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Type of Material:	Script	Title:	CONFIDENTIAL
Number of Pages:	120	Author:	CONFIDENTIAL
Coverage type:	Jr. Story Notes	Circa:	Past (Fictional)
Payment type:		Location:	Scotland
Coverage Date:		Genre:	Fantasy
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:

Christopher, thank you for letting me read your script. It is difficult enough to write a screenplay based in our reality, but to come up with a whole new world with different rules, societies, creatures, cities and political situations is truly a Herculean task. I think you have done a pretty good job of describing the details of those who populate the script; grounding it in the somewhat familiar Scottish Highlander setting allows it to be accessible. I also think you are right to include a romantic element to the relationship of several of the lead characters, for that is something audiences of all types can grasp whether they love swordplay or not. Lastly, despite the crazy names of the characters and the various action sequences, you consistently maintain a relatively spare writing style – especially when it comes to the narration lines. This helped a great deal with the pacing of the story, which could have been far worse than wading through the bogs in your story had you waffled on with endless description.

Where I feel the script needs work in the next draft comes in a couple large areas. First, I feel like you need to embrace some of the conventions of the fantasy/epic genre a bit more in order to give the script

some weight. Secondly, I felt that the story could use some attention in order to clarify its stakes and goals. So that said let's get into the specifics.

Epic films of sorcery and magic have certain conventions, rules and expectations. Consider following these to a greater extent in order to create something larger.

As a HUGE fan of THE LORD OF THE RINGS trilogy, NARNIA and all things Dungeons and Dragons (OK, I admit, I'm a nerd when it comes to these things!), I am adamant about this note. And in a way, this is probably the biggest issue I had with the script overall. So much so that it really permeates everything else I may write in this critique.

When I read this script, I was constantly waiting for that "large something" to start. You are competing with Frodo having to take The Ring to Mount Doom and throw it into the fires as it completely corrupts his true self and everyone around him. You are competing against the armies of Mordor marching on Middle Earth. You are competing with the Ice Queen taking over Narnia. You are in the world of large themes such as the meaning of bravery, the rustic world versus the evil of industrialization, Christian allegory and owning up to one's destiny. Even in something like WILLOW we are dealing with people learning that heroes come in all shapes and sizes. The point I am making is that when you venture into this genre you instantaneously enter a world of grandeur and I didn't quite feel that with your script.

If we first look at the grandeur of themes, I didn't get the sense anywhere in the script that one tied the whole story together. I think you attempted to do this with Fredwyg's scriptures, such as the one at the end of the script given to Ailan. But bravery never seemed to be the thing that you were examining different aspects of via your characters and the story. We never saw any of the characters struggle with trying to be brave. We don't get the sense that bravery is the thing that all people hold in high regard. We don't see that the various clans reward bravery differently. And we don't get the chance to see anyone really redeemed via a brave act when they had been cowardly prior. I think you need to get to spend some time deconstructing your story to get to the core of what message you are trying to convey. If it is indeed about being brave and that "one lone peasant standing valiantly" against an army represents that, then we need to see this in greater detail throughout the story. So at the very least, we would need to witness Ailan standing up and defending himself against great odds when all seems lost. And this moment is so poignant that it inspires those around him to join his fight. We would need to see what Ailan perceives as bravery before this realization. Perhaps he thought winning a fight against a bully was brave. Or maybe some teenage game of chicken that in retrospect meant nothing. And more importantly, we would need to see the various points where Ailan learns that bravery is not what he thought at all – in fact he gets let down by his previous beliefs, which then leads to his growth.

Then there is the concept of the grandeur of the battles that people fight internally and externally. The bit that I just described about Ailan learning the true meaning of bravery would be an example of the former. Bravery in this example is what defines Ailan and his people. It is the very core of their existence. So to have that seminal belief challenged, defeated, redefined and accepted is grand. I feel that throughout this story every character needs to have their internal beliefs and flaws challenged to a greater extent. I'm not even sure I could tell you what Laispeth's internal struggle is as it was not clearly defined. It may have to do with opening herself up to the softer side of being female in order to succeed in life, but that doesn't seem quite right. Fredwyg seems to be struggling with the weight of being a sorcerer, but you don't really go into that in any great detail. Since all of this ties to your larger theme, once that is sorted all of this should become apparent.

As for the grandeur of the battles that people fight externally, I literally mean in the sense of two huge forces on either side of the battlefield hurling at each other with the fate of the world in the balance. You did have some smaller skirmishes in the bog with the mud-muckers and the bogmen and you may have

been approaching something like this at the end of the script, but it never fully got to the assault on Helm's Deep or the attack on the Death Star level. One of the reasons for this is that a lot of the action takes place in what reads like a very small portion of that bog. As such, it feels very insular and small scale. Take advantage of the mountains, lakes, valleys, castles and other massive things that encompass this world so we feel like we are being taken on a huge ride.

Lastly, there are the smaller moments where our heroes have a chance to discuss what they are going through and relate them to how they are growing. Of the three, I felt you did the best job with this area. The things that Fredwyg says to Laispeth, the wisdom of Raanwyn even at her young age, even Slugart has some nuggets to impart that signify philosophical truths about life. What I feel you need to do is tie these all together somehow via the theme you decide upon. Aragorn and Frodo both were dealing with the sense of being alone with a great deal of responsibility and expectations on their shoulders. These issues led to the shedding of friends, banishment, jealousy, turning down love and inner loathing, which they had to overcome in order to be successful. Whenever there was a quiet moment, Sam, Gandalf, Legolas, Eowyn and even Gollum had something to share that gave an insight into this theme. I would encourage you to find more moments to infuse this wisdom throughout your story, as it will elevate it from just a straight action film.

Clarify the story so that the audience understands what's at stake.

In the beginning of any fantasy/epic there's typically a scene that explains where we are and what has transpired prior. It is usually done in relatively simple terms that everyone can understand. For example, STAR WARS has its famous crawl that catches the audience up followed by the opening scene where we learn that Darth Vader has captured Princess Leia in his attempt to keep the Rebels from obtaining those stolen Death Star plans. We know who the good guys are, who the bad guys are and what's at stake in about three pages. THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING had a slightly harder task because it had to sum up THE HOBBIT in 10 minutes, but it did and if you look at the monologue from this section it is very clear and concise.

While I think you are on the right track with your opening scenes, I don't think you quite imparted all that we need to know about this world so that when we get to the Highlands we know what's at stake. Part of the problem is that we are thrown right into the key political decision of the story without knowing whom anyone is. We don't know who Fredwyg or Laispeth are at that point. We don't know who King Groswith is. We don't know what the Controller Ring does or means. And we don't know what Chancellor Waithryll had planned to do that set all of this in motion. One suggestion here might be to actually show the events as they happened back then, a la THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING, so it gives us more context. So perhaps we could actually see the scene of Waithryll taking the Controller Ring, bending Fredwyg to his will and forcing him to kill Groswith up front instead of in the later flashbacks. Also we could show Laispeth coming to Fredwyg's side at this time so we can see how they were mistakenly charged with the death of the king. By doing it this way, the audience gets it right away and then there is no need to go back in time later, which allows the momentum of the story to constantly propel forward.

In thinking of the present time of the script, it isn't completely clear what would be gained by controlling the mines. Yes, it is clear that they are important, but how exactly? Does one have infinite ore with which to make weapons? Does this mean trade and employment for a whole people? Or is there something special about the ore that gives one magic powers? Whatever you choose, it has to be epic in meaning, for it is basically what everyone is fighting over.

Make Laispeth and Fredwyg's quest central to the story and resolve it.

Something that I found frustrating in the script revolved around giving two of the characters a goal and not having them act upon it in any meaningful way. This whole story starts with Laispeth and Fredwyg given a mission to get Waithryll or else be put to death. And yet with the exception of questioning Slugart a few times, they aren't too proactive on trying to clear their names and save their skins. It seems that if you are going to title the script after these two, then their quest should become the central story and Ailan should get caught up in it as a byproduct or at least as part of a bargain. Sort of like in PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN when Will Turner agrees to work with Jack Sparrow if he'll help him save Elizabeth Swan from Barbossa. Turner gets to go on his quest to save the girl while Sparrow gets the chance to avenge his marooning and get his ship back.

One reason for this being an issue could be that we don't ever see Waithryll in the present of this script. He seems like the logical villain given the goals of the heroes so it seems strange to see him at all. Perhaps you were thinking of writing this as a trilogy where he would appear later, but if that is the case, I don't think it really works. You should see Waithryll throughout this story and he should be the opposing force wanting to control the mines. Or at least have a stake in who gains control of them. By doing so, you can tie the Knights Errant and Ailan's missions together in an organic manner.

In Summary:

A lot of work has been put into this script in order to make the world and the characters accessible to an audience. And in truth, there are a ton of great ideas and images that would look great on a large screen. What the next draft should focus on is taking these elements and bending them more to a traditional epic fantasy structure where grand things happen to grand people (or to not so grand people who, due to the events, become grand). Doing so will help clarify the story as well as the internal and external motivations of the characters.

Homework (films to watch):

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

THE TWO TOWERS

THE RETURN OF THE KING

WILLOW

THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE

THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: PRINCE CASPIAN

RED SONJA

CONAN THE BARBARIAN