

Blood Mansion
Script rewrite proposal



Approach

First twenty minutes of SCREAM. Goes from playful, to flirty then creepy and finally, Sydney filleted on a tree. Along the way, the dialogue's smart. Rings true to the ear. The story has structure. Things make sense, even when you didn't know what going to happen next. Your current property needs an infusion of that – from characterization to dialogue to plot. Here's a few things that might help.

Dialogue

The characters don't sound like smart, sarcastically self-aware 20 – 30-year-olds. When Ramona goes cold on Vick he complains '*Frickin' broads and their hang-ups*'. Great line for Mike Hammer. Not so much for supposedly hip, bad-assed twentysomething guys. Especially when earlier Vick's throwing around lines like 'glad you brought that up, my brother...'.
Every character in the story suffers from a lack of believable dialogue. Which makes 75% of the dialogue expositional. And makes the characters fairly unimaginable. Or even, just believable. Janice accuses Vick, seething '*where did those come from? Your little harlot?*'. Use 'skank' instead of 'harlot' and Janice sounds like the sassy thriller chick we know she should be. Not her mom.

Characterization

Gage breathes fire. Literally. But it's not cool, just random. He won't call the cops when he finds a dead body. Ramona sees Bloody Mary, gets creeped out, then ignores it. The gang finds Ramona with her face carved off – reacts like it's no biggie.

At every turn, characters flat line their way through situations that should panic them enough to panic us a little. But when they don't, it leaves you just as flat. Who cares what happens to emotion-less characters? No one seems to have an arc, or a desire, or even much willpower. It's not even clear what Bloody Mary the Killer Ghost wants. The fix is to create real people. Give them emotion, a reason to act. Nothing philosophical. Something along the lines of 'this crazy bitch just cut someone's face off – I'm out, later'. Then you lock all the doors. Cut the power. Now your characters have an arc. Stay alive – at all costs. And that is fun as hell to watch.

Story

A pretty sound formula for this genre: interesting characters speaking cool dialogue in a jacked-up situation. Remove any of those elements and you have to work twice as hard to keep anyone's interest. But characterization and dialogue need a lot of work. Which leaves the story. But the first body doesn't turn up until p. 42. Before that, the power goes off. Strangers walk around in the dark. Basically, nothing of consequence happens.

No idea why Mary's whacking kids. Turns out she's confused Gage for his grandfather. And Mary's not a ghost in their world, they're human's trapped in Mary's ghost world. Sounds confusing – and it is. There's just not enough work put into any element of the story to make it believable. So the screenplay buys time killing people – then quickly wraps up into a big, confounding finale by having Beck transported back to the human world, leaving Gage trapped with Mary.

When too many moving pieces keep something from working, start removing pieces. Simplify. People – trapped in a house. Stalked by a killer. Works for me. Give the house some Amityville'esque possession – so it becomes a character. A character in opposition to the heroes. Make a clear, obvious link between Bloody Mary and the house – so she's a living metaphor for what haunts the Mansion.

Then you have a big, bad problem – the Mansion and its agent of terror – Mary, which brings the threat down to human size. Otherworldly, witch-y human, but still an opposing force with a face. Find a reason to have the house get angry and you have a reason for it to manifest evil. Then it's on.

Weave your character's desires into the plot – and have them oppose one another along the way (Maybe Janice is a Wicca – and wants to commune with the spirits...). Give Gage a hidden reason for his interest in the Mansion. Keep it simple. Like Hitchcock. Or M. Night.

The fleeting glimpse of a grotesque face in the mirror. Janice screams, falls backward – spikes her head on the faucet. Or a banister crumbles under her hand, she tumbles down a flight of stairs – ends up pretzeled. One down, more to go. Stuff like that. Because sinister isn't at much who we see, as what we see.

Location

Great house. Like the old writing adage goes 'Put your hero up a tree. Throw rocks at him. Get him down'. You have a great tree. Now you just need a good reason to stick some people in it.

Overall

Everything is there – characters, location, genre, dialogue. But it needs creative CPR. Stat. Get your characters sounding cool and, real. Give them a reason to want out of that Mansion. A reason to fight, to live. Do that? Then you can kill them. And people will pay to watch them get greased.

Let's talk again soon, all the best.

Dana