

Film Treatment: 'Late Night'

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Treatment:	1
Character Profile:	3
Narrative Structure:	5
Evaluation:	5
Research:	7

Treatment:

An artist coming home from work has an unexpected and dangerous visitor while settling in for the night.

The wind throws rain through the black of night, each droplet like an icy dagger against Anna's face. The crackle of her mother's distorted voice pitifully fights against the tempest, begging her to come home - to make amends. Her pleas only reinforce Anna's steely resolve, spurring her on through the winter downpour; a bastion against the cold thrashes of the past.

Her street, an anaemic stretch of terraces aloof in the dark, is empty except for her. Gnarled hues of orange bleed through the rain from sparsely placed lampposts; lonely silhouettes one impossible stride away from their kin. Anna squints through the gloom, her mind and body stubbornly focused on the impending warmth of home. Everything besides the path before her, cracked by invading weeds, was as distant as her mothers voice - static in the void.

Anna reaches the foot of her doorstep and fiddles with her keys, hands shaking violently. Her mind is still in that tunnel, enticed by the curling finger of respite and focused on unlocking the door. Wrong key. Wrong key. She drops them. A muffled curse slams against the torrent. Anna fumbles to pick them up, bending down with her back turned to a shapeless figure that has materialised from the void, watching her from afar. . .

The door unlocks with a satisfying click and Anna stumbles into the embrace of her home. The voicemail has ended and the rain now feels like a world away. The day's stresses pour from Anna with a heavy sigh as she digs around in her pocket, pulling out her phone to play a song through her headphones.

She kicks off her shoes and shambles into her living room: a barren space with peeling walls, rickety floorboards and a pittance of furniture. Licks of frosty air, spittle of the winter night, creep through every crevasse. But Anna doesn't care.

In the kitchen, she waters a row of plants squashed on the windowsill to the anthem blasting in her ears. The stomping from the neighbour renting the second floor of the house, the rain leaking in from her backdoor and the futile rumble in her stomach do not trouble her. Her mind is in another tunnel, one embellished with the comfort of her passions and the simple pleasure of solitude.

She moves onto her bedroom, throwing her coat and bags to the dumping grounds in the corner. This room feels more alive than the rest. The walls are animated with pinned up drawings and framed posters; on almost every surface, statues of fictional characters rub shoulders with a variety of knick knacks; and a keyboard, battered but functional, sits in another corner. She plops down at her desk and goes to empty her pockets, only to realise

that her keys are missing. Anna swears up and down that she just had them as traipses back through her house to the front door, expecting to find them dangling near the shoe rack.

The door is wide open. Buffeting against the wall, wind and rain furiously rushing into the hall. A cold prickle of fear pierces Anna's heart and the hairs on her neck stand on end, phantasmic air blowing on her skin. She approaches the door and finds the keys still in the lock, remedying some of her panic. She was in such a hurry to get home that she probably forgot to take them out and lock up properly. Clumsy Anna. Silly Anna. That was all.

She slams the door and locks it, dumping her keys into her pocket as she forces a bout of nervous laughter from her throat. Still, in spite of her affirmations, Anna cautiously sweeps the house with her headphones dangling from her neck, listening to every creak and crack over the tinny vocals.

Satisfied, somewhat, she returns to her bedroom and begins reviewing tattoo stencil; trying to align her thoughts with the parlour and her music, rather than the unruly spawn of her imagination. Working to the rhythm, it doesn't take long for her to get back to that tunnel and shut herself off from the world. She was oblivious, even, to the crashing and horrid shouting coming from her neighbours flat or the shifting shadows behind her.

She works. The song repeats over and over, ambient like the rain. She's about to finish up her work for the night when speakers in her living room suddenly start roaring out with the same song playing through her headphones. Unlike the scuffle upstairs, she hears this. Shaken from her seat, heart pounding like a drum, she stumbles towards the living room - music so loud it was almost making her bleary eyed.

She is shaken from her stupor when she spots bloody fingerprints splattered all over the controls. That prickle of fear turns into a blade, gauging her chest and paralysing her. A deer caught in crimson headlights. The lamps in her house begin to flicker, the music blaring through the speaker becomes distorted and a buzz - humming like the rain - drones through the walls. Someone, something is interfering with her home. Someone, something is there with her. Anna thaws from her fear and rushes for the door. Locked. Her keys are missing again. Her throat wrenches with a despondent cry. The backdoor. It's a deadbolt. The realisation, a ray of light beaming through a tempest, spurs her on.

She runs for the kitchen but a silhouette blocks the doorway. A solid chunk of shadow, it only had the impression of a person. Before Anna can even scream its lunging for her, a slow impending doom. Anna barely avoids it before it swipes at her again, the two of them moving in turns, following the rhythm of a beat, like a perverted dance.

Back and forth, back and forth. Anna fumbles through her home, upturning furniture and throwing decorations to avoid the force chasing her. It's a gruelling waltz, one Anna finally escapes from after catching the figure in the leg with one of her plant pots. She circles around the dazed creature and bursts through the backdoor, sprinting down the alley leading to her street as fast as her legs could bear. She runs until the jaws of oblivion could no longer snap at her heels. Eventually stopping to catch her breath, cry and return a message to her mother. .

Character Profile:

Basic Information

Name: Anastasia Watkins - "Anna"

Age: 23

Gender: Female

Occupation: Tattoo Artist

Attributes

Personality: Anna is an introvert through and through. What most people mistake for shyness, is Anna's inability and lack of motivation to connect with the people around her. She has friends, loved ones, but like a battery she needs to recharge between each visit and often prefers to talk to them through a screen - while she works on her drawings or tends to her plants. Being independent for the majority of her life, she has the determination to work for what she wants, turning down help at most corners.

Likes/Dislikes:

- Anna is an artist. She enjoys working in various mediums: inking, creating stencils for work, traditional pencil and paper. Her favourite, however, is painting. It's the medium she spent the most time with as a child and most of her creations often revolve around plants and botany. It's a sort of cathartic process for her.
- Speaking of, Anna is fascinated with nature, loving to study plants and then create illustrations from them. As her skills have developed over the years she has become particularly interested in combining the style with other themes. Urban environments overgrown with greenery and the macabre entwined with life.
- Anna is not a complete shut in. She enjoys certain gatherings and parties, but without a controlled dosage she quickly becomes exhausted with them. Often she will come up with elaborate excuses to get out of them, lies which have snowballed into repeated habits - putting strain on the relationships she does hold onto.
- Music! Anna adores consuming and creating music. Though she is nowhere near as experienced at it like her art, it is still a hobby that brings her immense amount of enjoyment.

Skills: Drawing, inking, gardening, music

Fears: A common fear that most people share is heightened in Anna's case with her high value of importance. Anna is afraid of

strangers, not just meeting new people but the thought that someone might be watching her or intruding on her life. It is a trait that, in some instances, makes her a bit paranoid.

Goals: Focus on her art, improve her position at the parlour and eventually - hopefully - stand on her own two feet with her own business.

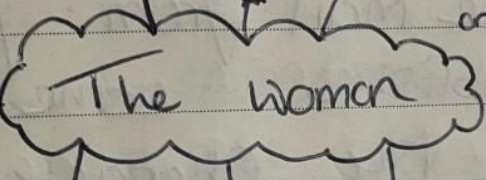
High Concept:
Silent character - no dialogue
The Woman, the Intruder

What I value:
music, privacy, arts.

What I want:
Simple, just to get home and go to bed.

life decisions making cutting contact.

This character is an introvert at heart.



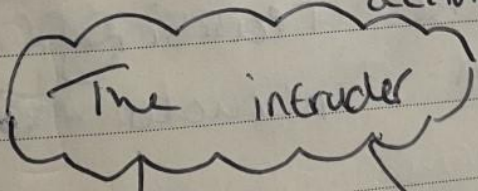
What I fear:
Strangers, intruders.

What I know:
Gardening, coloring.

What I hate:
Social gatherings.

Authentic activities.

Masked in shadows.



An ambiguous character whose true nature is never revealed.

A force, or entity.

Narrative Structure:

- My treatment is best labelled as a hybrid genre of horror and thriller. I have attempted to build a sense of tension and creeping dread during its beginning and middle before leaning into a more action orientated climax. It plays on the fears of the unknown and isolation while providing a thrill.
- The treatment follows a linear narrative, following the central character as returns home before she it's inevitably terrorised by a mysterious figure. There is a clear order that doesn't deviate from what is happening in the present. It is also single-stranded, focusing exclusively on the perspective of the protagonist.
- The plot of my treatment adopts a semi-realist narrative. While the nature or the intentions of the antagonist in my treatment are never clarified, the events that take place could happen in the real world. However, there are insinuations that something might be more sinister at play. Towards the end of my treatment there is a sequence that brings into question whether or not there is some sort of paranormal interference, but is again never clarified.
- The ending I decided on for my treatment is somewhat open ended. While my protagonist gets away from the figure tormenting her, the motivations and identity of her attacker are never identified. And whether or not the character is actually safe and away from the danger is ambiguous too.

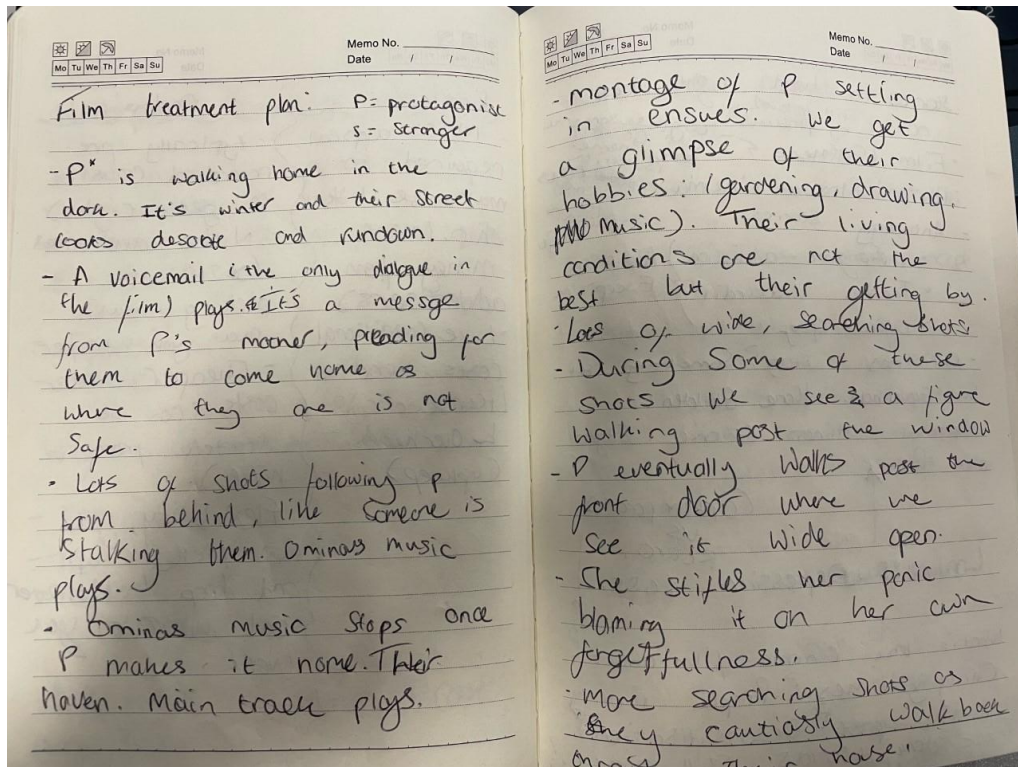
Evaluation:

I think the biggest challenge I faced while creating my film treatment was adapting my original concept to its short form structure. I would describe my short film as high concept, something that instead of focusing on character nuisances, is carried by creative sequences and interesting visuals. I wanted to make a film that played to the beat of a song, dialogue and sound cues muffled and - in some instances - absent entirely, supplemented instead by wide searching shots and subtle cues in the background all designed to frighten the keen eyed. Translating all of this to a format where I couldn't use action lines and camera movements was, surprisingly, more difficult than I had originally envisioned.

However, despite these difficulties, I believe I was still successful in completing this transition. My treatment, overall, is coherent and I feel that my original idea is conveyed well enough. Though, there were a few hiccups towards the end of my treatment when the action started to pick up in a physical confrontation. I intended for this segment to feel fast paced and a little disorientating but I feel that it might have ended up messier than I had hoped. It was another area of my treatment that I found some difficulty writing and is definitely something I want to practise and improve upon in the future.

Writing in the form of film treatment also felt new to me due to the tense I had to use throughout. Present tense is not a style I often use in my writing as I prefer a more traditional structure with past tense. It caused me to stumble over myself while writing certain segments and required me to spend some more time editing and proofreading my work. I believe this was a positive experience for me, however, I was able to step even further out of my comfort zone and exercise more writing muscles.

With all these challenges and my unfamiliarity with the format, I made more plans for the plot of my story than I usually do with other projects. I created mind maps to break down my ideas and made multiple bullet points lists to order each segment. I went through multiple iterations of my idea and plan before I started writing my treatment as I simply didn't know how best to approach it. This process, thankfully, proved beneficial in the end as I had essentially created a template for myself to follow. That being said, I still struggled with putting together my ending. With such a short runtime for my film, wrapping up my plot in a way that felt satisfying, reasonable and interesting was another challenge I faced; one that made me refer back to my research for inspiration.



Plot Plan:

- Mostly high concept. Little dialogue. Works best visually
- Walking through the rain to get home
- Voicemail from her mother plays over the downpour
- It ends at her door. As she tries to unlock it a figure, unseen to her, comes into view
- Once inside she puts away her things and tends to chores around the house, main music track playing through her headphones
- We get a feel for her interests and hobbies, defining her character without dialogue
- Realises the door is open
- Learn she's a tattoo artist
- Sweeps the house, finds nothing. Dismisses it as forgetfulness
- Goes back to working, person in background
- Loud thump upstairs, neighbour being attacked doesn't hear it
- Speakers play from her flat, same song as headphones
- Tries to flee but doors are locked
- Sporadic lights during physical confrontation, escapes through back door which isn't locked/unlocked by key
- Film ends with her calling someone outside.

Alongside all the short films I looked at to familiarise myself with the structure, I also took a look at a few feature length films (*Amelie*, *The Strangers* and *Halloween (2018)*). The latter two were particularly helpful in the development of my treatment as it helped me better visualise the 'searching' scenes I mentioned above. It also gave me a better understanding as to how to craft a suspenseful scene, the final showdown between Michael Myers and Laurie Strode in *Halloween* being a key point of my study. However, as previously mentioned, I wasn't entirely satisfied with the action sequences in my story so I will definitely be spending more time in the future studying media like this for further inspiration.

I also enjoyed the process of fleshing out my character (Anna) 'visually' rather than the traditional means. In my treatment there are various instances where Anna is completing menial tasks around her house. I felt these segments were important as it gives us a chance to learn about her in such a short time frame without the use of dialogue or exposition.

Upon completion of my treatment I found myself eager to adapt it into a fully fledged script at some point in the future, using the short summary as a guide for future projects.

Research :

Feature Length Film Research:

<https://witchersandwitches.wordpress.com/2022/11/09/feature-length-film-research/>

Short Film Research:

<https://witchersandwitches.wordpress.com/2022/10/12/an-introduction-to-film-treatments/>