



Reader Comments:

by Mic

Standard Studio Coverage Report

Type of Material: Short film script

Number of Pages: 27

Submitted By: WRITER

Submitted To: Mic

Coverage Date: 9/18/24

Title: SCRIPT TITLE

Author: WRITER

Circa: 2003

Location: Iraq

Genre: Drama

LOGLINE: In war-torn Iraq, a family's lives are threatened - but the threat may be closer to them than they want to believe.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Needs Work
Idea		x		
Story		x		
Characters			x	
Dialogue				x
Marketability		x		

Budget	
High	
Medium	
Low	x

SYNOPSIS:

In the war-torn Iraq in 2003, CHARACTER 1 (40s) tends to a critically wounded soldier in a speeding ambulance. The soldier begs him to tell his family he died peacefully, but Dr. CHARACTER 1 insists he will make it out of this alive. When the ambulance driver struggles to navigate through the war site, Dr. CHARACTER 1 takes the wheel, but slices his hand in the process.

Meanwhile, Dr. CHARACTER 1's wife, CHARACTER 2 (40s), brings a newborn baby to her niece-in-law, CHARACTER 3 (20s), who tells CHARACTER 2 she's naming the child after her. When CHARACTER 3's husband, CHARACTER 4 (20s) can't afford the bill, CHARACTER 2 pays it, but not without telling CHARACTER 4 to get his life in order so he can be a good father.

Stressed after work, CHARACTER 1 and CHARACTER 2 return home to their children, CHARACTER 5 (age 4), CHARACTER 6 (age 6), CHARACTER 7 (14), CHARACTER 8 (16), and CHARACTER 9 (20), who each express their concerns about the war. CHARACTER 9, studying to be a doctor, cleans and bandages CHARACTER 1's hand injury. CHARACTER 1 tells CHARACTER 2 he's worried about her safety at the clinic, but CHARACTER 2 says anything is worth saving lives.

(REMAINING 2 PARAGRAPHS OMITTED FOR ANONYMITY)



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COMMENTS:

Overall:

The story presents a compelling premise of family betrayal set against the backdrop of war-torn Iraq, offering strong potential for emotional depth and tension. The themes of loyalty, survival, and family dynamics are strong, adding a lot of depth and layers to this story. However, there are some concerns here regarding the script's structure, pacing, and character development. The main issue being that the true conflict – the extortion letter and ultimate family betrayal – is only introduced halfway into the script, leaving much of the first half focusing on world-building and character establishment that would be more effective if it were condensed.

Structure:

The script's pacing issues are mainly due to the inciting incident (the discovery of [REDACTED]) occurring halfway into the story. The first half of the script, which focuses on establishing the setting and family dynamics, feels overly long, diluting the tension and strong narrative direction this story would otherwise have. The script would benefit from tightening the first 15 pages and making room for an earlier introduction of the central conflict to engage the audience sooner.

Additionally, certain plot points are introduced but never fully developed. For example, CHARACTER 1's hand becoming injured in the opening scene and, later, CHARACTER 9 tending to it sets up the expectation that this injury might become a significant story point. Without a clear inciting incident before page 15, the heavy focus on CHARACTER 1's family life made it seem like the plot would revolve around CHARACTER 1 contracting an infection and possibly dying, leaving his family vulnerable during what was already such a difficult time in their lives. However, the hand injury storyline is dropped entirely after CHARACTER 9 helps bandage it up – and it seems at that point that the only reason the injury was mentioned was so it would be established that CHARACTER 9 is studying to become a doctor. But even this aspect of the story wasn't fully explored in a meaningful way. If the intent was to contrast where he's at in his life vs where CHARACTER 4 is, it could be done more effectively without leading the audience to believe that the story will focus on CHARACTER 9's medical career.



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Characterization:

The script introduces several characters, but many feel underutilized or unnecessary - particularly the children. The main characters are CHARACTER 2, CHARACTER 1, and CHARACTER 4, and the more characters there are aside from them, the less space there is to focus on the compelling story between these three. Although it's clear the intention is to keep the story as true as possible (since it's based on real people), on purely a story level, there's no need for all these supporting characters. On a production level, it also helps with the producibility of this script to not have 5 characters under 18 to cast (and pay for). It would be worth taking another look at the cast and determining which characters are necessary.

CHARACTER 2 is the most developed character, but some of her actions feel inconsistent with her core motivations. In particular, her decision to leave CHARACTER 4, CHARACTER 3, and their newborn baby behind when [REDACTED]. CHARACTER 2 is portrayed as a deeply compassionate and selfless person who values family, so it feels out of character for her to so quickly abandon her nephew and his family when, as far as she knows, their lives are also at risk. One potential solution to this problem would be having CHARACTER 4 himself request to stay behind, claiming he wants to protect [REDACTED]. This would set up a more powerful reveal later when it's discovered that he [REDACTED]. He acts like he's the hero coming to CHARACTER 2's aide, when really, he was the villain all along. His willingness to stay behind despite knowing the truth would add layers to his betrayal, making the emotional impact of his deception even stronger.

The other concern was the main point of view wasn't clear for a majority of the script. CHARACTER 1 is first introduced as the protagonist, but we quickly switch to CHARACTER 2 leading the story, and from there we jump between the two of them until the betrayal is revealed, and it becomes clear this was CHARACTER 2's story all along. It would be helpful to more clearly set up CHARACTER 2 as the protagonist. Consider making the first scene focused on her, in a way that emphasizes her WANT to care for her family and save everyone she can (the first scene we see her in already does a great job of this, so it could be as simple as moving this up). This will help establish CHARACTER 1 more clearly as an antagonist to CHARACTER 2's worldview, prioritizing the safety of himself / his immediate family over helping others.



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Another concern was that CHARACTER 4 is less present in the plot than is ideal for a character with such a strong impact on the story. His betrayal feels abrupt, and a bit like it's coming out of nowhere. It wasn't until CHARACTER 7 said he thinks CHARACTER 4 ██████████ that this idea became something the audience might consider as a possibility. Like mentioned, it would be helpful to consider which parts of the story are crucial and which are not, because right now there's hardly any room for CHARACTER 4 in the story while all the other kids are being introduced to the plot. This diminishes the impact his storyline could otherwise have.

The main two things that will improve this script are establishing CHARACTER 2's role as the protagonist in the story and clarifying her WANT upfront, in addition to streamlining the cast of characters to free up space to flesh out the important elements of the story (CHARACTER 2 and CHARACTER 4's relationship, CHARACTER 4 and CHARACTER 1's relationship, CHARACTER 2 and CHARACTER 1's relationship).

Overall:

The story has strong potential to resonate with audiences, particularly in its portrayal of family dynamics during a crisis. However, the current draft could benefit from some revisions to the pacing and character arcs to better introduce and enhance the main storylines and themes.