



THE JESUS NUT
Academy Analysis

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Genre: Drama, Comedy, Satire

Category: Feature

The following scores and comments are objectively presented and intended to be illustrative, instructive, and helpful in guiding the writer along a professional path. Scores and comments are in accordance with current professional film and television industry standards.

Scores/Comments:

Concept/Originality: 10

The script revolves around Dr. Haley Bershire, Father O'Shea, and Jesse Morales. Haley is on a quest to find the apocryphal castrated testicle of Jesus Christ, Father O'Shea loves strip clubs, and Jesse is a homeless man who believes himself to be the reincarnated Jesus. The title of the script plays on the idea of a nut which is both a colloquial way of referring to "testicle" as well as "person who is insane or unhealthily obsessed with something." "Jesus nut" also refers to any single point of failure in a mechanical system which would cause catastrophic consequences if it fails; upon which, the only thing left to do in such a scenario is to begin praying similar to how in the quest for the testicle anything can go wrong. This wonderful pun and incredibly playful wordplay payoff quite nicely in the final act of the script and the particular thoroughness of the semantic exploration deserves especial plaudits. It is not easy to be this seriously playful and it is a mark of an accomplished writer to so fully

indulge in what some would see as an overly pedantic joke about how the word “nut” can mean a lot of things.

The concept of the script itself is quite interesting and original. There are very few stories that center around the search for a missing testicle. In terms of comedy tradition, this script follows in the footsteps of *Monty Python and the Life of Brian*, *The Book of Mormon*, *Candide*, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *Gulliver’s Travels*, *Bruce Almighty*, *Some Like It Hot*, *Tokyo Godfathers*, and *Groundhog Day*.

Structure: 9

The script is structured well with a clear beginning, middle, and end. It follows the typical road trip or wandering protagonist structure where each section of the script is arranged episodically with each of the tritagonists getting into some kind of conflict.

There are some particularly well-structured moments of comedy in the script, such as when the son of the hotel proprietress, Jack, mentions to his mother how he thinks Father O’Shea might be having a church service in his hotel room, shared with Simone. When asked why he thinks that, he tells his mother that he heard the father shouting “Oh my God! Oh my God!” as he passed by the room. It is a deeply hilarious moment that leaves the hotel proprietress with a complete misunderstanding of Father O’Shea.

Similarly successful, when Jesse dines with Silas and Bernard, the reference to Jesus multiplying fish and loaves through the leftover catfish and cornbread and a wonderful allusion for those who know their Biblical miracles. Out of the three main characters, Jesse’s episodic sections are the least comedic but the most sympathetic and emotionally moving.

Haley’s episodes with her estranged family could be best described as cringe-inducing as she inadvertently humiliates herself with her clumsiness and clear lack of belonging within her own family circle. Out of the three, her moments are the most tragic and mundane, showcasing her own pathetic and desperate attempts to find meaning and connection within a solitary world.

The moment when Silas successfully sells a peanut shaped like Jesus on Ebay for over \$37,000 to a notorious religious bigot and zealot is a great payoff. The comeuppance alone is worth every smile on an audience's face. It's a part of the script that is sure to delight anyone who disagrees with the religiously motivated homophobia within American culture.

In particular, the ending of the script with the judge dismissing all criminal charges against the protagonists, their short-lived flight in a storm, and the ridiculously casual way they greet the first workers to arrive on the ferry while boasting egregious wounds is all hilarious stuff.

Overall, the script is structured well and the structure of the narrative supports each character's individual journey.

Plot: 9

The plot of the script revolves around the search for Christ's missing left testicle. Although the plot sounds far-fetched, it is structured episodically and introduces interesting moment after interesting moment. The way the script weaves disparate strands of plot together all the way up until the very end is highly compelling though at times distracting with the sheer difference in some scenes. Overall, however, the plot does a good job of creating a foundation with which the narrative can fully humanize and explore the depths of the characters.

Although the ending is satisfying, ending in a traditional happy ending, it leaves quite a bit unresolved. The biggest lingering question is whether or not the testicle of Christ actually exists or not or if the Gospel of Trevor was simply written by a well-meaning but ultimately illiterate figure. The reveal that Haley's translation was in actuality completely correct lends a great deal of absurdity to the situation but does leave the audience a little wanting.

Pacing: 10

The script is paced well with individual scenes flowing smoothly and with little dragging. The action of the scenes is also clear and precise with just the right amount of exposition and detail to progress narrative and characterization at regular intervals.

The story progresses quite naturally through a number of distantly connected episodes with each individual strand of character arc coming together nicely by the beginning of the final act.

Although the story juggles a lot of information, characters, and settings, it uses simplicity to its advantage, never overstaying in one scene too long or overly expounding on a joke. This lends the script a breezy and light-hearted quality that makes it easy to watch even with potentially divisive subject matter.

Characters: 10

The characters of the script are remarkably well-developed with clear motivations, interesting backstories, and a wealth of detail in both their words and actions, all of which is consistent with each other and depicts interesting portraits of American life across a range of backgrounds. Almost every one of the dynamic characters is likable and sympathetic to a degree and each of their journeys holds something compelling for the audience.

Father O'Shea is the most comedic of the tritagonists, pingponging between the obligations of the cloth while being constantly tested by Simone's attempts at seduction.

Jesse is the least comedic but the most sympathetic character of the three main characters. His Jesus complex is less a serious exploration of mental disorder and more an allusion to a truer, more altruistic Christianity. His idealism and compassion are heartwarming and faith-restoring. He is ultimately an incredibly likeable character who brings much needed warmth and humanity in a story that could otherwise have become consumed with its own cynical irony as many modern satires tend to do.

Haley is the most tragic-comic character out of the bunch. She is the most pathetic in the sense that she spends the most amount of time with misfortune and humiliation. Although she is sympathetic to an extent, a lot of her shortcomings stem from her own actions and inactions. As a result, she almost operates as a warning to the audience, not to be too invested in appearances and the fickle present as both are gone in an instant. This only adds to her fiery speech in the latter half of the script where she dresses down three multi-millionaire

evangelicals before a huge audience. Her critique is quite stunning and its a great moment of characterization.

Simone is a very interesting and dynamic character in her own right so it is a little disappointing how she simply leaves Father O'Shea in the middle of his journey. While her departure is reasonably sustained in-universe, from a writing standpoint she definitely had more to offer and should have been utilized as a stronger foil to Father O'Shea to explore the discrepancy between religious dogma and actual morality.

Dialogue: 10

At times intentionally awkward and at other times cutting, the dialogue of the script is proficient at satirizing the cultural hypocrisy of larger America in regards to the myth of the American Dream, religious beliefs, and the value of academia. Father O'Shea and Simone's exchange is particularly memorable, "Thank God for upward mobility. / Thank God for great tits."

Another wonderfully hilarious line from the script is Haley's "My back hurts, I got hit on by a married man, I spent a fortune for one night's hotel in Chicago, and a fat guy talked my ear off for the entire bus ride from Longview. But now I know all about tractor pulls, cheap bourbon, boar hunting, the Dallas Cowboys, and the intricacies of the sand and gravel business."

Although the dialogue is highly accessible to readers with a more liberal education, there is the concern that it is less accessible to broader audiences. It is recommended that some of the main characters be made more sympathetic and that the rate of jokes be increased.

Despite the room for improvement regarding mass audience appeal, the dialogue of multiple characters is distinctive and varied. Characters from various races, occupations, and classes all reflect their background and personality in the speech. One particularly noteworthy piece of character dialogue is the dialogue of Silas, a black farmer out in Georgia. He speaks African-American Vernacular English without being stereotypical, without sounding like he's from the city, and with detailed agricultural knowledge, aspects of which all showcase the writer's skill in research and characterization.

Especially poignant are moments when the comedy takes a backseat and the humanity of the characters is allowed to shine. Jesse's encounter with Silas, the revelation that Silas is married to Bernard, and the exchange they have ("Are you a good farmer? / I think so. / Are you honest? / As the day is long. / Then what else matters?") is rendered impeccably. Although it would be a challenge to shoot and edit a moment like this in a typical feature, any team that could successfully balance the tone of a script with dialogue this luminous would be leaving behind high art.

Tone: 9

The tone of the script is very light but it becomes quite serious later on only to flip right back out into outright hilarity. The script relishes the absurd, awkward, and uncomfortable moments in the first half of the story, but successfully pays off its multiple instances of setup in the latter half of the script. Levity and irony scattered throughout the script give it a surprising comedic timing that works on multiple levels. Overall, many of the situational jokes in the script work well and poke fun at religious beliefs through a meticulous use of dramatic irony which usually involves Father O'Shea who has a penchant for awkwardly stumbling over the gap between the human and the divine. This does suit him as a preacher and greatly adds to the irreverent tone of the script overall. His most comedic moments are definitely when he inadvertently confuses a small child into thinking that church services can be offered one-on-one in the privacy of a motel room.

Conflict: 9

The conflicts of the individual characters are very well done. They suit each particular character and they compel the audience to learn more about each tritagonist. The story is also propelled by the motivations of each character to find the missing divine testicle. The only real issue is that the testicle quickly becomes the least of the characters' worries and other conflicts quickly emerge to outcompete the original destination in terms of how interesting the conflicts are and how entertainingly they resolve.

The ending in particular is nice but the lack of a real resolution on the possible existence of the testicle is a unmet opportunity in some respects.

Emotional Response/Investment: 10

There is a great deal to love about each one of the main characters in this script. Although one might be judgmental at first, all three characters have wonderful redeeming qualities that make each of them a hero in their own right. Jesse, as mentioned previously, is the best at eliciting sympathy and his endless compassion, innocent upheaval of expectations, and truly miraculous abilities showcase him as one of the best characters suffering from a Christ delusion in all of Western literature.

The script as a whole leaves a powerful message in its lampooning of contemporary institutionalized religion. To live altruistically and compassionately should be the goal of all religions and to profess otherwise or misuse religion as a tool of oppression and bigotry is nothing less than the highest form of hypocrisy in the world. The script states that quite bluntly and earns the moment of sentiment as at this point in the narrative the drama is at its finish line, placing all three characters in a helicopter (a machine famous amongst engineers and the mechanically knowledgeable as being 99% comprised of single points of failure. The titular Jesus nut, holding the propellers in place, fails as a result of a very predictable lightning bolt since the characters were quite ridiculously flying a helicopter through a lightning storm in order to find a missing two-thousand-year-old testicle on the top of the Statue of Liberty. Thus, the full, semantic exploration of what is ostensibly just a long, drawn-out joke about genitals is completed and the promise between story and audience is delightfully substantiated. All-in-all, this script is a great way to show how something deep, entertaining, and substantial can truly come from the most absurd bits of nonsense.

Marketplace Potential: 9

A finely written satire, while this script may not appeal to the widest possible audience, for what it aims to do it does well and therefore is deserving of as many opportunities as it takes to get made. While the unusual subject matter and unpopular genre would be seen as a detriment to some, that is through no fault of the script itself which does all it can to show the appeal of both its narrative and characters to any audience smart enough to take a chance on it.

This is a beautifully heart-warming and life-affirming script. It deserves all the best.

Final Comments:

There are a number of grammatical and spelling errors throughout the script that should be addressed. There's an error on page 66: "friend dough" instead of "fried dough". On page 75, there shouldn't be a comma in "Duncan Prendergast, Junior." On page 109, it says "Statute" of Liberty rather than "Statue." On page 126, there is an extraneous hyphen on the phrase "one-hundred" a numerical phrase which does not need to be hyphenated.

Overall, this story about a missing testicle is incredibly entertaining and heart-warming. It is a deeply moving story about what true religious faith is and what the ultimate purpose of religion should ultimately be.