LOGLINE

The Screenwriter's eZine

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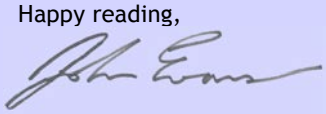
Letter from the Editor

The winners of the 2015 PAGE Awards have been announced! Congrats to all who were honored with prizes and best wishes as you take this big step forward in your careers. We're very excited for you, and we're proud of everyone who entered the contest this year. It was the most competitive field we've seen thus far! Every year, writers submit increasingly imaginative, skillfully realized screen stories in every category. It's important to keep stepping up your game. We will begin accepting entries for our 2016 contest on December 1!

In this the final ***LOGLINE*** eZine of 2015, we have more guidance for writers seeking an edge. 2014 Bronze Prize winner Robert Klecha talks about his first professional screenwriting collaboration. PAGE Judge Maxwell Kessler discusses the value of purposeful protagonists. Genre guru John Truby examines ***Inside Out*** and the resurgent "Female Myth" form.

Master formatter Dave Trottier talks about subliminal shots and character intros. Industry insider Marvin V. Acuna discusses the damage fear can do to a writer's psyche. And, as always, we close the issue with the latest leads from InkTip!

Happy reading,



Latest News from the PAGE Awards

◊ Since the 2015 PAGE Awards announcement on October 15, four of our 2015 PAGE Award-winning writers have been signed by literary managers who discovered their scripts while judging the contest. Gold Prize winner Niall Queenan has been signed by Peter Katz of Story Driven, Bronze Prize winner Michael Lee Barlin has been signed by Lee Stobby of Lee Stobby Entertainment, Bronze Prize winner Brittany Lamoureux has been signed by Andrew Kersey of Kersey Management, and Gold Prize winner Nick Carr has been signed by Joe Riley of Velocity Entertainment.

◊ The 2015 Grand Prize winning drama ***Immaculate***, by Gareth Smith, and the Gold Prize-winning comedy ***Mannish***, by Monica Byrnes and Toria Sheffield, have both been optioned by PAGE Judge Mitchell Peck of Peck Entertainment.

◊ Bill Dubuque's 2008 Gold Prize-winning drama ***The Headhunter's Calling*** is currently filming in Toronto. The movie stars Gerard Butler as a ruthless headhunter whose priorities shift when his 10-year-old son falls ill and his personal and professional priorities clash. Willem Dafoe and Alfred Molina co-star in the film, which is being directed by Mark Williams. Bill is represented by CAA and Zero Gravity Management.

◊ 2011 Bronze Prize Winner Steven Palmer Peterson has two features that have completed filming and are now in post: ***The Fixer***, an action/thriller Steve wrote on spec, and ***Statue of Limitations***, a thriller that Formula Features hired Steve to write. In addition, Steve's new movie ***Concrete Roses*** is in pre-production with Adisa Films.

◊ The 2009 Gold Prize-winning short film ***The Romance Class***, by Michael Cumes, premiered on October 29 at the Austin Film Festival as part of the "Rom-Antics" Short Film Program. Directed by Stuart Elliott, the movie was filmed in Scotland and produced by BBC Scotland.

The 2016 PAGE Awards Will Open for Entries December 1!

© PAGE International Screenwriting Awards

My Breakthrough Year

by Robert Klecha

2014 was a year of firsts for me. Two of the biggest were winning a PAGE Award and getting a commission to co-write a feature film, ***Social Suicide***, a teen crime thriller loosely based on ***Romeo and Juliet***. How did it all come about? Well, it started with a good spec.

Robert Klecha won a 2014 Bronze Prize for his Science Fiction script *Augmented*. He was hired by producer Janet Wells to co-author the film *Social Suicide*, which was filmed last year and premiered at the Raindance Film Festival in October 2015. Robert lives in London, England.

I've always felt confident in my writing, but I'd never had a "breakthrough" moment. Normally I like writing big and expansive concepts, but the issue with this is that the money for such productions can be tightly guarded — reserved for established writers, not the new kids on the block.

What writers need is someone willing to take a chance on them. So when my agent put me in touch with a producer looking for someone to script a crime thriller, it was an opportunity I knew I had to grasp with both hands. It was a low budget production, so I did the only sensible thing and submitted my huge, futuristic science fiction noir as a sample. It was my only script ready to go at the time and it was the one that went on to win Bronze in the PAGE Awards later that year. Fortunately, the producer loved the writing and we arranged to meet face-to-face to discuss her project.

This meeting was my chance to convince the producer that she could work with me over an extended time and that her budget would be safe with my writing. We discussed her concept, what I felt I could bring to the table, and what I thought needed to happen. I've had several more general meetings with producers since then and they've all followed the same rough pattern: good writing gets you in the door, but being a reasonable human being gets you the job. Luckily, I passed the test.

I landed the assignment. I was now a professional writer, paid to write! I had just enough time to let that sink in before realizing that the turn-around time to turn a three-line concept into a shooting script was just three months. It was an unusual position to be in, at least for me. Deadlines were a new reality. Plus, normally I'd have an existing relationship with my co-writer, but in this case I was going to be working with a relative stranger.

I'm a big planner, so my producer/co-writer and I spent weeks writing and rewriting outlines before going to script. My concerns were soon put to rest. The project developed organically. I found that co-writing can be a fantastic process whereby you end up with something that's not quite yours, not quite theirs, but is better for the collaboration.

Once we were happy with the script, the producer went off behind the scenes to get the director, cast and crew together. It's important for a writer not to lose contact with the team so I'd touch base with her regularly, but I found myself very much in a writer's purgatory. Waiting. I'd gone from working on the script every day to twiddling my thumbs while other people took the reins. I had to take solace in having done my job to the best of my ability and the fact the project was now in pre-production.

The excitement picked up as shooting began and I managed to get myself on set for a number of days. I even made my acting debut as an extra, although all my scenes were cut in the final edit. (No accounting for taste!)

What was so fantastic about being on set was getting to talk to the actors about the script, as well as watching them perform the scenes we'd written. There were lots of positive comments but I also learned a lot. In retrospect, there are scenes I'd write differently after having seen them acted out. If you have access to actors for a read-through during the writing process, it's well worth it. Their interpretation of the script will reveal things about your writing that you didn't even know were there.

One thing that struck me during the production process was just how many people it takes to complete a film! I had no idea how many jobs needed doing. The crew was huge. As a writer your focus is on the story, but I never really appreciated how the words on the page are transformed into pictures on the screen. Ultimately, the final product is an amalgamation of everyone's efforts. The script is a template for other people to interpret.

We premiered at Raindance in London and I've seen the film a number of times now, but I'll never forget my first viewing. It was at the cast-and-crew screening with some family and guests, and I was so nervous before going in. People I knew were going to see the movie I'd written and I so much wanted them to like it. I've never squirmed as much as I did for those 94 minutes. I've heard actors say that they can't watch themselves on screen, but I never thought the same would apply to me as a screenwriter! Rest assured though, by the third or fourth viewing, it's much easier to watch your own film.

The biggest lesson I can share from this experience is that it only takes one good script to get you noticed. My spec got me in the door for this job and it has also opened up several other big opportunities for me since then. The key thing about that script was that it captured my style and voice. I can't tell you how many times I almost gave up on it, but I'm very glad I didn't. It can be hard to sit down and face the same script over and over again, especially when it feels it's not going anywhere, but perseverance is the difference that can lead to your first big "breakthrough" moment that turns everything around.

The Dreaded Curse of the Meandering Protagonist

by Maxwell Kessler

I don't care if your lead character is "likable." I don't care if your lead is charming or beautiful or "deeply compassionate underneath a rough exterior" or "really hot — but you wouldn't know it by the way she dresses" or that "he's got an evil in his eyes that is only matched by Satan himself."

Maxwell Kessler graduated from Emerson College with a major in film and television. He interned and provided coverage for The New York Television Festival and Gran Via Productions, and was then hired as an assistant and script reader at United Talent Agency (UTA). He now works on the Fox comedy *The Last Man on Earth* and is an independent writer/producer.

These stereotypical character descriptions don't matter. Your characters' physical features don't matter.

It's what they **do** that matters. What gives a scene or collection of scenes meaning are the extraordinary results of a protagonist's actions.

The most infuriating types of scripts I read are those where the lead character, the hero or heroine, the impetus for all action, walks through the world seemingly impervious to consequence — even if that character has a specific goal in a unique, compelling world.

If there are no meaningful consequences attached to your characters' actions (their attempts to achieve their goal), then the goal itself is pointless, and their existence in the world is meaningless.

Writers tend to make this mistake for many reasons; however, the reasons I come across most often are as follows:

The Goal is Unimportant to the Protagonist

If a character doesn't care whether or not he or she achieves a goal, then the audience won't care either. It removes tension from the story, making it predictable.

For some reason, I have read a lot of scripts about unemployed schlubs who live in their parents' basements and fail at various job interviews. When these schlubs don't get work, they just shrug it off and go back to the basement, leaving me asking myself, "Why did I bother reading that?"

If those characters had actually cared (or needed to care) about getting a job, then they would have tried harder and harder to get one. This might send the story to unexpected places, introduce new characters, and unfurl some fun, unexpected outcomes.

Perhaps, for example, our schlub protagonist could become so desperate for employment that he applies for a job as a make-up artist at a funeral home, and it leads to all sorts of unexpected adventures.

The Protagonist is Unaffected by Loss

If a protagonist is unaffected by loss, this means that he or she doesn't experience difficulty, failure, suffering, heartbreak, regret, joy, elation, fear, pride, etc.

Something is wrong if you can cut scenes from your script or shuffle them like a deck of cards. Getting told "no" three times as opposed to once doesn't automatically make the second and third time more interesting.

"What gives a scene or collection of scenes meaning are the extraordinary results of a protagonist's actions."

Especially if the character can just go back to the basement, shrug and say "Whatever."

In our aforementioned "schlub" example, after the first failed job interview our protagonist needs to become increasingly desperate and seek out ever-stranger jobs as he worries about his income. The first failed interview should permanently change the character's world so that the next interview isn't just a carbon copy of the first.

The World is Unaffected by the Protagonist

It's not just the protagonist who should be affected by his or her choices — the world has to react as well. If the protagonist makes a choice, and the other characters are unaffected by said choice, then nothing has changed. If everything is the same in scene 15 as in scene 1, why are we watching this movie?

For example, if our aforementioned schlub ends up getting that job at the funeral home, then maybe he discovers a strange, secret skill he never knew he had. Or maybe he is wholly unqualified for the job, and when the family members arrive for an open-casket funeral, they freak out when they find their dead relative made-up like a bloodthirsty clown.

In this scenario, our protagonist might well end up back in his parents' basement — as unemployed as he was at the beginning of the script — but at least he ended up there as a **consequence** of his own actions.

After you've chosen the world for your story and populated that world with interesting characters, and after you've come up with what you believe is an interesting journey for your protagonist to embark on, ask yourself, "Why does this matter?" or "So what?"

Challenge yourself! Ask questions like "Who cares if my lead falls in love?" or "Is it really a big deal if the criminal isn't caught?"

When your protagonist's actions have big consequences, the audience gets invested in the outcome of your protagonist's journey. This is why it's so critical to continually focus on the **consequences** of your characters' actions.

If you don't, you're likely to have a difficult time selling your script and finally — **finally** — moving out of your parents' basement.

Take it from a guy who knows…

Writing the Female Myth Story: *Inside Out*

by John Truby

Inside Out is a creative, even revolutionary film that shows the emergence of the Female Myth in worldwide storytelling. Female Myth was wiped out in Western culture about 3000 years ago, and it was a devastating loss to our collective heart and mind. But in just the last few years we've begun to see it reemerge in a form that speaks to how we live now. And audiences love it.

This is not some passing trend. Female Myth stories are part of what I call New Myth forms (to learn the beats of these forms, see the New Myth Class), and I believe they will dominate worldwide storytelling for the next two decades and beyond. That's because they fundamentally change our collective vision of who the hero is and what she will accomplish on her life and story paths.

To see how ***Inside Out*** works, we have to break down its structure, beginning with the genres it uses. Genres give the audience archetypal characters and situations meaningful to everyone, regardless of culture. Drama gives audiences the most subtle and complex characters in all of story, and that applies to the opponents as well as to the hero.

In another important strategy for worldwide storytelling, the writers mix in other genres as well. Besides Myth and Drama, ***Inside Out*** has strong elements of Fantasy and Buddy Picture Comedy. That kind of mix makes for a very complex structure, which is difficult to pull off. As in any Fantasy, we have two tracks here: the fantasy track and the reality track it represents. But unlike Fantasy, which takes a single main character from mundane world to fantasy world and back to the mundane, this story has two main characters: Joy and Riley, one for each world. Joy is the primary main character, and it is her Myth journey through Riley's mind that gives us the main spine of the story.

Joy and Riley are female, but that alone does not make this a female myth. Joy is not a warrior like the Diana goddess, as depicted by the Katniss Everdeen character in ***The Hunger Games***. She is an emotion, and a way of seeing and interacting with the world without fighting. Riley isn't the typical Disney princess. She's a normal 11-year-old girl facing a traumatic life event where she's been forced to move to a new home.

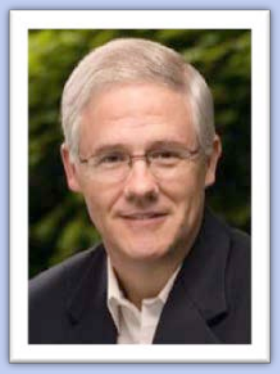
Like the Male Warrior Myth laid out by Joseph Campbell, Joy goes on a long, difficult journey. But she doesn't fight her way through one opponent after another, ending with a big bloody battle. She thinks and feels her way through the labyrinth that is Riley's mind. Nor is there a Minotaur at the center that Joy must slay. There are references to some of the old Greek myths, but it's the way she handles the opposition, and ultimately succeeds, that makes this a new Female Myth story.

Joy's primary ally in this journey, and the key to its final success, is another woman, Sadness. As in any Buddy Picture Comedy, the buddy is the first opponent. In the mind of Joy and the audience, Sadness is her polar opposite and best avoided whenever possible. But the key to the self-revelation, for Joy and thus Riley as well, is that experiencing loss and Sadness is part of growing up.

Inside Out points up one of the great challenges, and costs, of telling a new Female Myth. The Male Warrior Myth (and indeed all of Western storytelling in the last 3000 years) is based on maximum conflict. Female Myths solve problems in a different way. So the question becomes: how do you create plot that is not based on density of conflict? Many have noted the plot of ***Inside Out*** lags. The Journey plot, with its succession of opponents, can become repetitive. But a big part of the plot problem here comes from the lack of conflict, especially one with a powerful outside opponent that builds steadily.

Inside Out overcomes this with a number of brilliant story elements. One is the detailing and organization of the story world in Riley's mind. The ability of these writers and artists to bring the complex human mind to life, and even more to show how it changes incrementally and dramatically as a child grows up, is breathtaking.

With ***Inside Out***, Pixar has shown that its success comes from having the best scripts in the movie business (which is why their placement of the writing credit on this movie listed below apparently every producer at Pixar was baffling and very annoying to me). For writers, the great lesson of this film is that Female Myth is an express train that's coming on fast. If you have an idea for a Female Myth, write it now.



John Truby is regarded as the serious writer's story coach and has taught his Anatomy of Story Masterclass to more than 40,000 students worldwide. He is the author of *The Anatomy of Story*. To learn more about Truby's classes and screenwriting software, please visit www.truby.com.

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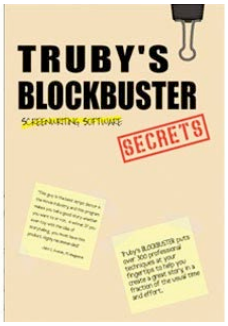

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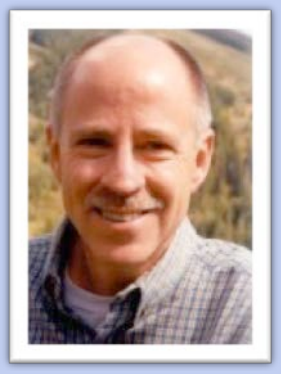

Dave Trottier has sold screenplays and developed projects for The Walt Disney Company, Jim Henson Pictures, York Entertainment, On the Bus Productions, Hill Fields and New Century Pictures. As a script consultant, he has helped dozens of clients sell their work and win awards. *The Screenwriter's Bible*, 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. For $20 off a script evaluation done by Dave, email him at dave@keepwriting.com.

Dave Trottier's

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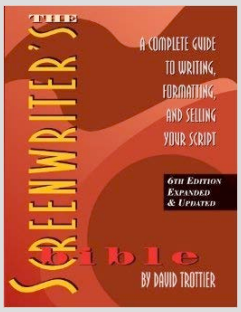

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Subliminal Images and First Appearances

by Dave Trottier

READER'S QUESTION:

There is a sequence in my screenplay where quick flashes of images — like TOM IN A CHAIR, TOM IN MOTEL ROOM, TOM DEAD IN THE ALLEY — appear in an almost subliminal fashion. How would I format this?

DAVE'S ANSWER:

The "flashes" are either subliminal or they are not. Just write what we see. There are many ways to handle this. Consider using the SERIES OF SHOTS if these flashes tell a little story; in other words, if they outline the key points of a narrative. Use the MONTAGE if the images revolve around a concept, such as the passage of time.

Here's an example of the SERIES:

```
SERIES OF SHOTS - TOM'S DEATH

A) Tom sits in a chair -- silent.

B) Tom paces in a motel room, then glances towards
the door.

C) Tom lies dead in an alley.
```

If these must be quick flashes to get the right effect, then use the following:

```
SERIES OF QUICK FLASHES

-- Tom sits in a chair.

-- Tom paces in a motel room.

-- Tom lies dead in an alley.
```

If these are quick flashbacks, then label them as such:

```
SERIES OF QUICK FLASHBACKS
```

If it's a very quick image that appears for less than a second, and has a truly subliminal effect on the audience, you can write:

```
SUBLIM - Tom lies dead in an alley.
```

Use the SUBLIM sparingly.

READER'S QUESTION:

What is the preferred use of caps when showing a photograph of a character who will be introduced later in the film? Does the character name appear in caps when the photo is seen, or when the character first appears? Or both?

DAVE'S ANSWER:

The first time the character appears in the script is when his name is capped, even if that first time is a photograph of him. If the character in the photo would be played by another actor, then he's a separate character; in that case you might have both YOUNG BOB and BOB, with both being introduced at separate times.

Do not place a character's name in all caps in dialogue when he or she is first mentioned. That's not a first appearance. Cap the name of a character only when he or she first appears in narrative description.

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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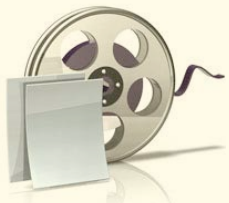

To the Dark Side, Fear Will Lead You…

by Marvin V. Acuna

Sorry I got a little Yoda on you… Ahem.

Today we're going to talk about the fears and doubts that plague **all** screenwriters and, more importantly, how **you** can overcome them!

First, a short story...

One of the screenwriters I work with deals with his fears in a very unique way. A timer sits on his desk, which 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.

For those 10 minutes he imagines the worst possible scenarios that could ever occur in his life and stews in anguish for each of those 600 painful seconds. However, when time is up he takes a deep breath, shakes it off, and returns to his writing.

That's one way you can proactively address your fears.

Here are some others:

- Be crystal clear as to what you desire — have **vision** and **purpose**. Because if you don't know where you are going, how can you get there?
- Declare your vision in written form, then share it with others. Let people know what you want.
- Take small, baby steps. You've heard it before... the Great Wall of China began with one brick.
- Be flexible and adaptable. It's simple: Is your current plan working or not working? Can you modify it, or should you try a completely new approach?
- Reward yourself for the small and big improvements. You sent out 50 queries this week. You attended two networking events. You completed a new script. You developed five new ideas. Congrats! Rewarding yourself is crucial. Sometimes we get so caught up with "looking up" (at where we want to be or what we want to have) that we never "look down" and acknowledge how far we've come and what we already have.

But most importantly, remember this:

To make your dreams come true, you must accept that you cannot please everyone. To wit:

- Not everyone will like you.
- Not everyone will like your work.
- Not everyone will be supportive.
- Not everyone will help.
- And more importantly, know that everyone — and I mean EVERYONE — experiences fear.

But only some allow it to imprison them.

What separates successful people from unsuccessful people is that successful people feel the fear, then leap anyway.

Because as John Burroughs so eloquently said:

"Leap, and the net will appear."

And only **then** will you be able to accept the success you desire and deserve.

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. 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**

Company A

Seeking Alien Horror Scripts

[code: mbfeqqew3a]

We are looking for feature-length alien horror scripts in which aliens and not supernatural entities are the source of the horror. We are especially interested in contained, personal horror scripts, and we are **not** interested in blockbuster-style invasion scripts (i.e., **no** crowd scenes, multiple cities, or heavy VFX/stunt work).

Budget TBD. Both WGA and non-WGA writers may submit.

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

Company B

Seeking Inner-City Crime Thrillers

[code: 6z2sbh5v8d]

We are looking for feature-length crime/thriller scripts in the vein of ***The Departed***, ***Black Mass*** and ***No Country for Old Men*** We are especially interested in such scripts where most or all of the story takes place in an inner city.

Budget won't exceed $1M. WGA and non-WGA writers OK.

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

Company C

Seeking Edgy Teen Comedies

[code: nyqm750t1j]

We are looking for feature-length, contemporary, edgy comedy scripts. As such, we are interested in ensemble comedies that push boundaries, featuring youthful, even scatological dialogue and a plot in which the characters get into almost unbelievable plot situations. Please include a full synopsis and make sure that your synopsis clearly summarizes the entire script, including the ending.

Budget won't exceed $5M. WGA and non-WGA writers OK.

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

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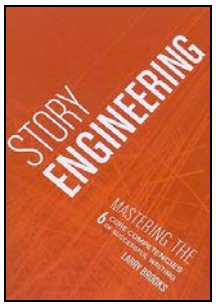

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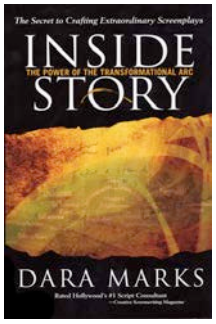

INSIDE STORY

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