



INDUSTRIAL SCRIPTS SAMPLE SCRIPT REPORT

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PROJECT TITLE: CELEBRITY WEDDING
WRITER: Harry Potter
MAIN GENRE: Drama
SUB-GENRE: Thriller
SETTING: __, Glasgow
PERIOD: __
BUDGET: Low
PAGE LENGTH: 119
FORMAT: Feature
LOGLINE: The ____ have their ____ shattered by a ____ – a ____ whose ____ and ____ gives way to ____ and ____ – but is everything as it seems?
COMPARABLE TITLES: SIDE EFFECTS, NOTES ON A SCANDAL, LES DIABOLIQUES, THE WINGS OF THE DOVE
REPORT DATE: 19.01.2014

Project Overview:

CELEBRITY WEDDING is a slow-burn script, heavy on set-up and foreshadowing, teasing the audience with trickles of mystery, slowly planting its clues to pay-off in the final act. Once the truth is uncovered, CELEBRITY WEDDING contains a gem of an idea – however, the script expression presently sits squarely between drama and thriller, leaving the audience uncertain as to the experience and limiting the quality of the action, condensing most of the more potent plot elements into the final act. The script plays with a multi-protagonist model, not settling on its ____, – until that explosive final act. The script feels like a thriller which starts one act too late – ____ turned upside down and causing ____ at the end of the second act, where structurally the optimal points would either be at the end of the first act or at the mid-point. This leaves the audience with an uneasy feel during

those first two acts – what is the story? A drama about _____? A soap-opera about the _____? Enough mystery is invoked early to give a sense that all is not as it seems (finding _____, _____ reaction to _____, _____ words at the _____, the unexplained _____ connection) but the fact that no onscreen characters are _____ that sense of _____ gives the work a frustrating feel – we know a mystery-thriller is on the cards, and are perhaps trying to piece that puzzle together, but must wait for the characters to catch up with our suspicions. That overuse of dramatic irony (audience feeling more clued in and ahead of _____ in terms of information received) contradicts the requirements of a mystery, in which we ideally investigate and have suspicions alongside the detective energy. A quality idea at its core, but storytelling and structure require significant reconfiguration to maximise potential of the premise.

Notes:

PREMISE, GENRE & MARKET POSITIONING

As alluded to in the overview, CELEBRITY WEDDING presently feels like it has a major dichotomy between its premise and its expression, which has ramifications on genre expectations and market positioning.

All is not as it seems in CELEBRITY WEDDING – _____ (referred to as _____ in notes in keeping with the majority of the script, as opposed to the truth of _____) arrives in _____ with a _____, living under a _____, appropriating a _____ and an _____. Once _____ and _____ cotton _____, they then hatch _____ to turn _____ into a _____ feeding _____ for attention into a _____. Three of the _____ main players (_____ and _____ as secondary and tertiary level characters) harbour massive _____. _____ herself even has _____ on the door, a _____ with _____ which she wishes to keep _____. These are the hallmarks of mystery and thriller.

That premise itself – the ‘true’ or ‘objective’ story which appears from under the shadow of a false subjective mask – is a cracker, and it is clear to see why the writer has been attracted to the material. _____ lends itself fabulously to the mystery format – a character clearly presenting a _____ for others to _____. That could lead to a fairly simple unmasking as one character begins to suspect the story or symptoms presented are not true – but the true quality comes in feeding that spark of an idea into something more complex, spinning a web around the fruitful material. CELEBRITY WEDDING manages this leap with aplomb, in the greedy _____ parlaying a sick one-time _____ with a _____ awaiting _____ into an opportunity to _____ their

own _____. This gives multiple layers, deep story cracks, for a protagonist to investigate.

Investigation is the key word in the realm of mysteries and thrillers, and should be the core plot mechanism driving the feature. It is important to comprehend the connection between story type and the resultant plot mechanisms, and some examples may shine a light on the present problems with CELEBRITY WEDDING's expression.

Escape, Quest, Pursuit, Fish-out-of-Water, Romance, Temptation, Rags to Riches, Underdog, The Riddle – there are a plethora of basic story types which each come with certain plot expectations (story being the core idea, plot being the way it is expressed). For instance, in a Romance we might expect the protagonist to encounter the object-of-affection sometime during the first act, such that the second act revolves around the courtship dance, raising the dramatic question (DQ) of 'Will they get or stay together?', to which we receive the answer in the third act (HOW TO LOSE A GUY IN TEN DAYS, ANNIE HALL, ABOUT TIME). Act one raising a question, Act two investigating the question, Act three delivering an answer to that question. The dramatic question is tied deeply to the story type and plot. For instance, an Escape film requires the protagonists to be locked away in some fashion, such that we establish the parameters of their confinement and spend most of their story following escape attempts – the dramatic question being 'Can they escape?' and the plot engine being hatching plans and making escape attempts (THE GREAT ESCAPE).

Mysteries, thrillers and riddles have an established pattern whereby protagonists become aware that the world around them is not entirely as it seems and they must venture forth to find the answers. The dramatic question being 'What is the truth?' and the plot engine being the act of investigation. There is a broad spectrum of investigator – from the paid professionals such as Jake Gittes in CHINATOWN to the hybrid reporters of THE RING or ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN (who are used to finding the truth, but get in over their heads) down to amateur investigators who are driven the find answers due to the necessity of their situation – NORTH BY NORTHWEST, REAR WINDOW (Hitchcock was a big fan of this model) and mystery-horrors such as THE WOMAN IN BLACK or MAMA. _____ is our _____, who will eventually look into _____ due to being tasked with carrying out _____.

So we have a premise with a _____ set of _____ to _____ and an _____ with a _____ investment in both the _____ and the _____ of the will – and yet we must wait until _____ (with the _____ of _____ and _____) before

_____ world is sufficiently _____ in order for her to _____ – condensing what many would consider to be the main plot engine _____ into the final act. This means the previous material has ambiguity as to the premise and genre.

The final act _____ is a well-established _____ – _____ THE SIXTH SENSE and FIGHT CLUB among the most successful recent examples. Perhaps most apposite is the stunner in THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION. It is worth examining the story type before and after the _____ to see why late story _____ can work – and why CELEBRITY WEDDING perhaps falls down in its current expression.

THE SIXTH SENSE is a mystery both before and after the reveal that the doctor is actually a ghost. The doctor is investigating whether or not the young boy can see dead people, or whether he is suffering illness. The doctor goes looking for an answer (the audience are hooked by the efforts to establish the truth surrounding the boy's abilities, and whether a patient from the doctor's past also suffered the same condition) but the answer he finds – the twist – is not the one he expected. With or without the twist, THE SIXTH SENSE is an engaging mystery over a child's abilities and a doctor trying to atone for the past. Likewise in FIGHT CLUB the core plot revolves around a social-revolution in which an Ikea-generation drone experiences a spiritual awakening and is pushed to the limits in taking new actions. Regardless of whether or not we find out that he is in fact Tyler Durden and is suffering through a split-personality (he was never happy with his own existence and wanted to upset the apple cart), the preceding material is viable in and of itself as a thriller (how far will they go? Can they change society? Is there a different way to live?) – the twist is what elevates the material to greatness. Similarly THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION is a captivating drama about the power of the human spirit to maintain hope against adversity, for those who have lost hope to once more believe, and in the value of friendship. It is a prison drama elevated by a twist escape which makes us re-examine the material. It is not an escape film (as per THE GREAT ESCAPE) in which plans are constantly discussed, tensions raised as to whether the protagonist will make it through the tunnel – it is a prison drama. And it works solely as a prison drama, _____ or no _____ – again, the memorable ingredient which elevates it to one of the modern greats.

CELEBRITY WEDDING suffers from a dichotomy between its _____ and post-_____ material, such that the current expression does not feel viable. Before the _____, we experience perhaps a drama about the difficulty in dealing with _____ and how a _____ will draw people together (_____ forgiving

_____ outburst regarding _____ on p34, or _____ going from _____ to devoted _____, or the _____ bringing _____ and _____ together – exhibiting a similarly uplifting trait to THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION despite _____ decline). Maybe it is a multi-strand soap-opera, similar to the TV series TEACHERS in which we take a Robert Altman-esque broad look at a community, with _____ arrival as the catalyst point. Of course, as mentioned, elements of mystery are being dropped along the way – _____, an unexplained _____ in _____ who we presume will have a direct connection to _____, hints about _____ not feeling _____. But are there enough elements of mystery for the script to be marketed as a mystery thriller?

This is the key when examining the link from premise to plot to genre to market positioning – how does the premise translate to the image presented to the public? In those aforementioned third act _____ films, the _____ material formed the lynchpin of the audience positioning campaigns; a ghost story, a socio-political drama and a prison drama. The _____ then embellish without fundamentally changing genre; the engines of investigating ghostly mystery, causing social upheaval, and finding camaraderie in prison were presented to the public to entice them into the cinema in the first place.

How would CELEBRITY WEDDING be presented to the public? As a drama about _____? As a drama about _____? Who is the _____ of the first two acts? What is the problem they are trying to deal with, what actions do they take? Imagine that trailer playing at the cinema – where does it cut off as it lays its teaser of a story out? Is it promising an insight into human nature as characters _____ – is it designed as a complete ‘rug from under the feet’ piece? Are we lead to believe that _____ is in fact the _____? Or is it _____ story, managing _____, a _____ and _____ against a backdrop of _____? These are less commercially appealing prospects to present to an audience, as drama does not sell as well as mystery and thriller.

Likely, it would not present a drama – it would present as a mystery. The film would likely be shot through with dark motifs and noir-ish cinematography, hinting that all is not as it seems. Thus, the main body of the story needs to chime with the message delivered to prospective cinema-goers. Mysteries wherein the protagonist is not aware of anything amiss, or is not under attack, are likely failed mysteries. Isolating _____ plot before the journey to _____ shows a lack of goal and necessity. She has elements of _____ (becoming embroiled with _____) and drama (_____ with a major _____ life in the shape of _____ and _____), but no pressingly strong goals. _____ is not a complete loose cannon such that the bulk of _____ story is dealing with her _____ new _____ (FATAL ATTRACTION, THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE).

In the interim, we are left without clear plot direction, and the plot that is present does not fit with the plot of the third act (as mentioned before, those late ___ films have post ___ material in keeping with ___ material, even in THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION where re-uniting the friendship becomes the driving aim).

Thus, CELEBRITY WEDDING feels stuck between expressions with likely two broad approaches available for future drafts; either re-cast itself as a genuine thriller which sees greater investigation by a protagonist figure trying to work out the truth of the situation, or else it would need to become a truly great drama about ___ plight and how ___ and the community cope with her ___, in order to tell a satisfying story ___ and be capable of being sold as a drama which completely ___ everybody when the ___ becomes known. There is perhaps room to forgive a drama which turns into a thriller, so long as the drama is of such high quality that it could stand alone without the ___ – as with those previous examples, and even THE USUAL SUSPECTS, CHINATOWN or THE CRYING GAME.

Perhaps indicative of an early draft, the first two acts do not stand-up as strong drama, with their function mostly built around setting up clues to pay-off later on. This is the difference between material which is powerful in and of its own right, and material which is fortified and given its true power in retrospect. Thus the script operates with a constantly high level of exposition but not a high level of dramatisation. Many scenes are not dramatically viable in their own right, and serve as progress markers and delivery systems for information. For instance, where ___ finds the ___ (p18) the accompanying material is devoid of true goals (though it does provide a nice juxtaposition between the ___ and a hint that all is not ___). Likewise, where we have had a fantastic ___ blurting out ___ (p34), we should be following up with a high level of dramatisation between ___ and ___ – but instead no ___ arises, and ___ accompanies ___ to the ___ (p38) – the scene delivers information but not dramatisation (characters with opposing goals coming up ___ each other). Drip, drip, setting up the fantastic ___, but not so viable as stand-alone material to draw an audience in and keep them hooked. Similarly later we will see some small work regarding ___ trying to deny ___ (p70) but no major conflagration over the nature of ___ care, or the emotional effect it is having on the characters. Is the interim drama material strong enough to delay the switch to ___? Presently it feels not, and the script then feels structurally uneven and undecided in terms of genre.

Genre expectations are crucial elements in how producers and audiences assess material.

For drama to hold up, we will need a much stronger insight into the character's inner emotional worlds (giving greater credence to the idea of _____). Some of the more powerful emotional material comes when we see into their psyches; the small moment of _____ between _____ and _____ at the _____ ("_____ " p78) for instance.

Could we see _____ tempted by other _____ during _____, his _____ put to the challenge? Could we see into _____ and _____ difficulties as the _____ brings up reminders of their _____ (p42)? How _____ perhaps feels some _____ at _____, doubly so when the _____ strikes (giving her an insight into _____ need for attention when she later finds out _____)? Complex emotional balancing acts mark out quality drama, characters forced into deeply difficult dilemmas which test the core of their being and require tough decisive action. _____ at chastising _____ for years, when eventually in the thick of it, _____ seemingly comes through as _____? _____ deciding to give _____ a fantastic _____ and _____, hit by the difficulty simultaneously finding _____ at the same time. It is this elevation of dramatic material, such that it could stand-alone, which must be seen if the present arrangement is to be kept in future drafts. Compelling drama which diverts our attention from all of the clues and set-ups. Presently, our eyes are mostly on those mystery elements – suspicious behaviours, a character who has _____, unexplained _____. We are looking at mystery, but the onscreen characters _____. Having a final act _____ without much of a prior _____ requires trying to hide the _____ as much as is possible – presently the script sees mystery information laid out, but the characters (i.e. protagonist _____) behave like they are in a drama.

From the mystery-thriller perspective, there are many angles and genre conventions unused, simply because the script does not have sufficient room in that third act to run through the full range of story possibilities – from double-crossings and betrayals, to bargains and negotiations, the balancing of _____ information, lies about various parties involvements, an onion-skin layer-by-layer understanding of the bigger picture such that incomplete evidence leads to erroneous conclusions (we might think _____ is _____ it, before thinking _____ is acting _____ was acting _____ and _____ fooled, before finding out about _____ – thus taking _____ and the audience through a longer line of investigation).

SIDE EFFECTS is likely the strongest direct comparison piece, and should be viewed as research material, especially since it spins so heavily on a mid-plot _____, as CELEBRITY WEDDING likely needs to, and it is a _____ regarding the nature of a _____. Crucially, the _____ at the centre of SIDE EFFECTS (Jude Law) is under duress in the build-up to revealing the _____ – he is investigating whether or not his _____ has been _____ from a _____ he _____, and is thus chasing a very concrete goal of his own – finding out the _____, and clearing his _____. The film is marketed as a mystery-thriller because the protagonist spends the whole time trying to find out the truth – even if the truth he uncovers is not the one he suspected.

THEME & SETTING

With a title spinning around the location (akin to CHINATOWN) it is important to assess theme and setting together.

The script gives a nice ironic use to CELEBRITY WEDDING as a _____ – the _____ has a reputation of being a _____ or _____, and for some an _____ there is a trip to somewhere they will _____ (_____ references the image of the _____ “I was _____” p2). Though it’s the last thing on _____ mind when _____ arrives, this is eventually what will happen to _____ – _____ has unwittingly stumbled _____. Big picture ironies such as these are deeply satisfying for audiences and help draw them into the picture.

There is potential for greater work to be done juxtaposing _____ to the _____ many of the population will experience – how _____ feels in such an environment, the irony of her situation etc. The location can then drive plot elements – for instance, if there is no _____ or _____ available, but only a spot in a _____ – then we see plot ramifications coming from the choice of location.

The location is used fleetingly throughout – reference to the walk to _____ (p51, p53, p58), or the _____ (p103) – giving some shape to the story, but perhaps not to the extent we would expect when the film is titled CELEBRITY WEDDING. What does CELEBRITY WEDDING represent? _____?

Giving _____? Stasis? A rich _____? What is the ramification for the characters who remain in _____? We see the _____ of _____ who have little to do in _____ (_____ p1) and there could perhaps be some talk of the _____, what they plan to do when they leave _____ – does everybody want out of _____? Does that pass comment on _____ who have stayed – that they lack ambition? That their lives are on hold? That they are already _____ and need to find reasons _____? The connection between location and psychology of the

characters should be as strong as possible, almost to bring the town alive as a character. What impact does it have on the characters? How do they view the town? How does their perspective change after ____ enters their lives? Many people never explore their own back-yard until they have guests visiting – only then do they look at what they have with new eyes. There is a catalyst character in____, and a group of characters who have fallen into_____.

Thematically, there is some work built around deception, perception and trust as is the norm with mystery-thrillers, perhaps summed up in the ‘appearances can be deceptive’ mantra; the friendship of ____ and ____ goes through several phases, from ____ to ____ to_____ – and all the way round to _____. Obviously, perceptions of _____ change repeatedly throughout the script, from joyful breath of fresh air, to _____ character potentially harbouring_____, to source of empathy as she____, to an image of a charlatan before eventually compassion for her_____.

However, though these areas can be tough to assess, it does not feel that a true thematic question is assessed. For instance, in CHINATOWN we see a dramatic question of plot concerning finding the truth behind a conspiracy and the identity of a killer, combined with a thematic question of ‘Does money and power win out over justice?’. Thus, as the detective looks to solve the objective plot mystery, he is also, by proxy, investigating deeper truths about the nature of the world – will he, as the torch of truth and justice win out, or is the world a dark place in which the rich and powerful will get away with murder? Back and forth the dramatic and thematic questions go, sitting hand in hand, finding equal debate, until concluded in the final act.

Where ____ lacks proactive steps in those first two acts, it is difficult to find theme in the events. ‘Is it true that _____ us?’ as the town rally. ‘Can you ever trust _____?’ might perhaps come through a little more if ____ doubted what was going on and acted as a voice of dissent. How do the characters actions test a sentiment about the world? Beyond having a quality premise which will grip audiences, what does the script, if anything, want to say about the world? There can be a fine line between preaching and dramatising – but done well, stitched into each scene like thread into a garment, theme can be the additional ingredient which elevates stories into being memorable for the ages. ‘Is hope enough to get through life?’ THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION asks – and constantly, Andy and Red’s hope is put to the test before we receive the resounding conclusion in the third act – yes, hope can get you through life – and thus the tagline ‘Fear can hold you prisoner, hope can set you free’. Whether dark (CHINATOWN concluding that money and power rule the world) or light (THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION

concluding that salvation lies in hope) strong thematic work will lift CELEBRITY WEDDING.

'Does true _____?' might be an angle of investigation as _____ and _____ become much closer and _____ through _____ – a truly powerful conclusion for _____ to still consider _____ a great _____ despite the _____. Perhaps if _____ has been burned by a previous _____ or _____ then trust might be the centre of theme 'In life, can you only trust yourself?' as _____ struggles to put faith in a potential _____ with _____, to believe _____ could act in decent fashion _____, or that _____ is all she says she is (perhaps _____ is far more sceptical of her when she _____). Often, we see a connection between a character flaw and the theme, as the flaw becomes the crux of the subjective character journey in the second half of the script (characters usually tackle objective problems in the first half, before realising that they need to change and go through a process of introspection and identifying their flaws and realising they can only be victorious in life if they change, before enacting that change in the final act as they prove their change and the theme of the story).

Scripts which are strongly plot-driven perhaps require less solid thematic work (AMERICAN BEAUTY for instance lives and dies on the power of themes and motifs as the plot is fairly simple dysfunctional family material – Lester goes through an almost Buddhist like ascendancy to give up a connection to desire), and if pushed down pure thriller lines then CELEBRITY WEDDING likely get by on the nuances of plot. Writers do not always know theme early in the drafting process, but they often find it along the way. What emotional character experiences chime with the writer? What does _____ journey embody?

CHARACTERISATION

One of the upshots of the present structure is that it is difficult to define the central protagonist, their dramatic question which propels the script, and the thematic question which accompanies their journey. Who is the script about? What is the fundamental story experience driving CELEBRITY WEDDING? A multi-strand about a _____? Or a single-protagonist piece about a _____ who is trying to _____, but uncovers new information, suspects all _____?

The delayed _____ currently makes this an ensemble piece – the group (as perhaps indicated by a _____) and the impact of _____. This is a little

disingenuous as it is _____ who opens the script, _____ who receives the first big clue that all is _____ with _____, _____ who _____ of confidentiality due to _____ emotions (blurting regarding _____) _____ who accompanies _____ into the _____, and _____ who is entrusted with carrying out _____ – posting _____ (p74) and taking the _____ (p73). _____ uncovers the _____ about the _____ and thus in turn the _____. _____ seems like a protagonist in the first and third acts, but not in the interim, as really there is little _____ must do whilst _____ gradually succumbs to _____ – _____ subplot with _____ progresses where a true protagonist should be mired in their mainplot.

_____ characterisation perhaps suffers when she does not react to _____ – opportunities to pursue a line of _____ or act. Where she sees _____ (p18) is that not an invite to look for a deeper _____? Leaving a clue _____ and curiosity not satiated _____ as lax without attention to detail. At the very least, we would expect _____ confession regarding _____ own (_____) usage to actually be a questioning of _____, prodding for the _____, a deep subtext, hoping that _____ would volunteer something about _____ in return and damp down _____ (and hence our) suspicions about _____. If _____ does respond, and it satisfies _____, then the topic might be dropped without reflecting badly on _____; as it is, a major element of mystery sits exposed but without consequence, and we wonder when the characters will start looking into the truth, why _____. Equally, _____ seems to have been given a major reason to doubt _____ (____p38), though this is bedded down in the audience's mind due to following up with the lump concern and _____. That scene with _____ perhaps needs to be framed in necessity for _____ – such that he is having genuine _____ thoughts about _____, or the information from _____ makes him feel guilt about the _____ between the pair – this goes back to the note regarding dramatising scenes rather than simply dropping exposition. Presently, _____ lacks a scene objective and a genuine reaction to the news – and so the audience's attention goes to _____ and suspicions – and so we feel like we are in a mystery, though the characters are acting like they are in a drama. If the aim is to tell a genuinely convincing _____ drama and fool the audience in the same way that _____ has been fooled, then the characters need to be deeply embroiled in their own miniature dramas along the way in order to divert attention from the set-ups.

The main players are reasonably well delineated with unique characterisations and character flaws, particularly rich when we go on a journey between the text and the subtext – for instance, in seeing _____ enthusiasm (volunteering for _____ and the _____ – p6) and _____ (p13) before seeing her _____ (the diazepam p26) and _____ (p34). Caddish _____ (seems)

to reveal a softer side, and the complex sibling ____ between ____ and ____ simmers nicely between scenes and awkward social engagements.

It is perhaps ____ who requires the most work in future drafts, presently slightly passive and lacking in her own strong characterisation. Though we receive a lengthy, slightly novelistic introduction to ____ internal world (p1) much less of her is seen onscreen via her actions. As mentioned, she doesn't____, and despite ____ her trust by calling ____ (p34), ____ reaction is minimal and she accompanies ____ (perhaps more can be made of the inappropriateness of this given the ____). It becomes difficult to discern whether or not ____ is there out of weakness or kindness since we have little access to her emotional world and outlook on the ____ – so we don't understand her motives for _____. She happily agrees to carry out ____ last wishes – is she kind-hearted, or gullible? Does ____ need to be portrayed as an inquisitor, a doubter, a sceptic, such that if ____ has fooled ____ then the ____ must have been world class? Is ____ the person in the group who 'sees things as they are' – can see through ____ bullshit despite everyone else being ____ (that fractal approach can reveal insights about characters – ____ reputation not cemented amongst the ____ at large, but ____ seeing the actual truth). Or is she easily ____? Does she believe ____ at face value, and ____ too, and hers is a voyage of ____ and____, of finally daring to ____ her perceptions and the ____? What is ____ flaw, and how does ____ test it? Is it naivety and gullibility or perhaps being a soft touch? Or is it ____ unswerving sense in her own judgment, almost a prideful excess which is undermined? Is ____ growing, or being cut down to size? Tested, or learning a lesson?

Though we see that ____ is a ____ (a subject of pure truth – a great dichotomy between character as seems and character as eventually revealed) and ____ handles sport (here a fitting match for the testosterone driven____), we don't get a deep insight into ____ from her sub-vocation within____. Is she a ____ who thinks that lessons are contained in the past – hence why she might be____, and she is putting a skillset to the test? That deep character is important for matching character to action, flaws and skills to story tests.

____ is mostly reduced to being a messenger figure for the group, handling ____ and delivering____, but does not have a meaningful impact on plot – he does not get his 'big scene' (there is a decent parallel character in NOTES ON A SCANDAL, a seemingly innocuous ____ whom the audience barely figure into proceedings, but who ironically relays a piece of information which tips the entire affair into the open). If he is not to eventually figure in plot, he can potentially be excised, his functions put____. If ____ is a keeper of

information, the nexus point of the ____ hierarchy, then it is likely he will be the keeper of a clue at some point or unintentionally relay something major which spins the action. Presently, he lacks true objectives and does not become an obstacle for other characters – such as if he were a_____, or tried to keep relations professional between _____, or conversely the opposite, and was a total gossip and jeopardised people’s privacy. But presently he is mostly a mouthpiece for exposition within the_____.

PLOT, STRUCTURE & CONFLICT

As mentioned, the chief note on CELEBRITY WEDDING comes back to that dichotomy between drama and thriller, and whether the intent is to fool the audience just as the community of CELEBRITY WEDDING has been fooled by _____ until the big reveal, or whether the expression would be better suited by being tailored to a purer thriller, in which _____ investigates much earlier, and the use of theories, red herrings and a gradual escalation to the truth becomes the mainstay of the second act. The story itself is solid – the _____ who is co-opted by a pair of _____ – but the plot expression of that base story is open to great debate.

Initially it will help to outline the mechanisms of the current plot by looking at the broad plot movements captured in the sequences (SEQ) of the story and the plot points (PP) which spin the fundamental nature of the action and provide turning points in the narrative.

SEQ1; Ordinary World; _____ – happy, bubbly (p1 – p18)

PP1; _____ (p18) – is there something amiss?

SEQ2; Debate; who _____? Unstable? How fit into group? (p18 – p39)

PP2; _____ (p39) – _____ is _____

SEQ3; New World; Bonding – _____ moves in, _____ (p40 – p51)

PP3; _____ (p52) - _____ serious

SEQ4; _____, but _____ is worsening (p51 – p68)

PP4; Bad _____, waiting for _____ (implied betw p63 – p68)

SEQ5; Preparing for _____, carrying out _____ (p68 – p82)

PP5; _____ amiss (p82) – who was _____?

SEQ6; Investigate (p82 – p98)

PP6; Confirmation of _____ (p98)

SEQ7; Confront antagonists (p98 – p110)

PP7; _____ out in the open (p110)

SEQ8; Fallout of story, denouement wrap up for characters (p111 – p119)

Sleepy little CELEBRITY WEDDING is established, with ____ arriving on p1 to represent the norm for the world – new ____ year, new ____ and the story's ordinary world rightly begins with ____ – much better to involve ____ from the out than to establish other character dynamics before dropping in the newbie. The first sequence shows the ____ would like to present; happy, enthusiastic, popular – which shows a crack when ____ discovers the _____. This throws us into a debate period over ____ – how will others adjust to ____ will they date her seriously or confide in her as a friend? Her behaviour casts significant doubt on her place in the hierarchy, but the news of the ____ forces everyone to rally around her in the third sequence – ____ commits to his call to adventure as a ____, and ____ commits to her call to adventure as a ____ (the things which should be in major doubt in that second sequence), and bonding occurs around the ____, humanity comes together against _____. The second act sequences are delineated by the progression of ____ with sequence 3 representing uncertain hope, sequence 4 ____ with hope, and sequence 5 running with the energy of certain ____ as characters prepare for ____ (the midpoint comes with the certainty of ____ around p63 – p68). Though they may feel like distinct sequences, the acts of preparing for ____ and ____ and initially travelling to ____ all come under the same sequence as the same story energy is at play – helping ____ with _____. That selfless helpful energy is over once ____ discovers the _____, which launches the distinct sequence of investigation, ____ and _____.

As noted, this structure is much closer to the needs of a drama with a major third act reversal. ____ status within the group acts to delineate the major plot points early on, and her ____ marks changes in the second act; the group acts as protagonist, reactions from ____ to ____ presence. Analysis will initially look at the script's current expression, before assessing other possibilities and potential future directions.

SEQ1; Ordinary World; _____ arrives – _____ (p1 – p18)

The initial meeting between ____ and ____ is middling and serves mostly as exposition – if they are to eventually end up ____, then we need to take the characters on a major arc with each other – akin to romances where the couple initially hate each other, or mismatched buddy films where the friendship opens on rocky ground. A combative, dramatised opening would be much more appropriate – or conversely it could be ____ who is desperate for new blood in ____ and betrays her own emotional needs at being too eager. What do we genuinely find out about ____ in this scene? That she is ____? That is

small work, but we need a much more powerful impression of a main player and hopefully someone who is pursuing a goal of some description – for instance, if ____ has parked in her spot (showing ____ feels like an alpha female of the ____, and potentially takes ____ to be an intruder at first – matching themes and inner character work to objective out plot expression – people are what they do, actions speak louder than words).

As noted, we see ____ acting as messenger and enabler, an exposition focussed character who does not serve a major plot function (ally, enemy, love interest, mentor, shapeshifter etc) beyond some minor heraldic roles. Approach each character through the viewpoint of necessity – why do they need to be here? What do they want? How are they trying to achieve that goal?

The note on dramatising exposition and hiding clues comes into play here – where ____ says “ _____?” (p5) in relation to ____ roots, it is a naked plant with no context to disguise its purpose – no joking banter from other staff members or mentions of _____ – the information invites attention by standing out and having focus put onto it. Where audiences and readers are scanning a film to find the hook of story, they are especially sensitive to such pieces of information. Is this supposed to fly under the radar? Or are the audience supposed to pick this up on their antennas, prying into the true nature of _____, entering a guessing game about _____?

Dramatise, dramatise, dramatise. It is often a trait of early drafts to lay scenes out in order to express something of character or to develop plot, but without the scene being justified in its own right as a work of drama, with characters seeking goals against the obstacle of conflict. Creatures of necessity in a land of scarcity. We certainly see this lack of drama in ____ opening scene with her ____ – her outlook and character are certainly given to the audience (p8 – p10), but the opposition provided by her class is too weak for her display to amount to a major victory. Scenes gain much of their power from raising doubt and dramatic tension in the audience; that is we understand what the character wants, how they are trying to achieve that aim, the hope and fear of the situation (the positive from success, the stake or loss from failure) and the obstacles standing in their way. This then becomes a debate within the scene between the scene protagonist and the forces of opposition (back to that notion of debate, as embodied in the bigger picture dramatic question and thematic question of the script) such that the audience are convinced that the opposite of the eventual outcome is the most likely – so if ____ will gain the respect of the ____, we need to take her as close as possible to a _____, such that it seems she has lost them completely, that disaster is imminent – only for _____ to turn it around. That is true drama, and the scene exists as its own

short film. Presently, ____ has far too much control over the ____, and the scene function is underserved, as ____ breezes through her cohort of _____ like a modern day _____. ____ starts watching this scene – her outlook and take on ____ are up for debate, and so the scene serves a purpose of taking ____ through an emotional experience with _____ – perhaps watching from the outside, about to step in as it seems _____ has lost control of the ____... only for a surprise turnaround. ____ controls the scene far too early (shouting, putting ____ in his place) which rather than being the opening salvos in an epic battle between ____ and _____, merely serves to lay the platform for her spiel.

The following scene between ____ and ____ (p10 – p11) highlights two issues the script will need to address moving forwards; a lack of visual storytelling which leads to an emphasis on dialogue, and an excess of ‘shoe leather’ or logistical scenes which serve to set up the story and move the chains, but have no dramatic function in and of themselves.

We do not need to see ____ discuss the success of ____ first day – having her smile at the ____ window as ____ takes control would tell us all we need to know in a short visual tell – trust that the audience will interpret the visual and understand its meaning (especially if framed within a narrative for ____ in regards to the scene – concern or mistrust which gives way to surprised happiness). On the nose statements such as “_____” (p10) can easily be excised – we can see ____ impact on those around her, without stating subtext of what is going on – show, don’t tell. Likewise, we don’t need characters to discuss meeting up at the __ unless there is a major dramatic issue stemming from that discussion – we can simply cut to the _____. ____ scatterbrained attitude to work (“_____” p11) has already been established in the previous _____ scene (p6 – _____) and does not need to be repeated – lean and efficient are the hallmarks of great scripts.

PP1; _____ (p18) – is there something amiss?

SEQ2; Debate; who _____? Unstable? How fit into group? (p18 – p39)

Once _____ sees that ____ she absolutely must investigate and find an _____ – whether _____ says it is _____, or using it in follow up care from _____, or hiding the truth by saying an _____ and it was just lumbered in with her moving stuff (this goes to the core of the ‘clue and hypothesise’ pattern of mystery, wherein clues will live double lives with multiple meanings – but leaving them open and uninterpreted will linger with the audience).

The B plot with _____ allows for _____ to confide in _____, and functionally sets up a motivation that she has _____ and would want to enter _____ with _____ and _____ regarding _____.

We see a repeated story cycle wherein _____ gets closer to _____ before pulling away with a negative emotion; once after the fight with _____ leads to the _____ incident (p26) and once where the _____ leads to the _____ incident (p34). This can potentially be cut down to one single movement and create efficiency.

The _____ lacks functional value – the build-up suggests something major will happen there, but nothing does – potential value in moving the _____ over _____ to this public arena connected to the professional lives, which gives an added tension as _____ must at first struggle to contain herself amongst the _____.

The introduction of _____ creates potential tonal problems for the script; what are the audience to make of this seemingly unconnected tale? Where the plot does not draw direct links, the audience actively look for links – is _____ a runaway from this _____? _____? A _____ to the _____? What has she left behind? This may be the intent for the subplot – to keep red herring motivations alive and conceal the ultimate truth from us. But this creates an aforementioned dichotomy – mystery for the audience, but _____ and co not investigating that mystery. This gives a form of ironic tension, where we feel we know more than some of the characters, and find it difficult to get on-board with their investment in _____, almost like watching a car crash in slow motion, waiting for them to realise the tragedy of their emotional investment. The _____, combined with Glasgow, make other elements leap out at the audience – for instance, “_____” and “_____” (p63) stand out and the audience likely makes connections before the writer intends – this reader was keyed into subterfuge from _____ (though not the exact nature) at that point in the script – because so much curiosity was left unsatiated.

PP2; _____ (p39) – _____

SEQ3; New World; Bonding – _____ moves in _____ (p40 – p51)

Having debated the nature of _____, the group rally around her _____ and couples are formed in _____ and _____. The material here is reasonable for a drama, but lacks slightly in goal-oriented action – characters trying to pursue objectives. Certain developments are taken for granted – such as _____ and _____ moving in together, which can be expanded to create doubt as to outcome, if the script decides to focus on the drama of these lives and the impact of _____ – we need to invest in _____ as a recovering _____ who is

making a big ____ in his life – give him opportunities to leave, and show his personal struggle.

PP3; ____ (p52) – ____ serious
SEQ4; ____, but ____ is worsening (p51 – p68)

This sequence would need to raise great hope over ____, such that the later ____ comes as a major shock. We might even see tussles over the nature of the ____ (get a second opinion?) and ____ and ____ come to true blows over ____ welfare, such that the antagonists of ____ must reformulate their plan.

It is important to establish elements for hindsight – particularly the fact that ____ interest in ____ is entirely predicated around keeping her distracted from _____. Presently it feels a little unconnected, as though it may or may not have happened regardless of ____ (perhaps catalysed by the ____) and it is difficult to pinpoint an exact dynamic or moment which ____ could view in hindsight as being an obvious ‘running interference’ ploy. Lauren will be investigating a ____ – and one part of that ____ comes in being _____. Their connection is perhaps not strong enough for ____ to feel entirely ____ on the ____ front (for instance, if she were to confide in ____ that she had hopes of ____, or that they could have a ____ with ____ if Toby were to grant her a ____).

There is a nice dramatic segue for ____ – getting what she wants in _____, which suddenly contrasts with ____ and her desire to _____. The _____ scene is another where drama and doubt can be upped – for instance, if the ____ arrives and ____ is insistent on getting on – so we genuinely believe the scene could go either way.

PP4; Bad ____, waiting for ____ (implied betw p63 – p68)
SEQ5; Preparing for ____, carrying out ____ (p68 – p82)

The midpoint comes with the escalation to certain ____ – and this perhaps needs to happen much sooner. As mentioned previously, there are repetitions and inefficiencies in the set-up which could be moved through much sooner, such that certain ____ comes up around p55, leaving more room later for ramifications.

Would ____ blindly post the ____? Or has enough mystery been raised that such a request cannot simply be taken at face value?

____ behaviour at the ____ is highly suspicious, and in line with previous clues points the finger squarely at him. If his behaviour seems odd only in

relation to ____, then the scene is better dramatised as a conflict between a ____, but as it is he is generally suspicious. The same too for ____ looking at BMWs (p81).

PP5; ____ amiss (p82) – who was ____?

SEQ6; Investigate (p82 – p98)

This is the absolute cornerstone of the script, but the material is highly condensed. We go through multiple revelations back to back – from the fact that ____ is already ____, to ____ being the true ____, to the ____ past, to the idea that the ____ could have been ____ – all in the space of ten pages. Active investigation is minimal, and all of the space where we might go through multiple theories, finger pointing, denial etc is lost.

Importantly, stake is very low at this stage. ____ is already ____, and so there is not an active patient whose ____ in the balance. ____ has received a substantial amount of ____ from ____ which is not dependent on the outcome of _____. ____ conspiracy was isolated to one patient with a particular set of circumstances, and so there is not a broader conspiracy to stop, such as if ____ were doing this with multiple ____, tampering ____ etc.

PP6; Confirmation of ____ from ____ (p98)

SEQ7; Confront antagonists (p98 – p110)

____ decision to confront ____ and ____ without ____ makes little sense – if she had no ____ and was trying to ____ them for their share, we might understand her decision to not involve the ____ – but given that she wants justice her strategy is perilous and difficult to comprehend.

“ _____ ” (p100) suggests a legal approach rather than a selfish desire to keep that ____.

____ does not actively resolve the plot – she is thrown over a cliff and survives by luck – leaving the ____ to do the eventual clean-up work on ____ and _____. Thus, it is difficult to understand how she has proved her character or her arc in her actions, and she is not the agent of the outcome.

PP7; Conspiracy out in the open (p110)

SEQ8; ____ of story, denouement wrap up for characters (p111 – p119)

The ____ subplot is eventually paid off – and shows in hindsight that it perhaps was given too much weight, with repeated expressions of struggling with money. There is a nice ____ in the ____ actually being a bearer of good news – though there might be darker irony in the ____ dodging the man

entirely and managing to move from the _____ – thinking he’s escaped a _____, but actually missing out on a _____.

The script might benefit from a substantial rearrangement of its plotting, in order to sit more comfortably in the realm of thriller. Here, we would expect _____ to investigate suspicions much sooner in the story – either at the end of the first act, or catalysed at the mid-point – but certainly not at the end of act three. The structural balance is tricky – investigate too early and it is obvious that a huge ruse is afoot and there is not enough emotional investment in _____ – it may be that a middle ground solution (similar to SIDE EFFECTS) is strongest, wherein the protagonist’s take on the material significantly alters at the mid-point. This does however require that _____ has a dramatised story with active goals prior to receiving the _____ information. SIDE EFFECTS does not try to hide that it is a thriller – it simply hides the highly unlikely truth. It could be that _____ is investigating _____ over her flight from _____ because _____ and _____ does not want her to suffer without her family – or it might be that _____ has doubts over _____ and an investigation of _____ leads to the conspiracy.

Keeping _____ alive during _____ investigation would be a major change to allow genuine tension, stake and timelocks – if _____ cannot prove or solve the case in time, then _____. Similarly, _____ cannot be gifted _____ from _____ which is independent of _____ investigation.

A slower reveal of the conspiracy allows our understanding to evolve. _____ might at first suspect _____, before beginning to suspect _____ of _____, before _____ treatment then comes under scrutiny (all the while ‘placeholder’ theories, or red herrings, misdirect us as to the true nature of events).

A slower approach then allows more confrontations and interactions between characters, testing their true natures. _____ might find out before the _____ – but she has _____, so is it _____ or her own _____? She might be so deeply _____ invested in _____ that she is in a dilemma as to whether she should go along with the _____.

What if _____ has managed to falsify all _____ and there is no easy _____ (for instance, he switches in genuine _____) and so _____ must then find a way to get a _____? This gives an active goal. The plot machinations of films such as SIDE EFFECTS, LES DIABOLIQUES, BLOOD SIMPLE, SHALLOW GRAVE, A SIMPLE PLAN show the multitude of options to

extract thriller material from this concept. The protagonist is only under threat once, because she _____ from _____ – she could go to the _____ for the same outcome of denying the _____.

Ultimately an even bigger deception could be in place – that _____ is in on the whole thing, that _____ fakes her _____ (and is actually _____) but that they needed _____ and _____ for the _____.

There are many points for _____ to jump into an investigation prior to _____ – the _____, or potentially opening a _____ before sending it – and then _____ is _____, raising stake, whilst _____ takes active efforts.

TEXT DOCUMENT

As a text document there are some formatting and description issues which need smoothing over.

Int / Ext – scenes must delineate between these when the scene progresses from one to the other – for instance, p92-p93 moves us from outside the _____ to inside, and so we need a new slugline. Similarly, p34 – p35 going inside and outside the _____.

Referring to the camera should be avoided where possible – the description is inherently what the camera is shooting, and explicit reference is not needed.

Scene description can be kept to a bare minimum – for instance, from p12-p13;

The _____ has low dark wooden beams, and floral patterned carpet which is wearing well.

The walls are lined with old sketches of sailing ships interspersed with portraits of hardened sea captains. On top of the bar are sailing ships in glass bottles, on top of an old fishing net.

Can become;

A rustic nautical themed _____.

The aim is to keep reader's eyes moving down the page, rather than reading across the page. If they don't need to know, don't tell them. There is a difference between a spec intended for market and a script for self-production

(which will likely contain greater detail for production, as director's reminders etc) but if the script is for producers, agents etc then a fast flowing read is the aim – dropping novelistic elements. The same is true of character description – _____ introduction on p1 is an example of describing things which cannot be seen onscreen – such as her demeanour. We should get this through the action and dialogue.

Conclusion:

The core idea is fundamentally very strong, but the expression sits between two stools; on the one hand a drama which is not watertight enough in planting its clues, and so raises a sense of mystery for the audience which is not investigated onscreen; on the other-hand a mystery-thriller which does not see investigation as the driving engine. Picking a clear approach, with the audience's experience in mind, is the first step before settling on future draft direction. Viewing research films of either ilk (as mentioned in the notes) will give a clearer idea of the mechanisms which work for each type.

Scenes and dialogue require significant tightening; re-writing for drama and tension, and avoiding logistical scenes and 'hi and goodbye' type conversation.

An idea certainly worth pursuing, but in need of clarity of vision – dupe the audience with a drama which _____, or present a clear thriller with a set protagonist who investigates.

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
IDEA	X			
PLOT			X	
CHARACTERIZATION			X	
DIALOGUE			X	
PACE				X
SETTING			X	