

SHORT+SWEET PLAYWRITING COURSE
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Dialogue Editing Exercise

Writing good dialogue is often dependent on editing. First cut this dialogue down to two pages. Now cut it down to one page without losing the sense of the scene. The first question is what is the scene about – when you know that you can decide what to cut and what to keep.

MAN IN BLACK: Sorry. Got tired of waiting so I kicked the door in. Hope you don't mind.

MAX: Who are you ?

MAN IN BLACK: My name is not important. Your situation is.

EILEEN: You've heard about our situation.

MAN IN BLACK: You should've reported it immediately.

EILEEN: We only just found out.

MAN IN BLACK: There's no excuse Mister – but don't fear. I am here.

MAX: And sorry, you are ?

EILEEN: And he did it again. Someone breaks down your door and you say sorry. Pathetic.

MAX: I didn't say "sorry" in terms of "sorry". I said it in terms of "pardon".

EILEEN: Well if you mean "pardon" then just say "pardon".

MAN IN BLACK: Excuse me but we don't have time for this petty domestic bickering –

EILEEN: Says you.

MAN IN BLACK: You have a situation – and I am here to sort it out.

MAX: And pardon me –

EILEEN: That's better.

MAX: But you are ?

MAN IN BLACK: Names are not important – I'm the man whose come to sort out your situation.

MAX: And what situation exactly would that be ?

MAN IN BLACK: Don't play games with me Max. You know very well what situation. You've had first hand contact with the U.I.F.

MAX: U.I.F. ?

MAN IN BLACK: Unidentified female. We believe she could be a P.T.

MAX: P.T. ?

MAN IN BLACK: Potential Terrorist.

EILEEN: See. I told you. (TO MAN IN BLACK) I told him.

MAX: But how do you know she's a P.T. ?

MAN IN BLACK: Sir, in these dangerous and irrational times –

EILEEN: Hey, that's what I said.

MAN IN BLACK: Everybody could be a terrorist. We must remain alert and alarmed.

MAX: So if everybody could be a terrorist then it must follow that we could be terrorists.

EILEEN: Max. What are you saying ?

MAX: Or for that matter – you could be a terrorist.

MAN IN BLACK: Are you admitting to subversive activity ? To be colluding with the P.T. in your basement ?

MAX: I'm just following your logic.

MAN IN BLACK: Sir, we live in a Constitutional Monarchy. There is no logic. There is only one question – are you a Terrorist ?

MAX: No.

MAN IN BLACK: (MOVING TOWARDS EILEEN) What about this U.I.F. ? Is she a terrorist ?

MAX: That's my wife.

MAN IN BLACK: Are you sure she's not a terrorist ? She has the sultry eyes and tanned skin of a terrorist temptress.

EILEEN: Thanks – I play a lot of terrorist. I mean – tennis.

MAN IN BLACK: She could be working undercover for subsurgent inversives. I mean insurgent subversives.

EILEEN: No it's just tennis.

MAN IN BLACK: Quiet !

EILEEN: Gosh, that's very forceful. De gran alcance.

MAN IN BLACK: What language is that ? It sounds Spanish.

EILEEN: No it wasn't Spanish. I hate Spanish. I'd never speak Spanish.

SHE BEGINS SPITTING AS IF RIDDING HER MOUTH OF THE WORDS.

MAN IN BLACK: I may need to take this U.I.F, in for questioning ?

MAX: What questioning ?

MAN IN BLACK: Don't worry. (SMILING) It's just procedural.