

TITLE: [REDACTED]

DATE: June 2021

WRITER: [REDACTED]

GENRE: Dark comedy

SUBMITTED TO: [REDACTED]

LOCALE: Maine

SUBMITTED BY: [REDACTED]

CIRCA: Present day

ANALYST: Ricky King

ELEMENTS: Car explosion, injury FX

FORM/LENGTH: Feature script, 85 pages

DRAFT: Unknown

LOGLINE:

A suicidal comedian who is past his prime finds the will to live by connecting with two misguided teenagers who kidnap him.

COMMENT SUMMARY:

This quirky script has an original premise and is worth reading for its potential, but the positives are outweighed by a lack of depth and confusing choices made by its characters.

	Exc.	Good	Fair	Poor
CONCEPT/PREMISE:		x		
PLOT/STRUCTURE:		x		
CHARACTERIZATION:			x	
DIALOGUE:			x	
CINEMATIC/PRODUCTION VALUE:			x	

WRITER EVALUATION:

RECOMMEND:

CONSIDER: x

PASS:

PROJECT EVALUATION:

RECOMMEND:

CONSIDER:

PASS: x

## SYNOPSIS:

MICHAEL AARON (40s), a stand-up comedian who has seen better days, performs at a second-rate night club. As he goes through the motions of his set, it's clear despite his best efforts that he is deeply stressed and unhappy.

Meanwhile, high school friends SNICKERS (20), EDDIE (19), and JAMES (21) are preparing for the bank robbery that James talked the other two into. Snickers and Eddie are reluctant but agree to go along with his plan. They rob the bank but are clumsy and amateurish. As they make their getaway with the money, James surprises his friends by taking a hostage as well.

In the car, they recognize Michael's face. The guys watched his movies growing up. They make a hostage video, but Michael won't stick to the script and wisecracks the whole time. James gets frustrated and pistol-whips him. Snickers and Eddie are alarmed by how much James has escalated the situation. When James leaves to do a drug pick-up, Michael asks the other guys why they are robbing banks when they seem like good kids. Snickers and Eddie have no chance at college. Eddie fears becoming a burden to his parents. He sees Michael as a symbol of success, so he can't understand why Michael is unhappy as well, especially since he is a comedian.

The story takes a darker turn when Michael manages to grab Snickers's gun. Instead of shooting his captors, he tries to kill himself. Snickers stops him, but the boys are rattled by his suicide attempt. James returns. They realize they have to leave their hide-out and wrestle Michael into the car.

In spite of the circumstances, Snickers and Eddie take a liking to Michael. They stop at a bar. Against James's wishes, Eddie takes Michael with him. Eddie asks Michael why he is depressed even though he is a famous comedian. Michael says that most comedians are, and that Eddie has potential as a comedian himself. The two form a bond.

Back on the road, Michael manages to get out of the car and jump off a cliff. It was not high enough to kill him, but he is badly injured. They cannot bring him to a hospital or find a doctor, so they stop at a motel and call a veterinarian.

At the motel, the veterinarian JUDY (60s) is confused but comes up to their room. James unexpectedly puts a gun to her head when she walks in. He is high and unstable. Snickers talks him down. Judy tends to Michael's wounds. A sheriff comes to their door and questions Snickers, who deflects. They leave the motel.

James says he knows some gangsters who can negotiate Michael's ransom better than they can and goes to meet with them. While he is gone, Snickers and Eddie have a heart to heart. The two of them realize that they have potentially ruined their lives and James is out of control. They agree to save Michael and return the money to the bank. They take Michael and escape with James and the gang on their tail.

Michael reveals that he also feels like a burden because he was diagnosed with Parkinson's. At the same bank they robbed, Snickers and Eddie return the money and are about to give themselves up. They are shot at by the gang. They drive away with Michael with the gang and the police in pursuit. They crash. Michael runs from the wreck and prepares to jump from a bridge to kill himself. Snickers takes off after him, but the police try to intercept and arrest him. Eddie yells for them to stop, and the officers realize that Snickers is actually talking Michael down. Snickers reveals to Michael that his own father killed himself and left him behind. Snickers begs Michael to think of how his family will feel if he goes through with it. Michael lets Snickers help him down. The police swarm in to arrest him and Eddie.

At Snickers' trial, Michael testifies in his and Eddie's defense. He says that they gave him a will to live and that they are just misguided. Snickers and Eddie each get a reduced sentence of 10 years.

Years later, Michael is a guest on a popular late-night show, promoting a book he wrote on what he learned from the kidnapping. He visits Snickers in prison – the two have kept up a friendship. Michael still has his sense of humor, which rubbed off on Eddie. Meanwhile, Eddie practices a stand-up set for his fellow inmates. His opening bit is to ask the crowd if any of them have ever been to jail, which he realizes will not land with his current crowd. He tosses that joke out and starts rewriting.

## COMMENTS:

This quirky script has an original premise and promising story, but the positives are outweighed by a lack of depth and confusing choices made by its characters. It is worth reading for the potential, and further revisions focused on character development would elevate it more.

The script has a structure that flows well. The concept of the depressed comedian is a familiar one, but it takes a compelling form through the captor/captive relationship that Michael has with the two boys. The major moments of the story work, but the script could use some ironing out in the details to make it land better emotionally. For example, a challenge would be taking the Michael character and finding the balance between his humor, his depression, and his constant threats of suicide.

The message of the story, that living is worth it, is stated often but is only communicated verbally without emotional depth or payoff. Michael, Snickers, and sometimes Eddie share deep thoughts, but they do not hit hard even when Michael is about to kill himself. The audience also does not know where these thoughts are coming from as the characters lack depth. Michael's dialogue in particular comes across as a repetitive caricature of a suicidal person, with little beyond "I don't want to live" because his life is in decline. The personalities of Snickers and Eddie are not differentiated enough, and sometimes Snickers seems like he is there for no reason. There is plenty of telling, but not enough showing. We are told why Michael is suicidal, why Eddie is nervous about his parents, and why Snickers went through with the robbery. We can see from the outside how the boys bond with their captive and decide to keep him alive, but we do not know why they change over the course of the story. With more detail and a deeper understanding of the characters, this script could go from fair to good in its characterization and dialogue.

Another concern is that the kidnapers' motivations beyond "ransom means making money" are unclear. We only know why Michael's struggle resonates with Snickers (his own father's suicide) right as the story climaxes, and we only know because he says it out loud. Michael similarly just tells the boys the root of his depression – that he has Parkinson's and fears his physical decline – and that's that.

The message struggles to shine through the lack of depth and confusing motivations, but the story is worth revising and looking at another draft. As-is, this script has a premise and characters with potential. The execution renders them shallower than they would be if there was more depth, emotion, and intent behind their dialogue and decisions.