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Editor's Preface

Gentle Hack: you may notice that this volume of the Hack Writers Library is a little different from the other Beginning Grade 1 Hack volumes. For one thing, there is less plagia—I mean, direct tribute, to Sneith Kyder's *The Hack Writers Guide to Writing the Mystery* than other volumes. This is because writing a screenplay is way different from any other kind of writing, although it's just as bad. People who read screenplays are all other jealous backbiting screenwriter wannabes, and they only understand plagia—I mean, direct tribute, to movies since they never read books.

For another, this volume has a New Look, printed entirely in a messy Courier typeface, except for this Preface, because all screenwriting should be in a messy Courier typeface for true "Boulevard cred." (Note: "Boulevard cred" is the same thing as "street cred", sort of, except it's in Hollywood, and has to do with knowing about screen resolutions, film speed, and digital imaging instead of drugs and handguns, although drugs and handguns are also very important in Hollywood. In Beverly Hills, the same thing is called "Drive cred" and has to do with being able to find parking spaces and shopping.)

So don't be confused.

James Lincoln Warren
Los Angeles

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INTRODUCTION

Wanted to be part of the literary world, but found it actually requires study of craft, proper formatting and submitting manuscripts to agents and editors who don't want to see your novice attempts?

Are you discovering how many other people are also writing and not selling and they have even taken a class or twelve while you believe you can do it on your own, thank you very much?

Once you sat down in front of a computer screen without solitaire, you've discovered writing the Great American Novel was a bit more than you imagined?

Congratulations! You, too, can write a hackneyed screenplay and make about a gazillion more dollars for 120 pages than any sale of a 400 page epic novel ever could.

And the best thing is you don't even have to have talent! In fact, it's best if you don't since the odds of an original screenplay making it to a movie screen near you is about as impossible as veto of a casting couch or nepotism not working in Hollyweird.

CHpater 1: PLOT VERSUS DIALOGUE

Everyone thinks because they can talk, they can write great dialogue. This is not true. Most likely, they will not even be able to write good dialogue. This is good because actually, in a script, it's best to write as little dialogue as possible.

Alfred Hitchcock once said you should be able to turn the sound completely off and still know what's happening in the movie.

Of course, this is very upsetting to the sound crew, the diction coaches and the actors who love to hear the sound of their voice almost as much as they love to see their handsome faces twenty feet high. So, more dialogue it is!

Plot is easily began with a circumstance happening. Remember there is a magic of the number three in all writing, so using three circumstances in the plotline is even better. If you feel you need more magic in your script, use completely impossible circumstances in as many scenes as possible.

Chapter 2: CHARACTERS

Do not worry too much about the description of your characters since the director will immediately hire actors who appear nothing like those in your script. Hiring is determined on two very old, time-honored Hollywood traditions: the casting couch audition and nepotism.

The innocent young soul you chose for your heroine will be portrayed by an actress selected by her sophistication, voluptuousness and bankroll. The lead, a adventurous young man will go to someone perfect for your extremely young nymphet: a man more than double her age with an aging physique and ability to (at minimum) co-produce the film. If he can produce the film outright, his name will be listed above the film title on the credits and secure his nomination for an Academy award from his cronies. While writing the screenplay, you pictured (insert Hollywood's newest female ingenue here)and (insert Hollywood's newest male ingenue here). The leads will eventually go to Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta-Jones.

Chapter 3: SETTING

Setting is very important to a film. Be sure and note the exact location where each scene is taking place, i.e. Smallville, Kansas, New York City or Carlsbad, New Mexico.

All will be skillfully recreated in Toronto where shooting costs are cheaper.

Chapter 4: THEME

It is very important to have a theme for your screenplay so that the director will know exactly what to change it from on a daily basis according to his whims.

Chapter 5: BACKERS, DIRECTORS, PRODUCERS

The most important thing about writing your screenplay is knowing someone who can bankroll the project. Secure the backer first. If you have enough money from your own trust fund, you can be the writer, director and producer. If your trustfund is aligned with a Hollywood legend background, you can also be the lead actor. As long as you're doing all that, you might as well do the credits, too. At least your name will be spelled correctly.

Chapter 6: WRITER CHEKKLIST

If you have a chekk, you can write a screenplay, too.