

Sentient Australia – Draft Two – Review questions

Help review the work by commenting on or answering these questions.

1. Would you like to see this on screen? **No. It's not ready for screen.**
2. What elements are working and what's not **Too many flashbacks that don't seem to add anything to the story or character arc. Characters wandering around aimlessly without any motivation. Passive, incomplete sentences make the script difficult to read.**
3. Comment on craft **I didn't enjoy reading this script. I found myself having to push myself to finish it. Too many passive and incomplete sentences. Too much onomatopoeia. Had to go back and reread sections that didn't make sense to see if I missed anything (usually, I didn't).**
 - **Structure The multitude of timelines made things confusing without adding anything of worth to the story or characters.**
 - **Theme of leadership I didn't pick up on any theme of leadership. There are characters there that are clearly meant to be leaders, but there is no evidence of them leading.**
 - **Characters, unique, clear in your mind? Motivated? Authentic or lacking in character depth? No to all. They didn't seem unique, they mostly seemed vague and uninteresting and completely unmotivated. There wasn't one among them I was interested in.**
 - **The World It's an interesting visual (the red, seemingly sentient cloud, the ash rain), but I don't think it's sustainable, and isn't enough of itself.**
 - **Originality Meh ...**
 - **Dialogue Poor at best.**
4. Comment on the use of withholding information. The Author withholds information and answers but then provides those solutions later. Does this work for you? **No. I found too often that there were situations, conclusions or attitudes that were completely unsupportable when presented, and certainly didn't get supported by anything later on. Yes, there's a lot of information missing, but it isn't teased, nor is it resolved. There were no solutions presented later. Overall it was both frustrating and unfulfilling.**
5. The conflict – Is it engaging? **No. What little conflict I found was cliched and illogical.**
6. The survivors do not know this is an alien invasion until the end. Does this make them look stupid? Does the reader switch off from the story because they would rather just get straight to the alien conflict? **I disagree that they discover it's an alien invasion at any point. Are you referring to the "thousands of the creatures" emerging from the water on the last page? They could just as easily be supernatural. It wasn't the lack of an alien conflict that switched me off. It was the lack of anything interesting happening.**
7. Are there cliché elements? If so, what? **Much of the limited conflict seems very contrived.**
8. After reading the whole script, how would you describe the character of Dr. Amon Teicher? What do you know about him? **Uninteresting. Looney. Certainly not a man of science.**

9. Should the Commodore follow through to pursue Lt. Commander Dowd at the end of the story? Does he lose his sting because he goes to rescue his dying son? **Huh? I don't see either of those elements in the story.**

10. The Lt. Aiden Frank line. Aiden Frank is Lt. Commander Dowd's Ghost. He is Frank's mentor just like Admiral Frank was his. He dies under the care of Dowd. He takes his own life. This story is fed, NON-LINEAR into the timeline. It takes us away from the world of the red storm and falling ash. It tells us of Dowd's history and his commitment to the Admiral. It establishes Dowd's military family. It allows the Commodore to use it to pursue his grudge. It is a central tenant of the work. That said, it may not work. As the reader, were you willing to take that journey and can you see a bigger picture evolving OR was it distracting, of little interest etc? **I found all of that far too confusing and unclear. He took his own life? (Is that the mine explosion?) That wasn't clear at all, nor would it be supported by the rest of the story.**

11. Navy talk – The Author DE-Jargoned the work for easy reading. Does that take away from the authenticity of a military Sci-fi? **I don't mind jargon if it's genuine and intelligible. I have no opinion on the use of jargon in this script.**

12. The Author sells the Biological warfare angle hard hoping the 'magic' of storytelling doesn't allow the reader to think too much about how this being traditional biological warfare is a ridiculous proposition. Did you find yourself questioning this during the read or were you happy to take the journey and didn't care about the science? **I found a lot of the "conclusions" that were presented seemed completely unsupportable and illogical. I considered the talk of biological warfare to be a misdirect or a McGuffin.**

CRAIG DELAHOY – REVIEW

Sorry, but I did not find this script engaging, entertaining or compelling. There is no build up, no tension, and the characters don't appear to have any individual goals or arcs.

The flashbacks became too numerous and too confusing. Many of them didn't appear to have a point or add anything to our understanding of the characters.

Even in the present-day scenes, many of the characters just appear to wander about aimlessly for no apparent reason and with no obvious intent. There are large sections with no dialogue and no discernible or motivated action, and sections where the dialogue makes little sense. Some scenes just stop. Some scenes have characters doing things that we are not given a reason for.

I also found the writing style very distracting (see note three below) and in parts even difficult to read/follow. Many things appeared to be assumed but not explained, and at other times character made or leapt to conclusions without any clear underlying logic (eg, how do they know that the ash is human remains?).

I feel there is a considerable amount of work left to be done, and would actually recommend restarting with a clean slate.

RANDOM NOTES

p.1, p.2, p.4, p.7, p.34, p.44, p.47, p.48, p.62 – I'm not a fan of onomatopoeia in scripts. Makes me think of Batman.

p.2 – Remove all passive phrases, (eg, "Two dead Dobermans laying on the shoreline" should read "Two dead Dobermans are lying on the shoreline.").

p.2 – (and just about every other page) Always use complete sentences (eg, "A scream. Dowd runs towards the guttural cry. Runs through the rain of ash. Runs hard and fast to...". There's no reason this sequence couldn't be written as effectively with grammatically correct prose and complete sentences. It makes the script jarring and difficult to read.)

p.15 – I always advise against including camera angles or shot descriptions in the script.

p.17 – Why is this labelled as a "dream sequence"? Isn't it just another flashback?

p.31 – How do we suddenly jump to the conclusion that the ash is human? How could the characters logically know that? Ash is ash (could even be volcanic, which would be my first guess), so why irrationally conclude that it's human?

p.32 – Sabban still hasn't spoken, yet he seems to be a main character by this scene.

Sc.41 – This scene seems to go nowhere. While I appreciate that it's potentially building up a plotline that will develop later/elsewhere, it still needs to stand on its own, and currently it feels very out of place.

p.34 – What is Dowd apologising for?

p.36 – Way too confusing. Hard to know what's actually happening.

p.39 – "It's a living entity ...". On what evidence does he base that? Just another unsupportable leap of logic. Nothing we've heard or seen (or read) so far suggests that.

Sc.52 – The introduction to Sammy provides confusing information (the photo) that won't easily be conveyed to the audience – a glimpse at a photo probably won't register with the audience. Does Heidi recognise her? That's not clear.

Sc.67 – Confusingly written. Hass speaks, but then "he" hits the release button, but that turns out to be Sabban.

p.64/65 – Sabban still hasn't spoken. Is he mute? If so, this is never made clear.

Sc.71 – I really don't know what's happening or why in this scene.