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Letter From the Editor

The 2018 PAGE Awards competition is in full swing! Whether you're putting finishing touches on a new script or wrapping up your revision on a previous submission, try to get 'er done and entered into the contest by our Early Entry Deadline, January 15, as that will save you money. Then again, if your script's not ready, don't rush it – you only get one chance to make a first impression, and a good writer improves a project with every pass through it. In fact, it's even possible that the

insights contained in this winter edition of the **LOGLINE** eZine will inspire you to rework or refine your work, lifting it to the next level of excellence.

If you're new to PAGE and/or this publication, the eZine exists to inform writers of any experience level what their peers are doing, what the experts say, and how industry trends may impact the efforts of screenwriters to break into the biz.

This issue opens with two-time PAGE Award winner Kendell Klein, who extols the power of characters to help a writer through the lonely hours of writing. PAGE Judge Elizabeth Page emphasizes the importance of character arc in a protagonist. Script consultant Ray Morton explains why ending stories right is a lost art. Format whiz Dave Trottier tells us how to handle screens within scenes. Career coach Lee Jessup polls industry pros for their opinion of the worst mistakes scribes can make. And finally, our good friends at InkTip provide a trio of "hot leads" for you to pursue.

Happy reading,

Latest News From the PAGE Awards

◆ 2017 PAGE Silver Prize winner Michael Moskowitz and 2013 Silver Prize winner Cameron Alexander both landed on the 2017 Black List, a compilation of Hollywood execs' favorite as-yet-unproduced screenplays. Michael made the list with his 2017 PAGE Silver Prize-winning script **Wylar** and Cameron was recognized for his new spec **Heart of the Beast**. In addition, 2016 Grand Prize winner Diane Hanks, 2014 Silver Prize winner Mark Townend, 2013 Silver Prize winner Cameron Alexander and 2013 Bronze Prize winner Melissa London Hilfers were all recognized on the 2017 Hit List.

◆ The new dance musical series **Pose**, by 2015 PAGE Bronze Prize winner Steven Canals, has been ordered to series by FX. This groundbreaking 1980s-set drama will debut next summer and features the largest cast of LGBTQ actors ever assembled for a scripted series. Previously a staff writer on the ABC show **Dead of Summer**, Steven co-created the new series with mega-producers Ryan Murphy and Brad Falchuck. He is represented by CAA and Epicenter.

◆ 2008 Gold Prize winner VJ Boyd is now co-executive producer on the CBS action-drama **S.W.A.T.**, and he wrote the recent episode of the show titled "Imposters," which aired on November 30. Previously a writer/producer on **Justified** (FX) and **The Player** (NBC), VJ is represented by WME and Plattform.

◆ 2016 PAGE Gold Prize winner Andy Byrne's first commissioned feature **The Orphan Dialogues** is slated to shoot in early 2018. Andy sent us this exciting update from his hometown of Sydney, Australia: "Just wanted to extend my thanks to you all for your dedication, passion and pure hard slog. Since we last chatted, things have been busy. My PAGE Award-winning sci-fi script **Disconn** now has active, ongoing interest from an A-list actor, I'm finalizing a feature I pitched that already has studio interest, I just got invited to write another feature by another producer, and I'm polishing up another script. I have no life beyond writing and editing. You guys helped make that happen. So from the bottom of my happily sleep-deprived heart...thank you!"

The 2018 PAGE Awards Early Entry Deadline: January 15, 2018

Your Characters Can Save You

by Kendell Courtney Klein

While I'm not one for assumptions, I think it's fairly safe to say that writing can be a rather lonely pursuit. It demands immersion into a world that others can't yet see because you are deep in the midst of building it. It begs that you ache, empathize, and be forever afflicted by the full range of the human experience. It insists upon optimism, even when all signs point to doom. While giving rise to perpetual, often procrastination-induced self-loathing, it simultaneously forces you to spend long days and vastly longer nights alone with the very source of your doom and gloom – yourself.

And yet, here we are. The writers. Back at it again and again, despite the odds, the heartaches, and the occasional shooting spasm of what we refuse to admit is likely nascent or (who are we kidding) well-developed carpal tunnel syndrome.

While I've always been a writer, screenwriting presents its own set of pains and potential. That prospect of seeing your work brought to life is the dream. Yet there is a loneliness to screenwriting that I believe is inherent to this particular medium because, should your script fail to make it through the cavernous, serpentine tunnels of Hollywood to finally see some form of release (and so, so many scripts won't), your dusty tomes become little more than ghosts that haunt you. And for all those all-nighters and painstakingly detailed edit sessions, it's likely no more than a handful of people will ever read your labor of love. This is a very depressing prospect in and of itself.

But going in, we all know this, and so, for me personally, one of my biggest focuses working in film and television has been to make certain that I nurture and protect my raw, intrinsic love for the craft. And for all the motion sickness induced by the Tinseltown tilt-a-whirl that I've managed thus far, I've found, at the end of the night, there is but one foolproof way to do this – through my characters.

Since I was a little girl, I've been drawn to obituaries. So it figures that as a screenwriter I'd be drawn to biopics. But although I find biopics to be the most challenging, rewarding, and nourishing of tales, they are a most risky game for a writer. For any worthy subject there are likely two dozen other writers out there penning a story about your same personage. Still, despite the gamble, writing biopics has provided me with an intrinsic wellspring of perseverance because of the subjects I chose – the outsiders, the misunderstood, and the forgotten.

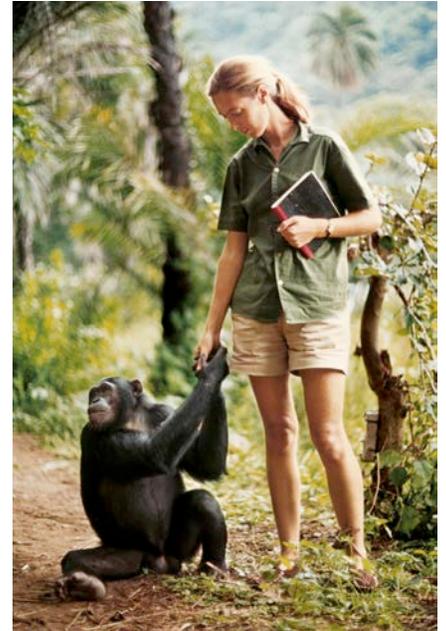
I've had two biopics place in the PAGE Awards. The first was a story about Maila Nurmi, the Finnish actress who created the character of "Vampira," the original late-night television horror host. Maila was a pin-up model in the ultra-repressed 1950s America. Tired of such a restrictive society, she created a character that not only allowed her to control the way she was perceived sexually, but also confronted America's avoidance of death, the macabre, the realities of Cold War fears, and the causalities wrought by WWII.

The second was the story of primatologist Dr. Jane Goodall. This story came both from my deep respect for Jane's pioneering work studying wild chimpanzees, which shed such profound light on the behavioral similarities between chimpanzees and man, and also

from a sincere love for chimpanzees themselves.

In college, I studied biological anthropology, specifically the behavior of great apes, and before going into film I worked as a trainer and behavioral researcher with chimps and gorillas.

So not only did I have a passion for Jane's story, her work, and the fundamental way it shifted our collective consciousness regarding animal behavior and their emotional lives, but I also **loved** writing chimpanzee characters and spending extensive time researching the various individuals whom Dr. Goodall observed in Gombe.



In writing this script, not only did I get to tell the story of a pioneering, odds-defying female scientist, I also had a cast of two-dozen chimps who, each in her or his own way, reminded me of the very animals I had come to care about so deeply during my days working at the zoo – including an elder male chimpanzee named Keo, who was so dearly similar to Dr. Goodall's most beloved chimp friend, David Graybeard.

In a business as uncertain and, let's face it, often downright mucky as ours, you can't rely on even the most potent cocktail of attributes to bring you success – be it luck, hard work, talent, or connections. You are in this for the long haul, so make sure to spend your days (and nights) with characters who will become old friends during the course of those seventeen-plus rewrites you do on your script, hoping that one day, by a stroke of stardust and that miracle "yes," your story will somehow make it onto that perfect producer's desk and begin its journey to becoming a produced film.

Until then, don't spend your words, time and energy in the hope that someone else will see value in what you do, but rather do so in service of something you love at the very core of your soul. That's what will sustain you.



Kendell Klein graduated from AFI with a MFA in screenwriting. Her TV and feature projects have been finalists in numerous contests and have received support from the Hamptons Screenwriters' Lab and Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. With a passion for biopics and adaptations, Kendell has written about such icons as cartoonist Charles Addams, '60s singer Tiny Tim, primatologist Jane Goodall, aviation pioneer Alberto Santos-Dumont, Abraham Lincoln and TV horror host Vampira. She is represented by WME and Plattform.

Why Your Hero Has to Change

by Elizabeth Page

One of the problems I've encountered in the scripts I've read is that many writers don't understand that films are about change. Their scripts tend to be about incidents – the "and then and then and then" of the story instead of what's driving the story. The hero has a goal, is challenged, and ultimately prevails – but who cares? The story fails to engage because the human being at the center is a cipher. Whether the main character is a complete fabrication or is based on a real person, he or she must change in some way or your film will have no impact. So this is a column about change – about making sure that your main character changes, that the change has dramatic stakes, and that these changes drive your story.

Whether your initial inspiration is a character, an image or the seed of an idea, the story will be told through the actions of the main character. And please note – it's not about what **happens** to the main character. The story is about what the main character **does** about whatever happens to her or him. So it's not a story about a car accident – it's a story about how Josefina finds the strength to lift the car off the little boy or how Wilson finds the courage to take on the auto company.

This dramatic fulcrum – a character wedged into a circumstance – is established in the beginning of your story. Whether you tell a linear story or not, the beginning is the "before" – before something happens to change the way things are and launch the main character into action. It's where you establish not only the world of the main character, but how he or she lives in that world. For example, we meet Josefina in a wheelchair, depressed and without hope, working as a paralegal in New York. Or we meet Wilson, an illegal immigrant keeping his head down as he works in a meat-packing factory in Arizona. We can already see the change that will be demanded for Josefina to be able to pick up a car or Wilson to be willing to sue a car company. It's the writer's job to create a story that demands change. And that's done by establishing the main character's circumstances in a way that makes it almost impossible for the character to fulfill the goals of the narrative.

Which brings me to stakes. If Josefina's task were to take on an auto company, her skills and connections as a paralegal would make the task doable. Just as Wilson could find a way to lift the car. Low stakes makes these stories boring. Making the task almost impossible raises the stakes and keeps us interested. This is why most films are about death and its partner, love. Even if your stakes aren't quite that high, they have to seem insurmountable for your character.

A film like *The King's Speech*, where the main character's problem was a crippling stutter, doesn't seem on the surface to be about life or death. But since our character was a king at a time when his frightened nation was dependent on a calm, lucid speech, stuttering was a serious problem. What made the film powerful was that the stutter was deeply rooted in the character's history. The writer chose carefully from the historical narrative, showing us scenes where the boy was publicly humiliated by his father. We understood why he stuttered and feared public speaking. The stakes were, yes, the fate of his nation, but more powerfully, his need to stand up to his father and become a man.

Once we have our main character and circumstances, how do we use change to drive the story? You can start with the character's "want." Josefina wants to avoid risk, so she abandons journalism and applies to law school. But what our character "wants" and what our character "needs" are two different things. Josefina wants to be safe but she needs more faith – in her doctors, in herself, in the possibility to heal and to resume her life. That conflict will dog every decision and force action and change.

Or you can use the Kubler-Ross stages of grief to drive change.

When Wilson's daughter falls into a coma after a car accident, he's in **denial** – she'll wake up, all will be well. He **bargains** with God – "take me, not her." But then she dies, his **anger** boils over and he attacks the other driver. He's arrested and sinks into a **depression** when his status is discovered. But he finally **accepts** his deportation and uses the funds he's saved, not for his immigration lawyer but to help the other driver file a lawsuit against the car company.

However you do it, what's important is that your "before" leads, through action and change, to an "after." The main character's circumstances and approach to life have to be different by the end.

In *Arrival* we meet a dowdy, emotionally shut-down Louise, brilliant at her job but alone in a big sterile house, apparently grieving the loss of her daughter and her marriage, wanting nothing more than to numb herself. She's pulled out of isolation by her job and gets hooked by the intellectual challenge, the appeal of her linguistics partner and her need to save this new alien species. By the climax of the film, she is not only in love but, having cracked the code, now knows that she is risking everything we thought she already lost by moving forward. But move forward she does and by the end, we see her in a glamorous dress at an international tribute having saved the world. Now that's change.



Elizabeth Page's plays have been produced regionally and Off Broadway. She has had an extensive career in television, winning six Emmys and four Writers Guild Awards, and has also written and directed several short films that have had successful festival runs. In August 2018 Elizabeth will direct her feature *About That Night*. She is the founder of [From Script to Pre-Production](#).

The Importance of the Right Ending

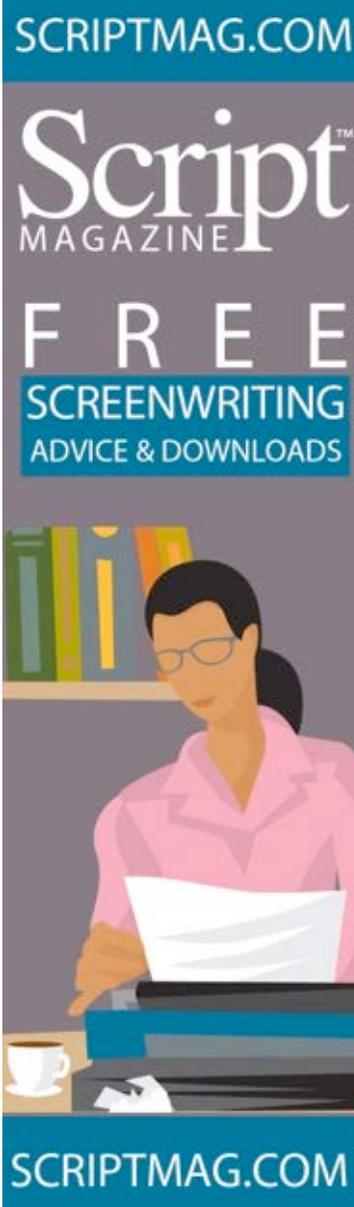
by Ray Morton



Ray Morton is a writer and script consultant. He was a senior writer for *Script* and is currently the author of Scriptmag.com's *Meet the Reader* column.

Ray's recent books [A Quick Guide to Screenwriting](#) and [A Quick Guide to Television Writing](#) are available in stores and online. He analyzes scripts for producers and individual writers, and he is available for private consultation.

You may contact Ray at ray@raymorton.com and follow him on Twitter @RayMorton1.



The ending is the most important part of a dramatic narrative. It is the part that resolves the conflict between the story's protagonist and whatever antagonistic force stands in the way of the character achieving his or her primary motivating goal. The ending is where the plot – set up in the story's first act and developed in its second – is finally concluded. All dramatic questions are answered, the protagonist's character arc is completed and the dramatic potential of the premise is paid off (this is the point at which a comedy should be at its funniest, a horror film at its scariest, a love story at its most romantic, etc.).

Without an ending, all you have is a series of events and incidents that might be entertaining, but that ultimately don't go anywhere or mean anything. One of the problems I have with modern TV is that most series today are serialized and so just go on and on and on without ever resolving anything. I end up feeling like I'm watching endless second acts, and eventually I just lose interest.

The ending is most important, however, because it is the section of the story that gives the piece its meaning. It's where the theme of the overall narrative crystalizes into dramatic action.

As an example, consider *The Godfather*. When Michael becomes the new head of both the Corleone nuclear and criminal families at the end of the film, this grand gangster saga becomes a devastating statement about the cruel inevitability of destiny. When the Italian Stallion holds on way past anyone's expectations – including his own – and goes the distance at the end of *Rocky*, this simple boxing story becomes a stirring tribute to endurance and the human spirit. When Luke Skywalker turns off his targeting computer and uses the Force to blow up the Death Star at the end of *Star Wars*, this entertaining space romp is transformed into a glorious paean to the awesome power of belief.

Despite this indisputable fact, many modern movies don't have endings. Most studio blockbusters made these days are part of ongoing franchises. The individual films are not meant to be complete entities on their own but are rather segments in a much longer whole. Therefore, many of their narratives don't come to a proper conclusion but instead stop on a cliffhanger – in the middle of a situation that will not be resolved until a future installment. This was a big problem in the *Harry Potter* series and is becoming one in the ongoing Marvel and DC sagas, which are increasingly starting to feel like filler to take up space while we wait for a payoff that never seems to come.

Indie films are also having ending issues. Too many recent independent features – especially but not exclusively the Mumblecore movies – come to a stop without actually resolving their storylines. The reasons most often given by indie filmmakers for failing to conclude their narratives is that A) they are trying to be realistic and real life doesn't come with resolutions, and B) they don't want to be predictable and give viewers what they are expecting.

Spec screenplays are following suit. More and more scripts I read do not have proper endings, for the same reasons that movies don't. No matter how many times they are told not to, there are writers out there determined to create their own original franchises. (This misses the point of why studios are attracted to franchise films – because they are based on preexisting material that already has a proven commercial track record. In studio terms, an "original franchise" is a complete non-starter.) Other spec writers go the indie route and omit their endings because they desire "ambiguity" or because they fear being predictable.

A story without an ending isn't satisfying. After investing ourselves in a narrative for two hours or so, we want to know if the lovers get together; we want to find out who committed the murder; we want to see villains defeated, obstacles overcome and demons (internal and external) quelled; and if they're not, we want a clear understanding of why not. Not telling us isn't being creative or unpredictable, it's just being disappointing. If you want to surprise your viewers, the trick is to give them what they expect (a satisfying wrap-up to the tale they have loyally followed), but **in a way they don't expect**.

The ending is where your story comes into its own. If you craft a conclusion that is satisfying – that wraps up the narrative in a clear and logical manner, that completes a character arc, that is highly entertaining, and that brings the point of your story to the fore – then it will stick with the audience. It will delight, move and inspire them long after the movie itself is over. Don't shortchange your audience or yourself. Give your tale the very best conclusion that you can, and your professional ending will be a very happy one.



Dave Trottier has sold screenplays and developed projects for companies such as The Walt Disney Company, Jim Henson Pictures, York Entertainment, On the Bus Productions, Hill Fields and New Century Pictures.

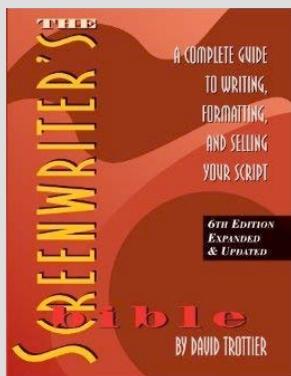
As a script consultant, he has helped dozens of clients sell their work and win awards. [The Screenwriter's Bible](#), Dave's primer for both aspiring and professional scribes, is perhaps the most comprehensive industry guide on the market.

To learn more about Dave Trottier's books, classes and mentoring services, visit his site: www.keepwriting.com.

For \$20 off a script evaluation done by Dave, email him at dave@keepwriting.com.

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Skype Hype

by Dave Trottier

READER'S QUESTION:

How do you handle a Skype conversation in a screenplay?

DAVE'S ANSWER:

If a character appears visually on Skype, you can handle her as another character, since her image is right there at the location. For example:

John's Skype beeps, and there, on the monitor, is Mary.

Then write out the conversation as you would normal dialogue. There would be no "voice over" (V.O.) or off screen (O.S.) speeches because both John and Mary are visually on the movie screen. In a way, this is like the INTERCUT of a telephone conversation where we see both parties. (And, yes, you could CAP the word "beeps" if you wish; the option is yours.)

Here's how to handle a slightly different situation.

John's Skype beeps, and John sees "Mary Columbine" on his computer monitor.

He races to his closet, searching through his clothes.

MARY (O.S.)
John, are you there? I need the recipe for Cornish game hen.

John removes a piece of paper from a shirt pocket.

JOHN
Got it!

In this case, since Mary is present in the room (on the computer monitor), but unseen by the audience, I used O.S. for off screen.

Many other examples could be given, depending on how the scene is written. The key is to use formatting principles and decide how to make your scene clear to the reader.

You might handle TV in a similar way. For example:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mary sits on the couch.

John turns on the TV and races out of the room. The TV News flickers on.

INT. KITCHEN

John searches through the cupboards.

NEWS ANCHOR (O.S.)
Headlining today's news is the recent Cornish game hen shortage in the state of Connecticut.

INT. LIVING ROOM

John races back in with a bag of popcorn.

JOHN
Oh Mary, this is a tragedy!

I didn't write CONTINUOUS at the end of the final two scene headings because it is already obvious, but I could have. For example:

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

And if John and Mary are sitting together watching TV, you could write:

John and Mary sit eating popcorn as they watch the news.

ON TV

NEWS ANCHOR
That's tonight's news. Good night and keep writing!

Every Mistake Contains a Lesson

by Lee Jessup

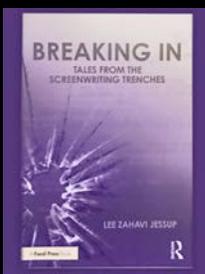


Author of the best-selling book [Getting It Write](#), as well as the newly released [Breaking In: Tales From the Screenwriting Trenches](#), Lee Jessup is a career coach for professional and emerging screenwriters. Her clients include writers who have sold pilots, pitches and specs; staffed television writers; participants in TV writing programs or feature labs; and, of course, writers who are just starting out.

In her role as coach, Lee serves as an industry guidance counselor, adviser, drill sergeant, cheerleader, confidant and strategic partner. Previously, Lee had her own script picked up, worked in development and ran ScriptShark.com for more than 6 years.

To learn more about Lee's services, visit leejessup.com.

Lee Jessup's Breaking In: Tales From the Screenwriting Trenches



A boots-on-the-ground exploration of what it takes to become a working writer in the industry today.

This book includes:

- "Breaking In" stories from 16 working writers
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Mistakes. We all make them. Once some perspective is gained, we tend to look back and shake our heads. If only we knew better. If only someone made us aware. In my ongoing quest to arm screenwriters everywhere with valuable information, I asked my expert friends in the screenwriting space: What is the biggest mistake that you see writers make, be it career-driven, or related to craft?

When I interviewed him for my book, [Breaking In: Tales From the Screenwriting Trenches](#), John Zaozirny, who repped The Black List's 2016 topper [Blond Ambition](#), said: "If I am suggesting something and at the other end you are like, 'no, I'm not going to do that,' I'm not excited about working with you because you don't seem really open to collaboration. Also, I don't want to put you in a room with my friends who are executives [or] agents, because you're probably going to tell them the same thing. Nobody wants to be in the scenario where they're working with someone who's not collaborative. Generally, the more experienced a writer is, the more open they are to collaboration, to ideas coming from anywhere. Let me put it this way: not all amateur writers are closed off to other people's ideas but most writers who are closed off to people's ideas are amateurs."

Celebrated television writing guru Jen Grisanti, who also instructs for NBC's "Writers on the Verge," told me: "One of the biggest mistakes that writers make is that they choose the wrong way in to the story. Their inciting incident or series trigger doesn't have a personal dilemma that links to the pursuit. Therefore, we don't feel the emotional impact."

Renowned reader Andrew Hilton, who can be found through his site [Screenplay Mechanic](#), had this to share: "Recycling movies [we] have already seen is a common misstep. Some new writers also overwrite their material and cripple their story by weighing down their pages with too much detail and description. Another common pitfall is a failure to reign in the imagination – nobody is going to make a \$200m movie from a first-time writer. If you write a great movie that can be produced for \$5m or less, your odds are infinitely better than [if you write] a big tentpole epic."

Danny Manus, who has been reading and consulting on scripts for over a decade, told me: "I think the most common mistakes made are due to a writer not outlining or truly knowing what their story is about before starting to write. Poorly developed characters, dialogue that isn't genuine, poor structure, inconsistent tone or pacing, lack of tracking or lack of setups and payoffs – it all comes from not having a strong enough outline to start."

Working writer and [Script Anatomy](#) founder Tawnya Bhattacharya said: "Writing material they aren't passionate about because someone else pushed them into it, or because they think they can sell it. And sending out material when it isn't ready. You get one shot to make a good first impression – don't blow it."

Pilar Alessandra of the [On The Page](#) writing studio, as well as the successful podcast by the same name, had this to add: "Thinking the reader (and audience) is dumb. Readers and audiences want to be challenged. They don't need to be spoon-fed information or treated as though they're just a market. They want something they've never seen before."

Reader and talented writer in his own right Rob Ripley kept it simple: "Overwriting – too much story (which usually means too little serviceable plot), too many characters, too many ideas."

And finally, Hayley McKenzie, screenwriting consultant extraordinaire who operates across the pond under her shingle [Script Angel](#), said: "On the page it's opening scenes being considered 'set-up' so they lack intrigue or fail to raise any dramatic questions. In terms of their career, it's when writers play to their strengths (which is great) but fail to address their weaknesses. For example, writers great at plot consistently writing boring, stock characters, or great character-writers writing scenes with no story point."

If there is a weakness in your script, your chops, your presentation or your meeting skills, it's your job to strengthen it. If you're weak on structure, find a class or a consultant to take you to task. If you are nervous and meek in a room, go try your hand at an improv class. While you may always have some things that you do better than others, the goal is to be able to show up, both on the writing and career front, as a smart professional.



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We are looking for limited-budget horror scripts with a fresh and unique premise/point of view that we have not (or at least rarely) seen before. Think about how *Paranormal Activity* was so unique when it came out; that's what we're looking for, something that will be as unique and non-derivative.

Budget will not exceed \$5M. Both WGA and non-WGA writers may submit.

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**Company C: Seeking Micro-Budget
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Budget TBD. Only non-WGA writers may submit.

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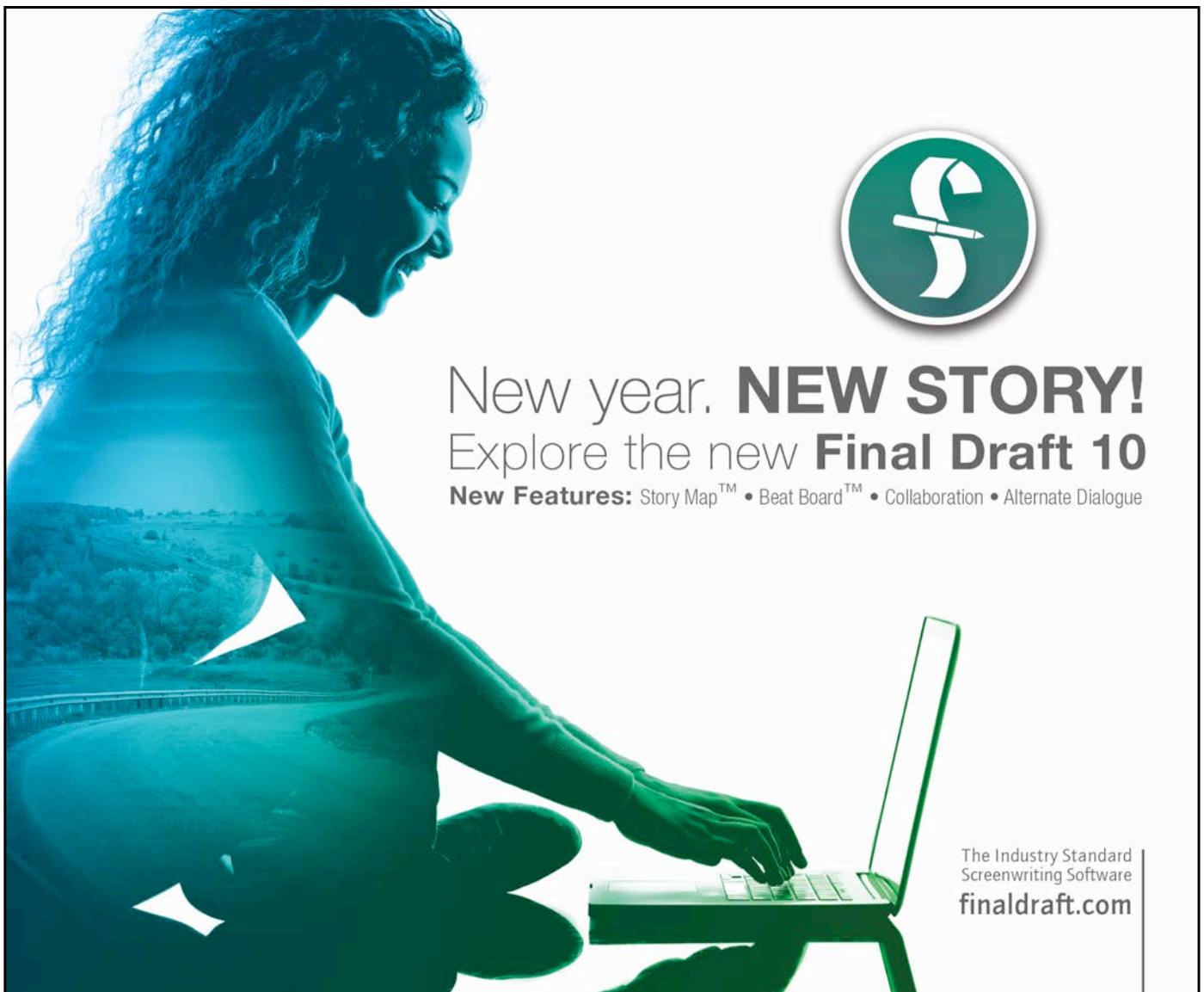
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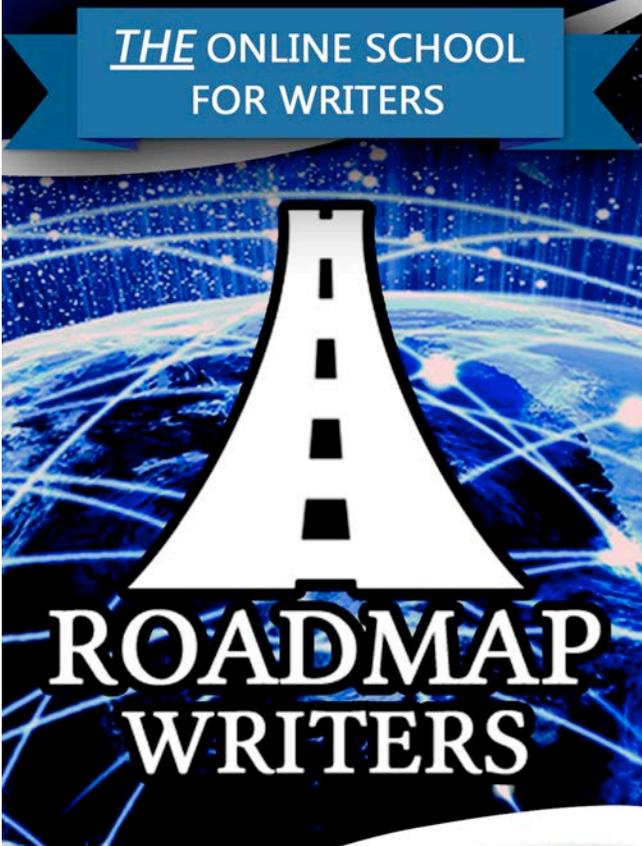
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