

SCREENPLAY GURUS

SCRIPT ANALYSIS

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|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| TITLE: | X |
| LOCALE: | Beautiful and Deadly Yellowstone National Park |
| WRITER(S): | X |
| PERIOD: | Summer 1995 |
| FORM: | Feature Screenplay |
| GENRE: | Drama |
| BUDGET: | Low |
| PAGES: | 104 |
| DRAFT DATE: | 10/29/19 |
| COVERAGE DATE: | 11/5/19 |
| PREPARED BY: | TA |

OVERALL

This is a very good script written by an obviously talented writer. It has the literary depth of a classic American novel and reads like an adaptation. The story has a very personal, almost autobiographical feel. As if recalling memories, this is reflected by the writer's talent in creating characters as vivid as the natural beauty they inhabit. This is particularly true of Brad and Ana. There is complexity and multiple layers of subtext within the context, yet the read is fast and maintains interest from beginning to tragic end.

In order to decide what to address in the rewrite, the analysis begins with an overview of issues that affect the entire script, and then breaks down the script into the elements of story and structure.

Throughout the analysis, problems are addressed and possible solutions are offered. The solutions are examples. If they work for the writer, they are available. If they do not feel right, the writer could return to the discussed concept to find a solution that fits within the script's objective and their creative process.

OVERVIEW

1. To start, screenplay mechanics: The script is written very well but outside the bounds of screenplay writing. Though visual in a way, it is far too literary and dense. This takes the reader out of the story and occasionally leads to confusion about the writer's intent. Clarity trumps creativity. This is particularly true in complex stories. The complexities must be presented with great clarity. Brad doubles over and fouls the quiet of the morning with repeated heaves.

Brad doubles over and heaves.

The brightening sky reveals sagebrush shrub-lands with worn rounded hills, loose groupings of quaking aspen and isolated lodgepole pines that graduate back from the road to become thick forests.

The pickup drives underneath a hulking rusticated stone archway and past a carved wooden sign announcing:
YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

The rising sun dapples the aspen and pines that dot the sagebrush scrub hills. Not far from the road, the trees thicken to dense forest.

The pickup scuttles under a large, purposely rough-hewn archway and past a CARVED SIGN: "Yellowstone Natural Park".

The markup flags typos. A few Parentheticals are not properly placed.

SERGIO

An apostate! Intriguing. (To Ana) Ana.

He's an apostate.

SERGIO

An apostate! Intriguing.

(to Ana)

Ana. He's an apostate.

2. As unfortunate as it may sound, the script's advanced language will be too difficult for some college graduate readers to parse. The recommendation is to 'dumb down' the script's Action language.

3. It is our suggestion for the writer to make a commitment to screenwriting software that does not add a watermark. A watermarked script gives the impression the writer is not serious enough to spend money for the basic tools of the craft. Fade In Pro runs \$80. Though limited in the number of saved scripts, cloud-based Writers Duet is free.

4. The writer takes some leaps without explanation. It is laudable to not spoon feed audiences, but too little information, or skipping proper set up, obfuscates a story.

For example, page 1, the first scene with Brad. We see he gets out of a camper van that, the writer tells us, has a bed. He takes crumpled bills from his pocket to place in his wallet. There's good detail of Brad smoothing the bills as if they were crumpled and perhaps tossed at him. If he had the bills previously they would already be in his wallet.

Brad throws up and moans. He just left home (mother's bowl haircut) or was kicked out (the mother is portrayed as a religious zealot). He hates himself for what he did yet turns on a dime and turns on the (bad) charisma when another vehicle approaches.

The writer includes information pointing to Brad performing sexual favors on a male either for a ride or for just plain commerce. It plays as if it's his first trick.

This beautifully detailed scene cannot be misunderstood. Until someone does and the script is either misunderstood or simply not understood in its subtlety.

Another unfortunate fact in today's marketplace where gatekeepers to contest wins or a place on a studio head's desk do not approach material with the proper care. As noted, to a reader's eyes the flowery prose may have already doomed the script. There is panic in a studio system where readers are fired for saying 'yes'. Or, sadly, just cannot recognize a good story when it passes before their eyes.

Readers cannot shoulder the blame for a script pass. Writers must assure they maintain vision and voice in their scripts but make them accessible. Clarity makes stories stronger. A reader or an audience should not be tasked with making assumptions about a story. The writer's challenge is to find ways to bridge the gap between spoon-feeding and gently and creatively weaving in exposition.

In this first scene, the bridge could be a brief look exchanged between the driver and Brad. One well-written sentence solidifies the scene's meaning. A note that it is critically important to know where Brad starts his journey.

A positive is contemporary audiences are sophisticated. The base audience for this film will make the right connections, and they like to be challenged. This story's nuances will go over a wider audience's head.

Another example is on page 104. It's obvious Ron has been in prison and has just been released. Others may or may not discern this from Ron's physicality. The difficulty lies in the leap between Ana lets the camera hang down as she stares at Brad who turns around and walks away with Ronnie behind. and Ron stepping off the bus to be met by Brad and his acolytes.

Ana is escorted to the Cruiser. It seems she's taken in for questioning but not as a suspect. Weak Ron either caved and turns himself in, or jailed through some other mechanism. Again, one well-written sentence from Ana to the Ranger would bridge this leap. She could silently point at Ron and Brad or say something clever the writer cooks up to incriminate them. The audience can then fill in a smaller gap.

The caution here is to eschew playing the results in lieu of playing the action. The writer is intelligent and does not want to be obvious. However, there is too much off screen action. We are certain the writer is clever enough to make the needed exposition original to satisfy themselves and the audience.

5. There are no likeable characters in the script, and that is valid. This is the writer's choice and this is their story. There are no rules except for what draws in an audience and what does not. This is a dark, multi-layered tragedy with little humor or light. It threads on humanity's basest instincts. It is also a brilliant character study.

Ana initially overshadow Brad. This is a way to make someone unlikable likeable – make a character more evil so we root for the underdog. However, Brad turns the tide against her when he stumbles into his power.

Brad does garner some sympathy for being on the street. However, we do not have enough information about it – left or kicked out. (Most likely the former to get away from a maniacally religious household.) He also sells himself to get cash.

That's a choice, and he's on his way to a paying job. Therefore, he does not necessarily *have* to trick.

Should the writer choose, we could learn a bit more about Brad's past. Or, he could do something kind early in the script – a selfless rescue a kitten from a tree act (not literally a kitten in a tree). Either allows sympathy for Brad. Audience sympathy for antagonists deepens the characterization. We don't have to necessarily know why they do what they do but we must at least understand them.

It is particularly tricky in this script because the antagonist/protagonist swaps. Initially, Ana is highly unlikable in the way she treats Sergio, and Brad is a bit sympathetic. It flips. Ana has genuine concern for Ronnie when she and Brad battle for his soul.

This is a suggestion to leaven the unrelenting darkness of the story. This could also be accomplished with a few notes of humor.

6. The title is too literal. A rethink here.

7. The marketability of the script is modest. This is a fascinating story. One that demands attention like passers by who rubberneck a gruesome auto accident. The characters, story and dialogue are top notch. A multitude of themes and ideas are successfully juggled. However, who is the audience? This is a question for the writer to consider. Currently, the script plays a like the writer has not thought about writing with an audience in mind, and more the exploration of a topic of interest with an assumption an audience will follow. The latter rarely works.

A positive is this is a low budget Indie script. With a sharp pencil, the production could be mounted for \$1M – \$2M max. Maybe less. The result could be an Art House film or Festival Darling. It might even make a foray into cult status.

The elephant in the room is a film from this script most likely wouldn't return this modest investment. That would be a production company or studio's greatest concern in a film with a dark, though fascinating, subject matter.

The industry is in a period of near self-destructive churn. The market is in trouble when a mass appeal Indie comedy like BOOKSMART struggles to make a buck. Fewer Specs are being sold. The concentration in Hollywood is superhero tent poles. In Hollywood, there is a go-for-broke attitude in making huge films to draw

loyal fans. The mid-budget Hollywood film has vanished. Streaming services offer some respite, but they even have limits. This script does not play like a Netflix film.

Going forward, the writer has a remedy in making this script as a microbudget film themselves then taking a shot at Sundance or AFM. Alternatively, sharpening it for script competitions with the goal of someone with vision to purchase or option it. Finally, as a Spec to get writing assignments.

Above all, the writer should consider whose butts would be in seats to see the film. A positive is X is a universal tale that will have long lasting relevance.

The most radical suggestion is to translate this worthy story to novel form. The writer has the chops to make this a compelling book that expands the story. Once the book sells and gains a fan base, Hollywood will find the writer... who already has a script.

STORY AND STRUCTURE

The story plays a bit like a road show LORD OF THE FLIES. Here, hapless Sergio fills in for Piggy. Though the characters are adults, they act like children with no supervision to moderate their actions. No 'adult' is seen throughout the story.

The characters act like children in a tragic game of manipulation not far removed from nasty playground games. Like children, all these characters are in one form or another trying to find themselves and their place in this world. These dangerous games also bear a similarity to the ones played in LES LIAISONS DANGEREUSES. Another take is these characters are a pack of wolves with no alpha until one of the betas, by proxy, rises from the rest.

An alternate title could be, X: THE MAKING OF A CULT LEADER. This is a terrific twist at story's end. Brad could be anyone from Charles Manson to Jesus Christ. The latter is a cynical view of religion in a world where it's pronounced, "God is dead!" If God is dead and Jesus has not returned to His earthly kingdom, Brad is more than happy to fill in the vacuum and lead his acolytes under a false banner called 'Love' – precisely what Manson did with his family. At the end, Brad adds a brawny, hardened soldier to his ranks. Who knows what havoc Ron and Brad will wreak? Excellent work; clever, biting, nihilistic and cynical.

The script explores those who freely give up their power, like Sergio to Ana and Ron to Brad. They search for a sense of self. In the interim, they fill themselves with someone else. Ron believes changing his name from Ronnie to Ron and growing a mustache will make him different, that externals are what make a man. It leads to embarrassing himself by pretending to channel an Alien. Brad even fools Katie into believing a triad of UFOs passes over.

An inevitable comparison is those in contemporary society – from world leaders to advertisers – who spin lies to tell us what’s not real is real or we’re a loser if we don’t use the phone they’re hawking. In addition, a percentage of the people listening, like Katie, believe it. This is a sad state of affairs the writer is unafraid to shine a light on by proclaiming ‘the Emperor has no clothes’.

Brad becomes Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*. The first step declares “God is dead.” This creates the vacuum Brad exploits and fills with nihilism as he begins to take control and create new values.

BRAD

Ron. Don't! They have lost their connection. There is nothing we can do.

Brad creates new values others line up to blindly follow, and turn traditional morality on its head.

Then there are the sexual politics. In a form of conversion therapy, Ana provides ‘serum’ to inoculate Sergio from homosexuality, sex or love. A master manipulator and misandrist, Ana meets her match and loses in a showdown with Brad.

These proceedings are a complex and fascinating deconstruction of humanity told through the simple story of a summer job that is antithesis to frothy summer romance comedies set in camps. In those, young adults work together over the season and learn about themselves while having lots of sex. See: MEATBALLS and WET HOT AMERICAN SUMMER.

The writer uses “Thermal Interludes” on pages 12, 36, 51, 68, 87 and 103. These ad hoc chapter markers offer subtext in a natural form for story occurrences – emotions bubbling up or pent up pressure released. This is a sophisticated plot element. Like much of the script, they are overwritten and should be presented directly in a simpler visual style.

The script uses a loose three-act structure to frame the story. The structure is irrelevant, really. The story proceeds in a linear fashion, the tension and

complications rise to the tragic end. The character's arcs are the structure. The character's journeys are crafted slowly and with care so the story does not need the typical manufactured Turning Points though there are turns after an effective set up.

ACT I

Pages 1 – 10

May 1995. We meet the self-loathing hustler Brad as he finishes a trick, leaves a van and vomits. The obsequious philosopher Sergio and unlikable, prickly photographer Ana pick him up. They're all headed to the Canyon Lodge for work.

Themes of masculinity are explored in the dominant Ana / submissive Sergio relationship *SERGIO* We are in Bighorn; she on the upper floor, I on the lower. There are appearances of a 'Bull' Moose and the foreshadow image of a Bison goring a man on a cautionary roadside sign. Ana photographs Brad as the Bison and Sergio as victim in front of the sign. Sergio communes with nature through a raven – a portent of the future. Sergio is doomed. He will die an ugly death in a very beautiful place.

The writer uses symbols throughout: the masculine and cow elk, lumbering bison, the wise fox and fortuneteller raven. Bison symbolize determination to make clear decisions. They are also an icon of power. Good work here.

A poseur, Brad reads Nietzsche, which he does not understand and Ana finds hyper-masculine. Sergio promises to teach him. Additional themes of nature and the meaning of God are added.

Ana averts her gaze when the boys strip to take a dip. She is sexually ambivalent and, as a misandrist, disgusted by or disinterested in the male form. The same occurs when Morris, Brad's roommate, enters their cabin in the bison employee lodge while Brad changes. Morris flushes and averts when he sees Brad's buttocks. Though he denies it, Ronnie knows he's gay.

An excellent set up. In the first ten pages, we meet the four principals and the writer introduces themes, sexual subtext and starts to sketch the complex relationships. Great work here. Economical and potent.

Pages 11 – 26

There continue themes of (self) deception, falsity or false image. Ronnie is hired to cook but has never cooked before.

The first Interlude follows a collegial night at the Pub where it appears everyone is accepted. The interlude shows a female elk – a stand in for Ana. The story moves forward from this pleasant meeting forward to prove “familiarity breeds contempt.”

There is talk of the March 1995 Tokyo Sarin attack that drives a foreshadow. Ana wants to form a cult around her. She’s out of luck because Brad will beat her to it. He becomes what Katie presages:

KATIE

The Supreme Truth of monsters.

Ana tries a Delilah on Brad’s Samson by cutting his hair, but he refuses to bow to her self-aggrandizing demand to call her “The Garden” Because...you would come to me for sustenance and growth. She is the cook. The struggle for power between Brad and Ana kicks off though he has feelings for her. This is a sick attraction. He sees how awful Ana behaves yet desires her. This could be an indicator of a love/hate relationship with his mother.

It appears he simultaneously fears and likes the symbol of what she is – powerful – rather than liking her as a person. Brad is a mirror of Ana yet he has not developed to her level.

Sergio literally kisses Ana’s feet further debasing himself; a moment of high pathos. Ronnie dislikes overbearing Ana who duns him for not knowing how to cook. Ronnie’s assignment to a job he can’t do underscores an uncaring attitude by those in power. ‘They’ throw these people in the deep end regardless their ability to swim.

Brad starts his transformation by stealing clothes he finds in a cabin he and Brent clean. The clothes are everything he wishes he was. He takes what’s left in the suitcase to Admin and meets the flirty Missy. He plays it cool. Brad’s sexuality is opportunistic and the most fluid of the group. Mostly, sex frightens and sickens him. The latter says volumes about Brad’s upbringing.

We meet a few more workers and Missy at the Pub where drink and Pot freely flow. Brad's transformational clothes catch the attention of an obese, denture-wearing Biker Chick, Barbara. Brad beds her but he quickly runs out and vomits again. In a great twist, Barbara becomes Brad's acolyte.

Sergio badgers Brad into a hike and swim. Brad is ashamed of the nasty hook up and cares what Ana thinks of him. Like Sergio, he gives Ana power. This will soon change when Brad almost accidentally finds his power over others.

BRAD

I don't think I want to see Ana.

Brad can't take seeing Ana's bikinied body and wants to walk ahead of her. Now that God is dead, Brad struggles with his morality, the decision to eschew God and to bed the unattractive Barbara.

BRAD

How am I supposed to know what I'm supposed to do when...

While Sergio tries to help, Ana calls Brad on it in a very blunt manner. She already finds Brad creepy and a phony.

It begins to rain and thunder. Sergio and Brad head back to the safety of the lodge while defiant Ana stands atop a ridge challenging God to strike her down. She is more man than the men who run away.

ACT II

Pages 27 – 86

Sergio, Ronnie and Brad go book shopping. Ronnie peels off to buy a knife. He meets them at the bookstore with a boning knife to use in the kitchen. Sergio found a pile of books for Brad who belittles Ronnie. You wouldn't be into it. The knife Ronnie buys will take Sergio's life.

Sergio states a major theme when they buy the books, and unknowingly creates a monster through a philosophy to use. Sergio is also falling in love with Brad. This is where you learn that good and bad are not as simple as we'd like. Truth and untruth, fact and opinion, real, unreal; these are complicated issues that we should all deal with.

At an employee bonfire, Sergio leaves Ana's side; his first steps from her influence. She dislikes it. Sergio gives Brad a guitar. He sings Ana's favorite song directly to her. She bolts from the bonfire. Ronnie claps loudest at song's end. He too is falling for Brad. Sergio goes after Ana.

As the fire burns down, Katie and Ronnie flank Brad. He takes a first step to finding his power as a master manipulator. He tells them something true about his mother but discounts it as a lie to test their gullibility, and to keep hidden and protected.

BRAD

My mother used to burn crosses into her body with a hot iron when I was a kid.

Ana and Sergio walk together. Sergio wants to host a LSD party but Ana doesn't want Brad to attend. She denies Brad desires her and thinks it's Sergio he's after.

ANA

Why do you give a shit about him? He is such a fake. Oh, my God. Look!

Running alongside the trail is a small RED FOX.

The fox symbolizes Ana's wisdom about Brad and that he truly is a danger. The wise fox leads them to a beautiful, isolated place they call 'The Castle' where Sergio can write, except he doesn't. We soon learn of Sergio's deception.

Sergio helps tend Brad's self-inflicted scourging. This is an expression of intense emotional pain and psychological distress. Brad tosses it off:

BRAD

Habit? It used to calm me down but I don't even really feel it anymore. I don't really know. Can you put some ointment on. It lends credence to the story his mother truly did burn herself with crosses. This does allow sympathy for Brad, but the scene could play out a bit more. Sergio is wise enough to probe him for more about this behavior. Without exploration, this extreme behavior feels a bit tacked on.

Sergio admits Ana doesn't want him to hang out with Brad. When they shake, Brad holds Sergio's hand tightly and brushes his cheek. Ronnie enters to break the moment. Ronnie grows a mustache and asks to be called Ron from now on – a sad statement about a desperate search for self and discomfort in his own body.

Brad's tenderness is a ploy to capture Sergio's soul away from Ana, and it's working. Brad begins to affect Ronnie as well.

The second Interlude has the surface of the water bubbling to make it clear.

Ana takes Ronnie to task for kitchen errors – one a foreshadow of stabbing Sergio. He intentionally spills the beans about Sergio and Brad. When Ana talks to Sergio, he lies by not mentioning Brad. Sergio is torn.

Sergio kisses Danielle to console her about a lousy boyfriend. Ana calls him on this and demands 'Serum', another way she controls him. Sergio taunts a bison – another foreshadow of his contrived demise.

Brent serves Acid like a communion host. Ana badgers Sergio about getting it on with Brad. Sergio says he's had the 'Serum'.

The effects of the LSD are not plumbed. They take it and we join them later. What occurs later is not typical behavior after ingesting Acid. The suggestion here is to see the group tripping.

SERGIO

I think he would get a lot out of a good trip. We could guide him.

Let's see the promise of this.

Later, the group plays corpse – naked, lying face down in the water. Brad asks Ronnie if he has ever seen a UFO, and tells him some nonsense about aliens knocking on trees. Brad attempts to test his immortality by breathing water when he plays corpse. It does not work. This near drowning is both a baptism and resurrection that tests Brad. Sergio talks him down from the incident:

BRAD

God has finally found me. He wants me to pay for my sins.

Sergio is torn between Brad and Ana but chooses the latter. Brad goes into a trance and proclaims he's a Magus (a further nod to Nietzsche), a magician, when he comes out of it. Brad's delusion solidifies. Katie and Ronnie are transfixed.

Over their protestations to assist, Brad stops Katie, Ronnie and Brent from helping with fiery car accident victims. Ana, Sergio and others rush to help. The factions solidify. Brad is learning fast.

MIDPOINT

An Interlude with thick, gurgling wet clay. The atmosphere, the plot, the soup literally thickens.

Ana tends to the upset Katie and takes fragmentary pictures in an attempt to reveal her. She wants Katie to reveal her (true) self, a purge of Brad's nasty influence. Ana sends Brad away when he appears at the door, but Katie has mixed feelings. Her inner conflict will soon end.

Brad manipulates Ronnie into bringing Katie to him – part and parcel of the power struggle between him and Ana. Ronnie reluctantly agrees. Ana knows and counters with a suggestion to Sergio for Ronnie to go on a hike and away from Brad's influence. At this point, the previously unreasonable Ana is wired tighter than the unraveling Brad. A fascinating flip of the story's energy and direction.

Katie and Brad make out. He demands Katie do his chores, and in a repeat of Sergio kissing Ana's feet, Brad makes Katie do the same. The circle is complete. The student is now the master.

After Sergio admits he got caught cheating on his thesis and didn't tell Ana, Brad feigns taking the moral high ground by saying he would never lie to her. This furthers the story's theme of moral ambiguity.

Another bonfire. Brad performs and women flock to him, including Katie. Later, Brad manipulates some into believing a squad of UFOs flies over. Brad draws closer to Katie who believes. Desperate for Brad's attention, Ronnie proclaims he sees them.

Ana cries bullshit, and Brad's attempt to charm her fails. She leaves but Sergio stays. The sheep seek their shepherd. Brad is becoming an adept "fisher of men."

Ana again tries to wrest Ronnie away from Brad by inviting him to the pub. Ronnie will return to the bonfire and the nonexistent lights magician Brad summons. Show them he does. At the bonfire, Brad is surrounded by people who want to see. In another desperate move, Ronnie "channels" an alien and spouts nonsense about human seed for hybridization of the two races. This also serves to deepen Ronnie's need to find himself.

Interlude. A fumarole erupts – not much water but a lot of steam. A lot of smoke but no fire. Yet.

Ronnie's lovesick puppy dog is too much for Brad.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Why do you have to be all over me all the time. I'm not your girlfriend!

Ronnie bends Ana's ear and lies in a denial he's in romantic love with Brad.

Sergio, Ronnie, Brad and others party together. Brad offers to do anything that's asked – a manipulation, a test of limits, and his worthiness by not asking others to do something he has not done. He's asked to kiss everyone. Tensions rise between Sergio and Ronnie. Sergio lays a load of intellectual nonsense on Ronnie who becomes angry. Sergio leaves before the kiss. The 'serum' works.

Brad asks Katie and Stewart to steal liquor from the lodge. They do, get caught and are fired. Ana is angry with Brad and believes he's the cause. Sergio's rational view it was Katie's doing angers Ana – they part. Sergio is manipulated by Brad's lies he didn't know about Katie. They make up and Brad holds Sergio too close as Ronnie watches.

It all comes to a head when Ronnie tracks Sergio to the castle:

SERGIO

I can't make you into someone you are not. I can't change the laws of the universe. I can't change you from Ronnie to Ron. I can't make Brad love you. Besides, I'm kind of in love with him myself.

Ronnie stabs Sergio to kill his competition and as an act of revenge. It is a tragic display of Ronnie's power.

ACT III

Pages 87 – 104

Interlude: a geyser erupts. All that pent up energy explodes.

Ronnie tells Brad he killed Sergio.

BRAD (CONT'D)

That's too bad.

This dry response underscores Brad's sociopathy. It also means Ana's free of Sergio's influence, and it could be an opening for Brad.

Ronnie has almost completely disappeared. He is completely under Brad's control.

Brad and Ronnie stage a scene where a bison gores the dead Sergio. Brad is complicit in the murder. Ronnie now has power over Brad. This plays out in the ending where Ronnie proves his love for Brad by taking the fall for the murder, serving the time. He does not implicate Brad who also deserves prison time.

Ana frantically searches. She and Dan find the dead Sergio. Ana confronts Brad and accuses him of killing Sergio, that Brad wanted him. Brad says no, it was always her.

Ana is taken in for an interview with Park Rangers. She sees Brad and Ronnie watching. She shoots picture after picture of Brad until the film runs out. Her photo project – if it was real – is at an end.

Interlude. The waters are calm again yet steaming.

Years later, Brad and a few acolytes, including Barbara wait for a bus. Prison-tempered Ronnie steps off. Brad addresses the group:

BRAD

Ron is here to teach us about love.

They all embrace Ronnie. Brad has a new, loyal and dangerous acolyte. Brad has also fulfilled his promise.

DIALOGUE

First rate, brimming with subtext. Characters have their own voices. Good work.

CONCLUSION

In regards to the current state of cinema, Martin Scorsese recently opined, “For anyone who dreams of making movies or who is just starting out, the situation at this moment is brutal and inhospitable to art.”

In today’s marketplace, China plays a major role. Films are made to tap this lucrative market. The films that fly in China are not subtle. They are roller coaster rides with the nutritional value of Cotton Candy. This is not a lament, it is the fact of modern filmmaking. It is after all Show Business.

These facts shut out films made from scripts like X. This script is a work of art. Like an artwork hanging in a gallery, some will resonate, some will not. Some will see the meaning behind the brush strokes, some will not.

As good as the story is, its appeal is a bit too vertical. This is a conundrum for the writer to ponder. There are certainly areas to make this story more palatable, i.e. the language and a few tweaks to the story. Even these changes will not bring the story to a wide audience unless the writer decides to turn the story in a radically different direction. There is no recommendation to do this. The recommendation is to make the few script changes and roll the dice in these inhospitable times. The writer should also consider a translation to novel form.

This script stands far above the multitude of lesser efforts by screenwriters who envision a film instead of writing a story. X is a potent story.

Thank you for the opportunity to read the script. It was a pleasure.

SCREENPLAY GURUS' 11 POINT SCORING MATRIX

Scores: 0 – 10 points for each element, 110 total possible points

Pass: 0 – 75
 Weak Consider: ¹ 76 – 80
 Consider: 81 – 90
 Strong Consider: 91 – 100
 Recommend: 101 – 110

Statistical Scores of submitted screenplays

Pass: 80%
 Weak Consider: ¹ 10%
 Consider: 5%
 Strong Consider: 3%
 Recommend: 2%

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| PRESENTATION | 9 |
| THEME | 10 |
| STORYTELLING | 10 |
| ORIGINALITY | 10 |
| STRUCTURE | 10 |
| PLOT | 10 |
| CHARACTERIZATION | 10 |
| DIALOGUE | 10 |
| STYLE | 6 |
| CONCEPT | 10 |
| MARKETABILITY/COMMERCIAL APPEAL | 6 |
| TOTAL POINTS | 101 |

SCRIPT: RECOMMEND
WRITER: RECOMMEND

Presentation:

Is the script properly formatted, free of typos and misspellings? Does the writing use standard English conventions? Is the cover page attached with the author's name and contact information only? Is there white space? Are there lengthy blocks of dialogue and action?

Theme:

Is the theme stated and does the screenplay reinforce it throughout. Is the theme relevant or unique?

Storytelling:

How effectively has the author crafted the timeline of events? Is the story interesting or compelling? Is it relevant? Does the script serve the genre in which it's written? Does the story have a through line and respect it without unnecessary departures?

Originality:

Does the story twist well-worn conventions, or create a new one, without straining credibility? Where does the story fit into the four degrees: Totally Familiar; Familiar, Yet Different; Different, Yet Familiar; Totally Different (Familiar, Yet Different and Different, Yet Familiar are preferred).

Structure:

Does the script have and an Inciting Incident, proper Act Breaks, Rising Action, Complications and Obstacles, a well- identified Protagonist and Antagonist?

Plot:

How well has the author informed the audience why the story's events belong in the script, and what the story is meant to communicate?

Characterization:

Do the characters have dimension beyond cliché and trope? Are they real or relatable? Do they have flaws? Do the characters elicit empathy or sympathy?

Style:

Is the writing clear, economical, free of bloat and unnecessary description. Does the writer "Show, don't tell?" Are the descriptions visual and intriguing? Does the writer use Active Voice and Present Tense?

Concept:

Is it sound, interesting or compelling? Do Plot, Storytelling and Structure reinforce the concept?

Marketability/Commercial Appeal:

Where does the script fit in the marketplace? How likely is it to be made? How does it compare to similar films? How will audiences react?

1. AKA Consider With Revisions.

Thanks for submitting your screenplay to Screenplay Gurus! We hope the analysis gives you the info you need to make the script as good as it can be.

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