



## Screenplay Analyses

### 3 Samples by Warren Goldie

These were done for the development department of a Hollywood production company. The screenplay titles and names and other identifiers have been omitted or changed for privacy purposes.

---

RECOMMENDATION: PASS

#### STORY REPORT

TITLE: COUNTRY SUMMER  
AUTHOR: Randolph Young (screenplay)  
Randolf Young & Cynthia Tolodson (story)  
FORM/PGS: Screenplay/135 pages  
GENRE: Psychological Thriller  
TIME/LOCALE: Present/Sleepy California town  
ANALYST: Warren Goldie  
DATE: February 24, 1992

**LOG LINE: Evil little girl murders playmate and blames it on mom's vagabond boyfriend.**

#### Synopsis:

Eeriness pervades everything in this sweltering town, especially in the vicinity of precocious six-year-old BLOSSOM THOMAS. Her naive adoring mother, EVA, never quite notices Blossom's malicious schemes against Eva's hunky, sophomore boyfriend, ROY JACKSON, or the terror campaign Blossom wages on visiting cousin TIMMY.

One day Roy finds the dead body of young CLAUDE RANKINS in Eva's garage. Nobody suspects Blossom or her friends, but the kids are hiding something. Blossom, the ringleader, manages to hush Timmy and dim-witted WILLIAM by scaring them with promises of retribution and stories of mutilation and death.

Oblivious to Blossom's cruelties, Eva spends her time quarreling with Roy about why they aren't married. After finding his stash of porn magazines, she suspects him of molesting and killing Claude. Blossom fans the fire with lies, and Eva soon runs to

the SHERIFF. But the Sheriff, unconvinced of Roy's guilt, grows increasingly suspicious of the neighborhood children, namely Blossom & Co.

Though Blossom plays dumb about the murder, Eva comes to suspect that Blossom was involved. Still angry at Roy and unnerved by the porn, a confused Eva frames Roy to throw suspicion off her child and lead the Sheriff astray. She suffers guilt over Roy, whom she is still loves, and breaks down emotionally.

Roy is locked up, but soon the Sheriff interrogates Blossom and her playmates. This time Timmy cracks, ending Blossom's reign of terror and easing his conscience. He confesses that Blossom beat Claude to death while William helped and the children watched. Roy is set free, Eva is a broken woman, and Blossom is committed to Children's Mental Hospital.

Comments:

The premise of this story is familiar territory: the cruelty of kids going unnoticed by preoccupied adults. The story is very well crafted, thick with mood, brimming with suspense and psychological terror, and vivid in characterization. It's told from the children's point of view, from about four feet off the ground looking up at largely inconsequential adults, as in E.T. The plot is a murder mystery with no winners.

Our time is mostly spent watching Blossom, the Evil Child, manipulate and torment her peers. The effect is powerful and real, the author grasping well the phenomena of children's cruelty. The initial EXORCIST-like feel of impending supernatural evil however, gives way to the less exciting reality of Blossom as an ordinary child who is just very, very disturbed.

Eva and Roy's woeful relationship is road well trod: Man Who Won't Commit to Woman Seeking Security. Neither gets our sympathy, unfortunately, due to their cluelessness. In fact, except for Timmy and the Sheriff (a minor part) we have difficulty liking any of the characters.

The power of the story lies in the psychological control Blossom holds over Eva, Roy and Timmy. We do hang in there to learn the who, why and how of the murder, but when the riddle is solved the solution doesn't quite satisfy. COUNTRY SUMMER could be a low-budget thriller, potentially entertaining.

PASS

---

RECOMMENDATION: PASS

**STORY REPORT**

TITLE: NORTH LIGHT  
AUTHOR: Polly Larson & Charles Pitt  
FORM/PGS: Screenplay/115 pages  
GENRE: Period Drama  
TIME/LOCALE: 1913/Rural Canada (Algonquin area)  
ANALYST: Warren Goldie

**LOG LINE: Handsome stranger stirs up passions of summer residents at backwoods resort.**

Synopsis:

Landscape painter TOM CAMPBELL, worn out by the big city and looking at an uncertain future, escapes for a summer to rustic MOHATTAN LODGE, where his presence ignites the local women folk – and threatens the men. The most beautiful girl of the vacationing clans, headstrong WINNIE TRAINOR, sends the shy Tom's pulse racing. It's hard to escape anyone's eye in this claustrophobic community, especially the evil BLETCHER family: young MARTIN, heartsick over Winnie and jealous of Tom, and his vampish sister, BESSIE.

When Tom isn't happily fishing on CANOE LAKE or fighting off Bessie's advances, he's painting. Impressed by his work, the normally sexually coy Winnie risks scandal and seduces him. The intensity of their attraction throws Tom for a loop, and he inexplicably retreat into himself, crushing Winnie. When a forest fire abruptly ends the season, Tom and Winnie part company to their respective cities, the relationship left unresolved.

One lonely winter later, the lovers return to Canoe Lake. Again, Tom avoids Winnie – that is, until he discovers she's seeing the thuggish Martin, whereupon he faces up to his feelings, confronts Martin and wins her back.

Finally at peace with the situation, Tom ventures downstream on his daily canoe trip. Revenge-minded Martin and Bessie follow him in their boat, undetected, to an island.

A week later a fisherman snags Tom's submerged dead body. Though the official cause of death was drowning, the coroner finds many

bruises on Tom's head. Some folks say it was the Bletchers' doing, but nobody knows for sure. All the heart-broken Winnie can do is cherish the beautiful paintings he left her, the lasting legacy of Tom Campbell.

Comments:

Here we have DELIVERANCE meets ON GOLDEN POND, populated with a volatile mix of repressed personalities and molded around old-fashioned values for an elderly audience. Though the story is well-written, plausible and marginally compelling, the characters are thinly drawn and the central theme – the love/fear relationship of Tom and Winnie – is almost totally unexplored. The mood, though, is nicely ominous and it could do well as a thriller instead of a love story.

A critical problem is the story's lack of depth. Tom, who starts out a mysterious stranger, remains one. This distance wouldn't be a problem if the authors kept their initial promise to spin the tale around Winnie's transformation, only her role is too insubstantial for this. Instead, we focus on Tom's life, and are disappointed when it simply sputters and ends.

Outside of exploring the joys and pains of an artist outdoorsman, we learn little of his inner workings. For example, what happened in Tom's past that made him afraid of his feelings? Answer: it doesn't matter, because he ends up dead for no good reason.

The lurking, inbred Martin and Bessie are interesting characters. This angle could be further explored to beef up the story's thriller aspect. Other than that, we have the conventional love and loss theme with inadequate character development, set in the scenic Canadian wilderness of 1913.

PASS

---

RECOMMENDATION: PASS

**STORY REPORT**

TITLE: THE LIFE OF BILLY RANDIKOV  
AUTHOR: Robert Caruthers  
FORM/PGS: Screenplay/115 pages  
GENRE: Fantasy Adventure  
TIME/LOCALE: Present/Alternate Reality  
ANALYST: Warren Goldie

**LOG LINE: Comatose boy is trapped in nightmarish imaginary world.**

Synopsis:

Sensitive BILLY RANDIKOV escapes mounting adolescent pressure and his mother JUDY's demands by daydreaming of imaginary playlands. Then, one day he is struck unconscious by a car, and gets his wish: he lands in TELLOLANDIA, a vast inter-dimensional never-never land of every boy's dreams, a world of amusement parks, ball fields, underground tunnels and junk food automats ... where nobody has to grow up! The residents are all boys except for "host" ESTOBAR BIBBIT and the unseen ELDERS.

But things aren't what they seem, and Billy's dream soon turns into a nightmare when he discovers the boys are actually prisoners trapped in Tellolandia. Every day, their emotions, memories and dreams are being methodically sucked out by receptors hidden around the grounds, only to be transformed into food for Bibbit and the Elders.

Each day the boys lose their humanity they become more and more mischievous until they turn completely primitive - thus yielding a bountier "food" harvest. After he discovers this, Billy tries to escape, running for his life from Bibbit's thugs through the mazelike tunnels, over the fields and across Tellolandia ...

And smack into a meeting of the evil Council of Elders, who look frighteningly like giant, mutated babies. They decide to punish Billy, and just as they're about to start ... Judy's voice breaks through. She's at Jimmy's hospital bedside, where his body remains in a coma. The strength of their bond pulls Jimmy

from the imaginary Tellolandia to consciousness and the real world.

Except for one thing. In a twist ending we discover that Tellolandia is real. Billy finds in his hand an artifact he got there, and with newfound confidence plans a return trip (how?) to free the boys and kick some Elder butt.

Comments:

This highly imaginative screenplay sends a young Walter Mitty into Alice's twisted Wonderland, complete with carnival-like insanity reminiscent of BOY AND HIS DOG's underground city "Topeka." The story is meticulously well-structured with a compelling plot and believable characters. The mood is of veiled evil, as in Bradbury's SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES.

The driving force is the script's gradual, tantalizing exposition of Tellolandia's mysteries and of how Jimmy deals with these challenges. Though some ideas are derivative, the story remains interesting and terrifying.

A serious problem is the first act, where we are force-fed a setup lacking in dramatic momentum and obvious in its expository goals. After this, however, the story comes together. However, in places the dialogue is flat.

Overall, the theme is a boy's coming of age and the message is life-affirming, as Jimmy learns self-reliance, compassion and love in his "hero's journey." THE WORLD OF BILLY RANDIKOV is a roller coaster ride into the unknown, and might play well for an audience of kids, sci-fi/fantasy and horror fans.

The story has some merit, though much of the dialogue would need to be reworked.

PASS