

Author's Qs – Sentient Australia – Draft Three

These are reference points. You can answer, any or all of the Qs.

1. Does the reader get a clear visual picture of what is going on in the script from the action descriptions? If there are grey areas, let me know. Ref the page and scene number. **See my notes and questions at the end.**
2. **The inciting incident of the Chinese flashpoint which features in Teaser Act is not right.**

The Chinese would never be so blatant.

I am looking to design a flashpoint between China and the US.

My theory is that it will be based on a provocative act taken by the US President that embarrasses the Chinese Premier, forcing his hand and leading to a flashpoint or some act of revenge.

This is more about the Chinese Premier showing his own people; he is not weak, rather than addressing the US President's challenge.

Can you think of something the US President might do or an act that might provoke the Chinese to act in a reckless or decisive way that leads to war? **I kind of like the way the Chinese actions are unexplained. We understand we are coming into this at some point along its evolution, so we don't really need to know what sparked it. We may wonder about it as it is introduced, but then the alien stuff happens and we realise the real action is about to start.**

It must culminate in the Chinese taking a stand, perhaps moving on a piece of land under the banner of unification and as a pre-emptive they lay mines in US base and Australian Navy base harbours.

The mines bring our lead character into play.

3. I have made the Commodore a woman. I believe that choice completely changed the dynamic of the work and the adversarial relationship between Dowd and Freisler. Did you have that experience of character? Do you have any comment re Commodore Kathryn Freisler? **I was left wondering why she is so down on Dowd. Her reasons for having it in for him are completely unclear.** I generally dislike someone who is nasty and obstructionist without any real motivation. I think we need to understand as soon as possible (in the pilot) why she is after him. **What's their history, and how has this animosity developed?**
4. The transition between the Teaser Act and Act One features Dowd descending (into the deep) then a sharp contrast of him rising, after being shock-woken. Does the abrupt reversal/ cut work for you the reader? **I was thinking that we don't need him descending – it's a slower, less dramatic move to wake from. I think the moment he hits the water is the moment he should come awake.**

5. I copped some criticism re Scenes 8 and 9 when Dowd calls out for help. It was seen as weak. What do you think of this? Dowd has just shock-woken in a recompression chamber and had that recompression interrupted. He is in a pretty bad way. Do you feel it makes him appear weak to call out for help? **What normally happens to someone who hasn't fully recompressed? Do they throw up? Are they dizzy / suffer from vertigo? What happens? Whatever the real physical response, that's what you should play on. Assuming he is in some way disabled or physically impaired, it is not unreasonable for him to call out for help. However, his recovery from whatever condition he is in should also be realistic – ie, he shouldn't suddenly be 100% physically capable in the next few scenes as he continues to recover.**

6. Scene 11 – First contact with the alien life form. Does this scene engage you? Can you see it as have a strong visual impact? **I think this is a good opportunity to introduce some mystery without actually showing the life form. Tease it. The hum, moving past the blinds, lights changing – create tension and drama by ALMOST seeing it, but not actually seeing it. This will then add more impact to the later scenes where it is seen again.**

7. Scene 14, Dowd states his clear objective. 'It took our people. I'm getting them back.' Are you the reader, sold on that as a valid objective for this character and story? **No. How does he know it took them? How does he know they're gone? I don't have a handle on his main motivation (driver) yet.**

8. Act Two introduces Able Seaman Che Amiri. This character begins an arc in the pilot, on the way to joining Dowd as a Navy Clearance Diver. What do you think of this character? Are you engaged by her? I am particularly keen to hear female readers POV on this character. **She's okay, but not yet memorable. That can happen over time.**

9. The work is laden with action scenes. Front to back. I'll be frank, readers didn't like my character work, so I sought to sex up the work with more action. Did you find this a more enjoyable read than Draft Two? **I found this script much more readable and engaging than the previous draft. It still has a few problems, but it's a great improvement. The teaser works well as an opener, and the action flows much better and in a more believable way.**

10. Scene 25 The infamous bunker scene. Loved and equally hated. I have simplified it, but it still employs the same structure. This is a juggling performance syncopated by the hammering of the shoe on the door. Read it and let me know if you get it or if you still hate it. **Works better here, but still not clear on what happened to the "crowd" that was there. We are told that everyone is "vaporised", but then a few scenes later a select few of those that were present at the bunker, and presumably "vaporised" along with everyone else, survived. Why? How did some survive, but most didn't?**

11. Scene 32 we reference Dowd's indigenous heritage. Dowd is Wiradjuri, from the West of NSW. There is an exchange between Dowd and Hunt. They are permanently, playfully aggressive with one another. Hunt makes fun of his mob and references Dowd's handle in the team, Wudji. Dowd points out that, his mob is Wiradjuri and pays it off to Hunt by

calling him an 'ignorant white bastard.' There is no hate between these two. It's just play but I am very concerned that given the level of political correctness that dominates current thinking, that people will not be able to relax and enjoy that exchange. Question; upon reading it, are you uncomfortable with the exchange between the men? **Sat fine with me. However, I'd be interested to hear an opinion from someone closer to the culture.**

12. Scene 38, the last, we reintroduce characters that featured in Draft Two, Heidi, Sammy and Rebecca Kaye. In Draft Two, introducing those three characters confused a lot of readers. They stated that, it was just too many characters to cope with. My objective is to set them up for the first ep after the Pilot. Question; Did it confuse you or take away from the ending? What was your experience? **Worked much better this time, though what is actually happening is not totally clear.**

Typos:

P2: "it's cased"

P3: TV NEWS ANCHOR

P6: "up against a cluster"

P7: "Then, his eyes are drawn to her phone."

P8: ""The door to the room creaks open."

P10: "squeak open"

P12: "with their hands"

P17: "The crowd loses it"

P17: "a security video monitor" – shouldn't this be a camera rather than a monitor?

P18: "vaporised"

P31: "Were" (you here for the storm)

P33: "Hunt"

P39: "until it's down"

Questions:

1. Do cruise liners have a class?
2. Why is the mine lying on the seabed? What good is it there?
3. "The door to the room creaks-open. [sic]" The door to what room?
4. Do we expect Teicher to already know Dowd on p11? Teicher calls Dowd by name and rank, by there was previously no indication of recognition.
5. If the storm is so loud (p14) we might hear an emergency siren, but how many car alarms would we realistically hear? If there were cars parked outside the navy base hospital, we'd probably hear them, but not those beyond a short distance.
6. **p17 opens S22. "The Admiral's eye". What Admiral? This is the first we've heard of an Admiral in this scene description. A few lines**

later we read about Frank. We are left to assume this is the same person. Please ensure proper, useful set-ups in each new scene.

7. p18: "This panel is connected to the external mains. They're being disrupted. It's not." Not sure/clear what this is supposed to mean.

Confusing. Is he referring to the camera?

8. p20: "head tilts-ajar". What does this mean? Is his head split open?

9. p21: **"How is it we're still alive?". That's my question too. Wasn't everyone vaporised?**

10. p26. **"The Pied Piper"**. Dowd and Teicher use this phrase as if they've agreed on it previously (ie, they both know what they're referring to), but this is the first time we've heard it. When did this understanding occur, when we've been there for their entire relationship and didn't hear it previously?

11. **While we're on the subject of the Pied Piper, why does the mention of that, and/or the exchange of the tote bag, change Amiri's mind as to who to support? This is not clear. Why did she change her mind? I have no idea.**

12. In the last three or four pages, the thickness of the mist along the shore is confusing. It seems the cast can see a catamaran that has started floating out into deeper water, but they can't see something happening on the shoreline?

13. **We are introduced to Rebecca Kay, and then we hear of a character called Kaye. Consistency please.**