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Title: EVERY MOMENT AND NOT A SECOND MORE

Logline: The residents of the Blue Diamond building in Seattle collide with one another, like particles in a collider, impacting each other in profound ways that change all of their lives.

Writer: Elizabeth Fall

Genre: Dramedy

Pages: 229

Reader: SS

Positive elements in this screenplay:

Easy, quick, interesting read with well-drawn characters and great situations. Wonderful authentic atmosphere and two terrific villains in Gi and Warren. The characters are off-beat, interesting and often surprising. I loved the hidden connections that existed between them, and the back stories. I thought it was very moving that though Emily suffered at the hands of her parents for her entire life, it was because of Colby that she finally acted and killed her father—and in the process, she prevented James from killing Gi, and thus kept him from ruining his life.

Areas that need improvement:

I say this with reservations, because given the off-beat nature of the novel, it might be better simply to leave the emphasis on the individual stories and characters as you have them. I will make some suggestions on structure and theme, but I could just as easily say that most of the work seems to be done. In this kind of loosely-structured story, with multiple characters as protagonists at one time or another, it might well be better to leave most of it alone. You'll notice that I've made specific suggestions about presentation and some minor plot points that were confusing or contradictory. However, I feel comfortable saying (as I seldom do) that this novel can pretty well stand on its own right now, with nothing more than minor changes, if you choose.

Scores are 1-10 (10 being highest, 5 being average)

Concept: 9

The concept is excellent, though for a long time we are not aware that the story is not really Emily's story, even though she is the one who acts most decisively at the end. Since you begin with her and she is the character most 'present' in the novel, it would seem like her story alone. It was only as I read that I began to realize it was really the story of every resident of the Blue Diamond, to a more or less degree. While Charlemagne had a very minor role in the action, her presence did reveal sides of Colby which are very important. And Emily's relationship with James was also critically important in spinning off James' own story. Still, to me the novel is really about Emily and her growth as a person from being in the shadow of her father her entire life to taking real control of her life its direction when she realizes his crimes.

Presentation: 5

While the paragraphing and spacing are fine for a novel, there are many pages which begin almost at the bottom of the page and should be centered properly. There are also many mistakes in spelling, grammar, punctuation and usage. I strongly suggest you bring in a copy editor for your final draft to fix all of these before submitting to a literary agent, publisher or POD publishing company (for self-publishing).

Structure: 8

The structure for the first third of so of the novel is slightly deceptive; it seems from the first to be Emily's story, meaning that her character arc and her goals are driving the novel forward. However, in introducing James and his story, then Colby and his, it becomes more loosely-structured, and ultimately it seems that everyone's story being intertwined with everyone else's, creates a knot that it might not be a good idea to untie. In a more traditional novel, while introducing all these characters and their stories, the usual route is to make sure the protagonist (in this case Emily) overshadows everyone else's story and that her goal is more urgent and more interesting to readers than anyone else's.

In this case, it's not really true. Emily is a passive character, not disposed to action. Even when James comes into her life and gives her the confidence to submit her painting to the contest, she

does not really grow in self-awareness. Her growth is limited to the huge spurt at the end—when she realizes the total dysfunctionality of her family can likely be traced to her father’s criminal sexual behavior. However, James’ ongoing battle with Gi and Colby’s with himself and with Charlemagne are actually more consistently interesting. Ordinarily I’d suggest shifting the emphasis so it remains more on Emily throughout and allows you to deepen her character and her conflict; however, as these stories intertwine and each one sheds light on Emily’s character, whether at the beginning or at the end, I’d say that in this case, you may want to keep the structure as it is, introducing characters as they come up in the story, even if it’s quite a few pages in.

Plot: 8

I like the story pretty much as is, though there are points I feel could be either deepened or re-thought.

The idea of Gi being some kind of robot put together by aliens is a strange concept thrown into a few paragraphs and then never mentioned again until the end, when Kirk appears and she seems to ‘recognize’ him as one of her species. This is just plain weird, even in a story full of offbeat characters, and I’m not sure what the upside is. Is it to suggest that only people who are not human can use other human beings as ruthlessly as Gi does? If so, what does that say about Warren, who you never suggest is an alien of any kind?

I also think this takes the story out of its genre and into a sci-fi dimension that is completely out of context with the rest of the novel. You may want to re-think this; make Gi the victim of serious child abuse herself (which would tie in well with Colby’s and Warren’s stories). It would give us a great window into how the victims of abuse can grow up to become abusers and bullies, and would help us understand the long-term effects of abuse. (Obviously this is just one idea of another direction to take Gi; but I do think the current idea of her being an alien is way out there—unless it’s simply her *fantasy*, something she might hope for in a weird way but that is made clear is just a fantasy).

Also, I don’t like the character of Kirk being introduced so conveniently at the end of the novel, as a way to get rid of Gi. Gi is someone I really built up a hate for, and I’d have loved to see her just get thrown under a bus (literally, if possible) or some other terrible thing happen that would have dealt her justice while not causing issues for James or anyone else. Kirk is really nothing more than a plot device, yet you give him an entire back story with little context, and then in a

few paragraphs, he and Gi go off into the sunset together. It's very unsatisfying, for a character you built up to be the second truly big villain of the story. Warren certainly gets his come-uppance; why doesn't she get hers?

I like that Emily breaks out of her own shell so violently (literally), and that she uses her inheritance from Warren to distribute hope to people who have been abused, including Colby. How does Colby guess that Emily and James left the bag of money for him? Did they ever have such free access to his apartment that they would be able to hide a bag of money there without his knowing it? This should be clarified; maybe Emily is given a key, or something, and then it would make sense that at some point, she slips in with the money and leaves it for him. But as it stands right now, that money being hidden by Emily and James there doesn't make much sense.

Emily knows how much pain Colby is in, and realizing it was her father who caused it, would she want to let Colby know somehow that the man who abused him is now dead? Would it help him to know that? Would it help her to tell him, even if she doesn't reveal her connection to him? She's carrying around an enormous secret, something that needs to come out of her somehow, or just carrying the secret could destroy her. She's already confessed to James that she used the hemlock. But given Emily's genuine compassion for Colby and her affection for him, it seems she'd want to give him the comfort of knowing the man who hurt him is gone for good. She can't help her brother, but she might be able to help Colby if he knows that.

I'm not really sure why Charlemagne is in this mix. Okay, a transvestite singer is colorful, but the relationship between her and James and Emily is virtually non-existent, and with Colby, it's just an irritant, unconnected to the real source of his pain. I get the feeling Charlemagne is really just a plot device—her story is unrelated to everyone else's and does not follow the theme of secrets that destroy people, or the abuse that changes the course of our lives. Is there some way to make her story more aligned to the theme? Because right now, she's just someone who's in the story to bother Colby without meaning to—and the fact that she ends up dead by her own hand, which no one sees coming, is jarring, to say the least. Charlemagne had seemed to be pretty comfortable in her own skin, despite still mourning Rod after all these years. But there was no indication before she did it that she was going to kill herself. Why, and how? This does need more explanation, and some coherent way to fit with the rest of the stories in the novel.

Gi's being confronted by Dr. Andes about her lies over James seems a little forced. I'm glad someone found her out, but the way it's written, we don't see Andes going about the process of finding out; what he did comes out in his conversation with Gi—ie, it's told not shown to us, which is something of a cheat. We're all rooting for that to happen, and for James to be offered

an opportunity to go back. But given how important a plot point that is, it's worth spending more time on—showing Andes with the first suspicion and then at least a scene or two of him poking around until he uncovers something that proves it to him.

Characters: 8

The characters are quirky, and the way they collide (yes, like the particles) and re-arrange themselves is entertaining.

Emily's character arc does not go as far as I hoped; she ends up giving away her inheritance but not really changing much herself, and while both her parents are dead and is therefore unable to re-define herself with them, it would be nice to see a woman who becomes much more confident, much more aware of her abilities, much more interested in following the path her gifts and interests open up to her, instead of the path her father decreed she should be on. I still don't have the feeling at the end of the story that she's quite achieved that, though she apparently feels that just having won someone else's love as an adult is enough. I'd like to see more self-actualization, not just the fact that she's loved, though given her history, that's certainly a victory in itself.

James falling in love with Emily, almost immediately, needs some more defining. We see some very short pieces of aimless dialogue, and then suddenly they're head over heels in committed love. This is a big step for Emily; she's a woman who's been very closed off from people—and lying to most of them—her entire life. Suddenly this miracle drops into her life and it happens so quickly, without the reader getting a chance to see her confront this change? It feels like it needs more explanation, and certainly more of the scene between Emily and James at their dinner, so we begin to understand what's happening to them and can accept it more easily.

Warren's a great character, but as he's an abuser, is he also a victim of abuse, perhaps in *his* childhood? It would help to know more about this; otherwise, he comes across as simply unspeakably evil, and operating out of nothing but selfish, narcissistic motives. I realize that's what you're going for, but even with a narcissist, we need to know how he got that way. In that sense, Warren is incomplete. And even if Emily never knows this, can you write a scene that would give the reader some idea of how he became what he was?

Pacing: 9

The pace is very fast, which makes the read very easy. I don't know whether it's really necessary to have so many separate chapters; you could certainly put two or more scenes together into one chapter. But the fact that chapters end so quickly does make it move well.

Dialogue: 8

Good. There's not always enough (as in Emily and James' first couple of meetings) to justify the emotional upheaval when they get together, so it would be worthwhile to write more dialogue where we can begin to see them moving toward one another emotionally. But the dialogue, especially for Colby, is authentic. Warren's dialogue, much as you hate him, is always entertaining.

Theme: 9

Excellent. The secrets we carry around, and how they affect our lives, while we're careening around bumping into others, seemingly randomly, and having relationships with them, good and bad, is fascinating and well played out in the various stories in the novel.

Tone: 9

The tone of the writing matches the pace and theme. Well done.

Commercial Potential: 9

The easy flow of the writing and the picaresque characters all but guarantee that readers would find this novel off-beat, but charming and memorable.

Advice for executives would be: (9 out of 10 of submissions receive a Pass score)

RECOMMEND

CONSIDER

PASS

Ways to improve this screenplay, additional advice:

Emily's mom got sober when Emily was 30, and 9 years later is diagnosed and dies from cancer. But Emily is 32 when the story opens, and her mother has just died 9 months before. And on page 19, it says Rose got sober around 2010—which would mean that 9 years later is 2019, when she dies. And that's in the past. Is there a math error there, or am I reading it wrong?

p. 50-51 – Emily invited James to her apartment; they had dinner and cleaned up. But then they went to James' bed in HIS apartment? Wouldn't they more likely have stayed at Emily's place and been in HER bed? Or if they decided to change apartments for the rest of the evening, shouldn't you let the reader know?

p. 81 – James says to Gi, “Why do you have it out for me?” Shouldn't it be ‘Why do you have it *in* for me?’”

p. 123 – Gi ‘dropped the sheets and walked naked to him’. But since she's already on the bed, logically she wouldn't need to walk anywhere. Wouldn't it make more sense if she dropped the sheets and just cuddled up to him?

p. 156 – James ‘sat on the floor by the wall, staring out the window’. If he's sitting on the floor, how is he able to stare out a window, which is typically set at about shoulder height, especially in school classrooms and labs? His head would be too low, while he's sitting down, to see out the window.

Would strongly suggest you open the novel (in the prologue) with the short paragraph on the last page, beginning “There are forces at work in the universe.” That paragraph is fantastic; it grabs the reader immediately, states theme succinctly and memorably, and it's something you can repeat in the same place you currently have it, at the end of the novel, which brings all the split pieces of the story together. I believe strongly in stating a theme—grabbing your reader—as soon as you can, and that short paragraph would certainly do it. It's also a clear lead-in to the current prologue, about Higgs-Boson. The way the current prologue is written, it's a little difficult to get

into, because of the scientific discussion, and it's light years away from the writing of the rest of the novel, which is very clear, easy reading. Since you want readers to get involved as soon as possible, it would really help to start with a paragraph like that, which promises us something we can understand—and then get into Higgs-Bosun.

The novel's title seems vague and arbitrary, and not really related to the theme or story. You might want to consider a title change more consistent with the characters and their goals.

Charlemagne, while it does sound like a girl's name, was actually the name of a famous French king who was in fact very masculine. You might want to change the name to something that sounds similar but is more actually feminine, since this is a transvestite.

It's not completely clear whether Colby moved into the Blue Diamond before Warren moved out, which is important to establish (or emphasize later to the reader, when you surprise us with their connection). Obviously if Colby had been there at any time while Warren was there, it was always possible that they would have run into each other going in or out. We know that Emily moved in right after Warren moved out, and that she's been there less than a month. How long has it been since Colby was there? Maybe Emily herself could find out how long he's been there and realize later that he would never have run into Warren—he'd have just missed him because Warren was gone by the time Colby got there. (I think you mentioned something about his time of arrival early on, before we understood the significance of the timing, but by the end there was no tie-up there, and a reader who didn't want to check back in the text might want to know.)