

SCREENCRAFT
2021 FEATURE COMPETITION

BAND OF DOCTORS

by dengxian Cao

ScreenCraft celebrates great writing and provides guidance for writers to achieve their goals.

Feedback

Band of Doctors has the kind of premise that seems destined for the big screen. In the near-future, a group of doctors specializing in 3D printing are forced to band together and use their miraculous achievements to do something they'd never imagined: fight ISIS. This is unique, relevant, and somehow avoids self-seriousness. At points, the script wavers in its execution of the concept. In other words, it can feel like the characters are pawns in the world, rather than the world complimenting them. After sharing what was most compelling about the script, I will go into some constructive feedback.

When we finally start printing human beings, there will be a lot of money-hungry people polluting the well. This promise is what motivates the start of the film, and it is as good a starting place as any. The developments of this technology feel plausible. More importantly, they feel dramatic. Dramatic because many of them are tied to the personal wants of Pattinson. His dad, his anxiety about his family at large. This is where the scientific advances stem (no pun intended) from, rather than simple "ambition." Keeping it personal is one of the key choices you've made in devising this script.

The title card that opens the film invites favorable comparisons to the genre-disguised-as-realism world of *Unbreakable*. While that title reminds us of the most obsessive collectors of comics, this reminds us of the most inspiring and harrowing plays at god. Leaning into how the introduction relates to Pattinson's humanity, rather than his job, would make this even stronger.

Before moving on, I'd like to highlight a sequence that I found very inventive. When Pattinson is exchanging sheet-notes, and later videos, with Farooq. This is visual, suspenseful. I found myself constantly checking if guards were watching. It is very difficult to achieve this thrill without violence! Great work. Come up with a few dozen visual ideas like this, and you'll have gold.

Pattinson, on paper, is a great character. A scientist who struggles with the morals of his job as well as filling the needs of his family. A radical humanist poisoned by bitterness. An artist of sorts, whose personal life has been collateral damage to poor business decisions. A kid who just wants to take care of the father who once protected him with all his might. This is someone to build a story around. A role that would attract stars. However, there is something lacking in his relationships. When Bell packs her suitcase to leave Pattinson, it invites audiences to fill in their torrid history. This is partly due to audience expectations about what such an episode means. More so, it is a testament to the fastidious work habits of Pattinson's that you've built as the preceding scenes in the script. Later, I feel as if the relationship with Bell leaves too much to our imagination. Until the big reconciliation, right before Pattinson makes Left Arm and Right Arm, we are not really tracking their relationship. Bell is skeptical of Pattinson, Bell is worried. But the conflict between them, as well as the most beautiful elements of their history, are not dramatized. This is essential, as by

design, the rest of the characters are non-familiars. Whereas relationships with histories allow for characters to express themselves in many different ways, newer ones only allow characters to follow the pattern they've (sub/)consciously set for strangers. That's why we have wonderful moments like Pattinson rolling his eyes at Yao and his students' hero-worshipping. We learn from this that his mission is personal as much as it is for "the greater good." We also learn he is shy! From deeper interactions with Bell (which you give us in the very beginning), we could learn how he loves, how he hates. The flaws beyond "works a lot," the love beyond "cares for dad." The opposite side of the spectrum in complexity from how he treats strangers. Even distinguishing Bell from the rest of the non-Pattinson group will help distinguish the ensemble from one another.

Continuing to clarify how Pattinson relates to his closest friends, his employer, and wife will lead to major revisions in the structure of the screenplay. Right now, the plot does not really allow for breathing room in this respect. There is always something happening. While this is good, it does not allow for much emotion. Try to build character moments into the wonderfully wacky plot.

Before sending this again, I might consider talking to a few cultural consultants. Mainly for the Syrian and Chinese cultural elements depicted here. For example, Ying's conversation with Mom is in "Chinese." As you may know, this is not actually a language, it is an umbrella that includes many dialects. Getting a friend from the backgrounds you're exploring could help make you comfortable exploring these cultures.

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