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## Letter from the Editor

Congrats to all the winners of the 2014 PAGE Awards! We can't tell you how excited we are to facilitate the launch of new careers and shine a spotlight on the work of writers who are ready to enter the pro ranks. Every year we mint a new class of winners, so the doors of opportunity are never closed for long. The 2015 competition opens for entries on December 1!

To help get your script ready to submit, use our special pre-contest promo discount code "YEAR12" for a \$12 discount off the price of the PAGE Awards eBook [The Insider's Guide to Screenwriting](#) or any of our great [Script Services](#). But this special discount is valid only through November 30, 2014, so make sure you place your order right away!

With this edition of the **LOGLINE** eZine, we dissolve from 2014 to 2015 and begin a new act. 2009 Gold Prize winner Suki Kaiser shares her personal story of perseverance and preparation for the career that seemed so far away. PAGE Judge Tony Zequeira begins a two-parter about the core concepts screenwriters need to assimilate in order to succeed. Genre guru John Truby finds the fatal flaws in murder mystery *Gone Girl*. Dave Trottier, our in-house format wonk, elucidates the uses of slashes and secondary scene headings. Industry insider Marvin V. Acuna eavesdrops on words of wisdom spoken in the Hall of Writing Legends. And finally, our issue concludes with three "hot leads" from InkTip.com – have you written a script that fits these producers' needs?

Happy reading,



## Latest News from the PAGE Awards

- ◇ Three of the season's top new TV series are being written by PAGE Award winners: 2005 Silver Prize winner Janet Lin is a producer and writer on the new ABC series *Forever*. 2009 Gold Prize winner Rob Sudduth is staffed on the FOX show *Red Band Society*. And 2013 Grand Prize winner Brooke Eikmeier is writing the CW series *The Flash*.
- ◇ 2008 Gold Prize winner Bill Dubuque is really on a roll! His movie *The Judge*, starring Robert Downey Jr. and Robert Duvall, opened nationwide last month and Ben Affleck is now attached to star in Bill's new feature *The Accountant*. Bill is represented by Trevor Astbury at CAA and PAGE Judge Eric Williams at Zero Gravity Management.
- ◇ 2014 PAGE Award winner Shannon Pestock has optioned her Bronze Prize-winning thriller *The Dead House* to producer Nate Adams of Picture Lab Entertainment. Nate discovered Shannon's script while judging the contest.
- ◇ The feature-length adaptation of the 2005 Bronze Prize-winning short film *White Water*, by Michael S. Bandy & Eric Stein, recently completed filming in Opelka, Alabama. The movie was directed by Rusty Cundieff and stars Sharon Leal and Larenz Tate.
- ◇ The thriller *Social Suicide*, written by 2014 PAGE Award winner Robert Klecha, recently completed filming in London. Directed by Bruce Webb, the film stars India Eisley, Olivia Hussey and Leonard Whiting. Rob tells us, "It all came about from my PAGE 2013 finals place and using my PAGE 2014 script as a sample. Many thanks! I wouldn't have had this opportunity if it wasn't for my PAGE success."

The 2015 PAGE Awards Contest Opens for Entries on December 1<sup>st</sup>

## “Survivor: Hollywood” (Episode 1)

by Suki Kaiser

A couple of months back, I wrote to the folks at PAGE. Part “thank you,” part giddy confessional, I sat at my computer, flush with gratitude and awe, because after

Suki Kaiser won a 2009 Gold Prize for her Action/Adventure script *Deepflight*. After crossing the Pacific on a two-year odyssey, she and her family have settled on a small island in Canada, where Suki plans to develop her own projects rather than waiting for pigs to grow wings. Her [blog](#) chronicles her ongoing adventures.

what seemed like an eternity, my dreams of becoming a PAID screenwriter were finally coming true.

Earlier that day, I had received my first long-form contract for a page-one rewrite for a studio on a project with a major star attached.

Thrilled, amazed, and so, so stoked, I wanted to

share my epic news with someone other than my husband, kids, mom, 20 or so “best friends,” check-out lady at the grocery store and whatever other random people I managed to blurt my life story to in the three hours that had passed since I received the big news.

I needed someone who understood the magnitude of it! Who would totally get how hard I had toiled, or appreciate the desperation of living atop that lonely Writer’s mountain, in the mental ascetic’s cave of anonymity, renunciate of all things that made “way more sense” than pursuing a screenwriting career?

I thought of the PAGE Awards. I thought of Jennifer and Zoe. Now, I don’t know these gals personally or anything, but I feel like I do, because in the years since I won PAGE, I’ve been receiving cheery, supportive and very regular updates on the successes of previous winners and feeling like a total chump-ass/loser, because while everyone else was moving into that golden circle of employment...I was treading water.

Literally, like, actual water. In the middle of the Pacific Ocean. It’s a long story but basically, I had become so deeply frustrated in my career (or lack of one) that I convinced my husband and our two kids to sell everything we own, buy a boat and sail 18,000 miles of the Pacific Ocean.

That’s the kind of crazy this business can make you.

I’m gonna share my weird tale with y’all because, chances are, if you’re reading this, you’re probably a writer, too, and you dig on obstacles, reversals, calls to adventure and crossings of thresholds (where is that goddamn bottle of elixir, anyway?). And perhaps you feel, as I have, that while everyone else breezes from contest to career, you remain huddled in your cave of rejection, surviving on ramen noodles and staring Gollum-eyed at a pile of unproduced screenplays.

You are not alone.

Screenwriting can be an astonishingly difficult, sucky thing to pursue. It’s so hard that it’s almost hilarious, and for some twisted reason, I find comfort in that.

When I entered my screenplay in the PAGE Awards,

I was over 40, a mother of two, and living on a tiny island in Canada. My first and only screenplay had been sitting in the back of a drawer for 10 years. I kid you not.

Back then, I thought what pretty much everyone thinks of their first screenplay – that it would be the subject of a bidding war, snapped up by a huge studio, fast-tracked into production, and break all records for an opening weekend.

Surprisingly, that is not exactly how it panned out. A few people saw the script and were generally enthused. I got the usual suggestions for how to turn it into a completely different movie. I rewrote the thing a few times, learning a little more about what the hell I was doing with each pass. But then Life happened, and kids, and the script got put on a way, way back burner.

Cut to 10 years later: Open the drawer, blow the dust off the cover (so old, it was actually a HARD copy), rewrite it again-again and send off to PAGE. It won a Gold Prize!

Really good, cool managers, producers and agents were now emailing me for meetings. Everyone wanted to see what else I had written (basically nothing). But I never ended up signing with a representative. And no one bought my gazillion-dollar-budget first screenplay (big surprise!).

Time passed and I wrote. A lot. For no money. My own scripts, other people’s ideas, treatments, outlines. I read about other PAGE winners’ success stories and sobbed in my pillow, because while it seemed to be going swell for others, it felt like nothing was moving forward for moi.

So, I went sailing – and wrote even more. I wrote a blog about our adventures. It was read by thousands of people, and though I still wasn’t getting paid, I was happy. Out in the big blue, I scribbled outlines and story ideas. Many a night, under a sky of stars, I wondered if my dream of being a screenwriter could ever actually materialize.

A few months ago, my little tribe sailed into Hawaii on the last leg of our odyssey: thrilled, recharged, and so broke we literally had three pairs of flip-flops between four people.

There was an email waiting for me from a producer whom I had met after winning the contest. I had written on spec for him, and even though that project was never produced, we developed a good rapport and were mutual fans. Now he was contacting me about a very big film – one with a major star attached. His company had been through a few drafts with a few different writers, but no one was happy with what they had to date.

I flew to L.A. on points, and while staying in a TENT in a friend’s backyard in Studio City, I drafted a pitch on how I would re-imagine the producer’s script. I met with the Studio and the Star’s “people,” and a few nail-biting weeks later... I landed the job.

Now you know why I was so chuffed to write our friends at PAGE. All my efforts were not in vain. The Universe was finally granting my wish. I was going to get paid, my name added to the WGA. Things were gonna get SO MUCH EASIER.

Well, guess what? It didn’t get any easier!

To be continued...

## Things Film School Never Taught Me: Part 1

by Tony Zequeira

When I decided that I wanted to work in the entertainment industry, I was right at the cusp of graduating high school. It was a great time for movies. People like Robert Zemeckis, John McTiernan, Ron Howard, Martin Scorsese and Steven Spielberg were at the top of their game. Hollywood's heart was pumping out the dream full force.

Tony Zequeira was an agent and manager at Larchmont Literary Agency and Evolution Management. He now runs his own production company and management firm, Super Vision Entertainment. Tony is set to produce a studio feature shooting in China in 2015. He studied film at Florida State University.

And after growing up on *Back to the Future*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Die Hard* and *E.T.*, who wouldn't want a career in the movies?

So I applied to film school and, quite surprisingly, got in. I still don't know to this day why I was accepted. I had **no** film background, hadn't shot one frame of video and hadn't written one word of a script.

Prior to 1990, if you looked at my transcripts you would think I was poised to be an engineer. But someone, in their infinite wisdom, saw something in me that I didn't even see in myself. If I ever meet that person, I owe them a nice dinner. Why?

While I didn't become the next Robert Zemeckis, I love my life. I am a literary manager with my own very small, very exclusive, boutique company. I work with a handful of clients, grooming them to become tomorrow's professional artists and leaders in a business that will demand from and give so much to them. I am extremely hands-on with all my clients. Though they are new to the business, I help them present themselves as consummate professionals. If, as a result, I can leave the business somehow better than when I found it, then it's all worth it.

Although I appreciate the training I got, so much of what I learned in order to be able to guide my clients to success — and to become a success myself — didn't come from film school at all. Film school can teach you how to make a film: where to point a camera, how to get an exposure, and which color gel to use to make it look like nighttime. But what film school does **not** prepare you for is how to become someone who will be successful in the business.

With that in mind, I have compiled for you a list of some of the basics you should know before throwing yourself into the world of producers, agents, managers, investors and the rest of the cast of characters in this crazy-but-incredible place we call Hollywood.

### WHAT "THE MOVIE BUSINESS IS TOUGH" REALLY MEANS

When I was first told the movie business is tough, I had **no** idea what my mentors meant. After all, I had detailed cars and painted roofs in the Miami heat my first summer out of college. What could possibly be harder than that?

What I didn't realize was what kind of hard they were talking about. This business will test all aspects of your personality, morals, values and basic human programming. I personally believe it is the Ironman competition of the

human experience. You will be faced with obstacles and pushback the likes of which you have never faced before and will never face again — and it will come at you from all sides, not just the front.

You will face more disappointment than you ever have. You will have days where your friends have success and you are starving. And don't even think about going to your 10- or 15-year class reunion. All your classmates will be enjoying comfortable lives as doctors, lawyers, dentists and attorneys while you are still driving a 1990 Toyota Tercel and eating noodles out of a paper cup. After your first year without a job, your parents will most likely write you off and your friends back home will disappear into their own lives.

This is all to be expected and it is your first test. After all, while it sounds nice, no one ever REALLY follows their dream, right? Part of it is jealousy. Most people aren't as brave as you are and know that they never will be. So don't expect them to root for your victory. Misery loves company. Secretly, they hope you will fail and come back to that sensible life working at your father's dry cleaners.

Oh yeah, and your writers' group? Don't expect them to take you out to celebrate when you get your first staff job or option your first spec. You just bested your competition (yes, they're your competition) and they won't be happy for you. The only ones who will be happy for you will be your pet and your spouse — assuming one or both didn't leave you already.

Take comfort in the fact that you're not the only one going through this. It takes a bit of heroism to do what we do. It's a hero's journey, really. If you've read your Syd Field closely enough, you will know that it's a long and often lonely road that no one else understands or appreciates. Accept this going in and you won't get surprised.

### WHY TALENT ISN'T ENOUGH

A famous director once said that making it in the industry takes ambition, perseverance and a bit of luck. He specifically did **not** say talent. He had a point. The successful people aren't necessarily the most talented. They are the most relentless. They view every step, positive or negative, as one step closer to their dream. Every "no" gets you closer to a "yes." And there will be a **lot** of "no's." This will cause a lot of dark days — days where you will question yourself and wonder if you are doing the right thing or not.

But when it's darkest, recognize that it usually means dawn is right around the corner. So pick yourself up and turn on a light or light a candle. Your strength to stay positive after 1000 rejections will get you to that 1001<sup>st</sup> call, which will be the "yes" you've been waiting for. It's always when you think you've done everything you can and can't do any more that you should push yourself that extra inch. It's within that tiny measure of distance that everything great happens in the world.

To be continued...

### Writing the Crime and Detective Story: *Gone Girl*

by John Truby

*Spoiler Alert: DO NOT READ this breakdown if you haven't seen the film. It is impossible to say anything useful about the writing without discussing the critical plot twists.*

With the tidal wave of superhero movies coming out of Hollywood, I get very excited when a serious crime story like *Gone Girl* comes along. Which is also why I was so disappointed when *Gone Girl* turned out to be a lot less than its hype suggested.

This isn't a bad film or a bad script by novelist Gillian Flynn. But it has serious problems. Some were embedded in the original story. Some came from adapting the novel to film. The biggest flaw in this script, and the source of all the other flaws, has to do with the main characters of the original story. The convoluted story structure of *Gone Girl* is designed to hide the plot twists until the most dramatic moment. But it's also designed to make these two main characters, Nick and Amy, appear to be complex. Neither character is what they first seem to be.

Normally that is one of the signs of good writing. But not here, because these characters are not complex at all. About halfway through, when the convoluted structure becomes clear, we, the audience, are struck by a horrifying revelation: this story is a battle between an idiot and a psychopath. As the story progresses, Nick becomes even more stupid, while Amy becomes even more insane. This sort of character opposition allows the writer to create plot (although much of it is fake), but it completely shuts down any character exploration. Three traits you never want to give your characters if you want the audience to understand the whys of human behavior is to make them stupid, insane or evil, and this story has all three. When that happens, it's "move along people, no character insights to be gained here."

And that leads us to plot. All the talk has been about the big surprises in this movie and how they must not be divulged. Forgive me for saying so, but the crime plot in *Gone Girl* is no better than the average TV drama. In fact, the Detective/Police Procedural, the most popular TV genre in the world, is done much better on the top shows than it is here.

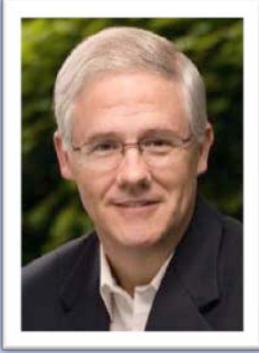
Crime and Detective stories are the most plot heavy of all genres. Which means that they push the bounds of believability in order to get their effects. The trick to the best stories in these forms is to be able to surprise the audience fairly. In other words, make the characters do things that fool the audience while at the same time remaining true to what these characters, and human beings in general, would actually do.

The best argument I've heard for what made the original novel special is how it uses crime elements to highlight a modern marriage gone bad. But Flynn has stated that she had great difficulty condensing the novel down to screenplay form without sacrificing any of the crime plot. When the story is leaned out to this level – making sure all the crime beats are present – the crucial details about the marriage are just not there. So we're left with a couple of highly unlikeable people whose marriage is just another version of *War of the Roses*. And that doesn't tell me anything about a modern marriage.

What's missing in the shift from novel to film? Flynn can't include all the things Nick did, big and small, that made Amy come to hate him and justify taking her revenge in such an extreme way. But that is the one essential requirement to making this story work. So what's Flynn's shorthand solution: Amy's a psychopath. No other justification is needed. But as soon as that becomes clear, about halfway through, the movie is effectively over.

Finally, the ending. Given the setup of the story, I can't say I was surprised by it. But I was still disappointed. I hoped that somehow Flynn would come up with a plot twist that really did surprise me, that made me understand that these were real people after all. And that this was a tragedy of a great love gone bad. Alas, Flynn doubled down on her character portrayals. Amy got even nuttier. Nick became a moron who deserved to be put out of his misery. And everyone else in this movie seemed to have become hopelessly stupid as well.

No doubt people will argue that this movie is a hit at the box office. But I would caution screenwriters out there not to learn the wrong lesson. If you've written a novel that has sold over two million copies in one of the most popular genres in worldwide storytelling, you've got as good a shot at a hit film as there is in Hollywood. But that doesn't mean the film is good. And if you haven't written a bestselling novel, you won't get away with this stuff.



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](http://www.truby.com) today.

#### John Truby's Detective-Crime- Thriller Audio Class



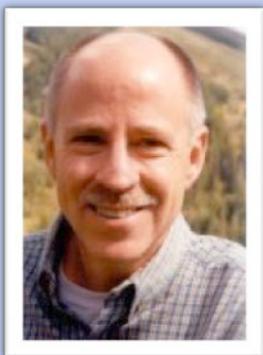
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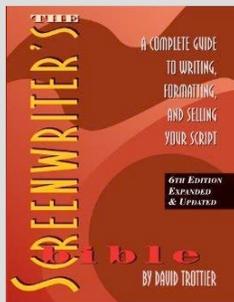
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Dave Trottier has sold screenplays and developed projects for The Walt Disney Company, Jim Henson Pictures, York Entertainment, On the Bus Productions, Hill Fields and New Century Pictures. As a script consultant, he has helped dozens of clients sell 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](http://www.keepwriting.com)

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- Includes worksheets, samples and more
- An essential text for any screenwriter's library

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## Slashes and Skulls

by Dave Trottier

### THE HOLLYWOOD SLASHER

#### READER'S QUESTION:

In a couple of "Hollywood" scripts that I have read, I see scene headings that use a slash, as follows:

INT. JILL'S MARKET/BAKERY - DAY

EXT. LANCE'S CAR/WASHINGTON, DC - DAY

#### DAVE'S ANSWER:

The slash is not used correctly in either case. A slash is generally used to indicate both that we are at two places at the same time **and** that the director and editor may alternate between the two locations at will. It is most often used with the INTERCUT in telephone conversations, as follows:

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION - AMY'S KITCHEN/BOB'S BEDROOM

Now the camera can be in either location at any point in the conversation.

Your first example presents a master (primary) location followed by a secondary location that is part of the master location. Here is an appropriate way to format it:

EXT. JILL'S MARKET - BAKERY - DAY

The same is true for the second example, but the master location is erroneously named last. If in this case you simply want the reader to know we're in Washington, but not actually show us the city of Washington, use parentheses, as follows:

EXT. LANCE'S CAR (WASHINGTON, DC) - DAY

### WHAT TO DO WITH A SKULL

#### READER'S QUESTION:

You say in your book that when a character's name is used as a secondary scene heading, this means the camera is on that character until the next scene heading. So how would you make the transition in the following scene?

THE GROUNDSKEEPER

is spellbound by the weird mesh holding the skulls together.

Suddenly, the skulls come alive.

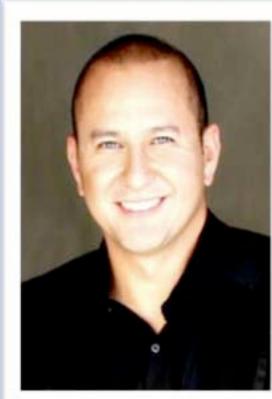
#### DAVE'S ANSWER:

Sometimes you can cheat a little if you are absolutely clear, and the above may be the exception that proves the rule (or should I say "guideline"). On the other hand, why not get rid of the secondary scene heading altogether? For example:

The Groundskeeper is spellbound by the weird mesh holding the skulls together.

Suddenly, the skulls come alive.

Good luck, and keep writing!



Marvin V. Acuna is an accomplished film and television producer. He recently produced 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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## Words of the Wise

by Marvin V. Acuna

Have you read the graphic novel *Watchmen*? It's an amazing story that was adapted into a mediocre film a few years ago. Towards the end, antagonist Adrian Veidt gives his flowery villain's soliloquy on why he's destroying New York City. Since Veidt idolized Alexander the Great, he explains...

*"I wanted to have something to say should we meet in the Hall of Legends."*

Hmm... "The Hall of Legends..."

For some reason that phrase always intrigued me. It appealed to my romantic side that somewhere out there, in some magnificent hall, the heroes of old gathered, told great stories, and were celebrated for their achievements.

Isn't that a cool concept?

And in the same vein, I always pictured a similar Hall of Legends for the best writers in history as well. A place with comfortable armchairs and writing tables, where Twain, Asimov, and Hemingway would write alongside Shakespeare and Ovid. A place where Orwell would point to Stephen King's laptop and ask, "What the devil is that?"

What would these writing legends say to you, a modern day wordsmith, if you could take a peek inside The Hall of Writing Legends? What insights would they share about the writing process – the struggles and the triumphs?

Well, let's pull open the great golden doors, shall we, and take a quick walk down the hall now. Let's see what the legends whisper to you...

*"There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed."*

– Ernest Hemingway

*"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you."*

– Maya Angelou

*"The role of a writer is not to say what we all can say, but what we are unable to say."*

– Anaïs Nin

*"I'm not a very good writer, but I'm an excellent rewriter."*

– James Michener

*"Don't tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint of light on broken glass."*

– Anton Chekhov

*"Easy reading is damn hard writing."*

– Nathaniel Hawthorne

*"If my doctor told me I had only six minutes to live, I wouldn't brood. I'd type a little faster."*

– Isaac Asimov

*"How vain it is to sit down to write when you have not stood up to live."*

– Henry David Thoreau

*"It is impossible to discourage the real writers – they don't give a damn what you say, they're going to write."*

– Sinclair Lewis

As we leave the Hall, know that the legends urge you to press through the hard times and keep pursuing your dreams. They ask that you uphold and continue their legacy. Because one day they'd like to welcome you among their ranks.

So if becoming legendary is your goal, then you've got some work to do.



## Sell Your Script

Hot Leads from [InkTip.com](http://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](mailto: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

## Project 8 Films

[code: fkk8hm9nfk]

We are looking for completed, feature-length, family-friendly scripts that feature teens and dogs or horses, i.e. scripts in the vein of *Midnight Stallion*. We are open to spiritual themes and a "kids playing sports" element (soccer, hockey, football, etc.). Please do not pitch a script you've already pitched to us in the recent past.

Budget will not exceed \$750k. WGA or non-WGA okay.

Our credits include *American Idiots*, among others.

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

## Farnaz Samiinia Productions

[code: xgwnjznuxh]

We are looking for completed, feature-length "converging plot" thrillers, i.e. scripts in the vein of *Crash* or *Mystic River*. Please note we are not looking for scripts to option but rather writing samples to evaluate for a potential writing assignment opportunity.

Budget has yet to be determined. Non-WGA only.

For more, see the [Farnaz Samiinia](#) page on IMDB.

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

## PRIMECINEMA

[code: 6ksex70wch]

We are looking for completed, feature-length faith-based/Christian message scripts, i.e. scripts in the vein of *Fireproof* or *Open My Eyes*.

Budget will not exceed \$500K. WGA and non-WGA okay.

Our credits include *Open My Eyes*, among others.

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



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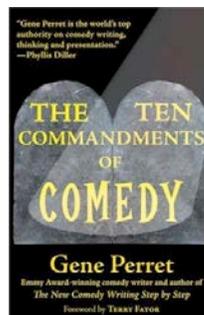
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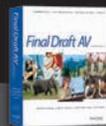
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