

WEST HARTFORD SCREEN WRITERS GROUP / MINUTES

Meeting of: 3/29/06

Moderator: Geoff Saunders

Scribe: Denning Powell

Snacks: Valerie Utton

ATTENDEES:

Tom Murphy
Geoffrey Saunders
Darryl Johnson
Peter Schuster
Steve Olechna
Rita Isaacson
Edwin Anderson
Christine Pajor
Denning Powell
Valerie Utton
Nancy Rossi
Liz Cipollina
Tessa O'Sullivan
Jonathon Parizer
Steve Wass
Jacquelin Devlin
Sandy Greenberg
Lida Boynick
Joe Vojt
Jed Backus

INTROS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- (1) Four members of the group will attend the *Beyond Structure* screenwriting workshop in NYC April 8-9.
- (2) Two contests upcoming: AAA Screenplay Contest (see www.creativescreening.com) and Big Break International Screenplay Contest (see www.finaldraft.com/media/pressreleases/pr_050401-bb6press.php4).
- (3) The screenwriting book *Save the Cat* by Blake Snyder gives a useful breakdown of movies and their scripts.

OPEN DISCUSSION:

The library and the Webster Hall meeting room year-long shutdown related to Blue Back Square construction reportedly will begin this September, not July (but this is not yet confirmed). Joe Cadieux is exploring the possibility of holding group meetings at the church next door. Darryl has identified some possibilities in Bloomfield if it comes to that.

REVIEW 1: *Hearts of Darkness, the Amulet* (first 1/3 draft script) -- Geoffrey Saunders.

Logline: Life, death, and something in between.

Why writing it: Marital harmony and bonus points for husband (wife wrote the novel, this is an adaptation).

Theme: We all die; some just live longer and better than others.

Genre: Thriller/suspense/romance.

Wants from review: Feedback on flow and pace, and character development; ideas on how/where to cut to condense.

Synopsis of group review: Great narrative and pacing. Clear interest in what's going to happen next and where the story is going; a good page-turner. Some liked voiceover technique, some didn't. A few issues with realism in the early pages: more character conflict is needed, there should be more emotional reaction to the death, the CSI/detective involvement is underworked, the amulet changing hands when it may be evidence in a homicide investigation cries for an explanation. Unanimous agreement that there's nothing the matter with over-writing a first draft – you can always cut, but if you don't get the ideas on paper they may be lost forever. Pretty clear group consensus: about 30 percent of script length needs to be cut -- but not in any one particular spot, just overall by condensing narrative and eliminating description that doesn't necessarily feed strongly into the story. Also, shouldn't interrupt dialog with exposition unless a description is crucial to understanding. Suggestion also made to shorten sentence structure in dialog to more typical speech patterns (speech in phrases). An excellent start on a difficult task -- converting book to film.

REVIEW 2: Aged to Perfection (complete draft script) -- Sandy Greenberg.

Logline: Teenager doesn't appreciate old folks until she's turned into one.

Why writing it: Producer interested; may take it to Disney.

Theme: Overcoming the generation gap; life lessons for the young (and old).

Genre: Drama/fantasy w/ comedic elements.

Wants from review: General feedback and impressions; where it could be improved for salability.

Synopsis of group review: Great concept -- shows how the teenage perspective (me!, mine!) gets expanded when encountering the hard lessons of adulthood. Writing is crisp; dialog nails teenage girls neatly. A couple of instances of excellent early foreshadowing of the story's intent/direction. A few things need better explanation/background/realism/support: (1) more kids fight with parents rather than grandparents; (2) root cause of issues (e.g., Leanne may be feeling abandonment of father, with grandma as a poor substitute or somehow to blame); (3) why grandma is such a softie/tolerant person. A few minor disconnects: (1) the chemistry test in the beginning doesn't play into the story at all; (2) the ghost on the porch comes too late; (3) missed opportunity to have Leanne see herself in mirror dancing with Corey as an old woman. General consensus that the meat of the story -- Leanne's trials/tribulations and resolution/redemption -- should be given a greater portion of the script (~2/3 instead of ~1/2). Also, the setup portion -- Leanne's character development and situation description -- should be correspondingly condensed from ~1/2 down to ~1/3. Great possibility for Disney.

NEXT MEETING:

Wednesday, April 26, 2006, 7:00 PM, Webster Hall.

Moderator: Jed Backus

Snacks: Liz Cipollina

POST-GELAMEN:

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

~DSP 3/31/06 :-)