

## FEATURE (FOR PRODUCTION COMPANY)

### OVERALL (3)

"How To Kill A Witch" is an engaging story about a young teen witch who discovers her true destiny. Even though the plot is a bit foreseeable, there are no alarming weak points in this script, The tone and the mood of the story are good. The story and premise have a great deal of promise, but the execution could be improved. The characters, however, doesn't always feel believable and fully motivated. Some are strong expressive characters, but they lack clear and coherent motives. The world that the story is set in is clear. The story is mostly told through dialogue, so there needs to be more showing and less telling. The story is in desperate need of a spark of originality that will make everything else shine despite its flaws. The writing is simple and brief. The fantasy element is interesting, but not enough to keep the readers fully engaged.

### PREMISE (3)

A young girl discovers she's a witch in this modern take of "The Wizard of Oz" meets "Beautiful Creatures". "The Wizard of Oz" is a feel good film, but it does get a little scary when the Wicked Witch of the West decides to kill Dorothy. A similar thing happens in "How to Kill A Witch". Although it can sometimes feel contrived, the overall effect of this story is to captivate the reader. The core concept has a great deal of promise but the execution could be improved.

### STRUCTURE (4)

The plot effectively follows the three act structure. It obeys an extremely standard point A to point B to point C progression and offers few surprises. The film becomes a waiting game for that big finale twist, since throughout the plot it becomes evident that Diane is not the evil witch. Some of the flashbacks in the story are excessive, unnecessary and oddly placed (21.5, 24). Also, the teen romance between Jordan and Cassandra is dull and boring since there are no obstacles in their relationship.

### CHARACTER (4)

Cassandra is a bland character with no internal character arc. She has a clear goal throughout, but her personality needs some work. Avoid overtly telling us about the protagonist, and instead show us (16.4, 33.1). She's described as someone who enjoys painting and baseball, and wants to be a normal girl, but we never see her involved in these mundane activities. The minor characters are well-etched, much better than the Cassandra: there's the annoying brother, the cute kid, the kid who would do anything for a couple of bucks, and the kid who always has something to eat. Each one has a distinctive personality that contributes to the story's genre and tone. The evil witch is a stock villain. Beyond her characterization as powerful and ruthless, we know almost nothing with substance about her. She's similar to hundreds of other evil witches in related movies. The best villains are often unexpected: they are discrete, gentle and not arrogant. Try to make the evil witch unique and interesting. As far as Diane's character, she's follows the standard rules of a mentor character. Nothing new here. It would be interesting to see if her character has an ulterior motive for helping Cassandra.

### CONFLICT (4)

The main conflict includes an evil witch trying to kill Cassandra and her friends, and possibly humankind. So yes, there is a great deal at stake for the characters. A sense of danger is established early within the plot (11.2). The plot also effectively introduces a sense of urgency, aka: the "ticking clock". This occurs when Cassandra finds out she has until her thirteen birthday at 4:21p.m. before the witch finds her and kills her. A pivotal scene that portrays the continually rising stakes and builds suspense is the elevator scene (110.1). Here, the friends are stuck in a dropping elevator cursed by the witch, while Cassandra has her first face-to-face encounter with the evil witch. However, there is no sense of internal conflict. Cassandra's struggle with her mother's death provides a good source for internal conflict. Also, conflict shouldn't always arise from the outside forces (the evil witch). Try to incorporate friends arguing with each other about where to go, what to do, etc. The friends are almost always too compliant with each other (50, 46). It's interesting to see that the gang (except Seth) follow Cassandra blindly without questioning the risks of their adventure, yet it's assumed that the questioning will erupt once the danger begins.

#### DIALOGUE (3.5)

For the most part, the dialogue and action scenes balance out into a coherent read. Yet, sometimes the dialogue is on-the-nose and overtly cheesy, and this doesn't always enhance the plot (50.5, 39.7). Plus, sometimes conversations don't flow naturally and seem unrealistic (20.5). Backstories should emerge naturally as we meet each character. Also, characters sometimes state the obvious through expository remarks (7.2, 9.4, 36.1, 9.4).

#### PACING (4)

Good and steady pace. Overall, the pacing effectively builds up the tension until the climax. Characters appear on screen for just the right amount of time, and major events occur at appropriate times. A good example of great pacing is when the gang is getting ready to fight the evil witch (108). The flow of these events builds tension and effectively captures the reader's curiosity. However, there is a particular part at the beginning that comes across as random and repetitive (23.5). Here, Cassandra and Emily are at the library, trying to research for ways to get rid of Diane, when Cassandra explains to Emily that she didn't tell her everything that happened the night her mother died. Yet, she proceeds to repeat everything she told her at the beginning (9). This scene seems confusing and feels disconnected from the rest of the plot. Some scenes are too short, like the scene where Cassandra meets Jordan (5.9). It would have been interesting to see them bonding and getting to know each other for a few beats. This way, it's clear that Jordan likes her, and the story avoids the sudden and derivative teen relationship.

#### ORIGINALITY (3.5)

While the plot is entertaining and mostly well done, it contributes little to the done-to-death fantasy genre. Beside the twist of Emily being the evil witch, almost every element feels bland and contrived. It seems devoid of actual and interesting magic. "How to Kill a Witch" also borrows elements from other films (The Good Witch, Beautiful Creatures, Teen Witch), expecting the reader to fill in the gaps, and use their imagination. Moreover, the title "How To Kill A Witch" is specific and unique, but perhaps more time should be dedicated to research the concept and process of killing a witch.

#### LOGIC (3.5)

There are several points lacking clarity. The most pressing matter involves unmotivated characters. Alas, why did the witch want to kill Cassandra? Why did she kill her mother in the first place? It's difficult to take a character that doesn't have any motives seriously. Also, the characters act too mature (and even too daring) for their age. A simple solution to this would be to make the teens a bit older. Do they absolutely have to be middle schoolers? Also, at the very beginning, there is a scene where Cassandra tells Emily how her mom died (9). This scene is not only filled with exposition, but it also very much raises a question: as her supposed best friend, shouldn't Emily already know this very important piece of information from Cassandra's life. Moreover, Cassandra's training is not believable enough. The evil witch is constantly described as a wicked being who has potential to destroy all humanity. As I've already mentioned, Cassandra's relationship with Jordan seems forced and meaningless. In other words, it's just there to fulfill a purpose (the romance subplot). Why does Jordan like Cassandra? This is middle school, and she's labeled as the social outcast, while he's the attractive popular boy. Consider writing the characters as friends or even acquaintances that already know each other at the beginning.

#### WRITING ABILITY (4)

The writing is simple, brief and straight to the point. The humor is light and appropriate for a teen fantasy film (26.9, 32.6, 38). However, some action paragraphs are lacking in description. Try to incorporate more visual elements in order to get a sense of world of the narrative and enhance the emotions and reactions of the characters.

### **FOR FEATURE (FOR SCRIPT COMPETITION)**

**What did you like?**

There's a good story here. Alexander is a relatable character and the situation that he finds himself in is certainly an alarming, could-happen-to-you circumstance. The story effectively tackles the unpleasant idea of "wrong place, wrong time" and blends it with the charming concept of serendipity.

I particularly enjoyed the way the you kick off the story. It has a very cinematic touch to it. For the most part, major events occur at the right time and characters are on screen for the right amount of time. Plus, the dialogue has a good feel to it.

The title is unique, catchy and memorable. Titles are a great marketing tool in Hollywood, so it's best to put some thought into it.

A good moment occurs towards the end on pages 95-98 (the events leading up to the resolution). Here, Alexander sprints towards the boat but then changes his mind and never boards the boat. However, when he goes back to look for Lena, she is gone. Later, Lena shows up at his doorstep in Odessa. This ending is very satisfying and sweet. Overall, the story and premise have a great deal of promise, but the execution should be much stronger.

### **What do you think needs work?**

The most significant issue with this script is that the characters are "walking stereotypes". Try to dig deeper into each of the character's roles and motives. Moreover, there's no internal conflict at all. When seeing the family pictures at the beginning, we assume that Alex will have some sort of inner struggle. Even though I did enjoy the way you kick off the story, it's not certainly the best beginning for this story. As it stands, the beginning is ultimately misleading since it prepares the reader for a story about the family, not just about Alex.

In addition to the conflict that threatens the characters from outside, there should be conflict rising between the characters. Unfortunately, Alex and Lena's relationship is not believable. They are inexplicably attracted to each other. Two strangers brought together by undesirable circumstances. After all, they are trying to survive the chase. Romance feels like a very cliché, and rather forced subplot in this story. Plus, they are too agreeable. Realistically speaking, it's unlikely to fall in love after merely one day and in such frenetic circumstances too.

Even though the dialogue is generally well written, it isn't necessarily memorable. This is mostly because it is hampered by moments of exposition. There needs to be more showing and less telling (i.e. pages 6, 18, 33). Throughout the script, conversations are often repetitive or empty (pages 46, 52). Keep in mind that the dialogue needs to enhance the character's role without explaining what has happened or what is about to happen.

The story is a little slow to get going, with nothing substantial happening until around page 20. Plus, the flashback on page 70 (when Lena is telling Alex her life story) are not necessary. In addition, there's no overall sense of urgency. A good solution to this is to try different ways to raise the stakes.

There are several points lacking clarification. For example, why does Alexander help Lena after knowing that she is a thief? There should be more reluctance and disagreement between them after Alex sees her stealing a man's wallet. Perhaps he decides to leave her and he gets in trouble.

All in all, there's a lot more than can be done with the premise. Lastly, try to think about the take-away message of your script: what do you want people to remember about your story or characters?

STORY 5

CHARACTERIZATION 3

DIALOGUE 4

DESCRIPTION 4

CLARITY 5

ORIGINALITY 4

Total: 25