

(This is a sample of what a "Detailed Analysis" looks like. Please keep in mind that all scripts have their own specific concerns and are tailored to them.)

(THE PAST NEVER DIES)

PRODUCTION CO: _____

WRITER: _____

FORM: Screenplay/117 pages

GENRE: Psycho-Crime Drama (Murder Mystery)

SUBMITTED BY: _____

SUBMITTED TO: _____

TIME: Late 80's through present day

PLACE: Any Larger Metro area, USA

ANALYST: Terry McFadden

DATE: _____

LOG LINE

A grizzled veteran police detective and his younger sexy partner chase down an emotionally disturbed psychotic killer.

Synopsis

Hard-boiled and grizzled veteran police detective SKIP VANCE, late 50's, and his new female partner, the sexy but secretive CHRIS GODFREY, 28, who have been getting nowhere after questioning possible murder suspects in a string seemingly unrelated killings, finally get a break when a knife is left in the body of the latest victim. Because Skip is sure that he has seen that knife before he searches his files and the old evidence boxes, and, finally comes to realize that the knife was taken from a perp on a case he was on with his now deceased partner, Raymond Taylor more than 15 years ago, and, since the knife had been taken from that very evidence bag, he gets the impression that the current string of murders are being committed from someone who has or had access to the police department.

Because the killings are causing a stir and much fear in the city, the HIGHER-UPS in the department call a meeting to decide on action to be taken but when Chris suggests to these lofty Super Cops that she believes the killer is methodical and offing people as they coincided to the cards in a game of solitaire, she is nearly laughed out of the room. Nevertheless, the spree of killing continues and since her theory is holding up brilliantly some others including Skip begin to go along with it.

Chris, an avid coffee junkie continues to have her designer mud at her favorite spot and has gotten to be quite platonically friendly with dark but humorous JIMMY TAYLOR, late 20's, and although she goes there for the great grinds and conversation, Jimmy begins to get the idea that he may be in line for more than just sweetening her Java. Unbeknownst to Chris, this very Jimmy, is the son of Skip's former partner Raymond Taylor and that he too is the one responsible for the present succession of homicides.

Skip and Chris get into trouble over a newspaper leak they had nothing to do with but continue to work on their own on the case. Later, they reminisce over a few drinks at Skip's, but when two bodies appear at Skip's front door, his old flatfoot intuition kicks in. Because he is certain that they're being thought to have been somewhere else when this occurred, will fair better for them with the department, they take hold at a sleazy motel to make it look like they had been shacking up. It turns out however that Chris's card theory holds up too in these two killings and she also has gained a staunch ally and believer in the young handsome detective, MATTHEWS.

Meanwhile, the forensic experts in the lab continue to connect the current murders to old cases and thugs dealt with years ago by Raymond Taylor. Skip is in absolute awe about this and befuddled until, in the evidence bag he sees an old coffee stirrer, and, since he remembers Jimmy was a coffee freak, he starts to put two and two together. He realizes that Jimmy, who also had access to his fathers' cases and listened to the police radio, has to be the culprit but how does he find the now nearly thirty year old mud slinger?

Synopsis

Using a picture of Jimmy at age 12, the artists at the station age the image and when Chris realizes that this is her very same captain of the lattes, both she and Skip head for the coffee shop. But they are too late as when they get there all they find is a coffee worker named TRIP near dead from Jimmy's hand and the address of Chris's mother's place of residence. Jimmy knows where Chris's mom lives because he followed Chris there one night reacting out of his infatuation. When they arrive at her Mom's house her mother is hurt from a fall and Chris's son, Johnny, who she kept secret from everybody all along, is missing.

Skip, Chris and some backup police show up at Jimmy's, but Jimmy, Johnny in tow, escapes to a nearby industrial park killing a cop in the process. Skip and Chris are hot on his trail. When Chris finds Jimmy in a crate near a loading dock he manages to get the drop on her. He lectures her about being a bad mother and makes it known that it is the very fact that he grew up having no parental guidance or influence that is to blame for why he is the way he is. Chris pleads with him to leave Johnny alone, and, because she reminds him that if he hurt her or the child, he would become what he most hates, he remains stilted for the moment. More cops show up and a helicopter, so Jimmy runs and lets little Johnny be. With Johnny now safe, Chris continues to chase Jimmy. Copters converge creating huge gusts of wind. Crates crash as shots are fired and both Jimmy and Chris fall into the water below. When Skip helps Chris out of the water, he is unaware that Jimmy is right behind her. Jimmy shoots and kills Skip as Chris falls back into the water. When Chris hops up and out of the drink, she looks for him, but Jimmy is gone.

Chris with her life and past now out in the open, takes care of her son. But the murders continue.

Comments

Premise: “The Past Never Dies” is a suspense crime drama in the tradition of *Dirty Harry* and *In The Line of Fire* that also highlights the fact that it isn’t just the tormentor who is living a life where their wants and needs go unfulfilled. A good concept, a good premise, three dimensional characters that go to the end of the line, a fresh take on the traditional good-guy, bad-guy story and a look at how more than just the bad guy lives in darkness and a life incomplete. Although this narrative illustrates the manifestations of a broken childhood, the lack of love, and its inherent psychological justifications for same while exposing the psychosis of the killer, the piece needs to ingratiate this idea into the lives of the protagonists more, progress some of the structural elements in the second act and make clear a few of the story points.

Story: The main storyline follows Skip and Chris as they work to find out who is committing all of these seemingly unrelated murders. Great depiction of the demeanor of a grown up physical man, Jimmy, who never emotionally matured. Not only does behavior show a world of isolation and darkness but his current secretive life and vendetta show a man who feels absolutely justified in what he is doing. His obvious savvy makes sense as does his misinterpretation of the signals given to him by Chris--a fine portrait of a very disturbed individual leading a double life--very good. And, this very parallel holds too for Chris as she is very secretive about her child and her past life. This theme is up, working and follows through wonderfully in the vivid and colorful character storyline. The idea that Jimmy still can feel things like jealousy, anger and need for love come through, and although they are distorted they fit in perfectly with this double-sided man and his world and play out badly as of course they have to--good. The theme of lost childhood comes through too especially where he lectures Chris about Johnny. It is clear that this man is pissed because of how he grew up and he wants the world to know it. It is too clear that the only influences he had as a child, that is, being around cops, sets the stage for this as he in some respect blames the bad guys and maybe even the cops for his plight. This point solidifies near the end when his killing turns to the innocents like Trip, the Police and Skip. A fine documentation of an irrational mind self-justifying. Nice parallels: The unknown son; the double life, he and Chris have some basic things in common but what is even more poignant is where their differences are seen, and how, later on.

Love the one-sided love story that is implied by Jimmy. Naturally, since Jimmy suffers from a delusional and demented value system, any real love story involving him would have to be one-sided and dysfunctional--happily this is the case here too. However, it is apparent here that he has feelings for Chris, and he acts on them in some regard. He follows her, learns more about her and although this relationship exists solely in his mind, the fine allegory prompts some of his actions as he suffers jealousy and the pangs of unrequited love and this is seen in this underlying story line. This prompts his action; it solidifies what he wants besides getting even with people. He wants some kind of romantic love and because he feels she is not behaving the way he would like he takes action, and this is what we want. The character work and arc is prompted here too. He wants something from her and is not getting it so we see his other sides. It serves to open him up some and to cement Chris as the hero of the piece and this is well seen.

Comments

Although this could never be a classic love story as Chris would never consider him, these scenes do allow viewers a peak into the two of them in a playful although innocent childish intimacy especially where he reacts with the truck demonstrating his boyish side; his wit and charm to her while spinning up her java's. His fondness for her is what prompted the kidnapping of Johnny and his realizing he was wrong in putting the kid in danger—this is clear and well seen. What this line also does is to delineate his reasoning and justification for who he is and what he does as seen when he lectures Chris. He acts out metaphorically as if he was actually dumped by her and this dimensionalizes the two of them, and the piece adding flavor, color and scope and a weird distorted vibe that then allows us to see just how affected her is. Very well done.

However, I would like to see some of the main characters given more pointed and specific function and the relationships fine-lined. This idea that Jimmy is far from emotionally developed works great and is clear, but can we adopt that idea some more into the world of our heroes and expand on it some paralleling this fine theme? First: Develop the relationship of Skip and Chris some more and here is why. Skip is an old timer set in his ways and he is now given a girl as a partner and that take has been seen before so we need to spin it as per your experiences that you delineate with Jimmy. The way you are layering your experience with childhood trauma as per your unique voices is up and seen but we need to crystallize this some and add to the thematic allegories.

Okay, but let's remember that Chris lost her father on the job, he was a cop and Skip has no real family to speak of. I wonder if we could have them, as the story moves on, really care for each other in a relationship other than him lusting after her all the time? It is fine for him to lust after her initially and into the piece as this is set up and will be expected, but what I am suggesting to you is this. After they work together for a while and get to know each other, after she proves to him that she can do the job yet is her own person, and after he notices her character points and human-ness, he takes to her in a different way. As viewers get to know these characters allow them to see what is missing in their lives by highlighting it more in their everyday world. All of our main characters, in naturally smaller measure, are incomplete and emotionally unsatisfied. Of course, nowhere near the degree that Jimmy is but it is important to show the parallel here as it will draw strong identification with the viewer and contrast them to him too. This is up and working in part as it is clear that Chris hides a child, lives with the pain of a lost love and has very little interest in romance.

The same with Skip as he lives in a world where as a result of his own personal trauma, his life is anything but full. Heighten this and show it more between them and be sure to show their vulnerabilities as well as their good qualities. Because of these variances and personality quirks between them they may slowly fill the void, in some measure of what they are both missing. Perhaps he follows her one time instead of Jimmy and sees the tipsy Mom but never mentions till they are alone and drinking. The wise-mouth and sexual innuendo would get replaced by cool respect and concern. Don't get me wrong, he still talks as he does but the emotion behind it and the idiosyncrasies would change. Subtle changes and the sense that he wants her to do well as we get deep into the second act of this. Perhaps he eggs her on to see Matthews in a romantic situation or something of that nature. And she too would look out for him in some regard as well as the piece furthers.

Perhaps she makes him drink the designer coffee or latte instead of the rot gut, or, she takes him home and makes him a real meal instead of the TV dinners he lives on. Maybe she buys him a cooler shirt or something light-hearted and of that nature to see if we can get the metaphorical Dad-concern going—I mean, she has her dysfunctions too, right?

Naturally, these incidents and suggestions occur within the context of them pursuing their goal or hurdling an obstacle, and of course it is witty and off-handed as this dialogue will be praised for. What I am getting at is bringing them together as an allegorical daughter and Dad in a subtle measure. Let the other cops like Hockman and Jefferson comment or bust him on it and allow that to only further the bond. A lot of this is in there and I know you are doing it to an extent, I just want to tighten this relationship up a bit more between them and provide that the both of them are what the other needs and not in a romantic or sexual sense. I feel this would add depth and color and raise the emotional stakes when danger or special happenings take place.

Another aspect to consider would be what does she do better than him? She is 28 he is nearly 60. You already start this theme of old versus new when it is shown that she likes designer coffee while he likes the mud at the shop. What else generationally splits them? Is she a computer whiz and it is seen that this is what gives them the lead (Jimmy's pic)? It is a small point but again the more we differentiate them the more we will bring them closer when they each learn to respect the other's sensibilities and skills. So, show this in the scenes at times but always within the context of the point of the scene. This is executed wonderfully when she discovers that the killings follow the game of solitaire, she is a zip in this regard--it takes him a while to get onboard and this is the idea, but get onboard he ultimately does and this is exciting and will create alliances with the viewers as well.

I like the idea that Skip is sure the murders are connected to his old pal Raymond and the evidence bag somehow, of course thinking it a current cop, while Chris furthers her theory of the game of solitaire. Naturally, their theories appear to be at odds so further this as to create a nice quite competition in the going here. This sentiment is seen when she is not taken seriously by Powers and the boys at the meeting, and Skip plays it off well even though he is not really going for it. They do come together when the murders prove to be in the cards so show a "click" for Skip along the line and allow him to show her the respect and approval she deserves for figuring this out. You'll want to add a few quick scene cuts of just how good she is getting here as we go and the notice of it building.

The notion is that it should be the two of them working in concert, old ways and new ways, modernistic methods and tried and true ones, and the combined work of Chris and Skip that finally lead them to Jimmy is paramount. This idea clicks in beautifully when the sketch comes up and she realizes who he is, and I am suggesting that by the time the script is about halfway through the second act, they begin to realize they need each other in this regard and their behavior and actions show it. This does happen but it is late and feels a bit forced. Layer it in earlier and this foreshadowing will not only be rewarding and surprising but make perfect sense when they do ally in this regard.

Comments

One important and well seen aspect of this solitaire concept is, that, because the murders are following the dealing of the cards, Chris and Skip are now able to see a correlation and this is fine. A suggestion: Is there any way they could use this knowledge and the idea that the victims are old perps of Skip and Raymond to get closer to the killer. This suggestion and scene ideas, should you decide to create them, would be put in about where the Garcia and hotel pages are now. Simply put, Chris and Skip, now separated because of the newspaper deal, figure out in the cards who is next. Chris says the next murder victim correlates to the say, seven of diamonds, then Skip and she go through old files to see who that could be, and, although they are unable to prevent Kelly from getting batted in, maybe they were on the trail. This device would cause some tension and urgency and show a bit more progress by our detectives at the same time. This could again happen at Skip's just before the two bodies turn up (and I hope elsewhere).

As far as the newspaper story goes... pin the leak on her more substantially and show us that as well. You mentioned in a response to me that Jimmy is not a traditional antagonist in the sense that he gives them little trouble but, I beg to differ. Let's say that Jimmy, as you ably imply, does have a crush on her. Naturally, he follows her as is seen but, what if he also realizes what she is up to as a cop? When he is convinced that Matthews or Skip is trying to get in her pants and it looks like she is game, although she is only being coy, Jimmy is livid and tosses the wrench, which is the newspaper leak. And, this is already foreshadowed and in place so use it.

And/or perhaps he feels that they are getting close (showing his delusion), or, perhaps he wants her and Skip separated, or any number of reasons, but, he does now have cause and motivation, in his freakish mind, and this is story. If Jimmy did make the call, it is not clear in the script so please make it clear. A shot of him revealing to a reporter by phone and substantiate evidence of this information would go far to paint his antagonistic functions as he now gets them tossed off the case. Perhaps he disguises his voice and makes sure that the reporter tells Hockman. Viewers don't even have to see him tell them-- he says, "is this the Daily Bugle?", end of shot. Simply put, it is in there anyway and if we make it clear that Jimmy is behind it we now have a more story-worthy opponent, we have battles incited and created by him?

How is Jimmy being apprised of police activity? Where does he get his information? Is he still listening to police monitors and radio? Does he have other means? Quick shots of this where appropriate are necessary and would add and fill.

Also, when Jimmy leaves the knife on the scene it is a big clue. If he is going to do this tell us why first, and secondly, what is the pattern? I will buy the idea that Jimmy is killing scum who had it coming from the old days, the people who in fact his dad could not pin down, that is valid. But now he is leaving something he took from the evidence bag at the scene of the crime. Will he be using other things that Skip and Raymond were privy too in those days? This would continue to fuel Skip's theory of an inside job while battling Chris's theory. Perhaps nothing so obvious as a knife in order that Chris may continue with the card deal. Point is, you started this with the evidence so do not leave it open-ended...drop clues that remind Skip of old days somehow and that also further the card game deal that is already up and working.

This brings up a major question about Skip in regard to Jimmy. Does Jimmy blame Skip in some measure for Raymond's death, and if so how much? If so, a suggestion would be that he first wants to make things miserable for him and not kill him outright. This would justify his killing Skip in the end and not killing him at his Brownstone. I want to know how Jimmy feels about Skip and I want to see his relationship to him even if it is just one-sided as Skip is still not aware of him. Perhaps Jimmy is conflicted about how he feels about Skip. Perhaps he unsure, love-hate? It is evident that Jimmy is still a fan of cops. His father was one and he is attracted to Chris. He is living as a cop in a sense but on the other side of the law. This may be why he does not kill Skip or any other cops till the end. However, by the end of it, we need to show a switch in him, that is, an element needs to be added here, an element of betrayal by the police, Chris, Matthews Skip and others. Jimmy needs to feel that even the cops are against him--how else do you justify his killing them at the end? This needs to be seen and felt by Jimmy at least in his mind in order for it to be justified that he now will kill cops. Naturally, this progresses his character and makes is credible that he lose in the end, either by bullet or being arrested. Which is another point...

In my humble opinion Jimmy has to either die or be arrested at the end. I know you may be thinking, "hey Terry, why does Jimmy have to die or be arrested, Hannibal the Cannibal got free at the end"? The answer is that Jimmy killed people that we have grown to like and know. He killed main characters that were doing the best they could, characters like Jefferson and Skip that enlisted identification with viewers, characters that were heroes throughout and characters that did not deserve to be killed. Hannibal killed relatively nameless characters as was the subject and helped Clarise save the girl from the nut in the well. We were not as attached to the people he ate, here we are. Also, this piece is more serious and realistic, and the justifications are stronger.

Bump up the functions of Matthews and Jefferson. At one point in my reading I got the idea that Jefferson is not really a fan of Skip down deep and truly. Am I on to something here or off-base? Let me and the viewers know. Thing is, I get the idea that Hockman favors Skip over Jefferson. I get the idea that Jefferson has a quiet resentment toward Skip because of that and perhaps several other things over the years. Maybe there was a bigger falling out back in the day and they sort of put up with each other for the sake of all concerned in some regard. Obviously, they respect each other as good cops and that is not the issue but there is (are) issues and history between them I feel, and issues and history we could use. Can Jefferson, an old-timer as well, be antagonistic, at times to Skip, feel out of favor and that his cards are dealt from the bottom? He is old enough to have been biased against for being black, could that be a factor that has colored his relationship with Skip? Did Skip catch a break years ago solely because he was white?

All we want is some quiet antagonism here, not a huge bout but enough to keep the inner scene conflict growing and Jefferson wanting to one-up him. He wants what Skip wants and resents Skip for being the man around Hochman. What if Jefferson feels he is just as good or better? You are doing this to some degree between them as there are some fine scenes showing a quiet inner conflict between--I am suggesting you take it a little further. Some of this is seen when they gloat after arresting the wrong perp but this script offers superb opportunities for growing and constant inner conflicts between these two men. I would like to see more of it as it would certainly bolster Jefferson's function here and add suitable everyday trouble for Skip.

And, Matthews obviously is the counter part to Chris. He is also of the millennial and computer whiz. He is also the first one who buys and goes along with her story and he also has taken more than a passing liking to her. This all needs to be fleshed out some as the quiet and then not so quiet alliance will have everybody reacting and provide support to Chris from a peer. I am not suggesting that they become an item, however, I am suggesting that Matthews go for it. Of course, we know and, it is well seen that she is not looking because of Johnny, a dead ex and other reasons, but his pursuit of her would pull out these traits, put them on the table and make her deal with them as the piece moves forward. Sometimes love hits when you are not looking and I, for one, would like to see her battling this even though she may want it. It is implied in the second to the last page that he and her will be getting closer so let's fight it out as an inner demon to her as the piece rolls through the second act.

Some minor things: Why does Jimmy have a scar--how did that occur? And, what exactly is in those notebooks from his mom that send Jimmy off and killing? Okay, he is working in a shop, he is a loner and a dark isolationist but so far, he is not a killer. That is, until he learns his mother was alive all of these years, and he reads her notebooks. How does that incite what is welled up inside of him for so long? I am looking for a scene or shot where audiences are going to see that he is capable of this and why. Show us an incident, that adds to the life experiences he has had, something that tips him to a decision on this, that gets these killings rolling and why. His Mom's brother showing up and giving him the notebooks is a catalyst to his deadly behavior and audiences deserve to know how it all unravels.

Structure: Wonderfully vivid and stylized visual description that fits not only in form with the genre but with the characters and the setting too. It is almost as if a cop was actually telling this story in narrative and that is a great plus when selling a psychological crime story. That's some fine language all around. A very fine setup, very believable heroes and some nice locations seen, heard and felt in the read. The read itself is, in fact fast and fun and this is what producers want. Act I does a nice job of setting the story up, introducing the characters, who they are and what they want; showing or implying their history thus justifying their actions and behavior; and really getting the story rolling structurally. Clearly there are two stories up: that of Chris and Skip on the job and that of Jimmy and his vengeful murders and the catalysts for both are seen as well. Jimmy becomes the killer after reading the notebooks his mother left him and Chris and Skip get a goal and a storyline when they get the case after Wallace is murdered.

Clearly both of our stories are given the background and are later drawn together but they both do get jumping because of an incident that occurred organically and from character. Some nice inner conflict between Skip/Chris and Jefferson and Matthews here--the idea that they are vying for this case comes through but it is resolved, for the moment, when Hockman gives the case to Skip.

Fine scenes showing how Skip feels about a female partner and nice progression of the murders and the leads dwindling off. Perfect pages and perfect timing for the murders that do not correlate all the way up until the time Plot Point I is seen on page 31. When Skip realizes that he knows where the knife comes from, Act I is now neat and complete. Nice structural elements in the last act from about page 90 or so on when Jimmy whacks Trip and goes to Chris's Mom's house. This is the real cop and robber; good-guy, bad-guy stuff that keeps viewers in the seat.

Great suspense fear, tension, stakes and urgency--it is clear that there are many dangers for all concerned and they are in your face and this is a fine Act III.

However, Take a look at the character functions of Jefferson and Matthews in Act I. It is not Jefferson and Matthews' case so why are they there after Hockman gave it to Skip? The following murders where Jefferson and Matthews are there too muddy up the scene as they only reiterate what is to be found out anyway, and, their function now weakens. Lose page 21 If you want them there then give them a function even if it is as simple as exposition of new information but they cannot just copy the talk and agree. How are they helping or hurting our two main characters, even if just a line or two? Chris needs to be the one questioning the mechanic, not Jefferson, it is not his case and he muddies the storyline. The idea with these two is to make sure that their functions are strong. Stick to the idea that Jefferson is pissed because he was taken off the case unjustly because Hockman likes Skip and that he is now subordinate to Chris in this case, and show that Matthews is a little sweet on her. Perhaps Chris too finds him attractive but because of her current home-life is afraid to go for it. Point is, these guys just can't be there doing the same things as our two main characters. Every time they are in the scene it needs to be necessary and they need to help move things along if only by antagonizing and moving the inner story.

And Act II needs to be amped up here. The main problem with the structure of this piece is that it is episodic and slow through a lot of the second act. Trim from the bottom of page 41 to 43 where the Bernard King issue comes in. This locker room banter is good in Act I but needs to be reduced after the Plot Point as our characters have no time for it, nor do the viewers. If it isn't moving the story or meting out info that we need to progress--lose it. Pages 44-50 need to be cut down too. Powers is there because the murders are getting out of hand and, he is Hockman's superior. The idea executed finely here is that he has been called in on this and that is working. It also working in the story sense because Powers is the tool that will force Hockman to really discipline Skip as I suggest. However, the idea of this scene/sequence is for Chris to state her theory, it be doubted, Skip to feel foolish and Matthews to ally with her because he is young and hip too and he sees how this is playing out. Currently Powers talks too much, it is repetitive and highlights too much of his own personal story--no time for that, he is a secondary character--get to the point.

Skip and Chris need to find a pattern for how the murders are occurring—that is the purpose of these pages externally. Internally it is the melding of their relationship as propelled by the stakes, urgency and obstacles of this killer still being loose and at it. They have clues and theories and they need to get to them. Get to them. The meat of this sequence picks up on page 47 but the three pages before that are ancillary. Turn those three into a half page and get to it. Powers is there to show he is boss but we cannot have him ranting like that just so Chris can get to her theory--it is slow and needless. Have Chris explain her theory, have Matthews go along, have Skip feel goofy, have Powers taunt her cause she is a rookie and get out. This scene is a setup and justification for events to come not to highlight a character whose function then becomes limited in this piece. This also means that pages 47-50 in this sequence be cleaned up to. We need to “move” on these slower bits to build to the action. Slow cool middle of the road scenes in the middle of the script only work when they progress the character of our main people. Like the love scene of a romance, or crooks spending money from a successful heist. You do this at Skip's place later and that is enough.

Lose the whole Garcia brother idea on 67-71. It is a dead lead and does not build to anything and nearly 5 pages is way too much to give to it. Instead, your new scenes will be the ones I mentioned where they are contacting each other while battling the created obstacle by Jimmy, of them two being separated and off the case. We need these pages to amp up the stakes, urgency and antagonism in these regards. When you add to that, at this point in the story, the idea that Jefferson and the other cops think they have the bad guy but Chris and Skip know they have not, you will see how the seriousness of what they are doing creates the tension to jump this hurdle and keep moving. The references to the Garcia visit, like on 87 or wherever, too will have to go.

Now, the sequence at Skip's on pages 71-78 is the slower midpoint, information gathering, and metaphorical love story sequence, but it is a bit long and needs to be more related to the case and less about the history of Skip and all of that. We want it, yes, but layer it in as it is important too to move the story here and they need to get some answers. Okay, I am not a fan of the bodies being tossed on the porch as I want a little more peril for Skip. I am under the impression that Jimmy could respect Skip as Skip was his Dad's partner. What if the hurdle was that Jimmy took a shot at Skip as to scare him and this got the ball rolling instead of the two bodies? The bodies on the porch leads to them hightailing it out of there and I am not buying that either. Fact is, their reaction slows things and veers off course and it is too late for that. Suggestion: Perhaps, Jimmy, unsure of how he feels for Skip, is not sure he should die yet, so he, knee twitching (a trait when he is scared) and all, just shoots at him and drops a clue or two from the days of coffee in his kitchen. This too will make Skip unmistakably aware that the killer knows him and that he is in the department or connected, and this is why he was spared when he could have easily been killed. And this ups the stakes and ante as now he knows Skip and Skip knows that, but, Skip doesn't know him. At the same time the two bodies are found elsewhere and the stakes rise as now the cops realize they didn't get the right man. Again, the idea of Skip and Chris running to the sleazy motel to cover their tracks is off the visible goal of the story, which is, finding the killer. This means, of course that pages 78-84 need to be replaced by Skip and Chris's reaction to his being shot at. Reacting to who they feel is the killer and Skip thinking now knowing that it is someone that has or had access, in the department.

Trim the last murder, with the Dick out, as there is too much time on it. By this time in the story it is fine if it is just mentioned or a quick shot. Viewers, by now, have more than a good idea how he is working so they will assume a lot and this is good and what we want as to lean our storyline on catching Jimmy.

Elements to look at and add: If Chris is going to be furthering her concept on Solitaire then she should be doing some work on her own to substantiate her expertise. In an earlier scene she sees the cards at the coffee shop and she begins to think on it--this is good but lets progress it with a quick scene of her at home on computer learning the game and comparing it to the murders so far. This will increase audience believability, her credibility and the integrity of her theory. This too will have audiences on board before some of the cops and such and this is a very good tension builder as there is nothing like audiences knowing what characters do not (they yell at the screen, and we want this).

And, make sure Skip and Chris are really taken off the case. Hockman answers to Powers and he is around a lot. They are sure Chris called the papers, so they take them off the case. However, it is only symbolic now as Hockman and Chris are pals, but this will not do. This piece needs the antagonism caused by Jimmy that taking them off the case will produce. Hockman feels bad about it but Powers is there, so he must. Furthermore, we need the obstacles that come with this like the two of them pulling their shifts in other areas of the department, so they are forced to work on this case on their own time. This is going to add the ticking clock and up the stakes as they need to be at this point. Giving them free reign is not an obstacle this late in the game so get the real ones in there.

Okay, assuming that the pages I spoke of will be cut and trimmed, we will have room for the scenes and shots that need to be added as to fill in the story and amp up the structure. Jimmy is a fine antagonist and because he has no real allies or reflection characters, we are going to need to show his intentions, mood changes, attitudes and how they are furthered by his reactions to things. Some of this needs to be associated with Chris and Skip as to advance Jimmy's antagonism, stakes and urgency as well so let's show this. I suggest the following additional scenes or shots:

--From the window Jimmy watches her in the car with Skip. Justifies the call to newspapers later as we see he is getting jealous. Want to see this by his reactions here

-- We need to see that Jimmy is keeping up with his work. Show him at the house with newspaper clippings, police monitor on, perhaps getting apprised of detectives somehow or just figuring out how to slow them and play the game. Seeing Jimmy in private will even the playing field, show his arsenal power and ability to battle back and hint at how sick he really is. May be important half a page shot probably not even dialogue. But, we do want to see discoveries and what he may be up to.

-- Chris at her apartment. Gaining expertise in the game of solitaire at home on her computer and matching it up to the murders. This scene would also serve the dual purpose of her being alone, then too, and of course add even more meaning to the word, "Solitaire." Should be a visual deal where she gets the big "aha" when she realizes that the suspect they are looking for is a card guy.

-- Revise the scene in the coffee shop on page 58. Nothing new or incited between them just an affirmation of what we already know--change it. Have Jimmy do something that really turns her off to him in some regard as to run in line with her getting some clarity on the case. Lets keep in mind he has hots for her in a dysfunctional way so show strange and morbid side of him to her, maybe?

--Hockman takes Skip and Chris off the case for real and creates a huge hurdle to them. Add to the dialogue that they are not only off of this case but assign them some goofy work in the department where they are not together, pending investigation. Now, they have to really work on it in secret as they have been assigned other partners. Get clarity on how and where they will collaborate. Of course, on their off-time they will sneak together as you already write but pursue these wonderful hurdles and make our heroes work here. This means that the...

-- Hockman puts them back on officially. He has egg on his face, he arrested the wrong guy. Chris and Skip have proven they are on to something. Hockman was wrong and he doesn't like that or admitting it—show this and the nice little win for our heroes.

-- Pick up the pace from page 88 on. At this point in the script it is more important to see Jimmy getting sloppy. We probably do not have to go to all crime scenes. Perhaps he is killing faster and with more frequency. He is still in line with cards but his pace is making the city scared. May not need Chris flashback. Point is, to add to and steep up the pressure now. Skip and Chris have to stop this guy now and viewers need to feel it.

Character: CHRIS is very three-dimensional as she is a woman with secrets and this comes through. She has some of the same traits as Jimmy and this endears them. She wants to do well and is not easily led. Clearly, she is her own man in a bra and this is well seen. She needs to be more responsible and her risk is to come out with the fact that she has a child. This is achieved by the end making her journey complete as she is the best drawn character here. I mention that her solitary life be seen more and showing her fighting real love in some regard, but what will really make her an even more identifiable character will be the colors she will show when teamed with Skip. SKIP lives in the past and this is expertly illustrated here. Skip also covers for what he needs and doesn't have by playing the macho tough guy but, he shows who he really is when the going gets tough. All in all he is well written, however, the suggestions of he and Chris as the relationship progresses will still show his human side. When his unwavering refusal to change is slowly diffused, in some regard, he will learn to be more than just a lustful worn out flatfoot. This is up but when expanded upon will really have audiences in his favor and his getting killed will force the writing to deal with Jimmy accordingly.

JEFFERSON and MATTHEWS: As mentioned in the "story" section of this analysis, you are going to want to specify the functions of these two and add to their emotional life by what they want (Matthews) and their history within the department (Jefferson). We touched on this to large degree already so there is plenty there to color with.

JIMMY needs to be opened up more as we go because we don't learn about the nuttiness of him enough until the end. In pictures like this (Line of Fire) the killers want people to know why they are doing it. Jimmy has a vendetta alright but it is unexplained and presumed and this will not do. The answer of course is to have him pose more active antagonism showing who he is and why in the process. With the notes in this analysis and your creative flow and feel you will have no problem showing more of who he is and you will dimensionalize this piece very much.

HOCKMAN is an old world cop and it is clear that he has a soft spot for Skip. They are the same age, class, have the same morals and values, are from the same school of police work. This all reads well and comes through. It is also seen that Hochman favors Skip as seen when he gives them the case. But, what we need to see from him is that he is forced to discipline Skip for the reasons I mentioned in the "structure" part of this analysis. Hochman has to discipline him, take him off the case and make an example of him and it breaks his heart and viewers will want to see this human side of him under pressure. He is well rounded now for his small role but he does have to lay down the law and not like it.

The secondary characters like TRIP, THE OTHER COPS, THE VICTIMS, and CHRIS'S MOM serve their story purpose and do add some of the humor and color to this piece. The police station and coffee house are quite befitting and provide an adequate backdrop for the action and story to fill in.

Working Title

Page 15

Comments

Dialogue: As I mention in the “previous” document for this screenplay the dialogue is very good--a real strong point of the script. I particularly took notice to the use of under-the-line references and subtext this time around. The detectives utilize the devices of implication and double-meaning all the time using sexual innuendo, mockery or generally saying the opposite or an inversion of what is really on their mind and it works. Jimmy too employs double-meanings and entendres as seen when he believes he is wooing Chris, and, when he warns Trip. The effectiveness of the sarcasm, ironic banter, charm and wit in the lines is not only realistic for these people and this world, but, it does much to show character as well. Half sentence answers, back-handed mocking, ridicule and sentence fragments on the page, and, the idea that the characters being spoken to already have an idea of what is going on certainly add to and moves the story. This too is individualistic and reflective of the personality saying them and this is well seen here.

Genre Considerations: “Working Title” falls into the general category of a crime drama but it fits more specifically into the category of, if I may, a psychological crime drama, as the villain (antagonist) is psychotic and does not see the world as it really is. Two things need to happen for the effectiveness of a piece like this. One, that viewers are scared, alarmed and amazed at the actions of the antagonist, but, since he is operating off of a skewed value system and tossed emotions viewers will identify with that too and offer some sympathy--this happens here. And, two, they want the cops to ultimately catch him. By the end of the piece viewers must realize that the villain has to be caught but maybe not so for a good deal of the piece. This means that a drastic yet cumulatively progressing change of actions by the villain tips to the favor of the law. “Working Title” makes this happen by the kidnapping of an innocent child and the antagonist’s killing of policemen. The broad strokes for this narrative are in place. When this script is revised so that the structural elements move and build to the fine climactic scenes, this piece will be ready to send to producers.