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Title: The Test of Quality

Contest: Script House Screenplay Contest

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Story:	4 / 10
Concept / Premise:	5 / 10
Structure:	4 / 10
Character / Character Development:	3 / 10
Dialogue:	3 / 10
Grammar and Spelling:	7 / 10
Originality:	4 / 10

Average Score: 4.29 / 10

SYNOPSIS

One day, protagonist Kyle has the usual frustrating time wading through automated phone menus to inquire about a company's delivery service. He finally gets a human being, luckily it's kindly, sympathetic Daria. She makes him laugh, and their conversation gets borderline flirty. Afterwards, Kyle calls back to try to ascertain her identity but is told that there are hundreds of operators at the company, thus no easy way for her to be found.

Later, Daria hears her colleagues talking about Kyle's follow-up call, which piques her curiosity. From the address he gave her in their original conversation, she writes him a postcard, on which she leaves her phone number for him. But a vehicle smashes into the post box she drops the postcard in, scattering and damaging the mail within.

Fast forward three years. The postcard finally makes it to the intended address... however Kyle doesn't live there anymore. The couple who do reside there receive the card and phone Daria. Her interest aroused again, Daria visits the couple and gets Kyle's current whereabouts from the building's landlady. Daria then tracks down her target and their relationship begins.

Their involvement deepens. Kyle, a "seize the day" type, takes Daria to many places in the city she's never visited or even heard of. Before long, however, she encounters Kyle's mother, who drops a hint that Kyle might be facing dark times. Daria confronts Kyle about this, and he admits that he has leukemia and has decided to let it kill him instead of fighting the disease.

Daria convinces Kyle to battle the illness. Reluctantly he agrees, and is taken to the hospital for a bone marrow transplant. At first, the transplant seems to be effective and Kyle is released from the facility. But later doctors discover that Kyle's immune system is not functioning, and conclude the transplant did not have the desired effect. Hence he has a very short time to live.

The finale shows Daria, alone, going to the waterfront park where the couple had their first date.

There, she rehearses the eulogy she will deliver at Kyle's funeral.

CAPSULE REVIEW

This script pulls a neat trick; at first, with the meet-cute between Kyle and Daria, then the lost postcard incident, it seems a standard-issue romantic comedy. Once the two meet in person and Kyle's disease is revealed, it switches into a dark drama about a man's illness. This is an interesting turn, unfortunately once it happens the story becomes conventional and predictable. We know Kyle and Daria will come closer together, and we feel no surprise when Daria learns to appreciate life through interaction with her dying paramour. The Main Character With A Disease story is a tired convention of years past, thus it is strongly recommended to find a fresher means of pivoting this tale in a dramatic way.

Another minus with this script is length. The initial interaction between Kyle and Daria, and the saga of the postcard, are far longer than they need to be for a rather straightforward sequence of events. Also, many scenes are far too talky and with too little incident to justify the length (nearly 140 pages). A trimming of this dialogue would make the material stronger, and tighten the pace.

The characters are problematic as well. Kyle is an appealingly cranky, smart personality that makes him interesting to watch and sympathetic. However, he's a type we've seen before. More fatally, Daria is rather bland and indistinct. This makes her much harder to root for and dissolves our interest in her and her trajectory. Secondary characters are types and not fully fleshed, and in some cases not necessary at all. For example, Daria's pal Kim has a great many lines and keeps popping up in the story, although she holds no interest and doesn't serve to move the story along or to deliver exposition.

Lastly, there is too little character development. With Daria's urging, Kyle agrees to at least try to save himself, but this is hardly a drastic character shift or the overcoming of a huge obstacle. Likewise, Daria's new awareness of the city she lives in and its hidden beauty isn't enough of a change or a feat of personal growth.

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