

Preface

Ah, Hollywood—the land of the free and the home of the backstab. It's less red carpet and more bear trap, and if you don't watch your step, you'll get soul-crushed faster than you can say "box office bomb." Here, everyone's got a script, a dream, and an angle. They'll smile to your face and steal your parking spot without a second thought. (Of course, if you've actually had a parking spot, you've probably already done more than most ever will.)

But you're not here to play nice; you're here to play smart. Hollywood might be a game, but it's one you're gearing up to win. Remember, in a town where everyone's chasing the next big thing, the most important thing you can do is stand out.

You do that by being the best—and smartest—writer you can be.

If you think Hollywood is all glitz and glamour, think again. It's a competitive sport, and every day is another game. Picture this: the year is 2018, and I'm standing in line at the Starbucks across the street from the Warner Bros. studio lot. I'm behind a guy whose flip-phone is growing out of his ear, and he's speaking loudly enough for every barista and caffeine addict in the place to hear the details of his “hot” new script that—wait for it—never got made. Why don't so many scripts ever get produced? Because talk is cheap. Becoming a successful screenwriter isn't about endlessly regaling anyone who will listen—even those in line behind you at Starbucks—about your latest “amazing” script. It's about writing standout material, of course. And then it's about working with the right support team—agents and managers—who can show the world you're ready to make a screenwriting career *happen*.

If you're ready to find that support team—if you have that script that is absolutely *undeniable* in today's marketplace—this book is for you.

People. That's what this business is all about, and that's what this next stage of your screenwriting career—finding representation—is all about: *people*.

But before you even think of stepping foot in an agent's office or going to a pitch meeting, you need to come fully prepared. That means knowing your stuff, knowing the industry, and most importantly, knowing yourself.

I remember my very first pitch meeting with a “hot” producer like it was yesterday. I had no idea what to expect when the producer's receptionist called my name and pointed to the massive

pair of oak doors that insulated the producer from the outside world. As I approached it and reached for the large brass doorknob, it automatically swooshed open without me even touching it. Pretty intimidating.

I walked in, knees knocking, was introduced to the producer and his gaggle of minions whose names I immediately forgot, was offered a plastic bottle of Icelandic glacier water, and after 30 seconds of completely banal chit-chat about how terrible L.A.'s traffic is, began to tell what I thought was the storyline of the century. The producer listened between phone calls and interruptions by his assistant about such critical issues as where he was lunching with one agent or another, nodding all the while as the minions drilled holes into my skull with unblinking, unsmiling eyes.

When I finished telling the group as many details of my story as I could remember—the notes in my hand had become a blur—the minions glanced over at their boss. A patient Mona Lisa smile creased his lips and he very softly intoned, "Okay. Now tell me a story we haven't heard before."

Lesson learned. Have more than one script ready for the market, more than one story to talk about. Be *prepared*, know your audience, know your market, and bring something fresh to the table.