells and whistles that make buyers misty-eyed with excitement. It also felt original and fresh, with her specific style.

Two weeks later, I heard through the grapevine that her new spec was in the middle of a heated bidding war (as rare as a Bigfoot sighting these days) and that a wildly famous director phoned Frances saying that he had to have her spec. WOW! In one day, Frances's world turned around. After more than a decade of dedicated and consistent writing, she hit the jackpot. Her spec sold for more than \$500K with a guaranteed push to production. Her cachet in town transformed, and she had to reboot her Facebook account to avoid all the sycophantic people who had ignored her for years as they came crawling out of the woodwork to suddenly sing her praises.

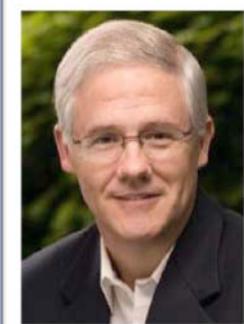
As a writer, you have to write every day if you want to get better and have a chance to sell something. Each contest of wills between you and the written word, in an attempt to create narrative magic, means that you are improving. It's the only way to progress. If you aren't writing, you are getting better at something else — most likely your clever posts on Facebook or competitive eating. Get back to what is important: your dream and your life's work.

So many writers spend too much energy and place a myopic focus on "that one script." It's never that one script. The second you win an Oscar® for Best Screenplay, you can be sure that everyone will say, "Congratulations, and what are you working on now?"

It's a numbers game, and the more worlds you create via your writing, the closer you get to becoming the best writer you can be. The second benefit to an ever-growing body of work in a variety of genres is that you will have a plethora of material on hand to choose from when the marketplace suddenly must have whatever it is they suddenly need. One of your many scripts may be the perfect match. You're prepared, your agent is happy, and you know that every day you keep writing you are just getting better and better.

How the Dark Knight Falls

by John Truby



John Truby is regarded as the serious writer's story coach and has taught his 22-Step Great Screenwriting and Genre courses to sold-out audiences in Los Angeles, New York, London, Paris, Sydney, Rome, Toronto and other far-flung locales. Over the past 20 years, more than 30,000 students have taken Truby's 22-Step class and rave about the insights and direction it has given them. He is also the author of [The Anatomy of Story](#). *Booklist* declares, "Truby's tome is invaluable to any writer looking to put an idea to paper." To learn more about John Truby's classes, screenwriting software, and story consultation services, please visit www.truby.com today.

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Spoiler alert: this breakdown contains crucial information about the plot.

The three Batman films from Christopher Nolan, Jonathan Nolan and David Goyer are incredibly ambitious superhero movies. And while the ambition for this final film of the trilogy is nothing less than a critique of modern worldwide capitalism, the writers fail to create a bridge that can carry that massive weight.

No doubt the writers began by asking themselves: how do we take *The Dark Knight*, the best superhero movie ever made, to a new level? How do we explore the mythology of Batman in greater depth and scope so that it can stand not just for a city in decay, but a worldwide system where injustice is embedded in its very fabric?

In the first two films, the key technique the writers used to kick the Batman stories above all other superhero franchises and into the realm of dramatic art was to build the stories with various moral philosophies. For *Batman Begins*, the origin story of the trilogy, it was elements of Eastern philosophy and Old Testament justice that provided the opponent's justification for using total force to fight crime and moral decay. In *The Dark Knight*, the writers went with Nietzsche and the Existentialists for Batman's bout with the terrifying Joker. The Joker, in a common misunderstanding of the Nietzschean Overman (aka Superman), thinks he can break any law because he is superior to the herd. The Existentialists provided the classic "dirty hands" argument that says you can never stay morally clean when you fight dirty people.

None of this is present in *The Dark Knight Rises*. The writers try to kick the film up to a higher philosophical level by returning to the fundamental theme of *Batman Begins*, where Ra's Al Ghul first introduced the idea of wiping out a society when it has become corrupt beyond repair. Batman's main opponent in this film, Bane, is Ra's Al Ghul's new executor of this moral philosophy, which is a form of fascism. But what is Bane attacking? Crime is actually way down in the eight years since the days of *The Dark Knight*. The writers introduce Catwoman as a Robin Hood figure, but she seems solely out for herself, and not a model for egalitarianism. A couple of traders on the stock exchange are a little haughty, but that does not constitute an attack of the 1%.

To put this in story terms, there's no setup. If the writers want this third film in the trilogy to expand to a critique of worldwide systemic injustice, they have to show specific examples of how the little guy is being destroyed. And they have to show that these individuals are all connected within a system of slavery.

For a while we don't notice the lack of a larger thematic set up, because we are too busy keeping track of all the plot lines. The Nolan brothers are the only screenwriters in mainstream Hollywood that suffer from too much plot. We would all like to have their ability to string reveals and surprises, but here it gets way out of hand. Besides straining all believability, these plot lines start to slow the narrative drive, which is determined primarily by the hero's goal.

That's when the writers spring the fatal plot beat. Batman foolishly walks into Bane's lair and is promptly tossed into some obscure prison. For the next hour of the film, with no setup and Batman out of commission, the writers try to pay off their critique of world capitalism. After turning Gotham into an armed camp, Bane "gives" the city back to "the people." How exactly does that work when the people are being trapped in the city?

Then we go through the major beats of the French Revolution, complete with storming the Bastille, or Blackgate as it's called here. And we get the citizen tribunals, whereby the rich 1% are sentenced to the guillotine. In wintry Gotham that means walking out onto the ice until you break through.

If this modern revolution had been set up in the beginning, maybe, just maybe, it would have worked. But with Batman stuck in a hole, the desire line of the hero has effectively stopped. So there is no spine, no suspension bridge, to support all this philosophical baggage. Narrative drive grinds to a halt. And we get one hour of stall.

The failure of the writers to weave theme through story structure in *The Dark Knight Rises* is instructive. Because this aspect of the craft is so important, I spend a great deal of time in my [Anatomy of Story Master Class](#) explaining in detail how it's done. But I will tell you this: it all starts with constructing a strong story spine, the hero's desire, that can carry the weight.

All About Flashbacks: Part 1

by Dave Trottier

This is the first in a series on how to handle a variety of flashback situations.

READER'S QUESTION:

Are there any special format rules for writing a flashback?

DAVE'S ANSWER:

Inexperienced writers often abuse the FLASHBACK. Make sure that your use of this technique pays off dramatically. In terms of formatting, there are numerous correct methods. The overriding principle is to be clear.

Method 1

In the example below, we label the flashback like we would a montage.

FLASHBACK - TRAIN ACCIDENT

Barry sees the train speeding toward him and leaps from the tracks, but his foot catches on a rail tie.

BACK TO PRESENT DAY

The above method is designed for short flashbacks that happen within a scene. For longer flashbacks, consider one of the following methods.

Method 2

FLASHBACK - EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

Method 3

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - DAY - FLASHBACK

Or

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

If you use either of the above notations, then the next scene heading would follow the same pattern and look like this.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT DAY

Or

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY (BACK TO PRESENT DAY)

Either of the above BACK TO PRESENT DAY notations can be used for Method 2.

If you wish, you may shorten the extension, as follows:

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY - PRESENT DAY

Or

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY (PRESENT DAY)

Alternate flashback endings for Methods 2 and 3

END OF FLASHBACK

Or

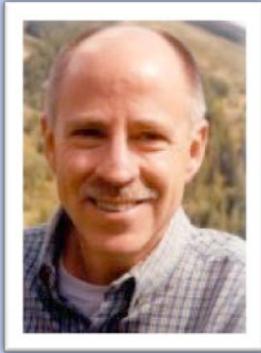
INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

It would also be correct to place the phrase END OF FLASHBACK flush to the right margin followed by a period, as follows:

END OF FLASHBACK.

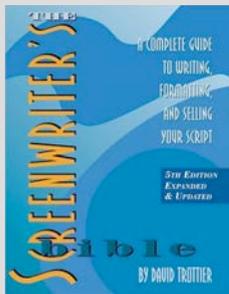
INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Next issue: more on proper format for flashbacks.



Dave Trottier has sold screenplays and developed projects for The Walt Disney Company, Jim Henson Pictures, York Entertainment, On the Bus Productions, Hill Fields and New Century Pictures. As a script consultant, he has helped dozens of clients sell their work and win awards. [The Screenwriter's Bible](#), Dave's primer for both aspiring and professional scribes, is perhaps the most comprehensive industry guide on the market. To learn more about Dave Trottier's books, classes and mentoring services, visit: www.keepwriting.com

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Marvin V. Acuna is an accomplished film and television producer. He is currently in post-production on the features *Chez Upshaw*, starring Kevin Pollak and Illeana Douglas, and *Lovelace*, with Amanda Seyfried, Peter Saarsgard and James Franco.

Previously, he executive produced *The Great Buck Howard* (starring John Malkovich) and *Two Days* (Paul Rudd, Donal Logue), among other films.

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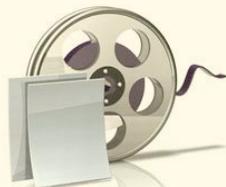
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Pain is Temporary, Glory is Forever

by Marvin V. Acuna

Recently, I decided to once again incorporate free weights into my workout regimen. However, I hadn't used free weights in quite awhile. Needless to say, I have been in pain. PAIN! But, two things keep me focused on my outcome:

1. A great saying: "Pain will make you bitter or better, it's up to you."
2. A photograph of the body type I aspire to emulate.

The pain is enough to make me slip back into what makes me comfortable and, more importantly, doesn't cause me pain. I hear the constant chatter in my head, yelling out "stop!" But I remind myself that I will overcome this. I am building slowly. And, one brick at a time, I will build the image I have crystallized in my mind.

There is overwhelming evidence in my life that dreams and ideas manifest. I simply need to apply the same principles I have used in the past to my new desires. Embracing your fears of the unknown, of the uncomfortable, and of the potential pain of disappointment and frustration, is a crucial ingredient to your success as a professional screenwriter. Otherwise, I promise you that fear will rob you of your dream. It will paralyze you from taking the necessary actions to attain your dream. Don't let it.

Screenwriters who succeed move past their disappointment and frustrations. They take action in spite of their fears. One of the screenwriters I do business with deals with his fears and doubts about himself and his work in a unique way. It may serve as a potential tool for you, so here it is...

First, it should be noted that he's fully aware he is naturally a pessimistic person. He actually does believe the sky is falling and that some day someone will discover he's a fraud and really not talented. Now, to address this, he devised the following routine. A timer sits on his desk and rings at 10 minutes to the hour. For those 10 minutes, he steps away from his laptop and allows himself to vent all of the doubt, all of the fear and all of the frustrations he's feeling. At the end of the 10 minutes, he returns to his writing.

That's one possibility for addressing your fears. Here's another:

Be crystal clear as to what you desire – have **vision** and **purpose**. If you don't know where you are going, how can you get there?

Declare your vision in written form and then share it with others. Let people know what you want.

Take small baby steps. You have heard it before... The Great Wall of China began with one brick.

Be flexible/adaptable. It's simple: Is your current plan working or not working?

Reward yourself for improvements big and small. You sent out 50 queries this week. You attended one networking event. You completed a new script. Developed a new idea. Rewarding yourself is crucial. Sometimes we do so much looking up (at where we want to be or what we want to have) that we never look down and acknowledge how far we have come and what we already have.

Make that call. Attend that event. Ask for what you want. Step outside of what you know to be comfortable.

To make your dream come true, you must be willing to accept that you cannot please everyone. Not everyone will like you. Not everyone will like your work. Not everyone will be supportive. Not everyone will help.

Most importantly, remember that everyone experiences fear. But, only some allow it to imprison them. Be afraid, be very afraid... then leap anyway!

Because as John Burroughs so eloquently said, "Leap, and the net will appear."



Sell Your Script

Hot Leads from InkTip.com

IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER!

Please submit your work only if it seems like a **perfect fit** for these companies' needs. If you aren't sure your script meets their criteria, please check with jerrol@inktip.com before submitting it. **Do not contact the production company directly.** Thanks!

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR SCRIPT:

1. Go to <http://www.inktippro.com/leads/>
2. Enter your email address
3. Copy/paste the corresponding code

Scorpio Studios

[code: n0dhjs1pjy]

We are looking for completed one-hour teen-oriented TV scripts as writing samples for a work-for-hire opportunity. Submissions should be in the vein of *Gossip Girl*. The narrative strength of your synopsis or treatment is what we will be evaluating. If your pitch interests us, we will request 2-to-3-page samples for review. Those selected will be asked to present a detailed pitch for how they would handle the material and will then be placed under contract to adapt material into a pilot.

Budget has yet to be determined. WGA and non-WGA okay.

Our credits include *The Derby Stallion*. No phone calls, please.

Please submit your work only if it fits the above description exactly. If you aren't sure, email jerrol@inktip.com. Thanks!

Infra-Red Films, Inc.

[code: 70frmwckfn]

We are looking for completed, feature-length "found footage" thriller or horror scripts. By found footage we mean stories such as *Blair Witch Project* and *Supernatural* where the script is structured as though originally shot by the actual people in the story. Please include a synopsis with your submission.

Budget will be relatively low. WGA and non-WGA okay.

Our credits include *The Forger* and *Dead Awake*, among others.

Please submit your work only if it fits the above description exactly. If you aren't sure, email jerrol@inktip.com. Thanks!

Wild Heart Productions

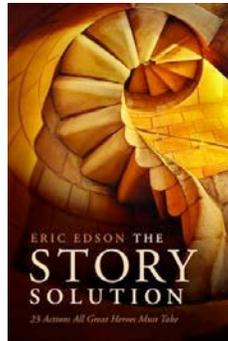
[code: v8h7byjdab]

We are looking for completed feature-length family action adventure scripts with humor but no extensive CGI, special effects, elaborate sets or creatures. We are looking for a self-contained script (like *Home Alone*) that doesn't require a fantasy world or a football stadium. The adventure should be more about kids running around a forest, fighting a neighborhood gang, etc. Script should have elements that adults can enjoy but strong appeal to younger audiences.

Budget will not exceed \$15M. WGA and non-WGA okay.

Our credits include *Bad Faith*.

Please submit your work only if it fits the above description exactly. If you aren't sure, email jerrol@inktip.com. Thanks!

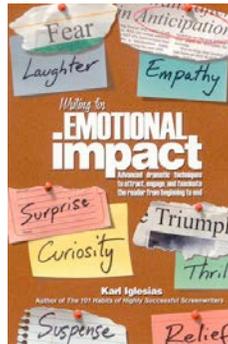


THE STORY SOLUTION

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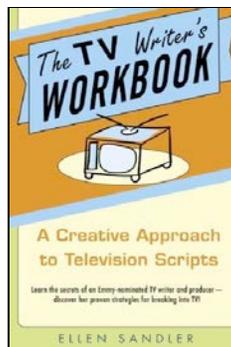


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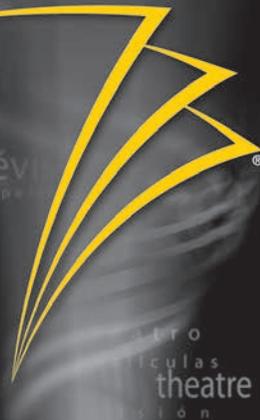


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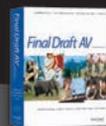
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