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ANALYST:	Julie Saint-Anne	GENRE:	Dark Comedy
CIRCA:	Present	LOCALE:	Los Angeles
ELEMENTS:	NA	SUB AS:	Spec Script, Writing Sample

LOG LINE

A twisted tale of twists and tales.

BRIEF SYNOPSIS

Travis, Rick, Doug, Jack, and Paul are roommates. They're all afraid of Paul, who is a large, hulking, loner; the type neighbors remark on after he goes on a shooting rampage. His roommates plot to get rid of him. He leaves. They discover the body of a missing child in his "garden." Before they can call the police, he returns and forces them at gunpoint to play a game: whoever reveals the most humiliating secret about one of the others gets to live. Three of them die. The last two face off, and we realize that all of what we've seen may not be what it seemed.

COMMENTS SUMMARY

"Recommend" isn't vehement enough. I urge you to read this script. You want to be hooked by page 10? I was hooked by page 2 -- with a riveting, hilarious, three-page monologue! Now that's good writing. Surprising characterizations and dialog, tense pacing, superb comic timing, and an unexpected plot twist that turns on an unusual camera maneuver.

SCRIPT EVALUATION: RECOMMEND
WRITER EVALUATION: RECOMMEND

SYNOPSIS:

(Like *Citizen Kane*, one doesn't want to give away the "Rosebud." However, that's the nature and definition of a synopsis. I apologize for diminishing your "first read" experience.)

We open in the first person with a pov camera, never seeing or hearing the protagonist, Doug. We meet each of his roommates (Travis, Rick, and Paul), as they regale us with funny anecdotes. Finally, Jack comes home and accuses dark, hulking Paul of sleeping with his ex-girlfriend Josie. Jack leaves to take a phone call, and inept, virginal Travis reveals he was the lucky recipient of Josie's juices. Jack returns. The gauntlet is flung, and Paul storms out. The remaining roommates congratulate themselves on getting rid of him with Travis's brilliantly concocted scheme. Now that Paul is history, Travis can move in.

Our point-of-view falls asleep. He awakens to find his roommates, bound to kitchen chairs. They've discovered the body of a missing girl in the "garden" and Paul killed her. Paul returns. They accuse him of insanity. He agrees that, technically, he is insane. He tells them that when Jack returns, he'll kill them all - except the one who gives up the best secret about one of his roommates. With increasingly desperate flair, each betrays the others. Travis wins the competition when he tops Jack's confession of Travis's feces fetish with Jack's butt-wiping with Paul's toothbrush. Paul is so impressed with their entries, he decides to reward them all - except protagonist Doug, who offered nothing. They leave him there, while they prepare his grave, and Doug hears four gunshots.

No longer in Doug's pov, we see him call the police and step over four bloody bodies on his way to warn Josie. She doesn't believe him, and tries to call Jack, but gets the police. They're on their way. The doorbell buzzes, and Doug realizes it may be Paul. He gets Josie's gun from her bedroom. It is Paul. He's covered in dirt and blood, and loaded for bear. He's there to protect Josie from Doug -- who just killed all his roommates. Showdown. The medicine Paul was supposedly taking for his insanity is actually Doug's prescription. Paul's diatribe about Mars and the end of the world was actually Doug's ramblings. He was paranoid and armed and he killed them all. But Paul played possum. The veins in Doug's forehead bulge as he suddenly realizes it's true. Josie and Paul try to calm him, to convince him to give himself up and get help. He shoots them both.

SCRIPT EVALUATION: RECOMMEND
WRITER EVALUATION: RECOMMEND

COMMENTS:

Talk about concept -- best friends forced to betray brutal secrets about one another or be killed.

Like the authors' other piece, ██████████, ██████████'s structure develops naturally from the set-up. In this case, a pov camera. Though it's a tricky maneuver, rarely successful (ie., the ending to Hitchcock's *Spellbound*, or the classic *Lady in the Lake*), this story uses the technique for more than effect. Like Bogart's *Dark Passage*, the revelation is dependent on this point of view.

The comic structure deserves some attention, as well. Every set up was not only well-paid off, it functioned as a pace setter. For instance, after hearing several long, involved "tales," the crucial story of how and why Paul killed the little girl comes up. It looks like we're going to be treated to a long, involved story. All he says is, "Two weeks ago, I'm sitting at home, it's the middle of the afternoon, but it's kind of a cold and dreary day and so I stepped outside for some fresh air. Saw a little girl playing, so I killed her." Boom.

Also like ██████████, ██████████ is rife with reincorporation. However, in this piece, it's more mature, more germane to the plot and the humor, rather than a device. Even the reincorporations add twists. For instance, we're told Mr. T suffered diarrhea in the opening story. Later, we find out that Travis has a nasty habit of videotaping people defecating. We're left to reincorporate that little tidbit on our own. And Paul begs not to be told the ending to *Citizen Kane* -- which is the title of the script -- just like I didn't want to reveal the ending of this story. I couldn't help but admire the incorporation of a poster from the Hitchcock thriller, *Rope*, which depends on a long, continuous shot much as this one does from pages 39-65.

The numerous plot turns are paced with extraordinary skill, tension, and timing. I found myself desperately trying to guess how each setup was going to turn, and either satisfied or delighted by each. The final turn never occurred to me. Even as it played out, I couldn't believe it, and waited for it to turn again. There were so many, set with increasing tension and stakes, that I fear the authors ran out of steam on the last page, with a weak denouement.

Though the characters don't "change" in the classic sense, little by little, their truths are revealed and smashed.

SCRIPT EVALUATION: RECOMMEND
WRITER EVALUATION: RECOMMEND

More rounded than the characters in *Gullible*, each is fully imbued with delicious touches and unexpected characteristics -- even the character we don't see or hear until the last act. Example: first we're set up to believe Travis is a virgin. Then he reveals he was the one who slept with the girlfriend. Then, it turns out it was all a complicated scheme that this seemingly inept, Jerry Lewis-like character concocted.

Dialog is revealing without exposition. It's snappy, clever, funny and captivating.

Three concerns: 1) the static pov camera may inhibit visual interest, making it too like a stage play -- all fabulous dialog in a static set. 2) The stories they tell might be more effective if we see them under the narration. After all, I was "seeing" them as I read. If I were watching a screen, I would see only what they showed me. 3) Weak final words. I know these authors can do better. Though I like the idea of an "Easter Egg" under-credits-ending -- like in *Ferris Beuller*.

All in all, it reminds me of *Crimes of the Heart* -- for guys.

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