

SCREENCRAFT

Sentient

by David Steinhoff

Contest: ScreenCraft Sci-Fi & Fantasy Screenwriting Competition (2020)

Package: Standard Entry with Feedback

Date: 04/06/2020

Page Count: 48

Genre: Sci-fi

Analyst: 336E7

Rating: N/A

Score: 6.70/10

| CATEGORY | SCORE |
|--------------------------|---------|
| Plot | 6.00/10 |
| Characterization | 6.00/10 |
| Concept | 6.00/10 |
| Format | 9.00/10 |
| Originality | 6.00/10 |
| Voice | 8.00/10 |
| Structure | 7.00/10 |
| Dialogue | 8.00/10 |
| Conflict | 6.00/10 |
| Pacing | 7.00/10 |
| Theme | 5.00/10 |
| Tone | 7.00/10 |
| Catharsis | 6.00/10 |
| Commercial Appeal | 6.00/10 |
| Current Market Potential | 6.00/10 |
| Casting Potential | 6.00/10 |
| Genre Conventions | 8.00/10 |
| Set Piece Creativity | 8.00/10 |

Logline

As the world is being invaded by unknown beings, a navy diver assembles a small band of survivors to mount a resistance.

Feedback

SENTIENT is a well written script and plays with some cool genre elements, but the pilot does little to hook in the reader or effectively explain what the series is going to be, moving forward.

Your writing style and formatting both achieve a fast-paced read. You never allow your descriptive blocks of action to become dense or overbearing, a sign of an experienced writer.

Your dialogue is believable and natural sounding, never becoming over the top or intentionally heavy on exposition. Good work in these areas.

What I found lacking were complex characters with depth and dimension that I could empathize with and feel engaged with their journey. Dowd is a heroic guy, but without knowing what his goals are, it is difficult to get on board with him.

Give your story some objectives. You don't state a clear objective until page 39 (get to Waterhen), and even then, it is not clear what that means. Dowd needs a relatable and understandable goal. Something like saving his son, but even when that is mentioned by Hunt, he seems to dismiss the notion.

Giving this group a goal allows the audience to track their progress and easily identify complications that arise. Without knowing what they want to achieve, we are in the dark as to their progress and can easily lose interest.

Once you establish the clear goals, add the ticking clock to the situation. They have to obtain X before Z happens. Add stakes for each of the characters. What are the consequences for each of them if they should fail? Doing so will get us invested in both the characters and the story. These important elements are noticeably missing from this pilot.

I'm a very novice recreational diver myself, so I have a passing familiarity with some of the diving lingo you employ. For the uninitiated, you should really make an effort to explain a bit more. In act one, when Dowd has the flashback scene about coming up with the bends, share some specifics with the audience. Have the doctor ask Hunt what happened and give a brief explanation on page 9 to educate your viewers.

Also, the effects of the illness do not play a part for the rest of the story. It would be an interesting complication to have Dowd fighting sickness and pain while also dealing with the weird shit going on around him. You clearly have a knowledge and passion for this diver element of your story, use

it more.

We see the Pied Piper two or three times, but it is not clear what it wants, either. Your antagonist must be as well established as your protagonist, given clear goals and objectives. We need to understand what it wants and how Dowd's persistence and survival is in opposition to that, placing him and the others in danger. It clearly is not going to stand up and say that "I want this!", so you have to have Dowd and the others suss out what it's goals might be and how they want to stop that from happening. Having similar goals for both sides would also add a nice layer of complication.

Overall, a fun concept that needs attention on character and plot. You have the other fundamentals covered, so focus on communicating objectives and how the journey to reach them is going to be complicated. Hope these notes help give you direction and focus for the next draft.