

Dead Set at Comeback

Bible/Proposal

Logline: Tommy Steele is an ex-movie star determined to make a comeback. Problem is, he's dead - literally. He's not gonna let it slow him down, he comes back as a ghost.

Genre: Comedy

Premise:

- 30 Min Television Series
- Single camera
- PG (Supernatural elements, sexual references, alcohol, drugs, strong language)
- Style: Black humor, ironic, surreal, dialogue-driven, off-beat
- Style references: Santa Clarita Diet, Episodes, Deadbeat, A Good Place

Dead Set at Comeback

“He's dead, but tell that to his ego”

It sucks being dead. Tommy Steele had it all, and now he's but a ghost of himself. Literally. For a while, he was the hottest star of Hollywood. Shooting bad guys on celluloid was what he did best, and it seemed he could do no wrong.

Tommy cemented his status as an action-star with Deadly Annihilation- and Turbocop-franchises. The comedy Diaper Patrol did solid business, but people preferred him as a one-liner badass killing bad guys.

Unhealthy habits took him to an early grave. He was survived by a loving wife Doreen, and a 9-year old son Dexter.

Death is something that doesn't suite Tommy's plans at all. He is simply not having any of it, and he is determined to make a comeback. *He is too important to stay dead.*

There are bumps on the road. Like the fact that a ghost cannot be photographed or consequently, filmed. His agent Mark Maximus is happy to be visited by a ghost of an old friend, but there is no way he can get Tommy back in movies.

Some of us simply won't take no for an answer, so Tommy decides to make a leap from movies to theater.

Time moves differently on the other side, so while Tommy was still coming to terms with his sudden death, he had already been buried. When he finally decides to step back to our world, three years have passed.

Doreen has remarried during Tommy's absence. Her new husband Dan is a personal trainer for the rich and famous. Tommy is not really jealous, but is secretly pissed off Dan now basically has his life. His old house, boat, son, and wife. In that order. His family is pleased to see him after all these years, but there is a mutual feeling, dead should stay on their own side. Tommy won't hear of it.

A new, flamboyant production of Macbeth is in development, and the theater is very keen on the idea of having a ghost in their play. Tommy will settle for nothing less than the lead part.

The 10-episode arc follows Tommy's new career development, reconciliation with his family, and the eternal raft between the dead and the living. In that order. We see

glimpses of the afterlife as flashbacks throughout the series, but the main focus is on Tommy's new 'life' on this side.

There is an element of sadness hidden in the background. The show deals with the meaning, or the meaningless of it all. How brief our time here is, and does one's existence make a damn bit of difference. When a loved one comes back, and we get a second chance to talk to him, this is just plain wrong, but also oddly comforting.

Theme: Ego. The series mocks pompousness and shallowness. A man is just a speck of dust in the grand scheme of things. We all have our limited time on earth, no more. No one is bigger/better than any other, when the moment comes.

Zeitgeist of project: When you're out of the spotlight for five minutes, people forget you. Some people live for the recognition, and practically cease to exist without it. Tommy's translucent comeback can be seen as an allegory – gone three years, now a ghost. The sign of the time is all about being famous, regardless how. Fame first, talent a far second. Everybody wants to hit the jackpot the easiest way possible. Now Tommy can't do 'easy' roles anymore, he has to learn how to act.

Location: L.A. Though could just as easily be set elsewhere. LA is not crucial, but the city of stars is attractive. That's where the talent goes, that's where the wannabe's are, there's ruthless competition, big money, stars, paparazzi, scandals...

Protagonist goal: To be noticed, and to be never forgotten. He depends on adoration, and is nothing without it.

Antagonist goal: The director Lorenzo Balthazar can be seen as the antagonist. They have a mutual goal, but are both equally stubborn, and want to have it their way. Balthazar seeks control, and goes to great lengths to seize it.

Dead Set at Comeback

Lead Characters

Tommy Steele: A huge star in life, but now seriously dead. Tommy was never a respected thespian, but his movies made a ton of money. A man with an ego, he always put his career first, and tried to ensure his name would live on. It is considered to be selfish and immoral to come back and 'haunt' the living, but Tommy isn't bothered by such nonsense. As far as he is concerned, rules don't apply to him. He is a star, and destined to live forever. Will death teach Tommy some respect for others, and make him more humble? Well, maybe just a little.

Mark Maximus: Tommy's agent, hard as nails. His career went hand in hand with Tommy's, and together they built Tommy's stardom out of scratch. Mark has since become a major player in Hollywood, and is doing just fine without Tommy. He is foul-mouthed, arrogant, and an actual predator in the negotiating table. Still loyal to Tommy, to an extent.

Doreen: Tommy's wife in life. She was always loving, caring and sensible. But she has moved on, and rightfully so. She has remarried, and she feels Tommy has no business coming back stirring up things. Especially, when she's in the bedroom with her new husband. She also works in movie business, and is a serious artist doing quite well as a screenwriter.

Dexter: Tommy's son, now 12 years old. He was once devastated by the death of his father, but has also learned to move on. Tommy's return is not exactly helping him to cope. Dexter has his own haps and mishaps in life, and Tommy wants to be there for him, help him with bullying, girl troubles, etc. Not all of Tommy's advices are good for Dex.

Dan: Doreen's husband. Distinctly younger than Doreen, and is physically annoyingly fit. In fact, he is a physical trainer for the rich and famous, and loves every moment of it. Dan may not be the smartest guy in the world, but he is there for Doreen, and because of his lifestyle, is not about to die anytime soon. He is also a big fan of Tommy, and is absolutely psyched to live in Tommy's house, with his wife and kid. He is annoying, but not a bad guy. We can't really hate him.

Mr. Hetfield: Tommy's old history teacher. He died in the nineties, in his sixties. He is there to greet Tommy in the afterlife, to show him the ropes, and to help him cope. He acts as the voice of reason, but generally Tommy ends up doing the opposite of what he says.

Lorenzo Balthazar: An OTT theater director from France, Portugal, or "one of those countries". A flamboyant, drama king if there ever was one, and a superstar in the theater world. His is an ego that can match Tommy's. He can be seen as Tommy's nemesis, but they have to work together. He is not above abusing his cast verbally, or even physically. He has been known to threaten actors with actual firearms. For obvious reasons, Tommy cannot be intimidated that way.

+ many other occurring roles

Season Outline

Ep. 1. "I'd hate to be You Right Now"

Tommy comes back. He is a ghost, but people are not frightened of him. Most people are surprised, but generally accept it as an everyday occurrence. We learn Tommy's agenda straight away, which is to make a comeback of the century. We get acquainted with the major characters, and see how Tommy died, along with glimpses of the afterlife. Tommy is already on his way to star in a major production of Macbeth on stage.

Ep. 2. **“D*ck-Measuring and Head-Butting”**

Tommy meets the director Balthazar, and there is an immediate mutual dislike. There is much ego-boosting, but since they both need one another, they are stuck with each other. The deal is struck, and announced to the media. The media has a field-day with the news, with headlines such as: “Steele’s Back”, and “Dead and Kicking”. The general opinion is not entirely in Tommy’s favor, as many feel this is a publicity stunt, and a disgrace to Shakespeare. Doreen’s debut movie is in post- production. Tommy is slightly jealous of her new career, but refuses to admit it.

Ep. 3. **“Social Media for the Dead?”**

Mark launches a campaign to raise Tommy’s status in the social media. This proves difficult, since Tommy cannot be photographed. They need a PR-manager and a professional profiler. His posts on Instagram and Twitter are futile at start, showing only empty chairs and landscapes. They will soon learn a clever new way to intrigue people. Clips of interviews, where the interviewee is not seen or heard. People want more of Tommy, and the pre-order tickets are selling like hotcakes. Macbeth looks like a success long before it is even finished. Tommy goes fishing with Dexter and Dan.

Ep. 4. **“Shakespeare and I”**

Tommy and Balthazar have a massive disagreement over the style in which Macbeth should be portrayed. Balthazar has studied drama, and written articles on Shakespeare, and sees himself as an authority on all things Shakespeare. Tommy promises to be right back, and soon returns with William Shakespeare himself. Good old Will takes Tommy’s side in the debate, and as a result Balthazar feels humiliated. It seems his life’s work has been in vain, having misread Shakespeare throughout his career. Balthazar storms out in fury. Dexter is being bullied in school, and Tommy helps him by haunting the bully out of his wits. Balthazar is found dead, hanging from his bathroom ceiling...

Ep. 5. **“You Can’t Quit Now”**

The production of Macbeth is in trouble. They need to find a replacement for the director, and there is no one to be had. An old superstition states, should a director die mid-production, the production is cursed. Mark persuades Tommy to go and get Balthazar back(!) If Tommy could return, so can Balthazar. Mr. Hetfield is vehemently against this, cause soon “everybody wants to come back!”. Trouble is, Balthazar has lost his wind. (Apparently death does that to some people.) He doesn't want to come back, and feels he has nothing more to give to theater. There is no negotiation leverage, nothing to bribe him with, until Tommy makes it personal: “I need you, I am nothing without you”. It is agreed, Balthazar will come back to direct, if, and only if, Tommy obliges to follow direction blindly. From here on, Balthazar is seen with his neck at a crooked angle.

Ep. 6. **“Can You Dig it”**

“I buried your People’s Choice-award with you”, Doreen tells Tommy. Since Tommy never realistically expected to win any 'real' awards, he always took great pride in this one. He considers the award his lucky charm. He wants it back, thought he hasn’t quite figured out how, and where to store it. Since he can’t hold a shovel, he persuades Dan and Dexter to help.

“C’mon, let’s go and dig me up”. During digging, there is much male bonding, and after the ordeal they all know each other a bit better. Once the cops show up, they won’t arrest the guys, but even offer to help them with the shoveling. Doreen’s movie hits the screens.

Ep. 7. **“Everybody Wants Back”**

Things are somewhat spiraling out of control. Tommy’s example has encouraged many late entertainers to consider returning. Elvis is planning a series of shows in Vegas, John Lennon is thinking of accepting a job as a goodwill ambassador for Amnesty, and Ozzy Osbourne has revealed the dates for his comeback tour, once he dies first (!) This bothers Tommy, since Macbeth hasn’t opened yet, and the other dead are stealing his thunder. The press is speculating whether this whole dead-act gets tired before it begins. This is starting to affect the pre-sales, although still going relatively strong. Mark is pissed off to no end. Something needs to be done. Mr. Hetfield can only say, “I told you so”, but does offer a possible solution by mistake. Turns out, there is a higher authority in the grand scheme of things. The Society of the Cold Order. Tommy learns of a way to appeal to TSOTCO.

Ep. 8. **“Court in Session”**

TSOTCO consists of famous dead people. Lincoln, Jesus, George A. Romero, Winston Churchill, Kevin Costner (!), etc. They couldn't be bothered, but according to ancient rules, have to listen to Tommy's issue. While Tommy argues “No fair”, many other late celebrities feel they have just as much right to return as Tommy. In the end, the court closes the loophole, and denies future returns of other dead people. Tommy, and Balthazar can still continue, due to a technicality (to be resolved). This makes Tommy the most hated guy in the afterlife, but he is not concerned. Doreen has been nominated for an Oscar. While feeling victorious, Tommy feels a sting of envy. He can never win one, so he tries desperately to at least get a seat at the Oscars.

Ep. 9. **“Dress Rehearsal”**

Almost there. The play actually looks good. Everybody's happy with the final rehearsal, and they can now open. All grudges have been abandoned, at least for the time being. Tommy is making his rounds at talk shows, and despite being awkward as he can't be seen, these shows get high ratings. Balthazar publicly admits being a bit hasty with his suicide, and appears to be more content than ever in his life. A well-known occultist/mentalist/entertainer Derral Exito declares Tommy's comeback as a hoax. Exito challenges Tommy to a live broadcast, where he plans to exorcise him back to where he belongs. Mark feels this is the highest point of exposure they could get, but Tommy is worried. Can Exito deport Tommy from our world? No, but he manages to get possessed by many dead spirits, and this is good TV.

Ep. 10. **“Good Luck With Macbeth”**

This is it. On the day of the opening, there is only one problem: The protesters. Various groups have targeted the opening of Macbeth, all supporting their own agendas. The religious fanatics want to shut it down, due to having two dead people involved in it. The unions also have a problem with the play employing two dead guys. An organization called Equal Rights to the Dead is protesting them both, the Shakespeare fans don't approve the play to begin with, and The Anti-Everything Association is protesting for the sake of it. Things look a bit volatile, and Mark could not be happier. The premiere tonight is for the VIP and the press. There simply could not be a play of a higher profile

in the world. The protests outside the theater are nearing full-out war, and something has to be done. Tommy seeks advice from the other side, but no one talks to him. Mr. Hetfield offers words of wisdom, and implores Tommy to simply stay dead. Naturally, there's no chance of that. He decides to use his charm, and negotiate with the protestors. A deal is done, Tommy gets VIP-tickets for each of the organization leaders, and everybody's happy. The play opens, Tommy exceeds all expectations, the production is perfect, and even William Shakespeare himself is happy in the audience. During curtain call, Tommy is on top of the world, and becomes a bit less translucent. Then it hits him: "Shit... I have to do this every night for the next two years..."

Concept: Ville Nummenpää

| ville.nummenpaa@gmail.com

Phone: +358-44-0208666