

-The Script Department-
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Type of Material:	Script	Title:	CONFIDENTIAL
Number of Pages:	99	Author:	CONFIDENTIAL
Coverage type:	Story Notes	Circa:	Present
Payment type:		Location:	Los Angeles
Coverage Date:		Genre:	Romantic Comedy
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

COMMENTS:

Overview:

Jimmy, you've really put a lot of work into this script and I respect that very much. I know this is your second script so it's natural to be on a learning curve. Right now, the script is in need of a pretty major overhaul. At a production company, the script would be a PASS in a big way and there are all sorts of reasons for that. There are three overarching problems: The premise isn't original as it could be and is full of logic holes, the characters are two-dimensional and I think you might be a little close to the material.

What's the difference between pouring yourself into your writing versus pouring your heart into your writing? When you pour *yourself* into your writing, everything in the story is ultimately self-referential. When you pour your *heart* into your writing, the story comes alive; characters and situations are not generated to gratify you but rather to reflect and refract the things in your heart that scare you, make you laugh, that you are curious about – it's getting into the heads of your characters and *letting them speak through you rather than you speaking through them*. In this script, the pages have the tell-tale, inorganic feeling of a marionette dancing; because you, Jimmy, are the puppet master. It must always be the other way round.

The knowledge of this newbie issue will help you get away from it and getting away from it will free you to really write your best work which is sure to come. You are a passionate idea machine and that will only help you in generating more and better material over time.

Premise & Genre:

The premise is soft and doesn't make much sense. You make much of XXXX (in a very clever and funny commercial for it) but essentially don't show it again. Hey, the title of the script is XXXX – so where the heck did the online aspect of the premise go? It doesn't really matter much at all, as it turns out. The idea of characters pretending to be someone else is as old as time (hey, Purim, Queen Esther, right?!) and because of that...is not as original as it could be here. Cal pretends to be Bill, Claire pretends to be a couth, sexy online date and they are each hiding something. I don't know if you are familiar with Billy Mernitt's book *Writing the Romantic Comedy* but it's amazing. Billy is a great guy; we've worked together before. I highly recommend the book and his website. Romcom is particularly challenging as a genre because it's been done to death. We have a couple, they are opposites, they might hide something from each other, or in some way betray each other, they discover this betrayal, they split apart but really they love each other and they find a way to make amends. The end. The trick is to find a situation that is entirely unique and entertaining and even more so, to write characters that are entirely unique – people with peccadilloes and eccentricities that we have never seen before. Bridget Jones is a good example of a kooky, unique and totally endearing romcom character. Or how about Judy Holliday in *BORN YESTERDAY*? The list is long but the bottom line is that you haven't achieved that in XXXX.

The script is full of stereotypes, plot turns we see coming a mile away and worse, the premise doesn't click into place; it's not compelling, it doesn't make sense. I know I am being hard on you, Jimmy but that's because I know you can handle it and I know you seek to become a better writer. Better me than one word from an exec's assistant: PASS.

Narrative/Structure:

A weak, soft, confusing premise really falls apart in the second act. We have many scenes and sequences in which veritably nothing happens. What's up with the supermodel party in the backyard all the time? Little Pak playing the violin is totally random – just because you've shown him earlier did not organically bring him into the party and what's more, it's clear he's a poignant little foil to show us Cal's sensitive side. The reveal that Cal is a widow was pretty clumsy; the pictures all over the floor? Who does that? The room full of pictures? Really not working. I think, Jimmy, that underneath all the stuff on the pages, which really is solipsistic, there is a warm story full of heart. But you have to dig down much deeper to find out.

World:

Just a couple of small notes here: we don't have brownstones in LA; the pages don't look or feel like Los Angeles at all. Have you been here? The flora, fauna, the smog, the Latino cultures, the noisy gardeners, the palm trees, the Sunset Strip – where was all that? The world/location in a romcom is very important. It's another character. But here, it's MIA.

Conflict/Stakes:

These are more or less missing altogether. There's no ticking clock (or is that supposed to be Bill returning?) there's no organizing event; there's no conflict at all – until after the midpoint of the script. Realizations and reveals come down inelegantly, and land like a ton of bricks (Cal being a widow, their first real date at Halloween, specifically) and do nothing to raise the dramatic tension or stakes.

Characters/Dialogue:

Characters are two-dimensional, to a one. Claire, particularly in the first act is really unlikable – a big problem for a lead in a romcom. She's also not the most ideal romcom lead in the sense that she's pretty and blonde but just out of work. But what is her inner need? What's going on inside of Claire? What is her arc as a character? All the same questions could be asked of Cal. In romcom, the couple ultimately will “complete” each other in some way. How do Cal and Claire complete each other? Because both are stereotypes (Cal, the misunderstood, widowed, artistic, sensitive underdog and Claire, the sexy, tomboyish, out-of-work actress) we can't identify with or root for either one. Also missing is a viable Bellamy, to use Billy's term. What other life choice would be better for Claire than Cal? Really, once she gets beyond the initial betrayal and the need

for him to grow up and move on – he’s the ideal guy. So what’s the problem? What’s at stake for Claire? That she won’t earn the \$50K? You never established exactly why or how she needs that money. Incidentally, anyone who would accept \$50K in order to facilitate a multi-million dollar sale is totally clueless. That transaction and Claire’s ready agreement to it makes her look like a dumb bunny. And how, exactly, will dating Cal/Bill facilitate the sale? So Bailey thinks that sending a pretty blonde date to Cal/Bill will influence his decision whether or not to buy a multi-million dollar internet business? Really? This doesn’t hold water whatsoever.

Scene work/Action Lines:

I do think the introductory sequence is nicely done but that doesn’t really go anywhere. Your use of V.O. match cuts is way overboard. Once or twice is fine, after that it’s only clever and does nothing for the story. So I’d inxay those. The scenes that intercut between Claire/Ken and Jamie/Cal are not done properly and are so misleading and confusing that the whole intention of comedy or cleverness in those sequences is gone gone gone. There is a way to do that and we can talk about that another time.

Logic:

Why does Cal act like his grown brother’s butler? To where does his mother keep coming and going? Why doesn’t Bill come back home directly after his mother declares that he should? Why does Claire agree to this scheme? Why does she accept so little pay? How does the scheme work? The very basis of the premise doesn’t make sense.

In Summary:

I am so sorry to be the bearer of bad news, Jimmy. I feel it would be unethical to give you different news about this script. My goal with each client, without exception, is to be totally honest about the material and to help each client grow as a writer. I’ll let you in on a little secret – this happens to the best of us and it particularly happens when you aren’t an experienced writer.

I think that every single script a writer writes is a lesson for them. Sometimes you nail it and sometimes you don’t. Doesn’t mean you give up, doesn’t mean you feel bad about yourself as a writer, it simply means that you go back to the drawing board and show yourself what you’re really made of. Writing is hard. That’s why, when we finally do either sell a script, or publish an essay, novel or short story, we get paid so well and/or we get recognition from our peers. If anybody could do it – everybody would do it.

Ask yourself – is there something central to this script, something you particularly love, that you’d like to lift out of it and work with? What is it about this script you are unwilling to leave behind? A character, a visual, a situation? Maybe it’s simply Mismatch – or maybe it’s Pak and his violin. Or maybe this is just move on time; only you can answer that question. You might be frustrated; I know you worked hard. But something was really out of synch in this script. Use the experience to grow.

Page Notes:

I know that this is a rough draft and so you’re not looking for page-by corrections. In fact, I feel this draft needs an absolute ground-up rewrite but it is worth pointing out that “Francais” is how you spell “in French,” and chic is not spelled “shiek” and that yes is spelled “oui” not “we” and chez is not spelled “shea” (that’s a nut butter). And so forth. So if you go back and decide to keep those (and more) little French bits, you need to spell them correctly. It looks as if at one point in time, Cal’s name was Ken and maybe vice versa? There are a few instances of the names being mixed up and that appears to be a remnant. Intercutting scenes is not done correctly here by a mile and it really hurt the sequences that it appears in. You might try something more like:

CLAIRE’S KITCHEN

Claire: Should I wear my purple dress?

CAL’S BEDROOM

Cal: I hate ties.

CLAIRE'S KITCHEN

Claire: I hope he wears a tie.

CAL'S BEDROOM

Cal: No, not the purple one, Jamie, I hate purple.

In general, try to minimize hopping back and forth like that; it's really tough to follow and in the instances where you used it, not effective or comedic anyway.