

SCREENPLAY COVERAGE

The Drama

Draft of June 14, 2024

WRITER

Kristoffer Borgli

GENRE

Dark comedy / Romantic
drama

PAGES

111

TONE

Cringe comedy with
dream-logic and
suspense

LOGLINE

A week before his wedding, an idealistic British expat hears his fiancée drunkenly confess, during a dinner-party game, that at sixteen she came close to committing a school shooting, and the suspicion he can no longer switch off threatens to destroy both the relationship and the ceremony itself.

FINAL SCORE

7.60_{/10}**RECOMMEND**PASS · CONSIDER ·
RECOMMEND

SCORECARD

CATEGORY		SCORE	WEIGHT	WEIGHTED
Concept & Premise		8/10	20%	1.60
Structure		7/10	20%	1.40
Characters		8/10	40%	3.20
Dialogue		7/10	20%	1.40
Final score			100%	7.60/10

SYNOPSIS

Charlie, a British museum worker, and Emma, an editor at a small publishing house who is deaf in one ear, are getting married on Saturday. As each rehearses a speech with Mike and Rachel, the couple's married friends, flashbacks reconstruct their history: the coffee shop meeting where he faked having read her book, the first kiss trapped between two museum doors with the alarm blaring. After spotting Pauline, their hired DJ, smoking what looks like heroin on the street, they head to the venue's menu

tasting. Over wine, Rachel brings up a pre-marriage ritual, confessing the worst thing you've ever done, and Mike insists everyone plays: he used an ex-girlfriend as a human shield against a street dog, Rachel locked a neighbor boy in a closet overnight, Charlie walked out on a date over a missing finger. Emma reveals that at sixteen she planned a shooting at her high school, that she brought her father's hunting rifle to school in a duffel bag, and that her deafness comes from practicing with it. Rachel, whose cousin Sam uses a wheelchair because of a shooting, erupts. Emma vomits across the table.

The next day Emma tells Charlie the rest: the move to Richmond, the isolation, an online group of misanthropic teenagers she wanted to impress by posing with the rifle. One day before her planned date, a mall shooting shakes the school; in the collective mourning Emma finds community for the first time, joins a gun-control group, becomes its spokesperson and buries the rifle. Charlie says he accepts it, but starts seeing her as a threat: he throws out a mug with a gun printed on it, flinches at the sight of her holding a knife, plays her a TED talk by a man who killed his best friend, loses his erection. Emma, covering for Rachel's silence, quietly discredits her to a colleague, and Rachel, dropped from the job, announces she isn't coming to the wedding. Charlie visits her, defends Emma by inventing that she watched her best friend crushed to death, calls out her hypocrisy and begs her to attend; afterwards he approaches Sam in the street. At the museum he floats a hypothetical confession to his colleague Misha; when she says she would call the police, Charlie slams the table, cries, and kisses her. They both stop.

Before the wedding they confront Pauline, who denies everything; Emma demands an admission, Pauline insults her and Emma fires her. At the reception, Emma's father recalls her activism and a rifle that "vanished," and the replacement DJ's equipment emits a crack that sounds like gunfire. Emma overhears "school shooting" and "don't tell anyone" in the bathroom line; confronting Misha, she gets the kiss confession instead. Charlie's speech freezes mid-sentence, the first dance is cut short, and Blake, Misha's boyfriend, knocks Charlie out and shouts that Emma should be arrested too. Emma flees down the road in her dress. Late that night, alone at home, Charlie breaks down. At the diner Emma appears and restarts the stranger game; he plays along and tells her there is something he needs to confess. She turns her deaf ear toward him and he whispers it.

ANALYSIS

Concept & Premise

8/10

The premise passes the elevator test effortlessly: an imminent wedding, a confession that cannot be unheard, and a question the audience asks itself from the seat: would you still marry her? Borgli takes a familiar skeleton, the secret that detonates before the altar, and loads it with the most uncomfortable taboo in contemporary American culture.

The freshness is in the specifics. The confession emerges from a game that calibrates the moral scale before shattering it (pp. 22-31): a human shield, a locked-up child, a missing finger, and then a school shooting. Emma's redemption is deliberately accidental: she is saved by another shooting that happens one day before her own (pp. 48-49). Charlie sums it up without meaning to when, in his version for Misha, he says the boy's "car broke down that day" (p. 82). The script asks whether goodness is a choice or a coincidence, and that is where its authorial voice lives. The title works on two levels: Charlie's speech line about living life as a comedy and not a drama (p. 5), and the phase when Emma "was really into drama," per her father (p. 95).

Commercially, the concept offers two showcase lead roles, a contained budget (apartment, museum, venue) and guaranteed conversation for festivals and word of mouth. It sits alongside *Force Majeure* (one instant redefines your partner) with the satirical edge of *Sick of Myself*. The risk is obvious:

"comedy about a school shooting" is a hard label to sell. The script manages it because it never jokes about victims; the humor comes from the social cowardice around the subject, like the photographer repeating "shoot" endlessly (pp. 43-44). Nothing is gratuitous and no deal-breaker applies.

There are no major concept problems. The development question is positioning: the sales material must sell the couple's question, not the taboo.

Structure

7/10

The structure is causal and the third act is exemplary, but it carries two pacing problems: the catalyst arrives late and the second act stalls in variations on a single beat.

The confession lands on p. 31, roughly double the standard. The first thirty pages are not filler: they plant almost everything the ending harvests (the deaf ear on pp. 2 and 12-13, the "do you want to start over?" on p. 2, the song on p. 15, the diner on p. 21, the DJ). Even so, the first-ten-pages hook is soft: we know the tone, not the dramatic question. Between pp. 54 and 70 the script strings together six vignettes with the same function: the blood nightmare, the mug, the knife, the TED talk, the failed sex and the role-play. Charlie suspects, Emma notices. They escalate in discomfort, not in consequence. A clear midpoint is missing: the best candidate, Charlie deleting his speech (p. 57), is internal and changes nobody's plan. The visit to Sam (pp. 78-79) never pays off.

The impact hits exactly where the premise should tighten: the reader understands the mechanism by around p. 60 and then waits twenty pages for something to change. What compensates is a third act where every disaster grows out of an earlier decision. Emma fires Pauline (p. 91), which brings in the replacement DJ whose equipment sounds like gunfire (p. 96) and cuts the dance (p. 105). Charlie kisses Misha (p. 84), Emma confronts her (p. 102), and that leads straight to Blake (p. 106). Zero *deus ex machina*. The diner ending inverts the opening scene and turns the deaf ear into the gesture of forgiveness.

Solution: compress first-act montages and flashbacks so the confession lands around pp. 20-25; merge the paranoia vignettes into three that escalate and force a decision; give the second act an external midpoint, a concrete step by Charlie toward calling off the wedding; and either pay off or cut the Sam scene.

Characters

8/10

This is the script's strongest asset. Charlie and Emma are three-dimensional, their contradictions are shown through behavior rather than declared, and the text sustains ambiguity about Emma to the final page.

Charlie believes himself open-minded and therapy-literate (p. 61), yet he abandoned a date over a missing finger (pp. 28-29), faked reading a book to flirt (pp. 1-4), invents that Emma watched a friend crushed to death (p. 73), stalks Sam (p. 78), turns his fiancée into an armed erotic fantasy (p. 79) and kisses Misha (p. 84). His reaction to the catalyst sits at the highest level of resistance: he wants to understand and he wants to marry her, and the cost registers in his body, in the deleted speech, the impotence, and the speech that freezes in front of the guests (p. 104). Emma is genuinely empathetic, as with the crying girl in the hallway (pp. 47-48) or her tears in front of Pauline (pp. 86-87), while carrying an aggressive streak the script doles out as possible evidence: the road rage (pp. 54-55), the choking in bed (pp. 46-47), the sabotage of Rachel (pp. 63-64), the firing of Pauline (p. 91). Her demand that Pauline "just admit it" is an ironic mirror of her own situation.

Charlie's arc is earned: he passes through public humiliation and a real breakdown in a single take (p. 108) before accepting the restart, and the ending reveals that the one holding a secret is him. Among the supporting cast, Rachel is a strong counterweight (the judge with her own locked closet, whose closeness to Sam deflates into "she's family, so..." on p. 79), but in the third act she shrinks into a hostile drunk. Misha exists to detonate the climax: the kiss (p. 84) goes from table-slam to make-out in three lines of action. The sequence suggests Charlie is drawn to danger, but it is never dramatized. Blake is a type, not a character.

Solution: one more beat making the kiss inevitable rather than convenient, and a crack in Rachel at the wedding that complicates her antagonist role.

Dialogue

7/10

The dialogue is naturalistic, with an excellent ear for cringe comedy and strong use of dramatic irony. It fails on two fronts: explanatory stretches in the confession and on-the-nose thematic statements from Charlie.

The best of it: the Pauline confrontation (pp. 88-91), which escalates into offering her a corner to smoke heroin in, "not inside though, the sprinklers"; the hypothetical question to Misha (pp. 82-83), where everyone knows who he is really talking about; the subtext of "you use ginger?" right after the knife scare (p. 60). The weakest: when Emma explains that the online group made her feel special and that she "started believing in this character" (p. 42), or that leaving it was "like escaping a cult" (p. 53), the dialogue turns explanatory, the adult acting as her own therapist while the flashbacks already show it. Charlie quotes Freud to say what he feels (p. 56) and turns an argument into a thesis on the "socially constructed, cultural" origin of violence (pp. 72-73), a stretch that edges into podcast dialogue. On the page, the volume of "Uhm..." and ellipses dilutes the key lines, and there are typos (pp. 5, 20, 40, 70, 103).

The impact runs two ways. In the confession, explaining flattens Emma's ambiguity exactly when the script wants us doubting alongside Charlie. In reading, transcribed hesitation tires a development reader even where it plays on set.

Solution: let the flashbacks carry the why and trim Emma's self-analysis; make Charlie's theories reveal his self-deception, as the "interesting" line on p. 74 already achieves, rather than announce the theme; clean up the texture and keep hesitation only where hesitation is the scene.

COMPARABLE FILMS

Force Majeure

Ruben Östlund, 2014

One instant redefines how you see your partner.

Sick of Myself

Kristoffer Borgli, 2022

The writer's own satirical, cringe-comedy edge.

Rachel Getting Married

Jonathan Demme, 2008

A wedding as a pressure cooker for buried family truths.

We Need to Talk About Kevin

Lynne Ramsay, 2011

Living alongside the possibility of violence in someone you love.

The weighted average of 7.6 sits in the upper band and rounds to Recommend on the strength of the concept, the character execution and a third act with no cheats. As a read, the script moves from "interested but critical" across the first thirty pages to "hooked" from the confession to the end. The floor is 7 if the second act stays as is; the ceiling is 9 if it gets solved.

This is an auteur script with real commercial value: two showcase leads, contained locations, and a premise that generates conversation. The market risk is the subject, not the execution. No deal-breakers: functional structure with catalyst, climax and causality; protagonists with agency; a sensitive subject handled with purpose.

DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

3-4 weeks of polish: move the confession earlier, condense the second-act paranoia spiral around an external midpoint, and motivate the Misha kiss.

GENRE WEIGHTING

Drama / Character Study. The engine is comedic, but the weight sits on the relationship.

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