



Entry Type: Bespoke Notes (WeScreenplay)

Marketing Blueprint: Analysis for Self-producing

Synopsis Included: No

Notes Date: June 1st, 2020

Analyst: SL39

Ranking: 89th Percentile

DEAD FRIENDS FOREVER

Thriller

Feature

109 Pages

by Tracy Fobes

TOP 8%
PLOT

TOP 9%
STRUCTURE

TOP 11%
CONCEPT

RATING
CONSIDER
PLACED IN THE TOP 11%

Percentiles are based on historical data of scores given out by this analyst.

For increased consistency, we calculate a project's pass/consider/recommend rating by using the scores input by the analyst and their history of scoring. Approximately 3% of projects receive a recommend and ~20% of projects receive a consider.

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OPENING THOUGHTS

This is a tight, well crafted and well written script. You have done a terrific job weaving the tragedy of Amelia's death that happened twenty years in the past; the and moral injury of teenage pregnancy; and how an intolerant racist mother loses her child because of her racist beliefs. Having said that, I think there just a little bit more work to make this script even more terrific. Nothing major, just some minor tweaks and edits. I hope the following comments, suggestions and insights are helpful on the next step of the process.

CHARACTERS

The characters are compelling, interesting, intriguing and well developed. We care about the characters, even as the horror and terror of the truth are revealed. We are saddened that Lily becomes the monster that she does. I'm not sure monster is the right word here. It seems that one cannot escape one's destiny and falls into the well of our karma no matter how hard we try to forget our past. We experience trauma and in order to protect ourselves we forget. This happened to Lily when she was just a child. But her past never really left her and it finally catches up in the most horrifying way. You have created a great character that teaches us about life and death; about memory and destiny.

After finishing reading the script and all that happens to and with Lily, I understand why her gaze becomes unfocused and her eyes go blank before she remembers something that happened twenty years earlier. But as I was reading I questioned the choice of words in order to reveal what Lily is experiencing. The unfocused and blank eyes seem too passive for what she is going through. Yes it is very difficult and challenging to write in a visual manner what is happening within Lily's character. But I suggest that you go back to see if there is another way to describe how Lily appears to us, the viewer. And if and when you find that, perhaps go through the script and refine those places.

On the first Nate appears. He is a good looking, athletic black guy. Then Lily appears. She is early 30s and she is on the roof of the plantation house. Detective Travis shows up on the next page. He is 45 and is a dedicated cop with a calm, self-assured kindness that makes others trust him instantly. This

description of Detective Travis is excellent. But I'm wondering if maybe we need to know if Lily is white and if Detective Travis is white or black. The reason I point this out is the first character is identified as black, and we don't know for sure if Lily is black or white. And I sense that we need to know right away the color of her skin. We assume that Lily is white, but I suggest that you take a look at this and decide whether her racial identity needs to be stated right away.

Detective Travis grounds the story in a way that none of the other characters are able to accomplish. He's a great character. There were times as I was reading when I missed his presence. I missed that he isn't more involved in the storyline of trying to figure out what happened to Amelia. On Page 34, he states to Lily that Amelia's case is the kind that haunts a person because it was never closed and that this haunting doesn't go away easily. This shows an aspect of his character that we can empathize with. Going back to the moments during the read when I missed Detective Travis' presence – What if he is just a little more involved with Lily's investigation? On Page 92, he shows up at the house because Clara is missing. He questions Lily about her aunt. She says she doesn't know where she is. Wouldn't he ask Lily if she has found any clues regarding Amelia's file? This may not be the best place for his questioning but I sense that he would ask Lily about the file more than he does. After all, Lily is a writer of true crime. My sense is there is something to explore and discover a little more here.

Nate is a good person who is caught in a web far more powerful than he is. We like Nate a lot and are sad when we realize that Lily accused him of raping her. What if the baby in the bassinet is a mixed race? How would this reveal affect the ending even more if we know that the baby is both white and black? Racism is already prevalent throughout the story. Why not go for it? The reveal of the baby's heritage would add even more of a punch, don't you think?

PLOT

The plot is excellent. The secret is revealed in clever and terrifying ways. You have a real handle on the story. You know how to write a story that thrills and frightens us at the same time. I actually don't know how you have accomplished this. You should be very pleased with this accomplishment.

There are a few places where the transitions are a little rough. Most all of the transitions from one scene to another are fine. However, the two scenes at the bottom of Page 106 are an example. Lily takes the pendant from Dead Amelia's outstretched hand and puts it in her mouth. This is an incredible moment in the story and we are horrified and dismayed at the same time!) The next scene is inside Amelia's Bedroom and Lily and Detective Travis stand next to the bassinet. The transition is jolting. What kind of transition might occur here? I don't know but I suggest you take another look and see what you might see.

STRUCTURE

The repeated motif of the pendant, the dripping faucet, the whispers, the Polaroid camera and photographs, the purse and the hidden pocket inside the purse, the lock on the cistern, the keys and the key – all of these terrific motifs help create a very strong and healthy structure. The image of Lily standing beside the bassinet with her baby is startling and brings the story to a closure in a way we had not expected. But at the same time, the ending begins a new story and we want to peek into the possibilities of this new story, but with trepidation and a sense of fear inside our guts. Well done! The structure is one of the strengths of the script. You should be very pleased with this structure.

DIALOGUE

The dialogue is very good. Each character has his or her own way of speaking that reflects his or her inner world and external world. The dialogue also reveals the world the characters lived in the past and the world they are living in the present. We are listening to people talking to each other. Young Clara's dialogue to her daughter who is trapped in the cistern brings everything to a devastating conclusion: "Do you really think that I'd let you give birth to a black baby?" And then she says how boys like Nate were slaves on that very land. This is brilliant writing. Through dialogue we learn so much about the characters, the place and the time. Terrific!!

CONCEPT

The concept is fantastic: a writer who writes crime novels goes home to attend her brother's funeral. But the cracks slowly open to the nightmare that she lived when she was a child at that home. And these cracks grow so large she is swallowed between them and will probably never seep back through into the light of this reality. But that is not all. Racism and teenage pregnancy are woven through this concept in ways where we must look at our own belief system. Am I a racist like Clara? Even when I have empathy for George Floyd and the others like him? What are my thoughts about teenage pregnancy? Do I understand a young woman's circumstances? What about the boy involved? How do I honestly feel about him? What am I forgetting that I need to remember and perhaps, forgive? You have written a compelling and memorable story with very important themes for us to take a hard and honest look at.

HOW CLEAR AND IMPACTFUL IS THE SCRIPT'S SOCIALLY RELEVANT MESSAGE OR THEME?

Script's theme or message feels a little unclear and can use emphasis.

Script's theme or message is impactful, but not one that is currently in the forefront of the culture.

Script's theme or message deals with an issue or issues that are socially relevant, but a few adjustments are needed to gain the full impact.

Script's theme or message is immediately socially/culturally relevant, and deals with the issue in a way that is thoughtful and impactful.

HOW DOES THE SCRIPT'S GENRE AFFECT POTENTIAL FINANCING AND DISTRIBUTION?

Script is a genre that will be difficult to sell/find distribution for without names attached.

Script is a genre that traditionally has a higher chance of selling/finding distribution.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS ABOUT THE SOCIALLY RELEVANT MESSAGE OR THEME

The first image of the story is “a run-down plantation at the end of a driveway lined by moss-draped oak trees” and rain. This is as Southern as you can get. The story takes place in Savannah, Georgia and this is as Southern as you can get. The riots over the brutal killing of George Floyd occurring across this nation and around the world at this moment I write this comment, racism, the Klu Klux Klan, segregation, Martin Luther King, Jr., Selma, Alabama, the Civil War might fill our thoughts when we see the image of an old run-down plantation. Clara is a racist; she hides behind her Southern politeness and hospitality, but at heart she is a racist through and through. She is the symbol for the attitudes prevalent in today’s South, and in other parts of the country. Thrillers attract different people. This thriller will resonate with a more liberal audience than conservative. What would be interesting would be to find out what the reactions of a more conservative audience might be after watching this film unfold. One thing is for sure—there would be conversations between people about racism, betrayal, and teenage pregnancy.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS ABOUT THE GENRE AND GENRE IMPACT

The supernatural elements drive the story and the main character’s journey. Amelia’s character appears in different stages of development, which fits the development of the story. First we hear mumblings and whispers; then images of Amelia in a window or a mirror. Amelia glides through the air; her arms stretch four feet in front of her as she reaches for Lily; the water seeping across the floor or into the tunnel when Charlayne is trapped inside; Amelia crams the pendant down Lily’s throat and Lily’s body bulging in unnatural ways; the dream when Lily is nine months pregnant—all of these terrific images and events require special effects of some kind. But these images and events are what make this story the story that it is. In other words, without these images and events *Dead Friends Forever* would not exist.

HOW WELL DOES THIS SCRIPT'S PLOT AND PERSPECTIVE STAND OUT AMONGST OTHER SIMILAR STORIES?

The perspective isn't completely unique. Even if the writing is really solid, perspective isn't the selling point of this story.

There are unique elements of this story and parts feel like they're coming from a specific point of view.

This writer has a truly unique story or perspective. The completed film will stand out as fresh, even within the genre.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS ABOUT THE PLOT / PERSPECTIVE

One might think that Clara's racist attitude is a cliché but it isn't. Her racist attitude is alive and well in the South—no matter how well a Southern Belle might hide it behind her smile. One might think that Nate's fate might be a cliché but it is not. It is disheartening that Lily accuses Nate of rape when in fact it is Amelia's ghost in possession of Lily that came so strongly onto Nate. There are indications that Nate has had a crush on Lily, so it seemed logical that he would allow himself to be seduced by Lily. But as we know, if a black man is accused of raping a white woman all bets are off regarding his future of freedom. He is guilty, plain and simple. This might seem a cliché but it is all too real in this day and age. What is very interesting about this script is how the writer has woven these culturally—and very real—hot topics throughout this thriller that is basically a ghost story. This weaving is unique and a strength of the script.

HOW WELL DOES THIS SCRIPT APPEAL TO A TARGET AUDIENCE?

It's unclear who the target audience is, or there are tonal or plot elements that make the story unsuitable for the target audience.

The target audience is clear. There may be a few tonal or plot elements that are out of step, but generally they are easily addressed/adjusted, and the script is in good shape.

The script is perfect for its target audience. The tone and content all serve the story in a way that is appropriate and appealing for the people who will be watching it.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS ABOUT THE TARGET AUDIENCE

People watch thrillers to be thrilled in a visceral and on-the-edge-of-your-seat kind of way. People listen to ghost stories for the same reason; and also to get in touch with the supernatural side of life and death. Some of us believe in ghosts and this story reinforces that belief. The continuous thread of whispers transforming into the image of Amelia in all her glory are inline with the target audience. The ending scene in Amelia's bedroom when Lily is showing Detective Travis the baby lying in the bassinet and in the window's reflection Amelia smiles sweetly is perhaps the most inline with the target audience's desire to be scared and shocked out of their wits.

And at the same time, relieved to know the facts that have been hidden and slowly revealed.

FINAL THOUGHTS

You have done an excellent job creating the world and the characters that inhabit this world. You should be proud of how you have woven the supernatural elements; racism and teenage pregnancy into a wonderfully scary ghost story that also is a murder mystery/thriller. Well done! Good luck with this project. I wish you all the best!

DEAD FRIENDS FOREVER

VIRTUALLY PERFECT
98th - 100th Percentile

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EXCELLENT
85th - 97th Percentile

Plot
92nd Percentile

Concept
89th Percentile

Structure
91st Percentile

Characters
89th Percentile

GOOD
50th - 84th Percentile

Dialogue
83rd Percentile

IMPROVE
0th - 49th Percentile

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RATING

CONSIDER

PLACED IN THE TOP 11%

ABOUT STORY ANALYST SL39

Has been providing script consulting and editing services for more than 15 years. Worked previously for Humanitas; and has been a juror for the Humanitas Prize since 1998, helping to select past winners for feature films, television and the college categories. Judge for the final round of the Montana Screenwriting Competition.

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