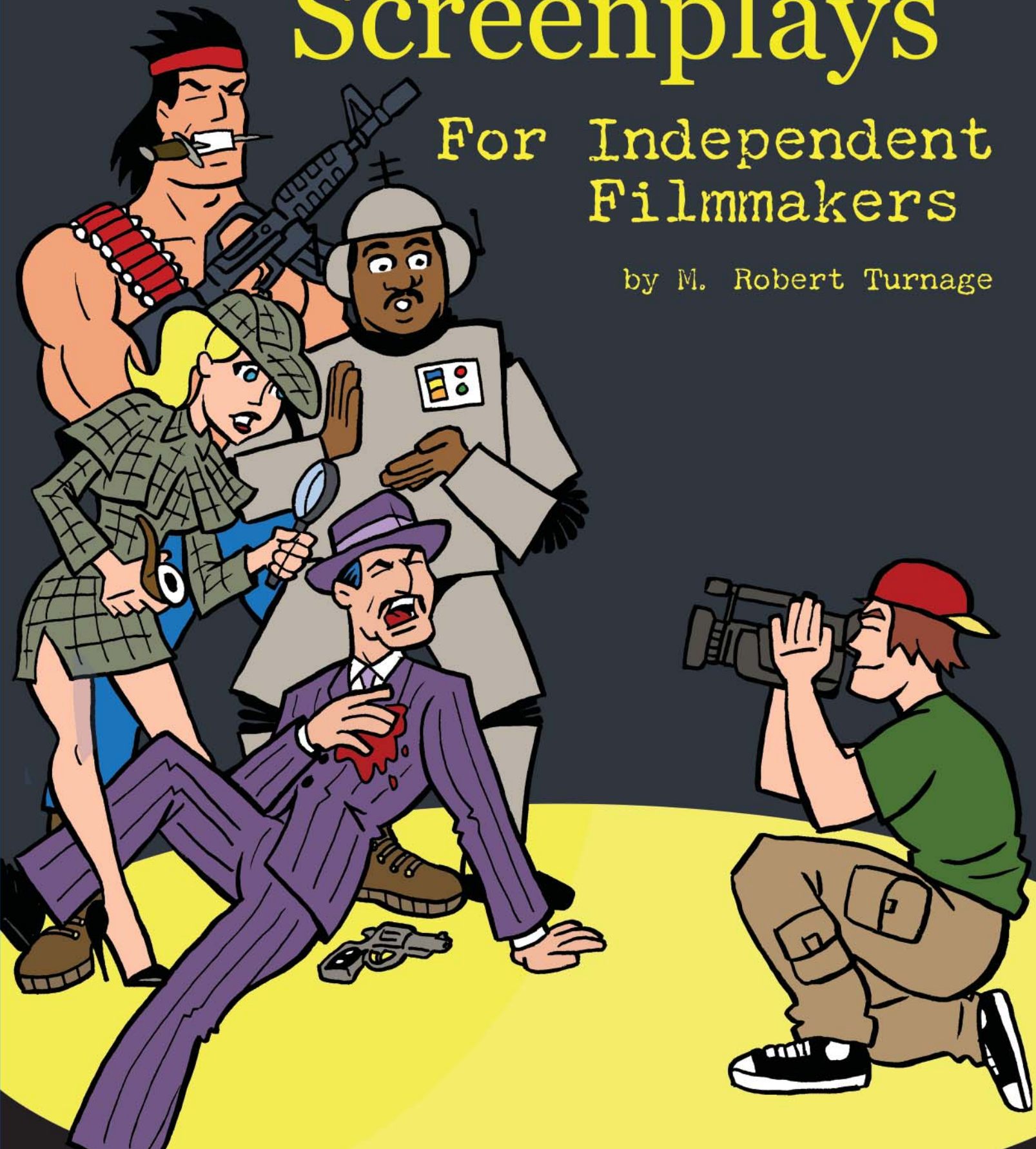


26 Short Screenplays

For Independent
Filmmakers

by M. Robert Turnage



Introduction to the ToC Doc

This document is a quick and easy way to review the types of projects in the book **26 Short Screenplays for Independent Filmmakers**, available at www.26screenplays.com.

This free eBook provides the Table of Contents (or ToC) as well as some of the introductory material. It even includes a section detailing how the different projects in the book are formatted.

This eBook is intended for those of you who are interested in the book but want to know a little more before purchasing it. Each script in the book has a theme, a working title, and a list of ways you can tweak the screenplay to make it your own.

For example, the 'How Scripts are Formatted' section has a little one-page screenplay you can read and review to get a sense of the writing style used throughout the book. Each script has a hook at the beginning, and each script ends with a stinger or punch line. Some of the scripts even have storyboards.

All films made with these scripts are yours. You can copyright the films as your own and use them to generate revenue. All you have to do is give proper credit when screening your film. If you want your film featured on the web site www.26screenplays.com, then send an email to **submissions@26screenplays.com**.

If you are interested in more free material, I strongly suggest following the blog at **blog.26screenplays.com**. There I will occasionally post scripts or other thoughts. Everything on the blog is released under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 license, so feel free to spread the word.

There are also 26 Screenplays accounts at www.docstoc.com and www.scribd.com. Any scripts available on the main web site will also be available on those two web sites.

Finally, there is a discussion forum at **boards.26screenplays.com** to visit and continue the conversation. Feel free to join the conversation.

If you need to contact me for any reason, feel free to do so at 26screenplays@26screenplays.com.

Thank you so much for your time and attention. I hope you enjoy the book and the free sample.

Sincerely,

— M. Robert Turnage

26screenplays@26screenplays.com

26 Screenplays Project List

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Introduction

This book is for independent filmmakers. In other words, this book is for anyone who has ever dreamed of making movies. This book does not cover the technical aspects of independent filmmaking. It assumes you already know about cameras, lenses, and editing equipment. It assumes you already know about release forms, insurance, and forming an LLC for your production company. It assumes you are intelligent and passionate for the project.

It also assumes you need a little help.

A common fallacy is that Hollywood is out of ideas. Producers and directors don't want to come up with ideas of their own; they would rather focus on remakes and sequels. For the big production blockbuster movies, this is mostly true. However, smaller independent productions are a great place for good ideas to take hold and grow. The only problem is getting those ideas.

This is a book of ideas. It provides scenarios that can be expanded on or tweaked to meet your needs. It also provides a way to develop a portfolio when bidding on other projects. If a producer has a project with a car chase in it, and isn't comfortable because the director hasn't filmed a car chase before, the director can dash off *Last Day of School* (Project 12) in a weekend and use that as an example of his or her ability.

That is the easy part. Now, the hard part.

It is time to share a dirty little secret with you — there is no such thing as a good screenplay.

At their best, screenplays inspire cinematographers to pick up a camera and frame a shot. At their best, screenplays cause actors to commit lines to memory. At their best, screenplays cause film financiers to open their wallets. That does not necessarily mean the screenplay can stand alone as a work of art. No screenplay is good because no screenplay is complete.

Screenplays are blueprints. They are maps of uncharted lands. It takes an adventurer to go into these lands, correct mistakes, and fill in the details. Screenplays need very special people to make their potential real. It takes a collection of brave souls to take the plain words on the page and transform them into moving images on a screen.

In short, a filmmaker needs to take a mere screenplay and make it into something alive. It takes a filmmaker to transfer static text into motion pictures.

The best way to learn something is simply to do it. The best way to learn how to be a great filmmaker is to film something. And rather than sitting around, trying to decide what to film, wouldn't it be easier just to pick a script out of a book and simply film that?

The scripts in this book are designed to be short and sweet little films that will be interesting to the actors, challenging to the filmmakers, and inexpensive to the financiers. Some of them can be filmed in a few minutes while others demand more time and attention. Some of the scripts may have supplementary material like storyboards or alternative endings. The book is even designed to be 8 1/2" by 11" — the standard script size, so it will be easy to photocopy pages to share with your cast and crew. The whole idea is to use the script to make something special.

And if the film doesn't turn out the way you intended, you can learn from what went wrong and correct it in your next film. You can film the same screenplay several times with different actors, cameras, or crews. Whatever 5

you decide to do, these screenplays can help. The point is to develop your own cinematic voice. These screenplays are tools that can help you become a better filmmaker. Each project is distinctive enough to help you decide if your cinematic strength comes from finding and filming the chemistry between two actors in a “meet cute” scene (Project 9) or if it comes from creating the suspenseful mood of a horror film (Project 24).

And to put our money where our mouth is, so to speak, we want you to use the 26 Screenplays web site (www.26screenplays.com) as a way to further your growth as a filmmaker. The web site will showcase short films used with the help of this book and will act as an online community for aspiring and veteran filmmakers.

After you’ve made your film, if you want it featured on the 26 Screenplays web site, just drop us a line at submissions@26screenplays.com and we will mention it on the 26 Screenplays blog (blog.26screenplays.com) and include it on the 26 Screenplays video page. This is a place to see how other filmmakers tackled the same script, their particular approach to the material, and their final interpretation.

Just like filmmaking is a collaborative effort, the 26 Screenplays web site has a space for a collaborative community to grow. The 26 Screenplays bulletin board (boards.26screenplays.com) is a place for the collaboration to continue. It is a place for independent filmmakers to discuss their projects and look to each other for support.

Good luck with your projects. May all of your films be artistically challenging, visually arresting, and heartbreakingly beautiful.

— M. Robert Turnage

26screenplays@26screenplays.com

Don't Get Sued!

The cover art, introductory material, and storyboards are all copyrighted materials. They should not be reprinted or redistributed without the permission of the copyright holder. This measure is mainly to prevent out-and-out piracy of the book outside the parameters of fair use. If you photocopy pages from this book and share them with your cast and crew, that counts as fair use. If you photocopy pages, put your name on them, and try to sell them, that counts as uncool and is not within the bounds of fair use. This book is made by artists for artists and all we're asking for is a little consideration for our efforts.

But you know what? The scripts in this book are released under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License.

On a high level, this means that you can use these scripts to make films and all you need to do is give proper credit. If these films generate income for you, then brilliant — you get to keep the money. If you do something like expand *Redux* (Project 26) into a feature-length project or make *Ghost Eaters* (Project 24) a television series — more power to you. Simply give credit where credit is due.

And here is where Creative Commons gets fun. You can even copyright the film as a derivative work, essentially ensuring that you own the rights to your film — just make sure that you give proper credit to M. Robert Turnage and the 26screenplays.com web site.

Screenwriters are very particular about how they receive credit, and this book is no exception. While your film project is essentially yours, please adhere to these guidelines when giving screenwriting credit.

If you use the screenplay with no modifications to it, credit me the following way:

**Screenplay by
M. Robert Turnage, 26screenplays.com**

If you use the screenplay and modify it less than 50%, credit me the following way:

**Screenplay by
M. Robert Turnage, 26screenplays.com
and
[Your name]**

If you use the screenplay and modify it between 51 and 90%, credit me the following way:

**Screenplay by
[Your name]
and
M. Robert Turnage, 26screenplays.com**

If you use the screenplay and modify it more than 90%, credit me the following way:

**Original story by
M. Robert Turnage, 26screenplays.com**

And if you just like the 26 Screenplays project or the idea of Creative Commons screenplays, feel free to show your support by adding the following credit to your film:

**Special thanks to
M. Robert Turnage, 26screenplays.com**

Of course, another way to show appreciation is to include some reference to the 26screenplays.com web site in your film. This can happen by having a character wear a 26 Screenplays T-shirt, having the book displayed in the background someplace, or just mention the web site on a monitor somewhere in your project.

If you do reference 26 Screenplays and want to have it mentioned on the web site, send an e-mail to 26screenplays@26screenplays.com. If you make a film out of one of the projects and want it featured on the web site, send an e-mail to submissions@26screenplays.com.

A full copy of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License is in Appendix B, for those of you with a passion for the finer details of licensing agreements.

How To Use This Book

One time I met a film producer who said, “I can write a screenplay, but it will take me six months and cost me more money than I care to spend. It is just cheaper and quicker for me to buy one of the screenplays already out there.”

That is what this book is — a collection of screenplays ready for you to pick up. These screenplays are designed to be turned into low-budget short films. Many of the 26 short film screenplays in this book are simple scenes or exchanges of dialogue. Some of them tell stories. They are designed for independent filmmakers to use, modify, and adapt into short films or as single scenes in larger works.

Or they can just be used to give the actors something to do while the filmmakers test out new equipment.

Each screenplay has introductory text explaining its technical purpose. For example, the introduction to *The Last Day of School* (Project 12) explains that this screenplay provides a simple dramatic framework for a car chase. The actual choreography, storyboards, camera angles, and editing are left to the vision of the filmmaker.

The screenplays grow in complexity as the book progresses. The first two are simple monologues, designed for a single actor or actress filmed at a single location. The last ten screenplays in this book are more complex with multiple scenes and more complex stories.

The screenplays in this book do not “direct from the page.” That is, they do not dictate camera angles or actors’ emotions. They are designed to be as flexible as possible. Many of the roles can be cast as male or female, young or old, or any race. And even screenplays with a specific scenario, such as *Rock God* (Project 22), can be adapted to different settings depending on the wishes of the filmmaker. For example, the *Rock God* scenario can easily be adapted to the world of country-and-western music or hip-hop or classical music, depending on your locations, actors, and personal tastes.

Ultimately, this book functions like a cookbook for film. Each screenplay has a list of settings, actors, and directions. As a filmmaker, you decide how much to follow and how much to tweak so that the final product matches your own vision. The final product will be yours. All that is asked for in terms of payment is to purchase a copy of the book (if you’re reading this, then consider that box checked) and then give 26screenplays.com a mention in your credits.

The 26 Screenplays web site features films created from and inspired by the screenplays in this book. If you want to have your film featured on the web site, send an e-mail to submissions@26screenplays.com.

E-mail any thoughts and feedback about the 26 Screenplays project and independent filmmaking (including any constructive criticism) to 26screenplays@26screenplays.com. If this book generates enough interest, there is a very good chance that a 26 More Screenplays book will appear sometime in the next few years.

Good luck with your filmmaking!

How Projects Are Formatted

Project Name

This is the technical exercise for the project. For example, “Showcase an Actor” would be the purpose of the project.

Working Title

This is the suggested title of the script. Like all aspects of the scripts, this can be modified as necessary.

Settings

This is a list of locations for the film.

Characters

This is a list of characters for the film.

Ideas for Customization

This is a list of ways that a person could tweak and modify the script to fit a particular set of resources or limitations, such as casting, location, and budget. This is to help generate ideas and to see the scripts as flexible.

For example, the Project Page for the script on the next page would be as follows:

Project Name

One-Page Example

Working Title

Initiation Rites

Settings

Clubhouse

Executive boardroom

Characters

Donnie

Ricky

Susie

Susan

Executive

Board of directors

Ideas for Customization

The initiation rite doesn't have to be as disturbing as eating a spider, but it should be something visual and one that generates a degree of tension.

How Scripts Are Formatted

