

THE BLACK LIST

THE HOMEWRECKERS

Evaluation

Overall	Premise	Plot	Character	Dialogue	Setting
6	6	5	6	6	5

Era Contemporary

Locations Los Angeles

Budget Low

Genre Comedy, Dark Comedy, Family Comedy, Sex Comedy

Logline A blocked pulp writer in a failing marriage is surprised with a visit from his bickering, eccentric parents, who are intent on saving his relationship just as he and his wife have both stumbled into exciting, extramarital sexual escapades.

Pages 120

Strengths

The shaggy, offbeat vibe of this script is hugely appealing, almost like a classic Italian sex comedy in the way these characters are lightly depicted trying to cheat on and deceive each other throughout the film. The fundamental conflicts of the movie are clear and compelling: Warren's writer's block inextricably linked to his failing marriage, Jeffery's attraction to Maggie and need to fend off Patti, and maybe best of all, Katie's desire to actually see her parents break up for their own good. The script has a refreshing bluntness about sex that never tips into wanton crudeness, but always feels authentic and real in a way even most contemporary sex comedies fail to achieve. Warren's story may be the one that works best all the way through, though, in part because of how likable his scene partner is. Charlotte is quick-witted and sharp, but most of all she's grounded in a way that proves necessary to Warren's development. Tying his reinvigoration as a writer to his almost-affair pays off excellently when he's suddenly written a brilliant new novel—and Charlotte realizes that he doesn't need her anymore. The structure of the film overall works well too, building to an outstanding climax as the grandparents make a *Thelma & Louise*-style run for freedom via suicide, and every family member independently realizes their folly

Weaknesses

Warren's storyline feels fully developed, but the rest all get short-shrift, the most egregious of them being Katie's. Her premise is outstanding, but then we see her make a total of one attempt and then recede into the background. Her eventual realization that she doesn't want her parents broken up feels more like a function of the page number than a moment earned by what she's witnessed.

Eleanor's arc takes a weird path to its compelling destination: her desire to fix her son's marriage is understandable, but could use a stronger driver (perhaps she already knows she's sick?). But she, too, never makes any real attempt to fix it, beyond some stray snark directed toward Barbara. It keeps her failure from feeling poignant, because we never get the sense she expended real effort toward it. And her final beats take the movie in a dark direction that it hasn't earned, partly because the movie never was about Eleanor; she was a background disturbance up until the climax, and ending on her illness doesn't work because we haven't invested deeply in her struggles. Harrison's story is funny but doesn't build any arc for the character, in contrast to the other plots. Even his wife's illness never gets to register emotionally for him, overwhelmed as it is by the immediate action on the freeway and thus losing its potential impact.

Prospects

The premise and characters of the script are excellent, and it's a breezy, light-on-its-feet sex comedy that pays off with some real character development in its final pages. It feels, perhaps, a little bit out of sync with where feature comedies are right now, but that may be a selling point: it's smarter, more character-focused, less spectacle-driven (and so budget-conscious). Its major issues lie in how it develops most of the plots, which tend to reach endings that aren't quite earned by what's come before. But if the film can smooth out these issues and build more coherent arcs for the non-Warren characters, there's plenty to recommend here, and it's easy to imagine a smaller, independent studio like Bona Fide finding appeal in its intelligent, character-based comedy.