TITLE:	WHO BY FIRE	**SUB TO:**	NATE KOHN
AUTHOR:	A. FIROR	**SUB BY:**	
FORM:	SCRIPT	**ANALYST:**	KENDALL PRATT
PAGES:	110	**SUB TYPE:**	
GENRE:	DRAMA	**PERIOD:**	PRESENT
LOCALE:	ATHENS, GA	**DATE:**	JANUARY 17, 2023

ELEMENTS:

LOGLINE: A young college-aged girl meets a kind-hearted man who helps her go on a journey of self-discovery to accept her mental illness and conquer her agoraphobia.

RECOMMENDATION: PASS **WRITER:** CONSIDER

BRIEF: There was some great, well written dialogue and characters, but the underdeveloped surrealist elements and inconsistent pacing makes for a dissatisfying ending.

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
CONCEPT:	☐	☐	☒	☐
STORY LINE:	☐	☐	☒	☐
CHARACTERS:	☐	☒	☐	☐

DIALOGUE: 

SYNOPSIS

CHRISTINE is a 20 year old college student suffering from agoraphobia. She lives with her two great aunts, AUNT MAE, an 80 year old devout Christian, and ROSE, Mae's older sister with Alzheimer's. JOSEPH, a 40 year old schizophrenic man, is a frequent guest at the house and adores Christine. Christine gets ready for school, her nerves increasingly evident. As she readies to board a University bus, she panics and faints. She awakes to MICHAEL, a warm and considerate young man, hovering over her. Michael urges her to wait, but she jumps up and stumbles off.

The following morning Joseph interrupts Christine and Mae's conversation to tell them he wants to invite FRANKIE, their paranoid neighbor, and his friend to his birthday party. They go outside to find Michael trapped in conversation. Mae invites him to dinner, and Christine adamantly objects. The group has dinner and Michael tells Mae he'll do a favor for her in return, to which she tells him she needs help painting. Michael begins painting the next week and Helen pulls up, while he and Christine are in conversation. Christine runs into the house and locks the doors. Michael sneaks in through a window and helps keep Helen out. Grateful, Christine invites him into her bedroom, and Michael sees an acceptance letter from the college of Charleston. Christine says she had to stay behind to help Aunt Mae, but Michael is disbelieving.

Michael comes over the next day and they have a heart to heart on the porch. Christine talks about her dead parents and reveals that she's scared of crowds. She gets defensive about being mentally ill, so Michael drops it. Christine wakes the next morning to find Helen telling Mae about the power of attorney if anything were to happen to her. Christine is furious, and confronts Helen, who says she's just being prepared. That night Christine opens the door to a soaking wet Michael. He urges her to come outside. Unsure at first, she eventually agrees and the two run around the college campus. They kiss, and Joseph sees it all.

It's the night of Joseph's birthday party, and the group sits silently around the table. Joseph tells Michael how he should have sex with Christine and chaos erupts. Joseph yells that Christine has no virtue, and Helen and Michael leave, flustered. Mae, upset, yells at Joseph and he calls her the devil. She sobs and Joseph storms out; Christine is shocked. The next day Christine finds Frankie in the garage with polaroids of hospital patients to give to Mae. She takes them and sees a picture of Michael. She confronts Aunt Mae, who says she was just trying to help.

A few days later. Christine goes into Mae's room. She's dead. Christine doesn't go to the funeral. Michael later approaches her in the garden and Christine confronts him. He was a counselor at the mental hospital hired by Aunt Mae; Christine was a patient. Michael urges her to accept her diagnosis and she yells at him. Christine wakes the next morning to find Rose gone. She runs outside and sees Helen with an assisted living van. Christine panics and runs inside, locking the door. She's met with a wind like whisper in her room, and she now knows what she must do. Christine gathers her bags and leaves the house. The house catches fire and burns to the ground. She goes to the mental hospital and finds Michael; she finally asks for help. She boards a bus to Charlestown, leaving behind all that she's ever known. The script ends as she listens to a recording from Michael; Joseph's poetry is included.

COMMENTS

One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest meets *Fried Green Tomatoes, Who by Fire* is filled with Southern hospitality, while also tackling issues regarding the stigma around mental illness. The screenplay has great dialogue and complex characters, with interesting plot twists and an important message. However, its pacing issues make the screenplay drag and ultimately result in underdeveloped, dissatisfying story lines.

The dialogue is engaging and well written, helping to develop the characters and flesh out their relationships. It always feels natural, drawing the reader in and adding a layer of realism and believability to the story and its characters. The exchanges between Joseph and Christine, for example, are consistently poetic and existential, exemplifying their personalities and adding to their character depth. As a result, the reader becomes invested in their relationship and their future. The dialogue helped to improve the flow of the story and enhance character development, which was often stunted by its pacing problems.

The characters were, for the most part, complex and flawed; their motivations as well as their circumstances were made clear throughout the story. Joseph and Christine were very clearly ruled by their mental illness, despite their constant denial. Christine suffered with a lot of internal struggle and opposing wants that drove the story forward and made her an interesting character. Joseph and Christine's relationship was also well developed and well-written, with a lot of conflict driven by Joseph's love for her. Michael's character, however, and his relationship with Christine fell flat in comparison. There was a big twist with his character being hired to help Christine, but it still remained unclear whether he actually felt any romantic feelings for her or if it was truly all a job to him. Their relationship ultimately felt rushed, and lacking in the complexity that Joseph and Christine shared.

While the storyline was at times enjoyable with interesting twists and the intersection of southern culture and mental illness, the inconsistent pacing resulted in underdeveloped relationships and out of the blue surrealist elements that left the story feeling rushed and nonsensical. The idea that the house was alive was hinted at throughout, but always in light hearted conversation that didn't really seem to be rooted in reality. When Christine was met with a mystical voice in the end that acted as a deus ex machina to help her solve her problem, it felt out of place and undeserved. In regards to pacing, the beginning felt repetitive and dragged on, with too many events taking place in the last twenty pages, particularly with Aunt Mae's death three pages after Michael's betrayal. There was no time to process the events unfolding, or time for Michael and Christine to properly unpack his deception. As a result, Michael and Christine's relationship was left unclear and underdeveloped and there was a lack of closure for the audience.