

Type of Material: Screenplay - 116 pages

Title:

Submitted by:

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LOG LINE:

Team Snakeyes must scam \$1M from gazillionnaire DONALD DONALDSEN's Xanadu Casino to save the Indian Snakeyes Casino (and the Uncas tribe) from destruction.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Characterization				X
Dialogue				X
Structure			X	
Storyline				X
Setting		X		
Budget	High	Medium	Low	X

SYNOPSIS

Electrician MILLER and welder CHIEF THOROGOOD (who operates the rundown “Snakeyes Casino” on the rez) lose their shipyard jobs at Nuclear Marine when gazillionaire/casino operator DON DONALDSEN stages a hostile takeover and shuts it down.

Miller’s ex-wife warns him he won’t see the kids again until he catches up on his support payments. He’s working on a sure thing. A radio-controlled electro-dynamic dice manipulator. He tests it at Snakeyes. Wins \$5G. Security escorts him out involuntarily, and tosses him into the lake. Chief rows up to him. Miller didn’t know it was his casino. Shows him the device. Chief lets him go with a warning: “You owe me.” Miller pays his ex off.

Chief meets with the GOVERNOR and Donaldsen, who wants the right to build a casino in a state that only allows Native gambling rights. Governor is disappointed in the measly tax revenues the Indians are generating. On the other hand, Donaldsen isn’t even meeting the interest payments on his loans, and he stripped the boatyard’s pension funds. The Chief pleads. A Singapore Corp has promised to pump \$100M into Snakeyes Casino that will generate \$150M in taxes. It represents the last hope for the Uncas Nation. On the other hand, Donaldsen is Gov’s largest contributor. Gov wants \$1M earnest money. The Chinese can’t advance the money until the deal is sealed.

He calls in Miller’s marker, and gathers a “team” of scammers whose markers he holds. Help him steal \$1M from Donaldsen, or go to jail. TOMATT uses a card-counting device strapped to his toes to rack up at blackjack. RUPERT JONES is a dice skimmer. STEPHANIE is a card shark. Heavy metal devotee MATT RIVERS is a slot hustler. ROSIE LOPEZ is a bingo cheat. PROFESSOR HUGH TRENGOVE is a roulette man. Team Snakeyes. They have 2 days to take \$1M from Donaldsen’s casino. Chief gives them \$100G front money, the tribe’s life savings.

They head for Donaldsen’s Xanadu Casino in Atlantic City. Scope the layout. They each run their individual specialties. Donaldsen’s casino surveillance watches the floor action. The team converges at a crap table. Rupert attaches Miller’s miniature computer chips to the dice, and rolls. Miller presses his jacket buttons to get his number. 19 passes in a row. They’re doing serious damage. The “eye in the sky” picks up Miller’s “fidgeting.” Miller gives the cue to pull stakes. They disperse.

Miller and Stephanie make a dinner date. Surveillance reruns the tapes. Puts it together. Visits each of the team members with a baseball bat. Stephanie shoots a goomba in the foot and escapes. They go after Miller, but he’s waiting at the restaurant for Steph. She warns him. They split, leaving the money in his room.

Miller reports their failure to Chief. Molotov cocktails and machine gun fire destroys Miller’s house. Miller is pissed off. He experiments in the garage with a slot machine and a battery charger. Inserts a doctored quarter. Tasers the machine. Jackpot. Chief is impressed. They gather the team back together. The plan: New Years Eve, they plug every slot in the Xanadu., and make them all hit simultaneously. It’ll cause a riot, which will cause an investigation, which will force the casino to close for at least a week. The banks will foreclose on Donaldsen.

The team fights the holiday crowds and plugs machines. Miller and the crew send their electrical signals to the machines. The jackpots roll. The crowds go nuts. Donaldsen comes down from the penthouse. The State Gambling Commission shuts them down and revokes his gambling license. Miller invites his ex-wife and kids to Las Vegas.

CRITIQUE

Characterization

- Ostensibly supportive of Native American non-stereotyping, yet the only Native American character who earns a name is Chief Thorogood. All the others are “BRAVES”. Come to think of it, we don’t meet any other Native Americans.
- Villain Donaldsen is so broadly drawn, it isn’t even clear what he wants. At least, more specifically than “everything.” A bad Trump caricature.
- Chief’s motivation is equally murky. There are no other Indian characters to ground the tribe’s dependence on the casino, just scenes of it’s low rent and low profits. More, the need is for an Indian “renaissance” -- too general to create empathy.
- The “specialists” aren’t impressively specialized. And their specialties are redundant. It ain’t exactly the Dirty Dozen or Mission Impossible team. It isn’t even a “motley team that pulls the best from themselves to accomplish a task beyond their grasp.”
- They’re supposed to be hardened old pros, yet they’re “awed” by the spectacle of Atlantic City?

Dialogue

- Too often expositional and distracted.

Structure

- That “symbolic” opening sequence is misleading, promises depth that isn’t delivered, and doesn’t have any bearing or impact on the story.
- Takes way too long to start. And then resolves too quickly in the foreshortened denouement. Piddles around with bullshit until page 60! For instance, the whole rerouted governor’s phone call gambit buys time - and wastes screen time. Then the governor asks for \$1M escrow. Why not save 10 pages and make that the inciting scene? Author’s turning points aren’t well-considered, which forces the story to slow down while the outline catches up. The page 60 turning point is the first casino scam. Instead, it should be the second scam, where the goals have changed, the stakes have multiplied, and they’re unified and compelled by deeper motivations. The first scam should begin by page 30!
- No sequential sense: They gather the team back together one at a time. All but one is back in. We cut to Miller reconnecting with his ex-wife. Then cut back to the last team member rejoining. Why the romantic interruption?
- Stupid, boring, revenge/solution. Author needs to think harder.

Storyline

- Too much illogical action to suspend disbelief: The casino surveillance guards are “baffled” by the scams they’re seeing onscreen? The team wins half their quota, and splits the take as though it’s theirs. But it belongs to Chief! They celebrate before they finish the job? (Ditto Miller making love to his ex-wife until he’s “earned” it in combat.) They lose the tribe’s life savings, and Chief is just “disappointed?” Their second scam doesn’t even attempt to retrieve the tribe’s life savings. Nor is it ever mentioned again.
- The scam is simplistic. Leaves little excitement in action, prep, and complications.

Subplots

- The only subplot is the ex-wife. Not only does it have no impact, it’s a useless distraction that interrupts the action.

Premise

- Tried and true, but VERY badly executed.

Writing

- Evocative descriptions: "...wears calm like a Saville Row suit." "...like they're all trying to catch the last chopper out of Saigon."
- Missing and confusing sluglines! Sometimes don't know where we are. Sometimes don't know when. Sometimes contradictory. And some locations are unnecessary.
- Amateurish inclusion of unnecessary music cues.
- All the onomatopoeia is damned annoying! "SAWWWOOOOOOOOOOOOSH HHHHHH! - A PICKUP" -- (and that's a slugline!)
- Too much intrusive author inflection.
- This author knows zip about casino payouts, operations, and regulations. A little research would change the plot considerably.

EVALUATION

- X** Pass
 Worth a read
 Consider with a rewrite
 Consider
 Recommend

CHARACTERS

Believable
Complete
Interesting

X-Caricatures
X-Thin
X-Dull

DIALOGUE

X-Realistic
X-Succinct
Effective

Artificial
Over-written
X-Weak

WRITING?

Amateur.

PLOT CONSTRUCTION?

The primary problem.

WOULD IT WORK WITH A REWRITE?

Rewrite from word one. New first draft. The “scam” doesn’t make sense. The characters are stock. The premise is worn, predictable, and uninspired. No sense of dramatic tension, structure, scene sequencing.

IS IT VISUAL?

Yes, author uses props and shots to tell the story visually instead of through dialog. Locations, chases, casino action.

BUDGET?

Low.

EXPLOITABLE ELEMENTS?

Casino heists are always intriguing -- when done well.

SEX AND VIOLENCE?

Acceptable levels of both.

TV?

No objectionable material, but no chance of selling it, either.

WHAT FILMS WOULD YOU COMPARE IT TO?

The Dirty Dozen, OE11

HUMOR? IF SO, IS IT FUNNY?

Some. Not very.