

## **Your Question(s):**

Thank you for your Feedback. If this script were fictional, I would rate your feedback a 9 out of 10. However, it's based on a real case—the 2020 Funny Nobel Laureate. There are four key facts: the protagonist and villain never met; the protagonist was unaware of the subcontracting; five killers were subcontracted; and the case was tried three times in court. These facts are widely known and reported internationally.

To address these constraints and meet script conventions, I fictionalized Wang Xiuhong to facilitate confrontation. To keep the protagonist visible after hiring the murderer, I had him create alibis, reduced the number of killers, and made the first killer his coworker and best friend. This keeps him active and adds unique comedy as he navigates deception and faked death. The killers' actions also reflect the protagonist's, creating a comedic sequence where fake actions disguise real ones. How is the protagonist still passive?

So I'm asking, do you realize that this is based on a real case? It's hinted at under the script title. If you know, do you think the feedback is correct? A distortion of the facts? Will audiences accept it?

If you didn't see the hints, then how do you make the protagonist confront the villain when it's based on a real-life case? How do you keep the protagonist active on screen after the murder for hire? Is there a more brilliant way? Isn't the fact that they don't have a direct confrontation what makes the story unique? And what are your new comments? Where does it need to be improved?

PLOT.

Regarding Luo Qiao as a passive protagonist, I've addressed this above. But about there not being much of a comedic element, I think it's worth discussing. A killer hires a killer, the hired killer hires a killer... isn't that a comedy theme? How else would it have been awarded the Nobel Prize for Funny? The protagonist is busy creating an alibi while the villain creates a fake death, and then putting them together isn't funny? Isn't it a comedy that Luo Qiao and Yao Jiancheng, thousands of kilometers

apart, are afraid of each other, one still afraid of reprisals from ghosts, the other afraid of being killed? Is it not part of the comedy that a case is heard three times? If you put it in a Chinese setting, there are even more laughs, such as the main character drinking and not being able to find his home, Zhang Xiao asking for money, and hilarious dialog, among other comedic elements.

Here are some questions for clarification:

As for why Luo Qiao is afraid of Yao Jiancheng on page 56, that's because he thinks the ghost is haunting him. He is revealed to be somewhat superstitious from the first scene when he kneels down to worship the excavator.

The declarative sentence is not from the police officer, but from Zhang Sanming: "We think there's more to this. Hidden Factors."

Thank you again for your Feedback and for responding!

## QUESTION ANSWERS

Hey! Thank you for the questions. I'll try to answer them as succinctly as possible.

I genuinely had no idea that it was based on a real event but I do believe the notes that I suggested still apply. Some real life events don't always make the best films when they are too closely translated from story to film and this story feels like one of those cases. I think it may be more beneficial if you treat the script as a "loosely based on" scenario rather than an exact replica of how the events went down. I don't think an audience would really mind as long as its entertaining and engaging. It also gives you more flexibility with the characters, especially Luo Qiao.

On the topic of Luo Qiao being a passive protagonist, I think having him make more choices is an easy way to make him more active. Luo Qiao does do all the things that you listed but a lot of that is through phone calls and static conversations. The audience ends up watching the other killers and Yao Jiancheng make a lot more choices when we should be watching Luo Qiao do things. Making

adjustments to the plot that force Luo Qiao to have more of a say in how the events unfold, even if that strays from the truth would be helpful. For example, you could make other characters like his wife or Fang Gang push back and create problems that Luo Qiao needs to respond to directly by physically doing something.

I think the idea of two characters never meeting is a unique element that works for a story but does not necessarily work for a film.

On your comedy questions, while the idea of someone hiring a killer, who hires a killer, who hires a killer is funny as a concept (the same goes for Luo Qiao creating an alibi while Yao Jiancheng creates a fake death), they aren't treated in a comedic tone in the script. The way the action lines and descriptions read in the current version of the script skews the story toward a crime-drama tone than a comedy. A good example of this is the start of the drunk scene -- It starts with the lines "Streetlights flicker with a ghostly glow. Shi Mao, barely upright, clings to his deputies like a drunkard's lifeline." This reads as moody rather than comedic, so even though the men flailing around while they're drunk is funny, the script is portraying the moment as something darker and heavier. Checking out some scripts from the Cohen Brothers, like *The Big Lebowski* and *Fargo* or something from Yorgos Lantimos like *The Lobster* might be useful in showing how to have the tone of the action lines and the dialogue feel comedic even though the audience is watching something that could be seen as very serious.

My apologies about the mixup between the police officer and Zhang Sanming but I think my general note still applies. The conversation they all had at that moment should be longer since this is a story about corruption and it's the first time the police have shown up. There's a lot of humour that can be pulled from the police questioning Yao Jiancheng, especially if they grill him about how silly faking his own death looks.

In terms of Luo Qiao on page 56, he can be superstitious but just seeing Yao Jiancheng once is not enough to make the audience believe that he feels like he's being haunted by a ghost. It should ideally happen at least one or two more times so the audience feels how paranoid Luo Qiao has become.

Good luck with the script! I hope my notes were helpful.

# MIDDLEMAN ASSASSINATION SQUAD

ABOUT STORY ANALYST LSTS86

I'm a screenwriter who has worked as a reader and development assistant for Schemers Entertainment and Atchity Productions reading scripts, offering notes, creating pitch decks, and researching up-and-coming writers and directors.