

CALLERS NOTES-JOURNAL

2.20.04 - 1.14.09

REFERENCE FILMS

ARCHIBALDO DE LA CRUZ
 VIRDIANA
 EXTERMINATING ANGEL
 THAT OBSCURE OBJECT OF DESIRE
 VAMPYR

BLOOD SIMPLE
 THE LIMEY
 AFTER HOURS

√BLUE VELVET
 √MULHOLLAND DRIVE
 √PERFORMANCE
 √PI
 √VERTIGO
 √MARNIE
 √BEETLEJUICE
 √DEAD RINGERS (CRONENBERG)
 √DEAD RINGER (RE. TWINS) -- BETTE DAVIS
 √DEAD OF NIGHT
 √THE SHINING -- family
 √THE EXORCIST -- adolescence
 √ROSEMARY'S BABY
 √PSYCHO
 √THE BIRDS
 √AUDITION
 √INSIDE MAN

EVIL DEAD II
 THE TROUBLE WITH HARRY
 TRULY, MADLY, DEEPLY
 MANHATTAN MURDER MYSTERY
 IRREVERSIBLE (+ other Gaspar Noe film?)
 WAKING LIFE
 DEFENDING YOUR LIFE
 FRANKENSTEIN -- machine age
 DR. TERROR'S HOUSE OF HORRORS
 MR. SARDONICUS
 NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD
 DAWN OF THE DEAD -- consumerist parable
 NOSFERATU
 DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS
 THE INCREDIBLE TWO-HEADED MONSTER

TITLES

THE AMANDA FACTOR
AMANDA'S WAKE
AREA CODE 000
BELLS ARE SCREAMING
THE CALL
THE CALLER
THE CALLERS
CALLER I.D.
CALLS FROM THE DEAD
CAN'T EXPLAIN
CIRCLE OF CONFUSION
THE COLD ROOM
CREEPING TOWARD NIGHT
DEAD DON'T LIE
THE DEAD DON'T LIE
DAY OF HER DEAD
DAY OF NIGHT
DAY OF THE DEAD
DEAD FROM THE WAIST DOWN
DEAD HAVE EYES
THE DEAD GIRL'S CELL
THE DEAD GIRL'S CELL PHONE
THE DEAD GIRL'S PHONE
THE DEAD LINE
DEADLOCK
DEAD ON HOLD
DEAD OR SOMETHING LIKE IT
DEATH BELL
END CALL
THE FIVE STAGES
THE FIVE STAGES OF DEATH
THE FIVE STAGES OF SLEEP
GHOST ENTERS, GHOST EXISTS
GHOST IMAGE
GHOSTING
GHOST LESSONS
GHOST ON THE PHONE
GHOST SPEAKS
GIVING UP THE GHOST
HELL'S BELLS
THE HOT LINE
IN AMANDA'S SHOES
LOVE MINUS ZERO
NEAR TEARS

NEVERMORE
 THE OTHER DEAD
 PHONECALLS FROM THE DEAD
 THE PINK PHONE
 THE PINK PHONE AND THE BLUE ONE
 RELATIONSHIPS ARE HELL
 SCARIER
 SEND - END
 THE STRANGE THING ABOUT MY DEAD GIRLFRIEND'S PHONE
 THE STRANGE THING ABOUT THE DEAD GIRL'S CELL PHONE
 THE STRANGE THING ABOUT THE DEAD GIRL'S PHONE
 SHIVERRUN
 SHIVER
 SUBTERRANEAN HOMESICK BLUES
 THE TALKING DEAD
 TALKING DEAD
 TALKING DEAD BLUES
 THE TALKING DEAD BLUES
 TELL WILL
 TOMBSTONE BLUES
 VISIONS OF AMANDA
 WILL TELL
 WILL TALK, WILL TELL
 WRONGFUL DEATH

SOURCES TO STUDY FOR TITLES:

Poe
 Joyce
 Un_____

2.20.04

UP ABOVE THE WORLD in Topanga -- LSD as reveal. Or maybe
 certain objects are coated with LSD, which leads to
 inexplicably strange reactions.

Character realizes that he is figment of someone else's
 imagination?

REPRISED

A small-scale variant on GHOST TOWN.
 Haunted Cell Phone
 Extirminating Angel as horror flick
 Seabury Quinn 2003 #205

"I am a ghost wanting what every ghost wants - a body."
 #214

Makes a Faustian deal with a body for right to use said body. Where does the host personality get pushed to when the ghost personality takes over? The ghost sees opportunities the real person/personality doesn't. (Just as it's easier to advise on someone else's script than your own.)

Maybe there is a juncture room where the ghost is visible and can talk to the host body. It could be a mirror scene: the host sees the ghost when he looks in the mirror. They have a mirror conversation.

Topanga Ghost Story 2003/#269

The hippie ghost is pissed off at other ghossts and gives away their secrets. The writer gets arrogant and acts like he/she has come up with all this stuff (metaphor of not goiving the unconscious enough credit).

Hippie ghost as shy in real life -- now that he/she can inhabit someone else's body, is no longer shy. Ghost engineers a series of events to get who he/she wants in the house. Scares off inadequate rentor prospects.

cf. AURA

GENRES

Vampire

Ghost

Slasher/gore

Monster

Psychic

Psychological Horror

COMEDIES INTO HORROR

Groundhog Day (the Dennis Weaver TZ episode?)

Meet the Parents

RATS IN THE WALL -- le faneau story

Arthur Machen -- Welsh, PD -- the great god pan

M. R. James -- night of the demon/ curse of the demon

Turn of the Screw -- Topanga -- Uncle is rock star

INNOCENCE -- Deborah Kerr = best movie version

Patsy Kensit -- 1994 -- TURN OF THE SCREW

3.3.04

Mix of EXQUISITE CORPSE and EXTERMINATING ANGEL.

Horror ORPHEUS.

Ghost of Bunuel feels ripped off.

College kid gets famous ala Bret Easton Ellis as a horror writer -- turns out he is cribbing from a cell phone that allows him to talk to the dead. Jealous friend. Ghosts are pissed (ala GHOST TOWN) that their secrets are being given up. Surprise party is organized -- fingers are pointed every which way -- who organized it?

3.4.04

EXQUISITE CORPSE / EXTERMINATING ANGEL / CELL PHONE NOTES
Post-collegiate writer -- gets famous young with horror books.

Cell phone to the dead is his conduit for stories. re. Cocteau's ORPHEUS.

Jealous friends.

Somehow the writer unleashes the metaphysical virus -- is it connected with the cell phone?

Metaphysical virus that jumps from person to person.

The writer is the first to go -- or he's the bad guy?

12 actors -- 10 killed off.

Surprise party as mechanism of gathering. False assumptions about who organized surprise -- writer thinks it's his friends -- friends think that it's the writer.

EXTERMINATING ANGEL part could be the force field that keeps ghosts in a house -- that's what keeps people inside without the ability to leave.

re. MAZE OF DEATH

3.6.04

"Slacker" with phone -- it gets passed around as characters die?

Writer has some psychic empathy that allows him to use phone without dying.

He makes pact with dead girl that if one of them dies, they will try and get in touch with the other. Maybe they are friends, but not lovers (she is with someone else).

Other people are invited to the party in the hope that they will destroy the phone?

Phone connects you with someone dead -- but it can drive you mad if you don't have the psychic mechanism to cope with the encounter.

Using the phone without the proper ability.

3.7.04

Kid writer (Eric?) seems to know too much about the dead girl.

The dead girl was the best and the brightest (imagine a brilliant Laura Palmer). Dead girl was the most promising writer in her class.

Dead girl was platonically close with a gay kid.

Dead girl's best friend is suspicious that Kid Writer knows so much about dead girl, seems to be channeling her in his fiction (re. Molvern Caller).

Dead girl was killed by...

Dead girl wants revenge for her death? Died in a car wreck?

Eric has a gf that he isn't straight with (he doesn't let anyone know about the cell phone)? No -- no gf -- the writer secrets himself as if masturbating to talk on the cell phone. Suspiciously, he has two cell phones.

Maybe Eric sleeps with another girl, who tries to make a call on the haunted cell phones with dire results.

He imagines a psychic phone company that offers cell phones to talk to the afterlife. Wouldn't most people get bored talking to people they know, family members that they have animosity towards?

Dead girl wants writer to avenge her death, as price of keeping cell phone connection.

(She died playing sex games with burn-out lit. prof?)

re. THE LAST OF SHEILA, SLEUTH.

CHARACTERS

Eric (the hotshot horror writer)
 Jason (his young agent, Eric is his key client)
 Dead Girl (Sheryl)
 Dead Girl's best friend (who is suspicious of Eric)
 Gay kid dead girl was close with

3.9.04

Combines: cell phone idea, Exterminating Angel idea, horror writer idea.

(re. AS)

Dead girl -- "trust" betrayed.

Her sense of betrayl.

His sense of guilt.

A story about falling in love with someone after it is too late (echo this in another of the stories?).

She falls in love with him in the phone calls (not much of a relationship while she was alive).

"Something Wicked This Way Comes"

Fellow dead are pissed.

The annoyed dead.

Intent on destroying phone. Intent on destroying him.

Someone else uses the phone -- it destroys their mind.

Surprise story to settle the score. Badly motivated people end up dead.

Psychic force keeps people in house (ala Exterminating Angel).

Scens of him talking on phone, think that he is talking to his gf (chilling revelation similar to talking to Mother in PSYCHO).

CURRENT BACKSTORY:

Writer barely knew dead girl in college, was smitten with her.

Girl dies -- he comes into possession of cell phone.

They fall in love talking on phone.

He writes a bestseller horror book about being dead based on what she has told him.

Dead girls' living best friend is suspicious that writer knows so much about dead girl.

His book becomes a bestseller.

Dead girl is pissed that her trust has been betrayed -- she still loves the witer -- but here is tension in their relationship.

The other dead are pissed that their secrets are being given away.

Surpsie party that everybody thinks that everybody else organized.

But the dead have organized it to get trhe dramatisd persoanna of the sceurity bnreach into one place.

The party guests are held captive in the houe my a ghostly psychic force.

CHARACTERS

Writer

Writer's gf (?)

Agent

Agent's bf or beard

Sister

Dead Girl's GF (?)

Dead Girl's GF's BF (or does this lessen sexual tension?)

Book editor

Crony (of the writer) -- who he confides to, but not about the phone.

Phone seems like the equivalent of a mad ventroloquist talking to his dummy. Does phone line seem dead to those who can't use it.

3.10.04

Writer has a gf -- doesn't consider it unfaithful to have verbal love relationship with dead girl. Or does he absurdly try to maintain physical celibacy with live girl? And at end they escape house together with the promise of a relationship.

Marijuana -- pot as part of party. Pothead paranoia.

Or does dead girl get pissed hat writer and dg's gf get together?

He's decietful -- threat to sister's life.

His attitude: can't wrong the dead.

Ordinary person uses phone -- goes crazy, descends into madness, dies.

Succumbing to dread -- can't tolerate it.

More and more people are catatonic in house -- joke about TV or video games making them catatonic.

6 people.

Writer

Writer's GF

Agent

Sister

Sister's BF

DG's Best friend (who has it in for the writer?)

Cook

Writer has causal gf?

Book just came out, is a hit.

Dead girl doesn't want phone contact broken.

At end, dead girl finally accepts being dead.

She died six months ago. She has dictated book to him, but he is taking credit. He is guilty, acts guilty.

Suspicion DG was given drugs?

DON'T ANSWER QUESTIONS -- ALA "AUDITION"

Sister has incriminating literary evidence.

Set in Ivy League.

Dead can use internet to arrange party.

Opening: en route to surprise party -- thinks he's talking to dead girl, he is talking to sister (their voices sound the same.)

When he meets the sister, he's smitten, because it's like the dead girl is alive again. Especially spooky when he hears her speaking in the other room.

Writer explains to sister that DG is on phone (earlier it seems that writer is crazy) -- he was to act as the go-between.

He gets on phone and expects DG but gets the angry dead.

He has to break up phone at end. Dead sister sacrifices connection to the world. Spell is broken.

3.12.04

[Couple of mis-invited people (the dead fucked up the invitations).]

Takes a while to figure out the party.

Cell phones don't work inside the party house.

Alt: DG encourages him to get book published -- then is chastized by the other dead.

Or: he goes from using her to feeling guilty -- transcending -- that's his growth. BUT: no "growth" in Bunuel!

3.18.04

Other cell phone reception dies in the house

Plagiarism: Sister presents case to book editor and agent.

Clark (sister's BF) is a law student?

Writer tells sister that he has cell phone communication -- but warns her that connection might be too intense. His dog put his ear to the phone and died.

Sister tells this story to the agent (who she has been telling plagiarism stories to). Agent tries to use cell phone -- goes berserk -- sees horrific visions -- dies (or is a vegetable).

Writer's gf has literary ambitions and tries to milk the agent/editor contacts.

No food -- devolves into a survival situation.

Writer's need to keep the phone secret. Ambitious GF wants it as her ticket to writing fame. Etc. Make others greedy for the phone.

re. exterminating angel -- belated discovery of the trap. Intrigue that goes on among the group. Embarrassment

about the problem, rather than terror -- treating it as matter of fact.

3.19.04

ALAIN: The key is his relationship with the dead girl. He didn't get to know her while she was alive. But they have fallen in love by talking after her death. She's not angry that he wrote the book, but she is angry that has jeopardized their relationship because the other dead want to cut off the phone connection. She doesn't care if he falls in love with her sister, as long as he keeps talking to her, as long as they stay connected. Keep that as the emotional core and I will sell this script.

Dead dog (from listening to phone) can be flashback.

Create structure based on information flow -- how the backstory is to be revealed -- use this as basis for organizing plot. Introduce characters only as needed.

3.21.04

Room in the Mirror ala DEAD OF NIGHT

BACK STORY -- POINT BY POINT

He didn't know dead girl very well when she was alive.

He came into possession of DG's cell phone.

Only he can talk on the phone -- it is dangerous to others. (his dog went into spasms and died).

He keeps this the phone and what it does secret from everyone.

Through their phone talks, he has gotten to know, and fallen in love with, the DG.

He wrote a book based on what the DG has told him.

The book sold for a lot of money.

The book was been a hit -- a publishing sensation.

DG's sister recognizes turns of phrase and details in book that writer should not know. She suspects that the writer

stole the DG's papers, and used these as basis for the book.

The dead are angry -- they want cell phone contact ended. They can't break it from the Other Side. The contact needs to be broken among the living. If they can't get writer to destroy phone, they will get someone else to destroy phone, or as a first step, kill the writer. [He has to come to fear the others in the house as potential attackers -- particularly since he is trapped with them in close proximity.]

STORY POINTS

Sister starts out hating the writer. Maybe even suspecting of him of some culpability in DG's death.

When first discovered talking on phone -- or when he says that he is talking to DG -- he is considered crazy.

Maybe sister wants to talk on phone and he warns her against it -- another person at the warning hears this warning (either directly or indirectly) and doesn't believe it. This person is found salivating in a trance, the phone in his hands.

Agent either wants to get another book from the writer -- or feels that if he can control the phone, he doesn't even need the writer -- he can write the next book himself and make all the money. Agent could also try using phone, go bonkers, even die.

When DG learns the havoc the phone is causing, she might be guilty or she might not -- the people who dies were venal and deceitful. Maybe she could send messages from the dead characters back to the other side.

Maybe the deaths are what force the writer to confess the underlying situation to the sister. Or maybe he has to keep the sister from using the phone. In the course of their Act 1 antagonism, the writer has grown attracted to the sister.

The DG girl could overhear this attraction, or sense it -- she is jealous at first -- but then is willing to live with it as the price of keeping contact with the writer.

Maybe sister is the one who helps the writer come to his senses. (If she doesn't believe that he can really write apart from the sister, he shows her some of his stories that he wrote before he got hold of the phone. She validates his talent.) Not just being trapped in his house, he can't spend his life tethered to a DG's voice.

Like Orpheus forbidden to look at his lover, the sister cannot speak to the DG, but must receive information second hand. Sister had accepted DG's death -- but the grief is reawakened -- maybe they revert to earlier squabbles.

[Tech question: the phone can only be used by a person alone so we can hear the DG's voice on the soundtrack without other character's hearing it? Speakerphone would defeat the fear issue.]

Once power traps them in house, writer is the first one with inkling of what's going on? He feels guilty, is filled with dread for the reckoning to come?

Writer isn't willing to die to be with dead girl. Or he is forced to choose: between sister and DG? "Do you think you'll be happy if I'm with you over there on the other side?" "Yes." "Well, I think you're happy because I'm alive, because I bring that to you, and if I'm dead then we won't have that." "But we'll have each other. Forever." "But you didn't kill yourself." "If you kill yourself, doesn't that change where you go?" "Oh." "So this is the only way that we can stay together. On the phone."

7.22.04

The characters are pretty blanks. They are young. Consider them the characters in DAZED & CONFUSED.

She wrecks the car. He has no guilt he has the phone. He desired her, but never felt that he had a chance.

8.9.04

Make him something other than an artist. Poli sci majors? She is a wild star. She helps him with his papers after she is dead, and the sister recognizes her language. Or she helps him find something hidden (eg, gets into a safety deposit box).

The cell phone rings after the crash and he answers it.

8.21.04

Everyone dead remembers themselves young. The young dead are the happiest. Being dead is better than being alive. If this gets out (this secret of the dead), everyone will start killing themselves. But suicides are unhappy. It's like forced membership into the club -- you can't buy your way in. People see themselves as young when they are dead -- destest mirrors. Unless there is some unhappy connection on the other side. Dead girl is one of the unhappy dead.

Writer goes to a cabin to write? Can't get out?

Start with her loving girl -- they try and continue this love from beyond the grave. Does he have to be a horror writer? Does it have to be a horror book (isn't that what SECRET WINDOW is?)? As long as he has the phone, that is the talisman that portects him from the attacks of the unhappy dead.

She is more talented than he is -- she has a publishing deal. he tries to not be jealous. (How does this relate to MOVERN CALLER?) She alks him into being a writer -- it is something that they can do together.

Maybe the phone is a way that he can get in touch with any great dead artist that he likes.

Or it is his secret source of power -- like that movie about the professor with the secret potion that makes the ball avoid the bat (ask SV the title). The dead writers are all too glad to have something to do. The writer rationalizes that he is bringing great literature into the world.

Can AURA be crossed with cell phone idea? But in AURA the idea of a ghost story sneaks up. Not just a ghost, but a ghostly projection.

In the end we are all dead.

OR: he has a good relation with both the dead girl and his sister (ala PSYCHO).

10.28.04

RE. ALAIN'S SYNOPSIS

How long to delay Will's direct knowledge that Amanda is dead?

How long does Amanda not know that she is dead, is just mystified about where she is?

re. Cyrus: Will cannot determine whether this is all a grisly joke or an unbelievable connection to the dead.

Alain's treatment plays out the mystery longer -- are the phone calls really from the dead. My fear is that the audience would get ahead of this, that you can't spin out that mystery for very long

What makes Will a catch?

Who to model Will on?

"THE DEAD TALK" -- series of horror books

10.31.04

SECTION LIFTED FROM SYNOPSIS 1:

At the wake, Will is still very confused, but does not let on to Lucy. Lucy is frightened -- because she doesn't know why the police called Will in. What is Will hiding? (And, if he doesn't tell her about the phone, how does he explain?)

Phone rings. Police Det. Harmon wants to speak with him. They traced the number of the anonymous call. Harmon wants Will to come in to the station -- but he refuses: his girlfriend has just died in a car accident, and he is at a gathering in her honor.

Amanda calls. beginning to accept her death. Doesn't she want to speak to Lucy. Doesn't think she can.

MOVE THIS STUFF DOWN, AS PER NOTES IN FIRST PRINT-OUT:

He tells Lucy: disbelief and concern.

[Does telling Lucy about the phone break narrative tension? Does he keep withholding this info?]

[NOTE: this is the point in the story where I initially thought that Will should come clean with Lucy, tell her what's going on with the phone.]

He goes into a back room to speak to Amanda alone.

11.4.04

TO WORK ON:

--escalating tension, demands from callers after Mitzi
 --The Mom Episode

11.5.04

REGRET -- Will constantly regrets things -- will this build
 in a ghost layer, or undone things?

Regrets law school -
 Cyrus - money regret?
 Mitzi - relates to what regret?
 Mom - guilt galore

Re. phone being destroyed and still working -- being truly
 haunted -- REINSTATE?

Lucy -- also a law student -- would seem a perfect match
 for Will, or is this too easy?

NOTE: Will as someone who keeps backing down until he
 stands up to Dead Mom at the end.

LIFTED FROM SYNOPSIS 2:

Will hands her the phone, she speaks to Cyrus, gets
 freaked, throws the phone down -- when Will gets the phone
 back it's dead. [NOTE: this violates the rule that only
 Will can speak to the dead. Maybe only hears static ala
 Lucy not being able to talk to Amanda at the morgue.]
 Cyrus got to talk to his wife. But Will didn't get to
 speak to Amanda. Maybe the phone is damaged and Will has
 to tape it together, fears that it won't work. But he does
 manage to make a local call. Play up the cliffhanger fear
 that his link to the underworld has been severed. (Maybe
 even take it into a shop. The time during which the phone
 isn't working is incredibly tense and nerve-wracking
 because Will fears that he will never speak to Amanda
 again.)]

WHAT SEEMS TO BE MISSING RIGHT NOW

--stronger sense of metaphor
 --narr. build with each episode
 --increasing danger or surreality
 --deepen the revelation by quirks that come before
 --each episode needs to have it's own singular nightmarish
 quality
 --relationship with Luct needs to arc, unfold in
 counterpoint.

MOOD

[--doom]
 --regret
 --forboding (threat, intrusion)
 --sexual longing

METAPHOR

--what is he missing? what needs to be completed?
 --how story structure relates to thematic concerns

THEMES

--second chances
 to talk to the dead (Will-Amanda)
 to take care of wife (Cyrus) selfless
 to start a relationship (Will-Lucy)
 to have her body found (Mitzi) selfish?
 to get even with spouse (Mom)
 --death isn't the end; it's actually more hgorrific is
 there isn't an end
 --having a living person do the dead's bidding disturbs the
 natural order of things

STRUCTURE

SET-UP

Will-Amanda relationship
 Phone calls
 Lucy, twin sister

SECOND REQUEST -- Cyrus -- more convoluted than he ever
 expected, the hoops that he has to jumop through to
 get to talk to Amanda again.

THIRD REQUEST -- Mitzi -- more nightmarish than Cyrus, now
 he is under attack by the police.

FOURTH REQUEST -- Mom -- his breaking point

CIRCULARITY, THE REVELATION

11.5.04

Need equivalent of deja vu in DEAD OF NIGHT,
 need to establish idea of circularity before the end.

"being dead is the same stuff over and over -- help me break out"

Longer-term dead as the story goes along

Theories of the dead

RE. MOM SECTION

Reverse gender -- back to Dad? Dad made him go to law school. Dad was a lawyer. Dad is dead, and Mom remarried his law partner. Is it is Hamlet, then does it have to follow through to the death of usurper husband? Does it become too much of a vengence plot?

Mom claiming that the new wife murdered her. Avenging Mom. Dad has rermarried -- Mom's sister (that fits thr reverse Hamlet paradigm).

Will goes snooping -- when caught, confronts the new wife, learns that Mom was lying. The lying dead.

What would make the incident chilling. Isn't chilling the goal?

11.8.04

Lacks sense of life-or-death threat -- prime threat is wheteher or not he gets to talk to Amanda again.

End of 3rd Act can have more anomolies.

Overt Hamlet structure of 3rd Incident plays to the dream reveal. As does establishing Lucy as the girl that he will wind up with.

GHOST meets JUMANJI.

11.11.04

Take diaristic poetic style of GW NARR and apply it to the script -- idiosyncratic but accessible creation of mood. rather than trying to fit myself to imaginary strictures. Get more in the mode of CRASHING, write as if it is just for me. Remmber that CRASHING was written after H/Y. Don't drift back to H/Y seconf-guessing as act of first recourse. This I realize at the end of the night when I tired wrong to write the first scene.

11.12.04

Started first draft in earnest today. Surprised that I gave Will tears in the early scenes. Either make this phrase brief and get into Bunuelian matter-of-factness, or revise to match earlier non-tearful intentions (never thought about Will's tears as something to be in the story).

Will & Amanda's phones both have the same ring -- it was a funny love thing that they did together.

REVISION NOTES

--earlier mention (at the morgue?) that Lucy wants Will to go with her to the funeral home to make arrangements

--after Gertrude admits to murder, is it boring to have Claude spend so long denying his guilt?
(visualize Claude's lies of innocence?)

--Should Hamilton make some remark about how he has learned not to be asshole after dying?

Visualize phonecalls

--Flash cuts

--Flash cuts

--Fantasies?

--by whatever means possible

12.3.04

ALAIN'S COMMENTS (12.1.04)

Margo-Vicki -- fix

Harmon -- too TV cop

Like Dana Andrews in LAURA.

More people at the wake -- Amanda's parents?

OPTIONS

Ex-bf married to Vicki or Margo?

After they find chain with "M"

Harmon: Are you a psychic?

Harmon drivew Will to the morgue -- Mitzi's parents are in the cold room. Amanda calls. Parents want to hear from Mitzi. Gertrude arrives at morgue (rather than the woods).

Gertrude calls Harmon to help out with disposing of Claude's body?

Dad bugs Will after Claude's death for more help.

DRAFT 1 REVISION NOTES

If wake is at parent's house rather than Lucy's, do we lose the contrast between Lucy's apt. and Will & Amanda's? Also, do we lose the moment of Lucy and Will alone (in Wake II scene)?

The Wake

p.25 - 34 I Vicki, Margo, Mitzi calls (in bathroom), Will calls 911, Detective Harmon arrests him.

p.52 II -- with Gertrude. Margo and Vicki are the last ones and are leaving. Gertrude leaves. Will talks to Lucy about the phone.

p.59 Will & Amanda's apt. -- Will confesses his feelings for Lucy to Amanda -- is this too early?

Should Amanda's final phone call be more reconciling -- Amanda as the reconciler? (Back off romance in Wake II scene -- no kiss). Amanda releases Will to have relationship with Lucy.

p.74 Will's conversation with Lucy at funeral home, about their feelings for each other. Does this undercut the conversation with Amanda?

END SEQUENCE OPTIONS:

--Amanda calls prior to the conervation with Lucy in funeral home? NO

--Revised conversation with Lucy in funeral home, then Amanda calls. Rewrite conversation.

Will/Amanda discuss their feelings. Will must still seem conflicted, still have strong feelings for Amanda (giref,

plus she isn't so dismissable). Amanda still stands between them.

Amanda calls and selflessly releases her claim (or does this make things too easy?).

12.31.04

p.55 too subjective a description?

p.67 Lucy-Will dial -- a bit forced?

1.5.05

KILIAN'S COMMENTS:

Nothing that he's supposed to be doing that phone pulls him from.

What's his agenda?

Mourning her?

Reconciling feelings?

Has Amanda's death cleared the way to have an affair with the sister?

He has to do bidding of other dead or can't keep talking to his dead love.

ALT: gets busted at bank, has to do explaining.

Will is too blank at the beginning to take an interest in what he is doing. Need some context for his life (Background, family...some mention of being guilted into going to law school?), his relationship with Amanda.

There is a layer or two missing from the first act that, if present, would help accelerate Acts 2 & 3.

Mitzi episode too constructed -- easy proof that he didn't do it. Different from the bank, where he broke the law. Cyrus episode is the most active.

ALT re Mitzi: he has to retrieve necklace to give to BF? He has to bury her body, gets caught doing that?

Need to set up father from the beginning, rather than have that a late-appearing, out of the blue episode.

Could get a call from someone who wants the drunk driver who killed him to get fucked up.

He has to do more and more things (currently he does less and less).

What's his compass that gets tested?

Storyline of sister butts up against one of talking to Amanda in the other world. Once he wants to be with sister, Lucy, that removes the tension. (Gertrude aying that Lucy loves him is fine, him going for it isn't.)

No thru-line to keep reader/viewer interested.

ALT: call from a guy the cop wants to talk to. Will is placed between a bad guy and a rogue cop. Cop wants help on a big case he has been working on, a Black Dahlia-type case.

ALT: Maybe some guy who orchestrated his own suicide, doesn't want that deicovered becuae his family will lose the insurance money. OR -- imagine Mr. Dietrichson trying to get Neff & Mrs. Dietrichson caught (they would otehrwise get away with it).

1.6.05

False ID for Cyrus' bank? Or, he needs to wear glasses and a hat to try and look like Cyrus.

Dad makes him break into Claude's (office or house) for evidence. Gertrude catches him there.

Early phone call from Dad -- he's finally "getting along" with Amanda. Early visit re. Hamlet's Ghost.

Murder of Mitzi -- grudge against Gertrude in prosecuting some related case. A serial killer that she is the victim of?

He goes to woods alone? To retrieve M necklace?

ALAIN

Change time frame to give him more than a day to deal with his grieving.

Opening scene with Amanda -- She says that he isn't happy at law school, he's only doing it to please his father, who is dead. "You shouldn't be living your life for a dead person."

Amanda realizes that she is dead when she sees Hamilton. He teases her nicely, like a prematurely dead daughter-in-law.

Law School Scene -- he goes there to get an extension because he is grieving.

Ultimately, he has to decide whether to kill himself to be with Amanda or to go on living.

Sounding board: Amanda? Lucy? Both?

Need to show Amanda -- as face in mirror? His imagining of what she might look like.

Will's deep, abiding passion for Amanda missing from first draft -- he's insufficiently grief-stricken.

In the middle of the Cyrus episode, he's grief-stricken, overwhelmed, stops what he is doing, starts crying. (Maybe this is how he gets around the ID issue, the femme bank official is sympathetic. "My fiancé died today...")

1.7.05

Gertrude -- not guilty in HAMLET

Early call from Dad, says he's been murdered -- Will just thinks it's Dad playing out a long-standing grudge against Claude.

Does he commandeer phone from Amanda (he does that later)?

Does Cyrus know Mitzi, is there some connection between them that helps segue the Cyrus & Mitzi episodes? ALT: some Hamilton-Mitzi and/or Hamilton-Cyrus connection.

MITZI EPISODE

Murderer wants locket retrieved?

Mitzi wants to make sure there is evidence to incriminate her murderer? (Bringing murderer to justice doubles up Hamilton episode).

Catching murderer VS. Being instrument of justice (which is what Dad expects, but which Gertrude short-circuits).

DRAFT 1 EPISODES

Cyrus 11 pages (pp.15-26)

Mitzi 25 pages (pp.35-60)

Dad 12 pages (pp.73-85)

1.8.05

re. Mitzi Fixes

She *too easily* tells Will who killed her.

Tension based on incarceration, false accusation.

What if: he has incriminating evidence -- Mitzi wants something retrieved, and that he has this object on his person when arrested.

Or by doing what she says, he is put in jeopardy by the real killer. (+Cops use him as bait?).

Maybe -- jeopardy from real killer, and police regard him as an accomplice. The call from Mitzi that gets him off the hook is unexpected? He needs to do some fast talking to get access to the cell phone that will bail him out (he too easily gets the phone back from cops in Draft 1.

Mitzi wants him to go check and see if there is evidence at her boyfriends house. Or a one-night stand.

Mitzi calls, wants an object retrieved. Will bristles -- *am I a "retriever" now?* He knuckles under to the threat.

What if she was buried in the field of a farmer/serial killer? Mitzi wants him to retrieve her necklace.

OR: she was killed by a serial killer -- the guy comes home while Will is in the house. He escapes -- is followed --

OR: Cyrus killed Mitzi (or wronged her). (She wants him to get incriminating evidence, sends him back into Cyrus's house get evidence, to besmirch Cyrus's name? Why?)

Claude or Hamilton was Cyrus's lawyer? If Hamilton was Cyrus's lawyer, it makes even more sense that he would be the 3rd episode.

After Mitzi, Harmom follows Will (secretly) and is there soon after the killing of Claude.

re. Draft 1 -- Will wouldn't so easily mention that he did favors for the other dead to Detective Harmon, because Will knows that what he did for Cyrus was illegal.

Tension re. Cyrus - Mitzi - Claude's house -- he is going into strange rooms, going into strange places to do the bidding of the phone.

At Claude's, Claude arrives first, then Gertrude. More hot water with Claude to begin with.

If episodes not connected, need sense of escalating demands from the dead (Mitzi episode is mostly about Detective Harmon).

re. 911 Call: Will makes 911 call from cell "I...uh...sorry.." Thinks better of it, hangs up. Then uses pay phone at law school. He is traced that way (combo of the two calls).

1.9.05

Two issues:

1. Potential causality or connectedness of episodes.
2. Emotional through-line of Will's grief.

There could be logic to how someone gets the phone: Amanda killed Cyrus. Cyrus killed (or wronged somehow) Mitzi.
OR: Mitzi was in the car with Cyrus.

Don't necessarily need connecteedsness as long as there is a build, escalating demands from the dead. (Problem with Draft 1 Mitzi episode is that it is more about Harmon than Mitzi -- or maybe that isn't a problem). More of THE WRONG MAN vibe re. Will.

But the key is probably #2, the flow of Will's emotions and reactions to grief.

Strategy: fix #2, then see what needs to be done about #1.

Cyrus's wife at morgue at the end?

1.10.05

Mitzi broaches the idea of getting together with Will in the afterlife -- is this something that Amanda should do instead?

p.67 Lucy kisses Will -- cut???

p.70 Will praises Lucy to Amanda (then Amanda attacks).
This goes too far???

1.11.05

MOOD ADJECTIVES

Unnerved

Spooked

in a trance

jittery - wired -

tense & jangled

Mood: creepy, unsettled, unnerving, disturbing. World gone strange.

Direct emotions (is that too contrary to me?)

Through-line of Will's emotions, his grief. Against the grain of my own muted reactions, deadpan tone.

Mood as function of description. With/without adjectives, adverbs. Mood as function of situation (vividly described). Mood as function of image, of repetition.

1.12.05

RE. REVISED DRAFT 2A OUTLINE:

The key questions I can't answer are -- why doesn't Mitzi know that she was murdered? Does she just know where her body is and wants it found? Is he shrewd enough to ask for this only after the favor of getting the necklace retrieved? How smart is she?

Does Hamilton need to call in Harmon's presence? Can Gertrude be the one to get Will off the hook with the Europe alibi? Or is there something to be gained by having Harmon except the supernatural explanation but not telling Gertrude at this point?

Amanda -- actress

Will -- wanted to be an actor, no good, going to law school without enthusiasm

...there is no there there...fave line from Draft 1, just excised...

re. FATAL ATTRACTION -- sense of anxiety/dread each time the phone rings.

1.13 - 15.05

DRAFT 2 NOTES

When does Harmon learn that Amanda died? (Overhearing Will talk in the interrogation room) His reaction to this? (presumed, not explicitly mentioned)

Missing Draft 1 Amanda conversation when Will first returns to the apartment (Amanda concerned about how Will is doing, but without the Lucy-jealousy stuff).

A couple of more deja vu references in the middle of the film? (is it possible to set-up the dream reveal a little bit more?)

Beats of Will - Amanda arc?

re. Will/Amanda having same phone ring
p.20 ??? Mention here???
(p.21 -- "same ring" mentioned)

"Cloaking device" added to Mitzi flashback (so we don't see her face)

GEN: more creativity/"lies"/POV in flashbacks. Non-matching, asynchronous flashbacks?

Claude's study -- Does Hamilton asking Clause about Mitzi's butterfly tattoo take the steam out of the later revelation that Clause was fucking Mitzi?

Missing: the scene of Will and Lucy alone at the wake. Then, in Draft 1, after Will goes home to his apartment, there is a long conversation with Amanda.

Note: No scenes at Lucy's apt. in Draft 2

1.15.05

[[[DRAFT 1 EPISODES

Cyrus 11 pages (pp.15-26)

Mitzi 25 pages (pp.35-60)

Dad 12 pages (pp.73-85)]]]

DRAFT 2 EPISODES

Cyrus 13 pages (pp.17-30)

Mitzi 18 pages (pp.32-50)

Dad 21 pages (pp.52-73)

1.28.05

p.38 Dream Scene

p.72 Wake scene revised -- Will looks at pix of the twins

2.12.05

Have Mitzi's body in the last morgue scene? Mitzi calls, wants Will to try hugging her body?

3.14.05

DELETED/RESTORED (4/26):

√"You're so competitive" (deleted as per Lauren Lloyd)

√Mitzi: This is sort of an unplanned calling plan. (deleted as per Lauren Lloyd)

2.1.06

FROM DAN:

Gary - sorry I didn't get back to you the other day - I was in Florida with my family until Monday night.

> Of course that's not reason enough to make it, and I've certainly
> tripped myself up before trying to do "commercial" projects. So I do
> really want you to weigh in as to whether you think this venture is
> advised or ill-advised. I still have residual wariness based on THE
> LAST BIG TOE fiasco.

I haven't read the script yet - I'll try to get to it soon. Even if I don't like it, though, that's no reason not to make it. Even if you don't like it that much, you might want to do it - you wouldn't be the first good director to take on a project that wasn't pure artistic expression. Really, I think the most important factor is whether you'll feel okay working on the project.

- Dan

2.13.06

STEVE:

--Mostly didn't like the last ten pages. Ending was a let-down. Refusing to pay-off genre story at the end.

--Seemed too easy, having Mom kill Hamilton.

--Wanted Amanda to ask for more, as the other dead do.

Amanda is willing to let him go too easily at the end.

Maybe she should be trying to kill him so that he can be with her.

--Somehow try to bring Cyrus back in at the end?

--Will too easily moves along to the sister.

Re-read the script yesterday on a cup of coffee, while working out at the Y.

GENERAL NOTES:

Heighten Will's POV. More subjectivity, mood, strangeness.

Go into everyone's thoughts?

Hamilton/Claude stuff doesn't work, especially for so much screen time at the climax of the movie.

Needs to be more of an art film.

Shift to night after p.39, if not sooner.

ALAIN DISCUSSION:

--He perceives the whole film as being a dream, I perceive it as being about Will being dead and working out the issues of his life.

--First scene too cutesy. More of a fight -- Will in denial about his anger about his father, and the fact that he is going to law school against his will. They should argue and reconcile.

--Need to set up Will's relationship with his father in the first scene.

--Mitzi episode is the weakest. It should be funny. Make her sarcastic. She is a law student with Will, she berates Will for not being perceptive enough to see that she was having an affair with Hamilton.

--KEY ISSUES IN FILM: 1) Grief for Amanda that he gets over, 2) Hates with father and gets over it.

--Reprise opening scene somehow in the middle and reveal that as a dream (that Amanda is still alive).

--Have him faint at the morgue, and use that as a way of getting into a dream. The shot where he wakes up should be an echo of the POV casket shot. Say but don't see that dead cop is badly mangled (which is why Will fainted).
 --When opening scene is reprised at again at the end, it should be different (he has made progress with his issues).
 --Alain argues in favor of ambiguity, that ambiguity is art.

WORK AREAS:

1. Opening scene
2. Mitzi - completely rework character - MODEL?
3. Reprise of opening scene somewhere in middle
4. Add dream sequence at morgue
5. Rework ending and/or closing scene

Feel some headway. That there are enough ideas to do another draft of the script. If can be made btter, it might be good enough for me to want to direct it, or for it to be saleable.

Glad that Steve likes it and seems inclined to work on it.

2.14.06

Convey since of dream without having final dream scene?

Steve likes CALLERS, except for last ten pages which doesn't fulfill all the inventiveness that has come before. Instead of a dream, he thinks that elements used earlier should be brought into play, and that Amanda tries to kill Will so that he will be with her.

Expect Alain to be resistant to this change, but he embraces it. AND wants to keep the dream structure. Cites VERTIGO as being a dream re. Robin Woods analysis. I counter that it is not overt in VERTIGO and should not be in CALLERS. He wants the reprised/I was dreaming scene at the end to reflect: 1. Will can't quite remember how he has worked out all the issues in his life 2. He is now determined to leave Amanda. (In the new version, will set her up as having a streak of selfishness that is subtly there in the opening scene.) The issue of revealing it as a dream is still under debate. If it's going to be a dream then strangeness and hints need to be layered through out.

But the conversation ends on the note of Alain saying that the movie could now "achieve genuine greatness." Bouyed by that praise. Even though, as a participant, he is praising, in part, himself. Am pleased that he so quickly embraces the general gist of what Steve has proposed (rewriting the last ten pages).

Feel, at last, that CALLERS can be good, good enough to (almost) commit to making it. But cannot proceed until script is rewritten.

3.8.06

DRAFT 3 REWRITE NOTES

--Clean out all extras

--Abstraction (such as Cop with bad news) -- don't see his face?

--Abstraction, poetics

--Simplify: Hamilton/Claudia plot. Shorten flashback dial.

--Morgue dream (kissing Lucy): overplayed? too overt?

--Cyrus apology (as per AS): doesn't feel right.

--More dream state stuff? In details, in mood.

--Have we lost all reference to his being in law school and hating it?

--Lucy in bedroom with green suit: show scene from Lucy's POV? Just hear Will's side of the conversation (what Lucy can hear).

Try to find other ways of pushing Lucy's POV (and reducing VO).

--p.83 Clear here that Will is aware of Amanda watching (no overt reference to her calling while he was hiding from Claude - IS THAT NEEDED?)

3.18.06

LEVELS (PER ALAIN +me):

1. Horror film
2. Parody of horror film

3. Meditation on Shakespeare
4. Dream with deep existential meaning
5. Zeitgeist of cell phones as disembodiment & death

3.19.06

re. Flashbacks -- should flashbacks increase in course of the piece?

Accelerating Flashback Structure?

(There is a brief flashback in the Mitzi section.)

Other people talking on cell phones bvat funeral home?

Or, in desert: other cops and Detective Harmon talking on cell phones? Something to widen out sense of menace near the end.

STRUCTURE

1. Intro dream/death
2. Morgue
3. Cyrus
4. Mitzi
5. Apt - dream of Amanda, Mitzi, Cyrus
6. Arrested - Harmon (flashback to car wreck)
7. Apt - Hamilton calls, flashbacks, Lucy, Harmon
8. Morgue - hugs the dead body, erotic Lucy dream
9. Lucy's - Hamilton calls again, flashbacks
10. Claude's Mansion - Amanda calls, flashbacks
11. Apt - Will mistakes Lucy for Amanda (funeral dress)
12. Mojave with Lucy - the set-up
13. Funderal home
14. Closing/dream

3.20.06

Review blocking diagrams for CRASHING as first step of director's prep for CALLERS. Interesting to see how many scenes were re-staged, revised, during filming. How much did I need to agonize over things? How much work, how much fretting were really necessary? I tell myself "a lot."

Many visual motifs were abandoned or greatly reduced -- stageline crosses (asbandoned), subj to obj camera moves (greatly reduced).

Directing = clean spatial presentation.

DIRECTING PRIMARILY IS:

- pacing
 - performance
 - shots
 - framing
 - camera movement
 - movement within the frame
 - duration
 - editorial construction
- shot selection
- framing (what is included, what is excluded)
- casting decisions
- crew decisions
- script decisions
- location decisions

Can rhythm be quantified, planned? I think the climaxes are:

- Dream of Amanda (this should be surprising)
- Morgue, hugs Amanda's body (very creepy)
- Dream frame at end (should be chilling)

Soundtrack is omniscient but visuals are not (disconnect between POV that sound and picture provide). Can fuck with POV by just hearing one side of the conversation (from Lucy's POV, for example).

3.23.06

Lucy's first visit to his apt -- she starts to open door with key before Will opens it? To establish that she has a key?

3.26.06

EMAIL TO ALAIN:

Finished re-reading it. Lord knows how many typos I didn't catch...

A couple of points...

The Cyrus Episode -- anything we can do to improve it?
Wittier, funnier, scarier?

p.23 Think we need to play down Will's reaction that Cyrus is watching -- do you think that the "watching" aspect has already been sufficiently established? If we keep it here, then cut later explanatory references?

p.52-4 I wonder if Will stays out on the porch for too long -- I guess it's okay given what's going on.

p.55 Flashback in Hamilton's office. Is it too pointed having Gertrude seeing Hamilton & Mitzi kiss? What if the scene were from Gertrude's POV and we just see Mitzi close the door at Hamilton's gesture, giving them privacy?

p.63 Cut morgue attendant as a reason for them to go into the bathroom -- grounds the scene too much in social reality.

p.73 Cluade pulls gun. Delay appearance of the gun until p.77 when Cluade points it at Will's head?

AS REPLIES:

In a message dated 3/26/06 9:57:44 PM Pacific Standard Time, Walkpix writes:

<< Finished re-reading it. Lord knows how many typos I didn't catch... >>

This is one of many problems with final draft: its spelling and context check is far inferior to Word.

<< A couple of points...

The Cyrus Episode -- anything we can do to improve it?
Wittier, funnier, scarier? >>

I have suggested before cross-cutting or going wider to heighten ironic suspense over being caught--Marnie stealing from Rutland & Co. being the template.

<< p.23 Think we need to play down Will's reaction that Cyrus is watching -- do you think that the "watching" aspect has already been sufficiently established? If we keep it here, then cut later explanatory references? >>

I would think the reference here could use clarification about how the dead "see": Cyrus does not know how, he just does.

<< p.52-4 I wonder if Will stays out on the porch for too long -- I guess it's okay given what's going on. >>

Not a problem.

<< p.55 Flashback in Hamilton's office. Is it too pointed having Gertrude seeing Hamilton & Mitzi kiss? What if the scene were from Gertrude's POV and we just see Mitzi close the door at Hamilton's gesture, giving them privacy? >>

That might be better.

<< p.63 Cut morgue attendant as a reason for them to go into the bathroom -- grounds the scene too much in social reality. >>

I would suggest a social reality contrast: a grieving wife or husband is being led back to reception area by a different attendant.

<< p.73 Claude pulls gun. Delay appearance of the gun until p.77 when Claude points it at Will's head? >>

I think later and subtler--why point it at his head. Presumably Claude has some talent as a persuader or he would not have been Hamilton's partner.

AJS

In a message dated 3/27/06 11:48:55 AM Pacific Standard Time, Walkpix writes:

<< Cross-cutting to what? What do you mean by "ironic suspense?" >>

Ironic suspense--where the viewer sees a threat that the character does not. Cross-cutting to someone nearby, such as the secretary, a security guard or janitorial person, about to discover him in the act. The Marnie shot is a high angle "split screen" in that mode.

For example, suppose Will arrives when the Secretary is supposed to go lunch (no loading dock--same elevator cross). He sneaks into Cyrus' office and the key is in the drawer. That is locked. While he gets something to jimmy, the Sec returns (forgot her purse). She hears a noise as he pops the drawer and starts to go in. Her hand is about to touch the knob, when the phone rings. She gets it. Will hears her. Back to her. She hangs up and enters. No one. She walks around then goes out. Will emerges from a hiding place. Business with no key. He peeks out, see no one, starts to leave. The Secretary has been out of sight, waiting. Now the who are you, security dialogue as he leaves.

3.28.06

POTENTIAL WORK TO DO:

- Tweak Cyrus's Office
- Mitzi flashbacks
- Desert episode

POST ALAIN/CHUNG KING LUNCH:

- Will's dial/character: make him smart, witty, well-read
- More underlining of emotional states as story progresses
- Desert drive

ALAIN'S YORICK/HAMLET RESEARCH:

Gary,

Here is what Polonius says at the beginning of Act Two:

Inquire me first what Danskers are in Paris

Yorick Road is fine, although we would not be the first to go do it seeking allusion (more after the citation):

<<Yorick, the deceased court jester whose skull is exhumed by the gravedigger in Act 5, Scene 1, of Shakespeare's Hamlet. The sight of Yorick's skull evokes a monologue from Prince Hamlet on the vile effects of death. The contrast between Yorick as "a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy" and his grim remains is a variation on the theme of earthly vanity (cf Vanitas): death being unavoidable, the things of this life are inconsequential. Though this theme of Memento mori ('Remember you shall

die') is common in 16th and 17th century painting (see especially Mary Magdalene), Hamlet meditating upon the skull of Yorick has become the most lasting embodiment of this idea.

Yorick, the name of a vicar in Laurence Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy*. He is supposed to be a descendent of Shakespeare's Yorick. The figure of Yorick is often taken for a rueful self-portrait.

Yorick, a programming language.

Yorick, the name of an enemy in Konami's video game series *Castlevania*, specifically in *Castlevania: Bloodlines*. The enemy Yorick is a skeleton doomed to forever chase his skull, which has fallen off. When the skeleton finally reaches it, he kicks it with his feet, dooming him to do this forever.

Yorick Brown, the protagonist of the *Vertigo* comic series. He is parodied by the character Saint Yoruk in the *Zork* series of computer games. See: *Skull of Yoruk*.>>

I checked for other proper names and found none.

BTW here is the Ghost's speech, if you feel like lifting a phrase or two and putting them into Hamilton's diatribe (I cut out Hamlet except for one line and made a couple of [comments]):

Ghost

```
<< I am thy father's spirit,
Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confined to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,
Thy knotted and combined locks to part
And each particular hair to stand on end,
Like quills upon the fretful porpentine:
But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O, list!
If thou didst ever thy dear father love-- >>
```

[Apparently even back then the dead were not permitted to tell the living particulars about where they were]

Ghost

<< Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.
>>

Ghost

<< Murder most foul, as in the best it is;
But this most foul, strange and unnatural. >>

["Murder most foul" now being an oft- or at least
sometimes-used cliché]

Ghost

<< I find thee apt;
And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed
That roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf,
Wouldst thou not stir in this. Now, Hamlet, hear:
'Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard,
A serpent stung me; so the whole ear of Denmark
Is by a forged process of my death
Rankly abused: but know, thou noble youth,
The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown.
>>

HAMLET

<< O my prophetic soul! My uncle! >>

[Possible sarcastic rejoinder or too much?]

Ghost

<< Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts,--
O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power
So to seduce!--won to his shameful lust
The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen:
O Hamlet, what a falling-off was there!
From me, whose love was of that dignity
That it went hand in hand even with the vow
I made to her in marriage, and to decline
Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor
To those of mine!
But virtue, as it never will be moved,
Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,

So lust, though to a radiant angel link'd,
 Will sate itself in a celestial bed,
 And prey on garbage.
 But, soft! methinks I scent the morning air;
 Brief let me be. Sleeping within my orchard,
 My custom always of the afternoon,
 Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,
 With juice of cursed hebenon in a vial,
 And in the porches of my ears did pour
 The leperous distilment; whose effect
 Holds such an enmity with blood of man
 That swift as quicksilver it courses through
 The natural gates and alleys of the body,
 And with a sudden vigour doth posset
 And curd, like eager droppings into milk,
 The thin and wholesome blood: so did it mine;
 And a most instant tetter bark'd about,
 Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust,
 All my smooth body.
 Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand
 Of life, of crown, of queen, at once dispatch'd:
 Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
 Unhousel'd, disappointed, unanel'd,
 No reckoning made, but sent to my account
 With all my imperfections on my head:
 O, horrible! O, horrible! most horrible!
 If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not;
 Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
 A couch for luxury and damned incest.
 But, howsoever thou pursuest this act,
 Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
 Against thy mother aught: leave her to heaven
 And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge,
 To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once!
 The glow-worm shows the matin to be near,
 And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire:
 Adieu, adieu! Hamlet, remember me. >>

[Horrible, horrible, indeed. I had forgotten that Hamlet Sr. complains about not having a chance to seek absolution--were their things that Hamilton wanted to make right and did not get to?

Other phrase possibilities: "seeming virtuous" or "leave her to heaven" (with film noir allusion thrown in for free)?

Also I checked out "hebenon" which could be a place name (as "henbane"): A poisonous Eurasian plant (*Hyoscyamus niger*) having an unpleasant odor, sticky leaves, and funnel-shaped greenish-yellow flowers. It is a source of the drug hyoscyamine.]

AJS

3.29.06

ENDING:

I still don't think the ending works. Even with the the layering-ambiguities, it still has a bit of the the disappointing "oh well it was all a dream" feel.

He throws it in the desert. Post credits -- hikers find it.

[He throws the phone in the trash on the way to the viewing room. Post-credit sequence: landfill -- traashman -- picks up hone answers it.] Or hikers in desert find it?)

Don't show Amanda dead at end?

4.18.06

DRAFT 3 COMMENTS

JOE DANTE

Didn't seem that different from Draft 2. I would have directed that one. I'd direct this one. (A studio pix?) Maybe Lion's Gate would make it.

PETER BAXTER

Great through Mitzi section. It was all downhill, a long slow decline, after that.

Would have preferred to keep going with Cyrus and Mitzi - why don't they come back in? (Because they get what they need, their requests have been fulfilled.)

He thinks that all the initial characters are great, well set up, this opening batch of characters are all that are needed to sustain the story.

The two factors of: 1) Talking to the dead and dealing with their demands and 2) Is Will crazy or not? is all that is needed to sustain a great story.

Didn't like Hamilton stuff. Too complicated, too conventional. Mires the story in a world of explanations. But did like that Gertrude got him out of trouble.

Peter thinks at the very least the film should be shot in such a way that it can be simplified in editing.

When I explain about the different levels (dream, Hamlet, etc) it makes him rethink the story, but he still thinks that too many things are piled on.

He was confused by the ending. (I explain the dream thing and he asks: was it real or a a dream? -- and I equivocate.)

I explain that the whole film can be interpreted as a dream, but he didn't think that came through in the script.

(I also explain that the dream frame can be edited out if it doesn't work.)

KILIAN

Liked it, but was confused by the ending. If it is a dream or if Will is dead, why the tag ending with the phone being real out in the desert?

I think the problem with the Hamilton stuff is that the flashbacks are non-action, they are expository. The movie stops to explain background stuff that is not germane to the core Will-Amanda-Lucy axis.

The Hamilton-Claude stuff is also spatially confined. The Cyrus episode is exciting because Will has to go into a strange office, a house, a bank to fulfill the request.

It's also decelerating action -- the only thing that Will actively does after Mitzi is go to Claude's study and look through some papers.

Also, the emotional weight of the story is Will's grief over Amanda. It muddies things to throw in a dead parent. (Just a dead dad in Hamlet -- not a dead girlfriend [Ophelia's not a girlfriend])

HAMILTON ANALYSIS

p.37 arrest

[interrogation scene p.38 - 49]

p.45-47 Hamilton calls

p.52-57 Hamilton calls again, flashbacks (non active)

p.68-78 Hamilton, Claude episode

= 17 pages

4.19.06

RE RE-WRITE:

--was Mitzi a friend of Amanda's?

--I like that Mitzi is connected to the next episode. Try to preserve some connection (or create a new one).

How Mitzi is connected is a significant story point, a linkage.

--What if it's a revelation that Mitzi worked for Hamilton? (Will is surprised to learn this in interrogation) Maybe she was someone in the typing pool, not Hamilton's direct assistant?

--Could Hamilton feed Will the information that gets him off the hook with Harmon (the equivalent of the Gertrude dialogue?)

A VERSION of INTERROGATION:

Amanda mad at Mitzi for getting Will into trouble & mad at Will for going along.

Amanda helps find Hamilton to get Will out of trouble.

Immediate antagonism between Hamilton and Will.

Hamilton wants something, other than justice??? (such as: doesn't like Claude wearing his pinkie ring?)

No flashbacks???

OR: Will asks Amanda to help locate Hamilton?

4.21

An old boyfriend of Amanda's in the afterlife?

An old girlfriend of Will's in the afterlife?

Hamilton wants favor prior to Will's arrest?

PULP FICTION re. how the episodes connect -- that kind of overlapping abstraction?

4.22

Funeral Home, "William Pierce" sign, etc -- that can be a dream, earlier, perhaps in place of the Lucy Bathroom Dream? (or in that vicinity). This would allow opening to be preserved, as something that echoes later in the film.

To make the whole story a dream undermines the suspension of belief that there is a cell phone to talk to the dead.

What if Mitzi was a client of Hamilton's? (an unhappy client who, in part, blames Hamilton for her death?)

When Mitzi first gets on the line: Actually, I was a client of your father's. He said nothing bad would happen to me, but it sort of did. The least you can do is help me with this.

Will: That's between you and my Dad. Not between me (and you).

Maybe Mitzi's allegations are what get Hamilton on the line, to get the last word in regarding his reputation.

Mitzi & Hamilton died one year apart.

That is the connection Harmon makes: Mitzi was a client of Hamilton's,

Any reference to Hamilton's death prior to his appearance in the story? Such as Lucy saying, "God, first your Dad dies last Spring, and now this." Some hint that Will was never that close to his father. (We already get this when Amanda mentions early on that she has seen Hamilton.)

What favor could Hamilton want? (structure change: Hamilton calls for favor just before police call)

4.24.06

GEN: story closes down rather than opening out.

A Bunuelian ending (what would that be?)

If Cyrus requests another favor -- if Will buckles, agrees, what do we think of him?

If there is an additional Mitzi or Cyrus episode, do beat where Amanda calls, gets Will caught (this is first attempt to kill him).

4.25.06

Alain, in one of his gnarly moods, threatens to "quit" if the ending is unambiguous...now agrees with all my objections re. the hamilton story, says that he had these same reservations all along (backwards "always right" syndrome).

Wonder why I want to make another film (but what is the alternative?).

Make the film about the Will-Amanda-Lucy triangle. Maybe Lucy tries to get rid of the phone (takes the phone from Will).

(Does Amanda try to have phone sex with Will? Does Lucy walk in on the phone sex?)

Hamilton wants his porn collection removed -- Will has to sneak into the house to do this.

"Hot chocolate" revelation -- too passive at the end -- have this earlier (in the bedroom), have it lead to sex?

Amanda is jealous.

Don't set Lucy up as the "good" sister?

Mitzi was a famous case. (Maybe somehow peripherally Hamilton was involved?) Prior to Mitzi, Hamilton asks for a favor (such as porn removal), after arrest, Hamilton helps get Will off the hook, so Will has to return favor.

"Last scene": cell phone rings, startles Will from nightmare, he's in bed with Lucy, gets out of bed -- it's a call from Amanda -- wakes again, in bed with Lucy. (or dream within dream riff)

OR: Will wakes from nightmare. He is in bed...with Lucy?
Here's cell phone ring in next room, fearfully he goes to
answer it...

(OR: should film start with creepy phone call that is
nightmarish and he is having another nightmarish phone call
at the end?)

NOTE: how do we know that opening POV is from coffin?
(moving shot over women's shoulders?)

Will goes back to desert to look for phone?

4.26.06

Can Will take Lucy into his confidence to explain that he
is thwarting Amanda's death attempt?

Cyrus calls with business proposition. Does Will have a
latent greediness that gets awakened?

Then Mitzi.

Then Cyrus.

Expand Cyrus into money.

Re. the famous dead -- riff on Bill & Ted's Excellent
Adventure?

One way of looking at it: it's all about "hearing voices."
Hearing voices is what makes him do everything. The power
of words, real or imagined. Try to think of other clever
things that words can do.

Love relationship with Amanda is too stock. Add details,
quirks, make it breathe.

4.27.06

POSSIBLE NEW STRUCTURE:

Start with Hamilton -- he commandeers phone from Amanda.
Wants Will to sneak his hidden porno collection out of the
house before Gertrude finds it. Will is "caught" by
Gertrude. Perhaps Gertrude thinks he's crazy.

Cyrus episode.

Mitzi episode. Hamilton gets Will off the hook with phone advice.

Will sleeps with Lucy. Amanda furious.

Will talks to Lucy about Amanda trying to kill him (need to figure out clue that gives this away). Will seems seems crazier to Lucy. (but audience believes so there is no tension from this)

Play out Amanda's attempt to lure him to desert doom (or some equivalent).

Other ideas:

Cyrus makes proposal to make money. Lucy was a greedy side that comes out?

Lucy is the one to throw the phone away?

Lucy thinks he should stay in law school as a solid career choice -- he uses phone to make money instead?

4.30.06

How to milk duration:

Stephen King (can't bring myself to read)

Hitchcock

Fassbinder

5.2.06

DAVID WARFIELD NOTES:

--don't plant corn and harvest wheat

--Move up "confession" scene

--Dream ending only plays out if he is caught in an inexplicable nightmare

5.4.06

Opening scene: wedding costing too much, credit card debt. She complains about having to sell pasta at farmer's market as a gig. Selfish.

After being dead, Amanda seems oddly selfless "death has changed me"

If she is more about money at the outset, then her proposing a money-making scheme makes sense.

Were Lucy and Will having an affair before Amanda died?

Play out the VERTIGO riff of remaking Lucy as Amanda's double?

Maybe Bunuel is the key. THE EXTERMINATING ANGEL. A crazy premise that is quickly accepted and then taken to extremis. The mundane and the hysterical mediated by deadpan sensibility. Similar to the unexplained enchantment of AUTO-MATES.

Hamilton not dead -- does that complicate things? Hamilton alive and wants to take advantage of the situation. Both the living and the dead trying to take advantage. (Someone other than Harmon wants to take advantage of phone link.)

There is something repellent about "script developmenmt" as it currently exists. How it fails to reflect sensibility.

The problem is reading the script dulls my ability to see the film. Boredom. Trance.

A bickering couple. As in AUTO-MATES.

Being able to talk to Amanda takes the edge of the grief, puts him back into the relationship hassles. And he actually doesn't love her. Maybe they get into a dispute early on?

TRULY, MADLY, DEEPLY -- she sees the dead boyfriend in the privacy of her home. Plays out the madness beat.

I'm not good with the grief thing -- not the narrowband emotional range that I'm comfortable with.

"The Bandwidth of Angels"

If they have a fight before she leaves for work, that creates guilt, but also puts some edge on the fact that he hasn't lost the love of his life. Don't work so hard to make Will a sympathetic character -- maybe he has some reserve because he feels locked in a not so great relationship. Think Maryanne FitzGerald.

Give Will my greediness, miserliness?

5.9.06

EVAN DUNSKY

--Amanda dream (in bedroom) and Lucy dream (at morgue) didn't work. These break conventions established within story.

--Montage with Dad flashbacks, no reason for Will to visualize.

But Evan liked the father story.

--Liked conceit of people consumed with pettiness in death

--Amanda's entreaties to Will need to be more overt. W: You want me dead? Amanda: Don't you love me?

--Liked that Harmon story had a film noir feel.

--Funeral home, Will's name on door -- can that be slaved as a dream scene?

--Lucy: you're psychotic, you're not really talking to the dead, I'll fuck you and make you better.

Lucy will never believe that he's talking to Amanda; grief causing dementia.

(Lucy is a psychology major? She talks in contempo psychobabble.)

--Move up hot chocolate scene. Lucy says: "after that, every time I saw you I had to look away."

--Lucy & Will try to resist having sex. W: how can we do this, your sister's dead? L: Because we're in grief.

--Lucy has to remain the good sister even when she fucks Will.

--After fucking L, Amanda calls, Will takes it in the other room -- Lucy gets pissed off and smashes phone (instead of Cyrus's wife).

--At first Will doesn't know that Amanda is omniscient, can see everything. He fucks Lucy before he is aware of her omniscience. (This would force a change in the Cyrus stuff??)

--Will powers off phone to have sex. Amanda powers it back on and interrupts -- phone rings?

--Desert stuff: we let Harmon in on ruse before audience knows that it is ruse. Unclear Harmon has arrested bad guys.

Amanda has to be specific about where the money is. It's not about money; it's about going to someplace dangerous where he will die. Amanda just needs to put him in harm's way. For example, he falls through a rotten floor into basement in desert. He is going to die there. Amanda, "It's not so bad, just let go."

(GW - OR: she tells him to go to this miner's shack -- there's treasure buried just beneath the floor -- she keeps coaxing him along -- but he throws a rock out into the floor and it cracks open, revealing a pit below. How did she know, Lucy asks. Some other dead person told her.)

(Someone else calls and threatens to end phone contact with Amanda. Will refuses. Amanda gets on the line and says that X is serious, do what he says or she can't talk again. X sends him on wild goose chase that almost gets him killed -- then we find out that Amanda was behind this third episode -- but her entreaties for him to do it already arouse our suspicions.)

--Ending: Lucy dies in car wreck -- she and Amanda call Will together. (Need scene of both Lucy and Amanda enraged, either here or later).

PETER BAXTER

What is Will's dark side? Do the dead call him on this dark side?

Try to keep the "is he crazy" question going as long as possible (delay Cyrus?)

Amanda asks, "Did you sleep with _____?" An indiscretion that she finds out about.

Will:
chump
unstable
ahead of audience at end (re death plot).

Telephone devices:
messages
text messaging
call waiting

BUNUEL
How does Discreet Charm end? (A scene of Will and Amanda and Lucy walking along a road?)

"If there is a distinction between the actual and the imagined, you wouldn't put money on it" (Anthony Lane re. Bunuel)

Start with eyeball sequence in Un Chien Andalou? Will wakes from nightmare, TV is on.

What are Will's character flaws? Indiscretions? Weaknesses? Secret shames?

Opening:
Will, Lucy, Amanda walk down a country road.
Moon and cloud
Eye sliced by razor
Will opens his eye - TV is on -

Start with repeating action ala EXTERMINATING ANGEL (or CRASHING)?

Dream: reading, tired, turns off lamp, this gesture prompts him to wake up?

He isn't as grief-stricken as one might expect, because his relationship with Amanda is troubled?

What if the opening scene is a fight (bickering not knockdown drag out) -- which the second phone call doesn't put right.

After the conversation with Amanda at the morgue, perhaps he goes back home and awaits another call, wonders if he is crazy. (or is this dragging out the narrative too much?)

Is he arrested too easily?

--gets called about eyeglass case

--taken out to burial site, they see the soil match before her walks through it

--(trio walking shot)

--Harmon calls before he is arrested. Displace interrogation stuff to this outside location.

--

This can be a film about desires. Hidden, guilt-ridden. Subversive.

Amanda asks him if he wants to try phone sex and he declines.

Dead grandparents he can talk to?

Replicate the necrophilia of VERTIGO?

Does Will have a hand in refashioning Lucy? Selects another dress for her (other than the one she has picked). Asks her to put it on. Tells her the chocolate story, or vice versa. he steps out of the bedroom while she changes out of propriety.

When he sees Lucy he wants to make love to her as the embodiment of Amanda. How to deal with his pretense of not being interested in making love.

Opening scene -- he wants to make love Amanda doesn't?

Father story could work if it keep's Will from Amanda. What if Hamilton and Amanda don't get along?

Hamilton wants to get even with Claude not for murdering him but for making him look bad -- Will needs to go to law

office, go get some files, etc...He seems odd and crazed skulking around the office. Sees Gertrude there?

Lucy and Will are driving together -- (Lucy gets furious that he is still talking to Amanda) they get in a fight, have a car wreck -- both killed (or unconscious, put in ambulance) -- the cell phone is ringing at the accident site -- someone picks it up. Kill Lucy? Or kill Lucy and Will?

Lucy has a boyfriend? He becomes the inheritor of the phone. Lucy (dead) calls boyfriend -- Will takes the phone, he has an errand that he wants done.

5.10.06

CYRUS: rewrite so that he doesn't call while Will is in office = moment where Will think she is crazy. He gets phone call in his car. "Can you see?" stuff in the bank? (but he can't seem crazy to the bank lady)

Lucy says that she slept with Will during the first weeks of his relationship with Amanda.

5.11.06

Amanda is the good sister, Lucy is the bad sister? Does this provide more narrative tension?

5.12.06

(ALAIN MEETING:)

Opening scene -- fight over guest list, china patterns (is there a later issue with calling off the wedding?)

Lucy tries on dress

He leaves her alone to answer alone (to answer land line)

(He catches Lucy on phone.) Lucy: "I really want to believe that you can talk to Amanda". She sobs, he comforts, it turns into a passionate kiss.

Amanda calls, pissed off.

Amanda confesses to earlier sex (Amanda didn't know about this).

Call (from Amanda? from Cyrus?) Lucy doubts that it's true -- Will wants to prove her wrong (that feels like secondary motivation)

Lucy wants to get rid of the phone

Harmon arrives (surprised to see Lucy)

Lucy spends the night -- hor chocolate speech -- Will wakes up, finds Lucy staring at the phone, looking disturbed.

Murder plot -- change of heart. (Cyrus, Hillside construction site)

Funeral home. He thinks he's burying the phone with Amanda. (Show dead Amanda and live Lucy in same frame)

Coda: Different place with echo of first scene. It's Lucy, reveal that she still has phone.

5.13.06

GENERAL: Don't get caught up in plot (that's why Cyrus and Mitzi work). It should be constantly surprising and freewheeling.

Hamilton -- what favor does he need done?

Will VO? To enhance POV?

OPENING -- how does ROSEMARY'S BABY open? Some cell phone montage of repeater towers, early morning commuters on the phone, that ends with Amanda using her cell phone as an alarm clock?

5.14.06

Cut getting 20K via Cyrus.

Move Mitzi story down, as far as possible -- can it be broken up with Lucy story?

Potential problem with Lucy story is it is too closed-in relative to Mitzi (which is expansive).

How does morgue scene play relative to new Lucy subplot?

5.15.06

Stay focused on what's in Lucy's head

--Up her emotional reaction in morgue

--Sex with Will is to try and recapture Amanda

--Attempt to kill Will is out love for Amanda and guilt that she slept with and is in love with Will.

DRAFT 4 IDEAS/QUESTIONS:

"I'm losing you" (re cell reception) -- use somewhere

GERTRUDE:

I know you're very upset. But Lucy loves you. Just knowing that can help get you through this terrible time.
CUT?

Before & After Cyrus -- he is sitting in car in driveway, unable to move -- did the episode even happen? (BUT Amanda calls right after the Cyrus episode.)

Harmon makes some comment at the morgue about Amanda & Lucy being identical twins?

Will's motivation for Cyrus's second request --

Will: I've already done one favor for this guy, I'm no going to do another one. I'm tired of doing favors for the dead.

Lucy: Do it for me. I need to believe. And that's the only way I will, something like that.

(couldn't he figure out some easier way to prove it to her?)

Save the bit where Will drives away from Harmon/Lucy?

Morgue -- Will ditching Lucy to go alone feels contrived -- does the morgue scene play out before Lucy shows up to try on the dress (keeping the Lucy stuff as one big bloc)?

It's okay for Will to be pushed around.

I worry that Will has been made too conventional. Too conventionally clever is parrying with Harmon.

5.19.06

Harmon/Interrogation scene -- AS focuses on how Hamilton seems different (from hearing Will's side of the conversation) ("Why aren't the dead as self-centered as before?"). This seems like projecting in. Plus, Amanda and Mitzi do remain as self-centered.

Harmon -- more explicit desire re. Ginger.

CAR WRECK: Amanda could hit Cyrus as a pedestrian and crash into a wall.

Will sees Cyrus's wife at the funeral home, he wants to avoid any potential awkwardness with her, but she chases him down and pleads for him to put her in touch with Cyrus, he begs off, maybe she gets hysterical and has to be restrained.

5.22.06

DAVE WOLLERT

Liked everything except the dream stuff.

Liked that there was a connection to Mitzi but she didn't know who killed her.

Keep him under suspicion longer.

What if Dad doesn't give hints? What if they find poison in Mitzi? What if he solves problem on his own?

(What if it is a poison specific to a pharmaceutical company that the law firm did work for?)

What if Hamilton refuses to talk to Will? (Amanda is the one who relays that Dad won't talk to him.)

Lucy is in jeopardy too? (When Harmon sees Lucy with Will he suspects they are in cahoots somehow regarding Amanda's death.)

Does Will get caught with Cyrus's money?

GW NEW ALTERNATE VERSION:

Mitzi worked for law firm.

When Amanda calls (during Harmon interrogation), Will asks to speak to Hamilton, but he refuses.

Will has phone taken away from him and is thrown in cell.

Second questioning: re dates -- maybe Gertrude arrives at this point and helps get Will out.

The coronor determines Mitzi was poisoned. Will suspects that Hamilton had something to do with it, goes home and starts going through Hamilton's files (Lucy comes with him?). Stumbles across surveillance stuff (Claude sleeping with both Mitzi and Gertrude).

Claude was having the affair with Mitzi (not Hamilton). Claude poisoned Mitzi to keep her quiet, get her out of the way. (Hamilton died before he could bust Claude.)

Somehow involve Lucy in the investigation?

5.29.06

DRAFT 5 QUESTIONS:

--Did Gertrude kill Hamilton and Mitzi at the same time?
YES Or did she just kill Mitzi? NO

--Separate revelation that Gertrude killed Mitzi and Hamilton. (Did Mitzi and Hamilton die on the same day?)
NO

--There is no last wrap-up conversation with Amanda? After her suicide pitch, that's it re. talking with her?

6.10.06

DRAFT 5

--No social grouping for law office scene?

--Ways of increasing dream aspect (sitting in driveway, additional not-quite-repeating scenes)

--Maintain theme of craziness, how?

EXPENSIVE LOCATIONS

--Morgue
 --Bank
 --Interrogation room
 --Court
 --Jail/Booking desk
 --Law offices (Pierce & Pierce)
 --Boat at sea

6.16.06

DRAFT 5A

--Cyrus phonecall: start in morgue parking lot? (driveway scene can still remain)

--Add driveway scene after Mitzi?

--Harmon interrogation: start at burial site?

--Hamilton's office: have secretaries &c as chorus/witnesses?

6.20.06

DIRECTING:

--ripples in the fabric of reality (subtle optical effect)

--coverage re. LCD

--coverage re. sitting in car

--coverage re. "dreaming" at the end

--time discontinuities, such as he comes out of morgue (2nd scene) and Harmon's car is not there.

--shoot additional love-making stuff in motel room and cut into some later scenes as flashback.

6.23.06

Gas station after morgue? Everything freaks him out.

p.67 -- Downtown anxious, expecting phone to ring. Ding, low on gas. Leaves his card, needs to return to sign it. Needs to get attention to get pump reset (avoid eye contact with low riders.) Low riders (laughing, happy). Sound. Gas pump needs resetting. Phone ringing.

NAMES:

Bank lady
 Cyrus wife = Sheila
 Mr. Stern

MOTEL ROOM, ADD DETAILS:

Twin beds. She wakes crying.
 She gets under the covers.
 She lies on the outside of her bed.

6.24.06

DRAFT 5B:

I think more could be made of the turn the story takes toward a twisted family psycho-drama re. Gertrude -- Will's unhealthy relationship with her and the unfolding story that she has killed Hamilton. Any possible foreshadowing beyond her mention in the first scene? Yes, I know that more will come out in performance but there are also opportunities to work with this more in the script, either in nuances of dialogue and action and maybe in additional scenes.

At the wake, would Gertrude try to barge into the bedroom? Would she be an additional element of claustrophobia that drives Will out of the room?

7.8.06

MULHOLLAND DR

--Opening dream imagery

--POV shots unrelated to character (or partially related)

--Floaty moves

--Repeating action

 π ("Pi")

--Guy disappearing from subway

--"Ordinary" shots gain eloquence and power through repetition.

7.9.06

The budgetary ruthlessness of Corman.

In your face style this time?

What will make the film good? Order of work priorities:

- Script
 - A reading?
- Casting
- Locations
- Visual Prep
 - Concepts
 - Shot List
- Design

7.16.06

Process of concept -- words -- stepping back -- trying to see the impact of the directions and structure as presented on the page, how that relates to the final aesthetic experience.

REWRITE NOTES

--Why should Hamilton be an asshole? Back story doesn't come through.

--Grief re. dad's death vs. Estrangement.
Estrangement that is reconciled (current draft) vs. Guilt

--Lucy is the arty one

--Amanda wants him to stay in school. She neatens up his art area. She's in a hurry to get to work and he delays her with a kiss (causing the wreck? = guilt).

--If Amanda is ambitious wouldn't Gertrude like her?
Unless Gertrude is competitive and possessive and couldn't like any gf of Will's.

--Opening scene with the 3. It's a surprise that Amanda's the one who stays with Will.

--"Dead can see": eliminate inconsistencies, milk awareness they are watching.

7.18.06

KILIAN'S NOTES (legal pad notes)

--Scene with twins at beginning

--Doppelganger theme not thoroughly deployed.

--Shower. Show Will in the shower. Phone rings, he gets out, still wet -- it's Amanda's phone, so he doesn't answer it.

--Opening: set up Dad and Mom

--"I ended up with wrong twin, you fucked me & thought of her."

--END, Amanda, "Now fuck her & think of me." Amanda gets the last laugh -- because he will think of her when he fucks Lucy. He will be with Lucy, but he will think of Amanda. (go into head space of what he thinks about while fucking?)

Way to do scene: he is having sex with Lucy and he says "Amanda". Lucy stops "You called me Amanda again."

--Amanda: "I bet a thousand times you wished I was dead and that I was her..."

--p.78 Turning off phone at motel doubles beat of turning off phone at the end.

REWRITE OVERVIEW

ALAIN,

Here are some thoughts. Wanted to plant the seed with you so that your vast subconscious could mull it over. I plan not to think about this in Italy, and this is the best way to get it off my mind.

--What about opening with a scene where Will, Amanda and Lucy have dinner together in the apartment? At the end of the scene, Will ends up staying with the twin he seems least connected to, a surprise. I know we lose the shock of introducing Lucy at the morgue, but we gain a lot.

--What if Lucy is the arty sister? It makes her more simpatico with Will.

--When did Hamilton die? 6 months ago? That's my guess. I think we need to set up a context for grief. Others would mention that Will must be suffering to have a second person so close to him die so soon.

--What about spending 5 or so pages at the beginning to establish relationship of Will-Lucy-Amanda, the fact that Hamilton is dead and Will has an unresolved relationship with him and with Gertrude? Then the family stuff wouldn't come so out of the blue in the second half. I think we can find a clever way to do this that enhances and does not telegraph the story to come.

--Hamilton as an asshole who turns nice doesn't play as currently written. What if he is someone who Will just wasn't close to and regrets that? I think the family dynamic and Hamilton character is vestigial from other drafts -- Will hanging up on Dad seems to come a bit out of left field now.

--It's rule about the dead being able to "see" what the living are doing is inconsistent. For example, Hamilton has to ask about Harmon's name. I think they should be consistently omniscient in what they can see -- this will be creepy and scary and offers lots of opportunities to inflect an ambient sense of fear into the whole proceedings.

--Here's a subtext to could make this a great sick twisted thriller. Stated in its crudest terms: Will starts out as someone who fucks Am,anda but thinks of Lucy./ Amanda's "revenge" at the end is that he is doomed to fuck Lucy but think of her (Amanda). I don't know how to do this but I think there is something to this idea. Related to this, the penultimate scene of Lucy-Will amyebe should be reconceived as something other than a direct echo of the opening Amanda-Will scene.

8.24.06 (back in LA from UK, read script on plane back)

Borges???

Main issues:

--How to deal with situation of grief

--Opening

--Closing

--Omniscience of the dead

--Family dynamic:

Guilt, continuing grief re. Dad

Claude killed Dad, Mon with Claude (re Hamlet)

Basis of bad relationship with Mom?

--Lucy vs. Amanda

Last scene, having sex --

Will says "Amanda."

Lucy stops. "You called me Amanda again."

8.27.06

CRASHING has a very defined and sophisticated aesthetic but, at least as the film festivals go, this has not been recognized. One of the key questions for me regarding CALLERS is how to remain true to my aesthetic and yet push things to try and get recognition for the quality and caliber of the work.

8.30.06

EVAN DUNSKY:

Key concept is the pettiness of the dead, that there is pettiness in eternity. That's funny. It's crucial that the humor of the piece come through.

9.2.06

RE DRAFT 6:

--Father episode should be trivial?

--Will and Amanda get interrupted from having sex at the opening?

Lucy and Will get interrupted later?

--Amanda knew Mitzi, condones the favor. Will is outraged by arrest, Amanda isn't. "Hey, I've got to get along here."

--What if Hamilton wants to show that Claude is fucking a secretary? Hamilton wants to disrupt the Claude-Gertrude marriage.

--All is trivial except for the Will-Amanda-Lucy triangle.

--WHAT IS THE THREAT? WHAT KEEPS THINGS SCARY? (With both Cyrus and Mitzi there is a sense of Will getting into deep then dderp water. The phone calls provoke risky action in the real world. There is an element of hearing voices and reacting to them.)

--Energy seems to drag when Gertrude, Calude, Hamilton come into the plot. It feels like an older, more constricted film.

--How and why is tension diminished after the court scene?

--ANALYSIS: The Mitzi favor lands him in jail, the threat is guilt of a murder.

--WHAT IF IT WAS AMANDA'S FATHER WHO WAS MURDERED, WHO IS ASKING FOR THE FAVOR? IN-LAWS OF THE AFTERLIFE. THE DEAD IN-LAWS. (HOW WOULD LUCY BE INVESTED IN THIS? WOULDN'T SHE HAVE AN EQUAL STAKE AS AMANDA IN FINDING OUT THE TRUTH ABOUT HER FAMILY?)

Could be some humor from Will talking to Lucy's dead sister and dead father and yet lucy can't join in the conversations.

Both Will and Amanda come from families of lawyers?

LOOKING FORWARD...

A movie unlike any other (return to that basic ambition)

What is the successful basis of duration? How does time pleasingly accumulate?

Some aspects: sound, heard but not seen characters, abstraction of reality (cell phone reality).

9.4.06

WHY I DON'T LIKE THE SCRIPT:

It started as a concept and suffers from a genesis that is conceptual rather than character based. The characters are not interesting or coherent. They are not specific. They are not interestingly flawed. (I kept thinking of the specifics of bourgeois delineation in French films).

After the Mitzi episode it leaves the realm of mystery and becomes too earthbound.

The shift to the Hamilton-Gertrude story feels too convenient, artificially "heavy", and it shifts from being a young person's story to an old fart story.

Unresolved question: do the people who encounter Will regard him as crazy? If Lucy does indeed love him, it seems that she would believe him (before Harmon does?). Will doesn't seem crazy to audience. How much does it matter what other people in the story think about Will? The question of whether other people believe him is boring -- tired dramatics.

Ponder how the story is altered by Lucy believing that he is talking to Amanda.

Dramatically wrong that the last resolution hinges on Hamilton and not on Amanda.

SOME SPECIFIC PROPOSALS:

--Try to make it scarier throughout.

--At the morgue, what if Amanda is not on the phone in Lucy's presence? (So that the question of Lucy's belief, inability to talk to Amanda does not come up so quickly, and is dispensed with so easily.)

As a corollary, would Will keep his ability to talk to Amanda secret? Is there something furtive about it, about him?

--[Avoid being sentimental or easy or favoring "sympathetic" characters]

--Mitzi-Amanda are friends. Amanda wants the favors done, her loyalty shifts to the dead. (Her loyalty to the dead overtly shifts she asks Will to kill himself and he doesn't? Should there be an additional scene of

recrimination, where she reviles him for not following through an offering himself. Does she promise him great sex in the afterlife? Does she hint at extreme erotic pleasures that are available on the other side? Does she threaten to take up with someone else, to try and motivate Will with jealousy? Making the opening more erotic would help with this.) (cf. NINE SONGS)

--Move up Lucy-Will sex as provocation to Amanda? (Feels like it should follow the suicide request.)

--After Will turns down the suicide request, what is left of their relationship? Is this where Amanda's allegiance shifts to the dead?

--Who killed Mitzi? Perhaps Mitzi knows who killed her. Can this lead somewhere?

--What if Harmon comes to believe not because of a phone call from Hamilton (find some other evidence, maybe something that Amanda could find out), and he takes Will right back to the morgue for help with Joanne (formerly named "Ginger")?

--Maybe the evidence that Hamilton (?????) gets is Mitzi feeding info through Will to bring her killed to justice. Too clichéd for this to be Claude?

--What if Amanda comes from a family of lawyers? What if the Claude story originates on her side? I like that Will is getting more and more mired in Amanda's problems, and the problems of her family.

--Maybe Will didn't like Mitzi in real life and is not pleased to hear from her in the afterlife. They never got along, got into the habit of avoiding each other.

--Messages on phone ala ORPHEUS? (he's a computer programming of some sort? some form of endeavor where genius insights are meaningful) Is Will something other than a painter?

--try to follow this premise: Lucy believes in the phone, but only Will can talk to Amanda. Will-Amanda exchange some secrets (ala Bernard LaMont) that convinces Lucy. Will is the apex of their conversations. What is the competitiveness between twins?

What would it be like at the morgue if Will confessed that he could talk to Amanda (without Amanda making a phone call). Then he would seem grief-crazed. He would realize that what he is saying sounds crazy.

The Morgue Phone Call & Lucy's response is not fully dealt with.

--Omniscience of the dead: when should this concept come fully into play?

Heightened eroticism of fucking the dead.

By Bunuelian, I mean an absurd-surreal premise that is treated in a matter of fact manner.

re. old plot: Claude is taping stuff secretly. He didn't kill Hamilton, but he is cheating on Gertrudde. Hamilton just wants to disrupt the re-marrriage, not have his death avenged.

What if Lucy has more of an agenda to fuck Will? What if she were less benign, less nice, less perfect?

9.8.06

EMAIL TO ALAIN:

AS--

Here are some ideas, some along the vein we discussed yesterday, and one big, new idea that is somewhat outside the box.

We discussed Will seeking out Mitzi's killer -- going to his house. Actually, what if her killer was a woman (fresher idea). There could be some nihilism to this -- Will is so depressed about Amanda's death, he has a devil may care attitude. Or to escape his grief he wants to pursue this dangerous mystery. All this would happen before Harmon arrests him (so that he could point Harmon toward the killer. And of course the killer could pursue Will, should we care to pursue that plot strand.

What if the person who killed Mitzi also killed Ginger (easier to call the dead lady cop Ginger than Joanne)?

Yes, it's a coincidence but as Gods of the story perhaps we can grant ourselves that.

Another possibility...was Amanda hoping that Mitzi's killer would kill Will as a way of getting him into the afterlife?

Here's the big new idea: What if Lucy is the one who can talk on the phone, rather than Will. Amanda and Will could still be engaged. Perhaps Amanda and Lucy could live together (Not cohabiting with Will before marriage), or they could all 3 share a house/apt. (The other variant would be twin brothers and one dies but I intuitively prefer two sisters).

I haven't thought through all the myriad implications of this idea. But, for example, if Lucy was looking in the mirror while she talked to dead Amanda you would visually get the impact of both sides of the conversation. Having Lucy be the conduit, protagonist, and perhaps erpson in jeopardy offers lots of visual, aural, thematic and psychological possibilities. It seems like a twin would be carrying on both an inner dialogue and an imaginary dialogue with her dead counterpart, irrespecitve of the cell phone angle.

I'm tired and I'm probably not stating it well, but I'm sure you get the gist.

I'm trying not to be excited just because it is a new idea. That's why I need your help inevaluating whether the idea has merit in any of itself.

By the way, one of the pleasures of working with you is the vast knolwedge of film history that you bring to the process.

Wicker Man was terrible but sometimes it is useful to see terrible films.

Gary

9.11.06

Visionary film -- realm of imagination.

Imaginary re-enactments of conversations?

Begins as a movie, then revealed as an internet-manipulation.

RE. PHONE CALLS

--He imagines where she is based on what she is saying.

--Progression based on what he is imagining.

--He imagines her in phonebooth.

--He imagines her in coffin.

--Blues screen ala 360° shot in VERTIGO.

RE. MITZI PLOT

--Mitzi says that she met a guy at the bar. She doesn't reveal that it was a girl -- she's not comfortable with being bisexual, or she doesn't want her bereaved parents to know. (visualize, then re-visualize when it is re-explained).

--Ginger was investigating Mitzi's death.

Security camera on Mitzi burial site. Then learn that killer has access to viewing this.

DRAFT 6 REWRITE POINTS

Phone call at morgue - Amanda wants Will to relay message to Lucy, he won't. Establish furtiveness.

When Cyrus's wife throws the phone down, it's over. He goes home. See his decision to put the phone back together.

No call from Amanda before Mitzi.

Mitzi: she doesn't know Will, and she's only just met Amanda.

She describes ther events leading up to her death. "I met a guy in a bar. He seemed like a nice guy..."

The Amanda dream should include an extended conversation. Amanda advocates helping Mitzi. She's part of Amanda's new crowd. "These are my people now."

Mitzi's next request. Go to killer's house and verify evidence before contacting police. ASK AS -- this seems pretty lame. Haunted house scene. Reveal -- killer is femme. IS BRECELOT NOT ON HER BODY, SO HE HAS TO GO TO HAUNTED HOUSE INSTEAD? (OR DOES THIS DOUBLE UP WITH THE FALSE BEAT OF GOING TO CYRUS'S OFFICE?)

Somewhere: Will wants to talk to Hamilton, but Hamilton won't talk to him.

After arrest, Will talks his way out of jail.

Ginger does talk to Will.

Killer of Mitzi is also killer of Ginger.

ALT: He visualizes Mitzi as Amanda.

Lucy: "I can't believe I'll never talk to her again."

9.12.06

GENERAL NOTES

1. More in Will's head (POV - reaction shots)-
2. Visualize phone calls
3. More night scenes
4. Scarier, creepier

KEY: APPROXIMATE-CONVEY WILL'S PROCESS/MENTAL LANDSCAPE

Will alone VS. Will with Lucy

Feel like I am back in the vapor lock of LAST BIG TOE, the year (or was it two?) spent rewriting with Steve. I'm not having any fun. I sort of had fun yestersay with the new opening but I'm not having fun today. I'm sleepy. I wish I could just watch movies and cure things that way. I am mindful of the enormous waste stretching behind me like a contrail into the past. That sort of plume.

A discussion of death, how it pervades all things.

9.13.06

HARDEST THING TONALLY: MIXING GRIEF WITH BREEZY QUALITY.

Other "grief" movies to study?

Extend section before Amanda's death to 8-10 pages. He puts aside law books to do something else?

Amanda or Will:

"Ever notice how cell calls are never about anything except where you are. Are you here? Meet you there. Where? There. I'm already here."

9.14.06

Mitzi - dismemberment as character is dis-imagined.

Reconfigured (Frankensteinian) as character is reconceived.

Payoff 3007 vs. 2007 later in script.

9.18.06

Amanda text messages her final plea to Will.

9.19.06

How to deal with the rhythm being broken...story progresses in a leap on Friday, struggle with pages on Saturday, nothing on Sunday, Monday I can blame on computer problems.

Try to understand why and how I phase in and out of excitement-inspiration.

9.21.06

Direct discussion of death -- "we're all going to die"

George Grosz riff -- vision of seeing underneath clothes.

KEY: POV & REACTION SHOTS

9.22.06

OULTINE FOR LAST SECTION

--Will doesn't want to get necklace, Amanda calls, intervenes "I have to get along"

--Will goes to Terry's house. She returns, he hides from her. Phone rings, gives him away (Will hits END button). Face to face. She raises gun, clicks, unchambered round, Will flees.

--Alley. Gunshot. Mitzi Calls

INTERROGATION: does Will get a call on the pink phone during first section of scene when he is alone?

During 2nd part of interrogation (after arrest) -- does Will get a second call with additional details? (To help convince Harmon)

Additional call from Mitzi at the grave site? YES (HOW TO VISUALIZE MITZI'S SIDE OF CALL? OR DO WE NOT NEED TO NOW THAT WE HAVE SEEN HER -- BEST LEFT TO THE IMAGINATION???)

(DOES LUCY CALL AT SOME POINT BEFORE TRYING ON AMANDA'S DRESS? OR IS THIS A POINTLESS RELEASE OF TENSION just to keep her "in the plot"?)

2nd Morgue Scene: after hugging Amanda, she launches into "you could kill yourself"

Terry's House - Harmon drops Will off.

Ginger calls: "They were trying to kill you and they killed me instead."

Will: "bullet in head messed you up."

Ginger: "dead don't lie."

Ginger explains that Mitzi was killed by Terry (flashback is replayed, differently). Then Mitzi and Amanda conspired to kill Will.

APT

--Ginger calls outside apt,:

--Will leaves voice mail for Harmon: Mitzi and Amanda tried to kill me! (WHY DOES HARMON NEED TO KNOW THIS?) Lucy

overhears: "Mitzi & Amanda tried to kill me!" (WOULDN'T SHE GET THIS FROM OVERHEARING WILL TALKING TO AMANDA?)

--Will sees Lucy trying on Amanda's dress. (He's angry at Amanda and he sees Lucy) "I held it up, then I decided to try it on, to see myself in her dress, to see her in me."

--Amanda calls. Will talks to her in front of Lucy. Lucy is outraged.

--Call waiting while talking to Amanda (Harmon calling back) (WHY IS THIS NECESSARY?)

--Harmon arrives. Lucy asks to see his badge.

--Harmon brings Will along in case Ginger calls. Lucy insists on coming with Will.

CAR: funny, confusing dialogue.

Will explains: Ginger got killed because I stole a necklace.

Lucy: what necklace?

AIRPORT - HARMON PARKS CAR. WILL & LUCY STAY IN CAR.

They get in back seat.

Lucy apologizes for doubting him.

Hot chocolate.

He reclines, closes eyes.

She kisses him.

RING - Amanda. "You're in danger."

They try to escape.

Terry with gun -- "Who are you? How did you know about necklace?"

Will explains about Mitzi/pink phone.

CALL - Terry grabs phone

Harmon kills Terry.

Will picks up phone -- First Terry, then Amanda -- PITCH FOR SUICIDE, HERE? -- Will thanks Amanda for warning, with Terry in background.

FUNERAL - Viewing Room - Will puts phone in casket. Amanda hands the phone back to him.

NEW APT

He wakes up. He's in bed -- Lucy in business suit. Not sure if it's Lucy or Amanda -- see ID clipped to her purse. (Does he need to check it to reassure himself?)

SHOWER -- moment of doubt -- will the story repeat?

NOTES:

We lose Will's dream of Amanda-Cyrus-Mitzi. (Any way to save without contorting?)

ADD IDEAS:

--Amanda's cell phone has pix of Amanda

--Use scene (early on) when Amanda "confesses" that the accident was her fault?

--Keep "Gas Station" scene -- where?

9.23.06

I'm writing a silent movie, sort of.

Will's POV of phone calls simulates a situation of madness (given that the phone is "real" within the rules of the story).

Combining Fellini (visions) and Hitchcock (POV, suspense).

1. MAXIMIZE MOVIE MOMENTS
2. WILL'S POV
3. PLAY OFF REACTIONS
4. PUZZLEMENT

9.29.06

VISUAL/DIAL: world filled with web info, first "wireless" power currents, then symbols, maybe pages.

When does Harmon learn (if ever) that the dead can see everything? Should it be discussed somewhere?

√Need to mention that that was Amanda that Will tried to put on back at the morgue? (yes, in conversation in car at airport)

Will imagines Terry & Mitzi together in the afterlife? I think this will undercut the joke of hearing Terry over phone while seeing her dead body.

Move down Amanda's Suicide Pitch?

10.2.06

NARRATIVE QUESTIONS:

--Suicide pitch: p.36 (after Cyrus's house) placement re. tips suspicion?

ALT: suicide pitch when he returns to morgue to hug her?

ALT: suicide pitch at Morgue II wouldv probably make murder plot obvious – but she renews pitch at end of scene, and Jennifer's call follows soon after.

--Burial Site II – Why does Mitzi call? Why her change of heart re. Helping Will?

--Why do Will-Lucy go along to airport? (motivation not sufficient)

--Why does Terry nab them? Too contrived? Do the emotions of Amanda calling distract from this?

DRAFT 6 REVISIONS

Final scene: does Lucy leave her cell phone, Will runs outside with it?

10.7.06

re. George Grosz scene – gets back to my "A VOYEUR" roots. Think about other "A VOYEUR" fantasy scenes (like bed disappearing into the wall).

Who cares about my archeology as much as me?

ADD SCENE: Will imagined cell phone signals & masses of pixel information

One Point Perspective

One Point Perspective VS L – R for phone convrsations

Will wouldn't necessarily visualize them in limbo.

SOMETHING OTHER THAN LIMBO. Re. BEETLEJUICE – waiting room of the afterlife.

DRAFT 6B OUTLINE (10.15.06)

Wake-up, Amanda leaves, shower (missed call).

Amanda calls: Will imagines Amanda at pay phone, imagines cop in same scene, imagines Amanda in car wreck.

Cold room, Morgue – Amanda calls. Will imagines Amanda in limbo, then wearing parka.

Lobby, Morgue – Amanda calls. Will imagines Amanda in their apt, in ski parka.

Parking Lot – Cyrus calls. Will imagines Cyrus calling from wrecked car.

Apt – Cyrus calls again. Will imagines Cyrus calling from stark office.

Cyrus's office – house – bank

Cyrus's house – Sheila – Cyrus calls. Will imagines Cyrus calling from his real office, re-iamgines Cyrus as bald-virile (to match his photograph).

Apt – Amanda calls, makes suicide pitch. Will imagines Amanda in limbo, then in crowd. Then imagines her alone in

bedroom. Then imagines crowd gone, Amanda gone, Mitzi talking (limbo & bedroom). Will imagines newspaper and TV montage of Mitzi. THIS IS A SECTION THAT NEEDS WORK

Will imagines flashback of Mitzi at bar, leaving bar with Nice Guy. Nice Guy vanishes, Mitzi talks alone. Will re-imagines Mitzi as "brunette" (not blonde!).

Home Depot – Burial Site (Mountain Top).

Gas station

Mitzi's Mom's house – Mitzi calls. Will imagines Mitzi Corpse talking from grave. Amanda calls. Will imagines Amanda sitting next to Mitzi (blonde-redhead-moldering corpse). (ALL IN LIMBO – what alternative)

Bar flashback revised: guy replaced by girl.
Will resumes talking to Mitzi: George Grosz riff (city street).

Terry's house – phone rings – Will chased

Alley – Mitzi calls – shooting

Mitzi's Mom's house – Harmon arrests Will

Interrogation Room – booking desk – interrogation room.

Burial Site (mountain top) w/ Harmon

Morgue (w/Harmon) – Amanda calls, he hugs her (AMANDA VISUALIZED?)

Mitzi's Mom's house – Harmon takes Will back to his car.

Ext Apt – Jennifer calls. Will imagines Jennifer talking from morgue body drawer, she explains murder plot.
Flashback, bar: guy replaced by Terry, Terry buries Mitzi.

Int Apt – Lucy trying on dress, Amanda calls. Will imagines Amanda talking from bedroom. Lucy overhears – Harmon arrives

Driving to Airport

Lucy & Will alone – Amanda calls – Terry nabs them

Harmon shoots Terry

Funeral home – Amanda hands phone back

Will wakes, new apt, Lucy

Shower – another phone call

10.10.06

Will imagines things based on what the dead say to him. Their words are the trigger for what he imagines (dial can be written to adjust trigger).

10.14.06

DRAFT 6B

--Location from which Will imagines Amanda (and then Mitzi) talking (approx p.34-37.) Try to find alternative to Will imagining Amanda and then Mitzi in limbo. But imagining Amanda in their apt. bedroom seems to undercut (by already playing the card of) Will imagining Amanda is talking from their bedroom later (when he is in the living room with Lucy).

10.15.06

A residual ambivalence about making a genre film. It doesn't work to tell myself that it is not a genre film. It doesn't quite work to tell myself that it is an IDIOSYNCRATIC genre film (how did I fix on that word?).

Liked the script better today than yesterday (read in toto and tweaked both days).

As an alternate to limbo, maybe something like taking their bedroom and wrapping everything in gray cloth. That's sort of the vague spatial image that I often have talking on a cell phone. Sort of a Christo type wrap, except in an interior space. Gee, that idea sounds pretty good.

10.18.06 (Wed)

Monday the word from Jeff via email is that he likes the new draft a lot less than the old. "Your kids are still cute life is good" is Alain's attitude. He interprets this as a pas from Jeff.

Call Jeff yesterday and he says that we're in a harmonic convergence the earth in in a tactor beam that for the next hour or so it's important to think positive thoughts and they'll be amplified – I thibnk he's beong completely sardonic but he's not – why not think good thoughts he says. His attitude it not PASS not evaluate and reconcile. "I'm going to say something very harsh but I feel I can because I've known you for a dozen years or so. Looking at Alain's credits it seems like he's pushed you in direction of B-movies."

Which I quietly deny. But there is the inevitable influence of any collaborator. And Alain does put emphasis on "we're making a genre picture."

Ultimately I stand again at the intersection of wanting to be commercial and not quite working.

Dig in my sixties heels – I primarily want/need to make a film that I like. That's how to answer the chorus of criticism. Maybe the long sessions with Alain have shaded from story into script and the script needs to be mine, to be my voice, as strange and as foreign to genre as that is.

Just got Jeff's notes, that include Ann Marie's notes (his wife), and Alain called to say that he would tell me Linda's notes (after he plays golf).

I just want to take a nap and forget it for a while.

10.19.06

Jeff will finance the old version, not the new one. This comes along with notes from Jean marie.

Talk to Alain, whio has notes from Linda. When I tell Alain that I won't make a genre movie, he says that he's done with the project, that he will only make it with genre elements because that's the only way that Jeff will get his money back, he doesn't care that Jeff wants less genre elements. So Alain quits and will only be talked back when I say "I will makea genre movie" and then we are back to the calm discussion. He quit CRASHING also (over WGA).

I'm (today) sick of the sturm and drang of moviemaking. I'm sick of this project.

Alain was revised his opinion (based on rereading the script while getting a new tire). He thinks the new draft will make the best version but thinks that the Mitzi character has changed in a way that isn't good (she's a tart because she gets picked up in a bar) and Terry comes from a different movie – so he is basically agreeing (in a bit different language) with Jeff.

Linda objects to the tone of witty dial (“romantic comedy banter”) that is ME.

I have been thinking how I always get fucked when I try to make a concept-based story. Love Machine all over again. I don't see a clear path to liking this thing.

But I am motivated (last night) by seeing a massive billboard for Marc Forster's STRANGER THAN FICTION just before I get on the 10 Fwy home from Andrew's (CRASHING color correction). Think of CRASHING as my miniscule variant on STRANGER THAN FICTION. Think also about the ruthless killer aggression of NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN and how I need that here, to succeed. Rather than folding, to read a book or watch a movie.

How to marshall my resources. Alain is a resource. Manage him, as a a director.

10.20.06

Kilian doesn't like the script, and his reasons are cogent – what's the A-story? It's not a love story. No deep grief, no desperation to use the phone. It's either AFTER HOURS (episodic black humor – and if I think that, then keep it from Alain) – or it's about reconciling with his Dad's death (which is Draft 2).

KK spins out several compelling alternates: it's a year after Amanda's death, he's meeting the new in-laws and then Amanda starts calling him from the dead. A dramatic situation in which there are emotions, etc (I'm at the Apple Store and an ad is playing and replaying and thts defuses my concentration). He talks about how the scenes in H/Y always flowed naturally from the situation. The dramatic choices were clear at any given point. And that is not the case with CALLERS.

My options: revert to Draft 2 and make it work. Or sell the script to Jeff and move on.

KK offers up what he calls a million dollar idea: Amanda dies and Will cvan talk to the dead. He falls in love with Lucy. The reveal at the end is that Amanda killed Lucy and replaced her.

Talk to Steve. He says his initial response yo the script (darft 2) was what a great idea he's like to write his own version of it. Re. genre, he likens it to Tarantino – the characters are unexpected, they are interesting.

I now (today) agree wioth Kilian that the Cyrus episode doesn't work because you don't care about Will talking on the phone. Can imagine fulminating at this rvised opinion (he has always said the first half works, niot the second). I now doubt that any of it works.

JEFF'S 10.18 NOTES:

Hey Gary,

Doing a lot of work on reviewing the current draft and the draft I originally responded to over a year ago. I simply refer to them as Draft #1 (Year old version) & Draft #2 as your current rewrite.

I'm going to past into this email some of Jean Marie's initial reactions to your current draft. I'm writing a rambling set of notes and comments which you may or may not want and will send them to you later. I prefer to think of them as choices for you to consider.

I met this morning with a friend who read both Drafts 1&2 (in that order). His reaction was Draft 1 was great, very intense and a page turner. Draft 2 he thought you lost the story and was like a B movie. My friend works pretty extensively in the theatre and has written his own stage pieces.

I finished rereading your current draft last night and have not changed my opinion of it much from the earlier emails. I am doing a lot of note writing on this. To be blunt, I would not fund the current draft. I feel you have a very solid draft from a year ago which is Draft2. I think if you go back to it and try to incorporate some of the ideas maybe from this current draft.

I am putting my thoughts down on paper (computer air) in

detail and will get them to you. But, I think you need to get back to the earlier script and work on rewriting it in a more limited fashion.

Here's JM's first notes, she's currently revisiting Draft #1 and I'm sure will have some thoughts on how that compares:
10/18/06

Notes on Draft 6B

The only way this story would work would be to set up the love triangle between Will, Amanda, and Lucy from the beginning. Lucy and Amanda are twins physically yet emotionally as opposite as they get, with a heavy dose of competitiveness to boot (mostly from Amanda who is the less accomplished). The difference in sisters need to be clearly set up in the beginning, along with how the better match would be Lucy and Will – everyone sees it but them. They are so moral and ethically correct they don't even go there in their fantasies.

Will's mother however is open about how she prefers Lucy only adding to Amanda's jealousy and insecurity. Will shrugs it off as "Lucy's a lawyer and that's why my mom likes her) rather than the underlying motivation of mother which is she doesn't want Will to make the same mistake she did which is marry the wrong person (this brings in other draft's main plot line which is the action of the combined versions).

So when Amanda dies she quite clearly sees she will yet again "lose" to her sister as the inevitable will happen (scenes supporting how better matched Will and Lucy really are – Will would be totally loyal to Amanda in life and death of course denying his mistake of "falling in love with the wrong sister).

Then it makes sense when Amanda hints at Will killing himself –

Will – I wish there was some way to be there with you to hold you.

Amanda – there is...

I would not state this initially – when it was done like that on page 35 not only did it sound unbelievable but it changed the entire tone of the movie edging into horror genre.

What were Will's POV of the after life trying to accomplish?

The short sequence of Cyrus would foreshadow this recurring theme of winding up with the wrong partner if the money went to his girlfriend rather than his wife (throw in a kid???) P.S. rich people's stuff never goes into probate because they always have trusts set up)

p.77 the student center falling in love doesn't work. I would set up a scene where Lucy is in law class with Will and Lucy impresses Will with some intellectual, confident, etc. debate with a Professor that's an asshole or some type to show Lucy's character. This would accomplish how Will could fall in love with Lucy and show Lucy's character fully as being opposite to Amanda's. I'm not sure where this would fit in the story ie what act. I think as it happens now it's too late to show it as a character revealing scene and works in late 2nd/3rd act as reference for them in admitting this initial attraction.

Then as the story progresses into the third act the theme of letting go could work for Amanda as she sees that she needs to be the one to hang up the phone. A three way conversation between sisters with Will in the middle on the phone could be an emotionally satisfying climax for the love triangle sub-plot.

The Terry/Mitzi thing doesn't work in this story. Neither does the character of Det. Harmon. It doesn't work as plot line so just feels like "let's put some action in because there's nothing else going on."

I would use the mother/father thing from the 1st story as the main plot line, and the love triangle as the sub-plot. I think these two could intersect nicely and compliment the theme throughout the story – letting go of people you love.

I don't like "ohhh it was just a dream and that explains everything ending." It cheapens every emotional aspect of the movie and brings it to a superficialness unnecessary. Ambiguity would work though although my choice would be to make it all real.

JEFF'S 10.20 SCRIPT NOTES

Gary & Alain,

I'm pasting the contents of the word file I sent you in case for some reason it doesn't open properly... here's the content:

Script Notes:

Comparisons & Contrasts=Draft #1 & #2:

I like the father/mother complications.

Morning Script Meeting w/JM (10/18/06):

JM read the latest draft. Basically, it doesn't work turning the whole story into Amanda wants to kill Will. It's not justified, it's superficial, it's a bore.

I think you need to go back to the draft I read a year ago and work on rewriting that with some of the ideas from this latest draft. But, this latest draft has totally lost the sense of your original story. It is not even close to a draft that I would fund.

What I think could be worked on in the rewrite of the earlier draft is developing the love triangle between Will, Lucy and Amanda. Bring in the issue of Lucy and Amanda as almost two opposites. Right now in both drafts, Lucy and Will's missed hook-up and affection comes in way late in the story and needs to be deepened and pulled in earlier. I thought JM made an interesting suggestion, that instead of the corny/superficial vision of Will licking whipped cream off his sleeve in the cafeteria, you put him and Lucy in a law class and either Will or Lucy is having a heated confrontation with the law professor about some interesting issue. One or the other of them is being impressed by the wild approach the other is taking in attacking the status quo of the law prof.. Now, you have a scene that adds some depth to both Will and Lucy, tells us something more about them, vs. the poofy, hot chocolate image.

I think the issue of Amanda urging Will to join her in the afterlife is a good subplot, that could run as a SHORTER dramatic loop earlier in the film and reflect her desperate manic situation, the fear of being dead, of total loss, DISORIENTATION. It's driving Will crazy that he can't comfort her. He and Lucy wander out of the morgue. He's dazed, helpless. Amanda's crying, screaming, agony is

pushing him to a desperate brink...brink of what? Stop the crying! It's a busy street, a bus is barreling towards him as he holds the phone to his ear. It's ripping him apart. Either in a catatonic stupor or in suicidal daze he starts to step out in front of it. Lucy, pulls him back. My God Will you almost killed yourself! (this opens them up to their feelings. Lucy is pissed that Amanda almost killed Will (or his delusion that he's talking to Amanda). Is this the difference between the two sisters, one wants him to live, the other to die? They start to talk about their suppressed feelings. Lucy confesses she's so torn up by the loss of her sister, but damn, she's resented Amanda for four years, since she won Will.

I think Amanda should imply Will's death versus outright asking him to kill himself. Or, as above, her hysteria is just driving him over the edge towards her. She might not consciously know she has almost killed him.

In this latest draft you totally make Amanda an unsympathetic character, who is almost demon-like in her wanting to manipulate Will's death. But, that changes the whole tone of the film and makes it a one dimensional B horror film. ("Death Don't Have No Mercy In This Land" by Hot Tuna is playing on my radio right now.)

REPETITION OF THOUGHTS: I do think Will seriously considering suicide at some point earlier on, subtly urged by Amanda, can show some depth and potential changes to their relationship. In which Amanda gets him so upset with her fear and her need to be comforted that Will maybe starts to step out in front of a bus and you then have choices. He changes his mind. Amanda somehow interrupts it with a realization that she inadvertently is pushing him over the edge and she somehow has realized that's totally wrong (in the cosmic/karmic sense &/or relationship sense) or Lucy somehow intervenes and saves Will and we learn more about her depth and feelings towards Will and her resentments towards her sister (having stolen Will from her?) This scene might actually introduce us much earlier in the film to Lucy's & Will's unspoken feelings for each other. Lucy might be wracked with guilt that she has a dead sister that she's been hating/or resenting for having gotten Will.

Which brings me to some points: I think that near the end of the film there's a place for much more profound character arcs (changes/revelations of changes) for Will, Lucy and Amanda. There's a definite place at the end for Will and Amanda to realize they've got to let go of each other. I know it's in there now, but it's not built up to as a tear jerking moment as it can and ought to be.

In summation of the love triangle points: Work it into the earlier draft. I think it has some connection to Will's mother having had an affair that Will never knew about. These harmonic points of the son feeling like he's following in the families dysfunctional footsteps add archetype power to the story. And, I think you guys lost track of how effective the family themes are in the earlier draft. They literally are the story, i.e. lost love, being with the wrong person, yearning to be with the right person. That's what the family and the triangle give you to work with. Gary, I hope you know you were doing Hamlet in the earlier draft? (all the way down to the names, Gertrude and Claude)

NEW NOTES SESSION 10/19/06 @ 11PM:

Small stuff that could add texture and depth. Will keeps getting calls on the pink phone from a collection agency that wants Amanda to pay off her delinquent student loans. This gives us a detail on who Amanda was/is and gives us a contrast to Lucy who might be the more conscientious one.

I don't think Will's imaginings of the afterlife do much. I think they take away the audience imagining it themselves. It ends up limiting the film and taking away a certain elegance that the story has. They don't advance the plot or story. They don't really give us anymore insight or info on Amanda or Will. What do they do?

Detective Harmon is good but he kind of dead ends in the first draft and he is nothing but a device in the latest draft. Sticking with the first draft, **what if Harmon logically wants to follow up further on Mitzi's unsolved death? Somehow he becomes a little more Columboesque and helps drive the revelation of Dad's murder through pushing more on Mitzi's death.** So, he still gets Will to the morgue again but to put him in proximity with Mitzi's corpse. Still keep the Amanda hug, but have him pull open Mitzi's tray. Mitzi gets on the line and she doesn't really know how she died, or even who buried her. Perhaps, she died in the office, laid there, the sun set and Claude comes in, in the dark, her astral observer never really can see who it was that dragged her out and buried her? But, Will is the interpreter via the telephone as Harmon interrogates her. Mitzi starts to reveal details that spark Will catching glimpses of what happened, maybe vague clues that implicate his mom, but he doesn't want to give this info to Harmon so

Will starts giving Harmon different info than Mitzi is giving him in the telephone interrogation.

I like that at first it appears that Will is finding out that his Mom killed his dad. I think that has great punch. Whenever I tell the story synopsis, I see people react positively to the fact that then Will finds out his mom killed his dad. (Everybody has these family skeletons. After my dad died of a heart attack, age 53, I remember my mother and I about a week after the funeral screaming and accusing each other of murdering my dad. We thought each of us had been the stressful cause of his death. I because she nagged him to death. Her because I appeared to be a drug addled lost artist out in Venice. I just happened to be tripping on acid that night of my mom argument/ accusation. But, my point is these family things are very harmonic in all of our audience. Moms and dads divorce. Have affairs, secret children, other households, etc.. Everyone wonders whether they're with the right person in their relationships. We all seem to think there was somebody else we were supposed to be with. Hence, it's great, the mom had an affair with Claude and the Dad with Mitzi and Will wonders if it should have been Lucy instead of Amanda, etc.. I think this is the stuff you have to work in the rewrite of the earlier draft.

In talking w/JM about the mom as murderer, what if she never really knew that Claude poisoned Hamilton? But, in our layering of Harmon pushing the investigation via Mitzi, etc., it at first seems like she was responsible or a co-conspirator, but we reveal finally that **she was in the dark, maybe she and Claude had drunkenly fantasized about it and Claude took it and ran with it and left her out of the loop?** I think that gives the best of both worlds, thinking for a spell that she did it, then redeem her integrity. This could finally be unraveled in the scene where not only is Claude threatening to kill Will but she's found out he killed two people. That would add extra ummph to her whacking him. Perhaps she was going to break it off with Claude and he kills Hamilton and comforts her enough to win her back in the earlier history?

POSSIBLE NEW ENDING: What if, Lucy and Will walk up to the coffin at the funeral home showing and it's Will in the coffin and the pink phone is laying on his chest. They're stunned. The pink phone starts ringing. BOOM, You go to your wake up scene, but it's Lucy/Amanda waking up from studying all night in the chair and the cell phone is

ringing by her head. She answers it and it's Will. He's been in a car accident.

You know there's this wonderful array of choices you have to explore as you get to the ending: Was there ever twins? Was it a dream or not? Is it going to repeat itself? Only now it's Will that's dead?

Or, Will wakes up at the end and says, I had this weird dream, somebody died? Your sister was in it. She says, "Sister?" Or she says, "Your sister?". On and on, the options go. You might want to plan on shooting several endings and play with them in editing.

You might want to put more thought into the "rules" of the "otherside". Those rules would help guide your choices. I don't know if you looked at the extras on the "Sixth Sense" DVD, but the director talks about the "rules" they functioned by in shooting that film and I think you have similar issues.

10.21.06

Re-read CALLERS 6B. Hate it. Maybe it's my mood. Maybe any read is based on mood, on prejudice going in. My prejudice to think it sucks. But it really does seem to suck.

LESSON: always wait 2 weeks (minimum) before showing a new script to someone important (such as financier).

Some seemingly inescapable mental mechanism whereby I have to convince myself that something is really good just to get through the writing of it. And then I need to convince myself that it is really good to proceed with making the film).

Today CALLERS does not have that sheen.

Then there is the issue/aspect of all this for 32K, most likely not a penny more, the big payoff akin to Dad's eternal quixotic quest for the set of numbers that would allow him to predict the market – that this will be my big commercial breakthrough.

Which is an aspect of belief ("if will be a great film") that one needs to make the damn thing.

Back into the unsatisfactory dynamic of collaboration. Had set as a rule only story collaboratiobn, but Alain and I have gone through the script line by line. There is a group psychosis that takes place when/as he convinces me that something is good. There is an unspoken power dynamic that (today) does not feel healthy. I'm back to feeling that it would be better if it was my own thing with something more of my voice. Alain tends toward complicated plots, toward characters that tend to being stock ("his cop sense", "everyone's a sexist, it's a sexist world") toward wanting to thing to be real (though the ending ambiguous), toward smoothing characters more to an ideal that he prefers (not whiny, not wimpy). He might be right in some matters but he is not me. He also believes that stripped down scripts are fine, because it will be fleshed out in a movie. Which avoids the issue of needing to persuade everyone based on script until the film is actually made. (Though he does pay respect to the first 20 – 30 pages needing to be utterly engaging of the reader.)

Yesterday: I don't like the Cyrus episode, he does and cannot be dissuaded.

Last night get excited with the propsect of turning it into a fake-supernatural thriller (ala Kilian), with the idea of spending a week trying to do that. But the specifics are lacking; I don't have a grasp of the steps to take it to that place.

Blank out when I try to read past drafts. I'm in an emotional space that precludes close reading.

DRAFT 6B: can see now how it reads as superficial. The visualized phonbe calls, many of them, are corny. The plot mechanics take precedence (I lay that an Alain's feet), there is no character development (not that characters need to develop – these particular characters just are not engaging). It feels very thin and facile.

NEW DRAFT POSSIBLITIES/ANALYSIS

--An early scene with Claude and Gertrude, to set up Will's unhappiness with that situation. Maybe a party that he attends with Amanda, and they talk about it privately after. A social gathering that Will can't get out of?

--What would make the family story interesting? Will's

attitude toward it?

--KEY CONCEPTS: 1) the dead are like the living, 2) relationship conflicts are the same. So...in an early conversation Amanda would razz Will: life is precious, quite law school NOW.

10.22.06

What would Bunuel do?

Think back to AUTO-MATES.

Which argues for a dream structure. A dream that deosn't seem to be a dream.

IDEAS:

--Who is Will? Why is he interesting?

--re. Overt expression of grief. Will doesn't express his feelings.

--Seems like he would immediately ask to speak to his father, which would alienate Amanda. Like me, he is someone who unintentionally alienates people.

--Is he a workaholic? Or is he indolent (Bunuelians often are).

--Sexually obsessed?

--Find an interesting way for Claude to kill Hamilton.

--Degression about Christopher Walklen and the watch is interesting in PULP FICTION. Maybe something can be done along those lines.

--Amanda a bit like Maryanne FitzGerald – she talked Will into getting engaged.

--Twins – can that play like OBSCURE OBJECT? What if Amanda insisted upon remaining a virgin until marriage? And Lucy isn't so puritanical.

--What if LUCY is a classmate, a study-buddy?

--What if they don't live together, Will just fell asleep

because he was studying late?

--What is they ARE NOT TWINS?

--Episodic, ala DISCREET CHARM?

--As a study of bourgeois inhibition.

--Or Will is more perverse, ala DENEVUE in BELLE DU JOUR?

--What if Will was female?

--What if film switched POV at point of death, ala PSYCHO?

--Issues of power VS powerlessness

--I'm not interested in a pat skeleton-in-the-closet family story.

--Raise Will's age? Late twenties? Thirties?

--**IRONY.** It needs a fuck of a lot of irony.

10.23.06 (Mon)

Call Alain – he doesn't want to discuss any big changes to Draft 2. He says the failure to improve over Drafts 3, 4, 5, 6 is indicative of there being no big alternate solution. His fix is to for Amanda to have a fight with Will about quitting law school.

Alain again says "do this or I'm through." Now that that threat level has been attained, I'm not sure it will ever go away and that is an unpleasant mood to proceed in.

I feel that discussing the Cyrus episode is taboo.

On one level I feel it is a waste of yet another morning to fret inconclusively about CALLERS.

KILIAN

--Channeling the dead lets bad things into your life.

--Moving into the world of Dad's murder takes Will into scary place. Hamilton should have a dark side and Will has to deal with that.

THE PROBLEMS

1. Fix the script
2. Making it something suitable for me to direct, something that engages my curiosities and abilities.

Starts with:

Will is sleepless. He's thinking about his Dad.

10.24.06

Cyrus episode – Hamilton intrudes, says don't bother – or Mitzi intrudes – the surprise of interrupting a task

Introduce Gertrude at morgue and withhold into of Lucy?

Key challenge: keeping the family melodrama fresh and from seeming unduly melodramatic (muting the inherent melodrama).

10.25.06

DAVID WARFIELD:

--Story never seemed serious – it seemed funny. The funny and eccentric stuff sticks out.

--It isn't a thriller unless a character is in jeopardy. It's a mistake to think of CALLERS as a thriller unless this condition is met.

--Metaphorical and funny

--Dark comedy, funny metaphor: you carry baggage in death.

--KEY: the dead same as the living

--re. Amanda & family story being apples and oranges – same as issues as you'd deal with a shrink: mother/spouse issues conflated, combine, can't be separated.

--How can he restore normalcy in the end?

--Something special that makes this particular phone work?
(NO)

--Woody Allen

--"The Trouble With Harry"

--Once he quits law school, Amanda could complain, "why didn't you do that while I was alive?"

10.27.06

THE CLAUDE PLOT

Mitzi - Hamilton

Mitzi - Claude affair

Hamilton hired PI

--evidence of Claude-Gertrude

--evidence of Claude-Mitzi

--PI might have knowledge of Claude killing Mitzi?

Claude is a Wallace Shawn type

Car jacking to kill Hamilton, accidentally kills Mitzi (she's giving a blow job) (Gertrude overhears this?)

After car jacking replay, then introduce Claude-Mitzi evidence.

Because Claude was fucking Mitzi he thought it was safer for him if her body wasn't found with Hamilton. He was afraid of being a suspect in her killing.

The records are in boxes in the basement, as is a discarded baseball bat.

SEQUENCE:

Claude-Gertrude - "murder talk" comes to life

Claude-Mitzi - evidence comes to life

FLASHBACK: murder in car (place this before basement scene?) (Gertrude has no overhear Claude's guilt re. Mitzi)

Claude appears in basement - avowals and denials (that Gertrude overhears)

11.2.06

Walk & talks - crucial to animating phone calls.

Driving is a form a walk & talk.

Need equivalent of "DISCREET CHARM" scene of walking along

road.

Scenes of Amanda talking in country twilight?

Is the Lucy relationship too forced? Her character not that developed. She seems somewhat beside the point. It's about baggage in the afterlife, stupid.

DRAFT 7 NOTES (10.25 – 11.1.06)

--Opening: Will is drowsy but not asleep – he has been up all night.

--WHEN WILL CAN TALKS TO AMANDA, THE TONE OF HIS GRIEF CHANGES – SHE IS NO LONGER COMPLETELY "GONE"

--Twins might be a double gimmick. The story might only be able to sustain one, namely, The Phone.

--Will wants to talk to Dad, Amanda is miffed

--GEN: Who cares that Amanda isn't sympathetic?

--Amanda comes on the line briefly before Cyrus (or during?) to maximize frustration. Tension comes from ending their prior call on an unsatisfactory note.

--Cyrus, middle-class – funky house, funky office, a guy you'd expect to work scams

--Show scene of Will quitting law school? Amanda doubts, so he goes and turns in a letter.

--What is humor of trying to get Sheila to talk on the phone?

--Brief chat with Amanda, trying to ameliorate conflict before Mitzi interrupts?

--Will quits law school. She's annoyed that he didn't do it earlier. (Show him going to law school and delivering "resignation" prior to Mitzi call?)

[[--Arrest: cell phone pix of Will at Mitzi's parent's house? NO]]

--Claude is with Gertrude at Police Station or save his

intro or later?

[[--Gertrude at morgue? Bring in Gertrude at some point prior to interrogation? (NO)]]

--Parking Garage/Gertrude: She is suspicious of Will, somehow? What is the tension that animates the scene?

--after Amanda dies, Gertrude says, "I was afraid this would happen." "WHAT?!" "She was reckless – as a driver." (Gertrude is reckless to.)

--APT AFTER GERTRUDE DROPS WILL OFF:

Have Harmon call rather than show up? Gives Will another opportunity to be secretive? (but this adds yet another phone call)

Or Lucy comes to morgue, as witness to the weirdness?

Does Lucy come to believe? Is that at all important?

Isn't it better that only Harmon believe?

But if Lucy overhears the Amanda-Hamilton conversations, she's not going to separate from Will.

(Check Draft 6 for how "belief" works).

Harmon has veiled conversation in front of Lucy?

The problem is getting Lucy out of there smoothly. She splits before Harmon, rather than getting witness that Will isn't crazy?

What is gained from Will seeming crazy to Lucy, then not? That all happens for the sake of the embarrassment of Lucy overhearing the phone calls. (Which is similar to the beat that we've already had with Harmon.)

If Lucy comes to the morgue, she is going to be in a state of shock by the end. Faints? Unsympathetic for Will to abandon her?

Easiest solution is that Lucy comes to the morgue. Will then drives her home (because he is going to Claude's). Sexual charge in the car, but Will has a sense that Amanda is watching?

(Re. mechanics – Harmon drives them to the morgue, so that conversation continues?)

--Hamilton: wants Will to have a drink by proxy. Dad lays on guilt trip about law (minorly)?

--HAMILTON'S DEATH: car jacking? If Claude is a criminal attorney, he would have contacts. Maybe one of the guys who killed Hamilton subsequently got killed. Hamilton sends Will to meet with the accomplice? Hamilton has surveillance system in his house and Claude is now living there? (Use Frank's house for Claude-Gertrude's house?)

--After Mitzi Burial Site – Will imagines Mitzi talking from tower location.

--FUNERAL HOME: last call from Amanda is proximity to her body?

--GEN: Amanda is strong-willed, like Gertrude. There needs to be some connection, some parallel between them.

--GEN: Will as someone who can't say no, who is inclined to do favors, and this quality is exploited by the dead

--GEN: Comic interruption

--GEN: Limit visualizing phone calls except at prior location, as if there is an echo traveling in the slipstream of the movie.

--GEN: Limit number of phone call visualizations (selective usage).

--Add back Amanda's "suicide pitch" somewhere in the script ala Draft 2

CUTS (from Draft 6B)

--Amanda's suicide pitch

--Gas Station scene

ADD BACK???

--Amanda confesses that he was putting on eyeliner, which caused wreck? (from Draft2)

11.4.06

CHARACTER STUFF:

--Hamilton always has to be right "Your mother killed me" re. paranoia. Narcissism wanting Will to follow in his footsteps.

--Gertrude: passive-aggressive? Needs to be in control. Gertrude competitive re. Amanda, no girl can be good enough for her son.

--Hamilton & Gertrude were very competitive

LAST SECTION OUTLINE/INFO FLOW:

--Police Station: Hamilton says (& show flashback) – Mitzi was with him when he was carjacked.
"Let's discuss this out of earshot of Harmon"

APT: "Here's why they just found me. 2 reasons. Because Claude was fucking Mitzi – I had him surveilled." SHOW SURVEILLANCE

I don't understand.

Don't go into criminal law if you can't emulate the criminal mind.

I'm not going into law.

That's a mistake you'll regret.

Dad.

Mitzi wasn't supposed to be killed. But when she was Claude was afraid she'd look like a suspect.

Hamilton says the evidence is buried in his files. Then Harmon shows up.

Lucy goes along to the morgue. Faints.

Jump ahead: Will puts her to bed. She's shaken, she believes.

Will goes to basement:

--Pix of Claude fucking Gertrude.

--micro-cassette (that he needs to listen to upstairs)
Claude and Gertrude drunk, colluding. Last revelation = Gertrude's culpability.

Claude – Will – Gertrude showdown.

Revelation to Gertrude: That she was indirectly responsible for Mitzi's death.

After Claude's death, Gertrude helps change Will's clothes
(an incestuous/strange moment)

Dream of Amanda grabbing phone

Reveal: Will dozing off at wake, seated between Lucy and Gertrude.

Traveling shot from Will's POV into coffin. ECU phone
"lens"

POV coffin lid closes.

(ADD DREAM – Will walks across graveyard, hears phone
ringing underground.)

Will wakes – with Lucy.

Shower coda.

THINK: Godardian mischief. Bunuelian concision. Offhand
and unexplained surrealism.

11.5.06

**DREAMS – constant use of Will's interior space, not just
his visualization of phone calls. Visualization of phone
calls should fit in context of his interior space.
Therefore need to expand dream-subjective-POV imagery.**

**Add back Will's sense of the dead watching. Use that for
creepy & COMIC impact (they watch him going to the
bathroom, so he just closes his eyes).**

11.6.06

Reading a fest blurb for Lynch's INLAND EMPIRE throws me
into a zone-mood of fuck all doing that.

Not sure if Lucy at the morgue enhances or detracts. Too
much social reality, which should be minimized? Why even
bother with her now that the (spurious) alt. Love story has
been scrapped?

Lucy's presence forced by the dubious mechanics of getting
Will away from her to go to the morgue with Detective

Harmon. Which leads to the problem of getting rid of her after the morgue.

Need to find a way to jump forward to Claude's without boring mechanics.

Re. Draft 6 – put back in the shifting POV's as Will imagines that the dead are watching him. Also put back in key phone conversations.

Does Lucy need to refer back to Morning Morgue Scene – “Were you “talking” to Amanda this morning?”

11.7.06

Problem with having Lucy along – to have a believer minimizes the subjectivity. Better for him to go it alone with the phone?

Lucy = adding a social dimension (discomfort or belief).

THOMSON RIVETTE QUOTE

Add problem: ditching Lucy for the finale.

11.8.06

INSIGHT RE ALT:

ONLY AUDIENCE ACCEPTS WILL'S ABILITY TO TALK TO DEAD. NO ONE IN MOVIE DOES. WILL ALONE HAS PERCEPTIONS & PROOF = MAXIMIZE SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE.

Therefore, Harmon does not believe. Alt structure: Harmon does not take Will to the morgue. “Hugging Amanda as part of the last sequence” at funeral home.

Lucy is spurious – don't need her to say good-bye to Amanda. Skip the weepy, conventional stuff.

ALT STRUCTURE

--Apt. – A calls, Hamilton calls. Lucy is witness.

--Claude's

Funeral Home:

--hugs Amanda, Lucy sees and gets upset, gets rid of phone in coffin

--Viewing room – Amanda thrusts phone at him
 --Wakes up, he's dozed off
 --Phone rings at wake (until message machine picks up).
 This motivates camera move into ECU phone

At morgue:

Harmon "Show me you can talk to her – then show me you can talk to Amanda."

ALT: Amanda calls – "See my body again"

2nd morgue visit works with Det. Harmon skeptical. Should he open up drawer with Mitzi in it first? It seems that he would to try and scare some info out of Will.

Harmon skeptical, trying to scare a confession out of Will, accomplishes the main goal (without shifting "hugging Amanda" to the funeral home), namely: no one in the story believes Will.

NOTE: make sure Gertrude is sufficiently skeptical.

REVISIONS LEFT TO DO:

--POV of the dead, omniscience of the dead
 --Phone calls, other side????
 --Reinfuse dream structure?

THE BIG QUESTION: is the script good enough to be a breakthrough film?

Complete First Pass of Draft 7 today.

11.8.06

NOTES FROM READING DRAFT 7 PRINT-OUT:

--p.12 "pathological aversion to conflict." Build this as a character trait.

--Cyrus Episode, pp. 19-32. How one thing leads to another. Need to keep up pressure of "is it worth is to talk to Amanda"

Cyrus piece needs more humor. Comic interruption re. his goal of talking to Amanda again (find a clever way to keep

that in focus).

It shouldn't be too much money – not a waterbox full. 20-30K?

√--p.40 (Dream of Amanda in bedroom, dream of sex) Expand Relationship Conversation?

√--Morgue 2 – Amanda resolution premature? Move Amanda good-bye to outside of Claude's house?

NO Says good-bye to Amanda at funeral home as fantasy?

Amanda farewell should transcend pettiness but in a way that is consistent with the humor and breeziness of the entire piece.

√--Last talk with Hamilton – weak. Some pettiness vis-à-vis Claude. Expand to give an appealing closure to this.

--"PETTINESS PASS" This should stay on track through out.

Crucial: the pettiness was to be funny not whiny. Or any whininess has to be funny not corny-irritating.

--"WILL ALONE" pass. Make sure that he has to face disbelief the whole way through. Only the audience believes that he can really talk to the dead.

Working alone I see the limitations of working with Alain. Needs to be my voice, my choices.

11.11.06

AUTO-MATES! The script now reminds me **AUTO-MATES: a life of bickering, based on an outlandish premise, in which the extraordinary is quickly accepted as ordinary. No gushing about talking to the dead, it becomes an aspect of life to deal with.**

Fits the definition of Bunuel that Dan once gave (an extraordinary situation treated matter of factly).

Isn't life an extraordinary situation that we quickly treat as ordinary? "We" bumble along day to day as if we will live forever. Maybe "we" have to think this way to not be

crippled by the enormous terror of the enormous void we are about to drop into.

It feels so good to think that I am finally somehow back in AUTO-MATES space. That I have come full circle, that after 30 years I can continue down a certain path.

AUTO-MATES and BUNUEL. That is the key.

Draft 7 (this draft) feels like something much evolved from Draft 2, though that is the root structure.

IDEA: Detective Harmon has trailed Will to Gertrude's - his POV and the sense he'll nail Gertrude. Set up glass wall in back of house, how you can see in (establish in opening description). Harmon surveilling can see evidence of Claude's murder.

But does this raise too many questions and break the flow leading into the funeral?

PROD DESIGN: interrogation room can be an office with an interior window with min-blinds and a wall-mounted camera. Doesn't have to be a one-way mirror.

11.13.06

JAY A'S DRAFT 7 COMMENTS

Main note: Amanda is so unsympathetic Jay wanted Will to shine her on by the middle of the script. Jay advocates making Amanda more sympathetic in the opening.

p.26 Maybe Amanda has something she needs Will to do; I'm thinking that would add urgency.

p.46 "We no longer care whether he talks to Amanda because she's such a bitch/cartoon."

11.29.06

FROM AN UNDATED (OLD) INDEX CARD:

Visionary,
Multiplex phone conversations.
1) As 2-hots
2) Contantly shifting locations

In and out of his head space.

Opening -- sentient probe in room

12.2.06

QUESTIONS

--Lucy/Amanda Twins? Does this increase dreamlike quality?
Effect on morgue scene? Effect on end? "Double gimmick"?

[Twins movies: Dark Corner(? Thora Birch), Sam Trammell
movie, Parent Trap, Dead Ringer.]

--Omniscience of the dead re. Hamilton's grasp of what
happened (as per Jeff)

--Other side of phone calls

12.5.06

Lunch with Jeff Jackson yesterday at Izzy's.

He has script comments, the most significant:

--Hamilton doesn't die by car jacking, but by poison. (I
agree to this, Alain doesn't -- though Alain has said
precious little about Draft 7 at this point).

--Ending. Jeff wants it more ambiguous and cathartic (to
me, different marching orders).

Then Jeff talks about how he didn't like BEAT or CRASHING,
that they seemed slow, uncommercial. That kind of
criticism. Which gives him doubts about me directing
CALLERS.

I'm sleepy from no coffee and don't do enough to argue my
case.

I'm angered by the criticism (which I understand).

Jeff is also worried about his health. And he worries
about signing over creative control after having his faith
shaken by Draft 6. he says that he might edit his own
version of scenes to show me, he wants to do test
screenings. He's nervous. He only wants to make the film
if he thinks it's going to make a lot of money.

Then he re-iterates his willingness to buy the script.
(But I don't tell him that I think his films suck and that
he would most likely mangle CALLERS.)

Which leaves me with a difficult decision.

Do I want to direct Callers?

REASONS WHY:

--It's extremely hard to get an opportunity to direct a film.

12.11.06

JEFF'S DRAFT 7 NOTES

--Twins. Make then twins, makes story dreamier.

--Morgue: fuck-up, Cyrus's wife learns that Will's gf killed her husband, there is a nasty scene.

√--Parking Lot. Phone call from Becky is lame. Make it about student loans, or some money hassle. YES

--Money goes to Cyrus's mistress, not to his wife

√--Cyrus's office -- add back cat and mouse with secretary (ASK STEVE RE. EDITING)

--Interrogation -- Harmon comes after Will, longer, harder

--Gertrude questions Will longer, harder

--Morgue 2 -- make it clearer that Harmon is suspicious **YES**

√--Change car-jacking back to poison. [OR car-jacker does not wear a ski mask, pulls body from car, pulls body to burial site (have Claude do this?)]

--With Poison -- show Claude 1) dragging body out of office, 2) to mountaintop grave (2 scenes).

√--Will was called back home when Hamilton died (for funeral), clarify in dialogue

--Claude's house -- initial suspicion that Gertrude was killer? Evidence against Claude needs to be stronger.

12.12.06

DRAFT 2 - HAMILTON CALLS

p.44 Police Station: 1st call-

p.52 Hamilton blames Gertrude
 (p.54 Will hangs up)
 (p.58 Will hangs up again)
 p.68 H reveals that Claude-Mitzi were having affair, photos
 p.71 House -- Will finds dossier

DRAFT 7 HAMILTON CALLS

p.51
 p.59
 p.69
 p.75

Flashbacks, visual cuts to illustrate poison sub-plot

12.12.06

Do not know if poisoning is better than car jacking.
 Except for Jeff 's logic problems, which made sense when he
 explained them, carjacking feels more dynamic.

Feel not in the zone re. making story decisions.

Feel too unexcited to be at the supposed starting point for
 this thing.

Twins?
 Dream?

Remarkable and depressing how close the story is to the
 story outline of 2 years ago. All the suffering to be in a
 barely refined version of that early scrap.

When I ask Steve if Alain has been more curmudgeonly
 lately, he says, "Isn't that Alain's MO? Maybe the third
 year of being on any project does that to someone."
 (referring to Crashing)

12.13.06

--minor fix -- replace Leonardo Da Vicni with Shakespeare

POISON PLOT

--Hamilton doesn't know that he was poisoned until he
 compares notes with Mitzi. (between first and second phone
 call)

He DISCOVERS he was poisoned (hence the outrage in his
 second phone call) then he is outraged with Claude and

Gertrude. He blames them both the whole way.

[--Make R. Finch a character that Will has to talk to?]

[--What if Mitzi disappeared a week later, she was blackmailing Claude? (seems too complicated to easily explain)]

--Gertrude's stance: Hey, Hamilton was screwing around, so was I, I didn't want to kill him.

--Change tape that Will listens to: Gertrude didn't collude, she didn't know until after the fact. Horrified, she goes along. She didn't rat him out because this was risky for her (she would seem like a co-conspirator).

--Add tension re. getting Claude out of the house -- Claude is there, Will makes a cell phone call to get him out of the house.

--He finds something funny in the files (something unexpected)

Will: Why didn't you turn him in?

Gertrude: No one would have believed me -- they'd think I was in from the beginning.

12.16.06

Show Amanda in Will's presence (ala Woody Allen) talking?
Or save that WHAM for outside Claude & Gertrude's?

ADD SCENE/COVERAGE:

--Hamilton talking to Mitzi
--Amanda -- physical visitations
--Claude & Gertrude scheming

12.21.06

CALLERS YES

Should keep making films
I'll earn a year's salary from making it
It might be commercial
It might stretch me

CALLERS NO

Not that excited about story.

I'll spend a solid year (or more) working on it.
 It will be such a struggle.
 Alain seems ever more curmudgeonly.
 Too impersonal a story (ala Love Machine)

STORY POINTS

--poison plot too static? More dynamic flashbacks? More dynamically interlaced?

--Does Hamilton do more to Get Will off the hook at the police station?

p.51 After June 22 is established

My brain hurts trying to feel a sense of what the script is after a year of fucking around that has led back to restoring largely what was. Biggest changes from 5 drafts: Will doesn't tell Lucy he can talk to Amanda, no one believes he can talk to the dead, Lucy is at Morgue II.

2.4.07

VISUALS: Tilt downs from sky etc. ala Bunuel.

Key: make last 20 pages (pp.65-87) FUNNY. For example, Harmon's attachment to memorabilia doesn't play. And there should be something funny (not just creepy in the last play-out).

Cast David Cross as Harmon. Cast comedic actors.

2.4.07

Is there something about the last section that precludes humor, that breaks the tone that is working (up until Morgue II)?

Visit the CSI Morgue Set on Friday, Saturday (in retrospect) Talia & Simon's condo seems a good setting for Will & Amanda's apt.

Re-reading CALLERS yesterday and inputting the changes today puts me back in the zone (after a long absence) of seriously considering CALLERS as a go-project.

In part because there is a substantial amount of work to

reconcile BMB Script with the BMB Novel.

2.5.07

MARK WOODVINE

Thought the story was a scam -- expected twins before this was revealed. He explains about "sound boards" -- internet scam, where a sound file is amassed so phone calls can be faked.

2.7.07

Maybe I hate Claude's death. Except for BEAT, no deaths in my films. Maybe Claude's death throws the story out of balance -- it's a shocking (and comic?) act of violence -- it gives too much weight to his character and to the last story?

2.11.07

Ending offers too much of a dream interpretation (the funeral home scenes)?

Hamilton is fucking with Will to keep him in law school -- Will has to get himself out of trouble.

He should be glad to talk to Hamilton then not -- nothing in their relationship improves from having talked (which is not currently the case).

2.16.07

ALAIN:

It occurred to me that rather than the widow/inheritance angle, Hamilton and Gertrude could have been divorced some years ago which yields several results:

1. Claude would have been a step-father for awhile and helped raised Will, so that Will's reaction to his mostly absentee father's accusations would be emotional biased in Claude's favor.

2. Will would have inherited Hamilton's share of the law practice making him definitively wealthy enough to do what he wants with his life and coloring the quit law school discussions/allusions throughout.

3. Hamilton would presume the motive was control, that

Claude was always junior partner and even with Gertrude could not override Hamilton's decisions.

All this makes the prospect of Claude and/or Gertrude being the killer(s) of his unappealing biological father more troubling for Will.

2.19.07

Definition of satire -- increase satire?

Mom mortally offended by Will's accusation of murder.

Add back gas station scene for length?

What other nightmare hints?

Establish Amanda as a pack rat early on.

Finish first pass, Draft 8 -- 14 new pages in 2 days, pp. 70 - 84.

2.20.07

Humor re. accusing Mom of murder

Spin out discovery of Amanda as killer of Mitzi?

AS NOTES re. DRAFT 8/FIRST READ

Weak part of script: Harmon arrest until Mitzi flashback.

Cyrus & Mitzi engulf him in unreal situation,
Harmon/arrest changes story to fear of what's going to happen to him. Needs more disorientation and fear.

Re. CRASHING: interstitial material one of strongest aspects. Need interstitial material here.

Interrogation too long.

Harmon character weak (when he believed in phone that made him different, nothing makes him different now).

Once he is arrested Will is in a world of stereotypes.

Gertrude & Claude weak (better by being simpler, more

direct).

Will's impatience ebbs and flows (inconsistent)

Cut Harmon, bring back some Lucy scenes?

Need more eeriness, spookiness -- he misreads ordinary events. (HIS IMAGINATION OF PHONE CALLS, AS DREAMS, AS DAYDREAMS, AS STORIES THAT HE TELLS OTHER PEOPLE?)

INTERSTITIAL CAN WORK IF WE ARE ENTERING INTO HIS HEAD. THINK FELLINI.

He feels like he is losing control.

Add back Gas Station Scene, or scenes like that. Silent scenes. Material where he is not talking to someone else.

Will is plunged into uncertainty and has to get out of it.

Film now should have the mood-texture of a living nightmare.

P.59 FLASHBACK/FANTASY - WILL IMAGINES HAMILTON FUCKING MITZI?

p.69 Hamilton accuses Gertrude of being a pack rat. Establish Amanda as a pack rat, this is what Gertrude and Amanda have in common, this is the continuity between the two women for Will.

2.21.07

Mailer's description of ghosts (in Oswald's Ghost).

"Oswald owned all the properties that belonged to a ghost - - ambition, deceit, a sense of mission, and the untold frustration of an abrupt death just as a long-held dream of personal prominence is about to unfold."

Mailer, OSWWALD'S GHOST, p.784

Will hypochondriac -- fear of body, fear of losing body.

His imagining of body, his imagining her body?

Hope I never make a concept movie again -- too hard to wrangle the concept into a felicitous state of being.

Re-read the script, from the arrest on. Maybe the interrogation scene could be shorter, but don't mind the claustrophobia of the section. Don't think it needs moments of silent weirdness.

Could milk more the comedy-pathos of accusing Mom of murder. Of letting Dad talk him into this.

Show Amanda talking him into other stuff?

Establish Amanda as being ambitious of pushing Will to be more ambitious? Maybe she doesn't want him to quite law school even after he's dead.

Opening scene: he wants to quit she keeps after him to stick with it (she's more driven, not so lassiz-faire).

Beginning needs to fit, but each next step should be surprising.

Amanda not an obvious pack rat?

What could Will be thinking of in interrogation scene?

It's a comedy. A creepy comedy. A creepy black comedy. It the skin of a drama of sorts. Outrageous. A bit like VIRDIANA?

Design it as a piece of entertainment, but how will it be salable? On basis of hook. "Fun" Weird adventures.

2.22.07

RE. DRAFT 9

--Opening dial. Her obsessive love for Will. How she "corrects" him. How he is afraid of her disapproval? **His guilt.**

--Interrogation Room p.41 - 52

1. Interrogation
2. Calls Gertrude
3. Amanda calls
4. Hamilton calls

5. Gertrude-Claude arrive

Add Flashbacks?

Amanda call -- Will imagines various death scenarios

Variance between Will's fantasies and what is being said

MODEL: piss bottle scene.

BILLY LIAR, etc. Will imagines Amanda naked (too sexist?)?

Harmon watching Will -- show what Harmon imagines?

Parking garage: Will imagines Amanda driving recklessly.

POV/FANTASY scenes that are HUMOROUS. Root the film in Will's POV, but humorously? Can fantasies undercut our sense of reality ala CRASHING?

More ECU POV stuff ala opening scene -- root the film in Will's POV, in his body, chillingly so, body as the seat of feelings of immortality.

Apt. p.55 - 63

Apt -- Amanda's jealousy re Lucy-Will: altered re. Mitzi-Amanda rivalry/murder?

ADD TEXT MESSAGING?

POSSIBLE FLASHBACKS

--Amanda/Will, her obsessive love. Correcting his behavior.

--Amanda answers the phone while they are having sex, which annoys Will to no end

--Amanda's bad habit of talking on the phone everywhere, on the toilet (some add dial to set this up)

--WHEN MITZI CALLS: Will flashbacks to Mitzi-Amanda-Will together, a "happy friends" scene. What would make this scene funny?

--(POLICE PARKING GARAGE) Amanda's dangerous driving

--Will imagines that Amanda is talking to him (riff from Draft 7, in car outside Claude & Gertrude's house)

--

WORK AREAS

--Opening Scene, Amanda's character

--WILL'S POV: flashbacks, new scenes

--INTERROGATION SCENE:

break up in time

other locations

Will, clear beat: "I'm fucked in real life now."

2.23.07

ALAIN/CHUNG KING:

OPENING SCENE

The depth of Amanda's attachment. "I want to spend every second with you, you're my whole life."

ARREST SECTION:

APT

Harmon's partner comes to apt. Eliminate Miranda stuff. Would you please come along? Come voluntarily, or I'll handcuff you.

DRIVING

Amanda calls -- Will tries to get to talk to Mitzi

BURIAL SITE

Harmon: Let's go back to the station and continue this

Will: Am I under arrest?

Harmon: Do you want to be or do you want to continue to cooperate on a voluntary basis?

POLICE STATION/INTERROGATION ROOM

H: How did you know where Mitzi was buried?

W: Mitzi told me!

Harmon believes (because of Hamilton) -- so at the end he's pissed that he was duped. (add to Hamilton questioning -- Will "Ask me a question" -- he asks some questions and gets surprisingly detailed answers)

After Will calls Mom:

H: If you're not guilty why do you need a lawyer?

Harmon is wondering if Will can speak to the dead when Gertrude & Claude arrive. Clear that Harmon is going to think about it.

TAG SCENE:

Mom visits Will in jail...

Did you kill Hamilton?

Mom! How can you ask me that?

"Inheritance" -- does that make Will less "sympathetic"?
Undue back story complication, or does it make him real?

How can I take the script (and my inner self) to the point where I HAVE to make this film, where the script is so good, the concepts so pleasing and complex that I'm dying to see how the hypothesis plays out in film.

Mailer said that a novel is a hypothesis. Maybe a screenplay is a hypothesis for a film, and if it is compelling hypothesis, then one feels compelled to test it by making the film, to see how workable the hypothesis really is.

Consider POV-SUBJECTIVITY at any given point and what that might offer. The eeriness of being in your own POV (re. opening scene).

2.24.07

Opening scene: step inside Will's fantasies somehow? ALA Crashing opening (and earlier "dream" structure) -- start with a fantasy, or double-back and repeat action (present alternative, Will's re-imagining of situation).

Re-imagining as a form of doubt. Re. Hamlet.

After Amanda leaves phone: Will imagines Amanda talking on toilet, answering phone while they are having sex.

Alternate scene: Will imagines that he got out of the shower and answered the phone.

Will second-guesses everything and there are flashbacks/fantasies that visualize that second-guessing process.

2.25.07

Harry playdate at LACMA with Fiona, lady at the GenNext table takes pity and kindly gives Fiona's Mom & me tix for the Magritte show (GenNext kids free)...

Surrealism is me, deepest core of playfulness.

CALLERS SHOULD BE SURREALISTIC

HENCE:

Will should want to be a writer (why not, everyone else is in the GW universe).

The phone is surreal. Maximize that.

Start with UN CHIEN ANDALOU. Eye slit pulls him out of nightmare. Nightmare of words.

Surrealism = he imagine Amanda ghostly on the phone next to him. Or as a direct presence ala the old scene outside Claude & Gertrude's.

3.6.07

POLICE GARAGE:

Flashback to Will riding with reckless driver Amanda?

ALT: the necklace is in the toilet and the cop fishes it out

STEVE'S COMMENTS

√Near beginning: I'd think Will would want confirmation, and he'd want to share this weird experience, so he'd want Lucy to check out this strange thing in hopes of figuring it out. No?

Will needs to make more of an effort to explain what's up with cell phone to Lucy. He needs to make similar effort (to Hamilton-Harmon) to convince her that he can talk to Amanda on cell phone. Maybe Amanda doesn't cooperate (as Hamilton did).

√SV: "I guess it felt like he should try to explain the first time Amanda tries to talk to Lucy. In the later scene at the apartment when she hears him talking, having the cop come to the door to interrupt felt like a cheat. I think he should at least have a line or two of attempted explanation before the knock on the door.

√(And let's see a photo of Amanda in that green dress early on, when Will's looking at stuff in the empty apartment, to try to impart some extra resonance when Lucy is wearing it.)"

√End: uncertain whether Amanda is setting him up VS.

accidental

√More of a pay-off at end. Amanda wants to punish him for not killing himself. Making his life a living hell, that's satisfaction. "I'm dead, I'm going to live my life."

SV: "I don't know that you need to change much dialogue in that scene. Maybe just eliminate her last couple of lines ("Fuck" and "I can't see everything") and instead have her tauntingly say something like, "See you around, baby" -- something that makes it clear that she's happy, and lets us conclude that she set him up. Also, earlier, it would be nice if his mom was so pissed off about Will even maybe buying Dad's accusations that it's clear that she won't be a lot of help to him -- put some ironic spin on the cop's late line about him having a good attorney."

√Description of cell phone photo of Mitzi not clear.

POSS SCENE: Something that Amanda sends him to do that ends in an accidental way, but he doesn't blame her.

√Twin thing vestigial -- remove

"Does Will ever consider the possibility that he's going nuts?" (a question, not a suggestion)

Character point: maybe Lucy and Amanda aren't that close.

POSS SCENE: Cyrus' cash is an untapped resource.

√ Phone sex? [an aborted attempt after the dream scene]

"It won't ever be an Ingmar Bergman but it could be a Howard Hawks." (SV sees it as being very stylized, with a film noir element)

Some dial with Cyrus, Will: how do I know you're real?

L: I wish Amanda an I had been closer.

W: You were.

L: We weren't.

He just shrugs.

L: I figured, when we got older. Now it'll never happen.

3.7.07

It makes Harmon interesting if he is the only one that believes Will.

3.8.07

ALAIN, DRAFT 9

--Primary issue is with Will

--SHOW OTHER SIDE OF PHONE CALLS

[IDEA: Amanda in apartment for all these. Have her smoking? Establish her quitting earlier -- nicotine patch -- on her arms when he pushes her sleeves up. He finds a pack of cigarettes she's hidden in her desk. MAYBE she's on the cell phone talking when he's in apartment.]

INDICATE ONCE + (intercutting with Will's Imagining Amanda in apartment.

AMANDA has end table by sofa, not a desk.

PHONE SEX: you see that she's in living room.

√--Will too whiny in opening scene

√--p.11 Conversation about Dad comes too soon, he gets over grief too soon -- bring up law school again

--p.13 Will sees Lucy with cell phone while talking to Amanda

--Amanda "demeaning" -- sounds more literate, make more literate throughout

--p.32 SOMEWHERE: Will asks if she is smoking, she says yes, then confesses that she was smoking when she had a car wreck (not putting on make-up, re. old script. Yeah, I'm smoking again, what's it going to do, kill me?)

--(Change Bank to Storage Facility)

X --Sheila not Cyrus' wife

--Cyrus phrasing similar

√--p.34 Mitzi -- alt location to parked Volvo. Convenience Store? 99 CENT STORE

√--p.42 Will's first arrest: 2 detectives, 2 detectives in car

√--p.46 Show Gertrude, since she's alive.

--Amanda -- look out for vestigial cutesiness

--Morgue: Harmon's belief is reduced

--(p.67)

√--(GW-- change "in the mood" to "not now" +"honor her hunch")

√--p.83, with Mitzi, "Don't forget the book for Amanda."

ADDITIONAL

√--Will and Amanda agreed they would quit smoking together. When he sees the pix of Mitzi on his computer he gets one of her secret cigarettes out of the desk and lights up.

--Play up Amanda's annoyance at her "old friend" Mitzi after Mitzi grabs the phone (check earlier drafts)

3.9.07

Yesterday Alain said, "You notice that I'm buying into your concept." Buy that he meant that Callers is not a horror film. He resists the genre appellation of dark comedy. It's supernatural, he says.

ALAIN TO REVIEW

--Opening dial

--p.16 Lucy/Will dial

--p.19 NOTE re. Amanda imaginary intercut. This scene is very brief.

But the Amanda dial on p.14 uses her "omniscient POV" watching Will.

(p.31 is next opportunity for intercut)

--p.21 Discovers cigarette pack in back of drawer

--p.32 Amanda smokes + Flashback

--p.84 re. Intercut

KEY WORK TO DO

--Distinct diction: Will, Amanda, Cyrus, Hamilton, Harmon

--Amanda smoking "subplot" Dos she confess to causing wreck?

AESTHETIC QUESTION:

In post-arrest scene, in apt with Lucy, is Amanda there but neither of them "see" her? Also, is Hamilton there?

I haven't re-read the script, but I have come to accept the image of Amanda on the couch talking to Will, and that gives enough intercut material to put the phone conversations in a safety zone. As when an air mattress is inflated, there comes the moment when there is enough air inside that the mattress snaps into shape, has reached a form in which it can be successfully slept upon. I feel subjectively (I haven't reread the script stem to stern) that I have reached that moment with CALLERS that the script has finally attained a critical mass. I know, I felt that before, with Draft 6B, but this feels different. There is a simplicity and a dimensionality that my mind can bounce off the edges of.

I'm already fantasizing about submitting to Sundance next year.

3.12.07

STEVE re. AMANDA CUT-AWAYS:

--2 issues: how the script reads, how the movie will work

--There needs to be some indication that we'll see Amanda throughout, for agents to put forth good actresses. And there needs to be a way that works for the actual movie. It would be nice if they coincided.

--Showing Amanda on the couch could close off some interesting areas of ambiguity. Could shoot her abstractly, in extreme close-up.

--Another possibility: she's standing there with Will, perhaps behind him, but he's unaware of her presence. But this strategy would require shooting the Will-Amanda scenes 2-ways so we have the option of editing her in and out of the scene (she could jump in and out for dramatic effect).

WILL

(relieved)

Amanda. Listen, I want to apologize for--

AMANDA (V.O.)

(muffled)

Hey! HEY!

WILL

Amanda?!

CYRUS (V.O.)

No. Cyrus.

INTERCUT: AMANDA ON COUCH IN APARTMENT

She disappears from couch. Intercuts end.

INTERCUT OPTION--

Don't specifically say "couch", keep it abstract

AMANDA INTERCUTS

p.14

p.31

p.42

p.47

p.85

3.17.06

All the dead conversations (Cyrus, Amanda, Hamilton) have them sitting on the couch? (As cutaway material.)

3.23.07

STEPHEN GYLLENHAAL:

Beginning v good -- so creepy and emotional. BUT shift out of creepiness too soon.

Doesn't feel like it's emotional enough.

Doesn't feel like psychologically well-rounded people.

Needs to be terrifying and funny at same time.

Even in pettiness there's emotional stuff.

He needs to have stronger reaction to Mitzi when he digs up her body. He would feel weird that someone he fucked is dead.

Ending: Stephen didn't see it coming, he didn't see it working in the context of the story. The ending does not come out of what comes before in the story.

Stephen did not buy the emotional life of the characters. All the character stuff needs to be deepened.

Characters seemed in service of the premise.

OVERALL: Stephen thought the concept is great, but it needed a lot more character work and a different ending (or a significant amount of work to make the current ending satisfying).

3.24.07

MELANGE OF WEIRD ANGLES

p.14 Morgue lobby

p.20 Parking Lot

p.25 Bank lobby

p.37 Mitzi

p.59 Apt, Will with Lucy

p.68 Morgue II

p.84 While Deleting Photo

CUTS TO RESTORE TO SHOOTING SCRIPT

--3007/2007 Computer glitch

DECISION TO SHOOT

PROS

--"It's what I do."

--Financial risk relatively minimal

--Potential of commercial success

--Timely follow-up to Crashing

--No other financial prospects (other than selling Crashing)

--I'm sick of writing (at the moment)

CONS

- Lack of passion
- Lack of fantasy material (one of my strengths)
- Somewhat alien to my mode of personal filmmaking
- Forcing a compressed time frame

CAR WRECK: Amanda could hit Cyrus as a pedestrian and crash into a wall.

STEVE: Amanda should have it in for Will

Cell phone in Will's pocket (when he almost has wreck)?

3.26.07

DAN SALLITT (based on phone pitch):

Other phone calls (Cyrus, Mitzi) -- not blackmail, he's not forced to do it, that's too conventional.

SV YES

Will could be the kind of guy who doesn't like to say no.

SV NO

Maybe Will does it out of sense of obligation (Cyrus -- because Amanda killed him.)

Will's personality leads him to do it.

Maybe Amanda asks Will to help.

[A - I've got a favor to ask. Please say yes.

W - You haven't said what the favor is.

A - But I really need you to say, yes. The guy I killed.

W - What guy?

A - The guy I killed in the car wreck, he really needs some help...]

Maybe they play to his better instincts.

Cyrus -- sincere

Mitzi -- she says that Amanda gave the phone to her, Amanda

wants Will to help

[Story point: would Amanda have continued to fake friendship with Mitzi after discovering that she had slept with Will? What is Mitzi-Amanda's relationship before Amanda dies?]

Cyrus has some connection to Hamilton?

DAN: Someone on the wrong end of a power imbalance makes Dan uncomfortable.

STEVE

Great idea: Amanda opens the door to Cyrus, then Cyrus turns out to be a jerk.

(GW)

Mitzi: Amanda asked you to help me. (Mitzi is lying, Will finds this out when he finally talks to Amanda.) (SV likes this.)

3.27.07

KILIAN NOTES (DRAFT 9)

√Have Amanda try on green dress in opening to set up Lucy and dress later

p.11 Tone shift, too abrupt shift from grief to comedic: (WILL "No, not really, I mean, wedding planning stuff, nothing major.")

√p.16 Revise so that he doesn't give Lucy the phone to try

Revise (per Dan) to have Amanda ask he talk to Cyrus as a favor

√Tug of war with secretary too slap stick -- make her officious

vp.57 Gertrude would ask about how he knew about Mitzi before grief/Amanda stuff

In the middle: he confesses to having an affair?

GENERAL:

Thematics -- what is the theme that ties the end to the beginning?

Why wouldn't Mitzi know who killed her? Why wouldn't Hamilton know? (re. omniscience of the dead)

How does Mitzi know where she's buried (but doesn't know who killed or buried her)?

Most entertaining: the Will-Amanda scenes. That's the relationship stuff that I excel at. As for the rest...it's a weaker script than CRASHING. Blah dial because things of wit and substance aren't being discussed.

More of a plot? Who killed Dad, who killed Mitzi? Twist: they're related. Double twist: he's framed.

ALT VERSION

1. She's dies, is buried.
2. 6 months later he finds the phone, looks at pix, turns it, she can talk to him. He's already in another relationship. The comedy of those 2 relationships, interlaced.

3.28.07

From: steve@thinkmodern.com
Subject: Re: Kilian's Notes - More Comprehensible
Date: March 28, 2007 8:25:58 AM PDT
To: gary@garywalkow.com

On Mar 27, 2007, at 2:54 PM, Gary Walkow wrote:

GENERAL:

Thematics -- what is the theme that ties the end to the beginning?

Good question. What is the aspect of Will's character that leads him to his fate, or at least makes him vulnerable to it? Or is this simply "Detour," where fate takes a hand unbidden? Maybe Will is tempted to coast in life because Dad left him a trust fund that he'll be able to access in a

few years? Maybe Dad thinks there's a motive there? Or maybe it ties into Amanda's motive? Or is Will just someone who tries to please everyone, and that creates an untenable situation for him?

Why wouldn't Mitzi know who killed her? Why wouldn't Hamilton know? (re. omniscience of the dead)

You can't have the dead be truly omniscient -- you probably need a different word in the script. I think they can simply travel easily from place to place and observe, so Will can never be sure when they'll show up and when they're watching him -- but they don't gain extra knowledge just from being dead. Amanda says something about being able to see everything; when Will calls her on that near the end (when the cops show up), maybe she says, "So I exaggerated a little."

How does Mitzi know where she's buried (but doesn't know who killed or buried her)?

Maybe she was still barely alive, but unconscious, when buried. After she died, her ghost found itself at the spot of the grave but doesn't know how she got there. Since they were poisoned, neither she nor Dad knows what killed them.

Most entertaining: the Will-Amanda scenes. That's the relationship stuff that I excel at. As for the rest...it's a weaker script than CRASHING. Blah dial because things of wit and substance aren't being discussed.

More of a plot? Who killed Dad, who killed Mitzi? Twist: they're related. Double twist: he's framed.

Umm... not sure I understand this comment. Their deaths are related, and Will is framed. ???

From: steve@thinkmodern.com
Subject: Callers - further meta-thoughts
Date: March 28, 2007 11:13:32 AM PDT
To: gary@garywalkow.com

Just to elucidate --

I think Callers is inherently a genre film, not an art film. It seems to me that films that have successfully melded the two (like Tarantino's early stuff) have done so by fulfilling the genre expectations on the way to taking them over the top -- while you're talking about taking something that, at first glance, appears to be a horror thriller and steadfastly refusing to fulfill the expectations of bloodletting and babes-in-the-shower that the genre would seem to demand. Reservoir Dogs is hip and post-modern enough for the art crowd, yet bloody enough for the lowbrow crowd. The worst-case scenario is a film that appeals to neither, and Callers appears dangerously close to that at the moment. I make no claims to expertise, but Callers has never seemed like a Sundance movie to me. Maybe it's because Tarantino clearly loves the genres he mines, and loves putting topspin on them, while you don't love horror thrillers, as far as I know. I'm not saying that Callers can't span the genre-art gap, just that I don't think it's there yet, and it may be in danger of winding up neither fish nor fowl.

I'm not trying to draw any conclusions, just adding grist to the mill...

Detail:

Amanda has books in the front seat of her car.

Amanda -- some comment about Will being passive-aggressive, about letting people push him around.

Will re Cyrus: God, all it is with you is problems.

Will re. Mitzi: You're taking advantage of my good nature.

3.30.07

Altman NASHVILLE -- just make the film.

Altman re, MCCABE -- take a clichéd story and add curlicues. Need the story to hang the curlicues onto.

Coens, BLOOD SIMPLE -- why is that an art film?

"The Limey" -- re. art/genre movie

French film aesthetic re. intellectual, bourgeois,
detailing

Will to Cyrus: Why can't your wife get it?

Cyrus: Fine, bring the phone to my wife and let me tell her
what to do.

ANALYSIS

Cyrus p.20-28 8p
Mitzi p.33-29 6p
Interrogation p.42-52 10p

POSSIBLE NEW SCRIPT WORK

--What if Hamilton didn't call in police station?

--Gertrude showdown: funnier? Gertrude re. Will's "need to
please"

--p.78 post-Gertrude Hamilton call

--Hamilton/Mitzi flashback

--Can Amanda relationship stuff be expanded?

--Will's character

Re. WHAT IS AN ART FILM?

STEVE

Irony re. Blood Simple

PETER BAXTER:

--"The Straight Story" -- it's an art film not because of
the content, but because of the tension and artistry that
the director (Lynch) brings to it.

--Callers: It's a genre picture that I'd bring my artistry
to.

--Art film = depends on who makes it

(--Peter would like to see Callers sponsored by a telephone
company.)

GW

--It is an art film because I inherently think of everything as an art film.

DECISION TO PROCEED BASED ON:

1. My enthusiasm/passion. It should be a film that I want to make, and that I think I can go a great job with. But I am more passionate about it than TV scripts, which I directed passionately.

2. Reaction of others -- as a gauge of agent/actor responses.

Did I talk myself into CRASHING? Steve doesn't remember me doing that. Maybe because I was nowhere and there was nothing at risk wince everything had already been lost? Is the fact that I am trying to talk myself into it reason enough not to proceed?

4.1.07

WILL WAKES, AMANDA APPEARS (DREAM):

Possibly add: "I had this extremely weird dream that you were dead."

AFTER MORGUE II -- Lucy-Will-Lucy tries phone when Hamilton speaks doesn't quite flow.

EMAIL TO/FROM DAN:

Did I have this level of hesitation about making CRASHING? Or this level of hesitation? It didn't seem so.

I don't recall. I remember that you had a lot of hesitation at the conception stage: you didn't think there was a movie there, and that period lasted for months. After you wrote it, I think you had less hesitation.

But as you can see I can put forth no compelling reason to make CALLERS. Fuck.

Why do you have to have a compelling reason to make a particular movie? Making movies is interesting. Making CALLERS won't cut you off from making more movies, even if the experiment isn't successful.

4.10.07

Email to Dan:

I really have no idea how this film will turn out, but I am extremely curious about it. It's been a different process. I've never written so many versions/variants of a story, not when it was self-imposed, and I feel that I have lived through lesser versions of the film. Anyway, it should be very interesting and I'm really looking forward to it.

5.24.07

Steve re. test shoot:

Your picks of 43 & 98 seem fine -- simpler than some. 25, which first establishes Amanda's omniscient pov, might be good, too, but perhaps not worth the extra effort to set up and shoot. (Though I always imagined him imagining her walking around him then, always staying just out of the corner of his eye as he looks around for her -- and maybe she doesn't have a phone.) Don't know if you say this in the script, but I think it would be cool if at some point, late, they're both sitting side-by-side on the couch, not looking at each other, talking via phone. I also imagine, in the phone-sex scene, cutting her in and out, running her hands over him. Putting her in closer proximity at times seems like it might be interestingly jangly and disturbing. (Like if she were standing beside him in the morgue, urging him to hug her body, for instance.)

I feel somewhat scared, in that I cannot get my head into, around, how to do the phone calls. The space that the film is supposed to take place in won't define itself. Can't move the actors around in my head. Do not feel like a director today. Why am I trying to do this? What is my motive?

5.26.07

Consternation at myself and at the process. Get most infused it seems with the issue of ego -- "if he can do it, why can't I?"

Trust to the accumulation of errands. And if the errands are pleasurable then the process is.

Today's desk errands:

--input and look at location photos. A lazy way of dreaming about the shoot. Sort of thinking it through. Inhabiting the space. Begin to organize location photos.

--Go through phone list for potential "actors"

6.6.07

Review morgue hallway shots with Steve for test shoot. He has better ideas than I have. I don't have any ideas. He encourages me toward stylistic bravura. I can see that, even if it does not feel natural. I am insistent on certain "grammars" of how to perceive the dead. But feel uncertain of the conclusions I am espousing.

Need dialogue with Steve to sharpen my thoughts. Need provocation to have thoughts.

Again, as always, have trouble correlating the script and the shot list and what might finally be the movie on the screen. There is a double veil of words and I cannot see past those words to what the film might be.

Does it help to keep vaguely thinking of the whole?

EC, which is supposed to be a budget boon, is a distraction and I am already in a distracted state, where I feel the tick of hours, the uselessness, the lack of accumulation.

One journal fades into another. Where do I put all the pieces?

If all the cast pieces fall into place, have a mere 2 months (with 3 weeks in Europe) to get the production organized and functioning.

Mull upon BEAT -- what did I accomplish with months of monastic fretting? Did the obsessive exercising help at all? Long term, wouldn't I have been better off drinking and bonding with Kiefer? What boon is there from being a miser to my time, the illusion that I am spending it slowly? Always spending, always leaking, always ticking.

6.7.07

Get mildly stoned last night (on medicinal marihuana rice krispy) and have a flash that the storage place can be

changed to the "basement" which could be the big room at Los Flores. Whoops, maybe, I had the idea at my office, but sat down to try and work it out at the stoned night desk. Call Alain and Steve today for reassurance validation and it passes double muster. So my life is simplified.

Feels extraordinarily good to write a "new" scene -- refashion an old troublesome one into something that at least for today is fresh. Been ages since I've written something even relatively new. Energizing in and of itself. The script is better. And easier to produce (one less character plus don't have to hassle with storage place location).

When I call Steve re. my list of Dead Phone Calls he comes up with another good obvious idea that he probably assumes that I've already had (I haven't).

6.9.07

Is there any point to smooth dramatic scenes? (except avoiding distraction)

Ala Philip Larkin, think of it as an exercise in recreating emotion.

6.18.07

Bunuel is the key -- Will accepts the extraordinary as ordinary.

8.9.07

re. restoring Cyrus initially nasty -- Draft 5a

8.27.07

re. First Cyrus call -- Draft 5B (no Amanda at start) Dr 9 (starts with Amanda, Crus yanks phone)

Draft 12 = use Draft 5B to revise opening of Cyrus phone call.

Jeff says that he will sign deal. So we seem to be started (he said he would sign it last week). Things though do seem to be churning toward signature.

Alain might take a 67K producing gig, and take Paolo with him. That is today's wrinkle.

Am finally motivated to watch a gang of the WMA casting DVDs, motivated now that the production will most likely be delayed.

10.7.07

The money is there. Why am I not manic, spending every minute? Why am I plowed into a book that is fits and starts unending (BMB)?

I need to start. I just need to be able to tell myself that CALLERS counts as time on the clock. I just need to tell myself that.

Problem is that BMB keeps feeling like it is getting closer and it is in my head and I want to get it to the point where other people can read it and it is not near to that yet.

If my mind is prepared then I can prepare CALLERS quickly, can't I?

I know that I want it to be pop and fun and as visually expressive as I can make it.

Study the Beatles. Pop music hall tradition mixed with avant garde.

Some held shots to break the rhythm. The gas station is not quite the right quiet moment.

SV: find a way to say that it's not all in his head, but also doesn't confirm that it isn't not all in his head.

10.14.07

Friday I printed out BMB, first full print out in 3 months, the manuscript a hundred pages longer, denser.

Met with Steve for an hour on Friday. He has better ideas than I do about the film. I've been away from it enough, but I just don't see it.

Keep thinking, how would Marc Forster prepare a film? Even with his vast resources, he would be on it around the clock, my kid distractions, younger non-crumbling body. Does he haunt me because he was a meteor close at hand, and a nice meteor at that?

I've got to start using everything. All the resources I can bring to bear.

This is the first day that I've started with CALLERS, not with BMB. Can't make heads or tails of the current draft of the shot list.

Hard to imagine myself as a working director, as a television director. The idea of having a few days to prep, then walking on the set and taking control. My surges of ambition are perhaps only vanity, the years I have accrued, simply TRYING, the persistence of that as the body merely persists in space and time. How in the hell did I make CRASHING? Is that a fluke?

At least I am returning to the semi-panicked mindset that disaster is at hand, the post-LBT mindset, and that will force mw to at least properly prepare.

PRODUCTION ISSUES

- Night shooting, without permits
- Art Direction
- Car wreck: staging, location
- Street locations

10.29.07

Subj to obj,
and obj to subj as the 2 camera moves to push, again and again, as the basis for the film's style.

Prep: having all the elements at hand, and a sense of the option available.

Prep as interactive: shot list, script review & revision, location scouting, refinement of prop list & collecting props, refinement of cast list.

12.12.07

DIRECTORIAL STYLE: The drama is something I stumbled onto, and observed. The drama is a found photograph.

12.15.07

As much as possible have actors read OS telephone scenes.

December 21 Friday Kent

5AM -- work on storyboards in kitchen. Turn the corner today. Feel like I'm finally giving Callers precedence over BMB, that I'm excited about it, excited by what the film might be. I am highly curious to see the experiment play itself out.

My confidence I finally on the upswing as I devise a visual plan. Today was a long run of what feel like good ideas. I finally get a grasp of how to shoot the interrogation scene.

A big day.

Dec. 22 Saturday Kent

I actually look forward to continuing the storyboard work. That's new, that it doesn't feel like a burden.

The act of drawing storyboards feel helpful -- connects my hands and brain to the pondering of images. Even with my crude drawings it makes me think in terms of what actually fits inside of the frame, it concretizes issues of perspective. It's valuable in the way that it stimulates the brain, not just because there is a collection of little drawings in the margin of the script.

12.23.07 5:30AM Kent

Rethink dramatics of Morgue Hug Scene when doing storyboard -- Will would only reluctantly go over to body. This is one of the strongest scenes and yet the set up for it has always been wrong and I didn't realize that until doing the storyboard.

It's not so much the specific work, it's the attitude

toward the work. For example, now: trying to just cast a good actor, looking for underlying visual strategies, not just coverage-type shot lists.

12.24.07 Boscastle

SCRIPT:

Need to bring up the text-subtext of Will wanting to sleep with Lucy. The fickleness of Will, the weakness that underpins his relationship with Amanda.

Overall, subtext is weak.

VISUAL

treatment of phone, film historical references, spoof, menace

Today's accomplishment:

--realize that the script is still weak
 --build on yesterday's revelation of the flaws of Morgue II scene, the weaknesses of the parking lot scene (conversation with Hamilton)

PARKING LOT, AFTER MORGUE II

--Will does want to fuck Lucy. Does he admit this to himself? He quickly sees her as the alternative to Amanda?

--Why does Will feel guilty about his dad?

--How is Will like his dad?

--Anguish toward Lucy crucial toward deepening Will?

--What does Will want? What drives him along? Why is it so crucial to keep talking to Amanda? A moment where he realizes what they don't have in their relationship?

--How does Will lie to himself?

Appalled by how many of these questions I can't answer. Maybe I am forcing myself into an approach that is not natural to me.

IMPROVS (or new scenes in the script)

--Opening scene, Will-Amanda relationship (extra material could be used in flashback). What if they fuck, which Amanda instigates, and then she is late for work? What if he instigates sex, which is what makes her late?

A powerful, early sex scene.

If I am going to use unknown actors, why not go for it?

--Will-Lucy alone at Tiki, inappropriate kiss? Sex fantasy? No. What if they actually sleep together, a moment of grief-stricken weakness? THEY START TO HAVE SEX, AND AMANDA CALLS TO INTERRUPT. What if Will turns off the phone so there is no danger of interruption? What if he can't make love with Lucy because of the distraction of imagining Amanda watching? What if Will is weak but Lucy isn't quite is weak, she is the one who stops the sex? This scene can be good to help set up Will's personal-sexual dynamic. What he needs, his weakness. How prone he is to manipulation, how he is not in control of his needs.

I wonder how this scene makes Will weak-sleazy, but this internal editing weakens the poss. of everything. Too quick to homogenize and conventionalize everything.

Will is weak at the end. He is weak throughout. A comedy of weakness.

Today felt useless re. storyboarding -- couldn't even fix the weak dial of Hamilton outside the morgue. But the idea of these 2 new scenes feels very strong. A real breakthrough after a long period of stasis on many levels.

The key: to keep reworking, expanding, enriching the material. To keep it in a state of growth and flux for the entire process.

If it is about being small-minded, then truly make it that.

Phone calls = fantasy level (re. TTWD, NFU, Crashing)

The permeability of internal-external.

What if the reality of it does remain in question? Even if we do accept that Will is talking on the phone, his reality can still be wavering and fickle. It can still be wiggly.

12.27.07 Boscastle

Storyboard through bathroom sequence at end of film then brain melts down.

re. storyboards: worth remembering that the 3-shot image from CRASHING (the key art image) was unplanned (I'm pretty sure) and happened only in the filming [Just check the Crashing Shot List and the 3-shot was planned, it just ended up being staged in a way that I didn't expect]. Also, the visually pure camera moves of the opening sequence only occurred to me the night before filming.

So...as per my review of the Crashing shot list re. the Callers shot list: the planning was crucial to develop the idea of the shot, but it ended up being staged in an unexpected manner. So the planning is crucial to develop the ideas, and then flexibility is required in the execution.

12.28.07

CELL PHONE PHOTOS

--Need 3-4 toggles to get to photos, then need to click pix.

--No tag for downloaded pix

Write new scenes: Amanda-Will sex, Will-Lucy heavy petting

Analyze weak Hamilton subplot, know that it needs top to bottom rewriting.

12.29.07 Penzance, pre-dawn

naiveté vs. sophistication in storytelling

subtext

shorthand expression of character

how could the project be so far along and Hamilton and his arc suddenly seem so glaringly weak?

key: buy into premise then push the story along just ahead of the audience. audience needs to have fun with the premise.

If Hamilton-Will relationship is fucked up it needs to be fucked up in a way that is consistent with the "fun" of the piece. why am I saying all this obvious shit to myself this morning?

Make it a Dylan song. Make it surreal.

HAMILTON ARC

--INTERROGATION SCENE

--APT. SCENE (LUCY LISTENING)

*Ham discloses that he slept with Mitzi
 *His theory that Gertrude killed them both
 *He feels like a fool for only figuring it out now

--MORGUE PARKING LOT

Ham accuses Gertrude of murder here?

--OUTSIDE TIKI APT

--AFTER WILL CONFRONTS GERTRUDE

This should be the pay-off/pettiness scene

Hamilton cleverly plants doubt re. Will's relationship with Gertrude.

Hamilton skillfully plays off of Gertrude's antipathy to Amanda. (Hamilton likes Amanda)

Currently Gertrude is too blatantly negative about Amanda.

Don't see point at which Will is driven-motivated to research Gertrude's possible guilt.

Hamilton's weaknesses should come out after the Gertrude Confrontation Scene, when the accusations are proved false.

Don't want to undercut the prevailing humor of the dead being petty and annoying.

ADD SCENE: visualize Gertrude's presentation of counter-evidence?

12.31.07 Lyes Cottage

Cop stuff weirder? Leakage of a dream?

I fluff about and lazily ponder Hamilton subplot without diving in and fixing it.

Have I been distracted from tone?

Do I fail to grasp tone?

It feels too blatant and conventional, at least when Hamilton is considered as a separate unit.

Everything feels to lack depth and this is the time to consider that.

2008

1.1.08 Lyes Cottage

Walk with Harry to the village shop. He wants to hear a story and I tell him Callers, somewhat sanitized. Makes me consider the narrative in a new light, the basics, what needs to be sustained, the danger of what can fall apart.

IMPROMPTU SCRIPT-PROJECT ANALYSIS

--crucial that grief issue be successfully dealt with. Amanda's carping needs to be the transition out of pure grieving. (is more carping needed?) There is the irony that he can talk to her so the break is not final.

--"one thing leads to another" and it gets worse and worse for Will. Narrative cannot slow down or it will collapse, like an unsuccessful soufflé.

--Hamilton section fails according to the model of grief stanchued by bickering. There should be genuine feeling, delayed grief perhaps, but then the relationship annoyances kick in (in the second or third scene, at Tiki or morgue)

--need a more incisive portrait of will's weakness. how he lets Amanda control him (and Mitzi). He is weak, he gets pushed around, but in a sympathetic way. (I cringe at this use of "sympathetic" -- we just need to go along with the story and that is all)

--character depth needed throughout, small touches, curlicues and swirls of backstory

--what if Hamilton's appearance in the story is delayed until after the interrogation scene? what if he first calls when will is at the apt. with Lucy?
then there would be four beats

1. apt. -- reacquainted,
2. morgue parking lot
3. parked outside apt (impetus to research Dr. Levin files)
4. after will confronts Gertrude

--the danger of rewriting Hamilton is losing humor. But is there any humor to it now? The socks? The bickering?

directness
obliqueness

direct vs. indirect speech

how people say the obvious
how they don't

Interrogation scene

--is Hamilton as sensitive as will about talking about personal stuff in the earshot of others

--did Hamilton hate cell phones before he died? I don't think so.

1.3.08

"humanity, weakness, insecurity" -- endow characters with this at every turn (re. Apatow)

Gertrude -- what is her insecurity? she felt threatened by Amanda? competitive with Amanda?

Hamilton -- always needs to be right? can't cope with the diminishment of power of being dead?

my thin blue dawn light in an almost trance I write down character stuff, in bright blue light, trying to force up some small insights that could perhaps be the basis for deepening some of the scenes

1.4.08

it's okay for characters to exemplify types as long as they are specific. uniqueness can be from how they are concretized or from the context they are placed in.

"Improv" as basis for new scenes & rewrites
(this was the idea behind the Amanda-will sex scene and the Will-Lucy heavy petting)

1.6.07

"He kisses her again. She lets him. He pulls her tighter. They are starting to"

NOTES FROM RE-READING "CALLERS NOTES-JOURNAL"

More funeral ticking clock stuff?

More witty bickering?

Would Amanda talk about calling off wedding? Would she be interested in planning the funeral?

Amanda's dead father? In-laws in the afterlife?

Bourgeois delineation in French films.

Amp up black humor. Make Hamilton funnier (more pathetic in his needs).

10.25.06 p.80 David Warfield: story never seemed serious, funny and eccentric stuff sticks out.

p.81 Phone call totally changes tone of grief

***Audience/Will identification re. accepting reality of talking to the dead (key concept)

**make Amanda more sympathetic in opening (re. Jay A)
Examine closely

Interstitial material?

Humor in interrogation scene?

Silent moments -- examine, expand

2.24.07 Will second-guessing everything -- visualize these second-guessings?

p.101 (SV) Character point: Amanda & Lucy aren't that close (some comment in "heavy petting" scene)

*** p.104 3.23.07 Stephen Gyllenhaal comments

*** p.106 Amanda could hit Cyrus as a pedestrian and crash into a wall (SV: flashback to wreck as freeze frames)

Amanda opens door to Cyrus? Then Cyrus turns out to be a jerk?

p.107 SV email answers

SV: art vs. genre

Gertrude re. Will's "need to please"

p.112 SV -- Amanda & Will sitting side by side and talking (where?)

Does Will make another pass at Lucy after Morgue II?

* heavy petting scene interrupted by Amanda's phone call -- that's what backs Will out of moment

What pieces are missing-feel wrong (such as murder in Beat and walk across city in TTWD)? Murder could have been cut from Beat and that would have been better, that ellipsis, than doing is wrong (which is what I did).
(this stimulated by reading Neo-Fever Dream notes)

1.9.08

RECAP OF ENGLAND CHARACTER NOTES (from handwritten pages)

--Hamilton cleverly plants doubt re. Will's relationship with Gertrude

--Don't yet see point at which Will is driven-motivated to research Gertrude's possible guilt

--Hamilton's weaknesses should come out after the Gertrude scene, when the accusations fall flat

--visualize Gertrude's presentation of counter-evidence?

WILL

--always wonders if he is making the right decision

--**hates to be told what to do, but lets this happen**

--needs approval (but doesn't acknowledge this)

--self-conscious but without deep self-knowledge, self-conscious without being self-aware

--doesn't know himself

--downtrodden, pushed around by Hamilton, Amanda, his sexual desires.

--still has adolescent quality? unformed, seeking approval

AMANDA

--externalizes

--thinks that Will will solve everything for her

--her identity is bound up in her union to Will

--nothing will stop her from making their relationship perfect

--Mitzi was a problem to be solved

--she thinks it is admirable to be able to get what you want

--she was indulged as a child & is used to getting her way

--excited to be marrying up, to be marrying into money. A climber.

--Will lacks sexual confidence. Amanda has manipulated him sexually, created a dependence.

--how overt is her dominance?

LUCY

--Amanda has always been the star, Amanda always granned & got the attention

--she thought that Amanda was selfish & controlling & feels guilty for these thoughts now that Amanda is dead

--she is somewhat self-effacing (in response to sibling dynamic)

--she feels sad she wasn't really close to Amanda

--Amanda is the younger sister but always treated Lucy as the second banana

--death is another way that Amanda gets attention

GERTRUDE

--emotions can be compartmentalized

--"Everyone has base motives"

--"Anyone is capable of anything"

--feelings are messy, they betray you

--worshaholic, stoic, Hilary Clinton

HAMILTON

--needs to feel powerful, needs to win

--obsesses over losses

--indulgent, a hedonist

--a blustery, showy, non-meticulous lawyer

--is she similar to Amanda? is their antipathy based on similarity? or because they are vying for control of Will?

DYNAMICS TO EXPLORE

Hamilton - Gertrude:

--what was initial attraction? No one ever wanted to fuck her so badly before?

--Polarities: spendrift - frugal, hedonist - stoic, hard working - networking.

--Their fight plays out between Will (this has to happen moe in the script).

Hamilton - Amanda

--kindred spirits, they really liked each other

Gertrude - Will

--he needs her approval (how can this be expressed in their scenes?)

***Prior to Amanda's death: Everyone vies for control of Will -- does he encourage this? He realizes that this is what is happening, he just doesn't realize how pervasive it is.

--does Gertrude think that Will is crazy?

CHARACTER STUFF (general analysis)

Gesture
Language
Subtext

Scars
Clandestine strategies of coping

Overt desire
Hidden desire

What does a character find entertaining? And why?

Tastes
(how do tastes relate to tone)

How to express irony
--framing
--context
--distance (distance that conveys authorial attitude)

Character in service of event (if event is predetermined)

RE. SCRIPT:

***KITCHEN TABLE SCENE: Gertrude has to talk more about Hamilton.
Does Will slip and tell Gertrude he can talk to the dead on the phone (which makes Gertrude think that Will is crazy?)

parking garage - driving scene: Gertrude lets Will off the hook too easily.

W: what is I told you I could talk to the dead? would you think I was crazy?
G: yes

Perhaps in interrogation scene, Harmon says:

Harmon: Do you know that your son claims to talk to the dead?

Gertrude: No.

Then Gertrude asks Will about it after, and chastises him for speaking so indiscreetly to a cop. Will has to do some fast-talking to keep Gertrude from putting him under psychiatric observation.

Does Will try to act like he was just messing with Harmon's head? (Which Gertrude would have trouble believing)

1.10.08

LUCY-WILL TIKI SCENE:

--if Lucy starts listening too soon to Will talking to Amanda, then the scene seems to drag on too long

--But having her eavesdrop creates tension.

Need to find the right point for her to enter into the scene as a listener.

MITZI PARKING LOT:

Can the flip tone be dialed back and still be funny?

DRIVING - GERTRUDE, POST INTERROGATION:

--if Claude is in car, he should comment-speak

--Gertrude comments, perhaps indirectly, on Amanda's obsessive nature.

LUCY & WILL DRIVE TO MORGUE

--cut this scene? shoe leather?

--what would they talk about? (dial might mess up other story beats) but if they are not talking here that takes away from not talking on way back from morgue.

1.15.08

AS NOTES/DISCUSSION

Will wants to do music

Amanda -- missing edge

Amanda gave up acting for Will, child actress. She thinks Will is ungrateful that she quit acting. She quit for him, he didn't want her to but she thinks he did -- she has regrets and resentment.

"She's an actress" informs everything.
When she wants something she performs.

She likes Will because he is considerate & attentive.

W: Calm down.

A: I'm dead -- I've got a right to be upset

Will re. Mitzi "How could you kill over something meaningless?"

Will tries to get advice from a friend? (someone Amanda doesn't approve of) (friend comes over before cops come?)

Gertrude had an affair with Harmon? She calls him "Leonard", makes Will's release a favor. "Leonard, you don't have any hard evidence."

Hamilton realizes that Harmon had an affair with Gertrude.

Will wants to find out if Gertrude had an affair with Claude & Harmon?

Will didn't realize his Mom cheated.
Will is disillusioned. This is lead-in to Amanda ending.
[currently this disillusionment is downplayed relative to Hamilton using it re. implicating Gertrude in both the murders.]

Hamilton: "I fucked but I didn't kill. Fucking is fucking and killing is killing and I don't mix up the two and that's morality."

TODAY'S QUESTIONS:

--Cut Claude?

--Does Amanda talk about quitting acting? if so, where?

--p.53, Harmon dial re. Mitzi

--Where does Hamilton tell Will that Gertrude slept with Harmon? (after Gertrude drops him off, outside apt) What

is Will's reaction? If disillusion, have that right after morgue?

H: Your mother slept with Detective Harmon. That's so obvious.

W: Okay.

H: No it's not okay.

W: Dad, I've got other things on my mind.

Hamilton-- infidelity + murder

OFFICE SCENE - GERTRUDE'S HOUSE

Visualize Dr. Levin?

When Gertrude says "I don't know why you won't trust me" -- Will could ask/say "Did you sleep with Detective Harmon?"

1.16.08

Freaked about setting start date because script isn't in good shape.

Upset it's taken me so long to realize how bad it is (dialogue and character wise) and that it's taken years and it's still not nearly right.

Mind slow and fogged and old. Not supple or confident.

At Alain' all morning, snatches of work between his many production calls (for the paying gig he's doing).

SMART CHARACTERS -- make them smart.

AMANDA

--actress

--insecure: obsessed with looks

--insecure about relationship

--"You're young, take a chance"

--"Why are you going to law school? You don't love the law."

WILL

--too restrained

--give opportunity to do stuff

--sincere, befuddled

--analytical (need to demonstrate in first scene)

--weight of ancestors

--intelligent but ambivalent

WILL LIKES AMANDA BECAUSE

--smart

--attractive

--she wants him to be happy

FIRST SCENE:

--he's explained all this before.

--she's reacting to his lack of enthusiasm for law school

HAMILTON

--was prosecutor, that's when he met Harmon

GERTRUDE

--litigator, not a criminal attorney like Hamilton (Harmon makes some comment

--does trial work?

Talk with Stephen Gyllenhaal. He muses about what is it that I'm missing, with my dazzling writing and the miraculous aspects of *Crashing*, all the things that were right with it, he thinks something is being held back, something emotional.

With characters that you love -- easy to be emotional.

1.17.08

Will argues like a lawyer. Analytical and argumentative.

Will likes to be logical?

1.18.08

WHAT IS GOING TO MAKE IT FUN TO WATCH?

--The twists and turns, the increasing complexity

(therefore: Hamilton needs to add a new level)

--Painful absurdity of the situation

--context of pettiness

POSSIBLE ADDITIONAL DIALOGUE

--**Amanda concerned about her face after the wreck?**
Discusses her appearance as a dead person. Vanity.

EXPLORATION SCENES

1. Amanda quits acting (after frustrating reading)
2. Will-Amanda have fun doing something
3. Will's friend visits
3. Will - Hamilton scene
4. Hamilton - Gertrude scene

re. language: my failure to create voices. Have I decayed,
 can I only write myself now?

WILL'S LANGUAGE

--words: logical, affirmative, negative, consequently,
 therefore

--he was a debater?

--complex sentence structure?

--slightly baroque, archaic

--some commonality with Hamilton's language

HAMILTON

mock legal language
 ornate
 mock archaic

AMANDA

--argot of an actress. theater language

GERTRUDE

--salty

VOICE IS

--vocabulary

--syntax

--rhythm, cadence

--pauses

--mimics the rhythm of thought

1.19.08

STEVE:

--To an outside observer Will's reaction (to Amanda's death) seems pretty weird (compared to Lucy's grief).

--Will & Amanda are co-dependents. After death, she is still petty, they can't have sex to smooth things over. No benefits of a physical relationship.

--The story's thruline is nourish: he gets more tangled as he tries to extricate himself.

Maybe too blatant:

Amanda: "I'm dead, why aren't you balling your eyes out like Lucy?"

Will: "Because we're talking, fighting."

subtext???

(Will: "It's hard to grieve for you while I'm still talking to you.")

(Amanda: "You don't have to grieve, you can be with me.")

(How interruptions keep them from talking -- the frustration of how things get no closer to being resolved.)

GW REVELATION:

√--Morgue 1: need description of Will's grief shifting as he talks-argues with Amanda.

--Hamilton re. Gertrude: It will get Will off the hook if Gertrude is guilty. (+ Will is suspicious of Harmon's chumminess with Gertrude -- maybe Will mentions this to

Harmon when he comes to the apartment +mention it to Gertrude when Will confronts her)
 This makes Hamilton an inherent catalyst to Will's next set of actions. Ultimately a frustrating conclusion to this episode.

--In Tiki phone conversation, Hamilton lays out how Gertrude meant to poison him but ended up poisoning him and Mitzi. This is visualized. (perhaps complete the visualization when Will presents the "evidence" to Gertrude.) (visualize in POV shots???) (Maybe it is Amanda who poisoned them both in a very similar way.)

"Infuse" is the drink. Gertrude is doing some corporate legal for Dr. Levin, has access to the drug during a lab tour.

1.20.08

WORK

--Add Amanda flashback (quits acting)?

--Add Ted?

--Hamilton

 rework Tiki

 rework Post Morgue

 rework Gertrude?

--Flashbacks in Final Tiki Scene (narrated by Amanda)

--Will & Amanda dialogue throughout

--Gertrude's voice

"FLASHBACK"

H: Your mother killed me!

W: (farfetched) (Will figures Gertrude could have killed Mitzi)

HAMILTON'S VERSION

1. **Pharmaceutical company -- lab/boardroom**
2. **Gertrude injects "Infuse"**
3. **Hamilton's work out bag**
 - a. **Gertrude puts drink in his bag**
 - b. **Hamilton brings bag to Mitzi's**

- c. they fuck
- d. take shower together
- e. drink together

AMANDA'S VERSION

1. Amanda arrives - Mitzi surprised to see her
2. Amanda puts poison in Amanda's ice tea jug
3. Amanda leaves
4. Hamilton arrives
 - a. they fuck
 - b. they drink Hamilton's drink
 - c. they fuck some more
 - d. they drink Mitzi's ice tea

Hamilton VS. Amanda (can they join in and "explain" together?)

DIAL CUT FROM TIKI SCENE

WILL

Then how come they found your body but not Mitzi's?

HAMILTON (V.O.)

Because Mitzi was too young to have a heart attack and it would have looked suspicious if we died together.

1.22.08

re. opening scene: they should reach a point of conflict and then use sex to smooth it over (to show how this will be missing later)

Lucy leaves her car at the morgue (when Prius friend picks her up)? Morgue II she abandons Will and drives her own car home? (no, because Lucy drove to the Tiki)

(p.45 during suicide request conversation)

Amanda: I quit acting for you.

Will: I didn't ask you to.

1.23.08

START with "Amanda quits acting" as a night scene, then cut to the next morning?

Will glances nervously at Detective Harmon, embarrassed to have to talk in his presence.

EMOTIONAL SEGUES

--relationship-conflict with Amanda

--grief

--grief shifts as Will talks to Amanda

--weirdness (Cyrus, Sheila) and the spookiness of this.
"Emotional" weirdness

√--Cyrus office - he realizes that phone call was real

√--Reacts to digging up Mitzi's body

(√)--Heightened emotions (threat) of interrogation

--Attraction to Lucy (as substitute, relief from Amanda)

--Creepiness of hugging dead Amanda. embarrassment of Lucy-Harmon witnessing

--Being manipulated by Dad

--Confrontation with Mom (what are his feelings about her prior to?)

--His emotional reaction to Amanda knowing about the affair with Mitzi?

Needs to be terrifying and funny at the same time. Terror-emotions need to be upped.

Good to work on the script in different contexts (DK's office, my office, SM library), it helps to see the movie from different angles.

1.24.08

Start Draft 17. Call it the "emo" draft.

Goal: to fill in the emotional beats (see list above). Put in those things I say in readings, a guideline for what Will is going through. Don't be afraid to put this shamelessly in the script.

This is a shooting script and "selling the actor" draft.

1.28.08

POSSIBLE FANTASY SCENES

--Dream sequence at Ikea

1.29.08

AMANDA LANGUAGE

--actor's language

--words

im-possible

--inflection

WILL LANGUAGE

--need alternate to "ridiculous":

ludicrous, outrageous, absurd, incredible

Harmon: "There are too many coincidences"

ALT STORY-ENDING (late night vision):

He gets in car and chases her, to get her the phone, but fails to do that.

Some humorous ending -- re. throwing the phone away? He makes it look like his Dad poisoned Mitzi, and he was cleaning up after his Dad?

Go back to the funeral home and it's Will in the coffin?

Is it possible to have a mind fuck ending?

He plants phone in coffin, but undertaker geek takes it, gets a call from one of the other bodies in the funeral home.

Draft 1: Will in coffin, wakes up, it's a dream

Draft 2: Will in coffin, wakes up, it's a dream

Draft 3: Will "dreams" that he is dead, hikers find phone in desert

Draft 4: Will is living with Lucy, she gets a text message on pink phone

Draft 5: he's a painter, Neptune society burial, he's with Lucy, little girl finds phone on beach

Draft 6: he's with Lucy, in shower, phone rings, he thinks it's starting again

Draft 7: same as 6

Draft 8: Will arrested at end

KEY QUESTIONS

--ending. an additional mindfuck? can there be a mindfuck on top of a mindfuck?

--Gertrude's character. is she emotional now?

--scale back "emotional" stuff just added in

--language. voice.

--teenage emphatic, constantly?

--at Morgue (1), would Lucy ask Will: why aren't you crying?

CUT:

AMANDA

You're postponing a decision you could make today.

WILL

I don't have to make a decision today. I just have to get ready for this test.

Peter Ellis is iffy in his praise for the script, says I'm

a good writer, but the implication is that he expected a funnier ending. Even his positive response with detected mildness is enough to throw me into a minor crisis. Maybe the end I all wrong. Maybe I am repeating the syndrome of LBT, working on a script endlessly with no acceptable improvement.

Feel too subject to my moods to make any sort of accurate evaluation.

Hard to see this today as my ticket up and out and that's what I need it to be.

Feel like I could twist any direction, with any comment or criticism.

Push forward in increments while simultaneously feeling lost.

Muck with the story, leave alone, or retool?

It helped to stop and take a few location pictures today. Works a different part of my brain.

Is there enough to the script where the rest can be smoke and mirrors?

1.30.08

STEVE (re. ending etc):

LAST SCENE: Amanda is nutty but it seems she is trying to help him. Then there is a JOLT when he (and the audience) realizes that she has set him up.

"too bad you're holding the poison"

"maybe wipe your fingerprints from the poison bottle"

WILL'S CHARACTER:

He's dominated by other characters. He winds up being his own person.

Either he's a sap or he finds a way to turn things around.

(example of sap ending: William Hurt in "Body Heat")

Gertrude is attorney. She wants him to plead insanity.

His pliant nature makes him want to go along.

"TWO WEEKS LATER"

He's agreed.

Then: "I'm not doing it the way you want me to do it."

He asserts himself.

Note: photo can still be retrieved from cell phone

ART FILM IMPRIMATUR

--Cast

--Quirkiness

--style riffs

--ending?

RE. NEW ENDING:

Evidence: in Mitzi's apt.

Surveillance camera at burial site.

Will talks Lucy into investigating?

Catch tail end of him telling the story to Lucy?

Playing guitar in mental hospital?

Is he allowed computer time at mental hospital? Internet research? Gets a cell phone?

cell phone: he needs to talk Lucy into helping him again.

Lucy comes to visit?

Harmon is sloppy in his detective work.

Harmon-Gertrude relationship - ongoing? they fuck again?
(is that implied?)

Point of ambiguity at end, in last image, that Will really is crazy but imagining his own vindication-salvation?

Will gets Lucy to do stuff. Lucy does the leg work.

He gets the phone back? The phone comes into play?

Gertrude gets phone back but doesn't want to give it to him because she think it's disturbing him.

STEVE PHONE CONVERSATION RE. ENDING:

Images that incriminate Amanda on the phone?

Phone has to come back in.

Will's state of mind: this place is terrible. I'd rather be dead than in here. Will talks someone to get the phone. He tells Amanda to help him get out so he can kill himself. Somehow in doing that he gets evidence on her.

Maybe he only finds the necklace. That's what he's caught holding. That's enough for cops.

Amanda tells him about the poison -- get someone to bring you some special shampoo. Just has her fingerprints. (He tells the cops, he tells Lucy.)

1. phone released from evidence and he has to get the phone.
2. get info from Amanda
3. get lucy (or Harmon) to act on it

MONTAGE:

--he has phone with him in cell-room
 --time lapse, phone in FG (increasing depression -- when it gets bad enough the phone rings) (maybe doctors talking to Gertrude, it's okay for him to keep the phone, it might improve his insanity plea) (maybe this is done via Will's reverse psychology -- Will makes Gertrude think that it's her bright legal idea -- so ending opens with Will & Gertrude talking)

OUTLINE FOR LAST SECTION:

1. Will institutionalized. Talks to Mom about phone. Makes it think it's her bright legal idea for him to have it.

2. Gertrude talks with Doctor

3. Will has phone. Stop motion as he gets increasingly depressed, Lucy visits, upset that he has the phone -- phone rings. He tells Amanda that he wants to kill himself, but he can't while he is locked up. She tells him about poison in bathroom.

4. Will sends Lucy to get poison -- she sends in Harmon, Amanda needs to be exhumed to be fingerprinted

5. Will is cleared, but they don't want to release him. (He disassembles the phone and throws it away,) He swears that he is over his mistaken belief that he can talk on it. Throws it in a recycling container?

Show it being melted down? Or sent to a third world country? The phone rings -- new owner (in Mexico) can't hear the voice on the other end.

1.31.08

re. new ending: need to convey Will's cunning passivity.

How cunning passivity is his way of turning the tables.

2.1.08

ALAIN DISCUSSION re. New Ending etc:

√ p.50 --add Harmon line "There are too many coincidences."

√ p.72 (speech) --Hamilton wondering about Mitzi's death (foreshadow Amanda)

Add, somewhere: "I know you think I'm selfish, but I'm a different self now."

√ p.51 --Gertrude wondering about Mitzi's death (foreshadow Amanda)

--Will shouldn't investigate Gertrude just to shut Hamilton up.

--Things is Amanda's dial or behavior that suggest that she's a psychopath. Either inappropriately large reaction to something insignificant, or too small a reaction to something big.

--mention Mitzi in the first scene? ("Where did you get that blouse?" "Mitzi gave it to me.")

--Mitzi has different take on sexuality than Amanda

--THEME/ARC: Will is a smart guy who puts off decisions. Uses indecision to stave-off life-altering decisions.

re. current draft of new ending: Seems like shrink is fucking Gertrude. Will's manipulations don't seem to play. Cut CSI style evidence montages.

police lab: Harmon, Gertrude, poison vial, he apologizes, asks her to dinner

Lobby: guy comes with phone, keep it, it's dead

Clerk at 99 cent store -- has phone

ALAIN

10 seconds black

Will opens his eye -- in a lock-down room.

Diff room, common area with guards: Gertrude, he says give me the phone back

Cut to phone on table. He stares at phone. It rings.

He makes suicide pitch. She's skeptical at first: "You're really ready to kill yourself?"

"You were right -- Mitzi was a bad friend, I understand why you did it."

A: you have to get the shampoo "that airline travel kit"

Amanda VO: show her leaving fingerprint on poison vial

(only say pack rat once)

Amanda was an actor, she can be more rhetorical.

NEED INCONGRUOUS REMARK FROM AMANDA IN FIRST SCENE.

Morgue scene -- add expletive from Amanda. Or she goes off onto unexpected tangent, something inappropriate.

ç

Put descriptions of Dead Phone Calls into Script

1. Morgue
2. "as in scene with Amanda in morgue"
3. _____ (without reference to #2)

2.2.08

They quote Beatles to each other, or pop snippets?

"I once knew a girl
Or should I say she once knew me."

This could be their ongoing joke.

"Baby you can drive my car."
Yes it's going to take you far.

Help I need somebody
Not just anybody

Something in the way she moves
Excites me like no other lover

Yesterday
All my troubles seemed so far away

Maxwell Edison
Majoring in medicine

She said
I know what it's like to be dead

Call & Response (Love you, every second)
p.3 hard day's night
p.13 help
p.42 baby you can drive my car
p.63 maxwell edison
p.88 I once knew a girl

2.5.08

Keep Amanda sympathetic?
Does she need to be sympathetic?

Keep it all as playful as possible.

Why can't I get better dial into the script? (such as the cubism line)

MAIN VALENCES

--cell phone to talk to the dead

--relationship problems with dead girl. the dead are the same as the living, same problems.

--grief yielding to deadpan black humor

--episodic structure gradually revealed as deeply interlinked

--Will puts off big decisions, postpones to avoid them. Gets pushed around. He pushes back at the end, to save himself.

POTENTIAL READERS

--Jay A

--Kilian

--Gyllenhaal

--Dan Sallitt

AMANDA (V.O.)

You don't really want to kill yourself.

WILL

I do.

ADD SCENES

--Will has a jam session

Why can't I make Will any more intelligent? Interesting? Erudite? Why doesn't the plot give room for that?

2.6.08

ALAIN WORK SESSION NOTES:

MITZI -- her dial needs more character
 possible characteristics: Russian,
 RETRO -- retro clothes; A Talking Heads cadence?
 David Byrne: "Burning down the house"
 Phrase chunks
 cadence: run on?

speech [{"you know?" (India's idea)]

she's buried in a heavy duty plastic bag -- he has to tear
 it open, decaying hand, not bony wrist

58 - omitted - fix

WILL
 only he asks (rhetorical) questions

HAMILTON
 stentorian, no contractions
 "Perfect"

AMANDA
 drops pronouns, Will doesn't
 cadence -- short sentences

LANGUAGE GENERAL
 all the characters use the word "talk" (this has now been
 mostly fixed)

VISUAL NOTE: Lucy can be in the frame with Hamilton (in
 Tiki scene)

AFTER MORGUE 2: will thinks everything is so nuts that
 maybe Hamilton is right. he is not apologetic to Lucy.

ADD TO AMANDA'S VERSION: Amanda returns with a handcart, a
 steamer cart and a black plastic bag (she's shocked to see
 Hamilton)
 She has to put Hamilton back in his clothes. Put him in
 his trunk. Drive him to his condo. Take a bus back to

Mitzi's.

Perhaps: "Mitzi was anxious to get rid of me" (before Hamilton came over)

ADD NARRATION

GERTRUDE: she's more concerned about Will's state than she's angry. She thinks of him as a client and it will be bad if he is arrested in this state.

AFTER GERTRUDE:

Dad, if you want to be helpful, could you get Amanda off this suicide kick?

Hamilton needs to recap: who killed me then?

Will needs to evince more consciousness about where he is.

Hamilton: If Lenny Harmon now thinks that your Mom told you about the wedding cake he's probably getting an arrest warrant right now.

at some point before:

(VISUAL: Will looks like he's talking to himself.)

ADD

TIKI: bottle of seconal. Warning stickers. Do not take with alcohol. phone rings: Hamilton fades into static.

PHONE SCREEN: **DROPPED CALL -- LOST CALL**

2.8.08

MITZI MODELS/CHARACTER POSSIBILITIES

Janis Joplin?

Wants to be a singer

Alicia

Jamie

Jacqueline

Diane Arbus wannabe --

Sixties stuff in her apt, wants to experience

Options: retro, grunge, hippie

HAMILTON

You better care because if Lenny Harmon thinks that Gertrude told you about the wedding cake -- and I bet she did some peeking into his freezer, among other things -- then he's probably getting an arrest warrant right now. I'll talk to Amanda about this suicide nosen...

RECAP, NEW SCENES:

--Will & Amanda have sex
 --Lucy & Will: heavy petting
 --"Hamilton's Version"
 --"Amanda's Version"
 --Coda: hospital room, Gertrude conference, Amana call, Amanda guilty, release, the cell phone lives on

MITZI (V.O.)

I'm up by the old radio tower, you know, "broadcasting forty thousand watts of love!"

MITZI (V.O.)

Cold. Cold. Warm. Warmer. Hot. Red Hot. Burning!
 Hunk a hunk a burning love!

WILL to dad:

In a couple of hours I'm meeting with a funeral director and Amanda's sister, who now thinks I'm a lunatic

MITZI:

And I thought I was easy.

2.13.08

√Clean up VOs when you can see the dead

Check prop jewelry box

√VO in Amanda's version

√Fix 98 scene numbers

√De-flip the phone (except for 96-97)

√Change Harmon's name (Detective Wilder)

2.14.08

Morgue 2: AMANDA, as an unseen presence, stands beside Will, urging him on. (cut from circulation draft)

WORK AREAS:

--"Amanda's version" VO + need to show Hamilton & Mitzi fucking?

--Last section, last Will & Amanda conversation - closure?

MITZI (V.O.)

Mitzi always looked like a slut, even in gym clothes

Does Hamilton answer the question why his body wasn't found with Mitzi's? Should Amanda say something about this? (Amanda now comments in "Amanda's Version")

Amanda: "And I figured the best place for a heart attack was in his own parking spot."

You're Dad had already had one heart attack so I knew this would look like another one.

2.15.08

NEW SCENES

- Opening sex
- Amanda's reel (Ophelia scene)
- Will-Lucy heavy petting
- Hamilton's Version

2.18.08

Ron Judkins says the latest draft is funnier, less creepy than the earlier draft he read. This makes me think that whenever possible I should shoot the creepy version and the funny version so I have that choice in editing, so that I have the option of adjusting the balance.

2.19.07

NEXT TASKS:

- update shot list
- update location list
- "Photograph" list

2.26.08

From: huebscher@fastmail.net
SUBJECT: "CALLERS" NOTES/IDEAS
Date: February 26, 2008 3:38:42 PM PST
To: gary@garywalkow.com

Hi Gary,

I've had a chance to take a look at the script, and wanted to give you some notes. I am in a drug-induced state (bad cold), so I apologize in advance if something doesn't make sense. It's generally easier for me to put this stuff in writing, but I'd be happy to have a phone conversation about it following this email.

First, let me say that I really like this story. I know it's come a long ways since the draft I read and I hope to be a part of the project.

So I guess my biggest notes about the script are with Will. When we are introduced to him, he seems in love with Amanda. But we quickly learn that it's Lucy he's more into, and perhaps that he felt trapped in his relationship with Amanda so he could never act on it. He kisses Lucy, but then she's sort of pushed into the background, and there is no payoff with the both of them (as there was in an earlier draft I read when Lucy was her twin). Couple this with the fact that he cheats on Amanda with Mitzi, and I feel a lot less sympathetic towards him than I did in the beginning. Now, his intentions are a bit unclear. Did/does he love Amanda? I'm certain the answer is no, but not until she tells of having killed Mitzi and his father. In fact, I think he's kind of a dick for having fooled around with Lucy and Mitzi, but that is trumped by Amanda's confession.

When Amanda is killed in the accident, Will seems to accept the reality all too quickly that a dead person phoned him up. I read Will as pragmatic and calculating, and I think he needs to be more freaked out about what is happening before he debates the semantics of his relationship with Amanda. This certainly will require some kind of visual cue as the first instance of the supernatural.

I don't buy that Will would not cover his tracks better when he digs up Mitzi to get the bracelet. The guy is a

law student, and you don't get there without having some good common sense and developing the instinct to cover your ass. I know this evidence helps the detectives point the finger at Will, but it makes Will look sloppy.

Sc. 10 - ext. phone booth. This is the only time we are actually in the world of the afterlife. This is a bit of a tease, and almost demands that we revisit it at least a couple more times or that this place will play some pivotal role later. I think we should never go here unless it will be featured more prominently. We could just stay with Will during this conversation. [Don't get me wrong - as a DP, I'd love the idea of creating this kind of purgatory world, but it opens up another can of worms].

When the dead are present in the scenes (Amanda, Cyrus, Mitzi, Hamilton), are they speaking the voice that is heard on the other end of the phone? Are they holding a phone as well? What do they look like? I like that you have specifically described how they are unveiled in the environments. We never see them appear or vanish in a gimmicky fashion. Rather, it's unknown exactly when and where they arrive, and it's always some kind of reveal that lets us know they're there.

From a visual point of view, I'd avoid staging scenes in parking lots. They're uninteresting to look at, and I can't imagine they're great for sound. I know you need to get characters to and from cars, but there's got to be a better way of doing that (or at the very least, minimize how much takes place there).

Some thoughts about how to shoot Will's mindscreen/POV of how he thinks he is being watched by the dead:

- Shoot into broken mirrors from odd, multiple angles and composite together (cubism meets DV)
- Shoot with a flo-mo/bullet-time system (e.g., the Matrix)
- Shoot like a fly's POV (kaleidoscope style - 1000's of images cascaded together).
- Shoot from overhead with security cameras and wide lenses. Perhaps shoot a sequence of angles all from overhead as though they are being watched from above. These could be rapidly cut together to present in a kind of haunting way.

We would have to make clear that this is how Will thinks he is being watched, rather than how he is actually seen (by a character just standing in the room with him). The Tony Scott movie "Deja Vu" did some interesting transitions

looking into past events in a mission control-like center. It might be worth looking at if we decide to get stylized with the piece. Be warned: the movie is not that good.

The reveal of the dead also demands a look at "The Sixth Sense."

The ending at the \$0.99 store doesn't reveal any compelling information. We know the phone is still out there, but is it still a threat if only Will can hear who's on the other end? What if the Chicana was able to hear Amanda? Granted, it will raise those "why her" questions, so perhaps this girl's dead boyfriend is calling her.

Despite these things, I think it's a solid script. It is suspenseful from the moment Amanda calls Will for the first time. I just want to connect with Will better, and I think the way to do that is to make him more compassionate and cautious in how he responds to the phone calls.

Talk to you soon,

Andrew

3.3.08

FROM: SALLITT@PANIX.COM
SUBJECT: CALLERS - COMMENTS ON FIRST 60 PAGES.
Date: February 29, 2008 2:50:24 PM PST
To: gary@garywalkow.com
Cc: sallitt@panix.com

Gary - I can't put comments right in the text with a PDF file - hope this method works. I'll try to get to the second half soon. - Dan

====

WILL
 Mid-terms. Cramming was easier in prep school.

√DS: Doesn't she know that there are midterms?

AMANDA

You dont need to do this for your dead

father. I love your songs. Quit. Do your music.

√DS: Too much exposition? She would sit down and start a big discussion if she really wanted to rehash all this. And I don't think anyone would say "dead father." More likely she would say something like, "You know how I feel about it." The dead father and the music will come out eventually.

WILL

Weve been lawyers since we got off the boat at Plymouth Rock.

√DS: Doesn't she know that?

WILL

(he strokes her neck)

Why dont I finish law school and then spend a year trying to be Bob Dylan?

√DS: I can't imagine a musician describing his music career as "trying to be Bob Dylan." That's an outsider's perspective, and maybe a derisive one.

WILL

I didnt ask you to. You hated auditions. And you hated being typecas as a sexy young whatever.

√DS: Better without "sexy young whatever"? They both know that.

WILL

Asking then was unfair.

AMANDA

Say it out loud, so its in the transcript.

DS: These are good.

AMANDA (V.O.)

Im bleeding.

DS: This whole scene is good, unnerving, with mysterious details.

OFFICER HAMNET (V.O.)

This is Officer Hamnet calling and--

DS: Do the police notify people by phone? Seems cold.

Will stares without seeing, tears coursing down his cheeks.

√DS: Cut this? His sorrow goes without saying - the shot will do nothing. You can resume with the good scene of the phone ringing in the car.

Will nods a slow yes, takes a step toward the body, and reaches out his hand -- it hovers over Amandas hand, but he cant bring himself to touch her fingers. He steps away.

√DS: This stuff is just code for "sorrow" - it doesn't and can't have any texture.

WILL

Amanda. Were talking. How?

DS: This is a juicy moment. Is he joyous? Or just freaking? Think about this - it could be intense.

AMANDA (V.O.)

Its cold here and the lights weird and...Oh...I saw your Dad. He looks great, considering.

DS: Okay, the tone is shifting, the intensity is over. I guess I take back the last comment - you probably have to play down the real emotions to get to the comedy. Too bad, in a way - there's a lot of power in both of them being confused and frantic.

DS: "Considering" works, in a way - it's so borscht-belt that it shifts the tone suddenly. Same with:

AMANDA (V.O.)

Excuse me, you and I are having a conversation.

DS (cont.): I wonder if it might not be fun to slip in the mundane stuff gradually, so that they gradually find themselves having a mundane argument, instead of tipping your strategy with these big signifiers of the mundane. Just a thought, not a criticism.

CORONER

Are you all right, sir?

WILL

No.

DS: Good.

WILL

I cant. Its just too...

√DS: I wonder whether you want raw stuff like this, now that you've established a lighter tone.

WILL

Like cubism.

AMANDA

No, Will, its not like a Picasso. You cant understand.

√ DS: **This is actually very funny, but I wonder if it won't be so funny when doubled with the weird camera stuff.**

AMANDA

Thats really demeaning!

DS: Good.

WILL

(back pedals)

...Amandas funeral arrangements, when we figure that out Ill let you know. Bye.

√ CUT DS: This is an old routine - I'd do something else.

CYRUS

Do you want to talk to the lovely and amazing Amanda ever again? And I do mean ever.

DS: It makes me nervous when movie characters are dominated like this.

AMANDA (V.O.)

No. Its really affected me.

√DS: Better without the "no"?

AMANDA

You expect me to be happy for you?! Did you ever think about how I might be feeling right now? Youre so selfcentered! Im dead! This isnt about you!

DS: This is funny.

AMANDA

Well, it didnt kill me. Actually, it did.

√DS: I don't like this line so much - maybe the concept works without it.

MITZI

I need your body.

√DS: This joke doesn't work for me.

MITZI

√ CUT I need your body to go find my body. If you ever want to talk to Amanda again.

DS: Maybe it's just my own emotional issues, but I wish that there were some other, more character-based way for the dead people to get Will

to do things. All this blackmail makes me fidget.

MITZI

√ Ive been thinking. I want to be buried. Properly. For my parents sake. You know, the healing process. Closure.

DS: The film is getting goofier anyway, and dialogue like this pushes it further in that direction. I've been enjoying the script, but I feel as if it's starting to lose its basis in character and becoming a pure lark. Maybe you can give the dominating dead people more complex emotions, more reasons to behave as they do. Mitzi especially is pretty arbitrary. Anyway, the last three sentence fragments here are just shtick - it's better without them.

WILL

Im amazed that we can talk.

AMANDA

We can do more than talk.

√DS: Right around here, people will figure out that this is a dream sequence and not a plot twist.

AMANDA

Dont question it. Im here. Im still committed to making this relationship work.

√DS: I'm not sold on this dream, but this line would be much funnier if she said, "I'm dead. But I'm still committed to making this relationship work."

AMANDA (V.O.)

Play along, Im trying to get something going.

DS: This is interesting.

AMANDA

Phone sex.

√DS: And this kills it. Just axe this line - we get it already.

DS: Doesn't Will want to know how all these dead people are keeping Amanda from the phone?

AMANDA

All you have to do is kill yourself.

DS: THIS MIGHT WORK BETTER IF IT WERE PART OF AN EMOTIONAL CONVERSATION WITH AMANDA, SO THAT IT SEEMED MORE LOGICAL TO HER, AND NOT JUST LIKE A PLOT DEVELOPMENT.

AMANDA

No. We need to focus on our relationship. On growing and moving on.

Together. Intimacy takes work. Especially now.

DS: I'm starting to feel as if every dead-person conversation is going to be pure irrationality. **I wish some of these conversations made more of a feint toward being natural, so that the absurd quality emerges along the way. MAYBE AMANDA KNOWS WHAT'S HAPPENING, IS MARGINALLY SYMPATHETIC, EXPLAINS THAT WITH HER NEW PERSPECTIVE THINGS LIKE ARREST AND CONVICTION DON'T SEEM AS IMPORTANT AS THEY USED TO. SOMETHING LIKE THAT. JUST SOMETHING TO GIVE THE ILLUSION OF CHARACTER CONTINUITY.**

AMANDA

And I just died! God, youre so competitive! This isnt all about you.

√DS: She said this before, and it was funnier the first time. Now she's just a plot obstacle.

AMANDA

Ive got a lot to process.

DS: This could be a good line, if the context hadn't gone a bit too goofy.

HAMILTON (V.O.)

Theres so much I want to say. I want us to spend some quality time together.

√DS: I think this scene will work better if Dad saves the "quality time" shtick for later, and just gets Will out of there.

HAMILTON

Right, I just love to confide. Tell Lenny to he ask me anything.

√DS: There's a typo in this line.

GERTRUDE

Thats all? No hard evidence?

DS: Didn't he just say there was forensic evidence?

GERTRUDE

How did you know where Mitzi was buried?

He thinks about how best to answer. Hes not practiced at lying.

DS: This is a lot of verbiage for no particularly good effect. Mom's a lawyer - maybe she just doesn't want to know whether her client is guilty. That would get you all the way to scene 68, and it might be funny, whereas the coverup is kind of pedestrian.

(add stuff that changes Gertrude's attitude?)

(Dan's idea: acts more like a lawyer than a mother -- write is as if she was just a tough lawyer. "we need to work on your story")

(Dan didn't intend it as a but as a reworking)

(Dan -- coverup not that interesting, takes up a lot of space)

Gertrude: that's good, that'll work.

GW: CUT FROM HERE STRAIGHT TO SCENE 68?

Lucy turns away from the mirror. Suddenly, with neither of them expecting it, they stand very close to each other.

There is a charge between them, an attraction. Neither knows exactly what to say or do next.

√DS: Really? I don't think I like this development - can't picture either of them behaving like this just now.

AMANDA (V.O.)

Could you at least wait until after the funeral before you fuck each others brains out?

DS: And, during the kiss, won't the audience be thinking, "How stupid can this guy be? He knows Amanda can see him"?

AMANDA

No, I cant stop. I cant stop being dead.

DS: This line would be good if Amanda had stayed semi-plausible. **BUT THE "KILL YOURSELF" THEME HAS KILLED HER CHARACTER. I'D PUT MORE WORK INTO MAKING IT POSSIBLE FOR HER TO SUGGEST THIS WITHOUT SEEMING TOTALLY UNFEELING. I THINK IT CAN BE DONE. YOU CAN WORK WITH THE IDEA THAT DYING HAS GIVEN HER A NEW PERSPECTIVE; MAKE HER MORE UNDERSTANDING OF HIS RESISTANCE.** Of course, there's the problem that she was jealous a few seconds ago, and now she's not.....

AMANDA

Sorry Im not helping you impress your new girlfriend. Now if you----

DS: Kind of funny, actually, if the "kill yourself" conversation hadn't intervened. Any way to put this bit earlier?

DAN (PHONE CONVERSATION):

--re. Sc 66 - 68 (Gertrude). Less verbiage here, not interesting. Gertrude more of a lawyer than a mother? Instead of interrogating him she tries to help him build his case.

(GW: how does cutting this affect the later Gertude conversation where she talks about "hunches"?)

--AUTO-MATESy: reactions not naturalistic, mundane fights rather than proportionate reactions

--Lucy "kiss" (gone): just have it look suspicious, they don't really do anything wrong. Maybe "He looks around nervously."

3.4.08

From: sallitt@panix.com
SUBJECT: CALLERS - THE REST OF THE COMMENTS
Date: March 4, 2008 9:47:50 AM PST
To: gary@garywalkow.com
Cc: sallitt@panix.com

HAMILTON (V.O.)

I spoke with Mitzi. Ive pieced together a timeline.

DS: I kind of like the prosaic quality of "timeline" here. Maybe Dad would introduce himself briefly on the phone?

WILL

Her and the Brie and the blood rare steaks and--

DS: This is good, with the implied impatience at having to deal with his father instead of Amanda.

HAMILTON

Horizontal aerobics.

DS: This line doesn't sound like Hamilton - I don't like it. He would probably say something that conveyed that he didn't think this detail was important.

WILL

You slept with Mitzi?! I should have known.

√DS: How should Will have known? Children don't usually suspect this sort of thing of parents.

WILL

The dead are ruining my life. Theyre selfish. All they want is favors and they never say thank you. Take the goddamn phone!

DS: This is a funny line.

LUCY

Who are you?

DETECTIVE WILDER

Detective Leonard Wilder.

√ DS: I don't know where this is going yet, but there's a lot of boring recapitulation as Lucy gets all this info from Wilder, info we already have. Do we care about this? Does she need to know? If so, can't this somehow be shortened or elided?

LUCY

Im coming along.

DETECTIVE WILDER

Bad idea.

√DS: Does Wilder have to say this? Some film critic once called this "the Gilligan cut," after Gilligan's Island: a character saying he won't do something, followed by a cut to him doing it. All it does is make Wilder look dumb.

WILL

I can only imagine what youre thinking.

LUCY

Actually I dont think you can.

√ **CUT** DS: Lucy's line is good, but then we don't need her longer followup - in fact, this line is funny only if we don't get the followup, which merely spells out what this line implies.

[**GW: need this because earlier expo dial has been cut? NO**]

WILL

If I hadnt made Amanda late this morning she wouldnt be in the morgue.

DS: This is nice. You totally need humanizing moments like this to keep the film from floating away into the stratosphere.

Will throws the sheet back over Mitzi.

√ DS: Geez, that's pretty nervy. And the coroner would stop him.

AMANDA (V.O.)

I know. He wants to see you talk to me.

DS: This is good - that she sees what's going on and decides to help - though Will should figure by now that he doesn't have to explain to her where he is. Note: all this makes sense only if Amanda didn't see Will with Lucy - otherwise she'd still be angry.

AMANDA (V.O.)

Im glad you came back. I want to feel your arms around me. Will you try hugging me? So I can feel you?

(√) DS: This sort of thing, where the dead seem oblivious to the feelings of the living, isn't my favorite kind of humor in the script. Maybe it would work better if she seemed aware that it was creepy, aware of the logistical problems, and tried to help make it happen. And she should really say that she wants to find out whether she can feel anything, because it turns out she doesn't know.

WILL

Dad, now is not a good time.

DS: Good line.

HAMILTON

Ill walk you through the steps, kid.

DS: Good.

HAMILTON (V.O.)

Gertrude was counsel for Levin Pharmaceuticals when they had their IPO. Their big government contract was for an untraceable drug that induces cardiac arrest. Gertrude copped a vial of this evil shit.

√ DS: Last sentence isn't needed and sounds awkward.

WILL

This isnt a joke.

LUCY

No, its a travesty!

DS: Is "travesty" quite the right word? Lucy thinks she's witnessing a mental collapse, not inappropriate behavior.

MAN (V.O.)

And congratulate you on being preapproved
for a home equity loan at the
low, low rate of 5.9--

DS: This is a pretty good joke.

HAMILTON

Perfect. Im trying to save your skin.
This is positive, Will. Were doing this
together.

DS: Good line.

GERTRUDE

Poisoned sports drinks. This sounds like
one of your fathers conspiracy theories.
I was in Montreal when your father had
his heart attack. The Guild & Stern
class action suit.

(Will doesnt remember)

Thirty-two million dollars?

WILL

(remembers)

Oh.

DS: This is funny, that it's the money he remembers.

MITZI

(laughs)

All those looks you gave me. What was
stupid was taking so long to get around
to it.

DS: I thought Mitzi was an old girlfriend, before Amanda.
How does this work? If he was cheating on Amanda with
Mitzi, why hasn't Amanda mentioned it during the earlier
Mitzi stuff?

talk to dan re. explaining what happened

WILL

You killed Mitzi?

AMANDA

Yes.

DS: First of all, it's weird that everyone is a murderer.
Second of all, how does Will know this? Third, if you're
going to do this, you probably need to preserve a little of

the old Amanda personality, so that the love affair isn't made senseless.

AMANDA (V.O.)

You know the phrase dead weight? Thank god for power yoga.

√ DS: I don't like this line - too destructive of the old Amanda.

AMANDA (V.O.)

I didnt want them both to turn up dead the same day. That would have been too suspicious. Hey, maybe I should have been a lawyer.

√ DS: Ditto the last sentence.

MITZI (V.O.)

And then I had to deal with my least favorite body on earth. I mean, look at all the trouble that body has caused me. Caused you. Caused us.

√ DS: Maybe better with only the first sentence?

AMANDA

You can never find anything. Its in there.

DS: Lines like this are good.

AMANDA

Told you so.

√ DS: I think it's better without this line.

WILL

Amanda, all I think about is being with you. I should have listened to you and done it right away.

DS: I have always found this suicide thing weird, and now that Will is onboard with the idea, it's even weirder for me. Will is not suicidal.

WILL

Thanks, Amanda. Thats all I need to

know. See you in fifty or sixty years.
Sweet sorrow.

√ DS: Oh, I see. Isn't Will being a little cocky? It's a long way to proving his innocence. I'd like it better if he just said, "Thanks, Amanda. Sweet sorrow." And after hanging up, said, "See you in fifty or sixty years." And then let the upcoming scenes take care of the rest.

CHICANA

Hola?

(hears only STATIC)

Hola? Hola?!

DS: Very good ending. In general, it's good the way you kept it light and moved it along quickly.

So, in general, I think I like this - certainly a lot more than I'd expected. It's absolutely a Walkow movie and not a commercial job. Me personally, I'd do work to keep the dead plausible in terms of character, to keep the plot from making Will too manipulated and helpless, and to make the proliferation of plot less goofy. Maybe I'd keep most of the plot, and see if giving the dead more plausible motivations could ground the script adequately.

dan phone conversation

element of mundane contrasting with craziness (my style).

DAN, PHONE CALL:

--Good stuff: the absurdity of it, being naturalistic.

--Suicide: needs to be cloaked more in her awareness of the extreme nature of it. "It's not so bad here, there are lots of other couples, happy couples."

3.5.08

Do we need a shot of Gertrude in lingerie standing in front of Leonard Wilder's freezer?

3.9.08

Andrew the DP, who is very bright, read the script and had a big objection that he thought Will was too careless-stupid re. leaving evidence. Andrew thought he didn't have the smarts you'd expect of a law student, from a family of lawyers. Did you have this problem?

It didn't bother me a lot. When he found the body, he wasn't in immediate danger of being discovered. And he's under duress anyway, and the situation is so weird - with the dead calling you, you might not be as practical as otherwise. The point where it's tricky is when Mitzi reverses herself and tells him to make the anonymous call - he might think about the evidence at that point. Too bad Mitzi can't get someone else to do that second favor for her....

I'm not so sensitive to things like this (the farce aspects are so blatant anyway - you can't mistake this for a serious movie about crime), but maybe other viewers might be. I was more bothered by Mitzi being able to blackmail him so easily - I wished she would encounter resistance and try something other than brute force - or maybe try something else even before she encounters resistance. - Dan

3.10.08

regarding Mitzi getting him to do the stuff, I agree with you in theory but I can't think yet how to do it in actuality. Do you have any concrete suggestions or things to attempt? Is it mostly changing how the first conversation goes?

You can start by getting rid of a few lines like "If you ever want to talk to Amanda again." By the way, doesn't he ever wonder, or ask, how the dead manage to dominate Amanda in this fashion? If you want, Amanda can talk about this at some point. Maybe the afterlife is lawless, and Amanda complains about it. Or maybe she denies that anyone kept her off the phone, and reproaches him for being so gullible. Anyway, back to Mitzi: maybe Will can ask for Amanda, and Mitzi can say she's indisposed, or something

evasive. Which might prompt Will to wonder what it means to be indisposed when you're dead. Mitzi can try to use her apparently considerable charm, or some pity ploy, instead of blackmail. It's a lot more interesting, anyway, to deal with sex appeal, and the fact that she's dead gives you an emotional zone to explore - why would sex appeal even work in this context? - Dan

AMANDA (V.O.)

What you've been through? **People are so rude about grabbing the phone.** It's crowded here and it smells and...

3.14.07

DAN SALLITT EMAIL:

From: sallitt@panix.com
Subject: I think this is everything
Date: March 14, 2008 10:07:57 AM PDT
To: gary@garywalkow.com
Cc: sallitt@panix.com

Mitzi Dialogue Revised and Re-Revised

MITZI

Things keep shifting. Amanda will get back to you as soon as she can. Do you still like me? Are we still friends?

√DS: Better without "Things keep shifting"? The goal is to make it seem almost everyday.

MITZI

I know you're going through a lot with Amanda and it's a terrible time but...

DS: I think this part works now. Her hesitation and shyness is a good contrast with "Will you dig me up?"

MITZI

Please. We've got a history.

DS: I don't like "We've got a history." Hey, maybe this is your chance to get some needed exposition in here. (I thought Mitzi was an ex-girlfriend.) Maybe she could say

something like, "I know we never, like, did anything, or anything like that, but I've always felt really close to you, and..."

I see you revised this. The follow-up to "Please" is better (though I still kind of like my suggestion above.)

WILL

Can I finish talking to Amanda?

MITZI

No, not really. She's unavailable.

DS: At the end of this Mitzi dialogue, you included another draft of most of the conversation. Mostly I think the one I already read is better, but I like "No, not really" better than "No" in this line.

WILL

I really need to talk to Amanda.

MITZI (CONT'D)

You can't right now. But I'll help make it happen. I know I'm asking lot but I'd do the same for you, if you asked.

√GW: ask Dan about addition of dial to p.31

DS: I see you shortened this exchange in the second draft. I sympathize with your desire to get rid of "You can't right now," but I think it works better in the earlier version - otherwise Will capitulates too automatically. "You can't right now" isn't too nasty in this context - the brute force of it isn't as shtick-like now that Mitzi is trying to sugar-coat everything.

Post Digging Mitzi Up

MITZI

No. I've been thinking. I want to be buried. Properly.

√DS: I know I advised you to get rid of those little fragments, and I still feel that way about most of them, but now I'm trying on "For my parents' sake" at the end, and maybe it's okay if that one and only that one returns. It might make it feel more serious instead of less. Anyway, it's definitely better now, with or without that.

MITZI

And I'm so appreciative. Really. But I can't stay in that bag. If you could just call in an anonymous tip, one little phone call, it would mean so much---

DS: Yeah, this is better. And him doing it quickly keeps the audience from thinking too much about the folly of it.

AMANDA PROPOSES SUICIDE (INTERROGATION SCENE)

AMANDA

It's not so bad here.

Will glances nervously at the video camera and turns away from it.

WILL

Great, but--

AMANDA

There are lots of couples here, happy couples. Which gave me this great idea, of how we can get back together. You can join me.

DS: I'd like her to be more aware. The small introduction she gives to her idea doesn't manage to make it seem natural. If she seemed aware that she was proposing something that was going to be a hard sell, you could play with it: she could start slower, play up her loneliness, be hesitant to mention her idea. If she just seems to think that suicide is a plus, she won't seem mundane/everyday - if she's aware of it, you can get comic mileage out of the everyday/unreal dichotomy. Of course, I guess you'll have to be careful about beefing up this scene, given the police presence; but I think you can manage a more complicated interaction, even with cops looking on.

√ GW: is Will still going to be focused on talking to Mitzi again? (Amanda is angry about Mitzi, deals with that issue, then she gets idea how they can be together, after saying things aren't that bad)

AMANDA

Rather than talk to me about our issues? You always do this, avoid conflict.

WILL

I need to talk to Mitzi.

AMANDA

Please. Stay on topic. Intimacy takes work. Especially

now.

DS: I think that slipping one comment about "our issues" or "intimacy" will be enough here. If you hit it too hard, it becomes shtick. Also - and this will be harder - it would be great if Amanda knew he were in legal trouble, knew it was a big deal to him, kept forgetting about it, apologized by saying that being dead gives you a different perspective, then maybe slipped back into forgetting about his dilemma.

AMANDA

I've got a lot to process.

DS: This is too extreme and heartless in this context. Maybe it would work if was going back and forth between sensitivity and self-absorption.

AMANDA SUICIDE PART 2, WITH REVISION (TIKI)

I'm working with the second version of this, but my main comment applies to both versions.

THE PHONE RINGS AGAIN. Will hits "TALK" as he steps out of the bedroom.

WILL

Hello?

AMANDA (V.O.)

I really miss you.

DS: Okay, I know I wasn't clear about this before. But, if Lucy and Will don't actually do anything (and I'd play down the pregnant moment a tiny bit more, so it's not glaringly obvious that they are attracted to each other, and so Will hasn't even really thought about yielding), then Amanda's jealousy becomes good, and funny. I'd think about getting back to the old dialogue, and trying to iron out the too-shtick-y bits of that.

AMANDA

Yes, it is! Talking is the only thing that we've got left. But we could have so much more, if only you showed some commitment to doing what it takes for us to stay together.

DS: I really want this line to be different, more graded. All Amanda has to do is whine a bit and indirectly

reference the suicide idea, and Will will get it immediately and resist. Any talk about commitment should be folded in after you take care of the job of easing into the conversation without making Amanda seem completely in the grip of farce conventions. The first revision gets in a little more gradually - but Amanda saying "I told you how you don't have to" is still a bit too direct. Less direct is both more character-plausible and funnier.

AMANDA ASKS TO BE HUGGED

AMANDA (V.O.)

I'm glad you came back. I know it sounds creepy but will you try hugging me?

Will stares at Amanda's sheet-covered body.

WILL

Amanda...

AMANDA (V.O.)

Please. I need to know if I can still feel anything.

√ DS: This is better. What would make it even better is some awareness on Amanda's part of how it might look. Maybe she can say that the onlookers will just think that he's overcome by grief, or something. Of course, it won't look that way...but Amanda doesn't have to be right, just plausible.

Amanda Talks about Killing Mitzi

AMANDA (V.O.)

When she didn't answer, I was hopeful, and I used my key to check on her health...

Amanda lets herself into the apartment and passes through the dark kitchen.

AMANDA (V.O.)

...hoping she didn't have any.

√DS: I'd slightly prefer it without Amanda joking needlessly - the appearance of seriousness is better. Otherwise, though, this scene plays better now.

One big note that you had from early in the script that I have not figured out how to address is this:

AMANDA (V.O.)

Excuse me, you and I are having a conversation.

DS (cont.): I wonder if it might not be fun to slip in the mundane stuff gradually, so that they gradually find themselves having a mundane argument, instead of tipping your strategy with these big signifiers of the mundane. Just a thought, not a criticism.

√DS: I was reacting to "Excuse me," which I thought was a little too far away from real feeling. Maybe if she had just said, "Will, we're having a conversation," it would have been fine.

The note that I gave before shouldn't be taken too much to heart. The entire aesthetic concept of the script is introduced in this scene: there's no sense in trying for complete naturalism, because the idea of Amanda being mundane at all is new here, and daring. But you'll need to keep her close to being a real person so you can keep getting laughs. So it's a balancing act. Reading the scene over, there aren't too many lines other than this one that don't work.

3.15.08

From: sallitt@panix.com
Subject: suicide
Date: March 15, 2008 7:26:29 PM PDT
To: gary@garywalkow.com
Cc: sallitt@panix.com

I think you licked it. - Dan

Amanda's Suicide Pitch

WILL
 Maybe you could find her?

DS: Maybe "Could you find her?" would be better. No biggie.

AMANDA

It's not so bad here -- scary at first, and then it starts to seem normal. Which gave me an idea. Promise you won't be mad? Because I know you will be.

DS: I still like the idea in this first sentence, but it's not working with this more rushed approach (which is working, I think). I'd like this better if the first sentence were gone, and she just said something like "Listen, I have an idea. Promise you won't...." You can save "it's not so bad here" - it might fit later in the scene. Or you can just get rid of it - I like it, but it's meant to be part of a little coy/whiny exchange, and maybe you haven't got time for it.

AMANDA

There is a way we can be together. If you could see things from my perspective then you'd see. That you can...join me.

DS: She brings up "perspective" later - I think that's overusing the word. I'd get rid of it here, maybe by just eliminating the second sentence.

Amanda's 2nd Suicide Talk

This is good - no notes, really. The lines were always funny, and now they have the right context. Key lines are "fuck each other's brains out" and "I can't stop being dead" - I hope you hang onto those. I presume we still get the "Sorry I'm not helping you impress your new girlfriend" line - it'll be really good here.

3.18.08

From: sallitt@panix.com
Subject: More Callers comments
Date: March 18, 2008 1:10:10 PM PDT
To: gary@garywalkow.com
Cc: sallitt@panix.com

Okay, I managed to find more things to mouth off about. Mostly toward the end. - Dan

=====

A TALL WOMAN (Sheila) walks past with a cell phone pressed to her ear. She locks eyes with Will, a moment of recognition, then hurries inside.

√ DS: Why the cell phone? That gives me the distinct feeling that Will is not

the only one talking to the dead. I don't see any real reason to emphasize her

with the locked eyes, either.

CYRUS

Which Im renegotiating.

CYRUS

Do you want to talk to Amanda again?

DS: I still wish Will weren't so easily dominated - it turns him into a certain

genre of comic stereotype. But maybe this is a personal issue of mine. It

would be easy for Will to make Cyrus back down.

√GW TO DAN: I cut the negotiating line of Cyrus and Will's reneging line that follows it.

AMANDA (V.O.)

What youve been through? Its so crowded here and it smells and...

WILL

Today has really affected me.

WILL

Im quitting law school. You were right, I was just doing it to please my dad.

Ive got the trust fund. Im going to do my music. I want to rework Angel Zone.

Ive got an idea for--

AMANDA

Its a little late.

√ DS: I have a feeling it might be hard to direct some of these interruptions.

Play them in your head and make sure that you can hear how

you want them

performed.

MITZI

No. Shes unavailable.

√ DS: The "no" is unusual in a normal situation - do you want Mitzi to sound

dominating here? Normally, a person might say "She's not here right now" or "I

can't - she's...unavailable" or something like that.

MITZI

No, not really. Ive been thinking. I want to be buried. Properly. For my parents sake.

√ DS: I still don't like "No, not really" - too nasty.

Until CYRUS walks into the room, bloody from the car wreck.

CYRUS

Hey! I cant do that with Sheila.

√ DS: I like this scene much better without Cyrus. Too many ghosts turns it into

a comedy routine, and Cyrus isn't as important as Mitzi.

AMANDA (V.O.)

Its not like weve got a lot of options.

√ DS: It seems like what should go here is Amanda guilting Will into it. "Don't

you want to?" "Yes, but...." Maybe you could work in something funny like

"Aren't you attracted to me anymore?" The "options" line could still fit in,

after Will has reassured her half-heartedly.

GW: Dan should reread this rewrite

AMANDA

Its all weve got. You couldnt wait to take my clothes off this morning. Maybe I wouldnt have died if you hadnt made me late.

√ DS: This line is better for me without the first sentence.

WILL

Dont you think thats a little selfish?

√ DS: This is going to undercut the effect of the later and funnier lines "The

dead are ruining my life. Theyre selfish." I'd re-word it.

DETECTIVE WILDER

Who was one of Mitzis closest friends?

DS: So Mitzi both worked for the father and was Amanda's friend. Is this

double connection needed, plot-wise?

DETECTIVE WILDER

So youre completely unhinged?

√ DS: Better without this line? Wilder's reaction, whatever you choose it to be,

will be enough.

HAMILTON

Ive got better contacts. On both sides. Lenny and I go way back.

√ DS: Better without the middle sentence?

WILL

(relays question)

What does he keep in his freez--

√ DS: Funnier if you cut Will off earlier?

Lucy turns away from the mirror. Suddenly, with neither of them expecting it, they stand very close to each other. Neither knows exactly what to say or do next.

√DS: When you're directing this, think about how much temptation you want to

show. If it's too obvious, it will ruin Amanda's reaction, just like the kiss

did. My feeling is that there should just be a hint of self-consciousness, way

underplayed.

AMANDA (V.O.)
Hug me. I know its weird but your fiance just died. Suddenly. Its okay to act a little strange. Please.

√DS: This line was much needed, but I think it should go earlier - the scene is

silly until it arrives. Think about trading positions between this line and "I

need to know if I can still feel anything" - if it works, I think that will

greatly improve the scene.

LUCY
Have a nice chat with your dead Dad? Any other dead folks you can hook up with? John Lennon? Shakespeare?

√ DS: I think I'd like this better with just the first sentence. Trying too hard

for wit diminishes the effect of her being upset or angry.

LUCY
We have a meeting with the funeral director in the morning. Are you going to bring the phone?

WILL
(beat)

Yes.

LUCY
Somethings really wrong with you. You need to get some professional help.

√DS: I think I like it better with just Lucy's last line.
My second choice

would be to eliminate Will's line, because I don't know
what he means by it.

It sounds as if he's rebelling against Lucy, but I don't
think he is. Maybe he

should just keep quiet.

MITZI

No. It was fun. Funs not stupid as
long as youre smart about it.

√ DS: I like this better without the last sentence - Mitzi's
personality comes

across clearer without her working so hard at wit.

AMANDA (V.O.)

I hate seeing you locked up. I know its
my fault.

DS: Now, didn't she purposely frame him with that necklace?
She's talking as

if she did it accidentally.

**DS: I'm not sure about Amanda framing him so cold-
bloodedly. I guess it's okay, in a genre sense. After
all, she's a murderer, so I guess she can be that
vindictive. But I think it would be a little better for
the love relationship (which is, after all, the real center
of the movie) if she didn't actively frame him. What would
you think about somehow contriving that last scene so that
Amanda didn't frame him? She could try to warn him about
the police coming - maybe it's too late, or maybe he's too
frantic to listen. And then the poison line would have to
go, because it's totally sinister. I don't think she has
to be so evil to justify Will throwing the phone away at
the end. Actually, I think that gesture will be better if
Amanda's crimes are smaller it will be more about him
freeing himself from this connection, and less about
getting back at the bad guy.**

AMANDA (V.O.)

Always postponing.

DS: I don't know why, I find this line a little awkward. It doesn't sound like Amanda's style of nagging. I wouldn't mind the same thought, sounding a little more new-age-y and less like someone's criticizing mom. Maybe it would be better if she sounded a bit more affectionate, given her mood.

AMANDA (V.O.)
Dont be so negative.

DS: Maybe ditto this line? She can talk more affectionately here, I think.

3.19.08

From: sallitt@panix.com
Subject: Re: More Callers comments
Date: March 19, 2008 11:21:00 AM PDT
To: gary@garywalkow.com
Cc: sallitt@panix.com

AMANDA (V.O.)
Play along, I~Rm trying to get something going.

DS: I think this scene is much better. When Amanda asks Will if he's still attracted to her, I wonder whether his response is just right. It's tricky to handle such a bizarre bit of comedy: on the one hand, a boyfriend has to be reassuring when asked that sort of thing, even if he has to lie; on the other hand, she's a mouldering corpse. **Why don't you treat his response as a comic opportunity and think about it a bit?**

=====

WILL
No...it~Rs just...
AMANDA
You~Rre only seeing it from your perspective. Once you~Rre here, we~Rll have the same perspective again and it won~Rt seem selfish.
There are lots of happy couples here. We~Rll make new friends.

√ DS: I think you'll need to get rid of "selfish" in

Amanda's line too. Could she say "It won't seem so extreme" or "It won't seem so strange" or something? Also, I'm thinking about Will's response. He's going to take a pretty hard line against Amanda on this subject - I don't know if he should sound so equivocal right off the bat. Worst case scenario, he can just repeat himself for emphasis: "You want me to commit suicide?" or something like that?

=====

DS: So Mitzi both worked for the father and was Amanda's friend. Is this double connection needed, plot-wise?

Okay -- I talked myself into cutting it -- you can talk me into putting it back as a cutting option.

DS: It's no big deal one way or another. Remember, though, there's another reference to the Amanda-Mitzi friendship when Gertrude pops up; and there's the issue of her having free access to Mitzi's apt. while Mitzi is working out. ✓ **Maybe you should cut working for Hamilton instead of being friends with Amanda.** Or you can put it back.

=====

Okay. I tired the switch. Dos it seem to play okay?:

DS: I think this switch works. Maybe you can work on this one line:

AMANDA (V.O.)

Hug me. I know it~Rs weird but your fiance just died. Suddenly.

It~Rs okay to act a little strange.

✓ DS: I think she should still start with "please" instead of "hug me." And I think she should say "I know it looks weird" instead of "I know it's weird," to make it clear that she's thinking about his situation.

=====

This is an interesting note. I'm not sure how to do this.

Will has
to know about the poison in order to lay the trap that he
does while
he is in the hospital. She could try to warn him but it's
too late?

I do like the idea of her being vindictive, but I can be
talked out
of it, maybe. This is one I'll call you about.

DS: She can tell him about the bracelet and the poison at
the same time, as two things he should get rid of. Or,
more likely, the scene can play as it is, only instead of
being vindictive, Amanda can beg him sincerely to kill
himself with the poison. Maybe that's better, as it will
allow the prison scene to stay as it is without many
changes.

The trap in prison presupposes that she's an enemy.
Otherwise Will would just ask her where the poison is and
have his mom check it for fingerprints. So, if you want to
keep the trap, she can't be on Will's side. But I like it
better if her motivation is getting him to cross over,
instead of just ruining him. If she's that vindictive,
then she wouldn't want him to join her in the afterlife.
In fact, she would have probably poisoned him too, and she
wouldn't have kept living with him, or calling him after
death.

=====

Dan re. ENDING (phone conversation):

Amanda wants Will to kill himself to be with her. Motive:
she wants him to join her.

Opportunity fair comedy: she set it up to get her way.

From: sallitt@panix.com
Subject: Re: some new dial
Date: March 19, 2008 12:37:32 PM PDT
To: gary@garywalkow.com
Cc: sallitt@post.harvard.edu

AMANDA

You^Rre only seeing it from your perspective. Once
you^Rre here, we^Rll have the same perspective again and

it won't seem so extreme. There are lots of happy couples here. We'll make new friends.

WILL

You want me to kill myself.

AMANDA

I'm just putting it on the table, as an option, to discuss.

WILL

Can I PLEASE talk to Mitzi?

How about something like this? (Note that "selfish" was removed from Amanda's dialogue.)

AMANDA (CONTD) *

You know. Join me. Get back together. *

WILL *

Kill myself? *

AMANDA *

I knew you'd be mad. *

Detective Wilder and the Arresting Detective watch Will * on a video monitor. *

WILL *

You want me to kill myself?

AMANDA *

You're only seeing it from your * perspective. Once you're here, we'll * have the same perspective again and it * won't seem weird at all. There are lots of * happy couples here. We'll make new * friends. *

WILL *

Amanda, it's a lot to ask. *

AMANDA *

I'm just putting it on the table, as an option, to discuss.

WILL *

Can I PLEASE talk to Mitzi?

3.21.08

From: sallitt@panix.com

Subject: Re: Various redos

Date: March 21, 2008 7:31:59 AM PDT

To: gary@garywalkow.com

Cc: sallitt@post.harvard.edu

I'm happy with the script but somewhat depressed about life -- it feels more about limits than possibilities at the moment.

Is that because of marital issues, or career ones, or....?

Doubt it would be easy to have more Walkow moments in a script even if I knew articulately what those were -- I'd probably get too mannered and precious (if I'm not already)

Yeah, there is absolutely no need to think about one's one style.

GW: I don;t see her as moldering. Maybe a bruise, maybe blue, but not too corpse-y.

DS: Well, anyway, she's dead, and it would be hard for Will to say that he's still attracted to her without any second thoughts.

WILL

Fuck. Why didn't you tell me he was coming?!

AMANDA

I saved some of the poison. You can still join me.

I actually think this needs to be elaborated into more of an interaction - it's kind of inscrutable at the moment. Something like (don't take this as a real suggestion, just an outline of an idea):

W: Why didn't you tell me?

A: The police? Oh, darn, I wasn't thinking.

W: What do I do with this necklace?

A: Will, maybe this would be a good time....

KNOCKS

W: A good time for what?

A: Well, there's some poison left over.

W: Amanda!

Police: Open up!

W: Amanda, did you set this up?

A: Will, it's not so bad here, honest. I know I said some bad things about it, but after I got used to it....

W: Where's the poison?

Will tries to flush necklace, police break down door, Amanda vanishes.

LAST BIT -- is this lame? All you're dialogue tweaks I've

agreed with, but I thought "always postponing" ("postponing" was in BEAT) and "don't be so negative" (which seems deadpan to me) were okay. I'm worried that I've flattened this a bit. But I feel I have a bit of a tin ear at this point, and have a tendency to be schticky. Maybe functional is best? Here goes:

Yeah, it's a little flattened now. Stick to your original lines if you like them. I like the idea of them - I just wanted her reproaches to sound more mundane and less zing-y.

APT final scene

They are cross purposes, she wants him to join her.

She's not trying to frame him up --

3.24.08

END

How to keep Amanda real?

DAN PHONE CALL:

Amanda -- affectionate, needy. She is trying to force the situation to get him to kill himself.

Why doesn't he trust her?

She set him up.

Dan thinks she is setting him up. KEEP THAT.

"Yeah, I set you up. I set you up to be with me."

I saved some poison.

WHAT? Where is it?

Are you going to kill yourself?

Amanda! Where is it?

Promise.

Promise what?

To kill yourself.

DAN: this doesn't seem like a girlfriend.

DAN liked, earlier: Promise you won't be mad?

Pity, nagging

Extreme things tempered by mundane

Makes most senses from him to trap her if he is at cross-purposes with her.

promise p.42, p.76 (repetitive that she uses the same line to ask for the same thing).

Listen, I know this a bad time to ask, but there's never really a good time.

A bad time for what?

I saved some poison.

3.25.08

ALT VERSION OF POISON REQUEST

AMANDA

Lift out the ring tray.

He does, and finally finds the necklace.

AMANDA

Will, I know this is a bad time to ask but there's never really a good time...

I saved some poison.

WILL

Amanda! Where is it?

AMANDA

I was hoping that...

WILL

What?

AMANDA

That you might...

WILL

Kill myself?

AMANDA

Yes.

There is a KNOCK on the front door.

DETECTIVE WILDER (O.S.)

William Pierce! Open up!

WILL

Fuck. Did you set me up?

AMANDA

I wouldn't use that language. I want to be with you. And I know you want to be with me but that's hard for you to see because sometimes it takes you forever to come around. FISTS POUND the front door.

WILL

Amanda. Where is the poison?

DETECTIVE WILDER (O.S.)

We've got a warrant for your arrest! Open the door! NOW! An ominous CRACK -- the front door sounds like it's SPLINTERING APART.

4.16.08

BEAT LESSON: how I shouldn't have shown murder because it was not a moment that I could truly understand or visualize. Learn from that: skip the moments that I can't do. Only do the moments that I can make mine.

In Bunuel's MILKY WAY:

--Character imagines a firing squad

--Cut back to framing scene.

Character's neighbor says "Is there a shooting range nearby?"

Character replies: "I was just imagining the execution of the pope."

4.22.08

DAN EMAIL re. NELSON AUDITION:

Yeah, the guy seems pretty good. He didn't have a good actor to play against, but he still managed some good line readings. I like him.

You know what I got from watching those clips? That Amanda isn't going to be a total cinch to cast. You really have to get someone who can give those lines a human, particularized reading. She's actually a fairly complex character, and not everyone will get it right. - Dan

yes, she needs to be really, really sympathetic or else she could easily seem shrewish and one-dimensional

She also has to understand that she is setting the everyday small-scale relationship tone that is so important to the movie. She will occasionally sound a bit unattractive, but it needs to be girlfriend-selfish, not villainous. - Dan

4.23.08

DAN re. Amanda:

Amanda created tone by bringing relationship stuff in. Will is a reactive character. Casting of Amanda is key.

Relationship chit-chat is what is introduced in the first morgue cold room scene.

DAN - 3 ALTERNATIVES TO MITZI SCENE:

1) Keep things basically as they are, let Will be insensitive to Mitzi's feelings, play the emotion gap for comedy.

WILL

This was stupid.

MITZI

I don't know, I thought it was okay.

OR

I didn't think it was so bad.

WILL

I'm engaged. What was I thinking?

MITZI

(philosophically)

It's hard to think and fuck at the same time.

Will's cell phone RINGS.

MITZI

Amanda again. She's got a sixth sense.

On the LCD: AMANDA. Will lowers the cell phone without answering.

MITZI

Better stop looking so guilty. She'll bust you.

2) Try to make it closer to their existing characters: Will more sensitive, Mitzi less of a monster.

Will is getting dressed in a hurry. Mitzi is lounging in bed.

WILL

I'd better go.

MITZI

Nervous?

WILL

I'm engaged. What was I thinking?

MITZI

(a bit peeved)

Maybe you were thinking that I'm the most amazingly attractive woman you've ever met.

WILL

Well, you *are* very attractive. But....

His cell phone RINGS.

MITZI

Amanda again. Shes got a sixth sense.

On the LCD: AMANDA. Will lowers the cell phone without answering.

MITZI

Better stop looking so guilty.

3) Shorten the scene to dodge the psychology.

Will is getting dressed in a hurry. Mitzi is lounging in bed.

Will's cell phone RINGS.

MITZI

(teasing)

Amanda again. Shes got a sixth sense.

On the LCD: AMANDA. Will lowers the cell phone without answering.

MITZI

Better stop looking so guilty. She'll bust you.

DAN re. VOICE OVER:

The fact that a lot of Amanda's dialogue is VO gives you an opportunity to insert more comic/mundane/inappropriate behavior via Will's reactions. The way people react to familiar stuff on the phone is very everyday: Will can nod mechanically, roll his eyes, hold the phone away from his ear, etc. Which is potentially hilarious given that the phone is a connection to the afterlife. - Dan

4.25.08

STEVE COMMENTS

--Sc 43, 99¢ Parking Lot: he needs moment to think before "Today has really affected me." While he is fixing phone. Don't need scene inside store.

--p.26 IMPROVE SHEILA'S LAST LINE

--p.27: Steve didn't like line about the music.

SCRIPT DIAL CHANGES (issue new pages!)

p. 1, 16, 17, 23, 26, 27, 28, 30, 39, 40, 48, 71

SCENE 73 (driving to morgue with Lucy)
Shifts gears for last line

RON JUDKINS COMMENTS

√--Phone call: "Is there a next of kin?" (Kin would go to morgue first)

--re. Hamilton -- did they do an autopsy on him?

--where did Amanda get the poison from?

--why does Amanda have a key to Mitzi's apt?

--p.73

--wanted something else in the ending - Lucy comes to pick Will up? (missing beat, Ron felt)

5.4.08

RE HAMILTON REWRITE:

HAMILTON

{[[If Lenny Wilder thinks that Gertrude told you about the wedding cake -- and I bet she did some peeking into his freezer, among other things -- then he's]] Make time. The detective is probably getting an arrest warrant for you right now and...]]

HAMILTON

Yes, it's a shitty time -- for you. You're about to get charged for a murder your mother committed. [[You look guilty as hell. Lenny wants to get back in your mother's pants so he's not going to pin Mitzi's murder on her, not

when he's got you.

VARIOUS DAN EMAILS:

You know what I got from watching those clips? That Amanda isn't going to be a total cinch to cast. You really have to get someone who can give those lines a human, particularized reading. She's actually a fairly complex character, and not everyone will get it right. - Dan (4.22.08)

She also has to understand that she is setting the everyday small-scale relationship tone that is so important to the movie. She will occasionally sound a bit unattractive, but it needs to be girlfriend-selfish, not villainous. - Dan (4.22.08)

You probably have more leeway with Mitzi: she and Will haven't got all that much history, so she can still be flirty and attractive with him. Ideally you'd have someone who can be girly and alluring but allow momentary glimpses into a practical, goal-oriented personality.

Wilder I think is basically a genre tool, no? You don't want him to be too individualized. I think he'll be easy to cast.

Calleigh seems more like a Mitzi: even if she can't suggest the character's colder side, the script will do most of the work for her. The Mitzis of the real world are a lot like Calleigh, with a really convincing facade of softness and sweetness.

Ideally Amanda would be able to do comedy, but not overdo it. A Selma Blair or Parker Posey type. - Dan

re. Lauren Cohan: She's so far off the character that it isn't funny, and yet I have the feeling that she might work, that there's the potential for her to read lines without all the sugar. No way to know for sure unless you can get her in the ballpark, though. All these girls are reading the way Hollywood wants them to read, adorable and romantic. - Dan (5.2.08)

From: sallitt@panix.com
Subject: Re: panix

Date: May 3, 2008 9:38:04 PM PDT
To: gary@garywalkow.com
Cc: sallitt@post.harvard.edu

I start shooting June 1. It's May 3. No actors locked.
 Missing most of my locations.

God, I remember that horrible feeling. And yet the terror is what makes it eventually come together.

I'm planning on having the dead callers present in some of the scenes (as indicated in the script) and I'm losing heart about how to do that.

What exactly are you worried about? Wasn't that the idea all along?

Was my panic this extreme before I started Crashing?

I'm sure I could dig up emails that sound about this panicky, and for a longer time. Remember, you felt you were jinxed after that movie that fell apart, thought that you'd lost all your directing skill, etc.

Why the fuck do I even want to make a movie?

I always feel that way at this stage too. Thank God it's too late to back out.

Re. panic -- feel that I running out of time to prepare. But I'm 54 -- shouldn't I know how to direct a film by now?

You'll figure it out. You didn't have any idea how to shoot CRASHING, and it looks great.

From: sallitt@panix.com
Subject: Re: 99 Cent Store/Clare
Date: May 5, 2008 11:04:43 AM PDT
To: gary@garywalkow.com
Cc: sallitt@panix.com

So you're okay if the phone doesn't get broken? Maybe we just wonders if it's been damaged by Sheila having thrown it?

I'm fine with that - that kind of suspense isn't my thing,

anyway.

So you are proposing that he gets the call from Amanda prior to getting in his car and rather than getting in the car, he walks down the street a bit, to get some distance from Sheila?

Yeah. I don't think he really needs the distance, but he might look back once after getting the call, then start walking without thinking what he's doing. You could have him turn around if you want - he probably wouldn't take a stroll around the hood, now that I think about it, but he might wander a bit, slowly. - Dan

I would propose that Sheila throws the phone, he picks it up, it doesn't work. Then cut to him at the apt - he gets it to work again, and then Amanda and Mitzi both call (stage that scene inside the apt).

That will be fine. - Dan

5.8.08

Paradigm shift yesterday today toward having fun:

We're making a student film. Should call my company Student Films. Except I've got people to do almost everything. I just need to worry about cast, locations a bit, and my shots. (and Clare and the kids). Looking at as a student film, this is easier, infinitely easier than A Voyeur.

So I am gaving fun. Relaxing a bit just a bit into it.

5.11.08

DAN

Grief: detachment that leads itself to humor (can use framing, camera etc)

Can have heavy heavy stuff in a comedy.

Whatever it is, it's not naturalistic grieving.

Lucy: while she's grieving we know that Amanda's around

(can talk to Will). Lucy can be really grieving but it can be placed in a comic context.

Framing to favor Will.

Eyeglasses: realism is when the camera can't be perfect.

Lucy will be interpreted through Will.

Amy Minderhoot as too realistic looking.

Appearance of dead: It's all Will's fantasy, it can go back and forth, do whatever I like. Confusing to have Amanda blue in morgue hallway (is it really her?)

All movies are a dream, a fantasy. It's my (GW) fantasy. It can be a complicated fantasy, but it's a fantasy. I can do what I like. Think Marienbad -- a black dress one second, a white dress the next. Can switch the way they are dressed between shots.

Do whatever I think is interesting extra layer.

George Romero made up his own rules.

Dan prefers the dead looking normal.

If it's about the pettiness of the dead they should look normal.

Think of visualization as being a dream.

Morgue hallway: a little bruise? a little blood?

Dan thought Mitzi's corpse in black bag was fine.

No dead make-up anywhere in the film would be fine.

THE DEAD ARE AS WILL IMAGINES THEM. WILL'S SUBJECTIVITY.

Mitzi is a gym junkie -- she's wearing work-out clothes. This movie is sufficiently quirky that I need to follow my quirk.

Everybody secretly wants the director to push them around, to be decisive.

(All the dead in formal wear? The dead all in bathing suits? They're all wearing jogging suits?)

Art is a lot about self denial and self indulgence and the collision of those 2 things.

re. opening scene -- actors love a scene where they can indicate relationship happiness. This needs to be reined in.

5.12.08

STEVE

Everyone is wearing what Will last saw them in.

All the dead look as Will last saw them, except Mitzi.

Take yellow highlighter and underline character moments in the script.

The emotional reality is what's going to make this not a B-movie. That I am paying attention to the emotional reality of it.

Will's emotional reality is out of sync with his Mom and with Lucy's.

DAN re. CYRUS

Stick with pushier version. Give him a charming, social side.

Will has to be someone with some pride. Can't act like a movie pawn. Behavior has to look justified. Show indignity, anger. Compensatory anger when he is being bullied.

Dan thinks I've got the highest level of quality output of any director working today. High level of consistency.

5.18.08

Dan re. Mitzi -- someone comfortable making men attracted to them.

Comedy is heightening behavior to make natural contradictions stand out in a believable way. There's an abstraction that heightens personality so the funny things bump together more clearly.

5.20.05

DAN re. Gertrude-Mitzi at end:

Bad idea. Film is existential. Will is alone. Film is about Will being thrown back on himself. He's not rejoining a community.

Everyone secretly wants the director to act authoritative, to be the daddy.

5.21.08

DAN

Actors want adjustments related to their goals. Goals are good. Cosmetic adjustments are nuisance.

Big expression isn't a problem, but cliched expression.

Large interesting things okay.

TV acting - pre-packaged, illustrating central theme of character. Perpendicular activity removed, so audience can't miss the point.

RE CYRUS:

I think the important thing about Cyrus is that he has a mission, he wants to get something done, he doesn't want any delay - he's not coming in with a chip on his shoulder or a grudge or anger, just with a desire to get that bag quickly.

5.25.08

RE LBT MISTAKES

Czerny miscast

Script Unsettled

Co-dependent with Steve re. script (somewhat co-dependent with Alain, and Steve, and Dan)

No shot list

No production designer

Dp who fought against the Dv format

Insecure about Clare and kid, didn't do homework during prep or during shoot (cooking dinner! playing tennis after shooting!)

Script input from Clare (who hated concept)

EA Space lacked authenticity, proper props.

Cast femme lead against my own instincts

Sappy ending (that I didn't believe in)

Crazy to make a film so soon after Dot was born

CALLERS

Nelson perfectly cast

Plenty of script development

Clare not a creative factor (no script input), though relationship insecurity still there

Focus on film, proper time allocated to prep

Shot list highly developed

Better budget

Production Designer (Rando only marginally involved with LBT)

Better casting director

5.26.08

DAN RE FIRST MITZI CALL:

The way to disguise he's a smart guy doing stupid things -- he 's a nice guy, trying to be helpful, distracted by grief. Farce mechanism taking the characters over. Try to

give a comic plausibility to plot driven stuff.

Play up character stuff that would make it happen: passivity, his niceness, his focus on Amanda (rather than Mitzi).

Cyrus bullies Will more. Will pushes back a little.

Tell Nelson there is a plot mechanism that Nelson has to make look plausible.

He's a comic figure that gets pushed around. He can't be pushed around openly.

"You know, Mitzi, I'd like to, but with everything that's happened today..." -- he's smart enough to know it's an outrageous request. Need to ask Nelson the problem he had.

An element of girl stuff going on in Mitzi conversation.

When Will gives in it's the path of least resistance. Need to have leash on fed-up reaction.

FIRST MITZI SCENE IS CRUCIAL MOMENT IN SCRIPT

Even if request is outrageous, Nelson needs to sell it. Character has muted responses, is not aggressive.

5.29.08

DAN RE. CYRUS

Cyrus is pushy but here realizes that he overplays his hand. He tries to be conciliatory but he blows it.

Will gives in because it is the easiest way to get back to Amanda. Cyrus know he needs to be conciliatory to get through life. He's not a good guy, he's having a bad day, his impulse to be aggressive.

OLD SHOT LIST NOTES:

43 EXT. CYRUS'S HOUSE

Over Will's shoulder as he runs to find phone - move off Will into ivy (obj to subj)

Will finds and picks up phone:

Will's face, PAN down to POV as he hunts for phone in ivy (obj to subj).

Reverse - MCU - Will - searching.

See AMANDA'S FEET. As Will stands, he stands next to Amanda (who is smoking). Will walks, and Amanda gets left behind. She catches up with him (re-enters frame).

NOTE: WILL LEADS, AMANDA FOLLOWS -- SHE KEEPS RE-ENTERING FRAME -- sometimes she gets in front of him, sometimes she falls behind and lets him get away.

2-shot - Will stops in an over on "We agreed to quit" - over Will to Amanda: CUT TO FLASHBACK.

(Will is near car at this point)]

From: sallitt@panix.com
Subject: Re: Amanda's Reel / Rewrite
Date: May 30, 2008 9:52:15 PM PDT
To: gary@garywalkow.com
Cc: sallitt@panix.com

and I nneed to expand Scene 106, the Common Room, in which Gertrude talks to Will at the hospital. Just 4 lines or so -- she's his mother, concerned he might be crazy, some mundane stuff about her concern for himn, then maybe even asa non-sequitur he asks for the phone. My brain is frozen, I need some help.

All right, think about this. The important thing in this scene is Will. Will is now in a state of terse focus that has a lot of appeal - finally, he has resolve and forward motion. He's not chatting with anyone, he's not saying anything that doesn't advance his mission. He has become an avenging angel.

I like the scene just the way it is - but if you add dialogue, I'd try to keep Will focused on getting the phone. - Dan

8.23.08

EDITING NOTES for Steve on 8/22 CUT:

COUCH SCENE

Try adding back some dial, maybe a lot of it. I'd like her to say "would you go look at houses this weekend." Can lose "say it out loud so it's in the transcript." Try to avoid over that looks like closer 2-shot. It is important she is angling for a house from Will.

Hamnet phone call -- can we cut "I presume you're Will"?

If we keep it, it seems that Will needs to say "Yes."

It's odd he has no response to the line. Cut will work.

End of apt scene -- do we need to see Will pondering the phone? Does that overweigh it? Why not just cut to the phone p[hone on the desk to both of them on the car dash?

Let's Discuss.

MORGUE PARKING LOT

We discussed. Consider phones on dash with car parked as transition. Or use jump cuts to get car parked and Will out of it. At the least, cut him taking off the seat belt. (Sunday morning: seat belt didn't bother me.) And I would definitely like the framing tightened on the pull in shot.

Distracting air in the composition.

COLD ROOM

1st POV shot of sheet (with Cyrus underneath) too short, abrupt -- lengthen. Or something in the surrounding shots keep the length of the shot from working.

A's "unresolved issues between us" -- awkward cut after this line

MORGUE HALLWAY

Note: try using coroner's "excuse me" from cold room as a wild line somewhere. I'd like him to mutter a word, might have to record that wild.

Lucy's "I just had a fight with her too" -- garbled reading/ Is there a clearer reading in another take? If not, put it on the list of things to be re-recorded.

Does Will answer the phone in the behind his back shot? If so, what about using that and then cutting to Amanda in the frontal view? I know, we lose the push in -- but now is

the time to discuss this option, if it exists.

"No I'm dead that's all I know" -- seems that we cut to Will a little too soon. Stay on A for "no I'm dead" and then cut?

I think you can digitally push in just a little more.

Eliminate pan -- hold 3 shot as long as possible -- is there another take where the 3-shot holds longer

EXT MORGUE

Add an extra ring before answering (it's okay that Will doesn't react)

APT

Pan across Amanda's desk -- maybe a few frames can be trimmed from the head

Is his smile too big when he discovers cigarette pack in drawer?

CYRUS'S OFFICE

Phone can start to ring a second time and that's when he answers (in the middle of a ring) (we can do this a couple of times)

BASEMENT - BLACK

Add an extra ring maybe muffled as Will gets the phone out of his pocket

SHEILA'S HOUSE

Digitally tighten head of phone pickup shot so we don;t see Amanda's leg until he puts phone to ear. Can fudge the end of the shot but I don;t want to see her leg at the beginning.

Dial looks out of sync to me in this section (walk & talk, first part)???

Timing of the second falling shot and how it cuts back to the frontal is awkward now. Feels different compared to 8/21 cut. I like losing the dial line but this cut needs to be finessed.

Right before cut to car wreck "actually" gets cut. This is a different cut point than 8/21 cut.

Car wreck: shot needs to go all the way into the telephone pole (pole needs to fill frame)

Mitzi OS dial -- there is an echo, like an old piece of VO is leaking through, at the end of the OS piece (before Will gets into the car).

LOS FLORES

I like seeing the mountains behind the car in the pullup -- good. Maybe jump to the fence angle and he pulls out the shovel from this angle??? Try changing the cut point and using it to jump forward a bit. (Sunday: cut point seems fine today)

Hold ELS longer? (not sure) (Sunday: seems fine)

Question: do we want some POVs to expand driving up sequence?

Cut Mitzi's "Please -- this will work" -- at least as currently placed it doesn't feel motivated.

LS (from tower) - digging -- this can hold longer

Does he come back for shovel in wider shot? Show exit for car and return from this angle. Might make joke play better if you can get into this shot smoothly.

APT

NFU:

Try starting with Amanda full screen "Is something wrong?" -- audience will wonder what is up, then reveal what he is doing. Might be more mileage from that than being on Will's back. (Plus, if you start with shot of his back do not wait a beat for her to speak.)

1st CU of Will is way too long relative to what we see of Amanda. CU should be half the length and she needs more on screen time before it.

2nd Will CU okay (seemed too long last night, not today).

Last CU of Will seems to kill it, dwelling on him before cutting to the next scene. We don't do that anywhere else, and it saps energy. I know you want to wrap it up on him, but as constructed it does not work. Quick look from Will, he hits pause on the QT movie, or the image of her is replaced by the screensaver of him? Something.

I want to keep NFU piece here for a screening, but it needs to be recut. This :31 as currently cut feels too long. It might not be length, but editing.

BEDROOM: I've considered jump cutting after he moves her clothes aside to him being in bed, but it's probably better having this be a continuous piece of time.

Dream: Shot where Amanda walks into bedroom -- what happens if she wipes through frame? Can you add any more to tail of shot?

DRIVE TO STATION

Lose phone call. Maybe recut scene to use one of the odd more dramatic POV shots -- perhaps one of the pans between the 2 cops? Start with POV, then cut to Will (after the call) putting his head back. Maybe have phone rings under POV shots to motivate missing the phone call? Good to start with a tight POV then provide context in 2nd shot.

INTERROGATION

"Did yo kill Mitzi Barvin?" Can you give any air after this, on any shot. Need a pause before Will answers. You could do a couple of silent CU's back and forth like we do next time Wilder comes into the room.

Any way to lose Amanda's head turn away? (I doubt it -- I don't like this gesture, even seeing it once)

"...so she's avoiding me" -- hear an echo of the line on another track.

Amanda: try cutting "I've got a lot to process" differently -- I think her turn away is too mannered. I like we can cut the line -- but you can also try saving it with some sort of recut (CU Will?)

Hold longer on shot of Wilder + Detective watching monitor

Hold a bit longer on Wilder as he steps away from table after Will says "she didn't tell me that."

Hold a bit longer on Will before Wilder opens the door? Somehow try to milk this moment a bit more before the cop says his lawyer is here.

"It's not up to me" -- hold longer at tail

GARAGE

A little digital tightening-reframe at the head to lose/minimize Rick standing and waiting for his cue?

LUCY AT APT

Bedroom: have an extra phone ring? Not sure if it will work without either of them reacting to it. But it might.

LR: POV of Lucy watching Will talk feels abrupt. Need to finesse to get these cuts to work.

Note: boom is corner of POV shot needs to be cleaned out (reframe)

DRIVING TO MORGUE/ EXT MORGUE PARKING LOT

You okay with cutting the walk into the building? Would music sell it? Just pondering.

COLD ROOM

Punch in to a tighter shot of Mitzi? Enhance Will's reaction to her? Not sure, but that thought did occur to me.

Milk moment of answering phone. Hold Wilder's reaction a bit. Perhaps a CU of Will sheepish to answer? Lucy's reaction because she is expecting the worst? Sufficient CU's to expand the moment.

3-shot, phone call: I don't like Wilder looking at Lucy just before A says "tell Lucy you want some privacy"
Wilder should have no interest in Lucy. If it's awkward to cut around this, then that's that. But I'd like you to try to get rid of it.

Do we have the hug from the over Will to Amanda angle? If so, that might be good to use. I don;t think the hug works

yet. I wonder about going to Lucy or Wilder, though i know you are saving their reaction for the end of the scene.

Cut to the side shot from behind the Cyrus table? I'm stumped here, but we need to try something different. Does Will hug her in the Amanda CU -- does his body block hers? Can we go more intimate-intense that way?

DRIVING AFTER MORGUE

Felt slightly long, but music could change that. What do we get out of the driving shot? Just cut it?

PARKED CAR

Do we have a cleaner line reading of "you're such an asshole"?

DRIVING TO GAS STATION

Try: phone on dash, then gas light, then CU of will reacting to this

GAS STATION

Cut out of mirror shot a tad sooner? Maybe.

Wide shot of Will pumping -- I think IO step into the right edge of the frame at one point --slight blow up or reframe is necessary.

Do the POV shots of trash can and light work? I wonder. Cut them?

I wonder if we cut to the frontal shot at the pay phone too soon. How long can it play in the shot with the phone in the FG?

Cell phone ring -- softer and add an extra one -- Will missed it because he didn't hear it?

Not sure about Clennon's reading of the last line "this is positive" We should look at alternates together and discuss.

GERTRUDE'S OFFICE

I wonder about trimming a bit from the tail of the first shot, when he goes into the file room. Am on the borderline but always wonder about it when I see that shot.

Pan across ECU of file -- does this bother you? Reshoot?

The page turns are good. Perhaps try tightening and/or slightly speeding up the shot so it feels more extreme.

GERTRUDE'S HOUSE

Kitchen scene -- okay -- but for the hell of it, just to answer the question, I'd like to see Will's reaction to 32 mil "oh yeah" on screen. You can show this to me as a separate cut scene if you like.

Can you add anything to the tail of the last shot of Will?

APT (FINAL)

Is there a less rushed version of Clennon's line? I don't mind him being cut off in the middle.

Desk stuff -- I don't dig the cut from wide to tight before he deletes the pix, especially with the computer stuff as a bridge. That part needs some finessing, I think. Let's discuss.

And we've got the problem with the wide shot that has both a shadow and Amanda stepping into the shot.

Does he answer phone in CU? Can we use an insert of the phone screen as a bridge?

Murder montage -- can start shot with phone sooner so we see Amanda in the window by the door sooner.

Driving shot (A driving): trim tail a bit.

NOTE: Would Will delete the Amanda photo on his cell phone? I think we have the footage to fake that up. Or is that a refrigerator question?

Fade out on Halloween pix: Need approx 3-4 seconds of black to signal end of movie. This needs some finessing. I don't think we get close enough to the pix before the FO. Consider a freeze frame and then a fade -- that would express finality. Then cut to black for a bit.

LOCKDOWN ROOM (opening)

Not sure if ECU camera is best start. Revert to the eye shot then POV??? Perhaps MCU camera, then jump to ECU camera? That might be too mannered. Revert to the eye shot then POV??? Not sure.

Lose Will's VO line, as discussed.

LOCKDOWN ROOM (after Gertrude)
Jump cuts at beginning okay

Do not use high shot -- maybe maybe once, but it needs to be justified. Does not feel appropriate now except to show that Amanda is not in the room as a dead caller.

I've already talked about cutting down-compressing the dial prior to the montage.

POISON MONTAGE: try to hold her look at herself in the mirror longer? or does it interrupt flow?

After poison montage: cut all Amanda's dial?

If she says "I'm sure they'll.." Will should either overlap or interrupt this. Cut way too lose right now. But I like the idea of he's done with her once he has this info, he doesn;t need to hear her prattle on nor dos he have the patience for it. Make it more to the point.

WALK & TALK WITH HAMILTON AFTER GERTRUDE'S
There should be some static before Will says Dad at the end (for our screening)

RUNNING TIME

8/12 73:38

8/14 71:49

8/21 67:17

8/22 65:43

8/31 64:17

9.15.08

PETER ELLIS'S NOTES

PETER'S NOTES

More score at beginning

Some movie (him asleep on couch) vTighten 2 still ifes.

Then title sequence w/ music

Have her enter into close shot on couch.

Then cut to wide -- show he's been asleep all night

One more cut of Amanda before the kiss on the couch (feel too one-sided)

Close on Amanda for "parting is such" -- it's an important linr

His reaction to cell phones before he runs to them -- show a CU of him before he grabs them

Peter bugged by cut from wide to close for Amanda first call -- stay in wide until cut to Amanda?

Amanda on camera "I'm bleeding"

Need more cuts to Amanda to make phone call more exciting

Beginning of Hamnet too fast -- open up, if we have the footage. Stay on answering machine to open it up. It's odd that Will answers the phone so quickly.

Add dial "Officer Hamnet with the Highway Patrol."

Something that tells more about connection between call and car wreck.

Hamnet shot -- trim the head -- Peter headed the head shake at the head of the shot.

RE-RECORD HAMNET AND MAKE HIM MORE COMPASSIONATE

"Please sir we need you to come down to the morgue to identify the bosy" -- doesn't work for Peter. Peter feels there needs to be another line before. There's a jump on this line. ALT LINE: SIR, IK KNOW THIS IS OVERWHELMING, BUT WE DO NEED YOU TO COME DOWN TO THER MORGUE" -- need something that is the cop's acknowledgment of grief.

Peter would like to see the cop one more time -- "Sir, I know this is hard..."

Morgue conversation -- another cut or two of Amanda during conversation. Be on Amanda for "unresolved issues."

Peter hated tail of last shot in cold room -- Peter didn't buy it. He should look more uncertain. Cut to wide shot showing whole wall to close scene? Peter wouldn't mind seeing the Coroner.

Morgue hallway -- a shot of Lucy approaching?

Shot on Will's back is awkward -- comes too soon after first Amanda. Instead of back show, can be use CU-Will (the angle that Lucy enters into).

A beat where Amanda reacts to Lucy -- have "let me talk to Lucy" with Amanda on screen.

Sheila's -- feels like something is missing (where we cut stuff) -- Peter would like a little something added back. Can we have her on screen saying "Jesus you're so self-centered." Smoking cigarette from behind better than in front (not convincing).

Cut tail of Mitzi in car.

Dream -- add head to shot where Amanda hugs Will? The cut is bumpy to Peter. Shot of Will standing into shot?

Phone sex -- doesn't completely work. Last cut jump cut doesn't work.

INTERRO

Want to see Shot of Wilder as he walks in and stops -- intro shot of him walking in.

Either lose silent show of Wilder before "how did you know.." -- or you need a complimentary silent shot of Will.

Need to see Wilder stop walking as he walks around to get close to Will.

"I'm so angry with Mitzi and she knows it and she's avoiding me" -- would like Amanda on screen

Lucy dress -- cut back to Will in doorway reacting to what he sees. (can lose first wide shot in the hallway). Will's reaction is the key (think about this throughout).

Pass by in bedroom -- cut back to Will, need to see his reaction.

Coldroom -- see reaction of Wilder & Lucy during the hug -- cut to them as he goes down to the hug -- and they react in middle of hug -- pick a spot and go to them once. Tears come from out of blue without a cut during hug. Lucy's tears are a bump without.

Lose "you're such an asshole" line

Kahuna -- rather have Will's reaction facing camera than over Amanda to Will.

Cut down black after Devil photo. Cut at least a second.

9.19.08

From: sallitt@panix.com
Subject: Re: DVD
Date: September 17, 2008 9:24:58 PM PDT
To: gary@garywalkow.com
Cc: sallitt@panix.com

I was on the phone with an elderly relative, couldn't pick up. I'm trying to watch as much as I can right now - will mail partial notes before I go to bed. - Dan

I got 40 minutes in. Here are some notes. It's going to be hard for me to devote a lot of time right now, but I'll try to finish up tomorrow night. - Dan

How would you feel about removing the CU of Will in the sleep montage at the beginning?

Something bothers me about the cut right before the first "Parting is such..." You need to show her starting to stand up in the closer shot.

I wasn't completely sure that Will was looking at the cell phones before he runs after Amanda. After that noise he makes, it looks as if he's just waking up instead of looking at something.

I know it's in the script, but this line is a little abrupt even for a policeman: "I presume you're Will. What is your relationship to Miss Kendred?" I wonder if it could be dubbed into something better? Maybe not, given that Will's reaction is carved in stone. No biggie.

The mistake in the morgue is really funny.

I wish that post-death chat with Amanda were paced a little slower and more gradual, so that the switch to mundane conversation were accomplished a bit at a time. Don't know what you can do about that.

On Amanda's first dead appearance - she moves her eyes just before the first cutaway - it's distracting.

Too bad Amanda isn't more frustrated on the Picasso line - I don't care much for her reading in this take. The cut in the middle of the line is slowing down her reaction a bit - if you're going to cut there, I'd use the cut to make the line snap faster.

The end of this scene is good, though.

Cyrus a bit preening, not direct enough in his first scene - he does a lot better in the next. Don't know what you can do about it.

I like the cut that takes Will quickly to the bottom of the staircase after the flashlight.

Cutting up "You're so self-centered. I'm dead" isn't working for me - I'd like that line to go with a face.

I don't think I want "I know we agreed to quit" on the soundtrack after the (funny) car wreck. It's not really needed, it seems weird that Amanda isn't standing there anymore, and we can use a little space before the advent of Mitzi.

I think I'd cut as quickly as possible after "You'll need a shovel" - it's funny, but not such a psychologically plausible line that I want to see reactions to it.

To tell you the truth, I think the scene would work a little better with either the shovel line or the shovel-buying scene, but not both. No biggie, and I hate to suggest anything that shortens the film....

I totally don't need that first overhead shot of the digging-up-Mitzi locale, if you can do without it. It might be nicer as a continuous shot. (The second overhead shot is fine.) And: is there any way to make it clearer that Will is actually entering the space at the beginning of that shot (which looks great, by the way)? First time I saw it, I thought he was trying to break something with the shovel, rather than pulling the shovel through the gap.

This scene is much better than I expected - dead Mitzi is pretty powerful.

The audition scene is actually very good, and Melissa is at her best. If you can lengthen the time before we realize that it's on the computer, I think that would be fine. No biggie, but you don't have to rush this scene for my money - it's intrinsically interesting.

I don't like the cut before dream Amanda throws herself into Will's arms - can you play with it? Maybe put more on the beginning of the second shot?

I personally don't need the second and third closeups of the arresting police. I'd CU them only at the beginning, and then play the rest of the scene from behind them.

Can we cut to Mitzi before her second "Parting is such" in the interrogation room? The cut seems awkward now.

Do you have to cut to the CU of Will ("I'm so angry with Mitzi...") in this scene? The cut seems so unmotivated. The next CU ("You want me to kill myself") makes more sense - but it too feels odd. I wish you would stick to two-shots in this scene.

Melissa is good in this scene. Her main problem scene is in the morgue - from the cigarette scene on, she's been okay.

Police watching on closed-circuit is funny.

"Dad?" is very funny, but I'd loosen up the first cut to Clennon, not make the dialogue follow the cut immediately.

I'd close the space before Gertrude's "That's all?"

The space before "What was the color of my favorite pair of

shoes" should be all on Emily's shot, none of it on Nelson's.

Can't you show Amanda on the line "Sorry, I'm not going to help you impress...."?

I could totally do without the cutaway to Hamilton and Mitzi hugging ("At her place? In the middle of the afternoon?"). It helps nothing and seems too obvious.

I would not cut to Emily's two-shot after "Take the goddamn phone." The shot seems unmotivated - I'd stay on Nelson's shot.

I also don't like the CU of Wilder in the doorway - the full shots seem better for this scene.

From: sallitt@panix.com
Subject: Re: DVD
Date: September 18, 2008 9:21:51 PM PDT
To: gwalkow@gmail.com
Cc: sallitt@panix.com

Finished up. - Dan

====

It's kind of weird for Amanda to ask for a hug before we see her body in the room. Maybe some viewers will remember where she used to be, but I didn't know where she was.

Amanda's "hug me" dialogue is not her best - she phones in a few lines ("I need to know if I can still feel anything") and she doesn't ramp up at all to the bizarre request, doesn't start with anything like a mundane, normal tone. It would be nice if the dialogue were a little slower and more paced. Again, don't know what your options are, but if you had time, you could probably put some air in this scene - a few pauses would probably help this dialogue.

The actual hug is surprisingly emotional, and Melissa even starts to get into the dialogue a little.

Good scene with Emily in the hallway after.

I don't care for the humorous Hamilton-Mitzi copulation, but whatever. No big deal.

I would add just a bit to the extreme CU of Nelson near the end of the gas station montage, as he looks up.

Why the cut to Will after Hamilton's "They'll show opportunity"? Did you need to elongate the reaction, or combine two takes? That cutaway shot looks really awkward to me - it would be good if you didn't have to use it.

You use the same cutaway later in the scene. I guess you need to get rid of Hamilton somehow. I much prefer the shot you end on, from the front of the car - if you covered any of the scene with that, it might give you more options.

I like the look of the shot in the parking garage, and the lock closing by itself.

Music in the Levin Pharmaceutical scene is pretty cool.

Will's "Hi, Mom" is good.

The cut before "And why, pray tell, am I reading this?" feels wrong to me. If you have to have two shots there, I think you need a little space at the beginning of the second shot, before the dialogue. And maybe correspondingly less on the first shot. But it would be better to do it in a single shot, I think.

Amanda puts too villainous a spin on "Mitzi was welcome to sleep with anyone and everyone...." After that she's more restrained. Can't say I care for the jump cuts in the scenes of disposing of the bodies, but whatever.

Careful of the cut on "...might not look too good for you." It's okay in principle, but maybe it can be smoothed out a bit?

It's interesting that Melissa's ditz take on Amanda actually makes her a more plausible murderess.... A silver lining.

Amanda gets villainous again after "I saved some poison." I guess that's her take on the scene. It might work in some sense, though it's more movie-like and less penetrating than the more mundane approach.

I don't like the fantasy repetition of the "I saved some

poison" line - it gives away the surprise of the ending. I'm not actually sure I like any of these fantasy lines, but that's the only one that does damage.

What happened to the rest of the dialogue around "That's okay - we can still do it"? Did it get shot? The dialogue seems a little rushed here.

I really wish some of that montage of the wheels of justice turning were cut. We don't need anywhere near that much info ("case closed").

I wish the Latina got one call instead of two.

1.14.09

AFTER HE DROPS OFF LUCY (AFTER MORGUE II).

Night: Will walks out on the pier.
He stares down at the water, looking morose.
He jumps.

Underwater shot: he chokes, drowns.

Dawn/day: Will on beach, wondering where he is. He dials a number. Gets Amanda on he phone. She walks behind him.

W: Where am I? I thought I was dead.

A: You are dead.

W: Then why can't I see you?

A: You got it all wrong.

W: I killed myself.

A: Suicides get treated differently.

W: Why didn't you tell me that?!

A: I just found out. Don't be so hostile.

Cut to: Will is still on the peer, contemplating the dark water. He shakes it off, and walks off the pier and back to his car.

1.19.09

I didn't mail this but called Alain and talked about it:

Alain--

I am writing to re. our mutual understanding of the

situation not because I want you to persuade Jeff of anything. I am also writing as a prelude to a conversation.

Back in October when matters reached a head, I agreed to restore all of the dialogue in the movie, both to the opening scene and to the scene outside of Sheila's house. You characterized it thusly: "everyone involved has to experience some pain and you are taking yours in one big dose."

I promised that with the dialogue restoration and other changes the running time would be raised to 70:00, sans titles.

Steve didn't make these changes quickly, despite my calling frequently.

In late December you told me that Jeff understood that editing work had stopped for the holidays and he was okay with that.

Restoring all of the dialogue was an irrefutable act of being responsive and making a good faith effort. I've done that. I didn't want to. It's not inconsiderable.

When I agree to something I do it. I don't renegotiate.

I understand that Jeff has moved on. I would like him to get his money back. I would like for him to be happy. But he might never be happy.

The running time is now approx 70:05, with opening titles 73:35. In my experience, distributors might look at how long the end credits are, but not in the split between opening titles and TRT, particularly when those titles occur after an opening narrative scene.

The issue of shooting new scenes was not seriously raised until last week, when it was presented as an ultimatum: you (GW) shoot these new scenes or I will.

I will shoot new scenes, I will even give Jeff alternate endings as material for SXSW. Attending SXSW was my suggestion.

I have made changes to the film to listen to and accommodate him, he approved of the script, I shot the

script as approved, that every scene in the script and every line of dialogue is in the current cut (how often is that true?), I am willing to shoot new scenes.

Jeff was warned by me repeatedly and explicitly about the risk of the venture, to the point where he lost his temper and asked not to hear it any more. He knew I would be using the same creative team. He saw CRASHING. If he thought that film was boring it behooved him to take heed.

The point of making this film was to make a film that I had control over -- that was the sine qua non of the deal. I am asking for your partnership is preserving that.

1.30.09

FROM ALAIN:

Version 1: Will is awakened, Amanda is alive, audience draws its own conclusion.

Version 2A with Lucy: "I dreamt I was engaged to your sister and she died in a car crash..."

Version 2B with Mitzi: "I dreamt I was engaged to Amanda and that she killed you..."

10.8.09

EMAIL TO STEVE:

Steve--

I read the script again. Here's my best attempt at recollection of intention:

AFTER THE SHOWER:

Will is in a state of shock, apprehensive of the red phone. Freaked out. He is freaked out that Amanda is most likely dead, and he is freaked out by the weirdness of talking to her after her car crash (and the distress of hearing her state of panic) and then getting the confusing information that she died instantly in the car crash.

His confusion by the calls (Amanda's, then the cop's) is overwhelmed by his dread that Amanda is dead. He'll think it a miracle if she is still alive.

My hope is that the viewer would wonder "what the heck is

going on."

PARKING GARAGE:

He can't move because he is dreading the inevitable. He's expecting the worse. He doesn't want to face that the slender thread of hope that she is alive is about to break, he doesn't want to break that thread. He is postphoning the inevitable.

I don't know what of this comes through.

IN GENERAL:

This section, for better or worse, is laying down a bed of "grief" (or "normal grief") for the rest of the story.

That "grief" will get toppled a bit in the first conversation with Amanda but some level of grief and its subversion is the basis for the comedy. In some form it needs to be there.

This perhaps argues against the radical surgery of cutting from Will hanging up the phone and then cutting to him pulling up in the morgue parking lot.

On a meat and potato level: the dissolve I find stylistically disruptive, and the Tiki parking garage scene pokey and overplayed. It was bloated in an effort at appeasement. It was better before. But I think there is the possibility of making improving it beyond restoration of the earlier cut (though I would settle for that). I know there are issues of when he looks at the phones -- on the desk, on the dash in the Tiki garage, on the dash in the morgue parking lot.

That's all I can think to say for now. Let me know what other info or opinions I can try to provide.

Thanks,
Gary

