



SCRIPT PIPELINE

– xxxxx by xxxx –

From the first few pages, we know that the writer has an excellent command of world-building and character and those elements only grow from there. There were points where I was worried the script would end in a too-predictable fashion, so the “fields” twist to the ending was especially satisfying – giving us not only the happy ending we so want for Xxx, but doing it in the most realistic way given the life of this character. Overall, there’s a great story here. Aside from some small issues of clarity, what feels like the biggest issue (though probably fairly easy to fix) is in terms of structure and pacing and when to dole out the elements of conflict. In the middle of the script, circa p50-60, it feels like the script loses focus and direction – we’re not really sure where the story is heading.

Given that starting on p79 we get a quick succession of conflict and action scenes (Xxx’s stated goal to study under Dr. Al Farooqi, the kiss, the cops and Hattie confronting Xxx, Hattie making grand promises and then dying – all of this happens within about 15 pages), which feel like they should be spaced out and given room to breathe. There’s a lot of tension and awkwardness to mine from these events, tension that could help propel the story forward, which it feels like we need around that halfway point. Especially in terms of a central conflict for Xxx, we’re not seeing much driving the script early on. Yes, he has significant sources of conflict in his sexuality, the crush on his teacher, his home life – but plots tend to be driven by a character’s reaction to those conflicts (or a sudden escalation in them or change in circumstance). In the first 2/3 of the story, Xxx isn’t doing much acting, mostly being pulled along by Vern or Scott’s do-gooding. This is understandable; it’s endemic to his character. But moving up at least Xxx’s stated desire to study under his idol would help inform the plot a bit better – it’s a goal to work toward (even if he doesn’t think it’s a reality) and helps us understand why he’s willing to make these changes in his life – he sees a future and a way out.

At the same time, the chain of events starting with the kiss feels like it happens and is resolved too quickly. Most of the significant external conflict in the script is bunched together here in the final 1/3 and as with the direction for Xxx’s character, were we to see these elements crop up earlier the script would likely have more focus. The internal/character conflicts for Xxx are strong and steady throughout, but the external/plot conflicts should be steady as well. The situation with Hattie especially feels a bit rushed – it’s just four pages between her grand promises and her death. There’s potential here to play up the drama in Xxx’s life with these promises – he really thinks it’s going to be okay, he’s been accepted into the program and just like that, his dreams are dashed because Hattie’s body is waiting for him inside. Giving Xxx some time to think that he’s going to get his happy ending before taking it away would make this moment more dramatic.

Smaller clarity notes:

- The relationship between Scott and Samantha feels like it's missing an establishing beat or two. We first see him on p6, introducing himself to Samantha and then on p12, they're post coital. When and how did this relationship happen? It feels like they go from introductions to established couple and it's a bit disorienting.
- It would be helpful to get some more exposition about why Vern is required to attend these group therapy sessions. The vampire therapist is a nice touch but we're never entirely sure why she's there.
- It's a bit hard to believe that Scott mistakes Tommy's mockery for interest at the bar on p39. At times, Scott reads a little close to a stereotype of the city/yuppie/hipster, which we understand is part of his character; we know he loves playing the role of Educated Hero, swooping in to save Xxx. But because every other character is given such unique details and no one else in the script feels like an archetype, we notice it in Scott's character.
- It's not clear why Scott suddenly shares information about his dad on p42. This moment feels like it comes out of nowhere.
- It also feels like we're playing catch up in terms of trying to understand why Scott immediately takes an interest in Xxx. We see Xxx beat him at chess on p20 but don't get the information that tells us why this moment is significant (that normally no one can beat Scott) until later in the script. As a result, we're not sure why Scott is volunteering to drive Xxx to tests, etc. We get that Scott recognizes Xxx's intelligence, but for him to start going above and beyond as a teacher, this "ah-ha" moment for Scott could be clearer.