

*-The Script Department-  
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Type of Material:	Script	Title:	CONFIDENTIAL
Number of Pages:	106	Author:	CONFIDENTIAL
Coverage type:	Jr. Story Notes	Circa:	Present
Payment type:		Location:	England
Coverage Date:		Genre:	Sci-Fi/Fantasy
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:**

Rachel – I am very impressed by your work here. Your character and dialogue work in particular are quite well done; Eman is a funny character, as is Jerrad, and the dynamics between all the characters are quite well done. You are definitely ahead of the curve in probably the most difficult and in fact unteachable areas of screenwriting: character. The script is inventive and has some great scenes and moments; however, one very central issue plagues the pages of XXXX and that is that your premise is as confusing as all get out. I spent much of the time reading the script feeling pleasantly confused. Let’s look at the separate elements and see what we can do to pull this premise together in a more succinct, understandable way because I really do think you’re on to something here and I don’t say that to every writer. Very often, a script is so deeply flawed that the writer is faced with the unfortunate task of walking away from the work and chalking it up to experience. I can’t say for certain how this script would do upon exposure to the market; with the fx it would be a very high budget movie and until we can sort out a clearer premise, it would be difficult to articulate a pitchable logline. Definitely this draft is nowhere near ready for the eyes of agents or managers. But that’s why you came to me, right? I will coach you through improving this script. Ready?

**Premise & Genre:**

If you look at the logline I’ve written above you’re probably thinking – hey! My story has a lot more going on than that! Oh, I know, it does. But it’s too confusing to articulate quickly and simply. And that is death for a

spec script. I have a lot of experience with this. I have walked down the halls of production companies and had executives say hey! [Reader!] What did you just read? And I have to turn on my heel and blurt out one sentence summarizing what I just read. If it's unclear to the exec, if I can't sum it up that quickly – his eyes glaze over and you just lost your read. What if I were to turn on my heel and say: I just read a script about a quirky family that takes a road trip so that their young daughter can participate in a beauty pageant. Well, that's pretty digestible isn't it? And that would be LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE. Or – I just read a script about two men who pose as women in an all girl band so they can hide out from the Mafia. SOME LIKE IT HOT. I just read a script about a cop who takes on terrorists holding hostages in an office building in LA. DIE HARD. You get the point.

If we look once more at the logline for XXXX, we notice that there is no clear upshot. The reason the log is not articulated well is because the story isn't articulated well. You've got a number of interesting scenes and some really cool stuff going on – but it's confusing as heck. So job one with this script is to go back to square one and examine the premise.

You know, sometimes we writers get ideas that just spring into our minds whole cloth with a first, second and third act conflict suggesting itself right away. Other times just a fragment of an idea will come to us. But how do we know if this idea is a movie? How do we know if this idea is too much like an existing movie or one in production? And there are more questions like: What genre are you writing in? Does this idea lend it self to drama? Thriller or horror? Romcom? What kind of story do you want to tell?

### **Narrative/Structure:**

The narrative and structure of XXXX feels a bit disjointed and confusing. And no wonder; it's the trickle-down effect. Your premise is confusing so naturally your narrative is too. Your structure feels soft, i.e., the conflict doesn't build consistently enough to make the pages turn faster as we go. There are detours in some scenes that actually slow down the momentum. With the type of script you are writing here, we should have the action/conflict/stakes intensifying steadily from page one. In this draft, we have at the titular midpoint several pages of Jerrad in the bar. The story doesn't move forward here; Jerrad is still in the process of freaking out that he's in the future. This is not a big enough event to take up as much space as it does.

I am not overly worried about this at this point in your trajectory as a writer, Rachel. I can see that you have a pretty darn high skill set for very early in your writing career. Every single element in a script trickles down from premise. When your premise is sorted out, almost everything else in your script will sort out too.

### **World:**

When is this set? Is this a dream or a nightmare? Questions of this nature will be answered within your pages once you have a premise we can easily grasp. Whatever world you are choosing to set the story in – whether it's in the present, as at the top of the script, or in 2059 as in later in the script, make sure you ground us in that world. I think you actually did well in this draft, so no worries here. Just remember, we have to “buy” the world you set the script in. It must seem real to us; as far as we understand the world *might* be in 2059.

### **Conflict/Stakes:**

Here again – premise needs work. I know you have in mind that something tremendously huge is at stake for the world – I just couldn't follow along well enough to say what that is.

### **Characters/Dialogue:**

Really outstanding work here. I was quite impressed, actually.

### **Scene Work/Action Lines:**

Your pages look really clean; your action lines are quite well done, actually. Many scenes are over-long and confused but again – wait for it – PREMISE will clear this up.

## **Theme/Tone:**

Now here is an interesting area to consider in XXXX. At times the pages felt quite apocalyptic and dark and at other times a little funny and MEN IN BLACK. Can you make a creative decision as to exactly what kind of tone you are going for and be consistent with it in your next draft?

As far as theme, this is something writers the world over ignore because it's just too amorphous. But theme is what separates okay scripts from great scripts. It's subtextual though; theme is not as visible as great character work. Theme is that thing that makes you identify with a movie in ways that you can't even articulate. You just loved the movie. Why? Theme.

What is the theme in XXXX? Is there an entertaining question you are asking? It wasn't clear to me. It might not be clear to you right now. That's perfectly fine. When you sort out the premise, the theme will rise to the surface effortlessly. Write backward to the theme; let it emerge organically.

## **In Summary:**

Rachel, I am duly impressed. What you've got here is a really good idea waiting to be made clear. Good pages, great character work and a really mysterious central idea are very promising in my view. I really can't believe this is your first script. Am I mistaken? Is this your 10<sup>th</sup> and I am misremembering?

When I see a piece of material this promising, rather than just provide you with the dusty old usual notes by element, I like to tailor the notes to what I see as your particular needs. And that is, in this case – it just never gets old – PREMISE.

Job well done, Rachel, and I am so honored you chose to work with me.