

*-The Script Department-  
6404 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1577  
Los Angeles, CA 90048*

Type of Material:	Script	Title:	CONFIDENTIAL
Number of Pages:	104	Author:	CONFIDENTIAL
Coverage type:	Basic Plus	Circa:	Present
Payment type:		Location:	London
Coverage Date:		Genre:	Drama
Story Analyst:			

**LOG LINE:** CONFIDENTIAL

	Excellent	Good	Needs Work	Rethink
Idea			X	
Overall execution			X	
Narrative/Structure			X	
Characters/Dialogue			X	
Effective Scene work			X	
Professional appearance: grammar, spelling, typos		X		
Commercial potential			X	
Readiness for Market			X	

Scouting Recommendation:	
Yes	
Not at this time	X

**Overview**

Tracy, thank you for letting me once again read your script. First of all I want to reiterate that your writing really is quite good and that I see a great deal of potential both for you and for the script. Job very well done. You've definitely made strides forward in this rewrite.

That said, you still have a relatively soft premise with character arcs that don't intersect in an emotionally impactful way, some confusing themes and main characters that need more dimension. I also concerned that a kid with cancer is pretty heavy-handed and the story of William and his mother Crystal doesn't add much in the way of drama or uniqueness to your story. I'm going to be a little harder on you this, Tracy, because I do think this story idea has potential but it's not going to really sing until you get down to brass tacks in your execution. The script doesn't ring true from an emotional level. So let's break down some of the elements and look for some ways in which to improve the script.

## Premise

Right now you have a young man with a bad growing up experience and a subsequent drinking problem who hits a pedestrian, coincidentally gets a job at the same hospital where the victim, a man with a sad divorce in his past is and the two bond because each has no family. More tension in the narrative is a must and the place to look for that tension is in the investigation of the hit and run and potentially, in Joseph's long-lost brother showing up at an inopportune time. You've got the seeds of conflict but you're not digging deep enough to find and exploit it so that the script is a page turner. A page turner doesn't mean a thriller with a mystery, it means just that – that the reader is curious, page after page, as to where the script is going and what will happen next. You need a ticking clock – of impending disaster at the same time that the friendship is growing. Dustin Hoffman once said (to paraphrase) that making a movie is like painting a railroad track while the train is headed straight for you. Scripts should feel like that too. They should have a sense of forward momentum and build. So look for opportunities to articulate a clearer premise line with conflict built right into it.

## Character

What I see right now is three separate characters with separate issues whose paths just happen to overlap. Now – in life, that happens all the time and the meaning of that overlap is something we have to look very hard for sometimes. But movies are not life. You, the writer, are the Creator and you get to have distinct reasons for people's lives overlapping. You are the architect of the lessons they will learn from one another. Here's what I see:

**Edward:** Still devastated, 20-odd years later about a mysterious divorce that totally alienated his sons from him. He's a professor, he's in Norway, he has an accident that leaves him unable to walk. This is pretty two-dimensional. Over and over you show Edward filing away letters returned from his sons. We get it – he misses his sons. But why? Can you dig deeper into this character and really make him three-dimensional and organic rather than a lonely, crippled sad sack? Why should I root for Edward? Why should I care? Because it's sad that your kids don't talk to you isn't dramatic enough.

**Questions:** What happened in the divorce? What is Edward's flaw? His character flaw should be connected to what happened in the divorce. How does he overcome his flaw through his relationship with Joseph? For example, did Edward walk away from his family when the going got tough? Maybe he yearned for the fame and glory that being a big deal professor brought him and felt that his family only dragged him down? And now with Joseph in his life, he's not going to walk away from Joseph when Joseph's down because now it's Edward's turn to redeem himself and do the right thing, allowing him to arc out of the past and finally regain his relationship with his sons (or try to). Right now, as in the last draft, Edward comes across as a whiny victim. Everybody is against him. His wife and sons don't care about him, his best friend married his ex. But what was Edward's part to play in all of this? And how did the accident and getting to know Joseph actually turn into the catalyst Edward needed to overcome his painful past? What was Edward doing when the accident happened? What was going on in his life? Had he been sober for years but he just got one more returned letter and he was about to head out for a drink? Give us more here, than a complete coincidence. Edward needs to carry the story too.

**Joseph:** An orphaned young man who suffered the loss of his parents and his brother. He lived in foster homes, he had a depressing upbringing. Now he's an alcoholic with no sense of purpose or belonging.

**Questions:** Edward's flaw, as you have it here, is that he drinks too much and won't talk about the past. But again, he comes across as whiny and weak. Drinking too much is a bad thing but it's not a character flaw. How can you retool Joseph's backstory so that he's not a passive victim but rather an active (unhealthy) participant in his life and how messed up it is now? Maybe rather than that he's an orphan, maybe he ran away and eschews his family. Maybe he hates the very idea of family. In INTO THE WILD there's a sequence of the film where the main character, a young man with an intense wanderlust, befriends a lonely older man who has lost his family. They create their own little family for a short time, but the boy needs to continue on his journey. How does Joseph's story intersect with Edward's emotionally? How does Edward serve as a catalyst for Joseph and how does Joseph serve as a catalyst for Edward? Why is it that these two people are the perfect lesson for one another?

**William/Crystal:** These two have also experienced loss but from the look of it, it was totally random. Now Crystal knows she is losing her son. So – what do these two have to do with the dynamic between Edward and Joseph? What is Crystal's flaw? Where is her character arc? She and her son aren't serving much of a purpose in the script other than showing up as the two sad people who are grieving and also dealing with cancer. How does William change Joseph's life – because he likes the guy? Why does William like Joseph so much? What has that got to do with the larger story? How do William and Crystal add conflict to the story?

## **Page Notes:**

Pg 2: 3mm short hair is a bit technical and not very cinematically descriptive. Just say a crew cut or a buzz cut or whatever. Recently shorn.

Halfway down the page: American literary professor EDWARD FELTHAM – how do we know by looking at him that he's an American literary professor? Show it don't say it.

Pg 4: *Joseph stops, studies Edward closely and is deeply effected* – should be AFFECTED and further, what does “deeply affected” look like or mean? Show it don't say it. This script has way too many “quiet smiles” and “deeply affected” moments – get more creative.

Pg 5: Make THIS the moment when Joseph sees Edward in the hospital – it's much more dramatic and surprising. Also: Wouldn't Joseph have any bruises and scratches from the accident? Doesn't that give him something to have to hide or lie about immediately, setting up more tension?

Pg 8: Isn't Joseph a janitor? How does he have time to hang out with William?

Pg 10: I am 10 pages in and I do not have a grasp of the Big Idea of this script at all. I don't know who Edward is, just that he's young and he drinks too much and he's a janitor. Why is this hospital job a new one? Why not that he's worked there for some time? By page 10, we should have a strong sense of what you're setting up in the dramatic narrative and in your characters.

Pg 11: I thought it was called a “quid” not a “quit?”

Pg 13: Edward’s sadness is just too vague and two-dimensional. See notes above about adding depth to this character.

Pg 16: Reconsider Crystal and William and, as above, making them more integral, painful and real part of this story rather than the nice widow with the dying son.

Pg 17: Why is Edward able to see Joseph outside writing? Again – does he not have a job as a janitor? Shouldn’t he be working? Why does he hang around all the time? Consider having Edward HIRE him so that he has to be around.

Where does this restroom scene take place? At the hospital? At Joseph’s home? Consider moving Edward to a convalescent hospital to break up the monotony of your locations and add some action and motion to the script.

Pg 18: Why isn’t Joseph working?? Where is his supervisor??

Pg 22: Joseph...*lies on the grass and reads.*

This is a fairly static scene. Why not have Joseph read the book at Edward’s home and see some of the milestones of Edward’s life in his home? Get out of the park – Joseph spends too much time in the park; change it up.

Pg 23: Ditto. This “realization” could be so much more interesting. Get those creative juices going.

Pg 30: Reconsider the Chaplin riff with the potatoes. It’s been done a lot.

Pg 31: Where is your first act break? Turn up the heat – even at this stage – have Taylor ask Joseph to help him shove the car in a lake. Make it a close call. Bottom line: This script needs conflict and tension. Get creative and find opportunity to liven up the story.

Pg 37: This short scene with Edward and his unopened letters is not only a repeated beat, it’s not very compelling. There are far better, more dynamic and interesting ways to show his grief and guilt than repeatedly showing us returned letters. See my earlier notes.

Pg 38: *They all sip their tea in silence.* – Really? That’s an odd reaction given the outburst.

*Joseph stutters.* – what? Give us the dialogue. Why does he stutter? Does he usually stutter? Where is this coming from?

Pg 41: Joseph (Hesitant – scrambling to answer) that is far too much direction for the actor within a parenthetical. Lose this.

Pg 43: What in the HECK is Joseph's problem? This self-pitying drunkenness is boring, repeated over and over throughout the script and really, quite inexplicable. He's sad about his childhood? His hands shake uncontrollably? I cannot get behind this character. He wallows in the past. Make his problems in the NOW (i.e., about William or the police closing in about the accident – anything).

### **In Summary**

Thank you once again for letting me review this draft of the script, Tracy. What is needed here is a lot of reinventing and reordering of your story. I really think you need to have a long sit down with the material and think about kicking it off with a new opening sequence via tying in the dragon fairy tale, reconsidering who and what Crystal and William are in the story and making sure that Edward's past, his flaw, his guilt and his arc dovetail completely into Joseph's. Your script has fundamental entertainment value and is emotionally resonant but you're got to really look at those passive characters, clarify the premise and find a more entertaining, inventive and original way into the essence of your story.