

SENTIENT USA PILOT REVIEW BY DAVID NERLICH JAN 2020

Note this is my first reading of any draft of this story and these notes were made as I read.

Anything I haven't commented on is probably working (or escaped my notice!)

p1 First thought: I see the appeal of opening on chaos but do we really enter the scene/story too late? Then I discover it's a flash forward. This works, not sure its necessary but maybe it's a good idea.

p2 JJ Lindsey discussion opener feels both sappy and forced. Something less obvious needed.

Agree with HOD that an establishing shot of the dam required and a hint of Lindsey's role so we know whats important other than that theres a bump in the romance.

p4 JJ's pestering her. We dont know the circumstances, so he's not being likeable. Plotwise the dynamic is clear though.

p4 "a tall electrical tower, one in a continuous row that goes on as far as the eye can see" - I guess you mean up? Oh, you mean one of many in a continuous row.

p9 Forest chaos seems like a challenge for VFX and practical FX might be expensive?

p15 Mightn't the water be tainted with ash or red stuff? Same problem later with the found canteen. Trusting drinking water is safe seems incautious.

p20 Sal seems initially to lack direction a bit. He seems content to just make friends with JJ. Not scouting around. No goal. Just seems to be waiting to play the role of ally.

p26 Okay now it looks like Sal is motivated by JJs connection to the dam, and maybe the power lines. It could be clearer if thats his story. Leaving JJ a gun without saying so or checking he knows how to use it feels a bit odd.

p28 Ok asks if he can use the gun. Bit late though as they had intended to part company before this. Prison escapees are a good escalation. Sal is making a bit more sense now. This is his battle.

p31 LENA “ Yep. I’ve cried more in the last twenty-four hours than I have in the last ten years.” Has she?? So is that about her sister, or her friends at the bar or..?

p36 Why do the glasses work then not work? Might be explainable but its not explained, just feels odd or like a set-up for events to come. Fine if it is but not if it feels like one.

p42 Leopards loosed - a bit improbable as a decision but good as another tension raiser. Couldn’t they just release the non-lethal animals? Maybe releasing the deadly ones should be an accident.

p44 JJ “Hello! Anybody!” Wouldnt calling out be more appropriate before swiping the water and carrots? Maybe not but felt a bit odd.

p48 We already have prisoners on the loose, why do we need a gang of bad miners as well?

p51 In contrast to the UK pilot this disaster is bringing out the worst in everyone. And the post-apocalyptic lawless western theme seems to be overtaking the scifi mystery.

p58 Zebra interaction presents a production challenge.

OVERALL I’d give this a solid 3/5 for now. I think there’s some overall story stuff to work out but the potential to be great is there.

STRENGTHS - Lots of sources of tension and foreboding. Everything clear, well described. Entertaining.

WEAKNESSES - Sometimes not clear there’s a been a consideration of budget. There’s not enough of the aliens or sense of this being more than a disaster story. Its not that the elements aren’t there but there’s too much else going on setting up tensions between the humans so the disaster and resulting chaos seems like they’ve taken over the story. There’s also lot of characters and setups and not much room for development. It might be a case of shifting some stuff into later episodes to make room.