

Sean Penn  
via email

Dear Sean,

I'm the author of the book *In Search of Captain Zero*, and the screenplay adaptation of the book, although you may not be aware that such a screenplay exists – notwithstanding that you're a producer of record on the project.

On the other hand, you may have heard from Agi Orsi (or possibly Radar) that the screenplay I wrote wasn't what they were hoping for or some such crap. In point of fact, here's what Orsi told me upon reading my final draft, the one I sent to your office: "It's brilliant." And "You're my little genius." And "You gave Radar exactly what you said you would." Exact words. She had an ICM agent plus another writer whom she trusts read it – they agreed wholeheartedly with her "brilliant" assessment.

Notwithstanding the raves, a few days later she told me, "This isn't the script we were hoping for." Her spectacular flip-flop was based on one negative opinion from a studio executive (I suspect you've had experiences with these types), who has since been fired. Like all Hollywood types, Orsi bows to what she perceives as power; loyalty, even to the material (wherein lies the real power), is not part of her deep character.

I hope you'll bear with me for a little history involving you, the way people use your clout for their own ends:

In 2001, Agi Orsi got in touch with me through my agent, Patty Detroit. Orsi wanted to option my book, with a director named Stacy Peralta attached. I had never heard of these people so I said no.

Orsi didn't give up; she sent me *Dogtown* and *Z-Boys*, which Peralta directed, as an example of Peralta's talent. A good little movie. However, about halfway through it, I noticed that the only scenes Peralta "directed" were interviews. Everything else was archival footage. And he shared writing credits with Craig Stecyk – whose brilliant writing I know from magazines like *The Surfer's Journal*. The narration had Stecyk's zip and flair. (Word is this also applies to "Peralta's" new movie, *Riding Giants*. All archival stuff and he had a talented co-writer, Sam George of *Surfer* magazine, whom I know.)

So: *Dogtown* told me very little about Peralta's directorial abilities. I still said no to the option offer.

Orsi didn't give up. She had a trump. You. Said you wanted to co-produce. She had you call me to discuss the project. (This was prior to our meeting with Ted Field at the Four Seasons in July of 2001.) I liked very much what you had to say. Orsi, who was in on that conference call, told me this: "You'll love working with Sean. He gets involved early in the script stage."

I've always admired your work; the projects you do, not only as an actor but as a director. I believed Orsi. I let her (and, technically, you) option my book. I sweated over four drafts. Almost three years' work, two and a half years more time than I've ever put into a screenplay. (I've written or rewritten about 20; I have screen credits on features and numerous TV shows.) My book was a tough, tough adaptation. I had to reinvent my book's internally driven, anecdotal, nonfiction story for the screen. (The key was finding the ending my book did not provide; the noir, Heart of Darkness, mythical finish I had promised everyone – you may recall this promise, made at our Four Seasons meeting.)

During the writing and rewriting I kept asking Orsi when you were going to get involved. Suddenly it was, "Oh, Sean doesn't read." (I don't believe this for a heartbeat. I believe you are as much a victim of dishonesty here as I am.)

I'm writing this message from the end of the road at the bottom of Central America. I live here for the waves and because it's as far from Hollywood as possible.

Maybe you can identify with my attitude. I don't know.

The In Search of Captain Zero screenplay I wrote is the best work I've ever done. I wish you'd read it. Sato has a copy. I have fine-tuned it further, but that version will do for now. (In fact, I'm not even asking you to read the whole draft. If act one – up to page 30 – doesn't knock you out, toss the thing. I know how busy you are but I'm really only asking for a half hour of your time. )

Yours truly,  
Allan Weisbecker

P.S. The book rights revert to me in a few months. Radar and Orsi have asked for an option extension so they can hire another writer. If I can't get a read from you I may actually take the money and forget about it. (I see you as the only realistic hope for my movie.) I live in paradise. As I write this I'm looking out my office window at an overhead south swell marching up El Golfo Dulce, The Sweet Gulf. I'll be in the water in a few minutes.

At the risk of going too far in pitching my draft: John Cusack's company, New Crime, has hired me to adapt my novel, Cosmic Banditos, mainly because they read my Zero adaptation and basically said, "If Weisbecker can do THAT, he can do anything."

(I'd very much appreciate a short email saying you got this message. I have been trying to contact you for a year, with no success. My phone down here is 011 506 829-3487.)