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Letter From the Editor

Summer blockbuster season is beginning, as a host of heroes and villains do battle on big screens across the globe. Your script is your champion in the professional arena. Is it as powerful as it can be? If so, now is the time to enter the 2019 PAGE Awards! Wednesday, May 15 is our Final Entry Deadline. Don't miss this chance to get your own compelling story in front of the Hollywood execs who are judging this year's contest, and hopefully viewed by multiplex throngs one day!

The **LOGLINE** e-Zine is your faithful companion on the road to screenwriting success. Here you'll find tips and tricks about writing, rewriting, marketing yourself and your work, taking notes, and everything else that goes into being a skilled professional. Each issue focuses on different aspects of this industry, what to do to break in, and how to make a name for yourself. We hope you find it helpful on your path forward.

In this issue, 2011 PAGE Award winner Lisa Ebersole shares the techniques that helped her launch her career without help from a rep. PAGE Judge Jamie Thomas explains how to chart compelling character arcs in your script. Ray Morton, our in-house script consultant, explains why calls to abolish three-act structure are misguided. Dr. Format Dave Trottier takes us for a ride in the way-back machine to understand the history of script formatting. Career coach Lee Jessup shares pro scribes' thought-process on choosing what to write. And before you hit the pool, check out these three "hot leads" InkTip has culled from production companies seeking new material!

Happy reading,

Latest News From the PAGE Awards

◆ It's a PAGE double whammy! The April 22 episode of NBC's **The Enemy Within** was written by 2010 PAGE Award winner Erin Donovan and directed by 2009 PAGE Award Winner Lily Mariye. Erin is represented by Stagecoach Entertainment and the Gersh Agency. She previously wrote the short films **Mindfield**, **A Tale of Two Thieves** and **Ferrying Fee**, as well as an episode of the CBS series **The Mentalist**. Lily is represented by Abrams Artists. She previously wrote and directed her own indie feature **Model Minority**, and she is directing two upcoming episodes of AMC's **The Terror**.

◆ PAGE Award winners dominate the airwaves: 2012 Gold Prize winner Graham Norris co-wrote the second-season premiere of the NBC drama **New Amsterdam**, which aired on April 16; 2005 Silver Prize winner Janet Lin wrote the April 18 episode of the Fox series **The Orville**; 2014 Silver Prize winner Shawn Boxe wrote the March 5 episode of the BET series **Boomerang**; and 2013 Grand Prize winner Brooke Roberts wrote the February 26 episode of the CBS series **NCIS: New Orleans**. In addition, 2015 Bronze Prize winner Steven Canals won a Peabody Award for Best Storytelling for his original series **Pose**, which begins its second season on FX on June 11.

◆ The feature film **Tinker**, by 2009 Gold Prize winner Stephen Hoover, is now out on Netflix, Amazon Prime and iTunes. The movie won Best Picture at the Fort Worth Indie Film Showcase, Best Feature at the Sutter Creek International Film Festival, and Best Sci-Fi Feature at the Indie Gathering Film Festival.

◆ The 2015 PAGE Silver Prize-winning family film **The Storyteller**, by Joe Crump and Rachel Noll, is now available on Amazon Prime, YouTube, Google Play, and Hallmark Movies Now. The movie won the Audience Choice Award at the Heartland International Film Festival and the Best Family-Friendly Film Award at the Lady Filmmakers Festival.

2019 Final Entry Deadline: Wednesday, May 15

The Unrepped Writer's Path to Success

by Lisa Ebersole

**Disclaimer: I have nothing against representatives. I like a lot of them, and I'm sure I will have one some day. But this article is for the screenwriters who don't yet have reps and want to forge a way forward.*

When I coach screenwriters, one of the first questions I ask is, "If we were talking on this day 12 months from now and you were living your screenwriting dream, what would that look like?" About 50% say, "I'd have an agent or manager."

A few years ago, I might have said the same thing. I thought an agent or manager was the answer to all my problems. I would "get" one, they would "get" me jobs, cue the award music. But it didn't happen. Nobody chose me. So, I was left with two choices: give up, or pursue opportunities as an independent screenwriter.

I chose option 2, and since then I've discovered that you can operate in the Hollywood system without waiting for someone to choose you. Everything I've done as an independent writer and filmmaker has involved me saying, "YES" to myself, and then doing a lot of work. No matter what, screenwriters always do a lot of work. Even the ones with agents and managers.

Here is what I have done independently:

- Wrote and produced a web series that sold to three distribution platforms
- Pitched shows to CBS, NBC, Comedy Central, HBO
- Developed a series with an A-list executive producer
- Got paid to write a low-budget feature
- Got paid as a script consultant on multiple projects
- Wrote and produced eight plays Off and Off-Off Broadway
- Wrote hundreds of animated shorts for kids
- Produced iPhone and iPad apps
- Pitched a TV series with an A-list actor attached

How did I get those jobs? Here are the four strategic practices that have worked for me, and they can work for you too!

#1: Write the right writing sample for YOU

It can be any genre, but it has to be a script captured through YOUR AUTHENTIC LENS (the way you see the world that nobody else does). 100% of you should be in this script. Most writers only bring parts of themselves to their work. You need to bring it all — and then add extra because this is a movie or TV show, not real life.

I spoke with an industry exec recently who said some writers come in with a sample for one thing, an hour drama for example, and then say, "But I actually want to be a comedy writer." To be a comedy writer, you need a comedy sample. Nobody gets jobs without evidence that they can do said job. Don't write a sample that doesn't represent who you want to be.

#2: Articulate clearly and consistently who you are and why you're special

If you're thinking, "Duh, Lisa, everyone knows how to do this," you are probably incorrect. When I ask the simple question, "Who are you and what do you do?" I frequently hear rambling stories and unrelated information. If we meet, you need to tell me in one sentence who you are and why you're special.

Here are two examples of what NOT to say:

"I'm a screenwriter, but I've never sold anything."

You have just given me information I didn't ask for, and a negative impression of you in one fell swoop.

"I'm currently bartending, but I really want to be a TV writer; I just don't have the connections."

Skip the caveats and be the thing you want to be. You're a screenwriter. Done! Now we can move on to what you write and how I can help you.

#3: Become a Networking Ninja

I used to think "networking" was the excuse writers used when they wanted to feel busy or drink. Then I realized that almost every job I've had has been through referral — i.e., someone recommended me to the person hiring. To get a job as an independent screenwriter, the person hiring must be in your network. It follows then, that the more people in the industry who know you and love your work, the better positioned you are to get hired. So, how do you build your network?

Go to at least one industry event each month.

You're not in L.A.? Attend live events on Facebook, YouTube or Instagram. Stareable.com and Seedandspark.com do live events that I've attended, learned from, and made connections through.

Meet other industry people twice a month. Buy them coffee and ask how you can help them. Notice I did not say, "ask them for a job" or "ask to pick their brain." Add value to someone else's world and it will return to you. Again, if you're in a remote area, maybe you're doing this virtually. Message three people you are "friends" with on Facebook whom you don't actually know. Ask how you can help them achieve their goals.

Have "socials" that tell your story. To be an independent screenwriter, you need a social presence. It's the fastest and easiest way to build awareness of who you are and what you do, and to find collaborators.

#4: Make a Thing

Who would you rather hire — a writer with a great sample, or a writer with a great sample who believed in that sample so much she turned it into an Instagram account showcasing the world and characters, a fiction podcast, a short, or even a feature film? You get my point. There are many ways to have a real thing that exists in the world. Some involve money. Some don't. All require time, attention, and a consistent message that supports your script. The bonus of doing this is the mindset shift it creates. You are no longer "selling" your project because it's already a thing. Now you're looking for the right partner to take it to the next level.

There you have it! You have the tools to navigate Hollywood as an independent screenwriter. Your job is to believe your success is inevitable, say "YES" to yourself, and do the work.



Lisa Ebersole won the 2011 PAGE Bronze Prize for her comedy script *Date Camp*. In addition to her writing work, she coaches professional screenwriters to write scripts that sell by helping identify their authentic lens and treating their career as a startup business. You can meet Lisa on socials @lisabersole and visit lisaegersole.net for coaching inquiries.

Crafting Character Arc

by Jamie Thomas

In this highly competitive marketplace of scripted entertainment, it's necessary to craft not only unique concepts, but also compelling, well-rounded characters to go with them. Here are tips that will help you craft strong characters and have a greater chance of success.

Character is informed by a variety of elements, but a flaw I often see is one-dimensional characterizations caused by weak character arcs and an imbalance of external and internal elements. To engage a reader and an audience, a strong character arc is essential. This applies to both protagonists and antagonists. The building blocks of a character's arc are her crisis, quest, conflict, and change – both internal and external. Many scripts tend to focus on external components, while the internal, more emotional elements are treated as afterthoughts. This focus on the external can be momentarily diverting, but it often results in an empty, quickly forgotten character and story.



The **crisis** jumpstarts the story, and the protagonist's external crisis is usually derived from her public life – an event such as losing her job. The internal crisis is usually drawn from a character's private life – an experience such as a childhood trauma. Consider which emotional or psychological elements the external crisis would induce or exacerbate in the protagonist's internal crisis. Does she lose self-confidence after being fired?

The protagonist embarks on a quest to overcome her internal and external crisis by striving for something she wants and something she needs. Externally, she'll search for a new job. Internally, she'll learn not to base her self-worth on a career. While the protagonist can be introduced as a reactive character, she must become proactive by the midpoint, or sooner. If not, the script will read as if secondary characters are shaping the lead's character arc. She must take charge of her quest.

Conflict creates drama; therefore, the protagonist must encounter internal and external conflicts that arise as a result of her crisis and quest. Conflict, large or small, should occur in every act and ideally in every scene. External conflict is commonly generated by outside forces, while internal conflict is generally the result of a character's own flaws and ties into the overall theme. The decisions the protagonist makes to overcome these conflicts will go a long way in defining her character arc.

Internal change in the character occurs incrementally throughout Act II, as a result of her quest. This change then solidifies in Act III once the protagonist overcomes conflict to complete her quest, thereby resolving the crisis. If she fails, she should have undergone change in the process. Depending on the nature of the external quest, external change could also be gradual, or it may be an abrupt change that takes place in the climax.

In the successful film *Shazam*, the teen protagonist, Billy, is a foster kid searching for his mother, who lost him in a crowd as a child. He's spent years running away from foster homes in search of his mom and has become a selfish loner. Billy believes he can only rely on himself and refuses to accept the love offered by his new foster family.

When Billy is magically transformed into a superhero, he doesn't know how to control his powers and he uses them for his own gain. With the arrival of a supervillain,



he must learn to use his powers before the villain kills him and destroys the world. Ultimately, Billy decides to put his trust in others, and puts his life on the line for the public.

It's equally vital to create a strong character arc for the antagonist, even with a compelling protagonist.

One of the most engaging villains in recent film is Loki. In the first *Thor* film, Loki's crisis begins when he realizes Thor isn't ready to become king and decides to prove this by starting a skirmish with their enemy. His plot goes awry when Thor is banished and Loki realizes that his own life is a lie. Loki is actually the son of the enemy. He never felt as loved as Thor, and now he never will be.

Loki then quests to prove his worth and secure a place in the only home he's ever known, but he does so by doubling down on the discord he already put in motion. In the climax, the truth of Loki's deception comes to light and he tragically banishes himself when faced with the disapproval of Thor and his adoptive family.

Loki's character arc has both internal and external elements, making him a compelling, sympathetic, three-dimensional antagonist. The choices he makes are villainous, but his backstory elicits empathy. His motivation is relatable and goes beyond many antagonists' simple quest for power, money, or revenge.

While I've provided examples from superhero films, these aspects of character arc apply to virtually any genre or medium. A fully realized character arc will keep a reader hooked and help your script go farther wherever you submit it.



A graduate of Chapman University, Jamie Thomas has worked in scripted development since 2009. She began her career at 3 Arts Entertainment before moving on to Curtis Hanson's Deuce Three Productions, Parkes + MacDonald Productions, and Seven Stars Entertainment, where she helped develop film and TV projects set up at major studios and streaming outlets. Jamie has been a PAGE Awards Judge for the last two years.

In Defense of Three-Act Structure

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.

There are quite a few folks out there in the screenwriting-verse who are anti-three-act structure – often intensely so. They adamantly insist that quality screenplays do not/cannot/should not have three acts. They can have two acts or four acts or five acts or even no acts, but they do not/cannot/should not have three. And anyone who doesn't agree is an out-of-touch old fogey who no one should listen to.

I'm not sure where this hatred for the three-act structure comes from. When I have asked protestors what they don't like about it, about the most they can offer is that it is "old-fashioned," which seems like a pretty weak complaint. Shouldn't a tool be judged on its usefulness rather than its age? If you need to put a nail in a wall, will you not use a hammer just because it was invented thousands of years ago?

Screenwriting is dramatic writing, and the three-act structure is as inherent to dramatic storytelling as steel is to building a skyscraper. The task simply can't be accomplished without it. All dramatic narratives contain a specific set of elements arranged in a specific way. If a piece of writing does not contain those specific elements and if they are not arranged in that specific way, then you may have something, but you will not have a dramatic narrative.

All dramatic narratives unfold as follows:

At the beginning, a protagonist is introduced and then something (the inciting incident) happens to set the story in motion. The protagonist responds to the inciting incident and things go along smoothly until something unexpected happens (the first plot twist) that turns the story spinning in an entirely new direction.

The protagonist responds to the first plot twist by developing a strong goal that he is determined to achieve. He creates a plan for accomplishing this goal and then sets out to implement the plan. Along the way, he encounters an increasingly difficult series of obstacles – including opposition from a formidable antagonist – which he uses his skills, talents, and abilities to overcome. After a rocky start, the protagonist's plan begins to work and, as the end of Act II approaches, it appears as if the protagonist will accomplish his goal. But then another unexpected something (the second plot twist) happens, causing the protagonist to suffer a terrible reversal that not only prevents him from accomplishing his goal, but makes it seem as if he will never accomplish it.

All appears to be lost, but then the protagonist rallies and finds a way to reverse the reversal – either by finding a new way to accomplish his goal or by coming up with an entirely new goal. The protagonist pursues his new course of action, which leads to a final confrontation with the antagonist. As a result of that final confrontation, the protagonist defeats the antagonist and finally accomplishes his goal (or doesn't, if the story is a tragedy).

That's it – that's drama! Every creatively successful dramatic narrative – screen, stage, or television – follows this template. And if you examine it closely, you will see that the two plot turns automatically divide the dramatic narrative into three parts. The first part introduces the protagonist and leads to the first plot twist; the second part deals with the consequences of the first plot twist by introducing the story's main conflict and escalating it until things come to a head with the second plot twist; and the third part finally resolves the conflict once and for all. Those parts are called acts and that's where the three-act structure comes from. You simply can't tell a dramatic story without it.

Some dramatic narratives have prologues or epilogues – chunks of storytelling (often quite lengthy) that occur prior to or following the main storyline. However, this doesn't mean that such stories have four acts – it means that they have three acts and a prologue or epilogue. Some scripts have both a prologue and an epilogue, but that doesn't make them five-act tales – it makes them a three-act tale with a prologue and an epilogue. The scripts for some network TV sitcoms are presented in two acts and the scripts for some network TV dramas are divided into six acts, but that doesn't mean these stories are two- or six-act tales – it just means they are three-act narratives cut into two or six pieces. Some screen stories are told in reverse-chronological order or in non-linear fashion and some are filled with flashbacks, asides, or dream sequences. None of these additions or contortions are going to change the essence of the core narrative, which – if it's been crafted properly – is always going to organize itself into three distinct parts.

So, rather than spend your precious time and energy arguing against the existence or the validity of the three-act structure, my advice is to accept it as a thing and utilize it to tell the best, most interesting, involving, exciting, and moving story you possibly can. Because that's what's really important and that's what's going to get you a great script and (hopefully) a great movie.



Italics and the History of Formatting

by Dave Trottier



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.

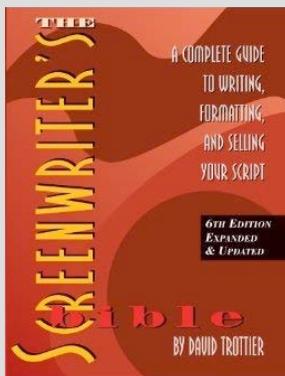
To learn more about Dave Trottier's books, classes and mentoring services, visit his site: www.keepwriting.com.

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READER'S QUESTION:

I've been told to never use italics. Why is that?

DAVE'S ANSWER:

That's been true in the past, but these days there are exceptions, which I will explain. But first, a little history.

Formatting history in four paragraphs

Screenplay format derives from the days of typewriters. That's why we use the Courier 12-point (10-characters-per-inch) font. It exactly matches the old pica typeface used by typewriters. One reason the Courier font has persevered is it preserves the one-page-per-minute standard for screenplays, just as the pica typewriter font did.

That doesn't mean that every script page will be equal to one minute of screen time, but it means that most 100-page scripts will generally result in 100-minute movies. That makes the Courier font very useful in estimating screen time. And it's why your script looks like it was typed on a typewriter.

In the days of typewriters, there was not an italic typeface. Thus, to indicate italics, you underscored (underlined) the word or phrase. Thus, the purpose of underscoring at that time was to indicate italics. That's why book titles were underscored. Many modern style guides (such as APA style) still allow you to underscore book titles, although nowadays the use of italics is usually preferred.

This explains why you emphasize words or phrases of dialogue by underscoring them in your screenplay.

Enter *italics*

Only recently have italics become acceptable in certain instances.

One of those uses is for dialogue that is not really dialogue. I refer to text messages, IMs, emails, etc. There are numerous ways to format these unspoken speeches. One of them is by simply using quotation marks, as follows:

Joe texts Suzy: "I luv U lots n lots."

Suzy's response pops up on his smart phone: "Can't you spell?"

Here's how to handle that using italics:

JOE (TEXT)

I luv U lots n lots.

That's not spoken dialogue, so it appears in italics with the word TEXT adjacent to the character name.

You may use the same method for someone using sign language. Just replace the word TEXT with SIGNS. Another option is to use subtitles for sign language.

How about the lyrics of songs? You may use the same style. I hasten to add that there are many other ways to indicate the lyrics of songs that are sung, but italics is now one more.

It is okay to italicize occasional foreign words. Here's an example:

JAMAAL

I'll call you or vice versa, and
we'll form an ad hoc committee.

It's not necessary to italicize, but you may if you wish. Use subtitles as you have in the past for foreign dialogue. For example:

LANA

(in Spanish; subtitled)

Brush your teeth or no treat tomorrow.

Finally, you may italicize words or phrases that you want to emphasize, which should be few. I still favor underscoring here because underscoring pops out more than *italics*. Besides, italics are a little hard on the eyes.

Two last points. First, don't underscore *and* italicize; that is redundant. And second, keep writing.

What Should I Write Next?

by Lee Jessup

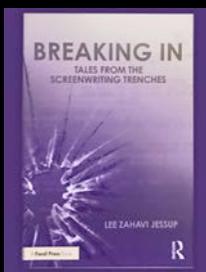


Author of the best-selling book [Getting It Write](#), as well as the newly released [Breaking In: Tales From the Screenwriting Trenches](#), Lee Jessup is a career coach for professional and emerging screenwriters. Her clients include writers who have sold pilots, pitches and specs; staffed television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

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All too often a writer I work with, be they an emerging scribe or working pro, poses this question to me early in the coaching relationship: I know I could work on this, that or the other project, but what **should** I be writing?

I am a big believer in putting your passion on the page. Writing the sort of movie or TV show that you want to watch – that would mean something to you – while adhering to industry formats and expectations. Beyond that? It's a long conversation, one that I wanted to get a few writers to weigh in on. So I turned to my friends and clients working in the professional space and asked them:

How do you choose your next original project? Is it a strategic or a creative decision? Or both?

Moises Zamora, head writer on Netflix's **Selena** bio-series, told me this:

"Right now it's strategic, because I've done well acquiring life-story rights about fascinating people that would be great projects for me to write, but they have also a commercial appeal."

Greta Heinemann, who just finished a stint on **NCIS New Orleans**, said:

"I try not to let strategy get in the way of my creative passion. I've seen it go wrong too many times and learned that chasing trends and writing to what others (reps, market, etc.) think you should usually doesn't pay off."

Savion Einstein, who has a project in development at ScreenGems, shared:

"Unless you're writing for your drawers and family, you can't write in a vacuum. You have to pay attention to what's going on around you. This doesn't mean writing for current trends, because those pass. It means recognizing projects that have been successful in the genre and aiming to write a script that has the same qualities or appeal."

Jimmy Mosqueda, fresh off a season on **Schooled**, had this to say:

"It always starts with a creative decision. What is exciting me right now? What idea can I not wait to write? I find that the right creative decision is usually the right strategic decision."

Eileen Jones, who has a couple of seasons of Fox's **Lethal Weapon** under her belt, and a feature script currently out to market, provided this:

"I'm a huge believer in passion showing on the page – it's the thing that will hit people and engage them. And it will get you to sit down and write more, especially if you're already writing other things for your day job."

Former PAGE Award winner Melissa London Hilfers, who has sold three specs and is currently on the prestigious **Jagged Edge** assignment, said:

"Because much of my work now is studio assignments, when I start something up on my own it's because I am propelled creatively. I have to be really passionate about something to pull myself away from projects that are farther along and therefore more likely to be made."

Thrice-published author and prolific TV writer Hollie Overton, who most recently worked on CBS All Access' **Tell Me a Story**, offered:

*"For writers trying to get noticed, I would say write something that comes from the heart. Bo Burnham writing **Eighth Grade** is a great example. I doubt most reps would be clamoring for a pitch about an awkward girl's middle school experience, but those big creative risks can pay off."*

Fresh off of his first feature writing assignment, Josh Renfree shared:

"My next original project is decided upon with my manager. I bring several ideas, usually in the form of 6–10 concise, laid out, 1–2 page pitches. We go through them one by one until we decide on the best choice to develop."

And finally, Nora Nolan, who started her career on NBC's **Trial & Error** and is currently on Netflix's **Paradise P.D.**, had this to offer:

"I come up with a few ideas and do a one-pager, then send to my reps, who advise based on what I already have (i.e., I have two single-cam network comedies, so it's time to write a multi-cam or a cable), and what seems like potentially relevant material. As far as how I come up with the ideas to begin with, I mine personal stories 100%."



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3. Copy/paste the corresponding code. You'll then be able to submit your work directly to InkTip's producers.
4. **IMPORTANT:** Please submit your work only if it fits these companies' needs. If you aren't sure your script meets their criteria, please check with jerrold@inktip.com before submitting.

Company A: Seeking Character-Driven Scripts

We are looking for material that is deeply rooted in the protagonist's progression, i.e., scripts in the vein of *At Eternity's Gate* and *The King's Speech*. We are especially interested in true stories and stories with an element of faith, but these are not requirements. We prefer PG-13, PG or G scripts.

Budget won't exceed \$2M. Will consider both WGA and non-WGA writers.

To find out about this company and submit a query:

- 1) Go to <https://www.inktip.com/leads/>
- 2) Copy/Paste this code: **g7xzu69n9b**

Company B: Seeking Hallmark-Style Romcom/Drama Scripts

We are looking for romantic comedies and heart-warming dramas. We need material that is family-friendly but doesn't focus on child characters. When submitting, please mention the last Hallmark movie you've seen.

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

To find out about this company and submit a query:

- 1) Go to <https://www.inktip.com/leads/>
- 2) Copy/Paste this code: **fs93ncmptc**

Company C: Seeking Single-Location Thrillers

We need material that takes place in one location (preferably European), i.e., scripts in the vein of *Swimming Pool*, *Devil* and *The Killing Room*.

Budget won't exceed \$1M. Anyone can submit.

To find out about this company and submit a query:

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