Got it. I'm building a comprehensive, modular intelligence profile of Leigh Whannell as a script consultant, based on deep analysis of his scripts for *Upgrade* and *Insidious*. I'll also fold in verified insights from interviews and commentary where they support beat-level creative choices.

The final output will be organized into clearly labeled expert modules like Story Structure, Dialogue Cadence, Genre Blending, and more—each focused on showing *how* Whannell writes and solves story problems, with script-specific breakdowns and citations.

I'll let you know when it's ready to review.

Leigh Whannell Script Consultant Profile

Story Structure & Beat Placement

Leigh Whannell's scripts exhibit a **tight three-act structure** with early inciting incidents and well-timed turning points. He wastes no time establishing normalcy before plunging characters into conflict. In *Upgrade*, for example, the happy domestic setup is violently upended by page 15: Grey's wife Asha is brutally killed and Grey is paralyzed in the same scene (upgrade-2018.pdf). Similarly in *Insidious*, a tranquil family morning swiftly leads to young Dalton's mysterious injury by page 15 (he falls from a ladder and slips into a coma) (Insidious-2010.pdf). Whannell often employs a **cold-open or prologue** to set the tone or foreshadow the central threat. *Insidious* opens with an eerie image of a ghostly old woman lurking in a dark hallway, whispering *"Let me in"* (Insidious-2010.pdf) before cutting to the titles, signaling upfront that supernatural danger looms. This scene-level decision plants a seed that pays off much later (the same ghost becomes pivotal in the climax), showcasing Whannell's knack for **setup and payoff** across the script.

Once the premise is launched, Whannell paces major beats at logical yet impactful intervals. He isn't afraid of **time jumps** or structural shifts to accelerate the story. In *Insidious*, after the initial hauntings, there's a jump **"TWO MONTHS LATER"** to show the family's ongoing ordeal (Insidious-2010.pdf). Midway through Act II, the Lamberts even relocate to a *new house* in hopes of escape – a bold structural beat that acts as a false resolution (Insidious-2010.pdf). This move subverts audience expectations (since haunted house films rarely change location) and raises the stakes when the supernatural phenomena continue. In *Upgrade*, the Act I to Act II transition is clearly marked by Grey's decision to accept an experimental chip implant (STEM) that will "allow [him] to walk again" (upgrade-2018.pdf) – a plot catalyst propelling him into a high-tech revenge mission. From that point, Act II is driven by a series of escalating confrontations as Grey hunts down each attacker, with each scene revealing new information (e.g. the thugs are cybernetically enhanced, suggesting a larger conspiracy). Whannell places a **midpoint revelation or twist** to keep Act II exciting: for instance, Grey's first violent retaliation reveals the enemies are not random muggers but connected to a bigger plot, and *Insidious*' midpoint brings in psychic Elise who explains the true cause of Dalton's coma (astral projection). By the time Act III arrives, all the groundwork is laid for a satisfying payoff – often

a twist or dramatic showdown that ties back to earlier hints (e.g. *Upgrade*'s final twist that STEM had its own agenda, or *Insidious*' reveal connecting back to the prologue ghost).

On a **scene-level**, Whannell ensures each sequence has a clear structural purpose (setup, escalation, payoff) and often **ends scenes on mini-cliffhangers or shifts** to propel momentum. For example, a quiet investigation scene in *Upgrade* might end with Grey discovering a crucial clue or being caught by the police, bumping the tension into the next scene. In *Insidious*, a scare scene might end not with full resolution but with the family in deeper fear, driving them to seek outside help in the subsequent scene. This beat-to-beat decision-making keeps the audience hooked. Whannell is also judicious about **pace** – he inserts the occasional breather scene (a grieving moment, a bit of humor) after high-intensity sequences, but never for too long. The result is a script that *feels* fast and eventful, hitting expected story milestones while still surprising the audience with **creative turns** (like moving houses or mixing genres).

Applying Whannell's Structure:

- **Incite Early:** Introduce the central conflict early in Act I for maximum impact (e.g. a life-altering trauma by page 15 as in *Upgrade* (upgrade-2018.pdf)). Early hooks pull the audience in quickly.

- **Foreshadow & Pay Off:** Plant intriguing setup scenes (even brief ones) that foreshadow later story elements. *Insidious*' opening ghost (Insidious-2010.pdf) seems like a scary aside but becomes crucial later – emulate this by seeding Act III reveals in Act I.

- **Pace Your Peaks:** Position major beats (inciting incident, midpoint twist, end of Act II low point) at optimal moments. Whannell often uses mid-story twists (like a *location change* or *new information dump*) to avoid a sagging middle (Insidious-2010.pdf). Ensure each act break fundamentally raises the stakes or changes the game.

- **Don't Fear Structural Boldness:** Consider unconventional structure moves if they serve the story – e.g. a time jump (Insidious-2010.pdf) or a false resolution – to keep the plot unpredictable while maintaining internal logic.

Character Introductions & Development

Whannell's character introductions are **concise yet evocative**, often using a few vivid details to convey personality and set up character arcs. Major characters get a memorable entrance on the page. For instance, *Upgrade* introduces GREY TRACE in a single shot that tells us volumes: we zoom out from an oil-stained eye to see Grey, a 28-year-old "ruggedly handsome" mechanic covered in grease – **"a quiet, blue collar guy. A man, not a boy."** (upgrade-2018.pdf). This intro not only describes his look but implicitly contrasts him with the slick high-tech world (establishing Grey as a hands-on, old-school type). In *Insidious*, JOSH LAMBERT's first appearance finds him doing an everyday morning routine (shaving and finding a gray hair), but Whannell inserts a quirky detail: Josh delivers a line in a *"Michael Corleone voice"* as he plucks the hair: *"Every time I think I've pulled you out... you grow back in."* (Insidious-2010.pdf). In one stroke, we see Josh's sense of humor and that he's a bit insecure about aging – humanizing

traits that make him relatable. Even side characters get distinguishing touches. When tech mogul Eron Keen debuts in *Upgrade*, the script notes he's *"27, baby-faced…with no patience for anyone not on his wavelength,"* even slyly adding *"he hates that you think he has Asperger's"* (upgrade-2018.pdf). In one sentence, Eron's socially awkward genius persona is crystallized. Likewise, *Insidious* introduces the ghost-hunting duo Specs and Tucker with light comic flair: Specs is described as a pale, wiry guy who *"looks like he spends most of his time in dark rooms"*, whereas Tucker is *"a larger man…eating a Hot Pocket"* (Insidious-2010.pdf) – a fun way to signal their dynamic (nerdy analyst vs. goofy tech guy) immediately.

Beyond first impressions, Whannell **develops characters through their actions and choices at key beats**. As the story progresses, characters change in response to the conflict, and Whannell emphasizes this in scene-level decisions. For example, Grey's arc in *Upgrade* is one of reluctant dependence turning into obsession. Early on, Grey is vehemently anti-technology – he jokes about *"microchips running the world"* and bristles at self-driving cars (upgrade-2018.pdf). But after losing Asha, he consents to a computer in his spine, and by mid-story he's actively collaborating with STEM (the AI) to exact revenge. Whannell shows Grey's development by gradually shifting his behavior and dialogue: initially depressed and passive after his injury, Grey becomes focused and grimly determined once he can walk again. In one pivotal later scene, Grey argues with STEM for control of his own body, insisting *"They're my arms and legs"* – a desperate clinging to humanity that contrasts with his earlier helplessness (upgrade-2018.pdf). This internal struggle (man vs machine) marks how far Grey has come from the easygoing mechanic we met; he's now hardened, and on the brink of losing himself, which pays off in the dark ending.

In *Insidious*, a key character arc is Josh's journey from skeptic to believer and ultimately savior. Introduced as a somewhat absent-minded but loving father, Josh initially avoids facing the strange events (throwing himself into work and denying the ghosts). Whannell uses other characters to **reveal dimensions of Josh** – for instance, Josh's mother Lorraine eventually confesses that Josh had paranormal experiences as a child, explaining his denial as repression. Once Josh's son is in mortal danger, he is forced to confront that past. By Act III, Josh undergoes a role reversal: he volunteers to enter *The Further* (spirit realm) to rescue Dalton, embracing the supernatural head-on. The script highlights this development with visual callbacks – e.g. earlier, Josh was uncomfortable even discussing ghosts, but in the climax he fearlessly faces the very old woman spirit that terrified him as a boy. **Whannell often ties character growth to plot developments**, ensuring that as the stakes rise, the protagonist is pushed to change. In *Insidious*, each escalation (Dalton's worsening condition, the attacks on Renai) pushes Josh from denial to action. By the end, he's literally fighting demons for his family.

Moreover, Whannell's characters are distinguished by **clear motivations and relatable flaws** that inform their decisions. Grey's grief and rage drive him to morally dark places by the finale. Renai's maternal love and trauma drive her to persistently research and demand answers about the hauntings, showing increasing strength. These traits are shown rather than told. For example, Renai's emotional resilience is portrayed in small moments like her exhaustion in caring for Dalton *"a wilted flower"* after months of stress (Insidious-2010.pdf) (Insidious-2010.pdf), yet she doesn't give up – prompting Lorraine to note her quiet strength. By grounding character

reactions in believable emotion, Whannell makes even wild plot developments feel anchored to real human drama.

Applying Whannell's Character Techniques:

- **Introduce with Impact:** Give each major character a defining entrance. A short descriptive passage should convey both appearance *and* a hint of personality or backstory (e.g. Eron's single-line intro paints him as a brilliant but socially inept billionaire (upgrade-2018.pdf)). Aim to show a character's essence in their first scene through unique details or actions.

- **Show Character Through Behavior:** Develop characters by writing scenes that force them to make revealing choices. Instead of expositional telling, let their actions under pressure define them. For example, Grey's willingness to break his moral code (vigilante violence) as *Upgrade* progresses illustrates his descent without needing explicit narration.

- **Use Supporting Characters to Highlight the Protagonist:** Whannell often uses dialogue with others to expose a protagonist's traits (family banter shows Josh's humor, Lorraine's stories expose Josh's past fear). Leverage side characters as foils or confidants to bring out dimensions of your main characters naturally.

- **Ensure an Arc:** Map your protagonist's emotional or moral journey alongside the plot. Whannell gives his heroes room to change – from skepticism to belief, from helplessness to empowerment (or vice versa). In your script, include beats that mark the character's turning points, and mirror those in their dialogue and decisions.

Dialogue Cadence & Voice

Whannell's dialogue is known for its **natural cadence, concise wit, and shifts in tone** that reflect each character's voice. At the scene level, he often achieves a snappy back-and-forth rhythm, especially in banter or tense confrontations, by keeping lines short and leveraging well-timed pauses. In *Insidious*, the husband-wife and family dialogues have a believable casual flow. For example, during the morning chaos, Josh playfully tells his son, *"Don't eat on the floor, buddy,"* while multitasking with tie and kids (Insidious-2010.pdf) – a line that feels offhand and authentic for a busy dad. Whannell frequently uses **(beat)** notations to signal timing and let a line land. In a quiet bedroom scene, Renai gently asks Josh if she can resume her music career, and they sit in silence *"for a long beat"* before he responds (Insidious-2010.pdf) – creating a realistic conversational pause that speaks volumes. This attention to rhythm makes the dialogue sound *spoken*, not written.

Crucially, each character in a Whannell script has a distinct **voice**. He achieves this through vocabulary, tone, and even punctuation. **Humor** is a significant element: Whannell injects levity in the form of dry jokes or sarcastic asides, often to break tension. The Specs and Tucker duo in *Insidious* exemplify this comedic cadence. Specs, the nerdy tech, speaks in a rapid, matter-of-fact way with a dash of showmanship. Upon meeting the Lamberts, he introduces himself with a flourish – *"I'm Specs… I'm here to solve your problem. I'm just kidding with the voice. We take*

this very seriously." (Insidious-2010.pdf). The delivery is playful (he even drops into a faux "spooky voice" for effect) but then promptly reassures them, showcasing Whannell's knack for **mixing humor and earnestness in one breath**. Tucker, on the other hand, has fewer lines but when he quips *"Helps weed out the nutjobs,"* in response to their investigative process (Insidious-2010.pdf) (Insidious-2010.pdf), it's a blunt, slightly goofy voice that matches his laid-back persona. By giving the comedic characters quick exchanges and one-liners, Whannell creates a light, bouncing rhythm distinct from the more measured, fearful dialogue of the haunted family.

In *Upgrade*, the dialogue often contrasts human warmth with machine coldness. Grey's voice is laced with sarcasm and emotion, while STEM (the AI) speaks in calm, clinical statements – an intentional cadence contrast. After Grey's first violent fight, he panics and stammers about calling the police: *"I've gotta call Cortez… I can explain it…"* (upgrade-2018.pdf). STEM immediately interrupts with curt, logical instructions: *"No. ...Remove any traces of your presence here. And quickly."* (upgrade-2018.pdf). The AI's lines are short, imperative sentences with no contractions, emphasizing a rigid tone, whereas Grey's lines often trail off or repeat words when he's distraught, conveying his anxiety. This interplay gives their conversations a unique rhythm – Grey might yell or curse in panic, and STEM responds with an even-tempered monotone. Whannell uses punctuation and italics sparingly, but effectively, to convey tone (e.g. STEM's voice is often indicated as (V.O.), and Grey's exclamations use ellipses or dashes when interrupted).

Another hallmark of Whannell's dialogue is how it **balances exposition with character voice**. Even when characters explain plot points, the lines remain in character. For instance, when Elise in *Insidious* delivers a long explanation of *The Further*, her dialogue is gentle and empathetic, suitable for a seasoned, kind paranormal expert (using simple analogies like *"a place beyond our understanding of the physical world"* in a reassuring tone) (Insidious-2010.pdf). Compare this to a criminal character in *Upgrade* who might reveal information via tough-guy taunts. In one scene, the villain Fisk casually says to a victim, *"I'll bet you didn't think your life was gonna end today when you woke up this morning,"* before killing him (upgrade-2018.pdf) – a line dripping with dark irony and Fisk's Southern drawl, as noted in the script. Whannell writes that drawl into the dialogue cadence (e.g. using colloquial *"gonna"* and a chillingly casual tone) which makes the villain's voice memorable.

Importantly, Whannell knows when **silence is golden**. He doesn't overload scenes with chatter; characters often react in silence or with minimal words when appropriate. This makes the dialogue that *is* spoken more impactful. For example, after a terrifying encounter, Renai in *Insidious* is almost speechless, managing only a trembling explanation like *"I… I saw someone. In the house,"* conveying fear by her halting cadence (the script might note her trailing off or voice cracking). By varying between rapid banter, normal conversation, and sparse frightened whispers, Whannell's dialogue *cadence* mirrors the story's emotional beats.

Applying Whannell's Dialogue Style:

- **Tailor Voice to Character:** Craft distinct speech patterns for each character. A stoic scientist may speak in clipped, precise sentences, while a panicked parent rambles or

interjects emotion. In your script, ensure a reader can identify who's speaking by the *style* of the line alone (e.g. Specs' nerdy humor vs. Grey's dry sarcasm).

- **Use Brevity and Timing:** Favor short sentences and interjections to keep exchanges snappy. Add (beat) pauses or ellipses to control rhythm when needed. This mimicry of natural speech (people interrupt, pause, trail off) is evident in Whannell's scenes (Insidious-2010.pdf) and makes your dialogue flow organically.

- **Mix Tension and Levity:** Don't be afraid to inject humor into tense scenes (a Whannell trademark). A well-placed joke or quirky comment can humanize characters and relieve pressure, often right before or after a scare. For instance, a bit of deadpan wit from a side character can make the following scare hit even harder by contrast. Balance is key – the humor should fit the character and moment.

- **Stay In Character During Exposition:** When conveying important info through dialogue, keep it in the character's established voice. An exposition dump will feel invisible if it's delivered with personality. Have a knowledgeable character explain things using their unique analogies or attitude, as Elise does gently in *Insidious* (Insidious-2010.pdf) (Insidious-2010.pdf), so that necessary plot info also reveals character and maintains tone.

Balancing Genre Tones (Horror & Comedy)

One of Whannell's signature strengths is blending **horror and humor** without undercutting either. His scripts modulate tone by alternating or even combining scary sequences with moments of levity, ensuring the audience experiences emotional rollercoaster shifts that feel satisfying rather than jarring. In scene terms, Whannell often uses comedy as a pressure valve before or after intense horror beats. *Insidious* is rife with examples: a frightening set-piece might be immediately followed by a lighter character moment to let the audience breathe. Early in the film, after a spooky nighttime incident in the attic, the next morning scene is full of comedic family chaos (kids spilling cereal, Dad joking about gray hairs) (Insidious-2010.pdf) (Insidious-2010.pdf). This deliberate juxtaposition **amplifies the impact of both tones** – the horror feels scarier coming out of a gentle, warm scene, and the comedy feels more relieving after a scare.

Within the same scene, Whannell may start with one tone and pivot to another, catching the audience off-guard in a good way. The famous baby-monitor sequence in *Insidious* illustrates this dynamic tonal shift: Renai is peacefully writing music on the piano on a sunny day, a calm domestic moment. The tone gradually shifts as she hears a strange whisper over the baby monitor: *"They see us... all of us..."* (Insidious-2010.pdf) – an eerie, tension-building moment. She listens closer, confused, and then *BAM!* a shrill demon voice screams *"NOOOOOOOO!!!"* through the monitor, making her (and the audience) jump in terror (Insidious-2010.pdf). Whannell crafted this on the page by lulling us with normalcy (Renai's everyday activity), inserting a creepy but quiet buildup (the disembodied whisper), then deploying a sudden loud scare. The **rise-and-crash rhythm** is a hallmark of his horror-comedy balance: the "setup" feels almost like a prank (even the demon's line *"We have to be quick…*" is weirdly intriguing until it

erupts into a scream). After this jolt, the script might follow up with a scene of Renai frantically explaining what happened to Josh – a bit of frantic humor in her *"I swear I heard it!"* desperation and Josh's bewilderment, which lets the audience recover while still driving the plot.

Whannell's background in horror (*Saw*, *Insidious*) means he knows how to scare, but he also understands that well-placed humor can make characters endearing and the scares more effective by contrast. **The comedy never undermines the stakes**; it usually arises from characters' personalities or absurdity of situations rather than spoofing the horror itself. In *Insidious*, Specs and Tucker serve as comic relief, but they also take the haunting seriously when it counts. Their banter (like Specs theatrically using a "spooky voice" then saying *"just kidding… we take this very seriously"* (Insidious-2010.pdf)) provides laughs without dismissing the reality of the ghosts. This keeps the **tone cohesive** – we laugh *with* the characters, not at the idea of ghosts. Similarly, in *Upgrade*, Grey's dark one-liners amid violent fights function as tension-breakers that feel organic: he's not cracking jokes to the audience, but muttering to himself to cope. For instance, after taking down a thug in an extremely gory fashion (with STEM's help), Grey quips in shock *"Tell me this is not happening…"* – it's a bit of nervous humor true to his character, arising from the absurdity of the moment, which gives the audience permission to release a nervous chuckle even as blood is on the floor.

Another way Whannell balances tone is by using **visual or situational irony for humor within horror scenes**. In *Insidious*, when Elise dons an absurd-looking gas mask apparatus to commune with spirits, Specs and Tucker exchange a deadpan look – it's a bizarre image in a frightening séance, but they treat it with a kind of "yep, this is our job" seriousness that becomes darkly funny. The script might note Tucker's eyebrow raise or Renai's confused reaction, injecting a touch of comedy *inside* a scare scene without deflating its intensity. Whannell also isn't afraid of *camp* in service of horror – the demon in *Insidious* has an outrageously red face and claws, almost over-the-top, yet because the characters are genuinely terrified, the audience goes with it. In short, **tone management** in Whannell's scripts comes from the characters' consistent reactions. They experience fear and relief in a human way, which lets the script slide between horror and comedy naturally.

For a screenwriter or script consultant, Whannell's approach teaches that you can maintain a frightening atmosphere and still have audiences laugh, as long as the humor arises from character and timing, not at the expense of the threat. By the climax, his scripts usually turn fully serious to deliver satisfying horror resolutions (e.g. the final confrontation in *Insidious* has little to no comedy). He knows when to turn the funny off and let horror take the wheel. The earlier humorous beats serve to endear us to characters and ratchet tension, so that when all hell breaks loose, we're fully invested.

Applying Tone-Balancing Techniques:

- **Use Humor as a Release Valve:** After a high-tension sequence, consider a brief moment of levity to let the audience exhale. This could be a witty line, a character's fumbling reaction, or a cut to an incongruously normal activity. Whannell often follows a scare with a human reaction that's oddly funny or mundane (e.g. a character's phone ringing right after a ghost disappears), to diffuse tension before building it again.

- **Keep Humor Character-Driven:** Maintain the integrity of the horror by ensuring any comedy comes from the characters' personalities or the inherent awkwardness of situations, not from mocking the horror elements. A skeptic character's sarcastic remark or a comic-relief sidekick's antics can lighten the mood while *reinforcing* who they are. Make sure that when the threats ramp up, those characters also react believably (even if with gallows humor), so the danger remains credible.

- **Oscillate Intensity:** Design scenes with ebbs and flows in mind. Whannell excels at scenes that start calm -> turn funny or warm -> then suddenly flip to terror (or vice versa). This whiplash, when done intentionally, enhances both tones. For example, you might write a scene where two characters share a joke in a dark house, easing the mood, only for the punchline to be interrupted by a shocking event. The contrast will startle the audience more than a uniformly grim build-up.

- **Know When to Go All-In:** As the story reaches its climaxes, dial back the jokes. Whannell's finales tend to shed earlier humor to deliver full horror or drama. Follow this model: early and mid-script is a mix of scares and laughs, but the climax should feel like the payoff of all the dread. Commit to the tone needed in that moment (be it horrific, tragic, or thrilling) so the audience feels the consequences are real.

Visual Symbolism & Imagery

Whannell's screenwriting is highly visual – he writes in a way that a reader *sees* the movie in their mind. He often employs **visual motifs and symbolism** to enrich the narrative, using recurring images or clever shot descriptions that add subtext. Notably, Whannell isn't shy about including camera direction or specific imagery in his scripts to ensure certain visuals stand out. For example, *Upgrade* begins with a stylized visual reveal: *"A void of darkness... a circular disc, set into a blue sphere. It is an EYE."* (upgrade-2018.pdf). By pulling back from darkness to an eye, the script immediately sets a visual theme of "seeing" and foreshadows the perspective-driven nature of the story (STEM, an AI, will later act as a second set of eyes in Grey's mind). This kind of imagery hooks the reader from the first moments and also symbolizes Grey's awakening into a new world of technology (his literal eye opening on the world).

In *Insidious*, Whannell uses **color and light** as symbolic cues. The script repeatedly references the color red – from Dalton's red superhero cape when he falls (Insidious-2010.pdf) to the lipstick-red face of the demon. Though the script doesn't overtly analyze this, the recurrence of red visually ties Dalton to the demon (red being both a child's cape and the devil's hue). This subtle symbolism reinforces the idea that Dalton is marked or targeted by that demon. Whannell's stage directions highlight striking images: the demon is introduced not blandly but as *"a lipstick-smeared face of a demon"* looming behind Dalton (Insidious-2010.pdf), a horrific visual that also symbolically suggests a corruptive presence "staining" the child. He often personifies the camera in prose – e.g. *"We FLOAT through the corridor... We are inside her dream."* (Insidious-2010.pdf) (Insidious-2010.pdf) – to guide how an image unfolds for the audience. In Lorraine's dream sequence, the POV floating through the dark house not only delivers a scare (seeing the dark figure) but symbolizes the out-of-body theme of the story (astral projection). The *way* the scene is described (floating, dreamlike) reinforces the concept visually.

Whannell frequently uses **everyday objects with a twist** to create symbolic imagery. In *Insidious*, a baby monitor becomes an instrument of terror – an object associated with innocent infants now delivering malevolent messages (Insidious-2010.pdf). This subversion is symbolic of how the safe domestic world is invaded by the supernatural. The rocking horse, the baby's crib, the metronome in Renai's song – all are ordinary visuals that take on eerie resonance in certain scenes (rocking on its own, etc.). In *Upgrade*, Grey's classic muscle car and the high-tech self-driving cars are visually contrasted on the page. The script explicitly notes the futuristic cars *"making no sound"* as they glide by, while Grey's Trans Am **"screams"** when revved (upgrade-2018.pdf) (upgrade-2018.pdf). This not only creates a cool image (silent electric cars vs. roaring engine) but symbolizes the clash between Grey's analog lifestyle and the advanced AI society – a central thematic conflict. It's a visual metaphor for "man vs machine" without spelling it out in dialogue.

Another symbolic visual Whannell employs is the use of **mirrors, photographs, and eyes** to represent souls or identity. In *Insidious*, family photos are frequently mentioned (Renai looking through wedding albums, Lorraine noticing an old photo of young Josh with a strange figure behind him (Insidious-2010.pdf)). These images symbolize memory and hidden truth – the ghost literally hiding in old photos foreshadows the reveal of Josh's past. The script calls attention to these photos and even the act of photographing (the classroom photo scene where Josh refuses to be in the picture (Insidious-2010.pdf) (Insidious-2010.pdf)). That not only humanizes Josh (showing his stress) but symbolically, his refusal to be photographed hints that something "off" about his image (which we later learn: ghosts haunted his photos). In *Upgrade*, reflective surfaces and camera feeds are pivotal imagery: Grey and STEM review security video footage that's described in visual detail, down to zooming into a killer's tattoo captured on film (upgrade-2018.pdf). The tattoo itself (a visual mark) becomes a clue – Whannell gives it importance by highlighting Grey's memory of it and its eventual match. Thus, even small visuals like a tattoo carry story weight.

Whannell's descriptions also frequently include **motion as imagery** – how something moves can be symbolic. In *Upgrade*, when Grey first fights under STEM's control, the script might note his movements are *unnaturally stiff and precise*, almost puppet-like (in fact, in interviews Whannell mentioned writing that Grey's fighting style should look "strange and stilted"). This conveys visually that he's not fully in control, symbolizing the AI puppeteering him. In *Insidious*, the slow, creeping camera moves and the image of a door **slowly creaking open on its own** are recurring visuals that signify the unseen forces at work. The *door* is a classic symbol of a gateway – in this film, the door to Dalton's room or attic opening by itself is symbolic of the door to the spirit world being ajar. Whannell emphasizes such moments in text (e.g. *"the door pushes open… a dark figure standing in the corner"* (Insidious-2010.pdf)) to implant these potent images in the reader's mind.

Finally, Whannell uses **symbolic settings** to reinforce theme. *The Further* in *Insidious* is described in vague, abstract visual terms (an endless dark void lit by lanterns, etc.), making it literally a symbol of the beyond, a place of lost souls – essentially a visual representation of limbo. In *Upgrade*'s climax, the sterile white tech lab where Grey confronts Eron contrasts with the bloody, chaotic violence that ensues – a visual metaphor for technology's facade of cleanliness versus the messy human cost underneath.

Applying Visual Techniques:

- **Think in Pictures:** When writing, imagine how to convey themes or emotions through images, not just dialogue. Whannell might show a *broken family photo* instead of saying a family is broken. In your script, look for objects or settings that can carry metaphorical weight (a shattered mirror to suggest a fractured identity, for example) and describe them at key moments.

- **Leverage Recurring Motifs:** Introduce a distinctive visual element early and echo it later for resonance. It can be a color, an object, or a piece of iconography. Whannell's repetition of the color red in *Insidious* gives the demon a constant presence. If you have a symbol (like a locket, a certain graffiti tag, a song), weave it through the narrative so it gains meaning each time it appears.

- **Use Descriptive Flair (Within Reason):** Don't shy from a bit of cinematic direction in descriptions to nail an important image. Phrases like *"We see…"*, *"We glide…"* (Insidious-2010.pdf) can be used sparingly to communicate exactly how a moment should look and feel, especially if it conveys story symbolism. Whannell does this to ensure the reader experiences a shot as intended (e.g. the slow reveal of the ghost in the corner (Insidious-2010.pdf)). Just avoid overdoing it; use it for your most critical visuals.

- **Align Imagery with Theme:** Identify your story's themes and find a visual way to represent them. In a Whannell-inspired approach, if your theme is isolation, perhaps recurring shots of characters separated by doorways or windows could visualize that. In *Upgrade*, the melding of man and machine is constantly shown via imagery (wires, prosthetics, mirrored reflections of Grey and STEM's "voice"). Choose imagery that subconsciously reinforces what the story is about.

Exposition & Revelation Techniques

As a screenwriter, Whannell faces the challenge of explaining complex story elements (supernatural rules, tech concepts) to the audience. His approach to **exposition** is to make it as engaging and paced as any action or scare, often delivering revelations through active scenes, visual aids, or character-driven dialogues rather than dry info dumps. A key technique he uses is introducing a **mentor or expert character** to articulate the complicated bits. In *Insidious*, this role falls to Elise, the veteran psychic, who in a single scene conveys the concept of astral projection and the spirit realm. Whannell writes this exposition as a **conversation with high stakes** – it's not a monologue in a vacuum, but Elise gently explaining to distraught parents. For instance, she asks, *"Have you ever heard of astral projection?"*, to which Renai responds, *"Out of body experiences?"* (Insidious-2010.pdf). This Q&A format keeps the audience on the same page as the characters. Elise then describes Dalton's ability in simple but evocative terms: *"He's a very accomplished astral projector…not afraid of his ability. And that lack of fear has led him too far and become lost..."* (Insidious-2010.pdf). By couching the exposition in a **story-like format** (almost a bedtime story about "travelers" and a place called "The Further"), Whannell ensures it doesn't feel like textbook info. The dialogue remains true to Elise's warm, mystical voice, which makes the information easier to absorb.

Whannell also times revelations strategically at **dramatic peaks**. Rather than front-load all explanations, he withholds answers until the audience and characters desperately need them. In *Insidious*, we don't get the full explanation of Dalton's condition until well into Act II, after numerous scares have built up mystery. This way, the exposition scene itself is highly anticipated and cathartic – a relief to finally learn *why* these things are happening. Likewise, *Upgrade* doles out its sci-fi exposition in pieces. Early on, the concept of STEM is hinted (Grey sees Eron's underground lab with a mysterious project, but it's not explained). Only after Grey is injured does Eron fully explain what STEM can do, in a scene where Grey has nothing to lose. Even then, Whannell keeps some cards hidden (the true sentience of STEM isn't revealed until the climax). This **layered revelation** technique – giving partial answers, then deeper answers – maintains intrigue.

When exposition is delivered, Whannell often **pairs it with visuals or demonstrations** to avoid pure talk. For example, instead of just telling us STEM is a super chip, *Upgrade* shows the surgical implantation process with detailed action lines: robotic arms inserting the chip into Grey's spine (upgrade-2018.pdf), and immediately after, Grey moving his fingers for the first time (upgrade-2018.pdf). This *show-then-tell* or *tell-while-showing* approach means the audience grasps the info in a visceral way. In *Insidious*, when Elise explains that *"It's not the house that's haunted, it's your son,"* the script had already primed us by showing how the phenomena followed the family to a new house – a visual proof of concept. Additionally, the use of Lorraine's dream sequence as an exposition device is a masterstroke: rather than simply have Lorraine say "I had a dream about a demon," Whannell **writes the dream as a full scene** with voiceover (Insidious-2010.pdf) (Insidious-2010.pdf), letting the audience experience the scare that Lorraine experienced. This makes the *revelation* (that Lorraine saw a demon in Dalton's room in her dream) far more impactful and cinematic.

For **plot twists and big reveals**, Whannell often plants subtle clues in advance so that the exposition in the moment of reveal feels earned. In *Upgrade*'s finale, the villainous turn of STEM is explained by STEM itself, but earlier hints (like STEM occasionally speaking on its own or overriding Grey briefly) were seeded to make this believable. The final exposition – STEM revealing it orchestrated everything – is brief but powerful because the groundwork was laid. Whannell keeps such climactic revelations concise and punchy, often in tense dialogue exchanges (e.g., STEM using Grey's voice to taunt Eron with the truth in one chilling line). In *Insidious*, the last-minute twist (Josh being possessed by the old woman) is mostly a visual reveal (Elise sees something off and a photograph confirms it). Whannell refrains from over-explaining in the end; he trusts the audience to connect the dots from prior hints (like the story of Josh's childhood). Sometimes **non-exposition is a technique too** – leaving a final beat ambiguous or for the audience to figure out can be haunting.

Another device Whannell uses for exposition is **secondary sources**: books, recordings, video, or tech within the story. In *Insidious*, Specs and Tucker present evidence via photos and sketches (the audience sees drawings of a red-faced entity drawn by Dalton, etc.), which conveys information visually. In *Upgrade*, Grey and STEM analyze a crime scene video HUD – the script describes what they see (like the thugs stealing Asha's documents) (upgrade-2018.pdf) and STEM verbalizes insights ("They also took Asha's work papers" – which tells us the motive

might be more than robbery). By embedding exposition in investigative action, Whannell keeps the audience engaged as participants in solving the mystery.

Applying Exposition Techniques:

- **Make it Interactive:** Avoid monologue dumps; instead, use dialogue exchanges, Q&A, or active scenes to convey exposition. Perhaps a skeptic asks questions that the expert answers (as Renai and Josh do with Elise (Insidious-2010.pdf) (Insidious-2010.pdf)). This keeps the exposition dynamic and emotionally charged rather than didactic.

- **Break it Up and Build Mystery:** Reveal information in stages. Give basic answers initially, then deeper truth later. Early on, hint at the mechanism or cause (e.g. strange medical results with no explanation), then let a knowledgeable character clarify in Act II, and maybe still save a twist detail for Act III. This staggered approach maintains suspense.

- **Show, Don't Just Tell:** Whenever possible, pair exposition with a visual or demonstration. If a character explains a device or a phenomenon, have the script illustrate it simultaneously: e.g., while a scientist explains how a chip works, describe it actually working or affecting something in real-time (upgrade-2018.pdf). This not only breaks up talking but cements understanding through imagery.

- **Tie Exposition to Emotion:** Position big reveals at moments of high emotional stakes for the characters. They (and the audience) should *need* the information at that point. Whannell often has characters practically beg for answers (Renai pleading "what does that mean?") which mirrors the audience's curiosity. When delivering the payoff, infuse it with the tone of the scene – whether it's relief, horror, or shock. This makes info moments dramatically satisfying, not just informative.

- **Use Diegetic Tools:** Consider employing in-story media (letters, videos, drawings, etc.) to offload exposition creatively. A diary entry or a found footage clip can reveal backstory in a vivid way. In a Whannell-inspired script, maybe a character finds a voice recording that plays out (letting the audience *hear* the exposition as an actual message, rather than just character narration). This can make the revelation more engaging and sometimes creepier (a ghost explaining its history via an old journal, for example).

Tension-Building & Scare Deployment

When it comes to crafting scares and tension, Whannell's scene construction is meticulous. **Tension-building** in his scripts is usually a slow burn of suspenseful details leading to a sharp payoff (a scare or burst of action). He often employs the classic horror technique of the *anticipation far exceeding the jump*, meaning he will spend a good amount of page space setting up an eerie situation, making the reader and characters expect something, and then deliver either a jump-scare or a disturbing reveal – or sometimes subvert it by delaying the scare even further. For instance, in *Insidious*, the sequence with Renai investigating a noise in the new house is drawn out to maximize suspense: she hears strange scratching on the baby monitor, follows

noises down a hallway, the music from the record player is cheery (creating dissonance), and *the audience sees a ghost boy behind her that Renai does not see* (Insidious-2010.pdf). This omniscient viewpoint (letting the viewer in on the danger while the character is oblivious) is a powerful tension-builder Whannell uses multiple times. On the page, he writes *"What she doesn't see is the child standing in the middle of the room…"* (Insidious-2010.pdf) – immediately the reader tenses up because we're a step ahead of Renai, dreading when she'll notice. The scene continues to milk this by having her walk away without noticing, only for the ghost boy to later reveal himself with a sudden movement when she returns. By giving the audience more information than the character, Whannell creates a **dread-by-knowledge** scenario; the reader is mentally shouting "Turn around!" This technique (dramatic irony) is prevalent in his scare scenes.

Whannell's **scare deployment** (the execution of the scare) often comes as either a jump scare (loud, sudden, quick) or a creeping reveal (something uncanny that slowly becomes clear). He uses both strategically. Jump scares in the script are indicated with clear, punchy descriptions and often capitalization of the triggering action or sound. For example, *"A dark figure LUNGES past the window –"* or the baby monitor *"scream"* might be in all caps like *"NOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!"* (Insidious-2010.pdf) to convey the jarring impact. In *Insidious*, one of the most famous jump scares – the red-faced demon appearing behind Josh at the dining table – is written in a way that it happens mid-conversation, unannounced except for a descriptive line (likely akin to "The RED-FACED DEMON is suddenly **RIGHT BEHIND JOSH**."). The effect on the reader is the same as the viewer: shock. Whannell sets these moments up by preceding them with relative calm or normalcy, to maximize contrast. In the script, he may emphasize a "long quiet beat" before the bang. This pattern appears repeatedly: a scene builds quiet tension (footsteps, creaking door, maybe a false alarm like a cat), then the real scare hits unpredictably.

For sustained tension scenes without immediate jump scares, Whannell uses **sensory details and confined spaces** to create anxiety. In *Upgrade*, while not a traditional horror, the fight scenes and chase scenes carry tension by highlighting Grey's vulnerability (e.g. when STEM is off and Grey is crawling, every sound of the pursuers' boots and every inch Grey moves is described to crank suspense (upgrade-2018.pdf)). The script might describe Grey's breath, the sweat, the approaching shadows under a door – painting a suspenseful picture. Likewise, in *Insidious*, take the scene of Specs and Tucker's nighttime investigation: Whannell includes the beeping of their equipment, the flicker of flash bulbs, whispers, etc., to build an atmosphere where any sudden movement will alarm. He's effectively priming multiple senses on the page.

Whannell also uses **misdirection** to great effect. He might have a character approach one potential source of fear, only for the scare to come from elsewhere. In the script, this can be achieved by focusing the description on something (say, Renai hears something behind a curtain; she pulls it back and nothing's there – relief – but then a figure darts behind her). The baby monitor scene again is a great example: the audience is straining to hear the whisper (focusing on the device) when the demon's scream explodes out of it unexpectedly (Insidious-2010.pdf). We expect maybe a ghost to appear in the room, but instead it comes through the speaker – a clever redirection of the scare's locus.

Another Whannell strategy for tension is **prolonging the unknown**. He often has characters investigate or walk through dark environments for an extended beat of suspense. In the attic scene where Dalton falls, before the fall there's a series of ominous beats: the door creaks, Dalton climbs, something watches – the script explicitly notes darkness and shadow (*"murky corners of the basement below"* (Insidious-2010.pdf)) to suggest a presence. Dalton's accident itself is a shock (the step breaks). But then Whannell does something smart: *after* Dalton falls and lies unconscious, he adds one more scare – Dalton (and the audience) sees a *shadowy figure in the corner* of the basement (Insidious-2010.pdf). This layering of a secondary scare after the initial accident ensures the tension doesn't drop but actually spikes: now it's not just an injury, there's a ghost in play.

In *Upgrade*, while not full of "scares" in the horror sense, Whannell still builds tension in action sequences similarly: setting up what's at stake, then delivering sudden bursts of violence. For instance, when Grey faces the first thug in his home, the tension is in whether Grey will allow STEM to take over, then the *explosive violence* when he does (jaw-dropping gore as a sort of horror element). The script describes each moment of that fight with crystal clarity and pacing – the tension comes from STEM calmly narrating possibilities and Grey's reluctance, stretched until the breaking point when he finally says "yes" and STEM executes a wildly efficient kill. The *release* is both horrific and darkly satisfying, akin to a scare pay-off.

Importantly, Whannell frequently uses **character response to amplify scares**. The fright isn't just described; we see its effect on characters, which in turn affects the reader. Renai's terror – dropping the baby monitor, "leaping out of her skin… Nerves fried" (Insidious-2010.pdf) – sells the magnitude of the scare. Grey's stunned reaction after a fight (vomiting in shock (upgrade-2018.pdf) (upgrade-2018.pdf)) underscores how extreme the preceding action was. By showing aftermath (crying, shaking, or conversely an eerie calm), the script not only scares in the moment but leaves an emotional impression.

Applying Tension & Scare Techniques:

- **Build Suspense with Detail:** Slow down the moment before a scare. Describe the environment richly – the faint creak of floorboards, a door ajar, a shadow that might be something more (Insidious-2010.pdf). Guide the reader's eye to expect something (e.g. a closet door slowly opening) and make them wait. The longer (within reason) you sustain the "something's not right" feeling, the bigger the payoff when you finally reveal it.

- **Use Dramatic Irony:** Heighten tension by letting the audience in on danger the character hasn't noticed yet. Whannell shows the ghost boy to us while Renai's back is turned (Insidious-2010.pdf) – consider doing similar: describe something lurking just out of the character's view. This engages the reader's anxiety on the character's behalf.

- **Misdirect and Surprise:** Orchestrate scenes so the obvious place of danger isn't where the scare actually comes from. Maybe a character checks one room intently (nothing there), only for the threat to emerge behind them. Scripts can misdirect with framing – focus description on one thing, then whip-pan to the real scare. This surprise is key to effective jumps.

- **Pay off with Impact:** When delivering the scare or shock, punch up the language. Use sharp, visceral words and maybe capitalization for sudden sounds/actions (e.g. *"BANG – the door slams!"*, *"A FIGURE RUSHES PAST"*). In the baby monitor example, the sudden *"NOOOO!!!"* is all caps (Insidious-2010.pdf) which on the page conveys a scream. Don't be afraid to make that moment stand-alone in the text (one line paragraph) so it hits hard.

- **Show Reactions:** After a scare or during it, include the character's reaction to amplify the terror. A frightened scream, paralysis, or even a quiet stunned silence can extend the effect of the scare. In writing your own scenes, note how characters respond – a bravado character might be speechless when faced with true horror, a timid character might utterly break down. These reactions not only sell the fear but also invest the audience emotionally (they feel what the character feels).

- **Vary the Scare Techniques:** Whannell mixes jump scares (short, loud) with creeping dread (long, atmospheric). To keep your audience on edge, use a variety of scare types. A scene with a slow ghost reveal (creeping out of a corner) could be followed later by a sudden attack through a window. This unpredictability in *how* the next scare will come maintains tension throughout the script – the audience can never get too comfortable with one format.

Script Formatting & Style Patterns

Leigh Whannell's writing style on the page is lean, visual, and **reader-friendly, with a few unique flairs** that reflect his director's eye. First and foremost, he follows standard screenplay format (sluglines, action in present tense, dialogue centered etc.), but he isn't afraid to break minor rules to serve the story's readability. One noticeable pattern is his use of **camera directions and "we" statements** in action lines. While some screenwriting purists avoid camera instructions, Whannell employs them judiciously to **guide the reader's perspective**, almost like stage directions for the mind's eye. For example, in *Insidious* he writes, *"We ROTATE AROUND, revealing the tower to actually be a LAMP–"* and *"We HOVER over the young boy... watching him."* (Insidious-2010.pdf). This puts the reader in a specific vantage point and creates a cinematic feeling on the page. He doesn't do this for every beat, but at key moments (introducing a creepy tableau or transitioning into a dream), the "We see…" language effectively communicates movement and focus. Aspiring writers can take from this that a well-placed camera cue can enhance clarity or emotional impact, as long as it's not overused.

Whannell's **action descriptions** are typically concise, punchy, and broken into small paragraphs for rhythm. He favors **one idea per line or paragraph**, especially during fast-paced or tense sequences, which makes the reading experience brisk and mirrors the pacing of the scene. In *Upgrade*'s fight scenes, you'll see a series of short lines: e.g., *"Grey clamps Serk's wrist… The blade sinks into soft flesh… Grey twists the blade…"* (upgrade-2018.pdf) (upgrade-2018.pdf) each as separate beats. This staccato formatting delivers a visceral, blow-by-blow feel. In quieter moments, he might use slightly longer sentences, but still keeps paragraphs tight (rarely more than 3 sentences). **Fragments** are common for emphasis. In *Insidious*, he opens a scene with a single-word sentence: *"Chaos."* to describe the messy kitchen (Insidious-2010.pdf). That

immediately sets the tone before elaborating with why it's chaos. Similarly, *"Peace and quiet at last."* might open a scene after the kids leave (Insidious-2010.pdf). These fragment descriptors act like establishing shots in text form – a quick broad stroke, then specifics.

Another style pattern is Whannell's use of **CAPITALIZATION** for important sound effects, character introductions, and sometimes key props. This is standard practice (cap first appearance of characters, loud sounds). For example, *"His light sabre SHATTERS."* (Insidious-2010.pdf) or *"The door EXPLODES OPEN"* (upgrade-2018.pdf). He uses caps to make sure the reader "hears" or notices those moments – effectively a way to indicate a loud noise or a sudden action in the silent medium of text. In *Upgrade*, technological sounds or weapon effects might be capped (e.g. *"BLAM!"* for a gunshot (upgrade-2018.pdf)). It's a simple technique but used consistently it helps the script convey an auditory experience.

Whannell also has a playful side in formatting. He occasionally uses **parentheticals in dialogue not just for tone but for asides or humor.** We saw an example where Josh's dialogue line has *(Michael Corleone voice)* to indicate he's imitating that character (Insidious-2010.pdf). That's an unconventional but effective way to quickly communicate exactly how the line should sound by referencing pop culture – fitting for a light moment. He'll also use parentheticals for quick action beats in dialogue when necessary, like a character (loads gun) mid-dialogue, though he doesn't over-clutter. The dialogue itself is formatted normally, but interjections like "(beat)" are used to pace out comic timing or dramatic pauses (Insidious-2010.pdf). For example, Specs saying *"I'm Specs." (beat; spooky voice) "I'm here to solve your problem…"* (Insidious-2010.pdf) uses a parenthetical to instruct the actor/reader on a voice change. This shows Whannell's **actor-oriented writing** – he clearly envisions how lines are delivered and encodes that in the script succinctly.

Regarding scene transitions, Whannell mostly sticks to simple *CUT TO:* or just implies cuts with new sluglines. He doesn't use fancy transitions except when stylistically needed (e.g. possibly a *FADE TO BLACK* for a time lapse (Insidious-2010.pdf)). Numbered scene headings appear in the provided scripts because they're production drafts, but in writing style, he isn't focusing on that – he focuses on flow. Noticeably, he sometimes writes continuous action under one slugline rather than chopping into many short scenes, especially to maintain tension (like the long tracking shot from bedroom to hallway in *Insidious* is all under one sequence with *INT. DARKENED BEDROOM* then flowing into *INT. CORRIDOR – CONTINUOUS* (Insidious-2010.pdf)). This keeps the read immersive.

Whannell's **use of whitespace** is also deliberate. He often isolates a single line on the page for emphasis. For example, after a tense buildup paragraph, he might put *"All is dark."* as its own line (Insidious-2010.pdf), amplifying the finality or impact of that moment. In *Upgrade*'s script, a reveal line like *"Stem is in control."* could well have been isolated to punctuate the twist. This is a good trick to let important beats land.

Dialogue formatting is straightforward, but he does sometimes let characters speak over each other (written as dual dialogue or intercut short lines) to simulate chaos – for instance, family members in *Insidious* shouting simultaneously, which the script might denote by overlapping dialogue or quick back-and-forth lines. He doesn't rely heavily on fancy text formatting like bold or italic in the scripts we see (except perhaps italicizing something like an onomatopoeic

"hisssss" of static (Insidious-2010.pdf)). Mostly, he uses standard caps and underlines sparingly.

Finally, one can observe that Whannell's **scene headings and tags** are very clear about time and place, to anchor the reader. If he jumps between the real world and the astral world, he labels scenes accordingly (e.g. adding "- OUR WORLD" vs "- The Further" in *Insidious* if needed, or marking dream sequences clearly as such (Insidious-2010.pdf)). This ensures that despite the complex happenings, the format guides the reader so there's no confusion about where/when we are.

Applying Formatting & Style:

- **Keep it Economical:** Write action in concise, punchy sentences. Break up paragraphs so that each conveys a single visual/action for clarity. When intensity rises, consider one-line paragraphs for each beat to create a rapid-fire effect. Your script should *look* fast-paced where it is fast-paced.

- **Use Formatting for Emphasis:** Employ ALL CAPS for significant sounds, sudden actions, or important elements entering a scene (like a weapon firing or a creature shrieking) (Insidious-2010.pdf). This draws the reader's eye exactly when needed. Likewise, feel free to underline or italicize sparingly if something truly needs highlighting (e.g. a crucial clue in a piece of text). Consistency in this will form your script's "visual language."

- **Direct the Reader's Eye:** It's okay to use "We see/We hear" or camera hints at key moments to ensure the reader pictures it as intended (Insidious-2010.pdf). Just don't overdo it – reserve it for sequences where perspective or reveal is critical (like describing a complex tracking shot or a POV scare). In less crucial moments, trust the standard description to convey the scene.

- **Make it Readable:** Whannell's pages are easy on the eyes – lots of white space, short lines, clear sluglines. Emulate this by avoiding big block paragraphs and overly technical descriptions. Write in a present, active voice (no "was doing," always "does"). Use strong verbs and specific nouns to paint the scene efficiently.

- **Inject Personality in Parentheticals (When Appropriate):** A well-placed aside in a character's dialogue (like indicating an accent, an impression, or a subtle emotional cue) can save a lot of description and convey tone (Insidious-2010.pdf). Don't write what the actor should feel, but hint at how they might say a line if it's not obvious. This can also add a bit of humor or reference that fits the character, making the read more enjoyable (just ensure it matches the story's vibe).

- **Proof and Polish:** Even with a casual feel, Whannell's scripts are professional. Scene headings correctly formatted, character names consistent, no obvious typos. Follow that example – a clean, polished script makes your inventive content shine. The goal is a script so smooth to read that the formatting almost disappears and the movie plays in the

reader's head effortlessly, as Whannell achieves with his tightly-written horror and sci-fi scenes.