

# THE WORKSHOP

– TITLE –

Big fan of this script and concept. I found myself very interested in Samantha, Willa, and the dynamic they have. So interested that I wonder if you're not maybe hiding behind some gimmicks and devices that take the focus off of them too much.

There are a few places in the script where transitions and shifts to different story devices seem like they get in your way more than they're helping you. It starts after the opening, when we're with Cyn. As a reader, I stumbled hard over the 1974 flashback, partly because I couldn't quite visualize who was where (i.e., blocking) in this Sasquatch punching scene and also in a general sense, why we were with Cyn so much. She ends up becoming the character I started to wish would go away, to be honest—every time the story was starting to get *really good*, she re-emerged. For example on p17, I was interested in who Willa was after she pulled this tampon stunt, and as we're about to get that answer ... we're back with Cyn, who then quickly fills in some history and exposition about Samantha's life as a wife and mother. But again, I really wanted to see this for myself—how this bullied and awkward girl turned into and behaves as a wife and mother felt like another one of those curious beats, a beat bulldozed over by Cyn. It happens again on p35; there's this really compelling relationship developing between Samantha and Willa, but we're back to Cyn, and it seems like it's mainly to ... make fun of her? There are comedic beats here as she's drunk and burping, and I see why it's included, but it just seems like a sideshow to the real story and the more significant characters.

So when we look at the script as a whole, there are a number of these devices—there's the faux true crime documentary, there's Samantha's death fantasies, at one point Samantha has voiceover (but only on three pages, in two separate instances, so it's not a device that's used consistently ... something to consider altering?) and Samantha speaks to the camera four times, but as with the VO, it's not a device used fluidly, so it may be expendable. In general, using VO or this kind of to-camera device just once or a few times can be jarring, as it ends up feeling random, someone suddenly talking directly to us and then never again. And when taken together, it's a bit like you're throwing everything but the kitchen sink at the script. Which in a roundabout way matches the frenetic tone, but kind of spoils the pacing.

You might need to pare down these devices and gimmicks, not just because it feels like there's a lot of them, but because it feels like it obscures the real story and your characters. While I could clearly see why Willa would be so fascinated by serial killers and clearly saw her motive, Samantha's attraction to all of this is fuzzier. Like we're missing a clear motive for her to go from a bullied girl to cold-blooded killer, and the focus on the bullying scenes and time in high school maybe isn't the way to go. Basically, it's hard to draw a straight line between Samantha being mercilessly teased by her classmates and wanting to take out serial killers. Are you perhaps going for a complicated friendship dynamic? because Samantha is so lonely, because no one has ever really *seen* her and Willa does, that she falls under Willa's spell in some way? If that's the case, it's not quite coming through. At the moment, it reads as if Samantha suddenly becomes interested in serial killers and turns into a "killing addict" without much of a foundation. (Her

own suicidal thoughts seem directly connected to how miserable her own life is, not that she has some kind of fascination with death, since all of these fantasy sequences involve her own death, not someone else's.)

With as many times as the script jumps around, or we return to Cyn's interview, some of these foundational pieces of this relationship get lost, and I wonder whether you should just trust and lean into these characters. A certain amount of flashing back and flashing forward seems necessary, since apparently Samantha is going back to killing in the story's present, but if we're going to buy this killers-of-killers duo, we have to understand their dynamic and why this becomes Samantha's thing. Interviews, VO, fantasy sequences, talking to camera ... it's more noise when there's a lot of good, substantive ground to cover in a less flashy/gimmicky way, without sacrificing the overall vibe and intent of the script.

These two might need to be more balanced, i.e. a reason why they *need* to be a team. Willa has the red string conspiracy board, so it seems like she has the knowledge and appetite. She's also conventionally attractive, so we can see how that might serve her within the narrative. But what does Samantha bring to this partnership? Why does Willa need or want her versus anyone else? You might want to give Samantha a specific skill or pastime—I don't know, like she's really into knot tying or she does actually have the same strength as a guy—that makes her an ideal killer. (There was a line about Willa screwing this up without Samantha, so was Samantha on clean up? Does she have an eye for detail that Willa doesn't? If so, we should see that to establish it.) It was hard to see why Willa comes to Samantha with Gerard in her trunk because it's undefined what Willa actually needs her for *in this moment*. She has the guy contained and incapacitated. What does Samantha need to do?

In the end, the script may need some kind of nod at the direction the series is heading, which of course is necessary for any pilot. My guess is that Monica's friend Jeff is going to turn out to be a famous murderer, and that directional nod might be as simple as having someone say his last name in the final beats of the episode. Or the girls are flipping through the (college?) yearbook and find Jeff's picture so we see the last name, since that would cement the purpose of these two.

Some smaller issues/notes:

- If you are going to use the faux documentary device, it seems like something that might be most useful as commentary on our collective and morbid fascination with true crime. *ONLY MURDERS IN THE BUILDING* dealt with this theme in a lighter way, and that's an example where this kind of doc/podcast was truly part of the narrative and character motive, making it more necessary than it is here. But if Cyn's lines do stay, they could be tighter. She rambles in a natural way, but a lot of what she says just doesn't feel relevant.
- By p10, I had "where is this going?" in my notes. That question actually popped up more than once (p29 I wrote it in caps) and that feels like it's connected to the time jumps and various devices. Every time the story starts to feel like it has real forward momentum, we're jumping somewhere else. (The caps came from frustration because this could be really good!)
- P12 feels like a repetitive beat because we've seen Samantha harassed the whole way to school, and here she is again, still being harassed. There's a pretty big focus on this

bullying, and given where this character has to go—murder-ville—these scenes don’t quite get us there, or it feels like the script is trying to say that the bullying is the entire explanation for it. It might be where the focus is in these scenes. It’s less on what Samantha thinks and what it does to her (and how it might make her particularly vulnerable) and more on the mechanics of the gum, the bloody sock, etc.

- P13 might be going a *little* too hard/obvious with the Jekyll/Hyde metaphor, and it’s a full page where Samantha isn’t actually saying anything herself; she’s just reading aloud. Comes off like we’re treading water.
- Samantha mentions it being quieter “out here” on p22, which suggests she was somewhere more exciting at some point. I was curious about this backstory, and it seems like it would be tied to the origin story of these two, which we might need to see more of.
- After the first couple, there’s no note in the script when we shift into different timelines. E.g. on p23, we go from the present back to high school and this needs to be noted. For a reader, it takes us a beat to remember where/when the school was, and for a production, they have to know which scene to be setting.
- On p44 we hear, “Oh you think you’re the only detective around here” and it’s hard to square with what we know about Samantha. Detective skills? Where? How? If this is her talent or skill, it would be helpful to see that.

