

SCREENwriter's (MONTHLY)

it all begins with a screenplay.....

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- by Chris Wehner



Let's see, how good a year has it been so far for Chris Kentis? First, his digitally shot film, *OPEN WATER*, gets a warm reception at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival; then he and his wife Laura Lou sell the rights for 1\$ million and the film opens number 5 at the box office; and lastly, he is invited to be on *The Late Show* with David Letterman.

Open Water is writer/director Chris Kentis's second feature film. His first feature, *Grind* (1997), starring Billy Crudup, Adrienne Shelly and Amanda Peet, was co-written by his wife, Laura Lau. Kentis is an award winning film editor and a graduate of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts film program. Lau helped Kentis shoot the film and acted as the film's producer.

Based on a true story, *Open Water* follows an American couple, Daniel and Susan, (Daniel Travis and Ryan) on an island holiday. As the film opens, we learn they both desperately need

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OPEN WATER

Writer/director Chris Kentis tells you how he made a potential blockbuster on a low budget

Screenwriter's Market Reports

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Point of Entry



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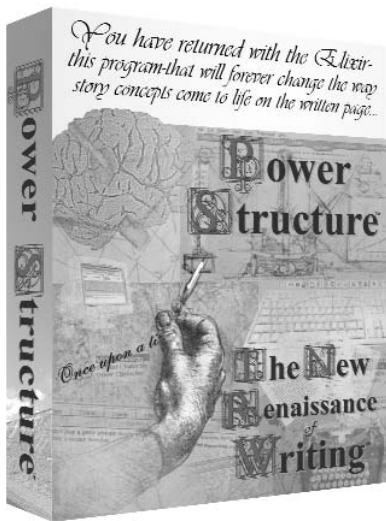
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Philippa Burgess of Mason/ Burgess/Lifschultz is a literary manager in Los Angeles who represents screenwriters working in Hollywood.

Playing the Hollywood game to get your script out there is like dating, hoping to find "the one", which in this case looks like a big spec sale or a greenlight for production on your script. In this world as the writer, you are always the girl, waiting for them to call, for them to ask you out or for them to ask for your hand in marriage. For some writers it is always the bridesmaid and never the bride when it comes to selling material. Why do some scripts get sold and others optioned? The basic answer can be found in the distinction between high concept and low concept ideas. The high concept ideas are the marrying kind. The low concept ideas you might date, and under the right circumstances they may just surprise you and be "the one" after all.

The Spec Script Market - The Debutante Ball

The spec script market offers a unique opportunity to new writers outside the system. This is your coming out party. Anyone can sell a spec. The definition of a spec by a writer is something that they write for free in the hope that someone will buy it from them later. However, the industry definition of a spec is a high concept idea that can be taken to market competitively. Specs are taken to market - the market is studio producers or producers with studio relationships - in what is a 48 to 72 hour process where the studios either bid for it or they don't. It is the high concept that gives the project heat in the marketplace, which in turn gets it read and considered quickly. The spec game is an organized system for representatives to sell to production companies and studios. Fear and chaos rule the marketplace, so getting good buzz on a project is important to leveraging a sale.

A Script Sale - Engagement

A spec sale is where a studio or buyer purchases the rights to a project. This is the equivalent to winning the heart of the man of your dreams and getting a very expensive diamond ring. When a spec sale is announced in the trades, you may read that it is a low six-figure against a mid six-figure deal. This means that the writer is paid low six-figures for their script. For instance, let's say it is a \$150,000 against \$300,000 deal. The balance, or the other \$150,000 will only be paid at the start of principal photography if the script ever goes into production. This bonus amount is reducible by half if there is shared credit. The WGA protects the interest and credit of the first writer, so another writer would need to re-write more than 60 percent of the original script in order to get a shared writing credit. This is the best of all worlds and a great first step to building your career.

The Selling Game - Dating

Matchmaker, matchmaker, make me a match. Agents and managers sell to producers. Producers sell to the studios. Studios do their best to say no unless they have to say yes. Consider that everyone who is in a position to sell or buy is subjective about the material they are championing. It is corporate suicide for a studio executive to make a business decision to authorize to pay a large sum of money and purchase a script unless there is an agreement. This agreement is best gained through a sense of competition, where the studio or buyer feels that, if they don't take the script off the table (make a deal), then someone else will. It can also be gained with a marketable element, such as a star or high-end director attached to the project. Other times there is either a relationship or a corporate mandate that makes a project favorable for the studio or buyer to purchase. The competitive situation is best achieved with high concept scripts that are taken to the spec market by agents or managers. Otherwise it is best to let producers option your material and use their relationships to get attachments or find favorable situations for getting your script made.

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agenda

DAY 1

- The writer and the art of story
- The decline of story in contemporary film, t.v., theatre and literature
- Story design: the meaning of story, the substance of story, the limitations and inspirations of story structure and genre, the debate between character versus story design.
- Premise Idea, Counter Idea, Controlling Idea
- Story Structure: beat, scene, sequence, act, story
- Mapping the Story universe: Archplot, Miniplot, Antiplot
- Shaping the source of story energy and creation

DAY 2

- Act design: the great sweep and body of story
- The first major story event (the inciting incident)
- Scene design in Story: turning points, emotional dynamics, setup/payoff, the nature of choice
- Ordering and linking scenes
- Exposition: dramatizing your characters, the story setting, creating back story
- The principles of antagonism
- Crisis, climax and resolution

DAY 3

- Putting the elements of story together
- The principles of character dimension and design
- The text: description, dialogue, and poetics
- The spectrum of story genres
- Story adaptations
- Scene analysis: text and sub-text; design through dialogue versus design through action
- The writer's method: working from the inside out; the creative process from inspiration to final draft
- How it all works: the principles of the previous 2-1/2 days applied in a 6-hour, scene-by-scene screening and analysis of *Casablanca*

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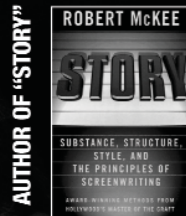
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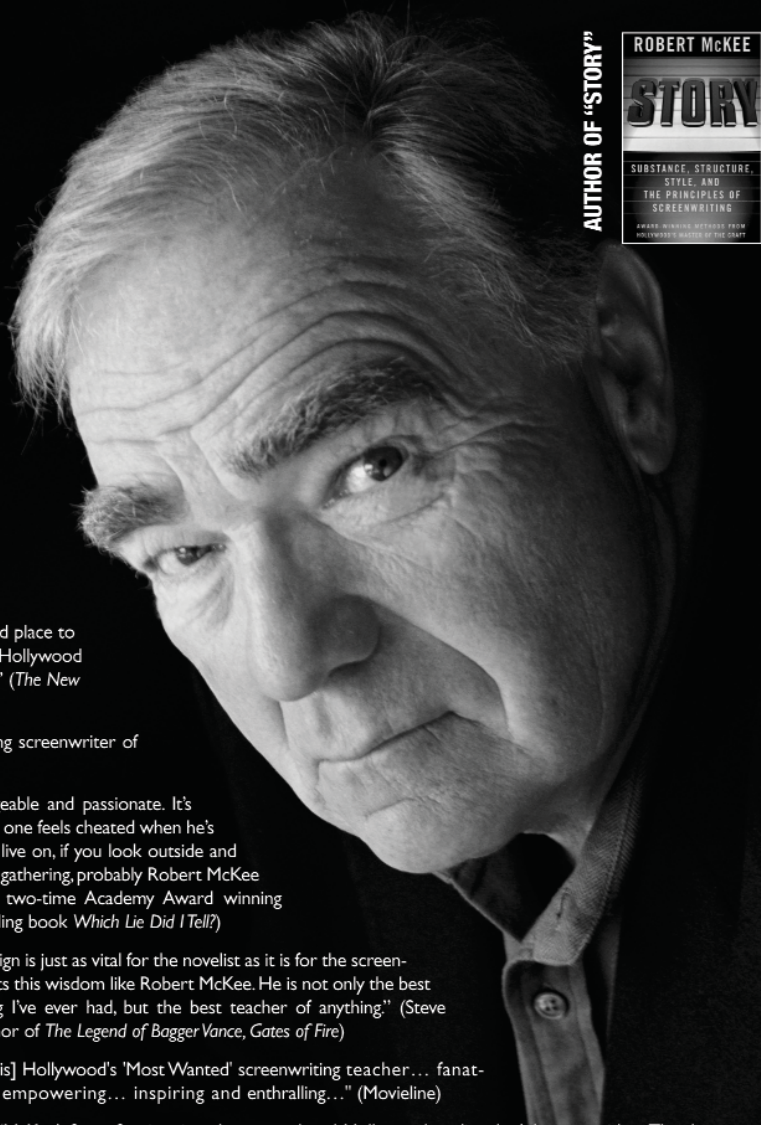
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AUTHOR OF "STORY"



An Option Agreement - Going Steady

An option agreement is where a producer wants to secure the rights to material for a specific amount of time. Quite commonly it is a \$1 option. This usually buys the producer a minimum of three months and a maximum of a year or two. Then the amount to renew the option goes up incrementally with each extension that the producer uses. An option agreement has a final purchase price negotiated into the agreement. It provides a floor, the lowest price to be paid, which is recommended if not required to be a WGA minimum, regardless of whether you are a member or not. It also sets a ceiling, the most that you can be paid, which is determined by any previous quotes or whatever the producer feels is the outside that anyone will pay. The actual purchase amount is determined to be a percentage of the budget of the film that will not be less than the floor or more than the ceiling.

High Concept Material - Being the Dream Girl

High concept ideas are smart and sexy. Only the most commercial scripts will be considered for the spec market. What makes an idea high concept is an original idea that we haven't seen before within a familiar genre. The basic genres on the light side are comedy, romantic comedy and action-comedy and on the dark side action, thriller and horror. These represent the emotions that you are eliciting from the audience. Each of these basic genres has its structure and certain beats that it needs to hit. Other terms such as period, sports, sci-fi or family can be married to these genres, but it is the basic genre that sells it.

Low Concept Material - The Cute Girl

Dramas are typically less commercial, no matter how compelling the idea. What will ultimately make a drama commercial for a studio are the actors who get involved. Dramas can make excellent movies but usually don't make it to the spec market. Low concept applies to other genres as well where the story is more character rather than concept driven. There is room in the marketplace

for low concept material, but it takes more time and in roads to get it to the right people. These are the projects that are most likely to be optioned. They need to find a champion who can bring together the right elements before they can move toward production.

The Aftermath - A Broken Heart or Wedding Bells

The writer also needs to understand that, regardless of whether a spec script sells or not, the spec market is the best tool to get them introduced to the marketplace. After a spec goes out, it is a great opportunity to take meetings with the development executives who read your script and responded positively to the writing. When the writer is in the room, they can talk about their portfolio of ideas, both high and low concept. The more fans that you have around town, the easier it is to facilitate your career goals. Your fans will want to find a reason to get in business with you. Given the way the system runs, sometimes great material doesn't sell, and lesser quality material does. In the case of material that does not sell which still has merit, this is where packaging with the right elements comes into play. Great material finds its way. Your fans will always champion your great scripts with the right people.

The Career - Marital Bliss

Your arc as a screenwriter is to transition from being an outsider to an insider. As an outsider, your best opportunity to break into the system is with your most commercial material. Although you may have both high and low concept scripts in your portfolio, you want to focus the possible spec as your point of entry. A spec can be that opportunity to break into the system and lead you to a long and happy marriage. If you lead with your other material, the process just takes a lot longer. Trust that once you are in the system, some if not all of your other projects will find their way. In dating, as in writing, it may take some effort to look your best and make a great first impression, but it will give you the best opportunity to find "the one". -PB

It's OPEN WATER for Chris Kentis

Interview [By Chris Wehner]



Blanchard Ryan and Daniel Travis in a Lions Gate film

Open Water is writer/director Chris Kentis's second feature film. His first feature, *Grind* (1997), starring Billy Crudup, Adrienne Shelly and Amanda Peet, was co-written by his wife, Laura Lau. Kentis is an award winning film editor and a graduate of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts film program. Lau helped Kentis shoot the film and acted as the film's producer.

The only additional crew was made up of family members who pitched in as production assistants and the various boat captains who got them out to sea. Shot mainly over weekends and on holidays, the film's primary location was the ocean, where the actors routinely hovered 1,500 feet above the sea floor, sometimes with actual sharks swimming about. Production started in an ominous way when, on the first day of shooting, actress Blanchard Ryan was bitten by a large barracuda. Miraculously, though, filming from there on out was mostly uneventful.

Based on a true story, *Open Water* follows an American couple, Daniel and Susan, (Daniel Travis and Ryan) on an island holiday. As the film opens, we learn they both desperately need a break from workaholic lifestyles. When they arrive at their island destination, they do the simple things such as a walk on the beach. But we learn that the two have drifted apart as a result of their hectic and demanding careers.

The next morning they board a local dive boat overcrowded with other vacationers for an underwater tour of the reef, but due to a series of miscommunications and a distracted crew, the couple is, after only forty minutes or so underwater, accidentally left behind to face their fears and emotions and an almost certain death.

What was your experience like at film school, and were you there as a writer as well?

Really for film. There were screenwriting courses, and you certainly learn the craft of filmmaking from the idea to the editing of the film. You learn to work with others and collaborate as well. It really was a great experience.

What did you do after your graduation?

My feeling coming out of school production was that it was really hard work to the point where you had no free time at all. It's grueling work working on a crew and lining up the next job. With writing you just get out of school and say you're going to be a writer and right away earn a living. What I ended up doing mostly by chance was the world of trailers. Getting out of school and entering the marketing side of film wasn't really what was on my mind but, you know, anything I could do to earn a living. What was good about it was that I got to see films at all different stages, from reading the screenplay,

It's OPEN WATER for Chris Kentis



Blanchard Ryan and Daniel Travis

dailies, how the directors work, shooting, rough cuts, editing, and I got to meet a lot of interesting people.

As an editor how much has it helped you as a writer?

A lot. Everyone says a script of 120 pages comes out as a feature length movie, which is nonsense, that's the standard, but anyone who shoots that script as it is will wind up with a three-hour movie. I really developed an understanding on how to develop a story efficiently without a lot of fat. The editing work I've done really taught me a lot about writing visually, you know, different visual ways of communicating ideas and developing a certain economy in writing the script so it's as clean as possible. Yet even when you get to production you're still rewriting, and even though you think you have a tight script, in the editing process you realize still how much fat can be trimmed from it and still communicate the essential elements of the story.

How many pages was *Open Water*?

It came out to about 90 pages, and there were still scenes we cut out.

Comparing the script to the editing process, did you need to change any structural or tonal issues?

There are certainly things that don't work once it's filmed that you thought would.

I really don't see myself as a writer to begin with. I find writing to be a very challenging and intimidating process. After Laura and I made our first film, *Grind* — and I am very proud of a lot of that film, — but one of the things I learned was that I really needed to improve as a writer. I realized that I had to become a writer because I really wasn't going to get any good scripts offered to me. So I hunkered down and starting writing screenplays and really started for the first time learning the craft.

With *Open Water*, my wife and I are both scuba divers. I read about this story, and I thought it was really scary but never thought about trying to do it. It was the advancements in digital technology that allowed me to really consider doing this film. We wanted to make a movie we could self-finance and

control. As for this story of two divers who get left behind, I went and researched it. I found out there were other instances where this happened. I did some research on sailors left out in the ocean at wartime. So once I had all this information and I sat down to write the script, the story just poured out of me. I wrote the script in six days. I showed it to Laura, and she helped me rewrite it. She did some rewriting, and essentially, the structure of the script never changed much. The different rewrites came together pretty quickly. After a couple rewrites we set out to cast it.

So much of this movie had to do with how we were going to make it and shoot it, how we were going to use the technology at hand. We wanted complete realism with the film. A lot of that was dictated by the digital video filming, how we shot it and that we had unknown actors. So the circumstances really dictated that.

Once we cast the actors, we spent a lot of time getting to know them, and then we went back and did a final rewrite, kind of filling in the blanks in terms of the characters, creating the dialogue and trying to create a real couple that people in the audience would recognize in themselves or significant other. So once these actors were in the water and in harm's way, the audience might feel like they were in the couple's shoes. We had to bring the audience into the film. We didn't want to make the story convoluted with big subplots or over the top revelations and clichés like the cheating spouse or anything like that. I remember that we didn't want to do any cutting back to anything else once they were in the water, and to have a backstory there, we would have had to do that.

We really had to keep it simple and have, for the most part, two actors and one location, the ocean, which was actually like fifteen different locations [laughs]. So we just put them out there and stayed with them.

With the indie guerrilla style filmmaking you had to employ, were there circumstances that dictated how you filmed it or told the story?

No, actually it was very tightly scripted. At first we thought about adlibbing some, and in the casting process we had actors do some improvements, but when it came down to reality and what it was going to take once we were out in the water, we had to make sure it was well scripted and concise. Once we were out there shooting, we had freedom to change dialogue around some, but really that was not needed very often.

Reading from the press notes, you drop these two poor actors into the ocean with real sharks around

It's OPEN WATER for Chris Kentis

them and then proceed to throw chunks of bloodied tuna flesh in around them [laugh], so can I assume there wasn't any trouble getting the actors to look scared?

A lot of people assume that, and I'm proud of this mainly because the actors, Blanchard Ryan and Daniel Travis, did such a phenomenal job, but it was all acting on their part. We only spent two days with the sharks out of five or six weeks. You're very limited in what you can do around the sharks. You can't scream or flail around. You can't even move your arms suddenly. We had a very specific list of shots we needed in those first two days, and we got them.

I read about the jellyfish scene where you thought you might have trouble finding some, and then out of the blue they show up.

We had a lot of good luck on this shoot. People ask us, "What went wrong during filming?" And I have to say that if anything did we wouldn't have had a movie.

Well, since you had to film all of the actor's reactions away from the sharks, you had to use some subject treatment techniques like Hitchcock and Spielberg (*Jaws*).

We were very conscious of that. What we were after is that feeling you get when you swim out to far and wonder, "What's underneath me?" Even if we had more money I wouldn't have changed that. We wanted to stick to the point of view of the characters. Everything in the water and the way you see the shark was from that. The shark guys we shot with have worked on Hollywood movies, and they were even saying that they had never worked like that with 90 percent of the action taking place on the surface. What a person can't see is always scarier than not seeing them.

How difficult was it to get tuned into what someone would be thinking and feeling in that situation, stranded and left behind, facing possible if not certain death.

There's certain logic and reactions that I have had myself as a diver. Never is the movie more personal than when you're writing. You sit there, and you're so intimately involved with it, and then after filming and in the editing, sometimes you forget there's a method to the madness. People assume the couple in the movie is based on Laura and me, which isn't so.

The emotional response wasn't hard to imagine. I've surfaced and had the boat be gone before, so I drew from my own experiences and from my imagination. The challenge of working with a small cast and out on the ocean is engaging the audience in a realistic manner. What we ultimately had to do was try to get the audience tuned into the characters and



Director Chris Kentis holding a waterproof digital video camera used to film Lions Gate's OPEN WATER.

the drama so they would feel what the characters feel. For example, when they surface and discover their boat is gone, yet in the distance they see a boat, the audience knows that their boat won't come back, but they don't. So when they decide not to swim, it will invoke a response from the audience. With the current it's ludicrous to try to swim anyway. So it's a constant issue of raising questions — "What should they do?"

Would there be a grieving process then that these divers would go through as it becomes clear they most likely will not get rescued?

Yes, we were very conscious of that. Even within the dynamics of the relationship. We setup the relationship — which I think is common today — where both spouses have careers and are so busy that they're not even really seeing each other anymore. They keep delaying this vacation, and they finally take one, both eager to reconnect their lives. A lot of the baggage they're carrying around eventually comes out when they're in the water, so we have a scene where it does. I was thinking about those stages on the relationship level and on the individual survival level as well. We had to show them reacting to the anger, fear, denial and acceptance.

So clearly, this isn't a premise driven story like it's described as being.

The bottom line: I wanted to make this specific, simple story but portray it on screen so the audience has the same response as I did when I read about this actual event. The story is not classically character driven; it is somewhat premise based, but the focus was always on these two people adrift in the ocean and what it would be like. It's a frightening thought for sure. I hope we conveyed all of the emotions and character like we intended. - CW



Sofia Coppola likes MARIE-ANTOINETTE

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The Presence (Supernatural Thriller)

Pitch: A mother dies giving birth to her son. Twenty-five years later he has just married and returns to his birth home to start his family. Unfortunately, his mom's spirit haunts the place.

Writer: Steven De Souza (co-writer of *Die Hard*, will also direct)

Agent: Rob Carlson (William Morris Agency)

Buyer: Four Winds Pictures

Price: NA

Details: Khamraj Anrud, Tom Craig, and Four Wind's Drew Grindstaff will produce.

How to Win Back Your High School Sweetheart (Comedy)

Pitch: A high school student seeks revenge against the girl who broke his heart by concocting an elaborate scheme to win her back, just so he can break up with her.

Writer: Robert Gelber

Agent: John Jacobs & Colin O'Reilly and atty. Rob Szymanski of Eclipse

Buyer: Level 1 Entertainment

Price: Low-six against mid-six figures

Details: Script was discovered from the Scriptapalooza screenwriting contest. Level One's Edward Milstein and Bill Todman Jr. will produce.

In the Land of Women (Comedy)

Pitch: For an L.A. comedy screenwriter suffering from a broken heart, moving to the suburbs of Michigan to take care of his ailing, eccentric grandmother, is a bit more than he can handle as he becomes involved with a house full of women across the street.

Writer: Jonathan Kasden (to make directorial debut)

Agent: Tobin Babst of UTA and mng. Guymon Casady of Management 360

Buyer: Castle Rock Entertainment

Price: NA

Details: Lawrence Kasden (*Dreamcatcher*), Jonathan's father, will executive produce. Meg Ryan and Adam Brody to possibly star. Anonymous Content's Steve Golin and David Kanter will produce.

Marie-Antoinette (Drama)

Pitch: The story of the French queen and her country on the verge of a revolution.

Writer: Sofia Coppola (Oscar winning screenwriter for *Lost in Translation*, will also direct)

Agent: Bart Walker of ICM and Barry Hirsch of Hirsch Jackoway Tyerman Wertheimer Austen Mandelbaum & Morris.

Buyer: Columbia Pictures

Price: NA

Details: Sofia Coppola and Ross Katz will produce. Kirsten Dunst to possibly star.

Matrophobia: The Fear of Becoming Your Mother (Comedy)

Pitch: A woman's life is mysteriously intertwined with the planet Saturn, and when it upends, the forward momentum of the successful 28-year old woman changes when her 56-year-old mother shows up on her doorstep.

Writer: Lizzie Weiss (co-writer of *Blue Crush*)

Agent: Shana Eddy of UTA

Buyer: Walt Disney Studios

Price: Mid-six figures

Details: Sold as a pitch based on an idea by Pfeffer Film's Rachel Pfeffer and Asha Kurian. Pfeffer Film's Rachel Pfeffer will produce.

Smoke (Supernatural Thriller)

Pitch: A physically abused dancer leaves her home for an apartment complex where she has premonitions of a tragic fire.

Writer: Ronnie Christensen

Agent: Steve Fisher of APA and Michelle Wallerstein-Weiss of Paragon

Buyer: Gold Circle Films

Price: NA

Details: This was sold as a spec script. Gold Circle's Paul Brooks, Vertigo Entertainment's Roy Lee & Doug Davison and Bedlam Media's Lauren Lloyd will produce.

Die Hard 4 (Action)

Pitch: Fourth installment of New York cop John McClane's exploits.

Writer: Doug Richardson

Agent: Sara Bottfeld of William Morris Agency

Buyer: Twentieth Century Fox

Price: NA

Details: This is a rewrite. The latest draft was written by Mark Bombback, who redrafted a pre-existing Fox script called *World War 3.com*. Cheyenne Enterprises's Bruce Willis and Arnold Rifkin will oversee development of the script. Bruce Willis to possibly star.

Superstition (Supernatural Thriller)

Pitch: A group of college students' psychology experiment goes haywire and creates a ghost.

Writer: Neal Marshall Stevens (will also direct)

Agent: Jon Huddle & Stacey Rosenfelt of ICM

Buyer: Radar Pictures

Price: NA

Details: To be adapted from David Ambrose's novel. Alex Sokoloff and Kimball Greenough wrote an earlier draft.

Hong Kong Heist (Action)

Pitch: Rival gangs are drafted by a triad leader to steal three rare gems.

Writer: Dan McDermott

Agent: David Lubliner of William Morris Agency

Buyer: Twentieth Century Fox

Price: Mid-six against high-six figures

Details: McDermott was president of DreamWorks TV before turning to screenwriting full time.

The Victims (Thriller)

Pitch: Deadly intrigue is encountered by a book editor when he follows his married lover and her husband out of the country on business.

Writer: Elisa Bell

Agent: Michael Eisner of William Morris Agency

Buyer: Universal Pictures

Price: NA

Details: This will be a remake of the French film *Les Victimes*, by Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac. Frederic Golchan Productions' Frederic Golchan and Sommer Company's Stephen Sommers & Bob Ducsay will produce.

DiCaprio Instigates Beating of Screenwriter?

News and information concerning screenwriters and their craft

It's that 70s Show Again

William Booth of the *Washington Post* noted that Hollywood's fixation with '70s comedy does not center on the idealism of the '60s.

"The '70s have built-in humor. You got the guy in the big Afro, you have the bell-bottoms. Man, the audience is starting to smile. They're already halfway there," Fred Wolf, screenwriter of *Joe Dirt* and *Dickie Roberts: Former Child Star*, told the publication. (Examples: Circa '70s kiddie actor David Spade reliving his childhood in the '90s). (mullet-wearing metalhead reject David Spade, trapped in the '70s)

But this does not mean that you should try to crank out a '70s themed story. By the time you read this, you'll have already missed out on the trend.

Say it Ain't So... Tarantino and Sofia?

According to the *London Free Press* Quentin Tarantino and Sofia Coppola are an item. In May, during the Cannes Film Festival, Tarantino and Coppola, 33, started seeing each other. Bumble Ward, publicist for both, confirmed that the two "enjoy each other's company." The couple was recently photographed together in Madrid, Spain, where the 41-year-old Tarantino was promoting the second installment of *Kill Bill*.

Screenwriter Beheaded. Suspect Arrested at Paramount Studios

A brutal and savage crime in June took the life of screenwriter Robert Lees, who was ninety-one. Lees began his career in the late '30s for MGM, producing a series of short films called *Crime Doesn't Pay*. In 1940, his first feature length movie, titled *Street of Memories*, was released by 20th Century Fox. During World War II, Lees and writing partner Fred Rinaldo participated in Frank Capra's U. S. Army film making unit. After the war, the two

wrote movies for Abbott and Costello before being blacklisted during the McCarthy era. Lees began a new career writing for television under the pseudonym J.E. Selby. As Selby, Lees has credits for such programs as "Alfred Hitchcock Presents," "Flipper," "Daktari" and "Rawhide" among others. Apparently, the suspect, Keven Lee Graff, 27, a homeless man, broke into Lees' home and executed him, then crawled over to a neighbors, still in possession of Lees' head, and stabbed to death a neighbor. The suspect was later arrested while acting suspiciously outside the gate at Paramount studios.

DiCaprio Instigates Beating of Screenwriter?

Here's an interesting if not humorous tidbit. According to a *New York Daily News* report recently, a \$45 million lawsuit against *Gangs of New York* star Leonardo DiCaprio may be unfolding. According to the report, the "bar-hopping heartthrob" instigated a fight by encouraging his friends to beat up a lowly screenwriter. Roger Wilson, the screenwriter, apparently become upset when DiCaprio invited the screenwriter's girlfriend, *Showgirls* star Elizabeth Berkley, to his table. (You know how far an actress has fallen when she's dating a screenwriter.)

A Manhattan Supreme Court Justice was reported as saying that she found parts of Wilson's version of events "troubling," but she would not issue a ruling in the case for a couple of months. Wilson reportedly became angry with DiCaprio during dinner at midtown restaurant Asia de Cuba in 1998. Wilson claims DiCaprio incited his friends to attack Wilson outside the Madison Avenue eatery when the screenwriter tried to confront the star.

Wilson's \$45 million lawsuit claims he suffered a broken larynx that put an end to his singing career when he was struck in the throat by one of the star's accomplices. He is suing the actor, who denies the allegations, for aiding and abetting the attack.

- Staff

“Studio executives are intelligent, brutally overworked men and women who share one thing in common with baseball managers: they wake up every morning of the world with the knowledge that sooner or later they're going to get fired.” —William Goldman

Two-time Oscar-winner William Goldman is one of the finest storytellers ever to work in Hollywood. He tackled other mediums first, publishing a novel, “The Temple of Gold” (1957), which he followed with two more works of fiction before turning his attention to the theater. With his older brother James, Goldman wrote the 1961 play *Blood, Sweat, and Stanley Poole* and the pair later co-wrote the book for the ill-fated 1962 Broadway musical *A Family Affair*, with a score by John Kander and James Goldman. He received his initial film credit for *Soldier in the Rain* (1963), based on his 1960 novel of the same name, but his first crack at writing directly for the screen came when Cliff Robertson hired him to adapt Daniel Keyes’ *Flowers for Algernon*—eventually filmed as *Charly* in 1968—which existed in teleplay and short-novel form. Although Goldman did not complete that project, he did receive his first screenwriting credit for *Americanizing* Michael Relph’s *Masquerade* (1965) script when Robertson replaced Rex Harrison in the picture.

Goldman adapted Ross McDonald’s *The Moving Target* for the successful *Harper* (1966), starring Paul Newman, but he really established his credentials with the Oscar-winning original screenplay for *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969), which teamed Newman and Robert Redford. Scripts for the Redford vehicles *The Hot Rock* (1972) and *The Great Waldo Pepper* (1975), preceded the Oscar-winning adaptation of *All the President’s Men* (1976), a marvel of clarity, considering the labyrinthine subject matter, the Watergate scandal. That same year, adapting his novel *Marathon Man* to the screen, Goldman gave audiences the marvelously evil Nazi dentist (Laurence Olivier) torturing Dustin Hoffman while asking, “Is it safe?” Although his only original screenplay since 1969 is *Year of the Comet* (1992), he has stayed busy adapting the work of writers like Cornelius Ryan (*A Bridge Too Far* 1977), Stephen King (*Misery* 1990; *Hearts In Atlantis* 2001; *Dreamcatcher* 2003), John Grisham (*The Chamber* 1996), Nelson Demille (*The General’s Daughter* 1999) and David Baldacci (*Absolute Power* 1997), as well as his own popular novels (*Magic* 1978, *Heat* and *The Princess Bride*, both 1987). In addition, he collaborated with William Boyd and Bryan Forbes on *Chaplin* (1992) and provided the script for *Maverick* (1994), based on the ABC-TV Western series of the 50s and 60s.

Goldman has also written widely acclaimed non-fiction works: “The Season: A Candid Look at

Broadway” (1969), in which he uses the plays produced during the 1967-68 season as the basis for an analytical dissection of the Broadway theater; “Adventures in the Screen Trade” (1983), a light-hearted, insider’s look at the film business; “Wait till Next Year: The Story of a Season When What Should’ve Happened Didn’t & What Could’ve Gone Wrong Did” (1988), written with sports-writer Mike Lupica; and “Hype and Glory” (1990), his breezy first-hand account of judging both the 1988 Cannes Film Festival and the Miss American pageant within the space of one year. One of Hollywood’s favorite script doctors, he has often done credited and uncredited revisions on ailing screenplays, such as the 1993 Arnold Schwarzenegger film *Last Action Hero* and *Jurassic Park III* (2001).

Goldman’s latest effort is adapting the adventures of the comic book superhero Captain Marvel to the big screen for *Shazam!*

Awards:

- 1966 - Edgar Allen Poe Award - Best Motion Picture Screenplay - *Harper*
- 1969 - Writers Guild of America Award - Best-Written American Drama Written Directly for the Screen - *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*
- 1969 - Oscar - Best Original Screenplay - *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*
- 1970 - British Film Academy Award - Best Screenplay - *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*
- 1976 - Writers Guild of America Award - Best-Written Drama Adapted from Another Medium - *All the President’s Men*
- 1976 - Oscar - Best Adapted Screenplay - *All the President’s Men*
- 1977 - NATO Writer of the Year Award - presented by the National Association of Theater Owners
- 1985 - Writers Guild of America Laurel Award
- 1987 - NATO Writer of the Year Award - presented by the National Association of Theater Owners
- 2000 - Las Vegas Film Critics William Holden Lifetime Achievement Award

Source: *baseline filmtracker*

“Vodka Helps” —Fred de Cordova

We are proud to feature excerpts from Hollywood producer Mark Bennett’s manuscript “The Big Show.”

We start shooting in one week and it is the morning of our meeting with ABC.

Lights are up, the floor has been painted, and now for the first time, what had been merely ether, I watch as my sets are being delivered to Studio 36.

I cried.

It was as if our wonderfully talented designer Roy Christopher reached in my brain and plucked out what I saw (and what was Network Approved).

All Fred could say was, "This is good."

My response?

"Thank you."

Upstairs in our offices, we made some phone calls and waited for the car to pick us up.

Everything was as ready as it could have been. All our paperwork, organized. My representative at CAA was to meet us at the Network, and it felt as if everyone was on the same page when that Armani voice calls me.

"We need to reschedule. I have a luncheon with George Lucas," says my timely agent.

Fred was a little annoyed as was I but then he made the suggestion for CAA to go ahead with their lunch, we would still honor the meeting with ABC and that perhaps our contract attorney Leslie Abell would make an appearance in their stead.

CAA reluctantly agreed.

Since there is never rest for the weary, or maybe it's a Murphy's Law type situation, but one of our key Top-Flight Talent Artists (Please note: Delivery Requirements) called with some...issues. Some appropriate, others typically not.

This definitely required some Fred finesse, but that meant he'd have to stay behind. He would always quip, "Let the Network reschedule you, not the other way around."

As a result, I brought one of our other producers for another set of ears and his expertise in production to come with me and Fred made sure I told ABC where he could be reached and that he, "Sends his best."

We all gathered in Mark Zakarin's office.

Small talk ensues when the door opens and Mark stands.

"John is going to be joining us," Mark states as John Hamlin enters with another gentleman I have not met face to face from Business Affairs.

If you haven't spotted the mark in the first half-hour at the table, you're it.

"I thought this was a Creative meeting," I discreetly whisper to my attorney Les, clearly indicating how not a good sign this is.

"I asked John to be here because I have already

notified ABC that I will be leaving effective immediately and that John here will be your Creative lead on the show."

John? The Fred's-most-tactless-moment John?

"I'm honored you would want to participate in helping us see this through. Thank you," I say in an Academy Award winning performance.

I'm fucked, I'm fucked, I'm fucked, and I'm fucked.

"Well, let me hand out our schedule and I guess I'll give this to John then, okay?" I express to Mark with I'm sure, a deer-in-the-headlights look on my face that I couldn't conceal.

"Sure, that's correct," Mr. Zakarin nods pretending not to notice.

I turn to Mr. Business Affairs who appears not to have liked me on sight, "Would you like this as well?"

"Yes please."

John Hamlin rubs his forehead and from the first word he (re)mixes and (re)matches the performers that we'd spent time putting together, suggests getting rid of others; he changes the amount of music, the host, and the title too. Now that may seem crazy and I must confess as it was happening his awards show approach didn't feel great, but when one takes a step back to see where he is coming from, it can be a different story.

First, it is my belief that Mark's leaving was a surprise to everyone. Also you figure that his departure has significant effect on let's say ten other shows just like ours.

Second, we could have been canned right then and there. This is not the case and John Hamlin at the very least likes some of what we've done so far and is willing to oversee this on top of his already existing award show franchise(s) that gear up this time of year.

Third, when this happens, the new Executive wants his thumbprint on it. He doesn't want to be stuck with the last guy's failure but also to some extent does not want the last guy's success either.

Fourth, this was not an awards show.

We now enter the blessing/curse phase.

"...I have two objectives with this show. One, to see this get on the air, and Two, to see you move ahead."

- Fred de Cordova