



The Final Draft (Feature Films)

## By Noble Means

Stephen Barber · Drama · 95 Pages

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Analyst: 3E234

Category	Score
Plot	9.50 / 10
Characters	9.50 / 10
Concept	9.50 / 10
Format	9.50 / 10
Voice	9.50 / 10
Structure	9.50 / 10
Dialogue	9.50 / 10
Final Score	9.50 / 10

RATING  
**Recommend**

SCORE  
**9.50/10**

## Opening Thoughts

It is always a pleasure to read your scripts. BY NOBLE MEANS and DEADSTICK are two quality projects which are both in my "keeper file". Given your background in the world of business, investments and financial planning you're very much aware of the impact that inflation and rising interest rates has had on everyone's wallets.

It's been the same with the studios and a week doesn't go by where a press release announces a further tightening of the belt buckle by the studios and the streaming platforms. When the streamer's banks accounts were flush with cheap acquisition capital, they were like drunken sailors on leave for the first time. That was also a time when the handcuffs were removed from writers and the creative juices began to flow freely.

In the four months time since the previous draft of BY NOBLE MEANS there have been more layoffs and even more belt tightening. If you didn't see this article in FORBES yesterday here is a link.

[https://www.forbes.com/sites/emilywashburn/2023/05/09/2023-media-layoffs-mtv-news-shutting-down-as-paramount-media-networks-cuts-25-of-staff/?sh=\(phone redacted\)b2b54](https://www.forbes.com/sites/emilywashburn/2023/05/09/2023-media-layoffs-mtv-news-shutting-down-as-paramount-media-networks-cuts-25-of-staff/?sh=(phone redacted)b2b54)

With my experience, this represents the tip of the iceberg. Acclaimed show runners and producers have also been forced to scale back their productions by diminishing the roles of some characters and reducing the number of shooting days. Ari Emmanuel of Endeavor recently noted that shows and features which were already lean were taking additional haircuts of 15%-17% by reducing their days of principal photography proportionately.

With the WGA strike currently underway in a no win situation, it is a blessing in disguise for the studios who are in no position to pay more for content when they are losing their shirts as it is. The bigger picture there also involves the use of AI so this strike may last awhile.

What does this mean for an emerging writer such as yourself? On one hand there are less opportunities for an outright sale of a script, but on the other hand for a writer who understands business and isn't afraid to take on reasonable challenges it represents an opportunity to get their

script produced and move forward with a career as a producer-writer.

With all this in mind, I think its time for you to get some "matzo flour" by the end of this analysis in anticipation of an eventual "run" to a "full loaf of bread". Let's move ahead!

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## **Characters**

The characters have essentially remained the same from prior drafts of this script. Jake Skinner (40) is the father who comes to the realization that he has failed in attempting to raise his son Noble as a single parent. Jake's wife and Noble's mother left the pair when Noble was only 7.

While it affected the young boy who was unable to truly comprehend the situation, it had an impact on Jake as well which may have compromised some of his parental decisions.

Noble emerges as a troubled teen and an intriguing protagonist. At first, the audience will disdain Noble as simply another unappreciative juvenile delinquent completely blind to what Jake has had to endure. They will eventually come to root for Noble as he "comes of age" in the wilderness camp and transitions into a mannered young adult capable of solving problems and taking responsibility for his actions.

The other teens at the wilderness camp are diverse and layered with traits that the audience may recognize. The advisers running the camp are tough but fair and that is what makes this story work. The writer paints a credible picture of those diverse advisers which reinforces that no matter how difficult the journey may be for the teens, they are always near by keeping a watchful eye to ensure that they grow and don't succumb.

No challenges presented are beyond Noble's capabilities and the audience will see that as the story unfolds. It is simply a character study of "tough love".

Is this a star driven project? It could be an opportunity for a "Disney kid", but with the WGA strike that's not a likely path for the time being. Instead, the reader sees this as a non-union low budget

project that has the opportunity to be a star turn for Noble and an excellent calling card for all those involved in the project. More in Salability.

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## **Plot**

The reader did not do a line by line comparison of previous drafts with this version, but can attest that the pace was quick and this draft read as a polished effort.

With many show runners weighing in on writing during the WGA strike, an excellent point was made by the Duffer Brothers who are the creators of the Netflix series STRANGER THINGS. Their position in shutting that production down despite having a season's worth of scripts banked was "Writing doesn't stop once principal photography starts." That statement is on point and a fact that most pure screenwriters don't grasp. Once in production, it is a writer's job to continually tweak the script for either character nuances or for budgetary reasons.

For example, having a scene with llamas may look good on paper but the reality is animals (unless highly trained) are not always in sync with the script. For SAG/AFTRA shoots, an animal and potentially its "double or triple" gets a paycheck as does each of the animal's handlers or "wranglers". There is also a separate line item for food since the animals don't eat from the craft services table like the rest of the humans.

For an indie shoot, a producer may look at the costs associated with several extra shooting days for an animal ( 1 day audition, 1 day prep/rehearse and 1 day shoot) and decide that it simply isn't worth it and circle back to the writer and inquire if there is another way to get a similar result but without the added costs. If the creator of the script says "no", the producer likely gets out their cellphone and hires another writer on the fly who says "no problem".

Why is the reader bringing this up in the section on plot? It's two fold. First, it reinforces that the writer would be well advised to gain some practical production experience and second, it infers that the writer must begin thinking about this production as if they themselves were writing the checks and keeping track of the budget. More on this in Salability.

Suffice to say, the plot of this story is tight and flows organically to a satisfying close. The writer has tagged the close with a "Super" which could suggest a potential sequel or simply be a creative nuance, but in this instance the reader suggests that the writer leave it out. It can always be added in post-production, but why step on the powerful ending of "Hi, Mom." No need for anything else at the point other than a black screen and the closing credits. That's simply some food for thought.

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## **Structure**

As noted in previous analyses, the writer demonstrates a solid skill set for story structure that builds to a satisfying climax. The open hooks the reader with the wife/mother dynamic being a factor in Noble's upbringing.

Jake is portrayed as a single parent who is simply trying his best, but in this instance Noble would have been better served in a solid two parent household. Essentially, the abandonment issue not effected Noble but Jake as well. Jake realized his shortcomings as a parent and that he needed help.

For Noble, the exposition of the story shows him gradually changing from a juvenile delinquent to a young man capable of accepting a challenge and accomplishing minimal survival tasks such as creating fire.

The structure of seeing Jake implement the cosmetic changes in the household was solid, and Jake's affirmative approach to setting ground rules for Noble upon his return demonstrated that there was growth on both father and son as a result.

The reader has already referenced the "Super" at the end and reiterates that the close is more powerful if the audience is left with the two words from Noble, "Hi, Mom."

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## **Format/Grammar/Spelling**

The reader notes that the writer demonstrates a high level of screenwriting technique. The script is free of any mechanical or grammatical errors and no misspelled words were noted through two successive reads.

The current draft presents as a professional script that may be seeking financing for production from high net worth financiers as a low budget indie production. More in Salability.

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## **Dialogue**

The writer demonstrates a solid skill set for creating organic dialogue. This script is at the point where a table read is the next step in its development prior to a production polish. Actors often bring nuances and inflections to their respective roles that a writer is unable to offer when typing away at three o'clock in the morning. There comes a time when the writer has to "cut their darlin' loose" as Stephen King puts it and for BY NOBLE MEANS the time is now. More in Salability.

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## **Concept**

As written in a highly congested script market where a WGA strike is underway and studio financing for features has tightened significantly, an opportunity is emerging for this concept to resonate with high net worth financiers as a low budget indie production.

The streamers are losing money but they still have a need for fresh content where they can't get hurt at modest price points. This is where many indie producers see opportunity given the aggressive tax incentives at the State level and the potential Federal tax incentives for motion picture production that are currently in place.

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## **Voice**

The reader notes that the writer brings a unique voice and perspective to the script. The reader continually gets the sense that the writer is able to tell this story through the eyes of both Jake and Noble. At no time has the reader ever had the impression that the writer isn't writing from experience with all scenes being credible.

It would have been easy to insert a true antagonist in this story, but often times in life we are our own worst enemies and that is what resonates here.

Is Jake a bad parent? No. In fact, he has tried his best but he is man enough to realize that he needs help in raising his son.

Is Noble a bad kid? Yes and no. He is given the way that he acts and is disrespectful, but those are learned traits that emanate from a sense of abandonment. Deep down, Noble's mom leaving when he was seven years old was the triggering factor to how Noble emerges as a troubled teen. Once in the wilderness program, the task for Noble is not to inwardly dwell on the past, but begin to achieve minor personal victories that enable him to grow as a person and eventually emerge transformed. The wilderness camp taught Noble how to rely on his own self worth. That was something that was missing in him as he sought peer approval from the wrong people.

So, is the writer's voice and perspective unique? Yes, and that voice and perspective should resonate with high net worth financiers when the writer puts on their producer's hat and pitches this project as a low budget indie production.

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## **Salability**

During the current market the conditions for an outright sale of this script is unlikely. There is a

WGA strike, the streamers are losing their shirts and the cost to leverage assets (which is what the studios do) is high given the interest rates.

On the other hand, the reader is strongly suggesting that the writer put on their "producer" hat and produce this script as a low budget indie production. Most writers dream of sitting in solitude and selling their creations to others who will bring their scripts to life. Unfortunately, reality sets in and it is "producer-writers" who get their scripts financed and eventually become household names like Vince Gilligan, Noah Hawley and Chuck Lorre to name a few.

In this instance the reader says, "Why not you?".

This is a great story that could easily be shot as an indie with a minimum amount of capital. It is the type of project that the reader sees all the time in the indie world where a little money goes a long way. In the old days of the studio westerns they would shoot a feature every three days. This script is a bit more complex with the llamas and the airplane, but the reader anticipates that the writer has the latter covered given their pilot's license. That only adds production value at a nominal cost.

For great production value, Mother Nature provides the rest with this story. What is the barrier of entry to becoming a producer? Not much other than stating that you are going to begin networking and wrangle the minions to make a movie. The reader has worked on a number of low budget productions throughout the years because they would have rather been active than sit home and watch cartoons so to speak.

Features have been shot on the weekends by those who have regular jobs and for budgets less than the cost of purchasing a used car. Suffice to say, there is a community in whatever State the writer is located that will eagerly jump at the chance to be involved if it means a sandwich, gas money and a credit.

The reader discussed this project with two entities that may be of assistance to you in the past few



weeks. Both have some access to some capital and plenty of free advice, but are not inclined to do any heavy lifting on BY NOBLE MEANS. That will be up to you. I've given them your contact information and will give them another nudge later today to have them reach out. Keep in mind their plates are full as they are attempting to take advantage of current opportunities with their respective projects as well.

In closing, this is an excellent revised draft, but now is the time to take advantage of market conditions and get this script up on its feet.

Years ago I was stuck in the Philadelphia airport and happened to meet a well known novelist writer who was on my flight. I asked him how he got started. He told me that one day he had been sitting in his office cubicle dreaming of being a novelist and went out to lunch. He went into a bookstore and immediately thought, "Look at all these books. How difficult can this be?!" He told me he went back to work and quit his job. The rest is history.

I'm not saying that you should quit your job. I'm saying that the time is ripe for you to embark on another challenge of making a movie. Think like that novelist. Look at all the movies being made.

How difficult can this be? For a person with your skills and mindset it shouldn't be that difficult, but it will be a learning experience just like any other start-up.

I hope that this has been helpful. All the best to you and let's see where this journey leads.