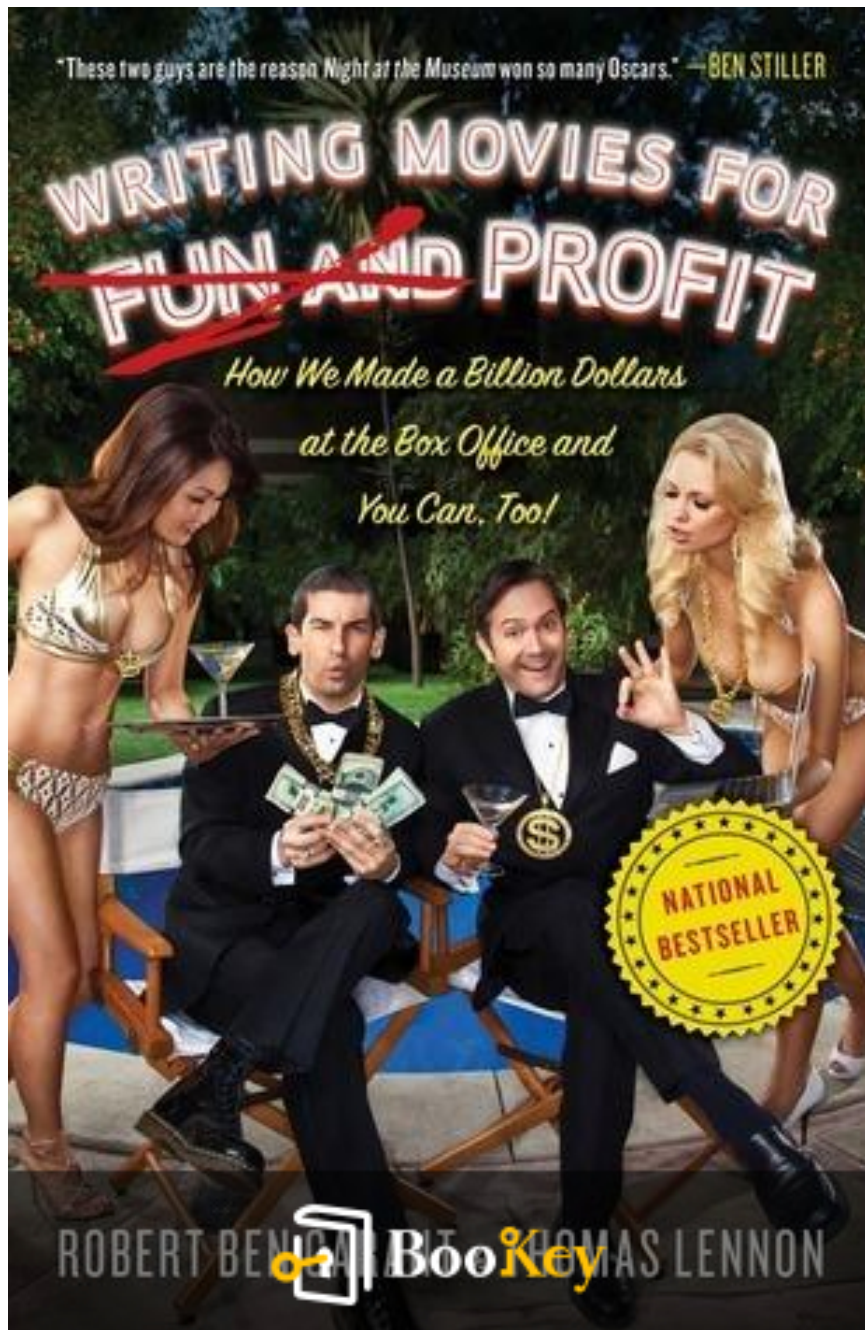


Writing Movies For Fun And Profit PDF (Limited Copy)

Robert Ben Garant



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Writing Movies For Fun And Profit Summary

Master the art of screenwriting for financial success.

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About the book

In "Writing Movies for Fun and Profit," Robert Ben Garant, a seasoned screenwriter with a wealth of Hollywood experience, invites aspiring writers into the thrilling yet often overwhelming world of screenwriting, offering invaluable insights that are as entertaining as they are educational. With a balanced blend of humor and practicality, Garant demystifies the screenwriting process, breaking down complex concepts into accessible advice that empowers readers to harness their creativity while navigating the commercial aspects of the film industry. Whether you dream of penning a blockbuster or simply want to learn the craft of storytelling, this book serves as both a playful guide and a pragmatic resource, encouraging you to turn your ideas into scripts that not only resonate with audiences but also generate profit.

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About the author

Robert Ben Garant is a multifaceted American screenwriter, director, and actor, best known for his work in the world of comedy. Born on September 14, 1970, in Brainerd, Minnesota, Garant gained prominence as a writer and producer for the hit television series "Reno 911!" He has contributed to the screenplay of popular films such as "Night at the Museum" and its sequels, showcasing his ability to blend humor with engaging storytelling. Along with his creative partner Thomas Lennon, Garant has established a reputation for crafting entertaining and commercially successful scripts, making him a notable figure in Hollywood's screenwriting community. His book, "Writing Movies for Fun and Profit," offers invaluable insights into the screenwriting process, drawing upon his extensive experience in the industry.

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Chapter 1 Summary: 1. Getting Started in Hollywood

Chapter Summary: Getting Started in Hollywood

The chapter begins with a bold assertion: aspiring screenwriters must physically relocate to Hollywood, California, to succeed in the film industry. While writing can be done anywhere, the intricacies of Hollywood's culture and business model necessitate proximity to the studios and the decision-makers within them. The chapter emphasizes the need for writers to be available for face-to-face interactions, quickly responding to changes throughout the long and unpredictable film production process, which can span several years.

One of the critical points made is that studio executives are primarily concerned with job security. Their immediate aim is to avoid getting fired, which means they need reliable support to produce successful films. As a writer, your role is to be their lifeline—someone who can help turn their ideas into viable scripts and save them from potential failures.

To establish yourself in this competitive landscape, the chapter outlines three essential tools for success:

1. **The Right Tools** Writers must invest in industry-standard software

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such as Final Draft, which simplifies script formatting. Proper formatting is crucial, as poorly formatted scripts are often dismissed.

2. An Agent or Manager: It is essential to secure representation, as most studios will not consider unsolicited scripts. An effective strategy for gaining representation includes producing short films or scripts and showcasing them on platforms like YouTube. An agent specializes in getting your work in front of executives, negotiating deals, and leveraging relationships built over years. A manager takes a broader view, guiding your entire career trajectory, unlike agents who focus on specific projects. Both agents and managers are invaluable for opening doors and securing future work.

3. Discipline: A writer's work ethic distinguishes them from amateurs.

Continuous writing is crucial; those aspiring to make it must develop the habit of writing every day. Writers should be prepared to part with many ideas, embracing the rewriting process as part of their creative journey. Adaptability is vital, as scripts may be altered due to shifts in casting or studio direction.

In summary, this chapter serves as a comprehensive guide to kickstarting a career in screenwriting. It emphasizes physical presence in Hollywood, the importance of professional representation, and the discipline required to thrive in a demanding and ever-evolving industry. By understanding these

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dynamics, aspiring screenwriters can increase their chances of success in the competitive world of film.

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Chapter 2 Summary: 2. Why Isn't Anyone Buying My Brilliant Script?

In this chapter, the author critiques the screenwriting industry, particularly targeting the so-called "screenwriting gurus" who have never successfully sold a screenplay. The chapter opens with a sharp distinction between genuine expertise and hollow advice, illustrating that aspiring screenwriters must be cautious of those who tout themselves as authorities without real-world experience.

The author provocatively questions the idea that every great story needs to be told, urging readers to consider the current films playing in theaters. He challenges the notion that successful movies must have profound narratives, using various examples—both critically acclaimed and otherwise—to highlight that the primary criterion in Hollywood is entertainment value. He stresses that even serious films, like "Norma Rae" and "Silkwood," are crafted to keep audiences engaged, contradicting the belief that weighty themes need to overshadow entertainment.

Central to the author's argument is the assertion that filmmakers should not strive to reinvent the wheel; instead, they must create works that align with successful genres and familiar themes. He advises against crafting overly complex narratives that may alienate mainstream audiences, suggesting that most viewers prefer films that provide straightforward entertainment rather

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than challenge their thinking.

Moreover, the chapter addresses the common pitfall for aspiring writers: the fixation on a single script that has not garnered interest. The author warns against the tendency to endlessly rewrite a screenplay based on feedback from studios that have opted not to buy it, insisting that writers must be willing to move on and create new material instead. He advocates for the importance of learning from each experience rather than becoming attached to a singular vision that remains unfulfilled.

In summary, this chapter serves as both a cautionary tale and a guide for would-be screenwriters, emphasizing the essentials of entertainment over artistic complexity and the necessity of resilience in the face of rejection. Ultimately, it encourages aspiring writers to embrace the craft with a more pragmatic approach, acknowledging that creativity thrives best through diverse exploration rather than fixation on a single idea.

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Chapter 3 Summary: 3. How to Pitch Your Movie

Chapter 3: How to Pitch Your Movie

Mastering the art of the movie pitch can be the difference between success and obscurity in Hollywood—a world where creativity meets commerce, and the key to wealth is often just an engaging presentation away. To help you navigate this landscape, here's a straightforward guide packed with essential steps and insider wisdom.

The Essentials of a Successful Pitch

Your pitch must revolve around two fundamental components:

- 1. A Fresh Concept Easily Compared to Successful Films:** While originality is crucial, anchoring your idea to proven successes is comforting for potential buyers. For instance, you could pitch your film as “Die Hard meets Home Alone set at a Chuck E. Cheese, featuring an eight-year-old hero battling an animatronic raccoon.” This relatability can spark interest and highlight the potential for profitability.
- 2. A Compelling Flawed Protagonist:** Your main character should be someone that notable stars would want to portray. Think about characters

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with depth who resonate with audiences—like Greg, a good-looking but shy dad who struggles to connect with his son. Hollywood loves a relatable character with a flaw—like the charming liar in Jim Carrey's *Liar Liar*—because such roles attract talent and resources.

The Art of Pitching

Now, let's delve into the techniques to ensure your pitch stands out:

- 1. Dress Professionally:** First impressions matter. Present yourself in a way that conveys seriousness and professionalism—a far cry from casual beachwear.
- 2. Summarize Your Movie in a Single Sentence** Keep it concise and engaging. This distillation helps clarify your concept and grabs attention without overwhelming.
- 3. Be Brief:** Limit your pitch to 12-15 minutes. Prospective buyers have limited attention spans, so make every second count.
- 4. Perform Your Pitch** Embrace your inner actor and bring your characters to life during the pitch. Storytelling is most captivating when it feels alive, so don't hesitate to act out key moments. Consider taking an improv class for practice.

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5. **Practice Aloud:** Rehearse your pitch repeatedly until you can deliver it effortlessly. This will help you identify awkward areas and refine your delivery.

6. **Stay Gracious:** Prepare for rejection. Often, a pitch won't sell for reasons beyond your control, such as market saturation. Regardless of the outcome, remain charming and adaptable—this sets the stage for future opportunities.

Keep an Open Mind

Even if your pitch doesn't find immediate success, remember that it can lead to other projects. Producers might see your talent and consider you for alternative scripts or ideas they develop.

A Cautionary Note on Pitching

Lastly, it's essential to maintain professionalism, particularly regarding your state of mind. Avoid the temptation to pitch while under the influence, as this can lead to a chaotic presentation, as experienced by the authors during a particularly rough session with a hangover. Being sober not only elevates your performance but also ensures you're treating the opportunity with the utmost seriousness.

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In summary, crafting an engaging pitch involves blending a unique concept with a relatable protagonist while perfecting your delivery. Understand that Hollywood is an ecosystem, and every pitch is a stepping stone in your writing journey—be prepared to adapt and shine in future endeavors.

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Chapter 4: 4. Joining the Writers Guild of America, West

Chapter 4: Joining the Writers Guild of America, West

In this chapter, the authors humorously outline the necessity of joining the Writers Guild of America, West (WGAW) for aspiring screenwriters, while dismissing the Writers Guild of America, East as a less desirable option, likening it to a distant relative with awkward family history. Located primarily in Los Angeles, the WGAW is vital for writers seeking protection from studios that often overlook their rights. The Guild negotiates contracts that ensure minimum payments, health and pension benefits, and residuals – essential perks that serve as a safety net in the unpredictable world of writing.

To become a member, a prospective writer must create original, audiovisual content and have it purchased or optioned under a WGA contract, which signifies compliance with labor standards. While there is an element of humor in recalling their own uncertain path into the Guild, they emphasize that the process, while seemingly daunting, can be navigated by fulfilling specific requirements—such as earning “points” through the sale of a screenplay.

The chapter ultimately underscores the importance of knowing one’s rights,

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pushing for a WGA contract, and enjoying the rich benefits of Guild membership, not only for its professional advantages but also for its vibrant social life filled with parties and networking opportunities.

Free Movie Idea: “Whacked”

Following the commentary on the Guild, the authors present a film concept titled "Whacked," a comedic narrative starring Jonah Hill as Lukas, an awkward community college student with dreams bigger than his circumstances. As Lukas struggles with his self-image while working at a miniature golf course, he unexpectedly finds himself in possession of his wealthy roommate's acceptance letter to Oxford University after the latter drops out.

In a bold move spurred by his infatuation with a classmate, Lukas decides to impersonate his roommate and navigate life at Oxford, leading to a series of comedic challenges—from learning to tie a bow tie to enduring social snobbery. The plot thickens when an elitist student, Simon, invites him to a croquet tournament in an effort to humiliate him. This sets the stage for Lukas's transformational journey, reminiscent of classic underdog tales, with mentorship from Ol' Squiggs, a kind-hearted groundskeeper who identifies with Lukas's humble origins.

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The thrilling Act II is characterized by intense training sequences, eventually culminating in a triumphant performance at the croquet tournament, where Lukas triumphs not only in the game but also in winning the heart of his classmate. The film's comedic tone is complemented by a soundtrack featuring upbeat British ska hits, enhancing its charm and appeal.

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Chapter 5 Summary: 5. I SOLD IT! Now What Happens?

Chapter Summary: "I SOLD IT! NOW WHAT HAPPENS?"

Congratulations! You've just sold a movie and officially become a Professional Screenwriter. As exciting as this moment is, the pressure quickly mounts. The transition from aspiring writer to working professional is fraught with challenges and high expectations, requiring not just talent, but also tenacity and shrewdness.

Once you've signed the deal, congratulations typically follow from your representatives and studio executives, but before the celebratory calls, you must navigate the negotiation process. Here's how it works: the executive who loved your pitch must seek approval from their higher-ups. If they proceed with approval, they will request your quoting amount based on your previous works—a key element in determining how much you'll make. For new screenwriters without a quote, the Writers Guild sets minimum payments, which as of now are about \$109,783 for original screenplays, paid in three installments.

The amount you can expect to see can vary significantly. If multiple studios vie for your work, a bidding war may ensue, potentially leading to even higher earnings. If this happens, it's the best-case scenario—an all-time high

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for screenwriters, potentially yielding between \$1 million to \$3 million for proven scriptwriters. However, it's important to understand that, after various fees and taxes are taken out, the actual amount you take home is significantly lower.

Your representatives will also negotiate various elements of the contract, including back-end profits, producer and director rights, retaining separate rights for adaptations, bonuses for box office performance, and future sequels. While you hope for profits and accolades, keep in mind that the process can be lengthy, and many elements can be subject to negotiation.

After the initial negotiations, you'll meet with the studio one final time for a friendly handshake and some notes on your work. This meeting is critical; expressing gratitude and enthusiasm is essential, as any sign of arrogance can jeopardize your deal. Once the meeting concludes, it's time to start writing or rewriting according to studio feedback.

Contractually, you'll have specific deadlines to meet: ten weeks for the first draft, with the studio given six weeks to respond to it. While it's crucial to adhere to these timelines, getting your work done early reflects well on you. If you're lucky, your deal might include an optional polish—an opportunity to revisit the script post-first draft.

What's most rewarding about selling your first script is the fact that you're

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now “in the club.” Breaking into Hollywood as a new writer is tough, but having a studio credit greatly improves your chances for future projects. Expect more opportunities to rewrite and collaborate with studios moving forward.

Celebrate your achievement! Enjoy time with friends, treat yourself to a good meal, and revel in the fact that as a writer, there are now more pathways open to you. Your journey as a professional screenwriter is just beginning, but remember: this industry is unpredictable, and the road ahead may hold both challenges and opportunities.

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Chapter 6 Summary: 6. Idiot Check

Chapter Summary: The Final Steps of Screenwriting

In this chapter, the authors guide aspiring screenwriters through the essential final steps before submitting a script, emphasizing clarity, professionalism, and adherence to industry standards.

1. Correct Length of the Script:

The chapter begins by establishing the importance of script length. A comedy should typically be around 100 to 110 pages, while dramas can be slightly longer. The authors stress that major studios often measure script weight in relation to production costs, which typically come to about a million dollars per page. A concise script demonstrates knowledge of industry expectations, while a script that's excessively long may lead to its rejection. Writers are encouraged to trim unnecessary scenes, lengthy descriptions, and excessively long speeches, optimizing the screenplay through techniques like “WORD TETRIS.”

2. Proper Formatting:

Next, the chapter delves into the technical aspects of script formatting.

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Screenplays must adhere to industry standards, with specific placements for transitions, scene headings, character names, and dialogue. The authors reveal nuances in formatting that vary by studio, illustrating this with specific margin and font requirements outlined by iconic studios like Warner Bros. They reinforce the use of specialized software, such as Final Draft, which simplifies the formatting process and enhances readability.

3. Title Page Accuracy:

The importance of a correctly formatted title page is highlighted. This includes the film's title, writer names, and any relevant credits or revisions clearly listed. The authors advocate for consistency in updating the title page with each draft for clarity in tracking revisions.

4. Spell-Checking:

Attention to detail is crucial, and writers are reminded to perform multiple spell checks on their scripts, as even minor typos can tarnish professionalism and distract from the narrative.

5. Fact-Checking:

The necessity of fact-checking is emphasized, with the authors warning that inaccuracies—like historical dates or character details—can discredit the

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writer and cause readers to lose trust in the story.

6. Clearing Revision Marks & PDF Submission:

Before submission, writers should clear all revision marks and create a clean PDF. This step is vital as it prevents unauthorized alterations and maintains the integrity of the original work.

7. Saving and Backing Up Work:

The authors stress the importance of organizing drafts carefully and backing them up in multiple locations to ensure that no work is lost and that the most recent draft is readily accessible.

8. WGA Registration:

Writers are encouraged to register their scripts with the Writers Guild of America (WGA) for protection against script theft or misuse, emphasizing the importance of this step as both a legal safeguard and a mark of professionalism.

9. Confirming Payment:

Before submission, it's crucial to ensure that all payment arrangements are in

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order. Writers should verify that they have received their commencement check to avoid any complications with the studio.

10. Correct Submission Process:

Lastly, the authors provide guidance on submitting the script to the appropriate individuals. This includes keeping all team members (like agents and managers) in the loop via CC on emails, avoiding potential conflicts over missed recipients and ensuring proper protocol during the submission process.

In conclusion, this chapter serves as a comprehensive checklist for writers nearing the completion of their screenwriting journey, reinforcing the necessity of professional standards in craft and presentation to navigate the industry successfully.

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Chapter 7 Summary: 7. Coverage! or How a Kid Getting College Credit Can Make or Break Your Movie!

Chapter 7: Coverage! Or How a Kid Getting College Credit Can Make or Break Your Movie!

Congratulations! You've completed your screenplay and submitted it to the studio—an achievement worth celebrating. However, before you get too comfortable, it's important to understand the next crucial phase in this process: coverage.

While it might seem that studio executives will dive into reading every script submitted, the reality is quite different. Generally, the higher-ups don't read your initial draft, especially if it's your first attempt. Instead, the screenplay goes through the Story Department, where junior executives rely on “readers”—often young professionals tasked solely with summarizing scripts—to provide them with coverage. These summaries are akin to CliffsNotes for your screenplay, distilling your hard work into a concise form that gives the higher-ups an overview.

"But why don't they read my script?" you may wonder. The harsh truth is that executives are inundated with scripts. As such, they prioritize projects currently in production, leaving less room in their schedules to read every new submission. The readers, often anonymous and unrecognized by

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writers, carry the significant responsibility of evaluating and summarizing scripts. Their opinions and critiques can heavily influence the studio executives' perceptions and decisions regarding your screenplay.

Good coverage can truly elevate your script. If a reader heralds your work as impressive, it increases the likelihood that studio executives will see it in a similarly positive light. Conversely, a report highlighting significant flaws—such as an unmarketable concept or a problematic third act—can devastate your script's prospects.

With this in mind, the onus is on you to ensure your screenplay is polished and engaging. A readability that flows easily is essential; after all, no one wants to grapple with a cumbersome, lengthy 130-page script. Before submitting, reflect on how you would perceive your screenplay if you hadn't written it.

To strengthen your script further, consider these key questions:

1. **What's the rating?** Films rated G or PG typically attract larger audiences than R-rated films, which can limit your viewership.
2. **What's the target audience?** Aim for a demographic that encompasses a broad range of moviegoers, avoiding niche markets with limited appeal.
3. **How expensive is the movie?** A larger audience can justify larger budgets, but be cautious about being overly ambitious with production

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costs.

4. **How can the movie be cast?** Ensure that your script includes roles that are compelling enough to attract well-known actors, as star power can significantly impact a film's marketability.

5. **Can the movie be marketed?** A script with clear promotional angles is invaluable; studios thrive on easily marketable projects.

6. **Is it any good?** This ambiguous question often depends on others' feedback, especially from the readers crafting the coverage.

Ultimately, aligning your script to meet these criteria increases its chances of becoming a profitable studio project—a primary goal for any studio. Remember, while the industry professes to make films, their driving motivation remains focused on generating revenue.

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Chapter 8: 8. Have I Made It Yet?

Chapter 8: "Have I Made It Yet?"

In the world of Hollywood studios, your parking spot communicates your status and importance within the industry, serving as an unspoken hierarchy that highlights your standing. The specifics of where you can park reveal the studio's perception of you, and this chapter provides a humorous exploration of this unwritten rule through various major studios.

Disney: The most esteemed parking pass grants access to the Alameda Gate, with outdoor executive spots directly across from Team Disney. A mistake here could lead to the less desirable Buena Vista Gate or, worse yet, the underground parking structure off Alameda, a place so bleak it's metaphorically compared to the deep circles of Dante's Hell—specifically, the bottom seven, minus the circle for lust.

Fox: Achieving a pass for the Pico Gate, notably the "Gold Door" spots, signifies a major success, akin to parking alongside industry giants like James Cameron—an enviable position worth capturing in a photo. The alternative, parking at the Galaxy Gate structure, is depicted as a perilous ordeal, likened to being trapped in a dystopian nightmare where a multitude of cars fills the area, and danger lurks.

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Warner Bros.: An indication of importance at Warner Bros. includes valet service at Gate 4 or designated VIP spots, solidifying one's status as a significant player in Hollywood. Conversely, parking across the street at either of the nearby structures equates to a long, contemplative walk back to the studio, likely to reflect on the disappointing reception of one's latest script, humorously dubbed "Basset Hound Switcheroo."

Paramount: Valet parking at the Melrose gate is another hallmark of prestige, while ending up in the open lot next to it signals a lack of credentials and the need for introspection as you walk the extra distance to your meeting.

Universal: Importance here is identified with outdoor parking near Building 100, which offers a pleasant ambiance, while the dreaded Building 100 Parking Structure earns a reputation for its confusing design, which can lead to endless circling and an inevitable late arrival.

DreamWorks: The ultimate sign of success is parking within the compound itself, where even the likes of Steven Spielberg store their vehicles. However, parking outside necessitates a humiliating return across the street, emphasizing that you haven't truly "made it" yet. Additionally, DreamWorks boasts the strictest security measures, with entry resembling more of a border crossing than studio access.

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MGM: Unique in its ambiguity, MGM lacks a clear parking hierarchy.

Its modern structure creates frustration for those unsure of their standing in the studio's eyes, leaving visitors craving a system to clarify their status.

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Alex Walk

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Chapter 9 Summary: 9. They Love My Script! ... and I Got Fired?

In Chapter 9, titled "They Love My Script! ... And I Got Fired?", the author presents a candid look at the harsh realities of the screenwriting industry, particularly the phenomenon of being let go from a project even after achieving a significant milestone, such as completing a first script. This experience is humorously dubbed a "luau," signifying both a celebration and a bittersweet turn of events.

The term "fresh eyes" is introduced, referring to the practice of studios hiring new writers to take over existing scripts. This reassignment often happens despite the initial writers putting considerable effort into their work, indicating that the industry is driven by a perpetual need for new perspectives, especially as executive decision-makers come and go quickly. It's emphasized that being fired isn't a personal failure but rather a sign that the project is making progress. The firing signifies investment and movement toward production, a key takeaway for aspiring screenwriters.

The author encourages screenwriters to embrace this part of the process, offering sage advice on how to handle such transitions. Maintaining professionalism, showing grace, and avoiding negative reactions will enhance one's reputation, as there's a good chance of being rehired. This chapter highlights the cyclical nature of screenwriting, where writers often

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find themselves rehired to edit their own scripts, reiterating that perseverance and adaptability are crucial traits for a successful career in this volatile field.

Additionally, a cautionary note is brought up regarding those who replace the original writers. New contributors may alter elements of the script for dubious reasons, such as accruing writing credits, which are vital for future earnings. The chapter underscores the importance of retaining the original integrity of one's work – a theme that resonates not only with screenwriting but also within many creative professions.

Ultimately, this chapter provides insightful advice for navigating the unpredictable nature of Hollywood, framing the experience of being fired not as a defeat but as an essential step on the path to a successful writing career.

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Chapter 10 Summary: 10. Why Does Almost Every Studio Movie SUCK Donkey Balls?

Chapter 10: Why Does Almost Every Studio Movie Suck Donkey Balls?

The chapter opens by addressing the disappointing reality of the film industry: a staggering 95% of studio movies fail to meet expectations. While the blame often falls on poor casting, inept direction, or a lack of chemistry among actors, the root of the problem frequently lies in the development process. Even when a script is strong, it can be compromised by various external factors, undermining its original vision.

At the outset, the writer emphasizes that after completing the script, the writer's control over the project is limited. Once the script is sold, the studio takes charge, bringing its own set of executives into the mix—many of whom may not contribute positively. This leads to a developmental phase critical to a film's success, known as "development hell."

This widespread issue arises from multiple layers of executives who must approve the script before it reaches the top decision-maker, often the studio president. While some executives may provide valuable feedback and inspire positive changes, many are more harmful than helpful. The chapter humorously illustrates this with the absurdity of bad notes that can plague a

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writer, ranging from misunderstandings about the script to misguided attempts to insert unrelated ideas into the project.

Bad notes can stem from many sources; executives may not comprehend the writer's vision, have their egos at stake, or simply be out of touch. Such feedback can derail coherent stories and lead to frustrating rewrites that ultimately detract from the script's integrity.

Despite the inevitability of encountering inept executives throughout one's career, the narrative reassures readers that smart executives rise to the top over time, while the less competent ones are weeded out.

To mitigate the potential damage caused by negligent executives, the chapter promises strategies in the next sections, such as learning “The Art of Nodding or How to Take Notes.”

In a lighter interlude, the writer invites readers to take a break and enjoy the quirky sights of Hollywood, including the eccentric "Crazy Roller-Skating Dude" of Robertson Boulevard, providing a humorous and light-hearted reminder of the oddities that make the industry memorable.

In conclusion, the chapter serves as a candid reflection on the challenges of filmmaking, emphasizing the writer's focus on creating great scripts while navigating the chaotic system of studio development—a game dominated by

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both creativity and folly.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Maintain your creative vision despite external pressures

Critical Interpretation: Imagine yourself as a writer in a chaotic world where your ideas are constantly challenged by outside influences. This chapter highlights the struggle of keeping your creative vision intact, reminding you that, in life, you will face similar situations where others may try to sway you from your true path. When faced with criticism or unwarranted advice, hold tight to your original intentions and trust your instincts. Embrace the artistic integrity of your projects, just as you should in your personal endeavors—be it a career goal, a relationship, or a passion project—recognize that external feedback can be a distraction. Stick to what makes your heart race and what you believe in, for this authenticity is what will ultimately lead you to success and fulfillment.

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Chapter 11 Summary: 11. The Art of Nodding or How to Take Notes

Chapter 11: The Art of Nodding or How to Take Notes

In the world of screenwriting, receiving notes from a studio or producer can feel daunting, especially when you believe your script is flawless. However, it's crucial to remember that once they purchase your script, it becomes their project. While studio notes come with compensation, notes from producers often come free of charge, compelling writers to revise their work without additional payment. This chapter delves into the delicate art of accepting feedback like a professional, emphasizing how to navigate these potentially awkward situations with grace and effectiveness.

The Essential Steps to Handling Notes

- 1. Take Actual Notes** It's imperative to write down everything during the feedback session. This not only keeps your hands busy and helps manage emotional reactions but also demonstrates your commitment to the process. Incorporating even a direct quote from a studio head into your draft can impress them and strengthen your working relationship.
- 2. Active Listening:** Nod along to show engagement. This small gesture

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can foster goodwill, making them feel heard and respected, which is vital for future collaborations.

3. Agree and Improve: If you find merit in their criticism, embrace it and enhance it. Letting the studio feel as though their ideas were integral to your revisions helps build rapport and positions you as a team player dedicated to making the project a success.

4. Quiet Disagreement: If you disagree, do so thoughtfully. Avoid confrontational responses and instead express your intent to consider their suggestions. Phrasing your disagreement with care maintains professionalism, increasing your chances of retaining your role in the project.

After the meeting, focus on the actionable notes that resonate with your vision, while finding creative ways to repurpose any suggestions that seem misguided. This balance ensures that you are responsive to feedback without compromising your unique voice.

A Cautionary Tale

A humorous yet eye-opening anecdote serves as a cautionary reminder of the pitfalls in Hollywood meetings. Two screenwriters experienced an unfathomable situation where their studio leader offered extensive critiques

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on their script for *The Incredible Shrinking Man*. Surprisingly, after discussing the screenplay for thirty minutes, the head suggested a character interaction with animals—ignoring the fact that the script already included multiple animal interactions. This gaffe highlighted the importance of thorough preparation and actual script reading, as well as the sometimes farcical nature of studio feedback.

A Free Movie Idea

The chapter concludes with a creative pitch: *Turbulence*, a comedic adventure centered on a baggage handler, Benny, who discovers a stolen van Gogh painting. Through a series of misadventures involving mistaken identities and the Yakuza, Benny transforms into a confident hero, eventually embarking on further adventures with a love interest who reveals her true identity as an art bounty hunter. This lighthearted narrative encapsulates the charm of classic Hollywood storytelling, complete with humor, romance, and self-discovery.

Overall, mastering the art of taking notes and positively engaging with feedback is crucial for screenwriters aiming to thrive in the unpredictable realm of Hollywood.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Mastering the Art of Taking Notes

Critical Interpretation: Embracing the art of taking notes and effectively engaging with feedback can profoundly transform your life, allowing you to cultivate a mindset of growth and adaptability. Imagine standing in a creative meeting, feeling a rush of anxiety as ideas are dissected and critiqued. Instead of defensiveness, you actively listen, nodding as suggestions flow in, pen in hand, taking notes that reflect your commitment to improvement. This simple yet profound act not only opens doors to collaboration but also builds relationships based on respect and shared vision. As you learn to accept constructive feedback gracefully, you foster a space where innovation thrives, empowering you to improve not just in your creative endeavors but in every aspect of your personal and professional life.

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Chapter 12: 12. Directors

In Chapter 12, titled "DIRECTORS," the authors delve into the multifaceted role of a film director, presenting a combination of humor, harsh realities, and insights into the filmmaking process. They highlight that, unlike other crew positions that require extensive experience and union hours, becoming a director is uniquely accessible; almost anyone can step into the role, regardless of their experience level. This often results in novice directors, such as those who have made commercials or viral internet videos, being thrust into directing feature films without proper preparation.

While the idea of directing a blockbuster might sound glamorous—with directors earning upwards of \$10 million per film plus royalties—the authors paint a more complicated picture. They liken directing a studio film to being the captain of an aircraft carrier fraught with challenges, including combustible egos, soaring budgets, and the omnipresent pressure from studio executives. They underscore that a director's task is not merely creative; it's an enormous logistical undertaking involving hundreds of daily decisions under constant scrutiny.

The narrative shifts to discuss the essential qualities of a good director: patience and facilitation. Directors must juggle numerous roles, from scouting locations and casting to collaborating with various departments (wardrobe, CGI, etc.), all while facing skepticism from studio members,

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especially if they are inexperienced. Resilience is key, as even experienced directors might have to deal with the fallout from last-minute changes and demanding actors, complicating an already difficult job.

The authors humorously caution writers about two types of directors:

“The first type is the director who says, ‘I’ll be back,’ and never returns. The second type is the director who says, ‘I’ll be back,’ and never returns.”

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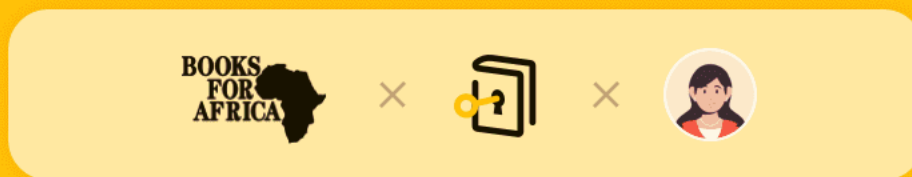




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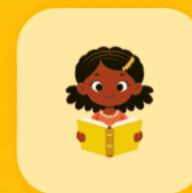
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Chapter 13 Summary: 13. Producers

Chapter 13: Producers and Their Unique Role in Hollywood

In Hollywood, the producer is the pivotal figure who receives the prestigious Academy Award for Best Picture, overshadowing directors, writers, and studio executives who may only receive brief acknowledgments during acceptance speeches. This prominent role entails manifold responsibilities—from securing the rights to a story to selecting writers and overseeing every facet of production, including casting, post-production, and even dismissing personnel when necessary.

Producers are often portrayed as domineering figures who thrive in high-pressure environments characterized by constant yelling and, at times, throwing objects in frustration—behaviors seen as emblematic of the chaos in the film industry. Their assertive personality types are necessary in a field dominated by egos, as they manage a team of creative individuals, often perceived as capricious or difficult. History has shown that many successful producers, such as MGM's Irving Thalberg and David O. Selznick, have faced personal and professional challenges due to the immense stress associated with their roles.

Notably, being labeled a "producer" can sometimes serve as a form of

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punishment, as former high-level executives receive severance packages that inexplicably position them as producers on a studio's lot—a clear indication of the job's daunting nature. To succeed, producers must strike a balance between artistic vision and the chaotic entertainment milieu, using their insight to identify potential blockbusters and orchestrating key promotional events, such as ensuring high-profile appearances during movie premieres to generate buzz.

From a writer's perspective, partnering with a producer can introduce both opportunities and complications. A strong producer enhances a script's potential by offering guidance and navigating studio dynamics, leveraging their experience and established relationships to secure production funding. However, attaching a producer also incurs significant costs; they typically command a hefty fee and a share of potential profits, which could dilute profitability for studios.

Ultimately, aspiring writers must weigh the advantages of having a seasoned producer against the financial implications, knowing that a producer with a stellar track record could elevate a project significantly, despite their often eccentric behavioral traits, including occasional outbursts directed at assistants or crew members. The chapter humorously illustrates the unpredictable nature of producer behavior, encapsulated in the comedic idea that even their most outrageous actions can lead to cinematic gold in Hollywood's complex and often absurd landscape.

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Chapter 14 Summary: 14. Herbie: Fully Loaded

In Chapter 14, titled "Herbie: FULLY LOADED WTF happened?", the authors reflect on their experience working on the Disney film *Herbie: Fully Loaded* and the factors that led to the movie's failure. They start by expressing disappointment not in the director or Lindsay Lohan, but in a particular studio executive whose incompetence ultimately ruined the project. The chapter serves as a warning to young writers about the dangers of Hollywood's executive culture, highlighting Rule 5: that incompetence far outweighs malicious intent in the film industry.

The authors recount their deep admiration for the original *Herbie* films, which they watched as kids in a more innocent era, contrasting it with today's harsher realities. They were excited about the opportunity to revive the franchise, believing they could craft a modern take on the story. Their idea revolved around Herbie, a sentient car, in a more realistic setting, incorporating subtle magic rather than overt fantastical elements. They envisioned a strong female lead from a stock car racing family, as they aimed to bring Herbie into the world of street racing, filled with genuine characters and relatable conflicts.

Their initial pitch was well-received by the studio president, leading to a green light for the project, which reflected their vision. However, once the script began evolving through various drafts, they found themselves

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negotiating with an uninformed executive who altered the narrative, making it overly simplistic and cutesy, which detracted from the authenticity of the plot. Attempts to revert to the original vision were thwarted, as the executive's stranglehold on the project led to their dismissal and the hiring of myriad other writers who perpetuated the same issues they initially faced.

The authors detail how this unfortunate experience is indicative of broader patterns in Hollywood, where decisions are often made not from a place of understanding but rather a lack of comprehension of what made the original project appealing in the first place. They emphasize that the studio system can be unforgiving for creatives, as demonstrated through alarming anecdotes about misguided executive decisions.

In the latter part of the chapter, titled "TRUE HOLLYWOOD HORROR STORIES! Part Two: The After-Lunch Pitch! The Producer Who Slept!", the authors share a comical yet cringe-inducing incident of pitching to a studio executive who inexplicably fell asleep during their presentation. This highlights a pervasive issue within Hollywood, where fleeting attention and forgetfulness can dismiss potentially great ideas. They conclude that sometimes a notion as simple as a mall cop can strike pay dirt, as evidenced by the success of *Paul Blart: Mall Cop*, made just after their ill-fated pitch.

Overall, the chapter serves as both a cautionary tale and an entertaining insight into the often chaotic and unpredictable nature of the film industry,

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reinforcing the importance of understanding the politics at play while navigating a screenwriting career.

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Chapter 15 Summary: 15. Redlighting or How to Get Your Movie Un-Greenlit!

Chapter 15: Redlighting or How to Get Your Movie Un-Greenlit!

Introduction to Redlighting

In Hollywood, the term "Redlighting" has been coined in this chapter to represent the opposite of a movie being "greenlit" for production. While the entertainment industry thrives on the excitement of new films, the reality is that many projects face sudden halts and cancellations—akin to a poorly crafted macramé bikini that unravels swiftly.

Avoiding Common Pitfalls

1. **Table Reads:** One of the first indicators of a potential redlighting is the table read of the script, where often the writer is not invited. This event can be excruciating as high-profile actors—who may not have read the script previously—bring your words to life (or destroy them, even unintentionally). When attending a table read, the writer must ensure that the script is sharp, concise, and engaging to prevent awkward moments that could lead to disaster. A lengthy reading is especially detrimental, as it

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might send attendees rushing for the exits.

2. Handling the Budget: Writers must be acutely aware that they directly influence the budget's trajectory. While they may not dictate the salaries of A-list stars, escalating costs force studios to reconsider their financial commitments, particularly when they don't fully recoup these expenses from ticket sales. A savvy writer should actively propose cost-saving measures in the script, ensuring that the narrative remains intact while also being mindful of international audiences and marketability.

3. Act III Problems: As production nears, issues surrounding the third act of the screenplay often arise—this is the crucial part where characters must undergo significant transformations. Writers should brace themselves for suggestions from various sources regarding changes and be flexible in rewriting to fulfill those demands.

4. Beware the Contemplative Star: Securing a high-profile star is generally seen as a victory, but caution is warranted regarding "contemplative stars." These actors tend to think deeply about their roles—often at the expense of timely production. They can keep a project in limbo for long periods, stalling progress.

5. Marketability: Before approval, the marketing department evaluates the film's potential appeal. Writers must have a clear vision of their target

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audience and the movie's marketability, answering fundamental questions about who will watch the film and if they will actually pay for the experience. Ironically, simply adding "in 3-D" might enhance the movie's appeal.

6. Executive Departures: Lastly, projects can derail unexpectedly if the studio executive championing your film gets dismissed. This shakeup can signal doom for the project, as a new executive is unlikely to revive it without any perceived value or assurance of success. As a writer, it's crucial to provide a compelling narrative that keeps the momentum alive—after all, your role is to build an outstanding film project, not a masterpiece of art but a reliable public experience.

Conclusion

In an industry marked by uncertainty, understanding these elements can empower writers to navigate the tumultuous waters of movie production. Every word counts, and a successful script can mean the difference between a green light and a swift redlight. Remember, even the most humorous anecdotes from Hollywood may carry a cautionary tale behind them.

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Chapter 16: 16. Turnaround

Chapter 16: Turnaround

In the tumultuous world of filmmaking, scripts can face numerous hurdles. After extensive development, a studio may decide not to move forward with a project, despite the hard work of its creators. However, not every abandoned script is truly dead. Enter the concept of "turnaround," which occurs when a studio sells a developed script to another studio. Typically, this transaction involves a minimal fee—often just enough to cover the initial production costs incurred by the first studio.

An illustrative case of turnaround can be seen in the journey of the show "Reno 911!" Originally, Fox invested in a pilot but ultimately chose not to pick it up. Years later, Comedy Central approached the creators for fresh ideas, leading to the revival of the Reno concept. They purchased the rights to the pilot from Fox, but not without complications.

Two notable incidents highlight the complexities of this process. First, Fox's legal team stipulated that Comedy Central could utilize the improvised script but not the original footage, necessitating a reenactment of the original scenes. This meant that the creators had to repeat antics in front of live California Highway Patrol officers, adding a comedic twist to their

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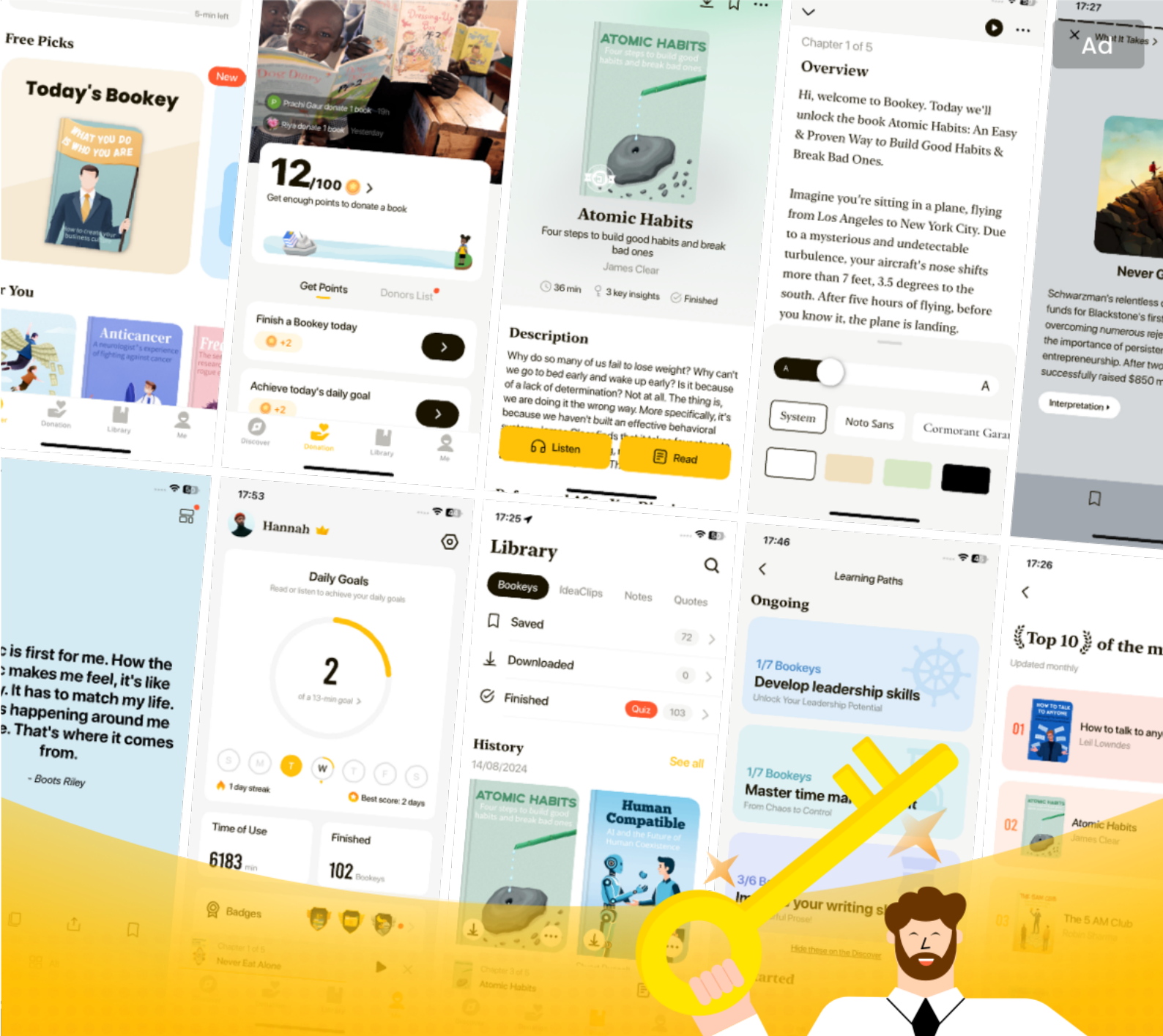
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challenges. The second mishap involved a critical oversight by Comedy Central's lawyer, who neglected to include film rights in the purchase contract. Thus, when Fox later sought to develop a "Reno 911!" movie, they discovered they did not need Comedy Central, leading to awkward negotiations. Ultimately, the entities partnered creatively, but the oversight

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Chapter 17 Summary: 17. How to Pimp Your Movie

Chapter 17: How to Promote Your Movie

In this chapter, the author explores the often-overlooked yet crucial aspect of filmmaking: marketing. The premise is straightforward—successful marketing can make or break a movie, regardless of the quality of its script. The tone is conversational and somewhat irreverent, likening the act of promotion to “pimping,” but ultimately shifts to the more appropriate term “promote” to convey the essence of effectively selling a film.

The author emphasizes that if you're fortunate enough to be involved in a movie's marketing strategy, you should seize that opportunity. The marketing landscape is continuously changing, especially as audiences migrate from traditional TV to digital platforms. Creating social media accounts, like Twitter and Facebook, for your movie is essential in establishing an online presence.

Several specific marketing initiatives are discussed, outlining your potential role in various promotional activities:

1. **Televised Events** If your film's star is presenting at an award show and is dissatisfied with the provided scripts, jump in to offer alternatives.

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Crafting a few witty lines could enhance their presence and promote your film simultaneously.

2. **Funny or Die Videos:** Even non-comedic films are getting involved with platforms that attract teenage audiences. Consider writing a Funny or Die skit to generate buzz—it's an effective way to connect with viewers at a lower cost than traditional advertising.

3. **Trade Shows:** Attend industry events like ShoWest where films are showcased to theater owners. Contributing to the promotional materials can highlight your creativity and willingness to collaborate, painting you as a team player.

4. **Site-Specific Advertising:** If your film references notable events, like the Kentucky Derby, write related ad segments that display your ownership over the promotion.

5. **Product Placement:** While some may view product placements as a compromise of artistic integrity, they are sometimes necessary due to budget constraints. If inserting a brand like Mr. Pibb helps finance the film, learn to incorporate it naturally into the script.

6. **Comic-Con:** This significant event draws large audiences of fans and industry insiders alike. Participating in panels or contributing to

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promotional content for your movie is vital, as the responses and buzz generated here can influence public perception significantly. Prepare for challenging questions—this audience is savvy and expects depth.

The author underscores the importance of cultivating relationships within the marketing department of your studio. Successful collaboration with marketing professionals can elevate your project, especially in an industry where even potentially great films may fizzle due to poor promotional strategies. Foster these connections, as your success on the big screen may depend on how well you help sell your film off-screen.

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Chapter 18 Summary: 18. Naysayers

Chapter Summary: Naysayers

In this chapter, the author navigates the tumultuous landscape of criticism that often accompanies the release of a film. As a filmmaker, the author emphasizes that with any creative endeavor, particularly in the movie industry, there will inevitably be a chorus of critics, often comprised of individuals who harbor dreams of creating films themselves but lack the courage or opportunity to do so. These "naysayers"—characterized here as "morbidly obese shut-ins with internet connections"—often spew negativity from the anonymity of their homes, fueled by their own frustrations and unfulfilled ambitions.

The chapter highlights a crucial perspective on dealing with such criticism: rather than succumbing to the stinging words of self-proclaimed experts, one should focus on the courage it takes to create. The author reassures readers that not all feedback is valid; many critics, especially those on the internet, are not professional writers and may not understand the complexities of filmmaking. The author reassures those in creative fields to take heart, arguing that the real value lies not in the opinions of the critics but in the passion and daring of those who actually engage in the process of creation.

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Quoting Teddy Roosevelt, the author reinforces the notion that true merit comes from those "in the arena," striving valiantly despite their failures and setbacks. Roosevelt's eloquent words serve as a rallying cry, encouraging creatives to embrace their journey, celebrate their efforts, and recognize that fear of criticism should never hinder their pursuit of artistic expression. Ultimately, the chapter is a reminder that while criticism may sting, it is the creators—the dreamers and doers—who shape the world, regardless of the opinions of those who watch from the sidelines.

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Chapter 19 Summary: 19. The Silver Lining

Chapter 19: The Silver Lining – The Upside to Writing a Crappy Film

In this chapter, the authors reflect on their experience writing the film **Taxi**, starring Jimmy Fallon and Queen Latifah, which they describe as one of the worst movies ever made. The film is a remake of a popular French film by Luc Besson, also titled **Taxi**, known for its thrilling car chases and the appearance of a young Marion Cotillard, who controversially appears nude in one scene, cementing the French version's appeal.

When tasked with reworking the original for an American audience, the writers set out to inject some fun into the project, transforming the setting from Marseilles to New York and redesigning the characters. Fallon was cast as Detective Washburn, a part they deemed perfect for him, while Latifah took on the role of the fierce taxi driver, a notable departure from the original's male lead. This change raised eyebrows, but the writers confidently reassured studio executives that they could make it work.

After several drafts, the movie screened exceptionally well at test showings, surprising the writers with its popularity among audiences. Despite the enthusiasm at these screenings, the official release of **Taxi** turned out to be a debacle; it received scathing reviews and became synonymous with

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cinematic failure, even overshadowing the promising careers of its leads. It garnered an abysmal 11 percent rating on Rotten Tomatoes, leading the writers to question their own judgment.

In hindsight, they recognized the bizarre nature of Hollywood, where a flopped film could still lead to lucrative opportunities; their experience with *Taxi* ultimately paved the way for them to work on *Night at the Museum*, which became a massive success.

Although *Taxi* was a critical disaster, the writers discovered that not all experiences are without merit. The journey included thrilling moments, such as flying first class to Paris, visiting Luc Besson's luxurious estate, dining at his renowned restaurant, and even sharing a hug with model Gisele Bündchen. Their overarching lesson is that even in failure, there can be unexpected rewards, highlighting the silver linings that accompany the challenges of a career in the film industry.

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Chapter 20: 20. Our Lunch with Jackie Chan

Chapter 20: Our Lunch with Jackie Chan

The scene opens in the Hollywood Canteen, a trendy restaurant on Las Palmas, where the narrators eagerly await lunch with their idol, Jackie Chan. The atmosphere is reminiscent of a nostalgic Hollywood vibe, but it's decidedly more upscale, featuring "nouveau California cuisine." Excitement builds as a group of stunning models enters, with one in a striking red plastic dress announcing Jackie Chan's imminent arrival with overwhelming enthusiasm. The other models, dressed in outfits reminiscent of the cartoon band "Josie and the Pussycats," add to the spectacle.

When Jackie finally arrives, he's clad in a unique all-white Puma outfit that blends athletic wear with an otherworldly Zen quality, reminiscent of a yoga-practicing Obi-Wan Kenobi. The narrator's admiration for Jackie is palpable, as he had just starred in the blockbuster "Rush Hour II," solidifying his status as a global comedy and action film star.

As they settle in, Jackie demonstrates his casual charm by ordering two soups – cream of asparagus and tomato/basil – and cleverly decides to drink them from the bowls like martinis, showcasing his playful nature. The narrators, fans and aspiring filmmakers, take the opportunity to pitch Jackie

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an idea for a film that would later become "The Pacifier," initially envisioned with Chan in the lead role. They describe a humorous scene involving Jackie buying a duck for kids, which adds depth to the concept, although the studio later strips the idea away.

Jackie responds positively to their pitch and suggests some of his own ideas, introducing the notion of his character, "Bad Jackie," who embodies toughness with a toothpick in his mouth. He amusingly demonstrates this persona, flicking a toothpick across the table with surprising precision.

The atmosphere shifts as one narrator, Ben, is invited to throw a punch at Jackie for a demonstration. With the restaurant watching, Jackie reacts swiftly, disarming Ben by wrapping his jacket around his arm in an impressive display of skill that leaves the audience in awe. The moment is met with applause, and as Jackie departs, the models, still cheerful, follow him out.

In this surreal lunch experience filled with laughter and jaw-dropping theatrics, the narrators capture not just a memorable meeting but an invaluable lesson—embracing the moment, as any film project may never come to fruition. They close the chapter with a light-hearted note about the toothpick, symbolizing the wild encounters of their Hollywood journey, and they prepare to regale their friends with stories of their incredible lunch with the iconic Jackie Chan.

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Rule 8: The movie may not ever happen, so— carpe per diem. Seize the lunch.

The chapter concludes with a teaser about meeting the legendary Sandra Bernhard, hinting at more captivating stories from the duo's adventures in Hollywood.

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Chapter 21 Summary: 21. Credit\$

Chapter Summary: Credit\$

In this chapter, the author drolls about the complexities of screenwriting credits, humorously illustrating how they can impact a writer's financial success and professional reputation. The pun-laden analysis of credits begins with a cheeky acknowledgment of the industry terminology used to refer to residuals, termed “zids,” offering a unique insight into the mind of the writer who yearns for major profitability from their projects.

The narrative outlines the hierarchy and significance of various credits, starting with "**Written by**," the most prestigious accolade. Holding this credit signifies that the writer has created the entire story, characters, theme, and screenplay — essentially, the heart of the film. Receiving this credit means a writer could earn around 1.5 percent of the profits, making it highly coveted.

Next, the chapter discusses "**Story by**," which implies that while the writer contributed significantly to the story's formation, others altered or contributed more to the screenplay, leading to a cut in residuals.

Clarification follows with "**Screenplay by**," which acknowledges a substantial role in writing the script but still requires splitting profits with

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the individual credited for the story.

An interesting category introduced is "**Screen Story by,**" suggesting that the film's narrative diverged from existing source material yet still references it in some capacity. The author humorously illustrates this with a fictional reimagining of a classic children's book, pointing out that new interpretations can lead to credits reflecting this creative process.

The chapter also explores lesser-known credits like "**Narration Written by,**" which has rarely been used, and "**Based on Characters Created by,**" implying a writer's original rights to characters used in adaptations. The author underscores the advantage of having separated rights, which offer control over sequels and adaptations, a rare empowerment for screenwriters.

Additional tidbits reveal the implications of using an ampersand (&) versus the word "and" in writer listings, clarifying collaboration versus forced credit sharing. The importance of name order based on contribution amounts and the option to use a pseudonym if a film flops is also outlined, although the author humorously notes the restrictions tied to pseudonym use.

This chapter serves not just as a guide to credits in the film industry but as a witty commentary on the struggles and ambitions of screenwriters navigating a competitive landscape. By blending humor and clarity, it reveals the intricate dance of recognition and remuneration, while adhering

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to the hierarchical nature of screenplay credits.

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Chapter 22 Summary: 22. Living in Los Angeles

Chapter 22: Living in Los Angeles

Los Angeles, often regarded as a sprawling suburb rather than a traditional city, demands significant adjustment from newcomers. The notorious traffic is a defining aspect of life here, with Angelenos spending an average of seventy hours a year stuck in their cars—more than any other city in the U.S. In response to this, residents often cultivate “car hobbies” to occupy their time. Tom, for example, has made productive use of his commute by learning two foreign languages and listening to NPR. Others take a more unconventional approach, like Ben, who has even explored intimate experiences while driving.

When not in traffic, aspiring writers find it challenging to work in public spaces without drawing unwanted attention. In L.A., writing in a coffee shop often leads to unsolicited conversations about screenplays or judgments about one's intentions. The best environments for creative work are limited to a couple of favored bars: The Village Idiot and The Cat and Fiddle, both known for their lively atmospheres yet daunting crowds.

Beyond writing, Los Angeles boasts incredible cuisine, particularly from its Mexican restaurants. Establishments like Casa La Golondrina and El Cholo

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are celebrated for their authentic and delicious offerings. The food scene is a highlight, contrasting sharply with the perceptions of safety in other regions. Olvera Street, for example, offers a lively tourist experience with its vibrant culture and food.

For entertainment, L.A. presents a mix of local favorites, from comic book stores to hypothetical best bars where celebrities might be spotted. However, the city's true draw often lies outside its borders, enticing its residents to seek luxurious weekend getaways in Hawaii or Catalina Island, which highlight the lifestyle many aspire to.

Lastly, no discussion about L.A. would be complete without mentioning In-N-Out Burger. With its simple menu and secret ordering options, it represents a cherished institution for locals. Here, "Animal Style" burgers and well-done fries are among the beloved choices, adding to the quintessential Angeleno experience.

Bonus: Tom and Ben's Guide to Awards Season

Accompanying this exploration of L.A. is a cheeky pitch for a unique film idea titled "BOBO & ME," where a custodial worker at NASA teams up with a brilliant genetically-engineered chimpanzee to thwart a plot threatening the animal's future. This whimsical road trip unfolds with comedic elements reminiscent of classic family films, all set against the

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backdrop of an unforgiving pursuit by the military and the mob. The pitch cleverly melds comedy with heartwarming themes of friendship and freedom, encapsulating the spirit of Hollywood's often outlandish storytelling.

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Chapter 23 Summary: 23. If Your Screenplay Doesn't Have This Structure, It Won't Sell, or Robert McKee Can Suck It

Chapter Summary: The Importance of Screenplay Structure

In this chapter, the author emphasizes that all successful Hollywood films share a fundamental structure consisting of three acts. The structure can be summed up vividly: “Get a likable guy stuck up a tree, throw rocks at him, and then get him down.” Taking examples from classic and modern films—from *Casablanca* to *The Matrix*—the author illustrates the universality of this formula.

The chapter breaks down the essential components of a successful screenplay by detailing key moments that occur within the structure. In Act I (pages 1-10), we are introduced to the hero and their world, with clear explanations that set the stage for the story. If a character or situation is overly complex to explain within this timeframe, the screenplay risks losing its appeal to studio executives.

On page 10, the narrative introduces an “inciting incident,” a pivotal moment that sparks the protagonist's journey—such as Luke Skywalker receiving Princess Leia's call for help or Bruce Willis being caught in

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Nakatomi Tower. However, despite this invitation to adventure, the hero often hesitates, delaying their plunge into action.

As the plot unfolds (around pages 10-25), the hero inevitably becomes embroiled in conflict. Complications arise, and the stakes become higher as the narrative progresses. For instance, in **The Matrix**, Neo is initially skeptical about the reality of the world around him, but a series of extraordinary events lead him to take the red pill that will change his life forever.

Around pages 45-50, the tension escalates dramatically, with the hero facing increasingly dire situations. This pattern continues as setbacks pile up: from Neo confronting the harsh truth of his existence to Luke Skywalker learning that he must confront the Empire. These difficult revelations culminate in moments where it seems failure is inevitable—keeping audiences engaged.

As we move deep into the climax (pages 90-100), the hero confronts their greatest challenge. Despite the overwhelming odds, they emerge victorious, leading to triumphant resolutions, such as Neo defeating Agent Smith and finding his true identity as "The One."

The author concludes that while innovative storytelling is valuable, adhering to this tested structural framework remains crucial for screenwriters aiming to sell their scripts. The formula promotes clarity and engagement, ensuring

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audiences remain invested in the characters and their journeys.

Additionally, the chapter provides a practical screenwriting tip: to streamline the writing process, screenwriters should avoid naming multiple characters with the same starting letter. This efficiency tip can save valuable time during script editing, allowing writers to focus on refining their narratives.

Overall, the key takeaway is the insistence on the significance of a well-structured screenplay as a fundamental element for success in the competitive world of Hollywood filmmaking.

Key Element	Description
Structure	Successful Hollywood films follow a three-act structure. The simplistic summary: "Get a likable guy stuck up a tree, throw rocks at him, then get him down."
Act I (Pages 1-10)	Introduces the hero and their world; establishes the story's premise. Simplicity is key to maintain appeal.
Inciting Incident	Pivotal moment introducing the protagonist's journey, e.g., Luke Skywalker's call to action or Bruce Willis being trapped.
Plot Development (Pages 10-25)	The hero engages with conflict; complications increase the stakes. Example: Neo's skepticism about his reality.
Escalation of Tension (Pages 45-50)	The hero confronts setbacks; moments of doubt emerge. Example: Neo's harsh realizations; Luke's challenges.
Climax (Pages 90-100)	The hero faces the ultimate challenge and triumphs, leading to resolutions. Example: Neo defeating Agent Smith.

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Key Element	Description
Conclusion	While innovation is important, following a structured framework is critical for script success in Hollywood.
Practical Tip	Avoid naming multiple characters with the same starting letter to streamline the writing process and save editing time.
Key Takeaway	A well-structured screenplay is fundamental for success in Hollywood filmmaking.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The Importance of Structure in Storytelling

Critical Interpretation: Understanding that a well-structured narrative, much like the universal three-act format detailed in this chapter, can invigorate your own life journey is essential. Just as in successful screenplays where conflicts and resolutions create engaging stories, your life can thrive when you embrace challenges as opportunities for growth. Instead of fearing obstacles, you can view them as necessary 'rocks' thrown at you while you are metaphorically stuck up a tree, pushing you to discover your true resilience and capabilities. This realization can inspire you to carefully craft your life's narrative, ensuring that you engage fully with the challenges at hand, ultimately leading to triumphant resolutions of your own.

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Chapter 24: 24. In a Few Pages, We'll Teach You How to Formulate Characters in a Script

Chapter Summary: Formulating Characters in a Script

In this chapter, the focus is on practical tips for creating engaging characters that stand out in studio scripts. The authors assert that while anyone can try their hand at writing, the key to success lies in understanding the essential elements of character development with a commercial mindset.

Character Attraction: The first tip emphasizes that a studio movie will only succeed if a movie star is interested in playing the hero. Therefore, protagonists must be exceptionally likable, charismatic, and attractive, akin to iconic characters like Han Solo or Indiana Jones. The hero should embody the essence of a hero from the outset, suggesting they are inherently heroic but may need a catalyst to showcase their traits.

Conciseness in Writing: A reminder follows that screenplays typically span around 100 pages, necessitating clear and concise character introductions. The main character must be clearly defined within the first ten pages. Vague descriptions hinder understanding and engagement.

Dialogue that Resonates: The authors advocate writing dialogue tailored

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to the voices of specific actors. This exercise helps create authentic and distinctive character voices, making the script feel vivid and immediate. For instance, envisioning characters as embodying actors like Ben Stiller or Zach Galifianakis fosters a unique cadence and perspective within the dialogue, enhancing readability.

Realism in Characters: Realism is vital, even when characters possess extraordinary traits or live in fantastical settings. The authors encourage writers to read dialogue aloud to check its authenticity and logical progression. Referencing popular Superman films, they highlight that relatable, well-crafted characters elevate a narrative, while poorly defined characters can detract from its quality.

Simplified Backgrounds: The instruction here is to avoid overly complex character biographies. Essential traits and backstory elements that serve the narrative should be prioritized. Writers are urged to craft characters with depth while not getting bogged down by irrelevant details.

Fun and Engaging Conflicts: The conflict faced by characters should be entertaining and engaging rather than heavy or mundane. For instance, while Luke Skywalker's story involves tragedy, it ultimately revolves around excitement and adventure. This balance ensures that films resonate more with audiences seeking escapism and entertainment.

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Character Archetypes: The chapter suggests studying successful films like *Die Hard*, where character archetypes are clearly defined and quickly understood. This enables audiences to grasp motivations and relationships effortlessly. Creating a blend of relatable heroes, charismatic villains, and memorable supporting characters can enhance a script's appeal.

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Chapter 25 Summary: 25. How to Write a Screenplay

Chapter 25: How to Write a Screenplay

In this chapter, the author emphasizes the essential first steps to writing a successful screenplay, which begins with creating a solid outline. The tone is conversational and slightly irreverent, aiming to dispel the myth that screenwriting is an impractically artful endeavor. Instead, it's framed as an enjoyable process, provided you lay the groundwork with a comprehensive outline.

The Importance of Outlining

The chapter asserts that writing a screenplay without an outline is a recipe for frustration. The author humorously illustrates this by suggesting that staring at a blank screen is as daunting as it sounds, often leading to distractions, like watching funny cat videos. In fact, the author playfully compares the success of outlined films to those without, using examples like **Die Hard** and **Empire**, highlighting that structured films tend to perform much better financially.

The author reaffirms that writing outlines is crucial to the developmental process of a screenplay, and they should be detailed—about 20 pages

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long—to cover almost everything that occurs in the story, excluding the dialogue. This foresight allows writers to work through potential issues creatively and effectively before diving into the screenplay itself, which, once the outline is set, becomes a much easier and more enjoyable task.

The Drafting Process

While the outline may evolve during the screenplay phase, addressing problems at this initial stage is significantly more efficient than trying to make major adjustments later when writing the actual screenplay. The author encourages writers to embrace the outlining phase, likening it to refining a blueprint for a skyscraper—it's far simpler than reconstructing a finished building.

Setting Deadlines

The latter part of the chapter asserts an important point: every writer should have a deadline. Whether writing for a studio or as an independent, deadlines stimulate productivity and transform writing from a hobby into a professional pursuit. Citing the standard ten-week timeframe for initial drafts in studio settings, the author underscores that deadlines create accountability and urgency, which are essential to successful writing.

Though having an outline and a deadline can significantly increase a writer's

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chances of success, the author candidly acknowledges that inherent flaws in the story or a mismatch with current market demands can still lead to failure. Ultimately, the chapter conveys that if writers diligently create detailed outlines and adhere to deadlines, they will have the necessary framework to craft compelling screenplays, thus maximizing their chances of success in the industry.

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Chapter 26 Summary: 26. Writing Action and Description

Chapter 26: Writing Action and Description

When crafting action and description in your screenplay, the golden rule is simplicity. Brevity is key: your goal is to clearly convey essential details without unnecessary elaboration. This chapter emphasizes that descriptions should be direct and concise, making it easy for the reader—often a busy industry professional—to visualize the scene without distraction.

For instance, when introducing a setting like a warehouse, you might write: “EXT. WAREHOUSE—NIGHT. A dark, abandoned warehouse on a seedy pier. An SUV is parked beside it, engine running.” This straightforward description provides crucial visual elements without overindulgence in poetic prose, which can lead readers to skim or lose interest. Flowery descriptions are discouraged because they serve to distract from the story rather than enhance it. Readers are looking for compelling narratives, not intricate imagery.

The importance of clarity extends beyond location descriptions to character introductions and action sequences. In character descriptions, you have the first ten pages to establish who they are, but you do not need to cram all

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information into the opening paragraph. Similarly, when writing action scenes, the recommendation is to maintain clarity by focusing on what essential elements need to be communicated. For example, rather than detailing the actions of many unnamed characters during a chaotic scene, you might describe the overarching chaos succinctly and then focus on pivotal characters' actions.

Additionally, it's worth noting that action scenes are often the most recognizable aspect of a screenplay. If these scenes are written well, they stand a good chance of being executed as you envisioned them, even if other parts of your script undergo changes during production. This is because action scenes are often planned in advance by second unit directors and stunt coordinators, who don't necessarily adapt the material heavily as they lay out the visual sequence.

The chapter humorously concludes with a nod to common struggles faced by writers, particularly physical ailments like carpal tunnel syndrome from extended typing. While it suggests tongue-in-cheek remedies such as indulging in drinks to alleviate discomfort, the key takeaway is that if you find yourself writing enough to feel the strain, you're likely on the path to becoming a successful screenwriter.

In summary, keep your writing clear, concise, and to the point. Focus on crafting an engaging story through action and character depiction without

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unnecessary embellishment. Remember, your script should captivate readers, leading them through a vivid tapestry of action and narrative with straightforward clarity.

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Chapter 27 Summary: 27. Advice for Writing with a Partner

In "Advice for Writing with a Partner," the authors draw on their twenty years of collaborative writing experience to share effective strategies for creating scripts together. They emphasize that working with a partner can be an asset rather than a hindrance, turning what could be a tedious process into a more enjoyable and productive experience.

The authors recount their earlier struggles, where writing in the same space led to distractions and overlapping critiques—each writer battling their own self-doubt. To avoid these pitfalls, they propose a systematic approach: First, create a detailed outline of the entire screenplay together in an informal setting, such as a bar, where the relaxed atmosphere encourages creativity and humor. They suggest that this environment can help to uncover unexpected jokes and ideas.

After developing the outline, they recommend dividing the script into manageable sections—approximately one page each—ensuring that these divisions maintain narrative coherence (e.g., not breaking up key scenes). They advocate for a coin toss to assign odd and even sections to each writer, allowing them to work independently in their respective spaces. This method fosters productivity, enabling each writer to send their completed sections via email and subsequently tweak the joint draft.

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Through this iterative process, writers can polish their work, culminating in a draft that feels fresh and refined without the pressure of direct oversight. This approach not only speeds up the writing process but also ensures that the script undergoes multiple revisions, leading to a polished final product.

The authors also stress the importance of several foundational rules: trust, a shared sense of humor, humility regarding ego, and mutual respect. By adhering to these principles, writers can maximize their efficiency and enjoy the fruits of their collaboration.

Additionally, they offer a playful tip for screenwriters: to spell words incorrectly on purpose within their writing software for comedic or stylistic effect, allowing the spell-check function to generate the correct spelling. This method serves not just as a time-saver but also as a creative tool, reinforcing the notion that writing can be both fun and effective.

Ultimately, this chapter encapsulates a philosophy that blends collaboration with creativity, positioning writing as a shared journey rather than an individual challenge.

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Chapter 28: 28. Rewrites: You Want It When? And I'm Getting Paid What?!?!?!?!?

Chapter 28 Summary: Script Fixes and the Writer's Dilemma

In the turbulent world of screenwriting, a common scenario unfolds when a studio acquires a movie but detests the script provided by the original writer. Despite their disdain, the studio often decides to move forward with the film, prompting them to seek a new writer to salvage the project. This situation highlights the paradox of Hollywood: a film could generate substantial interest due to its initial concept or potential, yet the resultant script may miss the mark entirely.

When a studio finds itself in need of a rewrite, they typically reach out to writers with whom they have established relationships or even take a chance on newcomers whose pitches they liked previously. For many writers, this marks an invaluable opportunity to break into the industry. A successful rewrite can lead to greater recognition and potential future projects, as it demonstrates the writer's ability to enhance an existing work and rescue the studio's investment.

Upon being approached for a rewrite—let's say for a whimsical title like "The Banana Police"—the writer's first step is to review the existing script.

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The initial read is often a shock; the script may be far worse than anticipated. The writer may feel frustrated, questioning why less competent writers have succeeded where their pitches have failed. However, it's crucial for the writer to maintain composure, assess the script thoroughly, and prepare for a pitch meeting with the studio.

During this pivotal meeting, writers must clearly articulate their proposed changes, balancing honesty about the script's flaws with tact to avoid offending any parties involved in its creation. The goal is to persuade the studio to embrace the new direction while acknowledging the original version's potential. Successful rewrites can significantly enhance the writer's reputation, as they require both creativity and the ability to navigate complex studio dynamics.

Rewrites also come with advantages, such as high compensation—often starting around \$10,000 per week—and a reduced workload relative to creating a script from scratch. Yet, in some cases, the situation escalates into "production rewrites." These occur when filming has begun, yet the script remains problematic. Often, these frantic environments involve multiple stakeholders—producers, directors, and stars—pressuring the writer for quick fixes while simultaneously discordant in their visions for the project.

Amidst the chaos, the writer's priority remains creating a script that resonates well and satisfies the studio's demands, even when faced with the

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director's or stars' conflicting notes. The timeline is intense, requiring constant adaptation and quick turnarounds, often resulting in substantial rewrites under pressure. Unfortunately, writers rarely receive screen credits for these efforts, resulting in a challenging but lucrative fallback.

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Alex Walk

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Chapter 29 Summary: 29. Martin Lawrence Has a Few Thoughts or How to Take Notes from a Movie Star

In this chapter, the author humorously reflects on the intricacies of working with movie stars, emphasizing that they are a rare breed in the film industry, much like the California condor—though the author sarcastically suggests that movie stars are actually far fewer in number. The text delineates between three categories of people often associated with film: movie stars, movie actors, and celebrities. Movie stars, defined as those who can reliably open a film at the box office, are distinguished from movie actors who perform in films but lack the influential drawing power, and celebrities who may appear in films without the acting skill.

For aspiring screenwriters or filmmakers, the chapter offers practical advice on how to navigate the process of collaborating with a movie star. The first essential step involves recognizing that casting a movie star is an expensive endeavor, often costing between \$20 million to \$25 million, plus a share of the film's profits. The author underscores the importance of being wary of miscasting based on popularity rather than star power.

Once a movie star is attached, their input becomes crucial during the script development stage. The author provides a list of guidelines on handling notes from movie stars effectively. Key points include:

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1. **Maintain Professionalism:** It's crucial to stay calm and composed—avoiding overly excited or awkward behavior that could make the star uncomfortable.
2. **Show Constant Agreement:** Unlike working with studio executives, it's essential to always agree with the star's notes; disagreeing can lead to immediate dismissal.
3. **Know Their Work:** Familiarity with the star's previous roles and films is vital to avoid embarrassing missteps; understanding their successes and even offering a positive spin on their less successful projects is key.
4. **Limit Chit-Chat:** Being succinct and engaging only when it's meaningful is encouraged, as excessive chatter can signal anxiety.
5. **Seek No Favors:** Arriving prepared without requests establishes an advantageous rapport, highlighting a sense of independence.
6. **Incorporate Feedback, Even if Flawed:** Ultimately, you must embrace the star's notes and make the requested changes, regardless of personal misgivings about their quality, as your reputation could be at stake.

The chapter concludes by noting that gaining a movie star's appreciation and recognition can significantly enhance a writer's reputation in Hollywood,

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paving the way for future opportunities and collaborations. The author encourages writers to invest effort into every draft they create for a star, reinforcing that dedication to the craft will be recognized and rewarded in the competitive film industry.

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Chapter 30 Summary: 30. Arbitration or Who Wrote This Crap?

Chapter Summary: Arbitration or Who Wrote This Crap?

In the often-overlooked realm of screenwriting, arbitration is a critical yet frustrating process that determines who receives official credit for a film after its completion. This credit is not just a title; it translates to financial rewards, including royalties and a share of profits. Without credit, a writer earns nothing, regardless of their contributions to the script.

When a film is in production, it's common for multiple writers to contribute, especially on comedies. However, many writers won't know who else has worked on the project until they receive the "Recommended Credits." The studio typically submits these credits to the Writers Guild of America (WGA), which tends to side with the studio's recommendations, often rewarding writers they have existing relationships with—a practice that can sideline deserving writers.

To ultimately receive credit, a writer must participate in the arbitration process. This involves submitting a detailed statement to the WGA Arbitration Committee, asserting why they deserve credit based on the following guidelines: contributions exceeding 33% of a screenplay for

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non-original scripts, or 50% for original scripts. The writer must rigorously prepare to defend their case against competing claims from other writers. The Arbitration Committee, a panel of three randomly selected writers, will review all evidence and testimonies before making a final decision.

The authors highlight the contentious nature of this process, which can lead to significant discord among writers, unlike in other creative unions where cooperative practices are more prevalent. Though the process can seem arbitrary and biased, there are strategies for winning an arbitration case.

Key Strategies for Winning Arbitration

1. **Seek Professional Help:** Enlist experts in arbitration who can guide preparation and help assess the strength of the case.
2. **Conduct Thorough Research:** Compile and analyze every script draft to pinpoint your original contributions, establishing a clear case for credit.
3. **Craft a Compelling Statement:** The statement defending your claim for credit should be meticulously constructed and emotionally resonant, emphasizing your pivotal role.
4. **Prepare for Uncertainty:** Understand that arbitration can yield unpredictable outcomes, regardless of preparation. If victorious, consider

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rewarding the arbiter who assisted you to foster relationships for the future.

In conclusion, while the arbitration process is fraught with challenges, diligent preparation and strategic maneuvers can significantly enhance a writer's chances of achieving rightful credit—and the financial rewards that follow.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The importance of diligent preparation and strategic maneuvering

Critical Interpretation: Imagine yourself as a screenwriter, pouring your heart and soul into crafting a compelling story, only to face the daunting task of arbitration to reclaim credit for your labor. In this moment of uncertainty, the key takeaway from the chapter inspires you to harness the power of meticulous preparation and strategic thinking as tools for life. Just as you would dissect every draft of your screenplay to establish your worth, you can apply this same tenacity to any challenge you face. Whether in your career, personal pursuits, or relationships, preparing thoroughly, understanding the nuances of your situation, and articulating your value can lead to the recognition and rewards you rightfully deserve. Embrace the idea that your contributions matter, and advocate for yourself with courage and clarity, knowing that you can navigate even the murkiest waters with diligence and purpose.

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Chapter 31 Summary: 31. Sequels!

In Chapter 31, titled "Sequels," the focus is on the superstitions and business strategies surrounding the discussion of movie sequels. The authors emphasize a crucial rule for filmmakers: **never talk about a sequel before the first movie's release**. They warn that even voicing hopes or ideas for a sequel can jinx the film's box office success, comparing this jinx to a mythical curse from Medusa—invoking it could lead to disastrous outcomes for both the film and those involved.

Using a humorous anecdote, they recall a moment at the El Capitan Theatre before the premiere of **Herbie: Fully Loaded**, where light-hearted chatter about potential sequels suddenly turned to panic when the film flopped. The chapter highlights the precarious nature of the film industry, where discussions about sequels can lead to disastrous consequences if the initial film does not perform well.

The authors illustrate the factors that increase the likelihood of a sequel being made: strong box office performance, particularly if a film holds well during its second and third weekends. They provide a guideline that a domestic revenue of around \$200 million is a good target, though they maintain their warning against premature discussions about sequels.

As the chapter progresses, it highlights the perks of being credited on a

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successful film. If the movie is a hit, writers are often invited to create the sequel, and they can earn substantial payments regardless of whether they accept the job. The humorous imagery of being buried in money like Scrooge McDuck serves to underline the lucrative nature of successful sequels, portraying the film industry as a land of incredible financial opportunities.

Finally, the authors cheekily suggest a celebratory getaway for those involved in a successful sequel, promoting the luxurious Jade Mountain resort in Saint Lucia as the perfect destination to unwind. The playful tone throughout this chapter reinforces the blend of excitement and caution that characterizes the world of filmmaking, particularly when it comes to the potential of sequels.

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Chapter 32: 32. Getting the Book Rights

Chapter 32: Acquiring Book Rights

In this chapter, the author outlines the essential steps for acquiring the screen rights to adapt a book—be it fiction or a true story—into another medium such as film, comic books, or articles. The acquisition process serves as a pathway for writers to expand their creative horizons while leveraging existing narratives with established audiences.

Step 1: Utilize Your Manager

The first step in acquiring rights is to enlist the help of a manager. A manager has the connections and industry knowledge to determine whether the rights to a desired book or story are available for option. If rights are available, they can negotiate the price on your behalf, allowing you to focus on your core passion: writing.

If you don't have a manager, the author advises doing some research online. Identify the publisher and get in touch with their subsidiary rights department, or if dealing with a true story, reach out to the individuals involved or their families if deceased. However, this can be complex, especially for stories with multiple rights holders.

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Once you identify the rights owner, you should contact them professionally and express your interest in adapting their work, leading to negotiations about compensation for the rights. Costs can vary widely; established works may command fees upwards of \$50,000, whereas lesser-known narratives could be much cheaper—or even free—if future profits are promised upon successful adaptation.

Step 2: Buying Rights or Pitching to a Studio

If the rights are available, you can buy them outright or propose your idea to a studio, which may take responsibility for purchasing the rights. Owning the rights not only allows for potential back-end profits but may also position you as a producer on the project, depending on your agreement.

To protect your interests when acquiring rights, it is essential to involve a lawyer who can negotiate and draft a contract, guarding against potential pitfalls. It is critical to remember that rights acquisition is often time-sensitive; if a project does not progress within a set timeframe (typically a year), the rights typically revert back to the original author or rights holder without a refund of your investment.

Even for aspiring screenwriters who feel they cannot afford to buy the rights upfront, pitching a book to studios remains a viable alternative. Many

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studios prefer adapting existing works over new ideas, given the reduced risks associated with established narratives. This inclination underscores the industry trend favoring adaptations of published materials, which often come with built-in audiences and marketing advantages, especially for stories deemed promising or noteworthy.

Overall, navigating the legal and financial aspects of acquiring book rights is a vital skill for writers looking to successfully transition their creative ideas to the big screen.

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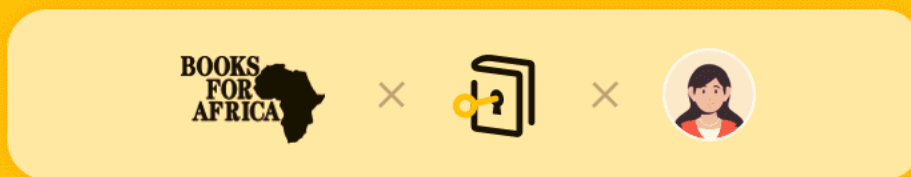




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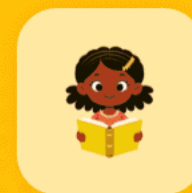
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Chapter 33 Summary: 33. I'm Drinking Too Much. Is That a Problem?

Chapter 33: "I'm Drinking Too Much. Is That a Problem?"

In this irreverent chapter, the author provocatively argues that heavy drinking is not only acceptable but might actually enhance the writing process. Drawing on a long tradition that pairs writers with alcohol, the text suggests that the liberation from conventional thought and inhibition that drinking provides enables writers to tap into deeper, more creative ideas. Historically, shamans and storytellers have employed substances to reach altered states of consciousness, and today's writers can similarly benefit from alcohol.

The chapter humorously compares the prolific works of iconic writers like Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner, both of whom were known for their heavy drinking. Hemingway, celebrated for his compelling narratives and moral complicity in masterpieces such as "The Garden of Eden," is used as a benchmark to illustrate the point that great writing often emerges alongside or even through inebriation. Faulkner's legendary, complex prose is shown to similarly thrive in the context of his drinking habits, with stark contrasts drawn between drafts written while sober and those crafted under the influence.

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Addressing the skepticism of those who view drinking negatively, the author instead encourages aspiring writers to embrace alcohol as a tool to unlock creativity and provide a richer writing experience. With playful references and anecdotal evidence, the overall message is clear: a little indulgence in spirits may just be the key to conquering writer's block and expressing uniquely original ideas. In light of this, the chapter ends on a light-hearted note of encouragement to maintain a balance of creativity and intoxication, underscoring the Latin adage, "In vino, veritas," suggesting that truth may indeed flow more freely with a drink in hand.

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Chapter 34 Summary: 34. Final Thoughts

In the concluding chapter, titled "Final Thoughts," screenwriters Robert Ben Garant and Thomas Lennon reflect on the unique and exhilarating experience of being a professional writer in Hollywood. They emphasize the freedom and creativity involved in the job, highlighting that writers are essentially paid to think and create—something they would do regardless of their circumstances. The authors assert the indispensable role of writers in the film industry, pointing out that while elements like actors can be replaced by technology, scripts remain fundamental for the entire filmmaking process.

They encourage aspiring writers to pursue their dreams, using spirited metaphors about heading west to the "Dream Factory," acknowledging the allure and challenges of Hollywood. The authors candidly address the unpredictable nature of the industry, where many decisions affecting a writer's career are made behind closed doors, often favoring those with greater connections. They urge writers to focus on the aspects they can control: namely, their dedication to working harder than their competitors.

The chapter is filled with humorous and outrageous suggestions for making an impact in the industry, from staging ridiculous public events to pursuing wild inventions. These antics serve as a metaphor for the boldness and creativity necessary to succeed in Hollywood. Ultimately, Garant and

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Lennon call on writers to stop procrastinating, ditch distractions, and start writing their own scripts without further delay, drawing the reader into a sense of urgency and purpose. The chapter concludes with their light-hearted yet motivational reminder that living life fully, experiencing all its highs and lows, can feed one's writing and creativity.

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Chapter 35 Summary: Appendix: Sample Outlines

Summary of Chapter Outlines

1. Reno S.O.S.!

This outline serves as a creative exercise, humorously reflecting on the challenges of making a sequel to the film *Reno 911!: Miami*. The writers clarify that while the film was financially successful, earning approximately \$22 million against a \$9 million budget, it did not perform well enough to justify a sequel, primarily because the target audience for the original show—predominantly teenagers—found the R-rated content unsuitable. The writers share anecdotes about young fans sneaking into other movies to watch *Reno 911!* but highlight that this misalignment of content and audience expectations hindered financial returns. The demand for a sequel was high, leading to an impulsive commission before the first film even premiered, which is labeled a critical mistake in the industry. This chapter concludes with the inclusion of a "scriptment" for the proposed sequel, emphasizing improvisation as the main creative process for the original films. The caveat is a warning to aspiring filmmakers that legal repercussions await those who might attempt to produce their own versions of this drafted script without proper authorization.

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2. Scouts' Honor

This outline introduces the concept of humor and absurdity within the framework of a traditional scout camp setting. The chapter likely follows a group of scouts who grapple with their responsibilities and expectations while navigating various comedic misadventures. As the characters find themselves in increasingly bizarre situations, the storyline demonstrates the clash between the ideals of scouting—like teamwork, bravery, and integrity—and the reality of their antics. New characters may include a particularly overzealous scout leader, whose strict adherence to rules contrasts sharply with the scouts' desire for freedom and fun. This tension not only drives comedic moments but also fosters character development, showcasing how challenges can lead to personal growth despite the chaos.

3. Instant Monsters

In this chapter, the theme of monsters—both literal and metaphorical—is explored, perhaps using humor to depict the fears and insecurities faced by the characters. The narrative could center on a spooky event where real monsters appear, leading to misunderstandings and comical scenarios. The monsters might serve as allegories for the characters' internal struggles, such as fear of failure or the pressure to fit in. As the characters confront these “instant monsters,” they learn valuable life lessons about overcoming fears and embracing their true selves. New concepts might include a potion gone

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wrong or a misunderstood creature, heightening the comedic chaos while reinforcing the theme that sometimes our greatest monsters lie within.

These outlines highlight the blend of humor and depth within the respective themes, showcasing how societal norms and personal experiences can create both comedic and heartfelt moments in storytelling. The creative approach emphasizes allowing improvisation to take center stage, encouraging a free-flowing narrative style that resonates with audiences.

Chapter Title	Summary
Reno S.O.S.!	This outline humorously discusses the challenges of making a sequel to *Reno 911!: Miami*. Despite its financial success, the film's R-rated content alienated its main audience—teenagers. Anecdotes reveal young fans sneaking into theaters, illustrating audience misalignment. The impulsive commissioning of the sequel before the first film's premiere is criticized. The chapter includes a "scriptment" for the sequel, emphasizing improvisation while cautioning against unauthorized adaptations.
Scouts' Honor	This outline explores humor within a traditional scout camp setting. Scouts face responsibilities and comedic misadventures, highlighting a clash between scouting ideals and their antics. A strict scout leader contrasts with the scouts' desire for freedom, driving humorous moments and character development as they navigate chaos and learn from their experiences.
Instant Monsters	This chapter examines both literal and metaphorical monsters, using humor to express characters' fears and insecurities. A spooky event triggers misunderstandings and comedic encounters, with monsters symbolizing internal struggles, such as fear of failure. Characters confront their "instant monsters" and learn valuable life lessons about fear and self-acceptance through humorous chaos.

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Chapter 36: Glossary

Summary of the Glossary on Film Credits

This comprehensive glossary elucidates the myriad roles and responsibilities within film production, particularly as they appear in movie credits. Each category of contributor plays a crucial part in translating a screenplay into a cohesive film.

Director and Creative Team The director is the visionary leader overseeing all creative decisions, while the writer, often less influential on set, is still critical in shaping the script. Producers manage logistics, finances, and the hiring of key talent, with executive producers influential in the project's inception.

Technical Department Heads

- **Director of Photography (DP)** collaborates closely with the director, determining cinematography choices like camera angles and lighting.
- The **Production Designer** creates the film's visual style, from sets to costumes, requiring approval for their designs from the director and producer.
- **Editors** are tasked with assembling the footage into a narrative, often



working in tandem with directors to refine the final cut. Similarly, **costume and makeup designers** develop character looks under strict oversight.

Support Roles:

- The **First Assistant Director** is pivotal in managing schedules and communication on set, ensuring smooth operations.
- The **Unit Production Manager** oversees budgets and reports, essential for keeping the film's costs in check.

Sound and Music: The **Production Sound Mixer** captures and balances audio during filming, while the **Music Supervisor** and scoring team are vital in creating the film's auditory atmosphere.

Visual Effects (VFX): With the rise of digital effects, roles like VFX Supervisor, CG Supervisor, and various digital artists have become prominent, each responsible for integrating visual elements that enhance storytelling.

Costume and Makeup: The costume department ensures the actors' wardrobes align with the film's vision, while makeup artists execute the designs mandated by their lead designer.

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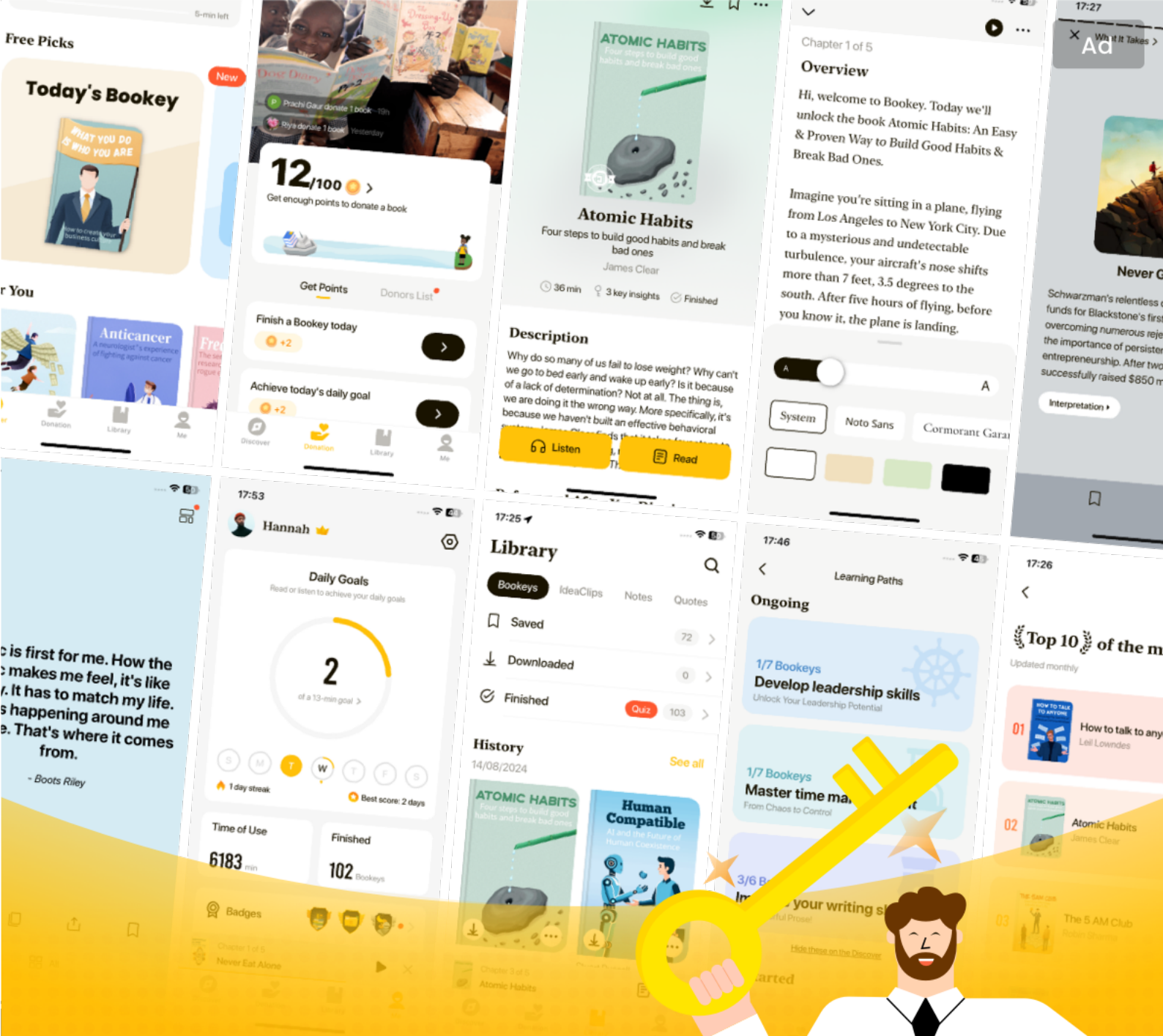
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Location and Practical Effects: Location managers scout and secure filming sites, ensuring logistical arrangements are handled, whereas the **Stunt Coordinator** and their team achieve action sequences safely.

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Chapter 37 Summary: Acknowledgments

Acknowledgments Summary

In this brief section, the authors express their gratitude to individuals who contributed to the creation of the work. They specifically mention David Lincoln, acknowledging his support or contributions, and extend thanks to another individual named Glarn, whose role, while not detailed, suggests significance to the authors' journey. This acknowledgment sets a tone of appreciation, highlighting the collaborative effort behind the project and connecting the readers to the human aspect of writing.

(Note: No changes made to the content beyond summarizing for clarity.)

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Chapter 38 Summary: Index

The book under discussion comprehensively navigates the intricate world of screenwriting and the film industry. Through various chapters, it explores essential components such as character development, plot structure, and the dynamics of the business side of filmmaking.

Overview of Key Themes

Industry Structure and Roles:

The chapters elucidate the critical roles of agents, managers, and producers in shaping a film's direction and success. Agents negotiate deals and provide essential guidance, while producers are pivotal in overseeing the filming process. Understanding the differences between these roles helps clarify their impact on a project from inception to execution.

Character Development and Screenwriting:

Characterization is underscored as a vital aspect of storytelling. Effective characters drive the narrative and resonate with audiences. The text provides insights into crafting memorable heroes and supporting characters while highlighting the significance of leveraging actor traits for authentic portrayals.

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Business Elements of Filmmaking:

A substantial focus is placed on the financial aspects of filmmaking, including earnings, residuals, and royalties. The text brings to light the importance of understanding contracts and financial negotiations, which can significantly affect a writer's livelihood.

Script Development Processes:

The book dissects the lifecycle of a script, from initial drafts through revisions and production rewrites. Key processes, such as coverage and notes meetings, are explained with an emphasis on how they refine a script's quality. The significance of outlines and structural coherence is also emphasized, helping writers conceive their narratives logically.

Criticism and Market Positioning:

Navigating the role of critics and the impact of marketing is crucial for a film's reception. The text offers strategies for understanding audience expectations and adapting scripts to meet market demands while maintaining creative integrity.

Cultural References and Anecdotal Insights:

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Sprinkled throughout the chapters are various anecdotes and references to iconic films and personalities, such as "Casablanca" and "Die Hard," which serve to illustrate broader industry principles and practices. These references not only enhance the context but provide reader engagement through familiar cultural touchstones.

Writing and Collaboration:

The text underscores the importance of collaboration between writers, directors, and actors. Emphasizing patience and diplomacy highlights the interpersonal dynamics that often dictate a project's ultimate success.

Concluding Insights

Each chapter methodically builds upon the last, offering readers a robust understanding of both the creative and business facets of screenwriting. By dissecting industry norms and evolving practices, the text serves as a comprehensive guide for aspiring writers and industry professionals, making it indispensable for navigating the filmmaking landscape.

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