

WEST HARTFORD SCREEN WRITERS GROUP / MINUTES

Meeting of: 1/25/06

Moderator: Jacque Devlin

Scribe: Denning Powell

Snacks: Darryl Johnson

ATTENDEES:

Tom Murphy

June Neal

Lida Boynick

Geoffrey Saunders

Darryl Johnson

Patrick Lee

Peter Schuster

Jacque Devlin

Steve Wass

Steve Olechna

Rita Isaacson

Ella Maydon

Edwin Anderson

Christine Pajor

Sandy Greenberg

Denning Powell

INTROS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

(1) The library and the Webster Hall meeting room will be shut down for about a year beginning in July for renovations related to the Blue Back Square development. Be thinking about possible alternative meeting places.

OPEN DISCUSSION (conducted after reviews for this meeting):

(1) Patrick suggested that shorter offerings for review (such as a few scenes) could also be a useful addition to the group process because that would allow some in-depth discussion about dialog, characters, technique, etc in a highly focused context. General agreement with the suggestion.

(2) Denning suggested creating some short pieces (on video or animation) and putting them on the WHScreenwriters website for purposes of buzz development, citing the Newsweek article of 1/9/06 (previously distributed via groupmail). General agreement with the suggestion.

(3) Steve Olechna showed his 55-second DVD movie short *Have a Nice Day* that he created by compositing still images and rendering them in various graphics programs. Applause for Steve's innovation and tech savvy.

REVIEW 1: Coopertown, The Devil's Eyes (complete script) – Geoff Saunders.

Logline: A town where evil seeks vengeance and people get in the way.

Why writing it: Loves horror.

Theme: Love and togetherness eventually triumph over a long-running evil.

Genre: Horror/fantasy.

Wants from review: Any and all feedback (particularly on transitions) so final version can be sent to upcoming Scriptapalooza contest.

Synopsis of group review: Loved the pace and action and graphic descriptions, very visual, very effective. Script is easy to read. Brilliant, catchy logline. Great dialog, but suggest paring it down a tad by (1) cutting out actor introduction/departure from scenes, and (2) relying more on inferences from the dialog rather than explicit statements or exposition -- jump in and out of scenes faster. A few issues with the plot: (1) consider moving from the past into the present day sooner in the story; (2) Bruce Morley is a main character, but may not be adequately realized at the denouement; and (3) the solution to Amanda's curse doesn't seem to have enough underpinning (what changed to get the townsfolk to face her down). Definitely should proceed with the contest submission.

REVIEW 2: Due Diligence (first ~30 pages of script) –Patrick Lee.

Logline: Wealthy investment advisor risks everything she has built up after she shares a limo with a rap star.

Why writing it: Reflecting on a limousine ride with a stranger, and turning it into a story.

Theme: Self-destruction is always only one bad impulse away.

Genre: Drama.

Wants from review: Do the characters make sense, do they resonate with readers, are they interpreted as the writer intended.

Synopsis of group review: Excellent dialog, crisp/incisive/ realistic; it sets up the characters clearly, particularly Miranda. Minimized exposition; the story is conveyed in minimal words. Script is very easy to read, and the reader is immersed immediately. The action moves well. The scenes are set up with subtlety, and convey the underlying meaning. The horse/jump opening metaphor is great (presumably it will become realized and melded with reality at/near the denouement) and similar to one used to good effect in Woody Allen's new movie *Matchpoint*. The characters after the rap star mansion scene may be less clearly drawn than those before. A couple of questions arose out of ambiguity (is Miranda's husband really cheating, is her daughter really going to Africa to do AIDs work, is the SEC really going to hammer her, and what have they got on her, etc) so there's some uncertainty in the reader's mind about which form Miranda's troubles will take (but this is not necessarily a bad thing a third of the way into the story). Miranda's nature and vulnerabilities have been set up exquisitely for her fall from grace, and everybody is anxious to see what happens next -- bring on the next installment asap.

NEXT MEETING:

Wednesday, February 22, 2006, 7:00 PM, Webster Hall.

Moderator: Tom Murphy

Snacks: June Neal

POST-GELAMEN:

Usual suspects decamped to Cosi's afterwards. No fatalities reported.

~DSP 1/26/06