

Title: *Sentient*

Genre: Science Fiction

Author: David Steinhoff

*Sentient* tells the tale of an Australian Navy diver who is forced to fight to save humanity by protecting the few survivors that remained after an alien invasion. Aside from some typos and grammar issues, the script was well-written and had a swift pace. Although an alien invasion in and of itself isn't very original, the writer was able to infuse some unique concepts and keep the plot entertaining. There were, however, a few areas in which I saw room for improvement and I'd like to focus the bulk of my comments primarily on those issues, beginning with the plot.

The teaser started the script off with a bang, immediately plunging the reader into this chaotic situation. Although we don't initially understand what's going on, the tone is set and we understand that something terrible is happening. The introduction of the faceless creature would result in a very chilling visual and lure the reader's/viewers interest.

Things became a bit disorienting when the titles ended and we were given a super of "before". I wasn't sure if this was meant to indicate that we had moved back in time from the beginning of the teaser or if it was meant to indicate that this was before some other catastrophic event. It wasn't until near the end when everything resets to the beginning of the script that we realize the before was indicating a non-linear storyline. I'll discuss this in more depth below when I touch on the structure.

I was confused as to why Heidi wanted to remain in Australia and avoid being deported back to Arkansas when this terrible thing was happening outside her door. Was the same thing happening everywhere or just in Australia? No matter how terrible her hometown was, it couldn't possibly have been worse than where she currently was.

I was confused as to how Teicher and Dowd were able to survive after they collapsed, seeming to succumb to the same symptoms that plagued all the dead bodies littered around them. And, speaking of the dead bodies, I was unsure why the bodies disappeared after Dowd originally saw them lying around. The mention of the "human ash" raining down as they left the facility hinted that the bodies may have been eviscerated but if that were the case, why wasn't the same thing happening to the survivors that were out in the elements as well.

I also didn't understand what was going on with Rosen's character. Why was she behaving like a rabid animal? I can only assume that it had something to do with the biological agent that had been released by the aliens but why was it affecting different characters in different ways? Hass went blind, Rosen became maniacal, most were killed and Dowd and Teicher seem the least affected of all as they were fully functioning

for the majority of the script. Not only was there no explanation anywhere in the episode but even more troublesome was that none of the characters seemed to be questioning it.

Somewhere in the episode, I would have liked to have seen at least a small hint as to what the aliens wanted. Was this a classic alien plot where they were here to take over Earth and kill all lifeforms or did they have some other goal in mind?

Moving on to the characters, Dowd made for a good protagonist and a well-developed character. We could tell from the very first page that he was skilled and brave and the writer was careful to give him an interesting backstory that was revealed to us through flashbacks. The other characters were less developed but we were given bits and pieces of information to go on which I appreciated, such as Teicher killing his wife and Heidi being afraid of being sent back to Arkansas.

The biggest issue for me was the structure. At 9 pages, the teaser was a little on the long side. I initially thought the teaser had ended when the titles appeared and didn't realize we were still in the teaser until later when Act I began. At the end of page 3, we've already given the audience a pretty good idea of who Dowd is and established the basis of what situation he finds himself in, which pretty much accomplishes the goal of the teaser. From there, Act I went on far longer than it should have and was followed by a very brief Act II. The remaining acts were more equally spaced and had a better flow.

It's almost arguable that the actual end of the teaser felt a bit anticlimactic since we are left with a visual of a glowing red storm raging outside the facility which isn't nearly as intimidating as a faceless creature with glowing eyes locking on to you.

The non-linear aspect of the script was a bit problematic in that, although the flashback scenes were labeled, we were never told exactly how far back in time we were going. A date or time would have been helpful for the reader/viewer to establish a timeline. I also struggled to determine if the present storylines (Dowd, Hass and Heidi) were all happening at the same time, a question that wasn't answered until near the end of the script. A simple solution would be to replace the "before" with something like "1 day ago" or some other indication of how much time had reversed.

There were also a few formatting issues. There was at least one occasion where the narrative descriptions were written in past tense which can be found on page 10 with: "Teicher carries the specimen like he was [is] carrying the most dangerous biological weapon ever created, which it is."

Having said that, the narrative descriptions were otherwise extremely well-written. The writer provided an ample amount of white space which made for ease of reading and kept the action moving at a steady pace.

On page 28, when Dowd goes into an adjoining surgery room, it wasn't necessary to continue doing full scene headings for Teicher's location, especially since Dowd's location was only receiving mini slugs.

Character's names should remain consistent throughout the script, especially when one or more characters share the same last name. The writer referred to both Aiden Frank as well as his father, the Admiral, as "Frank" in the narrative descriptions which made for some unnecessary confusion. Also, on the topic of character names, why were some characters referred to by their rank, first and last names in the dialogue prompts while others were just referred to by their first or last name? Consistency is key. If some of the characters go by their full name, the others should as well and vice versa.

Finally, there were quite a few typos and grammar mistakes. I would urge the writer to either perform a thorough proofread or to have one done professionally to eliminate these from subsequent drafts.

While *Sentient* featured a well-developed protagonist and boasted an interesting plot that easily held my attention, there were a few issues that prevented the script from being as effective as possible. Moving forward, I would urge the writer to consider the above comments and make any changes that feel the most in line with his vision. I wish him the best of luck with this and all future endeavors.