

WEST HARTFORD SCREENWRITERS GROUP / MINUTES

Meeting of: 11/29/06

Moderator: Patrick Lee

Snacks: Nancy Rossi (in absentia)

Scribe: Denning Powell

ATTENDEES:

Geoff Saunders

Denning Powell

Tessa O'Sullivan

Rita Isaacson

Patrick Lee

Lida Boynick

Valerie Utton

Liz Cippolina

Jacquelin Devlin

Cindy Drozd

Jed Backus

Steve Olechna

Darryl Johnson

Tom Murphy

INTROS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

(1) Liz suggested that anyone contemplating entering a work into screenwriting contests first consult USA Screenwriters, which evaluates the various contests.

(2) Val loaned out copies of various scripts, and recommended as worthwhile reading the textbook *Elements of Screenwriting*, a sort of Strunk & White discussion of the essentials of the process.

OPEN DISCUSSION:

(1) Cindy presented an example and analysis of exposition, via several scenes abstracted from *The Very Thought of You*.

REVIEW 1: *Secrets of Paradise*, by Geoff Saunders (Act 1 and Ending ~ 60 pgs).

Logline: A freelance writer escapes her dysfunctional family over the holidays and finds her secrets of paradise are a forbidden love.

Why writing it: Collaboration with novelist wife.

Theme: Life, nuts, and the pursuit of happiness.

Genre: Dramatic comedy.

Wants from review: Is the pace effective, are the characters well developed, is the dialogue effective, does the story have entertainment value?

Synopsis of group review: Great concept, seen by some as appropriate for a longer work (i.e., sitcom) and as more of a romantic comedy than drama. General agreement on: (1) pacing very good, an easy read; (2) characters nicely developed, especially Brenda and Sammy; (3) dialogue works well; (4) good entertainment value (especially the dysfunctionality). Suggestions for going forward: (1) bring Jon in earlier in Act 1 so the main storyline isn't obscured by the (very entertaining) dysfunctionality; (2) make the headless gingerbread gag more subtle/inferred after its first use; (3) decide on whose storyline this mainly is -- Jon/Allie's, or the family's -- and condense/redirect the other storylines around it a bit more.

REVIEW 2: Monkey Trap, by Denning Powell (Acts 2 and 3 ~ 100 pgs).

Logline: Aliens invade the minds of two lovers, distort their realities, pit them against each other in a battle to the death... and the fate of humanity hangs in the balance.

Why writing it: Book-to-movie conversion.

Theme: Love triumphs over power.

Genre: Sci-fi metaphysical thriller.

Wants from review: Any problems with the interweaving of the storylines, any section where the pace lags, any problems with the protagonists' character development, is there too much exposition, too much on-the-nose dialogue, is the mystery of what's really going on concealed appropriately, does the script need a front-end to foreshadow the mystery?

Synopsis of group review: The concept is great, but the multiple storylines and their complexities are a challenge to condense. General agreement on: (1) interweaving works okay, but there's (relatively) too much of the support characters and that detracts from the action pacing of the main storyline; (2) the protagonists John and Lara seem too similar in their respective FLBWs/attitudes/actions; (3) portions of the dialog are still too on-the-nose and that's the best place to begin paring down the exposition; (4) the mystery is maintained but definitely needs a front-end. Mixed opinion on: (1) should the monkey trap metaphor be disclosed earlier in the script; (2) do the protagonists too easily accept aliens in their minds.

Suggestions for going forward: (1) don't use dialog to tell any part of the story backdrop, use only character actions/attitudes/inferences; (2) deepen the John and Lara characters with more rooting interest and internal conflict; (3) give Josh a few more kid-like mannerisms and make other characters' dialog more unique to them; (4) cut down or simplify the complex technical parts; (5) make very clear early why the fate of humanity is at risk to keep the suspense up; (6) drop any dialog that describes what any character is seeing, just have them see it to preserve the thriller aspect.

NEXT MEETING:

No December meeting, instead there will be a Christmas party at Angelo's-on-Main, Wednesday December 20, 6:30 PM. Details to follow shortly.

The next group meeting will be Wednesday January 31, 2007, 7:00 PM, West Hartford Senior Center.

Nothing specified yet for the queue, but Geoff has the full script of *Secrets of Paradise* ready to go.

Moderator: Joe Cadieux

Snacks: Nancy Rossi

~DSP 12/3/06 :-)