



*** PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL ***

Title	UNTITLED FAMILY FILM PROJECT	AKA	
Writer	Hollyhawk Hill	Submitted To	Amanda Brown
Format	Script	Date Submitted	08/01/2013
Draft Date	7/30/2013	Submitted By	Hollyhawk Hill
Page Count	107	Agency-Company-Producer	In-house
Publishing Date		Story Analyst	John Soriano
Elements		Time Period	Present
Copy To		Location	California woods
		Genre	Comedy, Family

PREMISE

A 5th Grade class field trip to the woods goes terribly wrong - and two students (11) with video cameras capture all the mayhem, including the destruction of their bus and the attack on their teacher by a legendary giant bear - from which they rescue him.

COMMENTS SUMMARY

The idea of a Nickelodeon-targeted family movie with the footage conceit is good. Unfortunately, the script is tonally broad yet the humor doesn't land, and between the large cast and frenetic and expensive mayhem, it short-circuits the micro-budget strategy of a footage movie altogether.

	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCELLENT	N/A
PREMISE	██████████	██████████			<input type="checkbox"/>
STORY LINE	██████████	██████████			<input type="checkbox"/>
CHARACTERIZATION	██████████	██████████			<input type="checkbox"/>
DIALOGUE	██████████	██████████			<input type="checkbox"/>

SUBMISSION: Pass

WRITER: Pass

SYNOPSIS

Nerdy, bright and eager NOAH RICKENBAUM (11) makes a "epic movie" involving his plastic dinosaur figures. Across town, his classmate SETH SPENCER (11/portly) does the same thing, albeit in more of an assaultive manner: Seth tackles his sister ERIN (8), sits on her face, and farts - one of his many YouTube videos he's posted featuring fart bombs.

It's the day of Westfield Middle School's big field trip to the woods, and NOAH'S DAD warns him of all the perils in the wilderness - from poison oak to snakes to bear attacks and killer bees. Noah insists he'll be safe as he and Seth agree to make an "Epic Field Trip" movie with their camcorders - and we see construction paper titles as they sing TV's "Batman" theme song. Seth's PARENTS are annoyed with their troublemaking son, wondering if he should be in therapy or military school.

At the school, MR. JENKINS (late 40s) and super hot teacher's aide MISS GRIMES (20s) wrangles the kids on the bus, and there are a lot of them: morbidly obese GLENN; held-back older kid ROGER; mean girl clique of DEANNA, ADIA, and JENNY; pyro bad-kid MAX; chubby nerd RALPH; sporty Hispanic jock/Class Captain DIEGO; Chola GUADALUPE; rich fashionista OLIVIA; proud nerdy boy scout BUCKY; trippy surfer kid DAX; Asian skater ICHI; cute semi-emo rocker IZZY; Chinese exchange student PENG; and assorted other KIDS. They climb onto the bus driven by scary grizzled RANDY, and head off. Mr. Jenkins explains they'll visit the Chikiwatia Reservation, learn Native American skills, then visit the Sequoia Nature Reserve - and all the students are expected to take notes in their field journals, particularly with the world's largest fern - the General Butler 3,000 year old fern.

Their first stop is the California beaver sanctuary, where a BEAVER stands frozen with his arms up in the air - and as they drive by it slowly, other BEAVERS slap their tails on the pavement. Seth harasses Peng by opening his lunch box, grossing out over the tentacled lunch. Suddenly, Mr. Jenkins realizes that STEVE is missing, and they pull over to search for him. Fortunately, on Noah and Seth's videos, they have proof he entered the bus - and Max starts slashing seats to find him. Mr. Jenkins decides they should continue.

At the Ohikiwatia Reservation, a docent WOMAN introduces rascal scooter-riding RUNNING BEAR and Goth BLACK MOON, who show how to explain how acorns are ground into mush, and how tomahawks are flung (nearly hitting Bucky). Seth puts a worm in the acorn mush that Bucky eats, capturing the squirming mess as he eats it. Seth & wind up in the "Authorized Personnel Only" area, meeting CHIEF TOMO, who warns of the "Mantotopa," a one-eyes monster bear that lives in a cave on Mount Cachuma, and has ravaged the woods and "eats the pants off men." Seth scars Noah and Ralph by roaring like a bear.

Mr. Jenkins' group heads to the Sequoia park, where RANGER DAVE greets the (now late) class trip - taking them into the ranger station, where the kids marvel at the many stuffed animals - and Seth grosses out Deanna by picking out "Bambi boogers" from a stuffed deer. Miss Grimes senses Seth likes Deanna - while he really lusts after Miss Grimes. When asked about the Mantotopa, Ranger Dave insists it's just a legend. After outlining the rules for the nature hike (staying together, not touching any animals, etc.), they commence from the trailhead (Steve is still missing). Seth sees Ralph sketching a flower, and has Peng film him pulling a prank - stealing the flower, and getting Ralph to chase him - with boulders stuffed in his backpack, landing him on his back like a turtle. Seth declares "he's been SETHed!"

Most of the kids think that nature's so lame and boring - Glenn finally collapses of exhaustion, and then Miss Grimes touches poison oak - her head swelling up like a monster. Ranger Dave panics as he rushes her back to go to the hospital: she's having a toxic allergic

reaction and may need a tracheotomy. This leaves Mr. Jenkins, who's now rattled by the chaos that's ensuing from the incident - he sends most of the kids to the bus, while others like Noah (filming) try to find the missing kids. Suddenly, Mr. Jenkins is attacked by the 10-foot-tall (standing) ONE-EYED MANTOTOPA, which ferociously grabs Mr. Jenkins by the seat of his pants and runs off. Back at the bus, troublemaker Max shoots sling shot rocks at a RACCOON, which jumps onto a giant bus-sized boulder, which rolls down a hill, destroying the Ranger Station and blocking the road. Noah and his group join Seth at the bus - they'll share footage of Mr. Jenkins and the boulder to make an awesome movie.

With the gates of the park automatically closed at night, Bucky offers to try and create a fulcrum to move the boulder - but they decide to save Mr. Jenkins instead, driving the other way deeper into the forest. They have Roger (who's older and bigger) drive the bus, which he awkwardly learns in fits and starts - while the kids argue over what music to play on the radio, or whether the radio should even be on. Unfortunately, Roger hasn't mastered braking, and while they do make headway in their increasingly off-road drive, Bucky's bag blocks the brake and Roger smashes into the old General Butler Fern, destroying the 3,000 year old plant. Bucky sobs, wishing he could remember his plant-grafting skills.

Now that they're trapped, Bucky uses his scout skills to start a fire to send distress smoke signals - but he winds up starting a fire that surrounds and then destroys the bus. As they hear wolf howls, Noah and Izzy discover an attraction, and Olivia reveals she kept a cell phone (everyone had to turn theirs in before the trip), but gets no reception. Ralph gets eaten alive by mosquitos and they see those ominous beavers thudding their tails menacingly as they approach a white-water river. There's a tree log that forms a bridge across it, and everyone crosses until a branch breaks and Roger, Olivia, Izzy and Ralph all go into the rapids. As they cling for dear life, Bucky redeems his fire by knotting a "rope" from everyone's sweatshirts - and Glenn uses his bulk to pull everyone out.

Unfortunately, everyone's covered with leeches as they emerge from the river - which Noah captures on video, along with ominous beavers and possums. Diego tries to take charge and bully everyone into following him - then he's struck by lightning. Cowering from a wolf cry, Olivia crawls through branches, right up to the ass of a giant moose, which poops all over her Dolce & Gabbana. Seth gets bit by a poisonous Coral snake, and makes confessions as he dies - asking for a dying kiss from Deanna. But it turns out not to be poisonous - a mere King snake. They see Mr. Jenkins' boxers torn on a shrub, and know they're on the right path to save him. Olivia finds an adorable puppy - WOLF puppy, and suddenly they're surrounded by a snarling wolf pack, but then they're saved by STEVE, who's gone feral, wearing a wolf/cougar hide as he scares the wolf pack away. Izzy kisses Noah for protecting her from the wolves. As they approach the top of the mountain, a wall of bats emerges from a cave - this must be where the Mantotopa's lair.

The kids send Olivia in first, since she reeks of moose poop rather than human scent. Suddenly the Mantotopa emerges and attacks, and even when feral Steve bites the bear's neck, it flings him off and Roger nearly gets slashed. Then Max goes behind the bear and shoves some fireworks in the bear's but - it's like the 4th of July as the bear roars and runs off the precipice. Suddenly a rescue Search and Rescue helicopter arrives - the kids will be saved, but the National Park Service and FBI are pressing charges for the myriad violations and crimes the kids have perpetrated. Still, Seth and Noah are happy that between their combined field trip footage, they're going to have an epic movie.

COMMENTS

With horror, sci-fi, and comedy genres conquered by the found footage device, it only makes sense that the family film would be next in line. Conceptually, this is sound - the idea of fifth graders taking camcorders on their forest field trip could be a worthwhile movie idea. It also makes sense to have a Nickelodeon branded family movie with this new style of commando filmmaking. Unfortunately, despite this author's meticulous and well-intended efforts, this falls short in nearly every conceivable way.

The headlines here are fairly straightforward. The first is the budget model. The idea of a "found footage" movie suggests a micro or low budget approach - but this script reads consistently and increasingly expensive, with locations, pyrotechnics, explosions, rolling boulders, wildlife behaving in violent or strange ways (i.e., visual effects), and so on. It kind of defeats the whole point of the footage conceit: if you're going to have all these expensive shots, effects, stunts, and son on, why capture them on rough, hand-held video?

The second issue here is twofold - the tone. This is a fairly broad, which is perfectly fine for a comedy - unless it isn't funny. Such is the case here - we appreciate that the author is aiming for humor, but almost none of it lands, and the end result of broadness-sans-laugh is an amplified awkwardness. Secondly, there are aspects of the script that are kind of surreal or "irreverent" - such as the beavers that are behaving as menacing villains. It's in no way real, not quite funny, and never really pays off. This might be one of those odd details that requires a director's flourish to make it play on screen. Either way, it would require CGI beavers to make this play - another uptick in the expense of a "goofy" comedy.

Among the most problematic aspects of this concerns the characters - there is no member of the cast who draws us in, compels our interest (let alone love or compassion), and this makes the antics feel increasingly episodic and belabored. The script starts with the two main characters, videographer NOAH (11), who's the more likable of the two, making a lame dinosaur "movie" at home, preparing to take his video camera on the big school field trip. Then we meet SETH (11/portly), who's introduced attacking his daughter, sitting on her face, and ripping a fart. It's supposed to be funny sibling antics, but it comes off as bullying, and we hate this guy. He proceeds to be the "obnoxious one" of the filmmaking duo, and about the only way an audience would be satisfied at the end is if Seth suffered a fiery, torturous death - yet he continues to play jackass-like "pranks" throughout, to post on YouTube later.

The rest of the school class involves a large and diverse cast, but there are almost too many characters to keep straight, and we aren't liking or rooting for any of these kids. Early on during the field trip, teacher/chaperone MR. JENKINS and his sexy teacher's aide MISS GRIMES lead the class on their bus ride, only to discover "STEVE" is missing. In the real world, this would be the end of the field trip - yet they continue on, so that the kids can meet Native American representatives who show how they make acorn meal and warn of the legendary giant one-eyed bear, the MANTOTOPA, which takes victims to its lair. Needless to say, we await this happening, and aren't sure if it's supposed to be a mutant grizzly bear, a true monster, or some kind of Native American spirit. Either way, it's not real, not funny, and reads expensive to shoot.

There's one decent gag on the road, when Miss Grimes winds up exposed to poison oak and has a hideous allergic reaction - and while this should be another logical endpoint to the adventure, it goes on to feature the kids shooting slingshots at raccoons, causing a boulder chain reaction that destroys the Ranger Station, forces them to drive the bus on the hiking trails, start a huge fire from attempting "smoke signals" (that somehow doesn't start a forest fire), get swept down a raging river (with leeches), get pooped on by a moose, bitten by a snake, and eventually ends up with them rescuing their teacher from the bear/monster. This feels like it wants to be more of a summer camp movie than a single field-trip-gone-wrong, but either way, by the end we're weary of it all, and aren't particularly amused or satisfied by the resolution. Not for us.