

TITLE:	██████████	TYPE:	SP 102
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ANALYST:	Julie Saint-Anne	GENRE:	Noir
CIRCA:	Present	LOCALE:	Oregon
ELEMENTS:	NA	SUB AS:	Spec Script, Writing Sample

LOG LINE

There's a downside to everything -- especially trust.

BRIEF SYNOPSIS

Roy Maddux is on the downside of his life. Over-the-hill in years, love, and criminal career, he's resigned to robbing the thieves who rob convenience stores. An old friend, trucking line operator T.J., convinces Maddux to hijack one of T.J.'s drivers to ascertain if the driver is jacking merchandise. Looks easy, but Maddux knows better. And when the simple plan is interrupted by a sniper, Maddux must protect his downside by figuring out what's really going on. It's not a shipment of stolen credit cards, as T.J.'s man "Doc" would have him believe. It's not even a load of cocaine, as the femme fatale believes. It's a complicated scheme to maintain ownership of a cocaine delivery system. The scheme falls apart. T.J.'s opponents come after him. He goes after Maddux and Doc, and the only one who comes out alive is Roy Maddux -- who hitches a ride to anywhere with a trucker.

COMMENTS SUMMARY

Classic elements of film noir. Stylish, stylized dialogue. World-wise, world-weary protagonist with a dark past. Hidden agendas, and a hidden fortune. Solid, Chandler-esque writing. The downside: no heat between the protagonist and the femme fatale, and the protagonist's final action seems unmotivated.

SCRIPT EVALUATION: CONSIDER
WRITER EVALUATION: CONSIDER

SYNOPSIS:

Roy Maddux is on the downside of his life. Over-the-hill in years, love, and criminal career, he's resigned to robbing the thieves who rob convenience stores. An old friend, trucking line operator T.J., sends his substance-addicted henchman, Doc to with an invitation to change his future. Reluctant, but desperate, Maddux agrees to hijack one of T.J.'s drivers to ascertain if the driver is jacking merchandise.

Maddux and Doc drive to Bittersweet, Oregon, and set up in a local hotel to await the arrival of trucker Shayes. Already, things look dubious. Although the town looks like it was plucked from the 40's, brand new appliances stick out like sore thumbs everywhere. Townsfolk seem to be hiding a community secret. And everyone loves Shayes. When Maddux and Doc flag Shayes with a roadside ploy, the trucker is gunned down by a sniper before Maddux can check the haul as he'd been hired to do. Doc tells him if they don't find the stolen credit cards hidden in the cargo, T.J. will be after them. Thinking the driver may have ditched the cards, they visit his mistress, an old boozer who's an unlikely paramour for the handsome trucker. She knows nothing. When her mobile home is torched, Maddux begins to suspect there's more to this job than he's been told. When Doc sees T.J. get into a car with the Indian, he knows his boss is up to no good - and tries to convince Maddux to give it up and go home. Marv the mechanic is brutally stabbed with a screwdriver. The sheriff arrests Doc for murder. "Now, where's the coke," he asks. Doc, already on the edge of sanity, loses it and shoots the sheriff. Meanwhile Red Cloud, the supposedly brain-damaged Indian, demands a conference with Roy.

When Doc arrives at the bus depot, Roy is waiting for him. He tells Penny, the street-smart waitress who's waiting with her suitcase for the bus out of town, to explain to Doc what's going on. Shayes trusted her with the dope, but her boyfriend Marv was a problem. So she killed him. Doc's plan was to boost the load and lay Shayes's killing off on Roy. Suddenly T.J. appears. He knew Doc would sell him out. And it's not cocaine in Penny's suitcase, it's flour. T.J. invites them to take a ride. He's been dealing coke with the Yakima Reservation, and when he found a better deal, he had to prove the run wasn't viable to get out of his deal with them. The Indians, onto T.J.'s scheme, chase them down. Maddux and Doc barely escape. Finally, Roy puts Doc out of his misery by driving a big rig through the restroom where Doc is freshening up -- and hitches a ride to anywhere with a trucker.

SCRIPT EVALUATION: CONSIDER
WRITER EVALUATION: CONSIDER

COMMENTS:

The film noir hero still holds a fascination for audiences. Something about that jaded, hard-boiled, demi-monde seduces us. The author has created a tangible, compelling protagonist reminiscent of Bogart with the contemporary feel of Nick Nolte. Unfortunately, the backstory of a deceitful former lover whom he had to kill seems forced. And the subplot of a deceitful current lover is untapped. In the end, his fateful decision is based on an unanswered phone. We know she's schtupping someone else - but he doesn't. And there's no clear motive for him to dispose of Doc, after risking his own life to save him just minutes before.

The plot is well-conceived and thoroughly complicated, with unexpected conclusions and satisfying revelations that support the theme that trust is a double-edged sword.

The relationship between Maddux and Doc is girded with undercurrents, conflict, and rounded characterizations -- which makes Maddux's final decision to kill Doc unredeeming.

The classic film noir structure supports the plot well with one exception. The femme female, well-defined as an ambitious beauty stuck in a small town, is linked to Doc (the side-kick), instead of to the protagonist. Since it's her comments that reveal the true nature of the mystery, and her greed that triggers the conclusion, it would be more effective (and true to the genre and theme) for Maddux to get involved with her.

Characters and dialog ring with authenticity and interest. The boozy, old, sweepstakes addict who's death alerts Maddux to what's really going down; the brain-damaged Indian whose innocence masks his criminal power; the town sheriff, the gun-toting mechanic -- all lend mystery, and provide red herrings and clues for the protagonist.

The author successfully creates an atmosphere of duplicity and suspense. As the protagonist reveals the truth, his deductions are supported by observations and clear inferences.

Doc's backstory, although it mirrors the theme and is cinematically well-crafted, is extraneous and confusing.

Well-written, well-conceived, well-executed. The question is, does it support the author's ability to create a "darkly comedic musical". Though dark, it's not funny -- and it's as far from a musical as you can get.

Excellent Good Fair Poor

SCRIPT EVALUATION: CONSIDER
WRITER EVALUATION: CONSIDER



Analyst: Julie Saint-Anne

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Characterization		X		
Dialogue	X			
Story Line		X		
Structure		X		

SCRIPT EVALUATION: CONSIDER
WRITER EVALUATION: CONSIDER