

Comments on “The Wish Cow”

General Comments:

- Thanks so much for sharing your work with me! I really enjoyed the world that you built for this story. The characters were very vivid and relatable. I also really liked how you incorporated different timelines into the screenplay; they added an extra layer of intrigue and excitement. I love how you were able to successfully balance some fantasy elements with grounded reality. Great creativity! Having said all this I do have some notes about the overall script and specific scenes as well. Please see below.
- **Structure:** One of my favorite things about this screenplay is the introduction of Nandini, and in my opinion, the most compelling part of the story starts when we see the split in timelines. I think this works beautifully due to a number of reasons: 1) It gives us, the readers, a new insight. It creates a lot of anticipation for what we are about to witness. 2) It also gives your main character Jillian an opportunity to complete her character arc – she goes from a young girl who finds flaws in her life to someone who appreciates every little thing that she has. This is a really great way to bring everything full circle and to make the audience/reader re-evaluate their own realities. I found myself thinking about what I am grateful for that I may be taking for granted in my life. There are things that we take for granted and unless these things are taken from us, we don't get to fully appreciate them. This is one of the main messages of your story and it is communicated beautifully through the split timelines. Therefore, I found the portion starting at page 61 to be the most fun part of this read. I wonder if there is a way for you to re-structure the script in a way in which the timeline split happens even sooner, and maybe once it does, there is even more to explore in it? Maybe there are even several different timesplits (for example it might be funny if there was another timeline where Greg is very successful but is mean and Jillian decides she doesn't like that either?). You could really get creative with this script because you basically have no limitations when it comes to how many realities you can create. Also, just another idea: Not everything has to be played out chronologically. For example, maybe we see Jillian going in and out of different realities and we don't realize until much later that Nandini was the one that changed the timeline. These are just some creative ideas that came to me as I was reading the screenplay; obviously you don't have to take any of these suggestions. I would just encourage you to keep exploring different creative ideas around how to structure the script.
- **Screenplay Length:** I am raising the above point about possibly rethinking the structure of the screenplay also because your script is currently an 87-pages. Generally, feature screenplays tend to be between 90-120 pages so there is definitely room to play with the length (add additional scenes etc.) if your creative pursuits bring you to a point where you decide you would like to do that.
- **Characters:** I love how relatable and likeable the characters are. We immediately connect with Jillian because we see how her expectations are crushed during her sweet sixteen party. I also immediately connected with Greg, especially because it's clear that he struggles with his low self-esteem while also trying to keep the family together. We get introduced to his vulnerability right away. Ashley is an interesting character because at first she comes across as the very mean stepmom but then we see some of her humanity in later scenes. If I were you I would humanize her even more. Maybe there is an opportunity to write a scene or add a few beats into a scene where Jillian and Ashley have

a heart-to-heart conversation. This could be when they finally both start relating to each other on a more human level. Currently, Jillian starts 'liking' Ashley once she notices all the things that Ashley does for them (when she visits the other timeline) but maybe there is more to it? Maybe Ashley really didn't mean those words she said to her client? Maybe she does love Jillian and Austin? She might just feel a bit intimidated? Is there an opportunity to give her a chance to show that? This will make her even more multi-dimensional and it will help readers connect with her on an emotional level. Even when you have antagonists, you still want to show your readers that they have some humanity and vulnerability to them, regardless of how minor it may be. These elements will make them more interesting. I also think you can similarly have a scene (or just a few beats) somewhere between Jillian and Austin where they are bonding (even before Jillian comes back from the alternative timeline and gives each of them a hug). This will help the readers feel connected to them as a brother and sister team. I love how Nandini provides such a great contrast to the family and how she opens Jillian up to considering a completely different reality. Also, a few of the characters (Jack, grandma and grandpa) are introduced but then fade away. If you can find a way to incorporate them in at least one other scene or so, they will play stronger supporting roles. For example, maybe Jillian can have a brief scene with Jack when she is in the alternate timeline or he can react to seeing their video being shared by everyone at school? Similarly, you can maybe incorporate the grandma and grandpa in at least one more family scene so that we can get to know them a bit more. Currently, they don't have a very strong presence in the story.

- ***Characters' Emotional Journeys:*** I think you do a great job of creating conflict throughout the script (whether that's between Ashley and Jillian, Austin and Jillian or between Greg and Ashley). I would spend a bit more time tracking each character's emotional journey (especially Jillian's). For example, if Jillian hears Ashley say something hurtful to her, how does she take that in? The best way to do this is to make sure that you include a one-sentence description or action sentence as soon as a loaded line hits one of your characters. Let them have a second to absorb these moments and react to them. The reaction could be in their behavior or something that they say but it clarifies for the reader what it is that they are feeling in that moment. We want to be able to track the emotional journey of the main characters because it makes us relate to them even more. We put ourselves in their shoes and want to root for them, and the more we can feel how they feel, the easier it is for us to do that.
- ***Formatting:*** I have a few formatting notes that should be easy to fix: 1) I wouldn't break too many sentences in half. I noticed that you have a tendency to do it. It's totally fine for action scenes etc. to add suspense to each moment but in some cases it could actually distract the reader and slow down their reading (which is not something you want). I would go through the script once just to see if there are any sentences you can combine to make the scenes flow better. I've pointed out a few of them below in my scene-specific comments. 2) You start some action lines with a hyphen (-), for example, on page 41. The dash usually goes at the end of a sentence to indicate more is coming, not in the beginning of a sentence. The exception to that would generally be a montage scene where you have many different scenes listed and you use the hyphen at the beginning of each scene/sentence to make sure the reader knows the scene includes many mini-scenes. 3) A lot of your sentences didn't have periods at the end. Make sure to go through the script and add periods at the end of complete sentences. 4) Instead of using a semicolon

between sentences (;) I would use a period or comma, 5) I noticed that you use “Then:” a lot when transitioning between scenes. You really don’t need this. I think readers will know to connect the two scenes and you will also save yourself a lot of space if you delete the “Then:”s, 6) I would not include any camera instructions in the screenplay. For example, on page 42: “*Nandini's POV*” – you don’t need this.

- **Considering Production Needs:** In your story, Nandini looks different to Jillian than to other people. This is a creative choice but it doesn’t take into consideration the challenges it would create in the actual production of the movie. This kind of creative choice will create the need for extensive CGI in the production of the movie, which will increase the overall budget. Generally speaking, you want to eliminate as much of the special effects scenes as possible so that you have a more budget-friendly movie. Also, it may be confusing to the audience to view Nandini in two different shapes. I would make it consistent. I think when she turns into Bella, everyone (including Jillian) should see her that way. I was also expecting to see if there was a scene where the real Bella bumps into Nandini looking exactly like her. That might be a fun scene to explore as well. Similarly, make sure that all the descriptions are realistic for an actor to execute. On page 57 it is written: “*In the grand dining room, Ashley hops onto the table and starts doing a series of pirouettes, while balancing a decorative vase on her head.*” This is an incredible visual (I love it!) but it may be hard to find an actress who can do this, so you may want to modify it a bit.

Scene-Specific Comments:

- **Page 1:** Great opening imagery and the immediate conflict initiated by Ashley.
- **Page 1:** Grandpa Henry is sleeping. What is Grandma Susan doing? (love the false teeth placed in glass detail!)
- **Page 2:** *Jillian doesn't buy Ashley's insincerity.* – is there a way to show this through behavior?
- **Page 3:** *Ashley let's go immediately* – correction suggestion
- **Page 3:** *Jillian watches on, wanting the ground to swallow her up* – is this in reference to Ashley or herself?
- **Page 3:** *She looks at him. He mumbles.* – I think you should clarify who the “she” is here. Assuming it’s Ashley?
- **Page:** *Possum collapsing.* – I would be careful with highlighting the possum so much because it makes us (the readers) feel as though these are characters that we will see again in the future but we never do. I would not place too much attention on them but still use them to create the atmosphere for that first scene.
- **Page 4:** When Jillian is presented with the first gift how does she behave? Does she light up for example because the box is bigger than what she had expected or not? Later on you say she opens Austin’s gift with little anticipation. You may want to give us that from the very beginning.
- **Page 5:** Here you repeat Jillian’s name 3 times. I would replace the second one with “she”.

Jillian opens the gift. It's a clam-shell cell phone - clearly not the new model.

Jillian tries to hide her disappointment, glances at Bella's brand new one.

Jillian is too embarrassed to meet Bella's eyes.

- **Page 5:** When Greg says that he couldn't afford the latest phone that is an opportunity for you to give him a moment where he feels the full embarrassment of what he just said. You can also use this opportunity for Jillian to have some empathy for him. Maybe she sees his pain and that affects her. You could make something of that moment.
- **Page 6:** Great that you acknowledge their response to what she said here: *Greg bristles at the dismissive way she said 'family thing'. It isn't lost on Jillian.*
- **Page 6:** *After this, if it ever ends.* – correction suggestion
- **Page 7:** I think we should know where Ashley's line "*We'll have some quality girl time.*" is coming from. Is it from a place of defeat?
- **Page 7:** *The sky starts to open rain falls... Hard.* – close?
- **Page 7:** *ANTIQU~~E~~S STORE* – revision suggestion (this is repeated throughout the script. It should be Antique Store).
- **Page 7:** I think you can turn the Antique Store establishing shot into a one line description instead.
- **Page 8:** *neither Ashley ~~nor~~ Jillian really wanting to be here with the other.* – revision suggestion
- **Page 8:** *So I'm guessing this ~~is~~ where your dad bought your new phone?* – revision suggestion
- **Page 9:** I don't think you need this: *Jillian looks around, then :*
- **Page 10:** *That's just Ashley.* – very funny!
- **Page 10:** *Didn't she use~~d~~ to have her own business?* – revision suggestion
- **Page 11:** *An ugly statue of a COW teeters on the edge.* – revision suggestion
- **Page 11:** You can probably extend the moment when the cow falls on the floor (to increase the suspense) by giving each of these sentences its own line: *And then the cow topples off - Jillian dives for it. It hits her hands, bounces and then hits the floor.*
- **Page 12:** The moments after Bindra turns up the melodrama are really good. Great dialogue and conflict. You can maybe make Jillian a bit more active on page 13. How is she feeling as all this is going on?
- **Page 14:** I think you can end the store scene at "*He hands Jillian the cow, satisfied that he got the better deal.*" We don't need to see them leaving.
- **Page 14:** Is there a way to write what is on the computer screen as an INSERT?
- **Page 15:** I like that you made a choice of having Ashley accuse Jillian, claiming that she bought the cow to humiliate her.
- **Pages 15-16:** Since Jillian and Ashley blow up in this scene, I think you may want to start that tension already in the Antique Store. Maybe there is a moment right before Ashley pays for the cow where she gives Jillian a hostile look for example? Something small to let us know that the tension is already building between them.
- **Page 16:** When Jillian tells Ashley that she doesn't belong there, I would give Ashley a second to take in what just happened before she rushes out. When something like this happens we want to see how it's going to hit the character that will be impacted. Is she shocked to hear these words for example? If so, how does that make her behave? Also, I kind of wanted to know here why Austin is accusing Jillian. Is he actually on Ashley's side and if so, I would like to know why? Instinctively, it feels like brother and sister should stick together? And if they don't the reader may want to know why (you can maybe explore that in another scene).

- **Page 17:** When describing Jillian's room, you use "the girl". I would replace that with "Jillian".
- **Page 17:** Greg's lines on this page feel like exposition and as though the writer is trying to explain the backstory to the readers/audience. Maybe you can incorporate this information without making it too much of an exposition. This is the section I'm referring to: *"Before we met, Ashley had her own real estate company. A career. She left all that behind when she married me."* And then later *"She gave it all up to help with my business."* For example, later on that page when Greg brings up Jillian's mother we clearly get a sense of their past but those lines don't feel like exposition at all. They feel like a part of the natural course of the conversation. I would recommend reviewing the section I copied above to see if there is a way to make it sound more like a part of a natural dialogue.
- **Page 19:** I really would like to know more about Ashley's true intentions regarding Jillian. For example when she says *"If I can get that commission, everything will change. I'll maybe be able to spend more time with her. Really get to know her."* Does she really mean that or is it just an act she puts on when she's in front of Greg? I know some things get revealed later in the story but it would be good to get a hint of her sincerity in this scene.
- **Page 19:** When Ashley takes the call right in the middle of their romantic moment, how does that make him feel? We want to feel how he's feeling in this moment. Is this something that happens all the time? Maybe he's getting sick of it?
- **Page 19:** *Ashley answers the phone.* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 20:** You are using the same word (shoot) 3 times here. Is there a way to replace at least one of them? *"An impossible vortex of glowing mist shooting out from inside it, through which blue shooting stars seem to shoot, and bounce around the room."*
- **Page 20:** I love the cow reveal in the closet!
- **Page 20-21:** You may want to clarify the cow's size (is it huge or small?) When he runs out of the room, does he open the door himself? I am curious about the size and what he is capable of doing physically so you may want to add some additional descriptions to clarify these points. Also on page 27, you refer to him as a human-cow thing so it's important to clarify what this creature looks like when we first see him.
- **Page 21:** I love Austin's reaction here!
- **Page 22:** When Austin doesn't believe Jillian how does that make Jillian feel?
- **Page 22:** Instead of saying this, is there any way to show their mood through their behavior? *"their mood is buoyant"*
- **Page 23:** You don't need this: *Establisher.*
- **Page 23:** *"all the usual cliques"* is repeated twice.
- **Page 23:** *Jillian and Bella are walking, but Jillian is oblivious to her surroundings, or the other kids.* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 24:** *Lily's recording an Instagram reel on Taissa's phone.* – I'm not sure if we need to know that it's Taissa's phone?
- **Page 25:** You have the tendency to sometimes cut the sentences in half but in some cases it may serve you to keep the sentence in one piece. Such as this one: *"Jillian stumbles backwards, collides with a boy, JACK – a good-looking geek type carrying a boba tea. The boba bursts all over both of them."*

- **Page 25:** *He flinches away; it's the **closest** a girl has ever come to him.* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 25:** *Jillian's immediately **profoundly** embarrassed when she realises what she's done.* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 26:** *Greg's on the sofa in sweatpants and **a** t-shirt, watching TV.* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 26:** This scene between Greg and Jillian is a great opportunity for a vulnerable moment between the two characters. Is there more you can add here? Can Jillian do more to comfort him maybe? It would be really nice to experience more deeply how these two characters feel about each other and how much they care about each other even if it's in a subtle way.
- **Page 27:** I would remove all the 'And's on the top of this page. You don't need them.
- **Page 29:** *I know this is a lot to take in. People of your time **seem** to have lost their connection with magic* – revision suggestion
- **Page 32:** I love the moment when Jillian realized there are a million people outside the house! Great choice! And I love that this is such an over-the-top moment with people fainting.
- **Page 34:** *I could try, but, well, **the** way **I** see it we've got two problems.* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 36:** You don't need this: *apropos nothing*
- **Page 36:** I would fix the formatting on this page. There are some extra spaces that you don't need.
- **Page 37:** *Who needs a dental plan?!* – very funny!
- **Page 40:** *The passengers and driver put their hands in the air -including Jillian.* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 43:** *She lets out a laugh **getting** a few curious looks.* – revisions suggestion
- **Page 43:** *She starts running **up and** down the ~~up~~ escalator, getting nowhere **and** loving the novelty of it.* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 43:** *Eventually, Nandini and Jillian **reaches** the second floor, Nandini gasps **s** at the sight before her.* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 44:** *And then shoves the entire thing in her mouth, getting some strange looks from passers-by**s**.* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 45:** You can use the small dashes before each sentence in the montage. I think some of them already have them but you left other ones out.
- **Page 45:** They walk out **of the store** with bags, wearing some of their new designer outfits, including sunglasses. – Revision suggestion
- **Page 46:** I don't think you need this. We already know she's supposed to look like Bella: *"Who appears in it as Bella with a cow tongue."*
- **Page 46:** I love the choice you made here: Jillian brings Nandini to a mall that she used to come to with her mom.
- **Page 48:** *Taissa **clocks** the shopping bags Jillian and Nandini are carrying.* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 48-49:** You can add a few more action sentences in this scene to indicate how uncomfortable Jillian must be feeling being surrounded by the girls. We want to feel her agony here and her eagerness to get away. Maybe she tries to get away but the girls don't let her?

- **Page 49:** *Jillian drags Nandini away, and they walk off quickly* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 52:** *Oh shoot. I left the paperwork at my office.* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 53:** *She picks up the folder, glances over to Nandini in the doorway, munching on a pretzel.* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 54:** *Jillian listens in, tight-lipped, anger rising.* – Would she be angry only after hearing what Semanov said? After all, he's not talking about her. My advice would be: If you are going to have anger rising in a character you should give them time to build that anger. Usually it would take a few beats. In this instance, Jillian's reaction could be more of a surprise. Maybe her ears perk up when she hears what he has to say.
- **Page 55:** *Best to not keep the Lyft waiting.* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 56:** *SEMANOV What is matter?* – this is repeated twice.
- **Page 56:** I love Ashley's dance sequence. Such a great choice!
- **Page 56:** *And then Ashley starts to throw shapes, her body dancing to a beat that only we can hear.* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 58:** I love the cut from the closet in the Mansion to the Acker House (Nandini leaning over the bannister and listening to a heated conversation)
- **Page 59:** *How ~~do~~ else do you explain that amazing dancing I was doing?!* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 59:** This is a very loaded sentence: *"Worst day of my life, for the record."* How do Ashley and Greg take this? Give them a beat to digest this before they react. I love the conflict that follows this.
- **Page 61:** The following segment is very intriguing because you make the readers wonder how their life would have been different without Ashley in it.
- **Page 61:** *The grass in the front yard is patchy, and in need of a mow.* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 61:** *Hey, that ain't something a dad want's to think about, y'know.* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 64:** When the tough guys leave how does Greg feel about his little girl defending him? Is he perhaps a bit embarrassed or has this happened before? Is he used to it?
- **Page 65:** I would not separate these two sentences: *"Greg and Jillian sit on the opposite side of a glass partition to Austin who's wearing prison overalls."*
- **Pages 65-66:** I love when Jillian notices that his friends group is different in this new reality. It creates a very interesting dynamic versus what we have been introduced to previously.
- **Page 67:** I like that you started the Bella and Jillian scene mid-way so we don't get to hear exactly what Jillian was telling her. This helps us, the reader, connect the dots. Maybe instead of Bella accepting everything so fast you can give her a few seconds to digest this weird situation. Maybe she's not so quick to accept what she's being told because it clashes with her reality?
- **Page 70:** I really love this scene where Jillian is sitting across from Ashley in this new timeline but what if it wasn't so easy to get a hold of her? Maybe she really struggles to even get into her office let alone speak to her? That would get us more invested by the time she gets to explain to Ashley what is going on. Maybe Ashley never tells Jillian if she is in a relationship and Jillian has to snoop to find out?
- **Page 71:** *She's standing in front of the Antique's store.* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 71:** *It's as dark, dusty, and cramped as we remember it.* – Revision suggestion

- **Page 73:** *"Jillian throws the statue on the ground - shattering it. But nothing happens. She locks eyes with Bindra."* So does it shatter or not? I found the description a bit confusing.
- **Page 75:** *I know who you are.* ~~4~~ – Revision suggestion
- **Page 75:** *Jillian hugs her.* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 77:** I like when Nandini asks Jillian why she never wished for a reality where her mother never died because we, as the readers, are also wondering why she never asked for her mother.
- **Page 77:** *Nandini see sits down next to Jillian.* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 78:** *Ashley looks at Jillian with the same* – incomplete sentence
- **Page 79:** I love this moment when Jillian truly realizes how grateful she is to have everything that she has in her life.
- **Page 82:** *Ashley is distracted by an off-camera removals guy.* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 82:** Ashley breaking out in a random dance here made me smile. ☺
- **Page 83:** This is a great line: *Life would be pretty boring if I got everything I wanted through wishes. I mean I just want to see where the stream flows from now on, if you get me?*
- **Page 83:** *She rests her head on her lap.* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 84:** *Ahead of them is a majestic palace made entirely of shimmering crystals.* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 85:** *Stars and neon clouds swirling around her* – Revision suggestion
- **Page 86:** I would make the final beat really count. Maybe give the family a moment to exchange a few final words and really try to think of the significance of this moment. You want the reader to finish reading your script knowing exactly how each character is feeling at the end of the story.