



TITLE:	Shark Tooth Snake Fang	AUTHOR:	Ben S.
FORM:	SP	PAGES:	114
GENRE:	Horror	BUDGET:	Low
LOCALE:	USA	TIMEFRAME:	Present
DATE:	7.25.13	READER:	Cameron

Logline:

Reeling from an unjust malpractice lawsuit, a dentist is forced to take on an unusual and dangerous private client: a vampire.

ELEMENT	SCORE
PREMISE	9
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PROJECT VIABILITY SCORE: 124/150

GENERAL NOTES:

There are plenty of strong elements here. Though you're dealing with a subgenre that has all but been played out in strong properties like *Interview with the Vampire*, *Dracula*, *Twilight*, *True Blood*, *The Vampire Diaries*, *Daybreakers*, *Underworld*, *Let Me In*, *30 Days of Night*, *Blade*, etcetera, your hook of an ordinary man becoming dentist to a vampire is unique and novel. It's unexpected and comes off as both horrific and darkly comedic.

To an extent, the script also subverts traditional vampire mythology (e.g. in this narrative universe, vampires can't turn other humans into vampires). This is a compelling and marketable angle...making the old new...and ought to be expanded upon as much as possible. Lurren has a palpable voice as a character, and the contrast of his youthful visage with his jagged sense of humor and often ruthless actions is strong. He isn't a one-note monster. At times he can be funny, and at times, we even see him as a victim (e.g. when Scott is operating on him). Engendering that kind of response to a vampire character is remarkable and makes for a fascinating dichotomy.

The script fleshes out the mythology of vampires directly, which is great. Perhaps even more can be done, however, to make Lurren's kind unique. Anything that can be done to separate this iteration of vampire from the countless others that have come before will pay off spades when it comes to pitching the script and getting it read. Instead of merely subverting traditional vampire mythology, perhaps there is an opportunity to add entirely new elements to it.

What's particularly interesting about the story is the way in which it is developed and how intricate the plot is (the third act twist with Elena and Thomas is enormously fun and logical). This isn't standard horror, where the emphasis is on delivering (and often overloading on) grisly, visceral sequences of stalking and bodily harm at frequent intervals. *Shark Tooth Snake Fang* is far more character-driven and emphasizes emotional horror even more than the visual.

The key thrust of the story is how an ordinary man is entrapped and taken advantage of by monsters, of both the vampire and human variety...unscrupulous and corrupt individuals who target him. That's a story that could be played out in virtually any genre; it isn't horror-specific. That the script grafts horror elements onto a universal spine is a promising approach that could give the project crossover cachet...that is to stay, if properly developed, the story could be marketed for diverse audiences, rather than just strictly horror devotees.

This approach sets the script apart and is a major asset, creatively speaking. The thing to be aware of, though, is that because the script doesn't fall into predictable horror patterns, it's not as easily salable or commercial as the typical slasher project or haunted house narrative. What you really have here is a character study with horror elements. The key to making the script truly viable is to preserve the elements that set the script apart (as aforementioned) while more strongly highlighting and emphasizing the traditional genre staples that are instantly recognizable and marketable.

The horror scenes in the script are as follows: the revelation of Lurren's fangs on page 25; Lurren breaking Doug's jaw on 31; the carnage in room 248/9 beginning on 57; Lurren killing Schronn on 69; the showstopping sequence beginning on 78 when Scott ambushes Lurren in his lair; Lurren killing Thomas on 104; Lurren killing Jenn on 109; and Scott dispatching Elena on 113 (though it happens off-screen). Those scenes are all effective when they occur, but overall the script feels a little light on horror content. Adding a couple more scenes of grisly horror...particularly in Act II...will make the script more competitive.

The tragic almost-romance between Scott and Jenn could also be played up more. They have requisite scenes together, and the care they have for each other is palpable...it's just a matter of degree. Throughout the story, they have a wistful attitude toward one another that is constantly tinged with regret. But we never really sense that they have a chance together; it's as if they missed their moment before the script even begins. Scott's iPad confession to her and her gruesome death will be all the more heartbreaking if the script gives us a moment where we truly believe they could be together, whether it's a kiss or a full declaration of love/affection, etcetera.

If Scott and Jenn peak, even for a moment, their downfall will be felt all the more sharply. As is, their emotional throughline is affecting but constant; there's no rollercoaster ride. Take an audience up before you send them crashing down and you'll truly have something unforgettable.

CHARACTERIZATION:

SCOTT

Scott is strongly contextualized. His status as a dentist immediately characterizes him as an average joe. Meek, mild-mannered, consistent, low-key. Jenn comments on this perception directly on 77: "Dentists tend to be pretty

mild...it's a low-risk job. Predictable hours, predictable pay. You know what to expect. There aren't many surprises...certain personalities are drawn to it for that reason." Scott's journey, then, is going from functioning in an ordinary world to functioning in an extreme one.

He also has to find a reason for being. On page 30 he tells Lurren that he isn't afraid of dying because he doesn't see how it would have any impact on the world. He feels unimportant and purposeless. By script's end, Scott has had everything taken from him...his career, Jenn...and he has become calculating, tough, and fueled by anger and a need for revenge. That arc is powerful, but it's unclear if he has found a purpose by script's end. Is he going to become a vampire hunter now and kill all the others like Lurren?

As Scott rides off into the sunset, that possibility certainly registers in the mind, and that's the most commercial ending. It could be highlighted more strongly, however. What are the documents on Lurren's iPad that Scott looks at? Do they give Scott some idea of where to go looking? The notion of Scott using his dental skills and tools to become a hunter is lots of fun because it plays on the natural fear people have of dentists, with their ability to inflict pain in sensitive areas.

Maybe we could see Scott unzip his tools as he drives away. As is, Scott tosses his tools in the back of the truck. Showing him place them more delicately in the front seat and keeping them close will sell the idea that he plans to use them again for a particular purpose. You can still preserve some of the engaging ambiguity of the ending this way, because we won't know exactly what Scott plans to do or where he plans to go, but giving an audience a more specific expectation...the sense that Scott has plans and that he wants to channel his negative experiences into a purpose...will leave them wanting more. That's precisely what you want. You could have franchise material here if the ending puts the right button on the story.

STRUCTURE:

The script demonstrates an excellent command of structure.

The **framing device** in which Scott begins to record his story for Jenn on the iPad in his condemned office works particularly well. It grounds the story in a specific emotional context and makes us empathize with Scott right off the bat.

The **inciting incident**...in which Scott is sued for malpractice after Billy's minor operation...is strong and propulsive; it clearly throws a wrench into Scott's Ordinary World.

The **first act break**...in which Scott meets Lurren and discovers what he is...occurs at the perfect interval and sharply launches the story into a new direction, just as it should.

You have multiple plot points that could qualify as a **midpoint**, but the most apt one occurs on page 43, when Schronn surprisingly implores Scott to poison Lurren. This is an unexpected moment that effectively bisects the second act. In terms of page count, it hits a little soon after the first act break, but this isn't a problem given the genre, as so much of the narrative experience relies on build and pacing.

The **second act break** on page 87...when Scott is reeling from having seemingly killed Lurren...and goes to return Jenn's truck only to meet her new boyfriend Peter is well-chosen, but it would likely play even stronger if Jenn were somehow involved in the scene. She makes up the emotional stakes of the story, and this is the moment when Scott is at his emotional low, so it's only natural for an audience to want to see her involved in this moment. She's part of the equation and should be represented as such.

It could be something as simple as Scott seeing her through the window and looking at her with longing as he walks away or vice versa, or you could go larger and have Scott spill his guts to Jenn at her door only for her to reveal Peter lurking in the background. The latter is the obvious and potentially clichéd way to do the scene, but it is a surefire way to emotionally engage an audience.

What you have works, but it could be augmented to impact at a slightly higher level.

PACING:

Pacing is perhaps the number one area in which the script can improve. 114 pages is slightly on the long side, particularly for this genre, and trimming the project will make it more commercially viable. Fortunately, there are easy ways to trim the script without losing key plot points or character beats.

The easiest way to trim is to cut or condense the voiceover. Voiceover is hit or miss, particularly in the current marketplace, and it only feels truly organic in film noir or dark comedy, where hearing a character's unique voice and sensibilities is a key part of the narrative experience. That isn't the case here. The voiceover isn't meant to be devoutly comedic or take us into Scott's unique mindset, because Scott doesn't have a

unique mindset. He's an everyman character through and through, that's his appeal.

A good litmus test for whether or not to use voiceover is to see if you could tell your story without it. If you can tell your story without using voiceover, you should, because voiceover is inherently more niche and less commercial, unless it is fundamentally built into the hook of the narrative. That isn't the case here either. You could easily tell your story without voiceover; thus, it doesn't need to be there.

The impetus you provide for the voiceover is strong: Scott, thinking he is facing imminent death, is leaving a confession for Jenn, the one that got away. This setup logically justifies the voiceover narration and immediately lends the script a sense of fatalism and gravitas. We're watching a broken man give a last will and testament of sorts to the woman he loves. That's a great impulse. You should absolutely maintain that opening hook, that emotional framing device...but the voiceover that follows could be easily cut or condensed.

Scott's iPad video message to Jenn ends with "...it's only now that I realize how much I had forgotten..." before flashing back to the fateful day with Billy in Scott's office. That segue is so direct, and coupled with the fact that the transition takes us from Scott's condemned office to when it was functioning, it tells us all we need to know. An audience is inherently going to know that Scott is recounting his story without hearing his voiceover, particularly since the script returns to this scene on page 104.

Most of Scott's voiceover tells us information that is already apparent, making it redundant for an audience. Excess repetition will quickly turn an audience off; you don't ever want them to feel as if they are ahead of the story. For example, in the conference room scene on page 10, the script tells us that Scott has a "nasty scowl melted into his face." Then, the voiceover tells us how angry he would get when seeing Elena. Scott's anger has already been shown visually, so detailing it verbally is redundant.

If you're determined to keep the narration, it would be more effective to focus only on the emotional confessions he makes when he addresses Jenn directly (e.g. p. 18 "Right at that moment, the moment where you left, I knew that I would take Elena's offer", p. 36). That will isolate and highlight their failed relationship and show us even more how much she means to Scott. Voiceover can be used successfully in that emotional context, but there is no need to rely on it for expositional purposes because the

script already tells a clear and apparent centralized story.

Keeping the frame and the beginning of Scott's message to Jennifer but eliminating or at least dialing back the voiceover that follows will allow you to retain the dramatic effect and tighten the script's pace considerably.

For a good reference, view the opening of the Richard Wenk/Richard Donner cop thriller *16 Blocks*, which opens with protagonist Jack Mosley facing defeat and recording an account for his sister of the events that led him to that point. From there, the film never employs voiceover narration but the frame is transparent, and the story returns to the opening narration/scene at the end of the second act, much like your script does.

Dialing the voiceover back so that it comments on only what is absolutely necessary from emotional and plot standpoints will shave pages off the duration of the script and make the overall story feel tighter.

It is an easy fix that will have a big impact on enhancing the script's status as a viable project.

FORMAT:

Format is mostly excellent across the board, but one brief note: the action blocks are occasionally long. The target length in the industry right now is five lines or less.

There are action blocks in *Shark Tooth Snake Fang* that run 8 lines or more (e.g. pp. 3, 23). Better to split those into two blocks. Doing so will give the script more aesthetically-pleasing white space and ensure that readers don't skim over key information that is buried.

Also, be consistent with capitalization of characters. For example, midway down page 10, Scott is introduced in all caps with his lawyers, then in the same paragraph Scott is written normally. The general rule is to do all caps when you first introduce a character and then write the name normally from then on (some writers deviate by keeping character names all caps all the time). You abide by this rule almost entirely throughout the script, so deviating in isolated incidents feels jarring.

Though ultimately it's your story that counts (and you have a good one here), tiny little formatting issues can be all a reader needs to throw your script away. It's upsetting, but it's a reality, so don't give anyone the opportunity to do so.

CONCLUSION:

This is a refreshing and unusual horror narrative that places an impressive emphasis on character and plot development. Sharpening some of the key marketable elements (horror scenes, the romance) and tightening the pace will take it to an even more viable level. You're very close with this draft to having something emotionally engaging, distinctive and marketable.