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TITLE: Arizona Dreamin'

AUTHOR: B. Writer

GENRE: Comedy / Action

ANALYST: GT

PERIOD: Present Day

LOCALE: Mexico / U.S.

DATE: 5/5/2019

LOGLINE: It's a dream come true when Mexican drug thug Juan takes an interest in producing Jerry' screenplay, but the production soon turns deadly..

Excellent Good Fair Poor

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| Structure | XX |  |  |  |
| Plot |  | XX |  |  |
| Dialogue |  | XX |  |  |
| Character | XX |  |  |  |
| Concept |  | XX |  |  |

Recommend Consider Pass

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Script |  | XX |  |
| Writer | XX |  |  |

**SYNOPSIS:**

JERRY, a screenwriter and BARRY, an award-winning actor, flee for their lives in the Mexican desert, chased by Mexican drug lord JUAN and his armed men.

Flashback to the beginning: we learn that down-on-his-luck screenwriter Jerry has messed up his big chance, and he feels so low he tries to kill himself.

Friend BIFF turns up at the opportune moment to announce that he's found someone who wants to make Jerry's movie. After reminding Jerry that he wants to succeed at all costs, Jerry reluctantly gets in the vehicle with the Mexicans.

At Juan's luxurious home, Jerry crosses paths with the beautiful HERMIONE. His bliss soon turns to horror when he discovers Juan is a psychopath who plans to kidnap the leading actors for the film.

Terrified actors arrive, but Barry ends up enjoying the experience after falling in love with Jerry' script. The filming begins, and the actors all do as they're told, especially after witnessing Juan ruthlessly killing five men.

Jerry is torn between his love for the filmmaking process and Hermione, and the voice of reason, which ends up coming from a terrified Al. Desperate to leave, Al makes an attempt at escape only to be killed.

Jerry only really realizes just how trapped he is after Hermione makes him aware. The filming ends, and all that is left is the wrap party, after which Juan will have no need for any of them.

Barry comes up with a plan to run away disguised as women, and they succeed after having managed to fool the fat and stupid guard CARLO. They run and hide in the desert.

Juan soon realizes what's happened and after killing the remaining actors goes after Jerry and Barry. Jerry hides in a hole he's dug but Barry is caught and tortured.

Hermione searches for Jerry, and is relieved to find Barry dead and not him. Brother Juan is furious with her for loving Jerry and this makes him more determined to go into the mountains after him.

In the mountains, Jerry goes under a transformation, becoming one with the land and attracting the support of wolves. He concocts some explosives from materials he finds.

Jerry and Juan battle to the death. Hermione arrives and keeps Juan from dealing a fatal blow to Jerry. Wild wolves descend on Juan to finish him off. Hermione and Jerry ride off.

At an awards ceremony, various cast members receive awards; the film, as well as the film within the film, was all just a film.

**COMMENTS:**

With a concept revolving around a filmmaker's attempt to make a movie for a dangerous Mexican cartel leader, ARIZONA DREAMIN' promises to be a unique and entertaining story, quite different from other "behind-the-scene" movies. However, with a jumbled narrative and uneven tone, the script still needs a lot of work.

The plot, when boiled down to its basics, is quite promising: Jerry, a struggling filmmaker in Hollywood, is given a chance to turn one of his scripts into a movie with the "help" of Mexican cartel boss Juan Blanco, but it soon turns into a hostage situation where Jerry scrambles to finish the movie to save his life.

The main problem with the script is that, despite this fairly straightforward plot, the narrative isn't well-defined enough to move the story forward. The script has too many scenes with very little tension in them, or do not contribute to the overall conflict (all the scenes of Conrad Benjamin III performing Hamlet, for example), which slows down the entire script.

In a nutshell, the tone of the script keeps changing, the protagonist is unsympathetic, there are parts of the piece that are overdramatic, and the ending is unfulfilling.

But another reason the script reads as a bit all over the place is the fact that it never makes it explicit what Juan's threat toward Jerry and the cast is (is he going to kill them? Keep them prisoners forever?) so the stakes aren't clear enough. This also means that Jerry doesn't have a clear plan of action: how is he planning to escape? Does he want to escape at all? Is he trying to make the movie just to mollify Juan, or is he doing the best that he can for his art? This leads to a lack of direction in the plot development, making it rather clunky.

While there are comedic moments to this piece, Juan is too violent and dangerous. The kidnappings are harsh, but still darkly funny. Juan killing a bunch of his crew isn't humorous in any way. This takes away from the tone of the piece.

The sequence that follows, with Jonathan unable to act, could be amusing, if the massacre hadn't just happened. Juan killing the dog is way over the top. This gives the script a very ambiguous tone.

It's a bit coincidental that Jerry finds all the ingredients he finds and that he knows how to put them together to make gunpowder. This and his sudden transformation into a warrior who can make wolves walk away with their tails between their legs are extremely hard to buy. If they're intended to be over the top for the sake of humor, they don't come across that way.

The surprise ending that this was all a movie is a bit campy and predictable. It's not an original concept and it defeats the whole purpose of the story, since it was all just a movie anyway.

Also contributing to the script's muddled feel is that at times, it is not clear what genre it's meant to be. The opening scenes certainly have a comedic tone, but as the story progresses, it becomes more of a thriller, only to become slightly surreal toward the ending. It could certainly work as a comedy thriller or a spoof (especially with all the surrealist elements in the third act such as Jerry' battle with the wolves), but both the humor and the suspense need to be amped up a lot more and be consistent throughout the script.

In terms of characterization, the script could use more focus as well. Jerry is a sympathetic and identifiable protagonist, but as mentioned above, his character suffers from the script's lack of direction. He doesn't have a clear-cut, tangible goal, which may make it difficult for the audience to follow him on his journey. His character arc could also be clearer as well: does he start out as a man willing to sell his soul to the Devil just to get his movie made, and end up learning his lesson?

To wit, Jerry seems intended to be the protagonist, but what he should be striving for: getting himself and his cast free from Juan, he doesn't have any interest in.

Instead, all he cares about is getting his film made. This makes his goal one that the audience isn't going to be able to get behind. What's at stake for him if he doesn't make his film is he won't have a career. Considering what else is happening in this story, that's extremely trivial.

Instead of the stakes of "If he doesn't finish the film, he won't have a career," a more dramatic, more interesting situation would be "If he doesn't finish the film, he dies. Or someone he loves will die. Or his dog."

While this should be a story about Jerry trying to heroically free his friend and his kidnapped cast against extreme odds, that's not the story that's being told here.

This gives much of the script very little conflict, despite the extreme circumstances and violence. Until the end, Jerry simply wants to make his movie and he's making his movie.

When Jerry tries to kill himself, it's marginally comical. But ultimately, it just makes Jerry come off as weak, and uninteresting.

The dialogue is a bit flat and over the top, but it works for a zany comedy. However, since much of this script gets too serious to be a zany comedy, the dialogue sometimes feels out of place.

Juan's dialogue is especially unclear. At times he seems intended to be comical because he's so over the top, but at other times, he seems intended to be menacing.

For example, on p. 102, Juan says: "Who are you?! Geronimo!? You think I can't see the bloody tracks?! Huh?! Conjo! Move!" This could be intended to be humorous, but given what Juan has done and is doing, a comedic moment feels out of place.

The rest of the cast is serviceable to the plot, but they could be more well-rounded. Their relationships with each other and with Jerry would go a long way in making the characters more memorable and believable, but right now it's either all on the surface (such as the relationships between Jerry and Barry Conrad, or between Jerry and Al, while a lot of interesting parallels and contrasts could be drawn from them) or nearly non-existent. Juan himself could also be more effective as an antagonist, as he comes off as a one-dimensional psychopath, without any depth to his character.

In conclusion, there is a good idea behind the concept this screenplay, but it currently suffers most from an unfocused execution. The script needs to decide if it wants to tell a dramatic story (think Sunset Boulevard) or a comedic one (think Bowfinger), in order to appeal to the audience.