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Letter From the Editor

The 2023 PAGE Awards competition is now underway! Every year many PAGE winners move on to the pro level, and fresh faces take their place on the awards podium. Every year is a new opportunity, and this could be **your** year to shine! For the season's biggest discount, [submit your entry by Tuesday, January 10](#).

To glean the insights of previous PAGE Award winners, be sure to listen to our upcoming series of interviews on our podcast [The Writers' Hangout](#), starting Sunday, January 7.

Every show features a writer who cracked the code and broke into the business, each in his or her own unique way. Give it a listen wherever you find your podcasts!

Another great source of industry education is the **LOGLINE** eZine. In this New Year's edition, 2022 PAGE Grand Prize winner Alexandra Qin shares how she shot a short proof-of-concept for her winning feature without going into debt. PAGE Judge Anna Siri helps you approach 2023 in the most professional way possible. Script analyst Ray Morton shares nine signs that immediately suggest a script has big problems. "Dr. Format" Dave Trottier tackles the formatting of split-screen sequences. Career coach Lee Jessup gets you prepared for any request from reps, producers, or execs. And thanks to our good friends at InkTip, we wrap up the issue with three "hot leads" from producers in search of material that meets their specific needs.

Happy reading,

Latest News From the PAGE Awards

- ◆ The inspirational drama **5000 Blankets**, written by 2005 PAGE Grand Prize winner Larry Postel, premiered in theaters on December 12 and will stream on Pure Flix beginning January 5. Based on a powerful true story, the movie was produced by Affirm Originals and directed by Amin Matalqa. In addition, Larry's heartwarming family film **Flip Turn** premiered on Amazon Prime on November 1. **Flip Turn** was produced by Media World Studios and directed by Alin Bijan.
- ◆ 2015 Gold Prize winner Niall Queenan is now working on the new Netflix series **Vikings: Valhalla**. Niall wrote two episodes of Season 2, which will drop on January 12. Niall is represented by Story Driven Management.
- ◆ 2011 Silver Prize winner Joe Webb is now writing and producing the CBS series **FBI**. Previously, he worked as a writer and producer on **God Friended Me** (CBS), **Quantico** (ABC), and **Sleepy Hollow** (FOX). Joe is represented by Untitled and WME.
- ◆ The mystery/drama **The Lingerin'**, by 2014 PAGE Gold Prize winner Tracy Bradley, is now in pre-production with director Alex Bram. Based on true events and set in the Scottish highlands, the movie is being produced by Gary Randall and Edward Singletary.
- ◆ Lots of great news coming in from our 2022 PAGE Award winners... 2022 Grand Prize winner Alexandra Qin has been signed by Luber Roklin. Gold Prize winner Jessica Rowlands has been signed by Industry Entertainment. Gold Prize winner Leah Degrazia has been signed by Heroes and Villains. Silver Prize winner Steve Brehm has been hired to adapt the book **The Boy From Baby House 10** for Footprint Films. It was announced on December 13 that Catherine Schetina's Bronze Prize-winning thriller **Pure** topped the 2022 Black List, and her script has now been optioned by Burn Later. Keith Hemstreet's Gold Prize-winning drama **American Revolution** has been optioned by Peck Entertainment. And Sean Slater's Silver Prize-winning Historical Film script **The Devil and Dick Gregory** has been optioned by Alternate Sides.

2023 Early Entry Discount Deadline: January 10

Yes, You Can Direct It Yourself

by Alexandra Qin

Thirstygirl is my first script. It is an extremely personal story inspired by my experience with sex addiction, and my relationship with my younger sister. So it meant the world to win the PAGE Awards Grand Prize for it.

Before winning PAGE, I had a number of general meetings with producers and development executives. They were all pretty excited about my writing, but not excited enough about *Thirstygirl* to move forward. I was told I should attach a director, as that would make the project more attractive to financiers. So I reached out to some, but none of them were interested.

At that point, a mentor of mine asked me why I didn't want to direct the film myself. The truth is I really wanted to. The reason I started screenwriting was so I would be able to direct **someday**. But I didn't feel ready. I had barely even been on a film set. I loved my script, and I wanted a "good" director to direct it!

And that may have made sense for another story, but this is **my story**. Knowing that, and knowing I'd only ever have one first script, I slowly awoke to the possibility that I might in fact be the best director for *Thirstygirl*. So, terrified of failure and unsure how to even go about making it all happen, I decided to direct a short proof-of-concept for the feature film.

WRITING THE SCRIPT FOR A SHORT

I had never written a short before and I had barely seen any short films. So I started to consume them en masse. The basic rules of screenwriting still apply, but since the story has to be told in just a few pages, so many things I had learned about how to write a good feature script had to be tossed out the window.

After weeks of research, I decided I wanted to prioritize the following things: the theme of sex addiction, establishing the core relationship of the film, and setting it on the road, since the feature is a road movie. Within three weeks I'd written a couple of outlines and a couple of drafts of the script. I was off to the races.

FUNDRAISING

I've noticed that fundraising can be very intimidating for filmmakers. In the way that I had a lot of fear around directing my first film, many filmmakers I speak to don't believe they can successfully raise what they need to fund their films.

Before changing careers to pursue filmmaking two years ago, I had been a software engineer, a teacher, an activist, and my last full-time job was as founder and CEO of a nonprofit that teaches formerly incarcerated people to code, aiming to help them start high-paying careers in tech. I had already raised millions for causes I believed in, so I had absolutely no doubt that I'd be able to raise the money I needed to shoot this short film.

Here is a truth I learned early on in my activism career: people want to help you. You just have to show them how they can.

I decided to crowdfund the film with Kickstarter. I put a lot of work into the campaign and it was very successful – likely because I was shameless about reaching out to every single person I'd ever corresponded with about my film. Lots of people were excited to support me and the project, including complete strangers. There's something quite compelling about helping someone make their first film, especially if it's a personal story.

I would love for any aspiring filmmaker who reads this to know that you can absolutely raise the money you need from other people. You do not have to go into debt or deplete your savings to make a film.

ASSEMBLING THE TEAM

Finding the right people to make the short with me was by far the most important part of the pre-production process. Since I am new to filmmaking and don't have many contacts in the industry, it was quite intimidating to start the search. Again, I was shameless about asking friends to recommend folks they had worked with before. I reached out to the producers of short films I liked. I posted to social media. And thankfully I was able to find some incredible people without whom the film wouldn't have happened. Once I found my producer and DP, everything else fell into place.

SHOOTING THE FILM

Four months after finishing the first draft, we were on set. Those months were jam-packed with fundraising, casting, location scouting, storyboarding, rewriting, hiring crew, prepping with different department heads, rehearsals, and lots of imposter syndrome.

We shot the movie in upstate New York with a small crew over the course of four days. Some scenes felt like magic was happening right in front of me. Other scenes felt like a test of our collective endurance and patience. The hardest thing about it is the constant battle against time, just hoping it will all work out in the end. It often felt like the film was less in our hands and more in the hands of the universe. Perhaps with experience, the filmmaking process will become more predictable.

WHERE I AM NOW

We wrapped the shoot a little under two months ago, and I've been working with our editor pretty much non-stop ever since. I think this is the hardest thing I've ever pursued. Not necessarily in terms of work hours or high stakes, but because I'm putting my whole self on the line. The film **is** me. All of me. And the fear of failure and rejection that comes with that is debilitating at times. But it has also been some of the most rewarding and joyful work of my life.

I encourage all those who dream of directing their own film to go for it. I have learned so much from this process, and though this short will likely not be the masterpiece of my career, it has brought me one step closer to fulfilling my lifelong dream of making a truly beautiful feature film that moves people in the way my favorite films have moved me.



Alexandra Qin is an independent filmmaker based in New York City with a background in technology, social justice, and visual/performance art. Her first screenplay, *ThirstyGirl*, won the 2022 PAGE Grand Prize. A raw, intimate story about addiction, sisterhood, and Asian-American identity, it was heavily inspired by Alexandra's own journey of addiction and recovery.

Four Screenwriting Tips for the New Year

by Anna Siri

When you decide to devote yourself to a career in screenwriting, the one thing you're never lacking for is advice. Teachers, writers, friends, random strangers on the internet – everyone has an opinion on what to write, how to write, and when to write (the answer to that one is every day, my friends, whether you're feeling inspired or not).

However, for all the good advice I've gotten from all the different people in my life, there are still some things they never taught me about this wonderful and brutal business of screenwriting – challenges that you can only learn from by experiencing them. So, in the interest of starting the new year off right, here are a few important "tough love" tips to keep in mind as you plan your year.

First and foremost, remember:

FAILURE IS YOUR FRIEND

Any good trainer will tell you when starting a fitness regime that you need to learn to be comfortable being uncomfortable, and the same applies to your screenwriting career. You're not just going to fail early on. You're going to fail again and again and again – and that's great!

One of my favorite anecdotes about Hollywood is that when Lawrence Kasdan was shopping *The Big Chill*, he was told "no" over and over again, and this was after he'd written both *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *The Empire Strikes Back*, because Hollywood couldn't see buying a tiny, talky drama, regardless of who wrote it.

So, it doesn't matter how high you climb, you're still going to fail sometimes. Why is that good? Because you learn more from failure than you do from success. You learn to roll with the punches, and to be creative and flexible in finding a new way to take that next step. You also realize that one "no" doesn't mean anything is finished – it just means that it's time to find a new path.

Failure can teach you to examine your work more critically. Does it need another draft? Probably. Failure can also teach you to be confident, and it can inspire you to learn how to pitch your work in new and imaginative ways.

When you're comfortable with failure (if not thrilled about it), you can avoid some of the pitfalls that so many writers fall prey to. Self-sabotage is one pitfall, where you dread failure so much that you won't take risks. Procrastination is another. You'll never have to face failure if you never finish anything. Desperation is a third, where the end goal of selling something becomes more important than the journey of writing, and your material suffers as a result. If you can shrug off the fear of failure, you can put all that newfound energy into creation, where it should be.

My second tip for this writing year:

DON'T BE AFRAID TO START OVER

Not on the page and not in the industry. If you're planning to be a screenwriter, you need to get used to constantly hustling for gigs that are only going to last a few months. You need to get used to staring at that blank page over and over and over again.

Your ability to dust yourself off, learn from whatever knocks you down, and get back up to try again is what will separate you from the writers who get hurt and angry and just take their toys and go home. Even more than talent, your persistence is going to get you where you want to go in this business. Just showing up consistently and doing the work is going to put you head and shoulders above the crowd.

My third tip:

PRACTICE BEING FLEXIBLE

Gone are the days when you chose a lane – film or TV – and stuck with it. Now it's crucial to think about how to turn your idea into a book, a web series, a play, a graphic novel, and so on. Write it as a pilot. Consider it as a novel. Make it a feature. The industry turns on a dime these days, and as we reach "peak TV" writers who once shifted to writing pilots are now going back to writing TV movies and features.

With the ups and downs of the economy, Hollywood is also in flux, and no one knows what's going to sell and what's not. So the smartest thing you can do for yourself is to stretch those writing muscles and venture out in new and different directions.

The last tip I have for this year is my favorite, and it's this:

LIVE YOUR LIFE

The best way to strengthen your craft is to keep writing, of course, but a close second is to live a well-rounded life. Get out in the world, travel, learn new languages and skills, meet people, stay curious, read. Say "yes" to new things more than you say "no." All of those experiences are going to build up in your system and feed your writing. A well-lived life adds depth and heart to your characters, your ideas, and your storytelling.

Your ability to stay flexible, roll with the punches, avoid burnout and test new waters is directly connected to how well you feed your soul and the richness you allow yourself to have in your day-to-day life. So, don't be afraid to step back when the writing process gets overwhelming, or when that fear of failure starts to creep up on you again. Take a break. Take a music lesson. Bake something.

Then sit down and get back to work.

You've got this.



Anna Siri is an award-winning screenwriter and independent producer. She works regularly as a consultant, ghostwriter, and script doctor, and spends the majority of her time actively writing or searching for material to develop. Anna is an avid traveler, an armchair politician, a history buff, and an unapologetic bookworm. She attended Northwestern University and UCLA, and she has served as a Judge for the PAGE Awards competition since 2014.



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

Ray's 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.

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

Warning Signs

by Ray Morton

I've been reading scripts for a long time, and at this point I can usually tell after a few pages whether a script is going to be any good or not. After reading over 1,000 screenplays you start to recognize certain signs that there's going to be trouble ahead. Most of the other readers I know agree. So, as a public service to all of you out there seeking to improve your work and make sure it's well received, here are some of the warning signs of a possibly bad script:

1. The script sets up one story in the first act, but then switches to a totally new one in the second.

This is usually a sign that the writer hasn't figured out how to properly develop his premise into a fully realized, three-act story. Panicking, he switches gears and goes off on a new tangent using the same characters. The problem is that by setting readers up for one story but then delivering another, he leaves them feeling disappointed no matter how interesting the new tangent proves to be.

2. I'm on page 25 and I have no idea where the script is going.

This often means that the writer hasn't figured out what story she wants to tell or how to tell it if she has. And if she can't figure that out, there's no way we will.

3. I'm on page 25 and I know exactly where the script is going.

This is usually a sign that the writer has chosen to tell an extremely clichéd story in the most clichéd way possible. While the resulting script can often be competent, it usually isn't very interesting.

4. The first page has big blocks of type.

This generally indicates that the writer has bogged the script down with way too much detail (usually devoted to describing minute aspects of setting, costume, or cinematography – none of which is the screenwriter's job), which ensures that the forest of the story will be lost in the trees of description.

5. The first scene goes on for 20 pages (or what feels like 20 pages).

This is a sign that the writer has no idea how to pace his story, which means that the rest of the scenes are going to drag on at a uniformly leaden rate.

6. The first 10 pages are nothing but dialogue.

This shows that either the writer thinks she is writing a play (which **should** be mostly dialogue) or hasn't figured out how to visualize her material yet. In either case, the resulting script is certain to be stodgy, static, and uncinematic.

7. The spelling, grammar, and/or format are horrible.

Screenwriting isn't the sixth grade, so if your story is good, you're not going to earn a "pass" simply because you've improperly conjugated a verb. The same goes for incorrect scene headings. However, it has been my experience that when such a minor element of the work is bungled (at least enough to be noticed) it usually means that larger ones have been bungled as well.

8. The script is written with too much "attitude."

The writing in most screenplays is pretty basic, and for good reason – a script is a blueprint, not a finished piece of literature. A few screenwriters – most famously William Goldman and Shane Black – have employed a looser, hipper style full of quips, asides, in-jokes, and winks at the reader. This style can be entertaining, and both writers are very adept at it. Unfortunately, their success has inspired the less adept to employ this style as well. The results are scripts teeming with "attitude," as writers try so hard to impress us with their cleverness that they forget to apply that cleverness to the story.

9. The script makes me sick.

I realize that there's a place for gross-out humor and graphic sex or violence. The problem comes when there's too much of it. Too many shocks – especially when the material is of an exceptionally explicit nature – can cause readers to either want to avert their eyes, or become numb rather than impacted. Either reaction severely diminishes the material's shock value and, thus, the script's effectiveness.

Does this mean that if a screenplay contains one or more of these elements, it's guaranteed to fail? No, of course not – there are always exceptions. But once given a "pass," rejected scripts are rarely given a second read, so you want to do all you can to ensure that you make a great first impression. It's my hope that this list will help you do so.





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.

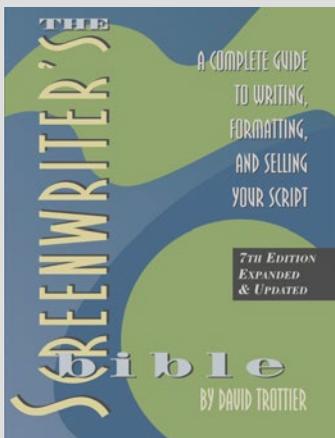
As a script consultant, he has helped dozens of clients sell their work and win awards. [The Screenwriter's Bible](#), Dave's primer for both aspiring and professional scribes, is perhaps the most comprehensive industry guide on the market.

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

For \$20 off your script evaluation, email Dave at: dave@keepwriting.com.

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Splitting the Screen

by Dave Trottier

READER'S QUESTION:

The film *500 Days of Summer* had a charming split-screen sequence in which the protagonist goes to a party and we view his "Expectation" vs. "Reality." Of course, the split-screen convention has been a long-standing tradition in cinema, going all the way back to silent films. In recent times, Tarantino used it in *Jackie Brown* and *Kill Bill*, and Oliver Stone used it in *Wall Street*. My favorite, though, has to be the hilarious split-screen phone conversation in *Down with Love*. How do I go about writing a split screen in a spec?

DAVE'S ANSWER:

Because the split screen device is a *special heading* (like the MONTAGE, FLASHBACK, or INTERCUT), there is more than one way to format it, and each way is simple and makes sense. Since you mentioned *Kill Bill*, let's use that as an example. I'll present four methods, all of which are correct.

Method #1

Do you recall how to write an INTERCUT, which is another special heading? Here's an example:

INTERCUT - HOSPITAL ROOM/HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

In the hospital room, the bride lies in unblinking comatose sleep.

Elle, in a nurse's uniform, strides down the hospital corridor carrying a syringe on a tray.

Now, what if you want the INTERCUT to be a SPLIT SCREEN so that we see both things happening at the same time? Simply replace the word INTERCUT with SPLIT SCREEN.

SPLIT SCREEN - HOSPITAL ROOM/HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Notice how the location is identified in each paragraph. You don't want to lose the reader.

Method #2

What if you want to be clearer about location to enhance the read? In that case, use secondary scene headings. In doing so, you can use the same SPLIT SCREEN scene heading as in Method #1, or you can use SPLIT SCREEN as the sole item in the scene heading, since it is also a technical direction. Thus, we have the following:

SPLIT SCREEN

HOSPITAL ROOM

The bride lies in unblinking comatose sleep.

HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Elle, in a nurse's uniform, strides along carrying a syringe on a tray.

Method #3

What if you want to be clearer about what's on the left and what's on the right? Simply indicate parenthetically which location is left and which is right. For example, begin as follows:

SPLIT SCREEN

HOSPITAL ROOM (ON LEFT)

Method #4

What if you are writing a shooting script, or simply do not want to use secondary scene headings in your spec? Then replace the secondary scene headings with master scene headings. For example:

SPLIT SCREEN

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

In the actual shooting script, Tarantino created two columns for the split screen, left and right.

Which method should you use? Use the method that is most consistent with what you want the split screen scene to accomplish. And keep writing!

How to Stock Your Screenwriter's Arsenal

by Lee Jessup

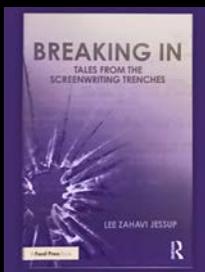


Author of the best-selling books [Getting It Write](#) and [Breaking In: Tales From the Screenwriting Trenches](#), Lee Jessup is a career coach for professional and emerging screenwriters. Her clients include writers who have sold pilots, pitches and specs; staffed television writers; participants in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



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Luck favors the prepared. It may seem cliché, but clichés always start out as something honest and true. For any writer looking to work in the entertainment industry, there are certain things you always want to have ready to share, so you're prepared for any opportunity that arises.

Two to three scripts in the same or similar genre.

This is, hands down, the most important thing to have in your arsenal. Whether feature scripts, pilots or a mix of both, your body of work should speak to your brand and make the case for the writer you are aiming to be. The projects should have unifying ideas running through them, and should be of the same or similar quality, making the case that you have what it takes to write high-quality scripts and do it on an ongoing basis.

Along with your body of work, make sure you also have the following:

A logline for each project.

For each of your completed projects, you want an effective logline. If an industry exec or rep reads your feature or pilot and wants to read more, he or she will likely ask, "What else do you have?" So, having at your fingertips loglines that have been developed, vetted, and tested often proves crucial if you're to make the most of those opportunities.

A short synopsis for each project.

Synopses are not nearly as critical as loglines, but they may be requested occasionally, be it from a screenwriting lab you apply to or from an executive whose interest has been piqued by your logline, but who's not quite sure she's ready to commit to reading the complete script just yet.

A two-minute pitch for each project.

Albert Einstein once said, "If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough." As your script's author you have to know how to speak about it in a manner that's effective and enticing, communicating what's at the heart of your project. Whether you're at a writer's event, in a paid pitching situation, or meeting an industry executive at a dinner party, the opening to deliver an elevator pitch for your latest project is an opportunity for which you want to be well prepared.

A show bible for every pilot.

If you are a TV writer, be sure to complete a show bible for every original pilot that you write. This should speak to the long-term, sustainable vision of the show, making a case for its "legs" and potential for multi-season longevity, which is very much what buyers are looking for. If you've done big-picture planning for your show prior to starting your pilot, you likely have some, if not all, of the information with which you could create your show bible. It's important to get it on the page in a cohesive, carefully developed manner so it comes off as well thought out and professional.

I always recommend that writers compile these items once you've arrived at an industry-ready draft of your pilot or screenplay. Also prepare these:

"Personal nuggets."

The incomparable [Carole Kirshner](#) put it best: "Divide your life into five-year increments. For each, write down two or more colorful situations or events that happened to you or your family. Also write down at least one success or accomplishment. Then, starting at about ages 10 to 15, choose one success and one colorful situation from each time period. String them together in chronological order, and cut any that don't show you in a positive light."

A personal logline.

Your personal logline is your very own origin story, told in three or four sentences, that speak to the life experiences that have defined you and made you into the person and writer you are today. Are there special skills or lived experiences you bring into the writing? Start making lists, look at your "nuggets," and craft a memorable logline that is uniquely yours.

None of these items that comprise your unique writer's arsenal can be developed overnight. They take time, thought, practice, and evaluation. Cultivate them carefully, running your pitches, loglines (project-based or personal), and show bibles by friends and writer's group cohorts. Because when a short window of opportunity suddenly opens, having your arsenal ready to go will prove incredibly advantageous.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES



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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 jerrol@inktip.com before submitting.

Company A: Seeking Rom-Coms With Late 40s to Early 50s Lead Couple

We are looking for romantic-comedy scripts starring a couple in their late 40s or early-to-mid-50s.

Budget under \$250K. Non-WGA writers only, please.

To find out about this company and submit a query:

- 1) Go to <https://www.inktip.com/leads/>
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Company B: Seeking Sports Scripts

We are looking for scripts about sports. Please add a note in the personal message space if your script has received coverage, and what its history is to date. We are based in Canada, so let us know if you're Canadian. (This is not necessary in order to submit material.)

Budget TBD. WGA and non-WGA writers are welcome.

To find out about this company and submit a query:

- 1) Go to <https://www.inktip.com/leads/>
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Company C: Seeking Scripts with a Young LGBTQ+ Person in a Lead Role

We are looking for scripts in any genre that feature a young LGBTQ+ lead role between the ages of 13-21. The LGBTQ+ character must be the lead, not a side character, and at this time we are not looking for scripts that can be adapted to include an LGBTQ+ lead.

Budget under \$250K. Non-WGA writers only, please.

To find out about this company and submit a query:

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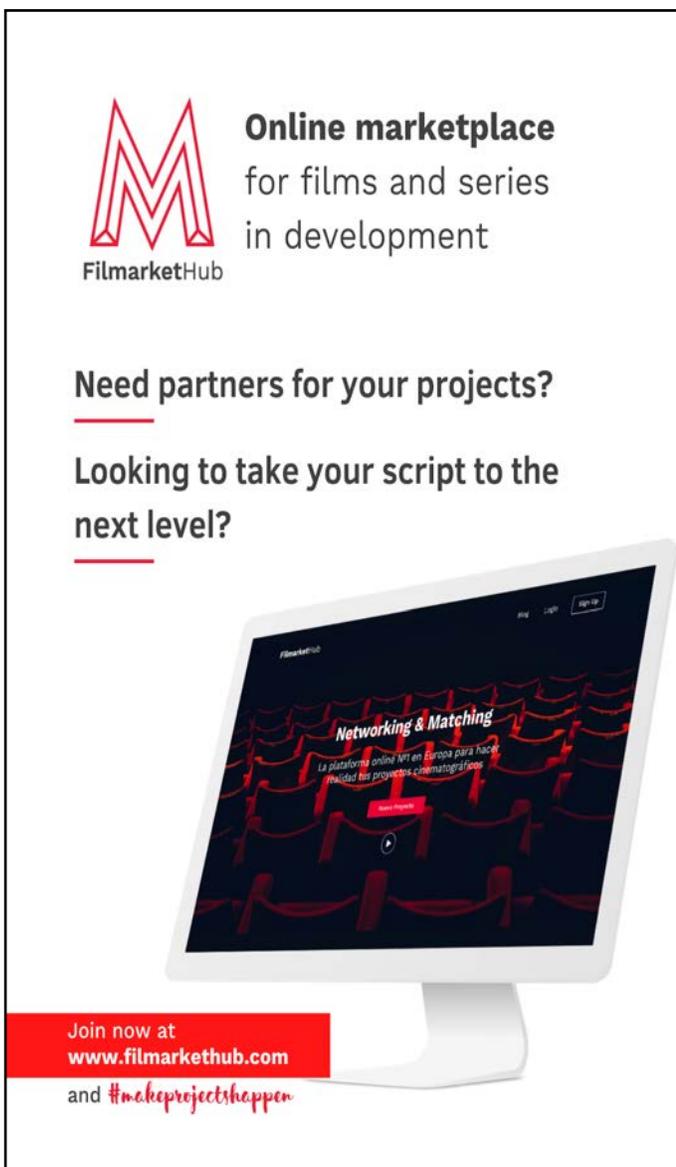
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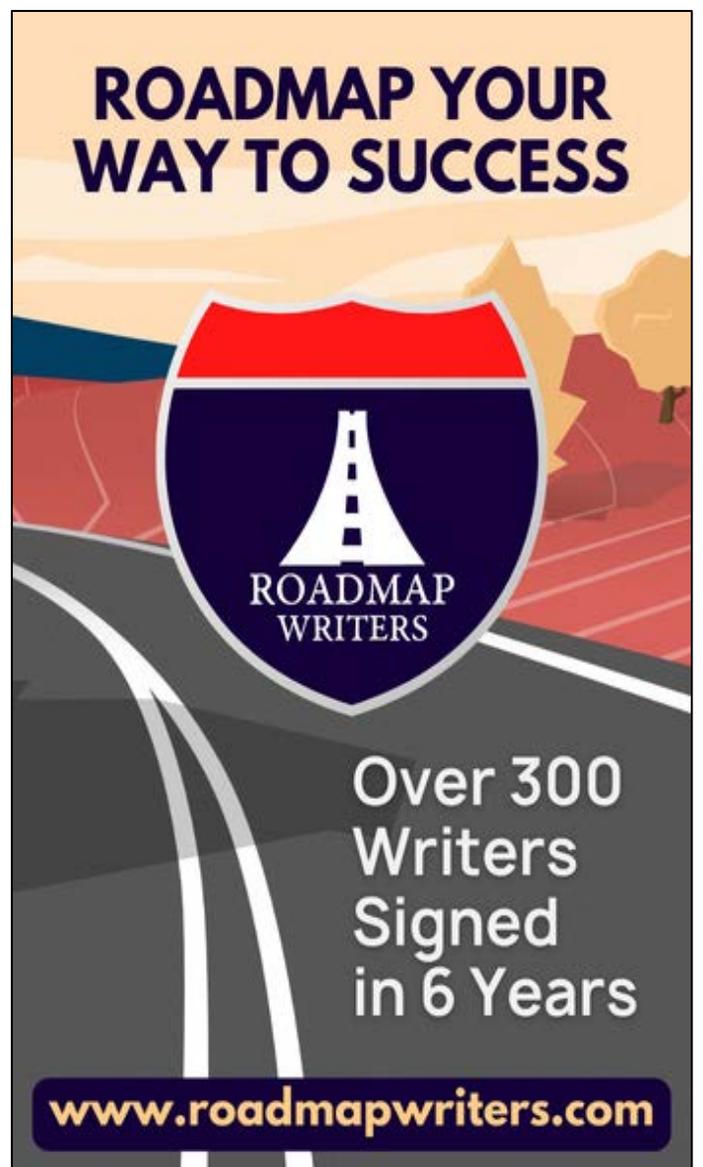
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