

In The Company of Mad Men

In the Company of Mad Men attempts to put this quote by Albert Schweitzer to the test, "Reverence for life affords me my fundamental principle of morality, namely that good consists in maintaining, assisting, and enhancing life, and that to destroy, to harm, or to hinder life is evil". The question is, if you were forced to choose between the life of a stranger and the life of a loved one would making either choice make you evil?

The conflict arises when Jake kills a serial killer in the line of duty. Soon thereafter he begins having visions. The visions present two images, one of a complete and total stranger and the other of someone he loves. Validation comes when he meets the stranger in real life. He doesn't kill the person and soon someone he loves dies.

The antagonist is actually something I'm trying to refine. My initial, gut reaction is that the antagonist doesn't matter as much as the result of the visions. The visions themselves present as the antagonist. My only pause here is whether or not I can present a reasonable enough chance for him to defeat the visions. I feel like him seeking and finding the origins may take me away from the main theme a bit. So this is a struggle at this point.

I wanted to open with Valentine, a clean cut, serious ladder-climbing detective trying to make his name by catching the notorious Crimson Killer, instead, while in pursuit of the unseen killer, he fires, accidentally killing a little boy.

Fast forward some time later, Jake is retired and eking out a living as an average reporter. The inciting incident occurs when he is approached by a man claiming to be able to identify the Crimson Killer. The man admits to being the killer and forces Jake to kill him. Jake begins having visions shortly thereafter.

The Act I turning point is when Jake bumps into one of the strangers from his vision. This should be more of an investigation. Maybe he sees a landmark in his vision that leads him to the woman. As he gets close to her he should feel an overwhelming urge to kill her. But he doesn't. He flees. When he gets home he makes love to his girlfriend. However, he awakens from another vision only to find her heart has stopped. She dies.

The midpoint is when his ex-wife goes into a sudden coma. With persistent visions of the stranger he finally kills her and in doing so his ex comes out of the coma miraculously.

The second turning point is when after Jake's many attempts to find a workaround to overcome the visions. Maybe he tries to stay awake, hoping the visions will subside if he doesn't sleep. The old together Jake becomes more ragged and weary. Then when nothing works he gives in and decides that he just needs to kill to keep his family safe. The build to the climax will occur when after several visions with strangers he gets a different vision, one in which his ex-wife, the love of his life, and his daughter appear together. He knows he must choose which one lives and which one dies.

Still thinking about the conclusion I have a few thoughts. The easiest solution would be that in a climactic chase sequences where he has decided his daughter should live and his ex must die he realizes that if he's dead his family is safe. He turns the gun on himself and ends it. Thinking this through, but these are the current key plot points.

American Psycho

American Psycho follows the life of Patrick Bateman, an investment banker living in Manhattan in the 1980's. The story follows Bateman as he lives a decadent life with his friends and co-workers, most of which he despises. We see him fixing his face, working on his physique and philosophizing over his favorite pop music. Bateman shares, via voice over, how he feels about his designer clothes, his beautification process and his apartment.

The inciting incident occurs when Bateman meets fellow Banker Paul Allen. While flaunting their business cards at a meeting Bateman is enraged by Allen's superior card. At a Christmas party Bateman invites Paul out for dinner. Paul agrees, mistaking Bateman for a guy named Marcus Halberstram. Soon Paul is drunk and back at Bateman's place. Paul is sitting in a chair on some newspapers while Bateman explains his understanding of a song. He then kills Paul with an axe. Bateman disposes of Paul's body and goes back to his apartment to stage the scene.

A few days later Bateman has a threesome with some girls. Bateman begins killing one of the girls giving the other a chance to escape. While escaping she runs into multiple female corpses. Bateman drops a chainsaw on her head killing her as well. Soon thereafter Bateman kills a security guard and janitor while escaping the police. Bateman's sanity comes into questions when he returns to Paul's apartment expecting to find a series of dead bodies he instead finds it clean, empty and for sale. The police, Bateman's lawyer and Bateman's friends all find that Paul has moved to London and track his movements.

After several attempts to confess his many crimes Bateman finds that no one believes him and since there is no evidence he realizes he will never be able to make restitution for his crimes. The story begs the question, did he ever really murder anyone. There are a few shots in the film we Bateman says or does something that seems over the top and vulgar or threatening and no one responds to it. As if he didn't say it at all. There is also an amazing lack of evidence and his apparent miraculous escape from the police.

Structurally, I thought the movie was written perfectly. It was a little embellished at the beginning, meaning that it took the long way home to introduce all the players and set Bateman off on his journey, but once it got going it was tight and didn't sag in the middle. I thought the ending was a perfect way to the journey of a character who would always be partially developed, like his story was halted along with the movie.

Bateman is the protagonist in the traditional sense of the word. He is not a hero. He is not the good guy. He is the leading character in this story. It's an interesting concept because in some regard Bateman is both protagonist and antagonist even though Detective Kimball fulfills that role in the traditional sense.

The tone is dark. It's a black comedy packaged as a thriller. So much of the narrative is a commentary about excess during the 80's. Certainly a period of American prosperity and over

indulgence. Bateman serves as the satire of the capitalist American man. I think all of the underlining intentions of the writer and director played well and didn't come across as over preachy.

The main take away for my film is that though there are essential ingredients to writing and making a good film what should not be afraid to apply a little recklessness to his writing. There are parts of this story that were very untraditional at the time they have now become the standard to writing suspenseful thrillers. I would like to play with the internal protagonist and antagonist in all of us. This film is truly one of my favorites and I love it more every time I watch it.

Along Came a Spider

We open with an exciting scene where Alex Cross is directing a sting operation to catch a predator. The operation goes sideways real fast and Cross loses his partner. Fast forward some time later where it appears he has retired. He is pulled back in when the daughter of a Senator is abducted by a man posing as a teacher, Soneji. The agent held responsible for the breach, Agent Flannigan joins forces with Cross to try and find the missing girl.

Cross uses his keen and sharp mind to figure out that Soneji admires the Lindbergh kidnapping. Maybe even that Soneji wants to reach the same level of notoriety. They later find that kidnapping the girl was only part of his plan. The real endgame was to kidnap the son of the Russian President.

Flannigan and Cross stake out the house and stop the abduction attempt. While Soneji attempts to flee Flannigan pauses, sparing Soneji, because he's the only one who knows where the girl is. Cross and Flannigan get a supposed call from the kidnapper asking for a ransom. Cross passes the ransom to a cloaked figure. When Soneji confronts Cross at Flannigan's home he is killed by Cross. In a cool turn of events Cross recalls that while talking Soneji, Soneji knew nothing about the ransom. While searching Flannigan's computer he finds enough evidence to prove that she used Soneji for her own plans. He tracks them down, saves the girl and kills Flannigan. Cross then takes the girl back to her parents.

I love movies that open up with a good teaser that also introduces the character's main issue. Cross retired after losing his partner and he blames himself. So, naturally he had issues with letting people get close to him. So, the first obstacle he has to overcome is the prospect of having a new partner. There was a great paced, thriller tone to the film. It worked great with this type of mystery. The conflict that drove the story began early on when the girl was kidnapped, and probably more importantly was Soneji called Cross and drew him back into law enforcement. This was like the mouse calling the cat and telling him that it was dinner time.

Trust and partnership were some of the themes explored. It was interesting that the one thing that Cross feared more than anything, losing another partner was exactly how the film played out. He grew to like and trust Flannigan and in the end he has to make a split second separation from his feelings in order to save the girl and kill Flannigan. I felt for Cross throughout, but I had a hard time feeling the humanity in the character. I know in a lot of films this is accomplished by a romance and I guess it would have worked here, but it probably would have interfered with the pacing of the film. I always appreciate when a film knows what it is and stick to it. Cross was intelligent, decisive and calculating.

I usually learn from things not to do when watching films, even ones I love, but I think this movie taught me two important things that I would like to carry over to my film project, one, use the teaser to set up your character development. This was subtle, but really made you get Cross's desire to be out of the business. And two, know what your film is. This was a suspenseful thriller. They cut out the romance, removed any additional character distractions. Each character was important to the arc or to Cross's overall development.

Monsieur Verdoux

This movie opens with a cemetery shot and the voice of Verdoux telling us his story. The story as it turns out is about a mysteriously missing spinster who had recently fell in love and married a man named "Varnay". After a whirlwind wedding she disappeared and so did all of her money. Her family, the Couvais family, has always been suspicious of Varnay. All they have to track him down is a photograph. After we see the photo we are introduced to Verdoux himself.

He's in the garden of a respectable little cottage in the countryside. Verdoux is showing the house, owned by his recently murdered spinster wife, to his prospective next victim, a widow named Marie. This is his business. Seducing, marrying, and murdering wealthy older women, women in need and women with a lot of excess cash. He liberates them of all their finances before sending them to meet their maker. We soon find the Verdoux is doing this because he lost his job some thirty years earlier and he has a crippled wife and a child he must take care of. A business born out of necessity.

Around about thirty minutes into the movie we meet Verdoux's problem. The woman he has been trying to kill for a while, the woman for whom he has crafted an untraceable poison, Annabella Bonhuer. Verdoux needs to test the poison. For that he meets a Girl. He takes her in under the guise of kindness and prepares her some food and wine, the wine is laced with his new concoction. The girl is street smart, but also a romantic. He finds that after she has lost her husband she is still a firm believer in love. Unexpectedly touched by this Verdoux replaces her poisoned wine with a less deadly glass and spares her life. The girl and Verdoux go their separate ways.

Soon Verdoux is back to trying to kill Annabella. The poison doesn't work. Strangulation doesn't work. It seems that Annabella is really just too lucky to be killed. Soon the Word War II erupts on the scene and the market collapses and Verdoux loses everything. Years later he is spotted at a restaurant by members of the Couvais family and arrested. In short order he is convicted, and sent to the guillotine. He says that murdering a few for survival is no worse than going to war and murdering many.

Verdoux is the protagonist of the story. He rationalized murder as a means of taking care of his loved ones. The world did this to him. It ruined his life. It took his chance of happiness away so in turn he would do the same to the world. He would turn the system against them. The conflict arises when he meets the Girl. She has similarly been broken down by the world, yet she has blossomed as a person instead of growing cynical and advantageous.

The themes of love, regret, failure and escapism ran deep throughout the narrative. I found that Verdoux was hard to relate to as a hero, even with the introduction of his family. Maybe it was how related to them when he was present with him, however rare that was. To see your father a few times a year and for him to rather spend time reading the paper doesn't read as an emotional bond, at least not to our generation. In modern times it would have worked better if he were passionate with his wife and played with his son and the business of murdering women dragged him away from what he really wanted. I would have totally been with him had that been the case.

What I've learned from this character and this story is how important it is to develop real and meaningful connections with these kind tortured anti-heroes if you have any chance of getting your audience to connect with and care for your protagonist. This way when he does something deplorable you have to wrestle with..."what would I have done?"

The Box

The Box is a psychological thriller set in Virginia in 1976. The movie begins when a financially challenged couple, Norma and Arthur Lewis find a package on their doorstep. Inside there is a box with a clear top and a red button. Also, in the box is letter from a Mr. Steward telling them he would call on them at 5:00 pm. Later in the afternoon Mr. Steward shows up. The left side of his face appears to be ripped off. Norma lets him in, since Arthur is at work. Mr. Steward tells Norma that if they push the button they would receive one million dollars cash. However, someone they do not know would die. Mr. Steward shows her suitcase full of cash to verify his assertion.

When Arthur hears about the money he and Norma have a debate about whether to push the button. However, without warning Norma pushes the button. At the same time, across town a man kills his wife and flees the scene. Norma's father is a cop and assigned the case. He finds the man is a NASA employee just like his son-in-law. At Norma's sister's wedding rehearsal a gift exchange allows Arthur a chance to select his own present. He picks a brown package just like the one that was left on his doorstep. He opens it to find a photo of Steward pre-disfigurement. Arthur asks Norma's dad to run Steward's license plate. Seconds later, Steward calls Norma to ask why her husband is running his plate. He tells her that he knows because he has people everywhere.

Later, Arthur is driving the babysitter home. She gets really weird on the ride home and tells Arthur to look into the light. Her nose begins to bleed and she passes out. Arthur looks at her ID and finds she is not who she says she is. She awakens, startled, and runs into the hotel. Meanwhile, Norma is at the grocery store when she runs into a woman, who tells her to look up a certain call number and to trust no one, even her husband. Arthur joins his father-in-law at the crime scene across town where he finds a weird Manual in it there is also a library call number. Norma and Arthur visit the library separately. Norma meets Steward's wife. She leads him into a room with three floating cubes of water. She tells him to choose. One leads to salvation the other two lead to damnation. He chooses the second one and disappears. Meanwhile, Norma meets Steward who tells her that he was struck by lightning while working at NASA. Her nose bleeds she passes out. She wakes up in her bed. Arthur emerges from the cube of water floating over her bed and he and the water crash down on the bed.

Back at NASA Arthur hears that Steward was struck by lightning, but that he was killed. He later awoke, his body being healed except for his face. That night at wedding reception Arthur's son is kidnapped while Arthur is being forced to leave the party at gunpoint. Arthur's abductor is the same man who killed his wife earlier, but he tells Arthur that he was forced to choose between his daughter and his wife. He tells Arthur that he knows where they are taking his son. While attempting a rescue both men are knocked out. We find that Steward's boxes are a way to judge whether the majority of the human race would choose personal gain over other lives. If so then humanity would be exterminated. At the end Steward offers Norman and Arthur one final choice. Their son returns to them deaf and blind. They can choose to leave him that way for the rest of their lives and they would retain the money or Arthur could kill Norma and their son's senses would be returned to him. Arthur and Norma agree to save their son. Arthur shoots Norma. Arthur is taken away by police. Their son is left with the Grandfather. Steward goes back to work.

Arthur is the protagonist in this story. The conflict is whether or not you would sacrifice a random life for your own profitability. The film was color corrected with a lovely haze. I thought the tone was eerie, the soundtrack, the shot selection, the lighting were expertly chosen and crafted to create an unsettling yet, beautiful film.

As far as character relatability goes I couldn't really get on board with Norma. Her character was written in a very distant way. She was almost like tin man. She lacked any real heart. They introduced her foot disfigurement so she could relate with Steward, but in the end that part didn't seem to help her character very much at all. Her growth was pretty much non-existent. She needed her husband and in the need she still needed her husband. There was never any real regret that she was the one that put them in the situation any way. Arthur, on the other hand was likeable and I felt an instant connection with him cause he was just trying to be a good guy and do the right thing. He was like the Charlie Brown of this story. He couldn't catch a break. He got rejected from the space program. His wife pushed the button. His son was kidnapped and then he was forced to murder his wife. Not really sure what the growth of his character was though. I think it would have shown more growth if he had pushed the button because he wanted the money and he was selfish and then he became selfless at the end of the story. Not sure.

The other element that didn't really work for me was the box. As a test for humanity's virtue it was lacking. Mainly because in order for Arthur to make a real choice to push the button he needed to be sure that pushing the button would actually do something. Someone would actually die, but he never knew that not until the button was pushed. Under those circumstances why wouldn't you push the button? You really couldn't lose anything.

So, for my film I realize that the device used to motivate the character needs to have verifiable consequences before the protagonist has to make a choice. I also feel like I can keep the story simple and that would help. I felt like The Box was a book and should have stayed a book. Too much going on all around.

Devil's Advocate

Devil's Advocate is a dark, seductive film that tells the story of Kevin Lomax, the protagonist, an up and coming defense attorney who has never lost a case. After winning a seemingly unwinnable case where his client was very guilty he is approached by a representative from a New York law firm. He is offered a large sum of money to go to work for Milton, Chadwick and Waters, picking juries for them. He accepts and he and his wife move to New York. The story begins when Kevin meets the firm's leader, Milton.

Kevin defends a billionaire accused of murdering his family. Soon Kevin is becoming obsessed with his work spending more time at work and less time at home. While his wife begins having visions and seeing Kevin's partners as demons. She wakes one night from a vision with a baby playing with her ovaries to her night gown covered in blood. She then hears from a doctor who tells her that she is infertile. She wants to go back home to Florida. Milton suggests that Kevin go back home and take care of his wife. Kevin declines.

The firm's managing partner, Eddie believes that Kevin is after his job when he finds Kevin's name on the Company charter. An angered Eddie threatens to tell the United States Attorney of the law firm's illegal practices. Milton hears about it, but doesn't really care. In a seemingly unconnected event Eddie is beaten to death by some homeless people who look like demons. His wife sees this.

Kevin thinks that one of his witnesses is lying and that she is guilty. Milton says he'll back him no matter what. Kevin lets her testified and he wins the case. His wife is later found naked, cut and bloody at a nearby church. She is institutionalized. We later find the Milton is Kevin's father. Kevin blames his wife's current situation and a pending investigation by the United States Attorney on Milton. Milton tells him that it was his fault and he could have left anytime. He was given many chances for an out. Kevin realizes he was addicted to winning no matter the cost. Milton wants Kevin to conceive a child with his half-sister so that they could bring forth the Anti-Christ. Kevin denies Milton and shoots himself in the head.

Kevin is somehow at the murder trial. He declines to represent his client. Kevin is approached by a reporter who wants to make him a star. He and his wife agree. After they leave the reporter is revealed to be Milton who says the vanity is his favorite sin.

The themes of greed and sin are the focus of this film. What would a man do in order to be the best? How much would he sacrifice? I identified with Kevin immediately. A man who was okay playing small ball in Gainesville, Florida gets a chance to play in the majors and takes it. His devotion to his wife deteriorates when his true love becomes evident, the spotlight.

I'm hoping to craft a character with similar qualities. A character that you want to see make a comeback, but make his success dependent on overcoming his own personal flaws.

Speed

Speed is a tension-packed, action film. It's a nail-bitter with intense action sequences and a very simple, yet elegant plot device. The films start by introducing our hero Jack Traven and his partner Harry Temple stopping a bomber from holding an elevator of people for ransom. While trying to escape, the bomber dies in an explosion. Disrupting the bombers plans sets the story in motion. Jack and Harry get the hero treatment.

Sometime later we watch a public transit bus explode. Jack is contacted by the bomber who tells him there is another bus with a similar bomb rigged. He tells him that the bomb on that bus will be activated if the bus goes over 50mph and it will explode when the bus goes below that very speed. No passengers can get off the bus or the bomb will be detonated. The bomber demands a ransom. Jack gets on the bus, but it has already been activated.

Jack tells the bus driver about the situation, but there is a criminal on board with a gun. The gun is fired and the driver is wounded. Jack enlists the help of another passenger, Annie. She gets behind the wheel and takes over driving duties keeping the bus above 50.

Jack manages to get under the bus and take a look at the device. Jack calls Harry and Harry does some quick investigation to find out that the bomber is a former cop. Meanwhile, the police clear the freeway so the bus can have an unimpeded path. The police LT, Mac wants them to offload passengers onto a flatbed truck against Jack's better judgment. The bomber allows the cops to offload the injured driver, but he detonates a secondary device under the front wheel well of the bus killing the driver.

Then the call comes through that the bridge is out ahead. In a daring move, Jack has Annie accelerate and jump the gap. After they are successful with that he directs her to the airport to drive on the runway. The plan is to circle the runway.

Harry identifies the bomber as a retired bomb squad member. He gears up for a tactical assault on the man's home address. The home explodes killing Harry and his team instantly.

Jack attempts to defuse the bomb, but winds up puncturing the fuel tank in the process. Jack soon notices that the bomber has been watching the bus the entire time. Mac gets a news crew to loop a recording to broadcast to the bomber. They quickly unload the passengers on another bus before the fuel leaks out. Annie and Jack escape together just before the bus crashes and explodes.

Jack keeps the loop going while Mac sets up a ransom drop for the bomber in a city square. The bomber realizes he's being tricked and nabs Annie while Jack and Mac are trying to manage the ransom drop. Jack finds out Annie has been abducted and realizes there is a subway beneath a manhole cover. Jack finds the bomber and Annie in a subway train. Annie is handcuffed to a pole on the train. After Jack kills the bomber he gets back to Annie. He doesn't have a key and he can't get her off the bus. Since they can't stop the train Jack turns up, full throttle. He pulls Annie tight and waits for the train to crash through a construction entrance. They come to a stop and they have both survived amazingly.

Who doesn't love a hero who saves the girl? Jack seemed to me as a picture of a hero and not much like a real person. Partly because there was so little time to find out anything about him. As a cop he was superb. He was the guy you want rescuing, but you didn't know anything about him and oddly enough, I didn't care. The tension was in the plot device. Lesson learned, you can lighten up on character development if the pace of your story is taut enough.

Blue Ruin

Blue Ruin opens with our protagonist, Dwight Evans living on a beach. He's a vagrant. He is taken in by a police officer who tells him that the man who killed his parents, Wade, is being released from prison. He shows up at the prison waiting for Wade. We see Wade exit and greet his family with hugs and kisses. Dwight follows him to an old restaurant in the middle of nowhere. He sneaks into the restroom and stabs Wade to death. He then sneaks out and goes to his car. Realizing he left his keys at the scene of the crime he steals a car from the parking lot and drives away. Halfway down the road he hears someone banging in the back. He pulls over and a teenage boy pops out. The kid asks Dwight if he hurt Wade. Dwight says he hurt Wade because Wade killed his parents. The teenager says he doesn't believe that Wade did it and then he runs away.

Dwight then visits his sister, Sam. Sam lives in the suburbs with her two kids. Dwight hasn't seen Sam in many years. He tells her that he has killed Wade. Sam is happy, but Dwight is concerned that the killing hasn't been reported on the news. He then thinks that Sam's family is in danger because he left the car at the scene of the crime and the car was registered to Sam. Back at her house he convinces her that it would be safer for her if they get out of town. After she reluctantly leaves Dwight sets himself up in the house waiting for Wade's family, the antagonist's, the Cleland's to show up. When they arrive Dwight manages to barely escape the house. He retrieves his car and hits one of the attackers with it. While trying to pull him in the car he is shot in the leg with an arrow. He puts the man in his trunk and narrowly escapes with his life.

Dwight tries to fix the wound by himself, but winds up in the hospital instead. After his wound is sewed up He sneaks out of the hospital. Dwight then tracks down an Old high school friend, Ben, to obtain a firearm. Ben lends him a rifle. Dwight lets the man out of the trunk. At gunpoint the man tells Dwight that Wade didn't kill his parents. He tells him that his parents were killed by Wade's father. Because Wade's mother had an affair with Dwight's father. The man takes the gun from Dwight, but is shot dead at long range by Ben.

Ben helps Wade put the body in the trunk and then gives Dwight a more manageable rifle. Dwight heads to the Cleland house. It's empty. He searches the house for all the guns. He dumps them in a nearby lake. He then buries the body on the land. He leaves his keys in the car and heads back into the house to wait. When the Cleland's finally return they rush to check their messages. Dwight is hiding behind them waiting to see their response as he offers them a chance to stop the killing, but they are hell bent on killing him and his sister and her kids. So, he fires killing the man. The two women left are frightened and plead with him to stop the killing. The teenage boy, from earlier, sneaks in with a shotgun and shoots Dwight in the stomach. Dwight gets the drop on the boy and tells him to leave, explaining that he is the lovechild of the respective dead parents, therefore Dwight's half-brother. Dwight lets him go. One of the women reaches for a hidden gun under a recliner and the shooting begins. When it's all over Dwight and the other Cleland's are all dead.

The films end when a postcard, Dwight sent to Sam days earlier, shows up at her house.

Dwight serves as a serviceable protagonist. When Sam says he is weak it is the truest statement in the film. However, it is this statement that allows him to grow beyond focusing on himself. He was so focused on his own feelings, his own grief that he never thought about how things would affect his family. As he grew into a decidedly stronger character his only focus was the safety of his sister and her children. I could relate to Dwight, but only in the way that I would do anything to protect my family. It was hard to get on board with him murdering someone who had already spent time in jail. I think it helped that his entire life had been turned upside down by the event.

How far can anger carry you? When is it time to stop pursuing revenge? When is it time to forgive? How much of a strain are you willing to put on the living for the benefit of the dead. This was a great study on the motivations behind revenge and when and how revenge changes a person.

The tone of this film was particularly extraordinary. It was quiet, patient and evolutionary. Reminded me of Hitchcock. I would certainly adapt this tone to my story. I think the slow and deliberate change from a really weak man who couldn't take care of himself to a man willing to sacrifice his life for others is interesting character development and would love to adopt this for my project.

Berberian Sound Studio

Berberian Sound Studio tells the story of the Gilderoy, a sound engineer from London. He flies to Italy to work on a film. He has no idea what the film is about and he is shocked to find out from the film's producer, Francesco, that the film is an Italian giallo, or slasher film. He has very little interest in the project, but he begins work on the film regardless.

We see scenes of Gilderoy reading letters from his mother, painting the picture of normal quiet life back home that he is missing sorely. With each day the scenes become more shocking and the assembled team becomes harder to cope with. Gilderoy finally meets Santini the director. Santini becomes irate when Gilderoy expresses his concerns about working on a horror film. Santini tells him it is not a horror film and warns him not to call it such again.

From the time Gilderoy arrives he tries to get reimbursement for his plane ticket to Italy. Finally, on a day when he is at his wits end, he is told that the flight can't be reimbursed because it didn't actually exist.

Gilderoy begins to slip off the deep end. He is not sure what is real. He begins to fall into the spell of one of the voiceover artist's, Silvia. She tells him that she was raped by Santini and that she plans to ruin what is most important to him. In the next scene all of Santini's reels from his film all over the floor of the editing room, destroyed. This forces Gilderoy to have to re-record all of the audio over again with a new voiceover actress, Elisa.

Soon the line between the film and real life begin to blur for Gilderoy. Gilderoy envisions himself in the film where he is angry and violent. He later joins Francesco in torturing Elisa. She storms out leaving history to repeat itself. Gilderoy is now fully part of this maniacal studio.

The tone is dark and contemplative. It's mysterious and has a creeping pace. As a protagonist Gilderoy is sympathetic, even if his reason for accepting or needing this job is never fully explained. The idea that his career has been on a slide is the only hint given. His slow evolution to become the thing he despises is very well done. He becomes increasingly haggard, detached and disillusioned. I love how the events and the other characters affect him with each passing moment until he is one of them.

I believe this sort of detachment from reality will work well for the main character in my film. I would love for him to have a similar, deliberate evolution from a hero, a human being who loves and can be loved to a monster made from his own choices.

Triangle

Triangle opens with an eerie, but everyday scene, a mother, Jess, taking her autistic son on a trip. The doorbell rings, but Jess goes to answer the door no one is there. Jess gets in her car and pulls off. On the way to the docks she passes the scene of a car wreck. She continues on. She arrives at the harbor and boards her friend Greg's boat. There's a small group of friends gathered to join the trip, Victor, Sally, Downey and Heather.

Later in the day the boat hits rough seas and the boat flips over. Heather is washed away. The storm clears in a near miraculous fashion. They climb onto the top of the capsized boat and wait. After some time an ocean liner arrives. They reluctantly board. It seems deserted. Jess feels like she's been here before. She experiences déjà vu.

It's not long before they believe they are not alone on the boat. Soon they are being stalked and killed one by one, though the killer remains unseen. The shooter, a person, in a burlap mask chases Jess to the ship's deck. Jess fights the killer off and pushes the person overboard. Jess hears some yelling, yelling that sounds oddly familiar. When she looks over the side of the boat she sees herself and the crew trying to hail down the boat, just like she did earlier.

Jess remains in the shadow following the group. Jess attempts to warn Victor, but accidentally impales his head on hook. She comes to the realization that she is caught in a loop and that the loop has been going on many times. She runs into an older version of herself who is killing her group one by one. She tries to stop her, but is halted one a newer version of herself throws the older version overboard and the loop begins again as the ship with her and her friends shows up.

After finding herself on the deck looking at tons of dead versions of herself, she realizes that the time loop restarts when everyone is killed. Later Jess falls off the ship and washes ashore. Feeling that she has escaped, she returns home only to find that she is returning home earlier in the day. We see Jess angrily abusing her son, unhappy with his autistic behavior. Jess knocks on the door and then sneaks in the back and kills herself. She then rescues her son and throws him into the car. Their car is hit by a truck and her son is killed. Motivated to rescue her son she catches a cab back to the harbor and resets the loop again.

Jess makes a sympathetic heroine. We start out wondering why she is so distant. Why would you go on a boat trip if you're in that kind of mood? Yet, she does. She remains a mystery eve in the light of all the revelations and deaths that take place right up until we see her abusing her son. This is when we finally see what type of person she was and we also get to see how her character has developed even though we didn't know that she had. Really clever.

The theme of being caught in your own regret was subtle, nuanced and played out every time she saw another version of herself. I absolutely loved how this played out and the final encounter when we see her living out the action that caused her regret. I would love to find a subtle nuanced way to weave this

into In the Company of Mad Men. I think that the theme of consequence should be played out as the story unfolds. Maybe there will be a sense early on about him not having to live with the consequences of his choices until his choices become life or death. And it would be interesting to see how he attempts to cope with the fallout.

Coherence

A group of couples get together, seemingly after a long time apart to have a dinner party and catch up. We start with a scene introducing Em as she is talking her phone and the phone cracks. When she gets to the party she tells everyone that her phone shatter and that maybe it was the passing comet that was to blame. Everyone else at the party thinks this is ridiculous until they realize that all of their phones have no reception and one of the other guests, Hugh, shows that his phone is shattered as well.

The house loses power. The group lights candles and heads out to see if the other lights in the neighborhood are out. They all are save one house a little ways down the street. When they get back Mike gets his generator on and the lights are restored. Hugh and Amir decide to walk to see if they have a working phone as Hugh is trying to call his brother. They return later, Hugh has a gash on his forehead and Amir is carrying a box. Apparently, Hugh began running when he looked inside the house and saw a table set just like theirs. When they open the box they find a ping pong paddle and a set of pictures. Pictures of them. There are random numbers written on the back and Amir says the one photo was taken that night because he had just bought that shirt earlier that day.

Mike, Laurie, Em and Kevin decide to go over and check the other house out. So, they fire up blue glow sticks and head out. They cross a darker area and Mike is sure that the house they see is his house. They decide to head back and they run into themselves. A group of alternate thems with red glow sticks. Both groups flee in fear. Back at home they go to the car and retrieve a book and the book is a many world view of quantum mechanics. Mike gets paranoid. He wants to kill the other version of himself, but instead figures he can get the other version of himself to steal their quantum mechanics book. Amir and Hugh who are versions of themselves from the other house steal the book and the box of photos. Meanwhile, the original Hugh and Amir return and say they have been at the other house by mistake.

The group has to create a way to keep them and the house they are in separate from the other houses. So , they get photos of themselves and the other and a box. They roll dice to pick random numbers and write them on the back of the pictures with other objects they choose. Beth realizes that she is in the wrong house with the wrong set of people at this point. She also figures that there are more versions of the house, many in fact, and that every time they pass through the darkened area they come out in a new version.

Mike and Hugh get into an argument and then an alternate Mike comes into the house and attacks Mike. They chase him off. Em wanders outside and walks through the dark area. She does so over and over again creating numerous versions of the group. Each time the group is in worse chaos. Em finds one version that apparently hasn't left the house and is just sitting down enjoying dinner. She lures that Em outside and knocks her out and takes her place. They go outside and watch the comet break apart, signaling the end of the split versions. She wakes up the next morning and all is well everyone seems okay. Later, Em and Kevin are outside talking when Kevin gets a phone call from Em.

This was a trippy film shot in a sort found-footage, shaky-cam style. The tone was conversational. The entire film was like a group of good friends catching up. Em ended up being the protagonist in the story, but this was very much an ensemble film. I think the line between the realities was very loosely set. I got

into the feel of this film and wondering what if anything I could salvage from such a high concept, but that's when I realized that was it. In *The Company of Mad Men* has a very high concept. Much like coherence we're dealing with an unseen enemy. We are experiencing the results through our main character's eyes, but we never have a real enemy to face or to fight. It's just about surviving. Trying to figure out what is causing this is maybe a moot point. But I do like that there is an effort to explain it. I think if I can find a very loose way to explain it where there is an explanation, but very little that can be done about it then I can focus on what truly matters is how our characters cope with it.

Horsemen

An older man and his dog are out hunting, when they discover a serving tray on a stand in the middle of a frozen lake. He notices the words "Come and See" painted on several trees as he lifts the lid.

Detective Aidan Breslin is a widower who has become emotionally distanced from his two sons, Alex and Sean, following the death of his wife three years earlier. Due to his former dental forensics expertise, Aidan receives a call regarding the contents of the tray, where it is revealed that it contained human teeth. After analyzing the teeth, Breslin is able to match them to a man who had been reported missing. Aidan is once again called to investigate the bizarre murder of a woman named Mrs. Spitz, who was discovered hanging in her bedroom, eerily displayed and strung up on a series of hooks connected to a rig; the words "Come and See" painted on the walls. According to her autopsy report, she drowned in her own blood due to a precise stabbing. She was pregnant and the baby was removed. Aidan speculates that there were four attackers and that they had used a camera to record the murder. Breslin tries to comfort one of the Spitz's daughters, their adopted Asian daughter Kristen.

The next murder is almost identical to the Spitz murder; the similar hook contraption leads Breslin to a local tattoo parlor. There, he is informed that the owner constructed four devices in total. Later another murder occurs, but this time no hook rig was involved and the message only appears on three of the room's walls. While Aidan reviews the evidence at his home, Sean stumbles on one of the photographs. Sean's insights point Breslin to the Bible, where he discovers that these killings are patterned after the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, with each room corresponding to a Horseman; the "Come and See" message is a quote from the Bible. The passage pertains to the lifting of the veil and the coming of the Apocalypse. Kristen contacts Aidan unexpectedly, he goes to meet with her, and during their conversation Kristen produces the missing fetus, confessing to the murder. During her interrogation, Aidan discovers the darker side of Kristen's personality, one similar to the Horseman War.

Later, Breslin goes over to Kristen's house where he and his partner, discover the video recording from the murders as well as some polaroids of Kristen posing sexually with Mr. Spitz. Breslin confronts Mr. Spitz with the photos of him and Kristen. Stingray and Breslin arrest Mr. Spitz and his children are placed in protective custody. When Breslin confronts Kristen in jail, she claims to have been sexually abused for years and the murder of Mrs. Spitz served as punishment for her abuse. Following the interview, Breslin has Mr. Spitz arrested. A microchip discovered in one of the victim's bodies leads Breslin to an apartment associated with the four horsemen. The apartment is booby-trapped and is engulfed in flames by magnesium ribbons in the computers.

Meanwhile, a gay man, Cory, has a confrontation with his homophobic brother, Taylor. Cory puts what appears to be a sedative in Taylor's drink and hands it to him after he has heard his response to the issue. As Taylor drunkenly stumbles out to his car, Cory is accosted by a thief in the parking lot. In response, Cory stabs the man, who survives the attack and later provides the police with Cory's description. The precision of the stab wound, and that Cory whispered "and Hell follows me", leads Aidan to assume that it was done by a Horseman. Elsewhere, Taylor awakens to find himself hooked

onto a rig with his eyes fixed open. Cory appears wielding a bone saw, then proceeds to try to cut out his own heart, killing himself in the process.

Breslin, convinced that there may be another victim, asks Kristen if she represented the Horseman War and that the unrigged victim was Famine. She confirms this, but refuses to relinquish any information about their leader. Breslin comes to the conclusion that due to the nature of the first murder, he was meant to be assigned to the case all along, and becomes concerned that his family will be targeted next. Breslin asks his partner to go on ahead and check his house. At the Breslin home, Stingray is attacked and knocked out. Aiden arrives later and enters Alex's room for the first time in three years. To his horror, everything in the room is white or painted white: the color of the Horseman Conquest, their leader. A clue points him to the Metropolitan Theatre, where Aidan first met his wife. When he arrives, he is rendered unconscious from an injection into his neck by an unidentifiable assailant; when he comes to, he finds himself handcuffed to a seat as Alex dangles over the stage on the final hook rig. Alex starts bleeding to death, as he gives Breslin a speech regarding the Horsemen's emotional detachment from their families. As Alex succumbs to his injuries, Breslin rips his handcuffs off the seating and fires his gun to detach the rigging from the ceiling. Alex awakens as his father holds him.

At the Breslin home, Sean wakes up from a bad dream as Breslin comforts him. When he asks where Alex is, Breslin reassures him that Alex will be okay, his fate ultimately unknown.

This was exactly the type of tone I am looking to set with my film. It is dark, cold, tense and eerie. I felt like Breslin's character was very distant and hard to relate to. I know the concept of loss and grief played a large part in his development, but I had a hard time believing that he had so little interaction with his children that he couldn't see any of the signs Alex had to be exhibiting. It also made him seem like he was really bad at his job. I felt that his dealings with Kristen were a little contrived and I will try to avoid those unnecessary entanglements with my protagonist.

I thought the pace was excellent. And I am planning to incorporate the same sort of tone and pace in my film. I would love to add the cold element into the film, but I will dash that idea for production's sake.

Fallen

An ancient demonic spirit, Azazel is supernaturally condemned to eternally transmigrate between human souls who act as hosts. On rare occasions, Azazel's spiritual transmigration is blocked by a human host who exhibits an immunity.

Detective Hobbes gains notoriety for capturing a serial killer named Edgar Reese. While Edgar is in prison on death row, Hobbes visits Edgar, and unknown to Hobbes, a spiritual being inside Edgar tries to get into Hobbes through physical contact. Hobbes is immune. After Reese is executed, Hobbes and his partner Jonesy investigate a string of murders by an apparent copycat killer. Hobbes, through hints given initially by Reese, and later by the apparent copycat killer, tracks down a woman named Gretta Milano. Gretta explains that her father, a detective in the same city as Hobbes, killed himself after accusations and evidence of murders. Hobbes goes to her family's lake-house, and finds books concerning demonic possession and angels. He also finds a name with which he is completely unfamiliar drawn on the wall, initially hidden by paint, of a being named Azazel.

Hobbes asks Gretta about Azazel. She tells him to drop the case to protect his life and family. Gretta explains that Azazel is a fallen angel who possesses humans due to punishment from God. She explains that Azazel cannot live a single breath without a host, and can pass between living beings by touch. Hobbes realizes that Azazel, while possessing Edgar Reese, touched Hobbes before the execution, but was not able to possess him. Therefore, Gretta explains that the demon will try to ruin his life by another way, and warns him of the inevitability of Azazel's victory. Azazel finds Hobbes at his precinct, and through his coworkers, torments him. Hobbes reveals his knowledge of Azazel's true identity, to which the demon responds, "Fear my wrath", and disappears into the city.

To provoke Hobbes, Azazel possesses his nephew and attacks his brother Art in their home. He flees into other people on the street, ending up in a schoolteacher. As the teacher, Azazel draws a gun and forces Hobbes to shoot his host in front of a group of bystanders. Azazel boasts to Hobbes that even if his current host body is killed, he can transfer to any new host body in the surrounding area, without even needing to touch them.

Hobbes fingerprints are found at one of the murder scenes and along with the bizarre circumstances of the shooting of the teacher Azazel possessed. Azazel inhabits several of the witnesses and gives false accounts that the shooting was unprovoked, thereby throwing further suspicion on Hobbes, framing him for the crime.

Hobbes escapes to the lakeside cabin where he originally found Azazel's name and draws the demon to him. Stanton and Jonesy show up, confusing Hobbes due to their relationships. Jonesy reveals his possession when he kills Stanton dramatically and pursues Hobbes throughout the cabin. After ambushing the demon, Hobbes shoots Jonesy in the stomach. Hobbes smokes poison-laced cigarettes, explaining that Azazel will not find another host in the remote wilderness, which will force Azazel to inhabit Hobbes's dying body and die with him. He frantically tries to find a new host but succumbs to the poison in Hobbes' system. Azazel drifts around until a last second reveal that he finds a host, a cat.

Hobbes is exactly the type of protagonist I want for my film. He is a strong, decisive character thrown into a supernatural conflict with an ancient, wiser enemy. I don't think I will be able to play up the evil antagonist angle, but I love the conflict of him fighting a supernatural and unseen enemy. The concept is not dissimilar to what I'm trying to pull off. The idea of the transmigration being passed through touch would only be different by the fact that in my story the need to kill is passed on by killing the original carrier. Part of me wants to play with the Biblical angle. The idea of the second seal mentioned in revelations, to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another, is one of the ideas I've toyed with. I have a fear that any deep analysis of the "reasons" may take away from the point of the story. Something to be evaluated.