

**What I Got For The Money:** Six pages of notes, a few minor script markings, a phone consultation, and further marketing services available.

**How long did it take?:** Four weeks.

**Her Credentials:** Melody Jackson, founded Smart Girls in 1992 to “cater to the business needs of actors and screenwriters”. She has written and produced one short and has been hired to write “two other feature length scripts”. The promotional literature says that Smart Girls has helped their clients get “literary representation with top agencies and [work] as a staff TV writer [and get] their screenplays produced.”

**Her Method:** While it’s obvious that Melody Jackson is familiar with the traditional three-act structure and can communicate intelligently on this topic, her main focus is character development. She approaches plot and structure through her examination of character motivations and relationships.

**Her Overall Impression Of My Script:** “This script is well written and a good, interesting read. You have obviously put a great deal of work into it, constructing layers of meaning within the story, fantastic visuals that support it, and lots of good humorous moments, too. Excellent.”

**Specific Areas Suggested For Improvement:** Clarify protagonist’s inciting incident. Strengthen conflict between protagonist/antagonist. Protagonist growth through inner conflict, as reflected in the theme. Clarify protagonist’s goal. Strengthen Fabio/Trina relationship. Clarify Sarkis/Troilus relationship. Further development of protagonist’s aunt and girlfriends. Correct formatting errors.

**My Evaluation Of This Analysis:** Melody Jackson, uses a soft, nurturing approach when analyzing a script. By examining the character motivations and interpersonal relationships in the story, she manages to point out all the weaknesses of the script. Plus, she accomplishes this without getting overly mired in screenwriting jargon, which is probably a bonus for relatively inexperienced screenwriters. For example, when discussing the protagonist’s inciting incident, Jackson says, “It’s not enough for her to have always wanted to know the secret. When you come up with a strong reason that *now* is the time that she *must* find out who her father is, once and for all, then you set into place the Inciting Incident, which kicks the story off.” This is clear, concise analysis that gets right to the heart of the characterization/ plot relationship.

Ms. Jackson offers solid notes that are right in step with majority of consultants I studied. However, I think a more intense deconstruction of my structure would have uncovered some additional weaknesses that were missed, such as the need for stronger, more surprising turning points. Still, given the monetary limitations of the “Inexpensive” category, I think Melody Jackson’s Smart Girls is a very good deal.

A note on marketing: for additional fees, smart Girls offers the most varied and intensive marketing services I’ve seen. These are sold a la carte and range from helping you write a query letter to giving you the names of hundreds of producers and agents who are looking for projects like yours. While I did not personally take advantage of these services, a close friend did. Through Smart Girls’ contacts, my friend was able to interest

many producers and agents in her script and she is currently moving ahead with development. If you need to get your foot in the door and you can afford to risk some cash, I suggest you take advantage of Smart Girls' marketing expertise.