



TV Pilot Writers Room Analysis

Analyst: [REDACTED]

Writer: Richard L [REDACTED]

Genre: Horror/Comedy

Category: Short

The following scores and comments are objectively presented and intended to be illustrative, instructive, and helpful in guiding the writer along a professional path. Scores and comments are in accordance with current professional film and television industry standards.

Scores/Comments:

Concept/Originality - 7

The [REDACTED] follows in the footsteps of 20th Century B-Horror films, such as *The Little Shop of Horrors* (both the original and the musical,) by taking an absurd premise and raising the stakes gradually until the moment that the threat posed by the otherwise innocuous plants becomes plain to see.

However, instead of an invasive species from outer space, the plants in *The [REDACTED]* [REDACTED] are, instead, simply fed up with the treatment that they have received at the hands of humanity, and have decided to finally act upon it. Shaun, as the eponymous florist,

serves as both the envoy between plant and human, while also becoming the punching bag on the receiving end of the flowers' initial violent outbursts.

Structure - 7

The writer has structured their script well, in terms of narrative -- a cursory introduction that informs the reader about the setting and the primary characters; an elevating second act as the "stakes" of the story are introduced, via Shaun's first conversation with the Rose; and a chilling conclusion that ends the story with a question mark. *The End...or is it?*

However, while the story structure is fairly sound, the writer has failed to adhere to proper screenplay formatting standards, currently used and accepted within the industry. Sluglines, or scene headers, must always feature a time of day, whether the shot is interior or not, and regardless of whether or not it has been established previously. On page 1, the writer establishes that the scene takes place in the MORNING, but then, despite numerous scene changes, the time of day is never referenced again, until the slugline on page 19.

Additionally, the writer has opted for the descriptive times of "Morning" and "Dawn." While these are helpful in establishing mood and a specific time, common practice is to default to either "DAY" or "NIGHT," as these details are primarily used for the purposes of lighting considerations. If it is early in the morning, but the sun is still down, "Night" would be the appropriate choice -- likewise, if it is late in the afternoon, and the sun is setting, it would still be classified as "Day."

Additionally, the screenplay makes frequent use of the "ANGLE ON" notation. While this is not technically, incorrect, camera notions are generally only used in shooting scripts (a screenplay that has gone through editing and revisions and is the "final" product to be used on set,) or when the screenwriter in question also happens to be the director. The implementation of such notations can be viewed as somewhat restrictive, as many directors and cinematographers will view these notations as the screenwriter doing *their* jobs for them. When going through initial drafts, it is best to avoid using them at all.

Plot - 5

A florist, who has inherited the business from his deceased father, deals with frustrating customers and his brother, who wishes to connect with him, more. As Shaun, the florist, closes shop for the night, he is confronted by one of his flowers -- in this case, a talking, sentient rose. Once Shaun gets over his initial shock, he and the Rose discuss the plans that the flowers have for humanity. Confronted by the horror of it all, he loses consciousness, only to awaken to discover that his apparent "dream" was more real than he believed.

During the course of a 23 page script, Shaun appears to lose consciousness twice. Once, when he slams his head upon the counter; twice, when he faints after talking to the Rose. This becomes somewhat confusing to the reader, especially when trying to consider what is a dream or hallucination, and what is not.

Overall, the plot does not venture a great distance. The discussion with the widow, at the beginning, establishes Shaun as a brusque and unlikeable fellow, while the conversation with Nick gives backstory as to how he came to work as a florist. Combined, these scenes take up eight pages, or roughly 1/3rd of the entire story.

The backstory about Shaun's father, ultimately, has little bearing upon the plot, and the conversation with Clara similarly has no discernible pay-off. While narrative flow cannot be reduced to something as banal as mathematical formula, the writer should examine what the aforementioned scenes are in service of.

Pacing - 5

The writer seems to fall back upon prose, giving intense descriptions, as though it were a novel. This is an understandable instinct, and one that many experienced writers, but neophyte screenwriters, have difficulty overcoming.

Take the following example: "Shaun can be heard moaning on the floor." Can he? In what circumstances can he *not* be heard? "Shaun...finds himself looking out of the corner of his eye at the Rose." These two examples, while they wouldn't be out-of-place in a

different format, are unnecessary in a screenplay, where every inch of page space is essential. “Shaun moans on the floor,” and “Shaun looks out of the corner of his eye...” are brief, concise, and to the point. Many poetic writers can find this to be too indelicate, but in reading a screenplay, brevity is the best course of action.

Characters - 6

Shaun works well as a horror protagonist -- an individual to whom the audience can grow attached, while simultaneously being unlikeable enough that their ultimate fate does not become *too* regrettable. The Rose, however, is less clearly defined. Though they serve as a de facto antagonist, their ultimate motivation is unclear. Why do flowers wish to overtake humans, and why do they view Shaun so favorably?

The two side-characters, Nick and Clara, are introduced to the story and then leave with little consequence. As mentioned previously, the two scenes in which they appear have little narrative bearing to the plot, itself, and they, as characters, are equally expendable. Yes, Shaun’s discussion with Clara gets across that he is a rude individual who takes his flowers too seriously; but this exposition could still have been delivered merely by Shaun (via a one-sided telephone call) without the need to introduce another character.

Dialogue - 6

The majority of the dialogue within *The [REDACTED]* is largely expository. Clara and Shaun introduce themselves, and Shaun expresses his true feelings about how his flowers are used. Nick and Shaun’s conversation consists around catching the audience up to things that both of them are already aware of -- how their father used to run the flower shop, how he left it to them, etc. Then Rose and Shaun’s conversation switches between a shocked denial of what is happening, and an explanation about the talking flowers, and their desire for world domination.

In a short film, where a great deal of information may need to be conveyed in a comparatively short amount of time, this is an understandable measure to take -- however, the writer should examine how the exposition sounds, when read aloud. Does it

seem stilted or manufactured? If so, the writer should consider other ways, such as visual cues, to deliver the information that they wish to convey.

In two instances, the writer uses the parenthetical “(sarcastically)”. However, only *one* of those instances can truly be considered a sarcastic statement. On page 4, Shaun sarcastically replies “Yes, I *are*,” before launching into a tirade. His mockery of her verbiage wouldn’t be considered sarcasm, and if the writer is to use a parenthetical with a line, then it needs to apply to the *entire* line.

That said, there is an abundance of clever witticisms and legitimately funny lines “*You’re familiar with Darwin?!*” was a particularly humorous one, that should be commended. The writer is quite talented at capturing funny banter and chit-chat, and in subsequent revisions, should try and generate more opportunities for it.

Tone - 7

The tone flip-flops between *horror* and *comedy* rather competently. The title, in and of itself, indicates that the script does not take itself too seriously, and though the stakes are severe (the end of the world and humanity,) the subject matter never strays too far from an overall sense of levity.

Conflict – 4

At first glance, the conflict within *The* [REDACTED] would seem cut-and-dried, but instead, the story serves upon the *promise* of conflict without actually delivering. Conflict is inherent within the first page, as Clara argues with Shaun about his “ethics.” However, his eagerness to turn away a paying customer, who plans on using his flowers for a funeral, seems to only be rewarded by The Rose, who admires Shaun’s supposed devotion to his petalled friends.

Shaun’s conversation with Nick would seemingly put him at odds with his brother’s more sociable personality, and yet the two seem to get along just fine, with Shaun even agreeing to have dinner over the weekend, with no goading required. Shaun is set up as a homebody, only for this to be abandoned almost instantly.

Lastly, the most dire of conflicts, that of humanity versus the conquering plants, is similarly vague. Just how credible is their threat of global takeover? Shaun appears to be impaled by the flowers, but then wakes up to find himself safe and sound. When the Rose talks to Shaun, again, it is intended to end the story on a cliffhanger; however, if The Rose told Shaun about the plan, while he was dreaming, is the reader to believe that the plan will be the same, when he wakes up? What actually occurred, and what did not? This uncertainty neutralizes the stakes, entirely.

Emotional Response/Investment –6

As a *horror-comedy* hybrid, *The [REDACTED]* leans most heavily upon the tone of the latter. What draws the reader to a script such as this are the humorous moments found within, rather than the “horrific” trappings -- after all, killer flowers aren’t exactly as terrifying as a possessed demon-child, or a masked slasher, but then again, they aren’t intended to be. The writer could conceivably balance things out more by upping the suspense, or by focusing entirely upon the comedic elements.

Marketplace Potential – 6

As a short film, this show could very easily find itself at home within the numerous streaming services that host short-form horror (*Shudder*, *Screambox*, etc.) or as a part of a larger horror anthology, such as *Tales from the Darkside* (1990.) However, the writer should make the time to revise the formatting of their script, ensuring that it adheres to all current industry standards.

Final Comments:

The [REDACTED] seems to be a script which started with a title, and then worked backwards. While the overall concept could be an amusing one, the ideas are currently half-baked and not fully realized. There is a great deal of value, here, particularly by way of the bantering dialogue elements, but unfortunately, very little occurs within this script, and most scenes seem to focus around no more than two people speaking to each other.