



Team Philadelphia USA

Thursday, July 7, 2016

Hey Joe,

Congratulations on the work. You read the brief, delivered and excelled. Whatever is not working is fixable.

The read

I enjoyed Sentient – USA, (Philadelphia) immensely.

- Excellent characters and pairing
- True to culture
- Great dialogue
- Strong opening scene
- Great visual descriptions

How close is it to the Sentient story?

It's workable.

Two more drafts and a polish should do it.

The Sentient story is simple yet its full revealing requires some deft touch. You have the skill. My job as HOD is to guide you through the process.

Our next Skype will cover the details.

Become an advocate for your story and characters

Have I missed something?

My review is based on what I read. If my review reveals I have missed something in your work, let me know.

Issues

- Format – We need to see the Teaser act plus five more labeled acts
- Formula – Nice shaping but some critical elements are missing or wrong
- Sentient children – Sentient don't take over child hosts
- The Sentient are missing from the story, (and we kind of need those guys)
- Nemesis – Some great set-ups but this needs work
- Episode Two premise – Start with your ghost of Xmas future and deal with theme
- Theme – Our Skype will ensure we are reading the same sheet of music
- Multi cultural mix of cast – Check
- Series strategy – Let's start talking about the six episodes
- Judo – One word, NO
Unless you have a special reveal on how we are going to get away with this, have your protagonist employ the tools of his trade or his know-how or a gun in a half-ass way until he gets the hang of it but if we go to judo, we will tag the series as sci-fi martial arts story and viewers will immediately think we are in another genre or that we don't know which genre we are in

Format

The guide to [format](#) provides some example scripts.
The [formula](#) page also states the rough page count per act.

I expect you have already read these. We will review them in our Skype meet.

- Label each act
- Feature a Teaser Act plus five other acts
- The six acts are;
 - Teaser Act
 - Act One through Act Five
- The end of each act should be labeled, End of Act X
- Label the end of Act Five with Fade out and / or END OF SHOW

Formula

The franchises feature a floating formula. That means you have some room to move. That said there is still a formula.

Review – Act by Act

○ Teaser Act

- ⌘ Great opening image
- ⌘ Established the world
- ⌘ Established the skill
- ⌘ No ghost but no problem, we can live with it
- ⌘ No central conflict introduced yet but let's not worry about that yet.
Your approach for the Philadelphia story may work
- ⌘ Ends P9

○ Act One

- ⌘ B-story introduced, REESE and the plane crash. I am very glad you employed this recommendation. I like what you have done with it
- ⌘ Reese's exploration of the new world is another window into what happened
- ⌘ Visuals are great
- ⌘ Hum is great. Hum should feature with phones too
- ⌘ The 'hosts in the fountain' is OK but it needs a topper. By that I mean he needs to encounter a large body of water and find it filled with bodies. No need for them to be holding hands. They're not [kumbaya](#) aliens. It should look like a river of the dead
- ⌘ The A-story continues with JJ meeting SAL. Gosh, I like your work with this guy
- ⌘ Speculation begins BUT this is not strong. It is quite casual. Nor is it strong with any of the A,B,C storylines. **That's a flaw in the story.** The parties need to hold distinctly different and strong views about what has happened and what we need to do. This is a source of conflict and creates **GAP** which the audience can leap into with their own speculation
- ⌘ **There is no driving force behind the characters, especially JJ.** Yep, he has his gal Lindsey and that is a motivation but he is not overly wrought about this and has no job or other motivation pushing him.
I am prepared to let this slide for now but we should explore it in greater detail during our Skype.

We need to ensure the audience is rooting for JJ or engaged because he is highly motivated and pursuing a course of action.

They will be keen to sort this and if they think it is the Chinese they will be talking revenge. Remember, they don't get this is an alien invasion yet.

Note also, he and the others have just lost their teams and their family's fates are in question. This will be both a weight upon them and feature in the state of shock they are in

- ⌘ JJ has some physical damage from his rapid pole dance descent and we see him bleeding from the nose but **there is no other physical damage to any of the other survivors from the arrival of the Sentient**. This should be addressed. Give everyone a physical problem. An alien life form just gave them all a good probing and it hurts. Deafness, vision impaired, disoriented, continued bleeding, paranoia, memory loss etc. You may argue the epileptic fit is born of the storm but there is no direct link demonstrated
- ⌘ Revealing the end of the digital age, the picture of Lindsey, no phone, no picture, nice
- ⌘ The HAM radio reveal, yes and very nice set up for Sal's son in Iceland
- ⌘ LENA's intro. Pure gold and another POV of the arrival of the storm
- ⌘ Lena meets Reese and happy birthday, more gold
- ⌘ Once again there is speculation but not opinionated and nothing that motivates action. With these two that may be OK but not with your lead or perhaps the people that he meets
- ⌘ Sal and JJ go hunting and Sal reveals what's waiting out there for them
- ⌘ We introduce the first of the SENTIENT as a fleeting glimpse. Yes, but more could be made of this. Perhaps the figure is aware they are being observed and looks straight back. When pressed re the shoot, JJ doesn't know what to say then looks back and it is gone. The point is, there is a first contact / connection and we raise Qs
- ⌘ Around P 28 is probably the end of Act One

○ Act Two

- ⌘ Backstory to Reese and a bit more on Lena
- ⌘ Great dialogue
- ⌘ JJ sets on a path to the city to find his gal Lindsey. JJ advised against it and offers weapon
- ⌘ Backstory on Sal, his wife and son and the Iceland payoff
- ⌘ No complications or casualties but at least JJ is now on a roadtrip
- ⌘ No ticking clock
- ⌘ Around P34 is the end of Act Two

- **Act Three**

- ⌘ Lena and Reese speculate re why the animals survived and not the humans then Reese has a moment of clarity re what happened to the humans when he remembers the cop's K-9 dog on leash
- ⌘ The Tractor working is good but the electronics of the ignition would still be fried. How does he replace or fix it? He should.
- ⌘ Speculation re EMP
- ⌘ Reese and Lena resolve to head to Carlisle Army barracks
- ⌘ Lena releases the animals which leads on to the ZOO and DAMIAN, CAROLYN and JOEY also letting the animals go. That's a [segue](#) of sorts but not a contrast. We meet people quite happy to slaughter animals later with the coal mine workers but not here. The contrast would make it more interesting
- ⌘ Damian's view of the city, great POV opportunity
- ⌘ Good diversity of characters
- ⌘ Intro of the Amish gal that has lost her parents. We've already covered how the Sentient do not take children hosts however our formula allows for a conduit for relations between the Sentient and humans and a child is an excellent option. In Sentient-Australia we employ an [Idiot savant](#) who does not speak, (though later we find out she does) but does have an extraordinary ability to see sound and aura. The Sentient are [aural](#) focused. They emit flux rays that create resonance in objects. It is what they hear that stimulates them. A character such as a young girl, who is an idiot savant who can see sound and aura will have a connection to the Sentient and become a conduit for relationship with them. There is no need to focus on a particular autism as leaving it vague allows us to cast from a wider range
- ⌘ Based on the need to rewrite our Amish gal I won't offer up any review on that track of story at this point apart from to say she may make contact with a Sentient character whilst JJ is asleep. She can be the 'eyes of wonder' who bears witness to them early in the story
- ⌘ Nice visuals on the Zoo and animals in the city. The release of the animals gives you an opportunity to employ a STAN-like character as in our STAN from the Sydney story. Stan develops a relationship with a tiger who at first hunts him but eventually surrenders as Stan is too fast and agile for the tiger. Humans later shoot the tiger angering and saddening Stan. You can consider this storyline. You may have already done this for Episode Two
- ⌘ Still no sight of the main nemesis but you do have layers of nemesis and that's probably OK
- ⌘ No escalation of the conflict
- ⌘ No ticking clock

- ⌘ End of act around P46

- **Act Four**

- ⌘ Back story of how JJ met Lindsey cleverly told via 'talking to my dog' technique where the dog is our silent but attentive Amish gal
- ⌘ JJ uses his climbing skill to take a look
- ⌘ The arrival of the HEAVILY BEARDED MAN (coal miners), nice veiled threat or at least hint of the world to come
- ⌘ I get the choice to refer to the strange folk (Sentient) and see the Amish gal as a potential threat but it is not a good choice. They should not know yet. They should be speculating with strong views and a willingness to express bloodlust. They may be, by their presence just plain dangerous but I like the fact nothing happens. We can use those guys later
- ⌘ The reference to, 'kill yourself a little something' is a good contrast but are their actions proportionate to the situation? If they don't know where everyone is or what happened to them how can they chose to start killing people's animals? If they are hungry, why not just take from the kitchen. My point is, whilst the scene looks great it is too far ahead of itself. They are not at that stage of world breakdown yet. Five minutes from now, perhaps an episode or two when things start to reveal themselves, when they realize no one is coming for them and this is it, the world will begin to change. When they realize this has been done to them by an alien life form, it will change again
- ⌘ Damian spots the arrival of the Army and questions how is it possible the vehicles can move. I'm not sure that is the right observation. There ought to be speculation that these are responders but I like the conflict re his desire to report and Carolyn's zebra crisis and the fact you don't reveal what it is until later
- ⌘ Intersection of stories. JJ meets Reese and Lena but now with DALLAS at the service station
- ⌘ Excellent dialogue and tension in the scene
- ⌘ Whilst there is a focus on the hostage situation, JJ refers to the event as, 'the attack', there is no speculation as to what has happened.
Now arguably you might say they have something on their minds but JJ won't be at that place straight away even if he does sense there is something up
- ⌘ Our Amish gal chasing the cat as a device to get JJ to later discover the orange jumpsuit is OK. The point is she leaves and JJ has to find her so that can be massaged to lead us to your story angle here

- ⌘ We are advancing the storylines and intersecting them and this is good. No main nemesis yet but maybe this can be let slide as we have an entre nemesis that has been seeded by Sal and lets us know about the new world
- ⌘ No presumptions have been overturned yet
- ⌘ No crisis but we're nearly there
- ⌘ End of Act Four around P 56

○ **Act Five**

- ⌘ Joey has a seizure and gets Zebra stomped
- ⌘ Joey dies
- ⌘ CAPTAIN DYER and SOLDIERS arrive. Not happy with his choice for opening line. He may be arrogant but he also wants something so there will be some grace in his approach, at least enough to establish if they have what he wants
- ⌘ JJ discovers the orange jumpsuit whilst looking for the Amish gal the discovers Dallas with knife Lena and intent
- ⌘ Good cliffhanger
- ⌘ Missing, the Sentient's presence in the city and the knowledge that something is coming, something they really need to pay attention to

Recommendations for the Second Draft

1. Sort the formatting
2. Load the survivors with strong views and venom about what has happened. Even if JJ is happy to act as the audience's eyes and have no opinion yet, the characters he meets do have an opinion and want to act on it
3. Ensure the characters don't know what is going on yet. Not knowing creates angst and panic
4. I am concerned JJ does not have a strong motivation. Rick Grimes of, 'The Walking Dead' is highly motivated to find his family. We should talk about this. If JJ is not driven, our audience may not rally to him
5. Damage your characters physically
6. Damage them emotionally, at least with shock, they have just lost people
7. Top your bodies in the fountain to create scale
8. A single phone humming and glowing is value X. Open a door to show a room of them tops it. You may not show this in the Pilot. You may reserve it to show in a Teaser Act of a future episode to demonstrate the experience of the arrival of the storm for one of the survivors
9. Re-jig the Amish gal as human. Employ here as someone the Sentient can engage with. That will require design. We should discuss the steps to achieving that. For example, she has to demonstrate something unique and they have to notice.

By they, I mean at least one Sentient character. We don't have to show the Sentient character yet. We do have to demonstrate their presence in environment.

That may be T-lux hum plus our Amish gal, head tilted, looking in wonder but what she sees is their aura because that is her unique talent. Leave some mystery here so we have some place to go. She may be the person that reveals the presence of the Sentient to JJ. He may be one of the first to realize what has happened because of her. In short, she is a very, very, important character

10. I can live with no central conflict or lead nemesis until the arrival of Captain Dyer. We need to explore this guy and what he is about and what he wants
11. Ensure we see more Hiroshima style human ash shadows in venues. Touch the walls and they blow away. Make it clear, this is common
12. The story has no ticking clock. That is a problem. We should talk about that. The clock may be borne of their view of what has happened and what is about to happen
13. Re starting-up old tractors etc. The electrics are still fried. They need replacement or repair
14. We have one plane crash. There is a saying, 'Take off is optional, landing is mandatory.' Every plane airborne will have come down. There will be lots of burning wrecks. If you get a view of the city, it will be alight
15. The work has spelling errors throughout but it's no crisis. We'll sort them in review as we go
16. Preserve your characters for reintroduction into the story. I certainly want to see Sal again and those miners but NOW they have changed
17. Preserve, 'arrival of the storm' back-stories for episode openers. For example; Feature in the Teaser Act of future episodes, our Amish gal with parents in horse and cart travelling down the road when the storm arrives and have her see her parents vaporized
18. The Teaser Act of Episode Two should feature a Ghost of Xmas future event that will see by the end of Episode Six
19. Perhaps the most important thing here is telling the audience something is here and its intentions are not clear but humanity has just been largely extinguished. Now, you have released all of the zoo animals. They may be inquisitive. They may discover the Sentient but for a really big reveal, do a look down travelling over the burning city. See the glowing blue auras in the streets. Hear the hum. Fade out. You already have an ending. I'm suggesting we end on speculation of what's going on. I may not be completely clear here but I hope to clear it up in our Skype.

Theme

The Australian story deals with leadership and the smartest guys in the room. We need to discuss what you see as Sentient USA's theme.

Elevator pitch / Synopsis

Create an elevator pitch.

The Sentient [main page](#) shows a short sharp pitch for the whole franchise. The Sentient Australia – [Season One page](#) features a synopsis focused just on the Australian story.

You need one of those for your story. We need it to publish the work on the site.

Sometimes you can cover these with, ' WHEN X happens, HERO resolves to do Y until Z happens.

Publish

Once I have your synopsis, I will publish the script on the site and promote it and you to our global team and via our social media.

Commission of second draft

Once we have undertaken a Skype meet and reviewed these notes, subject to your willingness and availability, I will commission a second draft of the Pilot and 12,000 points.

Skype

Please advise your availability for next week.

Deadline for Draft Two

Second draft of Pilot – Delivery by Oct 7th 2016

Our objective

We want to see the commissioning of Sentient USA (Philadelphia) as a TV series featuring one x a sixty minute pilot followed by 5 more 40 minute plus episodes to make up the first season.

We still have a way to go to create the full first season but you are seeding the story and the characters to do so. We want to create a comprehensive and global case for the creation of the work as a global franchise.

This way, we can raise the most money and pay the greatest fee to the above the line team.

I've never met a Writer that was unhappy about being paid well. Me included.

Chat shortly, let me know when we can Skype.

Conclusion

I am very impressed with your work.

It is perhaps the very best Teaser I have read and your work with dialogue is gold. You deserve success. I am very pleased we made contact and that we are on the same team.

My job as HOD is to enable your success and the success of the whole franchise. I have nothing but optimism for the future of Sentient USA (Philadelphia).

Once again, well done.

Kind regards,



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