SCRIPT COVERAGE

"SPACE ADVENTURE"

**WRITER:** B. SPACEY

**DATE SUBMITTED:** 11/12/2019

**DATE COVERED:** 11/18/2019

**GENRE:** Action/Thriller

**TIME/LOCALE:** Present Day, Houston, Texas

**READER:** GT

**COVERAGE FOR:** P. Agent

**LOGLINE:** A retired *Space Adventure* is pulled back into one last mission that goes horribly wrong when his family is kidnapped by Taiwanese terrorists who threaten to kill his family if he doesn't follow their orders to use a U.S. satellite to attack a Chinese satellite.

**SUMMARY:** SPACE ADVENTURE is a convoluted thriller that tries to pass itself off as a space mission movie. The main character is a derivative, one-note action star who responds to every situation with a quip and every character in the film is shallow and shows no growth throughout the movie. Some of the action scenes are described well and though this film could potentially be a good family-friendly space movie or a good psychological thriller, the weak writing and the ridiculous logic and plotting lead this project to be a long ways away from being ready for production.

 There are far too many confusing plot threads in *X* and the thrills are so artificially delivered that it makes it difficult to have any emotional investment in any of the characters' fates. The “good guys” (the astronaut and his kidnapped family) don't show any growth and are ultimately safe at the film's conclusion mostly due to dumb luck and their antagonists idiocy. The Taiwanese terrorist group and the Chinese military serve as the primary antagonists, but they both act so illogically that the potential threats they pose feels hollow, instead of exciting and functioning to drive the plot forward.

 All of this could be digestible if the main character was interesting and/or likeable, but he mostly comes off as a flat character whose main trait is that of a stereotypical expert who is considered to be a “loose cannon” because of his willingness to do what he thinks is right in any situation. The tensions set up in the film's opening is that he is having trouble deciding between his job and his family, but once the Taiwanese terrorist group forces him to literally choose between his family and his job/country he doesn't really learn anything and isn't forced to show any real ingenuity to solve this problem. Instead, he simply beats up everyone who tries to stop him, nearly causes World War III, and then saves his family by crashing a space shuttle into the plane they are on.

 The other characters don't fair much better and have little personality besides their profession or status (i.e. 'scientist,' 'mother,' 'terrorist,' etc.). The dialogue is generally over-the-top, too on the nose, and suffers from a constant insistence on telling us things rather than showing them to us. Contrary to the rest of the film, the first scene, which shows the astronaut on what he thinks to be his last mission, does a good job of encapsulating his character and showing both his positive and his negative traits. However, nothing is built upon that foundation for the rest of the movie and nearly every scene that follows is an endless escalation of action. There are a few good action scenes (particularly those that take place in space) and some of the more technical dialogue sounds moderately believable, but those few positives don't outweigh the negatives.

The structure once the main plot gets underway is extremely quick and hard to follow. Scenes jump between the space shuttle, the NASA headquarters, the Taiwanese group kidnapping, and (less frequently) the Chinese space/military headquarters. The scenes are extremely short, but instead of making the plotting of the film feel energetic and fast-paced, it merely leads to confusion and a lack of tension. The film has a short couple of opening scenes that explain the main character and his situation, but soon he is magically whisked away and the main two plotlines stretches out for the rest of the film. The film lacks coherent sequences and acts, with the action continually getting bigger and more extreme until the ridiculously over the top climax. The second plotline of the Taiwanese terrorist groups kidnapping of the astronaut's family doesn't really make any sense and is completely lacking emotionally because of the cartoon villainy of the terrorists and the mother and daughter's utter lack of agency or action beyond cowering in fear.

Although lower than in the mid-90s, I still think is a degree of interest when it comes to astronaut-themed movies. However, the generic action/thriller elements and the extreme violence would lead to it only being palpable for a small, male audience, which would be risky with its necessarily high budget. The fairly offensive portrayal of Asians probably doesn't help things either. There is definitely some fun to be had with this movie, but major changes in every aspect would be needed in order for this film to be a success. Development of the protagonist, a greater focus on making it family-friendly, and a simpler, more focused plot would be the first-order changes I would suggest in order to make this film more enjoyable and meaningful to a wider audience.

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|  | **EXCELLENT** | **GOOD** | **FAIR** | **POOR** |
| **CONCEPT** |  |  | **XXX** |  |
| **STORY** |  |  |  | **XXX** |
| **STRUCTURE** |  |  | **XXX** |  |
| **CHARACTER** |  |  |  | **XXX** |
| **DIALOGUE** |  |  | **XXX** |  |

**PROJECT:** Consider

**WRITER:** Pass

**SYNOPSIS**

**KIRK**, a veteran astronaut has gone on his last mission into space. He is now back on Earth trying to figure out what to do next with his life. His wife, **LINDSEY**, wants him to take a desk job so he can be with her and their daughter, **BRIANNA**. Kirk agrees, but is soon whisked away by his old mission commander, **MILTON**, for one last job. Kirk's mission is to help repair a satellite that has moved dangerously close to a Chinese satellite. Little do they know that a Taiwanese terrorist group, led by a man named **CHOW**, has been watching Kirk and plans to kidnap his family in order to force Kirk to sabotage the American satellite, which would lead to a war that could result in Taiwanese independence.

Kirk leaves for the mission, despite his wife's annoyance. The next morning, Chow and his henchmen kidnap Lindsey and Brianna and set up their base in the family's basement.

Kirk meets the rest of the crew for the mission: **JONES**, a hard-nosed commander; **BOB**, a pretty boy pilot; and **HERBERT**, a fresh-faced rookie. The mission begins and Kirk checks his email to find a message from Chow, which shows that his family has been kidnapped and that he must set the American satellite to attack the Chinese satellite or else his family will be killed. Chow also tells Kirk that he has a mole on board Kirk's shuttle. Kirk interrogates his fellow astronauts individually.

After a malfunction forces Kirk to go outside the shuttle for repairs, he comes back into the shuttle and informs Milton that his family is currently being held hostage and that he is being forced to go along with the terrorist plot. Milton is skeptical and thinks that Kirk may be suffering from the after effects of going outside the shuttle. Back at the kidnapping scene, Lindsey tries to escape from the kidnappers, but is unable to. Brianna is also becoming increasingly sick because Chow won't allow her to take her diabetes medicine.

Herbert reveals to Kirk that he is involved with the Taiwanese terrorist group after overhearing Kirk talking to Milton. They begin to fight, which leads to Jones and Bob becoming involved in the fight to stop Kirk. Eventually, Kirk is able to escape out to the satellite with the proper codes, but the other astronauts still don't know that Herbert is a traitor and think Kirk has gone crazy. Back at NASA they are worried that Kirk has lost his mind and set out **RILEY**, an astronaut at another space station, to neutralize Kirk. Riley and Kirk engage in a long fight sequence on the satellite and Kirk wins. Kirk programs the American satellite to attack, while back on Earth, China is readying for war. Back at NASA they have figured out that Kirk is innocent by zooming onto a screen-cap of Kirk's reflection, which shows the pertinent email.

After Chow tells Kirk that he is going to kill his family despite Kirk going along with his plan, Kirk destroys their communication and stops the satellite from attacking. The Chinese call off their attack. Chow and his crew flee from police towards the airport with Lindsey and Brianna as hostages.

Kirk boards the shuttle and manages to kill Herbert. Kirk lands the shuttle at the Houston Airport with the help of NASA. The police pursue Chow and company, but the Taiwanese terrorist group is able to board their jet without interference because of the hostages in tow. Kirk manages to land the shuttle in an extravagant action sequence, with the shuttle eventually crashing into Chow's jet, causing a large explosion and killing all but one of Chow's henchmen. Kirk boards the jet and saves Lindsey and Brianna from the last of Chow's henchmen. Just as Kirk is about to reunite with his family, Chow appears from the shadows with gun in hand. Chow is about to shoot Brianna, but the distraction of sirens allows Kirk to shoot Chow in the head. Brianna is rejuvenated by a paramedic and Kirk walks with his family off into the sunset.

**COMMENTS**

**THEME:**

*Space Adventure* lacks a clear theme, but it seems to be going for something like, “be careful what you wish for,” “you have to do what's right, even if it's hard,” or “don't mess with Kirk.” A clearer theme would go a long way to cleaning up the rest of the problems with the script.

**STORY:**

The story of *Space Adventure* follows a retired astronaut who is pulled back into one last mission that goes horribly wrong when his family is kidnapped by a Taiwanese terrorist group and he is forced to choose between saving his family or causing an international conflict. Eventually, he is able to avert World War III, save his family, and kill the Taiwanese terrorist group.

The story is action-oriented, with new problems continuously springing up and Kirk having to solve them (usually through violence). There is a brief period where the film becomes a bit of a psychological mystery as Kirk tries to figure out who the mole is, but that soon ends when the mole reveals himself instead. The action is over-the-top and rarely connected to the characters.

*Space Adventure*'s premise that a Taiwanese terrorist group would go to such lengths in order to start a tangential war seems far-fetched and China's willingness to start an all-out war seems preposterous. The protagonist astronaut also operates more like James Bond than an astronaut, which leads to his endless heroics feeling flat and artificial.

The third act's crash landing sequence is reminiscent of Con-Air, but probably less believable. Things are wrapped up too neatly and the ending in which the protagonist shoots the antagonist is not particularly original. The final reunion between the protagonist and his family falls flat because the characters and their relationship are too shallow to be emotionally impactful.

**STRUCTURE:**

**ACT I: KIRK**, the veteran astronaut on his final mission, displays his skill and recklessness in restoring a satellite. Six months later, Kirk is back on Earth at an elementary school science fair. He is accompanied by his wife, **LINDSEY**, and their daughter, **BRIANNA**. A mysterious Asian man—who is later revealed to be **CHOW**, the leader of the Taiwanese terrorist group—looms ominously in the background. Back at home, Lindsey scolds Kirk for dreaming of still being an astronaut and he promises to take a desk job instead of returning to work as an astronaut.

**PLOT POINT 1:** Page 14. **MILTON**, the NASA mission commander comes to Kirk's house and tells him he is urgently needed for a mission to repair an American satellite that is hovering near a Chinese satellite. Kirk goes, despite his wife's annoyance. The next morning, Chow and his henchmen kidnap Lindsey and Brianna and set up their base in the basement.

**Act II:** Kirk meets the rest of the crew. **JONES**, a hard-nosed commander; **BOB**, a pretty boy pilot; and **HERBERT**, a fresh-faced rookie. The mission begins and Kirk checks his email to find a message from Chow telling him that his family has been kidnapped and that he must set the American satellite to attack the Chinese satellite or else his family will be killed. Chow hopes this plan will lead to a conflict between the Chinese and the USA, which will in turn lead to Taiwanese independence.

Chow also tells Kirk that he has a mole on board Kirk's shuttle. Kirk becomes increasingly paranoid about his fellow astronauts and accosts them individually.

After a malfunction forces Kirk to go outside the shuttle for repairs, he comes back inside and tells Milton about the terrorist plot. Milton is skeptical. Back at the kidnapping scene, Brianna is becoming increasingly sick because she cannot take her diabetes medicine.

On page 62 Herbert reveals to Kirk that he has been paid off by the Taiwanese terrorist group. They fight while the members of NASA back at mission control try to figure out whether Kirk is crazy or telling the truth. Back on the shuttle, Jones and Bob become involved in the fight to stop Kirk, but eventually Kirk is able to escape out to the satellite. **RILEY**, an astronaut at another space station, is ordered to neutralize Kirk. Riley and Kirk fight on the satellite; Kirk wins. Kirk programs the American satellite to attack, while back on Earth, China is sending out jets and readying missiles for war. Back at NASA they have figured out that Kirk is innocent.

**PLOT POINT II:** Page 89. After Chow tells Kirk that he is going to kill his family, Kirk destroys their communication and stops the satellite from attacking. The Chinese call off their attack. Chow and his crew flee from police towards the airport with Lindsey and Brianna as hostages.

**ACT III:** Kirk boards the shuttle and manages to kill Herbert. Kirk is forced to manually land the shuttle at the Houston Airport. The police pursue Chow and company, but the Taiwanese terrorist group is able to board their jet without interference. Kirk manages to land the shuttle, which eventually crashes into Chow's jet, causing a large explosion and killing all but one of Chow's henchmen. Kirk boards the jet and saves Lindsey and Brianna from the last of Chow's henchmen. Kirk reunites with his family, but Chow appears from the shadow with gun in hand. Chow is about to shoot Brianna, but is distracted by sirens and Kirk is able to shoot him in the head. Brianna is rejuvenated by a paramedic and Kirk walks with his family off into the sunset.

**PACE:** The story moves very quickly, jumping constantly between the four different settings. Scenes are driven by confusing logical leaps and guns/violence. Solutions to insurmountable problems simply conveniently appear, instead of being creatively solved by Kirk, and violence is generally the answer.

**CHARACTERS:**

**KIRK**, a newly retired astronaut who is torn between his job and his family, always quick with a one-liner, skilled but reckless

**LINDSEY,** Kirk's wife, angry at Kirk for going back on another mission

**MILTON**, veteran NASA mission control director, believes in Kirk

**CHOW**, antagonist, leader of the Taiwanese terrorist plot, ruthless

**BRIANNA,** Kirk's daughter, diabetic

**HERBERT**, young astronaut on Kirk's mission, mole for the Taiwanese group, greedy

**JONES**, veteran astronaut, commander on Kirk's mission, hard-nosed and authoritative

**BOB**, pilot astronaut on Kirk's mission, pretty boy

**FEW**, tech expert for the Taiwanese terrorist group

**HOBO,** astronaut who is tasked with neutralizing Kirk

**CRAM**, U.S. Defense Secretary

**BOLTON**¸ Air Force General

**FARGOZ,** commander of Chinese military space operations

**LANG**, One of Chow's henchmen

**WU,** Another of Chow's henchmen

**TED,** Milton's assistant, helps prove Kirk's innocence

**BAI**, Taiwanese mole working within NASA

**DIALOGUE:** Characters lack their own voices and either talk in a generic approximation of their profession or issue “witty” quips and comebacks. The dialogue is too often used to explain what is happening and characters directly explain their motivation and thoughts. Kirk, in particular, only speaks in short quips that are often incongruent with the situation (e.g. Kirk, speaking to Chow who is currently holding his family hostage at gun point: “With a face like that you should stick to radio,” or “Just what space needs. More junk,” after (presumably) killing fellow astronaut, Riley). In general, dialogue doesn't seem realistic.

**WRITING ABILITY:** The writer describes action fairly well, although some of the action scenes could use clearer description. The writing is short, choppy, and action-oriented, which is generally easy to read and understand.

However, structurally and logically the writing needs improvement. The constant quick jumps between four settings leads to confusion and a lack of tension in individual scenes. This structure also leads to problems being solved in illogical or uninteresting ways (e.g. Tom, Milton's assistant, proving Kirk's innocence rather than Kirk doing so). Timing of various events also doesn't seem to make a great deal of sense and the believability of the action sequences stretches the imagination, even for an action movie.

Also, character motivation and actions are often illogical. I'm not particularly sure why Herbert chooses to reveal himself as the mole to Kirk, for instance. And no part of the Taiwanese terrorist group's plan makes sense: the overall plan, their kidnapping, keeping Lindsey and Brianna alive, trying to escape on a jet, etc.

There is no character development and none of the characters grow, creatively solve problems, or learn anything. The ending is also wrapped up in an extremely quick and preposterous fashion.

**MARKETABILITY/TIMELINESS/AUDIENCE:**

1. A space film could have a wide appeal for both kids and adult males, but the over-the-top violence would severely limit the film's appeal.
2. Foul language and graphic violence would lead *Space Adventure* to receive an “R” rating, but both could be toned down to a “PG-13” level without negatively influencing the story.
3. The high budget for this film and the derivative nature of its plot would make this film a hard sell. The offensive portrayal of Asians and shallow story also severely limit its appeal. It would require a simplification in plot and a deepening of characters to be of interest to a studio.

**IF THIS WAS MY SCRIPT I’D:**

1. Simplify the plot and focus on a more manageable story. If the aim is make it more family-friendly I would remove the terrorist plot and show more scenes of Kirk with his family before the mission. Make it a bigger choice when he goes back to do that one last mission and create tension through more natural problems that arise from the dangers of working in outer space. Kirk can communicate with his family throughout the mission, which will deepen their relationship and increase the suspense and drama when Kirk is in danger.
2. If the aim is to stick with the terrorist plot/thriller tone, then increase the psychological paranoia elements, make the whose-the-mole element more important/interesting, and create the conflict out of the fact that Kirk desperately needs to achieve his goal, but nobody believes him. This would make the terrorist plot more believable (because nobody but Kirk believes it) and the audience could be further engaged in the story because they too aren't sure whether Kirk is crazy or right. This tone would also play well with the claustrophobic nature of being up in a space shuttle.
3. Make Kirk more dynamic. He is basically a perfect alpha male in the current script. Give him more weaknesses, show him being fearful and unsure of his actions. Make him less of an action star and more of a normal man thrown into a terrible situation. Have him creatively solve problems, rather than just winning through violence. Reveal something in his past that connects him with the terrorist plot or makes him the ideal candidate to be used for it (i.e. more than just, “he's a family man”). Have him show some growth or learn something that helps him ultimately win out in the end. Lose the constant quips. It works if he is an alcoholic asshole, but it seems strange that this family man would take so much pleasure in killing people.
4. Cut the kidnapping plot or make Lindsey and Brianna more dynamic characters. They should at least be able to show some initiative or growth beyond simply trying to run away. Show them reasoning or talking to the terrorists, which could give both groups more depth. Make Lindsey more than a stereotypical “wet blanket” and show why she is a good person beyond her being pretty. Have her take action or help Kirk save them in some way.
5. Cut the NASA scenes and the Chinese military scenes. They are uninteresting and don't add anything besides explaining to the audience what is happening. Kirk's innocence being proven by a minor character like Milton's assistant isn't exciting.
6. Slow down the pacing and let some scenes breathe. Space is a quiet, slow place. Reflect that in the film. This will make the more intense/action scenes more exciting, suspenseful, and meaningful. This will also help the dialogue be less explanatory and filled with one-liners. Space can be scary and tension-filled, but the current action feels like a normal action movie pushed up into space. Exploit the fact that Kirk is up there with no one else on his side and with little room to hide/maneuver.
7. Deepen Chow and his gang. Make them less diabolically evil. Just because his parents were killed by the Chinese doesn't mean his ludicrous plan makes sense. Show him having some sympathy for what he is doing to Kirk and his family, but then have him pull back as he remembers what is at stake. Create conflict between Chow and his compatriots. Have some question his decisions or whether they should go through with the plan. Make Chow more tragic and less evil. Or if he stays evil, have Kirk in direct opposition with Chow more often. Also, don't have Chow kill Kirk's dog. It's audience-upsetting, gross, and probably offensive to a couple different demographics.

8. Improve the logic across the board. The main terrorist plot is preposterous and Herbert's reveal as the mole/the resulting fight with Kirk just seem like an excuse to have a fight scene. Improving the underlying logic behind actions/events would help improve character motivation, actions, and audience attachment. These are smart people who should behave intelligently unless pushed into making emotional decisions for one reason or another. If the goal is to keep the general terrorist/kidnapping plot I would strip the story down to the space scenes, look at them closely, and make sure things follow a logical and interesting path.