

Is this a fact? "*Stephen doesn't want Angel to call him Stephen.*" No. All we can say as a fact is that there has been at least one conversation between the two of them on the subject of his name. Even though he says, "How many times I gotta tell ya..." it still may have been only once for some people, twice is too many times to discuss certain subjects.

We can't even include as a fact that Stephen was called "Red" as a kid. Even if he claimed it was true, we wouldn't be able to accept it as fact. Interestingly, when we reread the scene carefully (script research, Column 5a), we find he doesn't actually say that. What he says is that when he was a kid he had red hair. Of course we can't be sure that this is true either. There is no evidence for it since now his hair is brown, as even he admits. All we can say as a fact is that he says that he had red hair as a kid, and that on at least one occasion previous to this scene he has made a request that Angel call him "Red."

Another way of putting this would be to list it as an "issue" under Column 4. His name is an issue between them. Other issues might be her lateness, if we make the choice that it is habitual; or the rules of the diner, e.g., the paper cup rule.

Actually, as soon as I wrote that, I considered its opposite: maybe the paper cup is not a standing issue between them. Maybe it's the first time this particular issue has come up. Maybe he always uses the prohibited paper cup, but usually she indulges his lapses; today she doesn't. Or maybe he usually uses the ceramic cup and this morning has decided to make this little rebellion. I'm not trying to talk you into any of these ideas. The point is that they are *ideas* — *choices* — not facts. (At first glance they seem like weaker choices, but you never know. Sometimes an apparently less plausible choice can give a performance a mystery, an edge. It might be something you could whisper to the actor in between takes to freshen things up.)

QUESTIONS

Questions are perhaps the most important product of script analysis, even though you are not going to rewrite the script so all

questions are answered. Make a big list of them. If a character says, "Why are you shouting?" instead of assuming that the second character is shouting, ask questions: Is the other guy shouting? Or does the first guy have a low threshold? Could it be that what actually bothers him is the content of what the second guy said?

To me an important question of the scene is raised by Stephen's line "...as soon as I get something taken care of." Characters can lie, so he might be bullshitting — there might be nothing he has to take care of. He might have no reason except his own immobility for staying in this town instead of leaving. But I don't want to stop my script analysis here, because this thinking is likely to lead me into generalities and judgment about Stephen.

What is the thing he has to take care of? It may be that as soon as the thing he is referring to gets "taken care of" there will be another thing to take care of, but even so, it is something specific. With whom does he live? Does he live with his parents? Could there be abuse or alcoholism in the family? Is it possible that he has to fix his mother's life before he can leave?

If you find yourself jumping to a conclusion, I want you to put it in the form of a question. If, for instance, you find yourself saying, "Obviously this has happened many times before," turn it right around and ask, "Has this happened before?" That's always a good question in any case. One question you should always ask is, "What in this scene is happening for the first time?"

Anytime there is more than one possible explanation for something, it is not a fact. It may seem bewildering at first to open up so many possibilities. You may feel, "I thought I knew what I was doing and now I have nothing to hang onto." There are two purposes to this seemingly chaotic approach. One is to bring our story imaginations to life. Allowing ourselves to "daydream" around the facts of the script gives us the opportunity to let the material tell us what it is about. The other purpose is to prepare ourselves to make choices. In order to make choices, you need a field from which to choose; otherwise, it's not a choice, it's an assumption. As you get used to this