



TITLE: Skin Deep
 AUTHOR: -----
 GENRE: Comedy
 ANALYST: -----
 PERIOD: Present
 LOCALE: USA
 SERVICE: Feedback
 DATE: 14th Jul 2013

LOGLINE: When a vain young woman witnesses a murder and decides to hide out in an isolated residential home for disabled people, she gains a new perspective and new friends.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Structure			X	
Plot/Story Line			X	
Character Development			X	
Dialogue			X	
First 20 Pages			X	

	Recommend	Consider	Pass
Script			X
Writer			X

SYNOPSIS:

Kate tries to talk her beauty-obsessed sister, Bianca, out of the bathroom, where she has locked herself for three hours. Inside the bathroom, Bianca sees her own face as a pig's face and tries to cover it up. Eventually, Kate gets Bianca out of the bathroom and takes her to a Church hall where they are looking for volunteers, as Kate is desperate to get Bianca a job. On the way Bianca dives into the Nail It van to have her nails touched up by Lulu.

At the Church Hall, Bianca fails to help and on the way home Kate and Bianca fight. Later, Bianca asks Kate if she will pay for her to have more plastic surgery. Kate reminds her that she is still paying off the last lot of plastic surgery and refuses to give Bianca any more money. They head to bed and distraught, Bianca searches for anything that will put her out of her misery – pills or knives. However, Kate has locked everything away, so Bianca takes Kate's car keys and drives to a bridge. On the bridge however, Bianca sees two thugs throw Lulu off of the bridge. Lulu's boss, Hickson, is also present. Bianca screams and the thugs spot her and head towards her. Hickson fires a gun at her, but Bianca escapes and drives away. Moments later, Hickson, and the thugs pursue her. Terrified, Bianca dives through red lights and having failed to find toll change, down a lonely street. Bianca gets out and tries to call Kate, but Kate is asleep. Bianca's car catches fire and she drops her cell phone before running into the forest. Soon she is covered in mud.

Kate awakens and realizes Bianca is in trouble. She calls her but the phone lies where Bianca dropped it unanswered. Kate calls Emmy, Bianca's doctor, who refuses to help.

Early the next morning, Bianca emerges from the forest and finds a residential home called Sunnyview. Here Bianca meets Chris who assumes that Bianca is Kelly, who he is expecting to start work at the residential home that day. When Bianca hears that there is also accommodation with the job and that Chris will pay her in cash, she grasps the opportunity and says that she is Kelly. Then she signs the paperwork and is shown the cottage where she will stay. Immediately, Bianca realizes there is no mirror in the bathroom. Chris asks her if she will manage and Bianca responds that she will "try." She then meets Meredith who is blind.

Meanwhile, Kate calls the police but gets no joy. Then she spots Pastor Brock talking to Hickson. She tells Brock that Bianca has disappeared.

Hickson gives her Bianca's lipstick that she dropped on the bridge, saying that they were found in a nearby street.

Back at Sunnyview, Bianca meets other disabled residents, many of whom are blind. She tries to call Kate but realizes it is no use and hangs up. Soon Bianca is managing all her jobs and getting on with all the Sunnyview residents. However, one day Chris and Meredith ask her to go into town with him, on the same day that Kate's burned out car is being towed away. In a clothes shop a sales assistant sees Bianca's nametag and comments that Kelly is her own name and that she had considered working at Sunnyview, a few months earlier. As Bianca leaves the shop, the sales assistant recognizes her from the posters that Kate had put up trying to track down her sister. The sales assistant calls Kate.

Back at Sunnyview, Meredith is not even mad about the trick Bianca played in getting Meredith to wear a red dress to the dance. Later, however, Bianca and Meredith fall out and Meredith suggests that Bianca is a coward for not opening up to her. However, after staring at her newly calloused hands, Bianca heads to the Sunnyview dance and dances with Chris.

The next day as Chris and Bianca clear up, Kate turns up at Sunnyview and tells Chris that Bianca is not Kelly. Chris is distraught saying this always happens when he finds someone great. Bianca is touched and says that she must explain to Meredith. In the distance the Nail It van approaches.

Bianca tells Meredith that she saw a murder, which is why she is in hiding and Meredith insists she tell the police. However, moments later Bianca is abducted by Hickson's thugs. They speed off in the Nail It van. Chris, Meredith, and the other residents give chase in the community van. Kate is touched to see how much they care about Bianca.

Meanwhile, in the Nail It van, Hickson gives a reluctant and bound Bianca a make over, saying she will be sold to a client. Bianca almost gives up, but then fights back and with the help of Chris and Meredith's cane-fighting ways, she escapes and Hickson is arrested.

Kate tells Bianca that she is happy that she can manage independently and Chris says he wants Bianca to continue working at Sunnyview, even though she is not really Kelly. Bianca and Chris kiss.

DEVELOPMENT COMMENTS

Premise:

The premise in *Skin Deep* is a vain young woman witnesses a murder and decides to hide out in an isolated home for disabled people. A few months without a mirror gives her a new perspective and new friends.

While this is a strong premise, which could drive a feature comedy powerfully forward, there are certain issues that need to be addressed by the writer. Firstly the script lacks a little credibility in places. For example, is the Nail It killer, Hickson, credible enough? Also, Bianca finds Sunnyview very quickly after having been lost in the forest for a night and is then offered a job. This reads as too convenient to the plot. While the characters are interesting, the writer must ensure that how they act is credible.

Secondly, consider the opening depiction of Bianca. In the opening scenes she seems to be in some kind of mental therapy as her vanity is well above normal. However, she very quickly adjusts to her plain life at Sunnyview. There is much more potential for comedy in this initial adjustment and it may be worth the writer watching films such as *Private Benjamin*, to look at how much comedy is mined in the fish out of water scenarios. There is real potential in this premise of a vain character stuck in a place without all of her beauty tools.

Thirdly, consider Bianca's goal. Is it to live on the farm in disguise as Kelly, so that the murderers do not find her? If so, then the antagonist needs to be more of a threat to her discovery throughout the script, rather than just in the first and third acts. If Bianca is in constant danger of being found and we see her acting to manage her anonymity while Hickson tries to find her, then there will be greater conflict and tension in the narrative. Finally, work through the script to ensure that the comedy is maximized throughout.

Skin Deep has an engaging comic premise, but the writer is awarded lower marks because of the issues highlighted above. The writer could consider making changes to this effect, so that the script reads with greater credibility.

The script touches upon several themes, including the ideas of self-obsession and image, which are fundamental to the character of Bianca. The script reads as 108 pages long which is a little long for this material. Consider if the story can be told in 100 pages.

First Twenty Pages:

The first twenty pages of a comedy script are essential in establishing the world, laws governing the world, the tone, and the premise of the narrative. Additionally the writer must introduce the characters in a compelling way, clearly establish their goals, and spark the on-going conflict between the characters. In addition it needs to be funny.

On the first page of *Skin Deep*, the writer, to their credit, introduces the protagonist, Bianca and quickly sets up her problem on page 2, when Bianca looks at herself in the bathroom mirror and sees her own face as a pig. The antagonist, Hickson, is then introduced on page 4. However, the writer could give further consideration to establishing the world that the characters inhabit.

The conflict between the protagonist and antagonist is clear by page 18, when Hickson tries to shoot Bianca.

Structure:

The three-act structure is evident here, but the writer needs to work through the script to ensure each act has enough credible conflict. Giving Hickson greater presence in act 2 of the screenplay may help maintain conflict and tension.

Act one – Kate refuses to pay for Bianca’s plastic surgery. Bianca sees Lulu get shot. She escapes into the forest and finds Sunnyview. Chris offers her a job as Kelly and she accepts.

Act two – Bianca begins work and is a hit with Meredith and other residents. Kate searches for Bianca. The real Kelly sees Bianca on a trip into town and calls Kate. Kate and Hickson show up at Sunnyview and Hickson abducts Bianca. He gives her a makeover and she loses hope.

Act three – Bianca spots the community van. She fights Hickson. Meredith and Chris help Bianca and Hickson is arrested. Chris asks her to stay at Sunnyview and they kiss.

Additional notes:

Revisit each scene to ensure that each scene is credible and there is clear conflict in it. Particularly consider Hickson, as he needs further development to ensure credibility.

Look at each scene and see if it is needed. If it is not needed, cut the scene from the script. Some scenes may not be needed or could be edited.

Edit the dialogue in the script, to give each utterance as much focus and comic impact as possible.

Consider whether the use of pig visions in the mirror is the best way to tell some aspects of the story.

Ensure the antagonist is present throughout the screenplay as currently Hickson largely disappears in Act 2.

Character and Dialogue:

In the main, the characters are interesting, however they need further development to ensure their actions read as credible. Bianca as the image-obsessed woman, who finds herself without a mirror to look in, is a potentially compelling character. However, the writer needs to further consider Bianca's depiction when she first joins Sunnyview, as there is considerable potential comedy in her situation. Also ensure she is depicted acting on a clearly defined goal.

The characters on the whole speak distinctly from one another. Edit any pieces of dialogue, which are overlong, to give each piece of dialogue maximum impact.

General Notes:

Skin Deep offers a compelling comic premise, with the idea of a vain woman stuck in an isolated residential home. The writer needs to focus on ensuring that the narrative is credible throughout. Reading other comedy feature scripts and considering the ways in which writers overcome narrative complications to create credible comic momentum, may help in the rewrite process.



TITLE: Bullets for Silverware
 AUTHOR: -----
 GENRE: Thriller
 ANALYST: -----
 PERIOD: Modern
 LOCALE: Rural West Virginia
 SERVICE: Feedback
 DATE: 3/24/13

LOGLINE: Pharmacy student Michael Young leaves his sheltered existence to become the pharmacist in Caldwell, West Virginia. He encounters a world of drugs, intrigue, and murder and must solve the mystery if he is to survive.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Structure				XX
Plot/Story Line				XX
Character Development				XX
Dialogue				XX
First 20 Pages			XX	

	Recommend	Consider	Pass
Script			XX
Writer			XX

SYNOPSIS:

In a rural shack, four men count out oxycontin. Three of them – JOHNNY, TOLLY, and AARON – are high on the drugs. The fourth, JAMES, remains sober. When Tolly tries to force Aaron to fellate him, there's a huge scuffle, and James ends up shooting and killing Tolly. Johnny is passed out and doesn't see the murder.

Worlds away from all this, MICHAEL YOUNG graduates from pharmacy school. Much to the dismay of his parents and young fiancée MEREDITH, he decides to delay medical school and work for a while in rural West Virginia as a pharmacist. Meredith refuses to go with him or support him, so he strikes out on his own.

As Michael makes his way to West Virginia, Johnny wakes up covered in Tolly's blood, with no recollection of the previous night's events. James tells Johnny he killed Tolly and orders him to dispose of the body. As an overwhelmed and confused Johnny disposes of Tolly, Michael arrives at the Super-Rite Drugs and begins work. He meets TAMMY, the pharmacist assistant, and James, the regular pharmacist. James is going on vacation, and Michael will relieve him.

Johnny tries to quit working for James' illegal operation, but James threatens him with the fact that he could easily be blamed for Tolly's death, and possibly Aaron's, since Aaron has disappeared. Johnny is threatened into obedience. The sheriff and James are close, and the sheriff warns James that Aaron's mother is wondering where he is.

On Michael's first day at work, he is tasked with making a delivery to Johnny, and on the way out, he sees the beautiful CRYSTAL. When he reaches Johnny's house, he has an encounter with sketchy WHITEY, and Johnny warns him that there is danger afoot – his predecessor has gone missing. Michael is unnerved.

That evening, James acquaints Michael with his house, which Michael will occupy while James is away. Michael is not allowed to go into Aaron's old bedroom, and when he asks about Aaron, James said he disappeared but refuses to answer any more questions.

Meredith tries to call Michael, but he doesn't want to have the same conversation about medical school. When he's next at work, he asks Tammy about Aaron, but she assures him nothing interesting ever happens in Caldwell. When he leaves work, Crystal is sitting on her car. Intrigued by her, he goes with her to a boxing match behind a rural church and then to Frank's Supper Club. Michael sees Johnny there and tells him that he believes him – something happened to Aaron. Michael wants to go to the police, but Johnny assures him the police are in on the town conspiracy. Johnny asks Michael for help, but Michael says he doesn't want to get involved.

As Michael and Crystal hang out at the club, he asks her about Aaron, but she also won't answer his questions. They have to make a hasty exit when her ex-boyfriend walks in, and they sneak out of a bathroom window. Exhilarated by the mystery woman who won't tell him anything about herself, Michael asks to see Crystal again. Meanwhile, James placates Aaron's MOTHER with sex, but when she persists in asking about her son, he tells her that Aaron was gay and probably propositioned the wrong guy.

Michael and Crystal begin having an affair, and there are police DETECTIVES sniffing around town. James hands over the keys to his home and reminds Michael that when he receives three checks, he's to deposit the money into a special account. With James gone, Michael decides to enter Aaron's room, and he and Crystal discover a blood-stained handgun.

Michael goes to Johnny, who walks him through the events of the night Tolly died and Aaron disappeared. He expresses his belief that Aaron is alive, because he's too valuable. Johnny then has Michael take him to get a fix. Michael has another run-in with Whitey, who drunkenly shoots his gun in Michael's direction. Johnny tells Michael that he killed his own father when he was a teenager, but Michael doubts his story – everyone knows Johnny is afraid of guns.

Michael settles into life in Caldwell, continuing to sleep with Crystal, and trying to perform his duties in an impoverished town. One night, Michael tells Crystal he's tired of just having sex and confesses that he has real feelings for her – she's the only reason he's stuck around as long as he has. He also expresses his belief that she's involved in whatever is going on, but wants them to spend a real day together. She agrees, and they go fishing. They're falling in love.

Detectives show up at the house and ask Michael about Aaron. James catches wind of the detectives and cuts his vacation short. When Michael comes home, someone has broken into the house and taken Aaron's gun and drugs. Meanwhile, someone murders Aaron's mother.

Much to Michael's chagrin, Meredith surprises him by showing up uninvited. While Michael is at work, Crystal poses as a flower delivery girl and goes to see Meredith. She gives her flowers, claiming they're from Michael. When Michael returns, he realizes the ruse, but allows Meredith to believe the lie. The cops show up and search the premises. Alarmed, Meredith asks him to leave with her, but he chooses to stay.

At home for the holidays, Michael discovers Crystal gave him an STD. He admits the truth to Meredith, and she kicks him out. Back in Caldwell, Michael goes to deposit the three checks and realizes his name is on the account – along with Aaron, James, and Crystal. He ransacks James's drawers and finds further evidence that Crystal is on the account.

Michael fetches Johnny and tells him what he's discovered – James sells drugs to businesses at twice the rate and runs an illegal side operation. Johnny admits he never killed his father; he was trying to impress Whitey. Johnny and Michael go out drinking, and Crystal enters the bar. Michael confronts her about her STD, but their argument is cut short when Michael receives a call that Johnny is in trouble.

James confronts Johnny on the railroad tracks, and shots are fired. It's James's body, however, that ends up floating downstream. Johnny, who now owes Whitey his life, is forced to accompany Whitey on his murderous spree through town. Michael discovers that the body in the river was James, and he tells Crystal, who is shocked – it should have been Johnny. Michael takes Crystal to a motel, where they can wait out the police investigation. Crystal confesses that her father controls the town with illegal activities, and Michael threatens to go to the police. Crystal says that Michael is implicated in the racket, having deposited James's dirty money, but Michael never deposited the checks. Meanwhile, Whitey, Aaron, and Johnny rob a bank; when Aaron goes in to do the deed, Whitey calls the cops on him.

Crystal tells Michael she's pregnant. Before he can process this information, Whitey and Johnny burst into the hotel room. Whitey pistol whips Michael, and Crystal takes offense. Whitey says that their plan is complete, and they've gotten rid of Aaron; now they only need to get rid of Michael. They tie Michael to a chair, but Crystal convinces him to wait to kill Michael. She picks an opportune moment and tries to help him escape, but Whitey catches them. Whitey ties them both up and prepares to torture and kill them, but Johnny kills Whitey.

Crystal loses the baby, and Michael wraps up things at his job. He decides to go back home, but Crystal pulls up in her car, and he gets in. They head off into the sun.

DEVELOPMENT COMMENTS

Premise:

"Bullets for Silverware" is a mystery thriller in which a sheltered pharmacy student enters a small town and gets more than what he bargained for. Michael Young not only must solve the mystery of the disappearance of his predecessor, but he must also find out if the woman he is falling in love with can be trusted. The deeper he goes into the mystery, the more he loses himself.

First Twenty Pages:

The first twenty pages must accomplish three things. First, the audience must understand the world of the story and the antagonistic

force. Second, we must understand the protagonist as a character and empathize with the journey he will undergo. Third, we must get a sense of how the protagonist's main WANT will lead to the overall conflict of the narrative.

The first twenty pages gives us a great sense of the antagonist force, but the balance unfortunately leans too heavily on this part of the narrative and not enough on character and setting. During this part of the story, the script cuts back and forth between Michael and Johnny too often and tips its hand too early. This is not the most effective way to begin a mystery. Cutting back and forth between two storylines implies to the audience that these two characters will collide in an astronomical way – the closer we get to the collision, the more the scenes should cut back and forth. At the beginning of a script, however, cutting back and forth should be very minimal; the audience needs to take enough time to get acquainted with each storyline and care about each character. The script should then gradually cut back and forth more often, creating an increase in pace as there is an increase in stakes. Think of it as two trains colliding.

The first twenty pages also suffers from failing to introduce us properly to the main character; we spend too much time with the intrigues around Michael and not enough time getting to know him so we can go on the journey with him.

Structure:

The structure, unfortunately, needs a massive overhaul in order to make the narrative more effective. One problem is that there is no discernible structure – there is no sense of an inciting incident, a first act turn, a midpoint, etc. There is a discernible climax, but unfortunately by that point in the script, the story has fallen to pieces.

In terms of the mystery – the writer tips his hand much too soon by showing so much of the villain from the beginning. This makes the audience much more ahead of Michael, but in a mystery, it's much better to have the audience be with the protagonist and discover things as the protagonist does. It is also perhaps not the strongest decision to show the audience so much about James at the beginning; it would be nice to trust him as a mentor, and then turn that mentor role on its head later in the narrative.

Structure is inextricably linked with character. It is often the character's overarching WANT that propels the narrative. However, Michael's want – that of unraveling the mystery of the town – doesn't actually materialize into ACTION that we can enjoy following. When Michael says he'd like to know what's going on in the town, which he does repeatedly, he usually doesn't do anything about it. He also asks people what's going on, and when they refuse to tell him, he simply drops the issue and moves on to something else. The story never

progresses; the stakes are never raised, because Michael never pushes things. He's an incredibly passive character who wastes a lot of time not doing much of anything.

A story like this should really only unfold over a number of days – that's how urgent the situation should be for Michael. If the writer would like the story to unfold over a matter of months or years, then the mystery should unfold much more slowly, and the structure should spend time acquainting Michael with the world before he begins to perceive that things are wrong. In other words, the order of scenes would invert – we'd spend time being introduced to the town, and then we'd begin to perceive something is wrong. As the script is now, the conflict is apparent from the very beginning, and the story seems urgent, but the writer repeatedly puts the brakes on. The discovery that Crystal is James's daughter happens in such an easy way, and the secret is hidden in such obvious places, it feels like the writer purposely tries to hold it off.

The rules of the world are also too complicated and unclear – Michael tells Meredith he'd like to work a job for about two years, but when he shows up, James says he's only replacing him as he goes on vacation for six months. Likewise, Aaron disappears on the evening Michael tells his family he's going to take the job, but Michael took the job before the film began, so he actually agreed to replace Aaron before Aaron needed replacing. This doesn't make sense. James gives Michael his house to stay at, but Michael has to spend a night or two in the hotel before the house exchange is made. Perhaps in real life, this would be the case, but in movies, it's best to simplify. Just have Michael immediately move into the house, or eliminate the premise that James needs to leave town. Streamline the details so that the story can be richer.

The central mystery of the film could also use shoring up; there are many plot holes and inconsistencies. Why did Aaron need to disappear in the first place? Why would they rob the bank when all Aaron has to do is make a withdrawal, since the account is in his name? Why would Whitey choose now to start disposing of people, and what was the scheme Crystal thought she was in on, that then changed on her? Why does Crystal need to seduce Michael at all for her and Whitey's scheme to go forward?

Character:

Character is the main weakness of the script, as Michael is not a fully fledged character. One problem is that during the initial pages, when the audience should be getting acquainted with Michael as he becomes acquainted with his surroundings, too much attention is paid to the intrigues. Michael has no emotional life – the audience loves to see a fish out of water, so there should be scenes in which we see

Michael actually feel out of place in the town, and struggling to get used to the job. What is the town like, and how does he initially interact with it? We also do not understand why Michael decides on West Virginia or what it is he feels he's not getting from home. The reader would suggest watching the beginning of *Last King of Scotland* – the character is similar in that film, and we very quickly understand his dissatisfaction with his hometown, and we are present for his decision to go to Africa. This makes us invest in him.

Michael is also a weak hero: he is more concerned about his love triangle than solving the central mystery of the script. When Crystal makes cryptic comments like "I wasn't supposed to fall in love," instead of realizing she's in on a scheme against him, he comes back for more, over and over. When he discovers that she is James's daughter and figures out James's scheme, instead of doing something about it, he goes out drinking with Johnny and is angry about Crystal having given him an STD. When he realizes Crystal can't be trusted, and there's a larger mystery at hand, he threatens to call the police, but instead waits around in the motel room waiting for Whitey to burst in and attack him. These are all very puzzling reactions on his part, and he does nothing to propel the story forward.

Secondary characters are also one-dimensional. Meredith in particular only has one conversation with Michael and one tactic for trying to get him to become a doctor. This grows repetitive, and the stakes in their relationship never progress.

Setting, Pacing, Tone and Transitions:

The setting of rural West Virginia is potentially very interesting, but scenes in which we're given glimpses into the town are placed in odd places with respect to the narrative. What few scenes we do have are vivid, and it would be great if the setting played a stronger role in the story.

The pacing of the narrative is affected by the protagonist's indecision: the story has no sense of forward momentum, because when characters are confronted with a problem, they do nothing to solve it in the moment. Pacing would be greatly improved by increasing the urgency of the story and looking at the order of scenes. The pace of a thriller should be like a train leaving the station: slow at first so we have time to look at the scenery, and then faster and faster and faster until we're on a collision course and can't get off the tracks.

The tone of the narrative is largely consistent. The opening scene in which the murder takes place sets the tone nicely, and the story doesn't stray from that tone.

Transitions are not smooth because the structure is non-existent. Once the structure is fixed, the transitions will fall into place.

General Notes:

The script conforms to industry standards and looks professional. There are also not a lot of typos or misspellings. Where the reader would suggest the script can improve is in the dialogue. Characters often say much more than they need to, and often repeat themselves over and over instead of upping the stakes. Much of the dialogue in this current draft can be lost without the narrative being affected at all.