

SCREENPLAY FEATURE COVERAGE

TITLE	Bird Box	GENRE	Horror
WRITER(S)	Eric Heisserer	CIRCA	Post-Apocalypse
SUBMITTED BY	Eric Heisserer	LOCATION	American Suburbs
FORM / PAGES	Screenplay / 117	BUDGET	Low
DATE	3/21/2023	ANALYST	Devon Flynn

LOGLINE

A horror about a reluctant mother and her children, who are forced to blindly navigate a world overrun by indescribable creatures. If you see one, you die.

SUMMARY

The story opens with MALORIE going over her plans with her children, BOY and GIRL. Their goal is to make their way down the river in search of a nearby shelter. Malorie and her kids live in a post-apocalyptic world overrun by enigmatic creatures. She orders Boy and Girl to *never* take their blindfolds off unless she explicitly tells them to.

We cut to 5 years prior. Malorie is pregnant. She and her older sister, JESSICA, head to the hospital for an appointment. They hear over the news that a strange “pandemic” has been sweeping Europe and Asia that compels people to kill themselves. Thousands have already died.

As Malorie and Jessica drive home from the hospital, chaos erupts. The mass suicides have reached America. Jessica sees one of the creatures and succumbs to despair. She crashes the car, nearly killing Malorie. Jessica then throws herself in front of a moving truck. Malorie aimlessly wanders through the chaos until a man named TOM guides her to a nearby house.

Malorie and Tom are now stuck in the house with 5 other survivors: GREG, the owner of the house, DONALD, a grumpy man who complains about everything, LUCY, a young, aggressive athlete, FELIX, a cowardly biker, and CHERYL, a clueless old lady.

Act 2 begins a week after the event. The National Guard has announced over the radio that they plan to send rescue parties within the next month. There’s one problem, though: the house is running out of food and supplies. To make matters worse, 2 more survivors show up at the house: OLYMPIA, a frightful pregnant woman, and EDGAR, a suspicious old man who knows something about the creatures outside. Anyone who sees them are compelled to commit suicide.

Tom forms a group with Malorie, Felix, and Lucy to head out to the nearby supermarket in search of food and supplies. They block out the windows of Greg’s car and carefully drive through the neighborhood. They almost come into contact with one of the creatures along the

way. At the supermarket, they stock up on resources. Malorie starts to form a bond with Tom. Their moment together is cut short when a madman attempts to let a creature into the building. Apparently, there are people out there who are immune to their visages, and work with them to eradicate the rest of humanity.

Meanwhile at the house, Greg attempts to observe the creatures through the security cameras, but ends up killing himself. Later that night, Malorie awakens from a nightmare and hears someone outside the house. She lets the man, GARY, inside. He claims to be a survivor from another house a few blocks down. There's apparently a madman going around breaking into people's homes and letting the creatures inside. Donald suspects that Edgar, the suspicious old man from before, is one of these madmen.

A month passes. The National Guard isn't coming. Olympia is on the verge of going into labor. In need of medical supplies, Tom heads out on another expedition to the supermarket with Lucy, Cheryl, and Gary. As Malorie and Olympia form a bond over their burdens, they both go into labor at the same time, marking the end of Act 2.

Malorie and Olympia are taken to the attic. There, they learn that Edgar is immune to the creatures' influence. Gary then breaks into the house, telling everyone that Tom, Lucy, and Cheryl are dead. Tom then returns, warning Donald not to trust Gary, who turns out to be the madman going around and getting people killed.

While Malorie and Olympia give birth, a huge fight breaks out downstairs as Gary lets a creature into the house. He, Tom, Donald, and Felix are killed. Olympia sees the creature enter the attic and kills herself. Malorie refuses to look at it and protects the newborn babies. Edgar then scares the creature away. With everyone else dead, Edgar leaves Malorie and the kids to fend for themselves. Years pass by. Boy and Girl are now 4 years old. After receiving a phone call from a man named RICK, Malorie learns of the shelter down the river.

The story frequently switches between the past and present throughout the screenplay. Malorie and her kids face multiple trials as they sail down the river. Boy nearly dies from hypothermia after falling into the water. A madman nearly succeeds in taking off their blindfolds.

Eventually, they make it to the end of the river. A group of creatures chases them to the shelter, forcing Malorie to divert their attention. As Boy and Girl get to safety, Malorie threatens to gouge her eyes out to avoid looking at the creatures, which successfully scares them away. Safe and sound in the shelter, Malorie finally gives her children names: Tom and Olympia.

COMMENTS

Based on the book by Josh Malerman, *Bird Box* is a unique adaptation perfect for a low-budget Horror film. The concept, while vaguely similar to M. Night Shyamalan's *The Happening*, is compelling enough to draw the reader in. The story is well-structured, has a consistent tone, and has an interesting gimmick where it switches between the past and present day.

While switching between the past and present may ruin the pacing for some, the reason why this was done is understandable. If the last third of the story was just Malorie and her kids floating down the river, the reader's interest would drop considerably. This approach was also taken to give the script a more gripping introduction. Opening in the middle of the post-apocalypse is a great way to immediately seize the audience's attention.

The characters are the weakest quality of *Bird Box*. Malorie is the only interesting character of the bunch. She is a decent protagonist: an aloof woman who fears motherhood and attachment. She acts rather coldly towards Boy and Girl during the present day scenes, but deep down, she cares about them. By the end of the story, she overcomes her fears and expresses her love for them, finally giving them names.

The rest of the characters, however, aren't nearly as interesting. The screenplay suffers from having *too* many speaking parts. Characters like Lucy, Felix, Edgar, and Cheryl add nothing to the story. They don't grow, nor do they form meaningful relationships with the other characters, nor do they contribute anything to the plot. They could honestly be cut from the script entirely, and nothing of value would be lost. It would give more breathing room for the other characters, such as Tom and Olympia.

The overcrowded cast unfortunately takes away from the romantic subplot between Malorie and Tom. They get a grand total of 3 intimate scenes with each other before Tom is killed off-screen in the third act. Olympia doesn't get much development, either. Malorie dislikes her the first time they meet, but then they abruptly become friends in a later scene after bonding over their pregnancies or whatever. Their relationship hardly feels organic. We're supposed to believe that Malorie goes on to name Girl after this lady?

Boy and Girl get automatic sympathy points for being children, but that's where their characters end. The story is mainly about how Malorie treats them and her inner conflict with motherhood, which is fine.

The "indescribable creatures" serve as interesting antagonists. The fact that they are never described or fully shown on screen adds to the fear of the unknown, which is great for a horror film. They feel like a cosmic force of nature, which gives the screenplay room to focus more on the characters and their relationships (which it fails to do in most cases). The addition of the "insane" characters, like Gary, increases the stakes considerably.

The theme of *Bird Box* is difficult to pinpoint. Based on Malorie's character arc, it can be said that the story is about the fear of parenthood and the trials it brings. However, the whole plot with the suicide-inducing creatures implies that there's a deeper meaning to be found here. Is the story really trying to talk about mental health? That's up for the audience to decide.

Overall, the script is highly marketable and has an engaging premise. Heisserer also has a unique writing style that makes it fun to read. However, the writer should consider a total re-evaluation of the characters before going any further.

CONSIDER

RATINGS GRID

	Excellent	Very Good	Adequate	Poor
Concept	X			
Story			X	
Structure		X		
Protagonist		X		
Antagonist		X		
Stakes		X		
Minor Characters				X
Dialogue			X	
Scenes			X	
Pacing		X		
Theme			X	
Tone		X		
Writing Style		X		
Marketability	X			
Formatting	X			
Grammar	X			
Title		X		