

This just seems like mindless bickering, similar to the 48 hour script draft.

Bad start.  
1. Jared already knows. A death in the family wouldn't make people this oblivious.

2. Generally bad starting with a question.

Jared  
ie. Hope you're not like that this weekend. 2.

So what? That means they could.

This whole driving thing seems out of place. It doesn't load anywhere - anywhere and it doesn't pay off. Nothing new is revealed and they're just arguing.

this seems too random. Maybe have Jared start off about camping.

Liam just punched a kid for making fun of his dead mom. Him and dad may have a completely different tone of conversation. These seem random. It is because you aren't carrying emotional consistency with the characters.

A widower to his son wouldn't say this.

JARED  
What's gotten into you?

LIAM  
Nothing.

Jared shakes his head and walks to the driver's side door of his car.

LIAM  
Hey, could leave early to go camping.

JARED  
You're suspended and I have to get back to work.

LIAM  
Can you teach me how to drive like you used to do?

Jared hesitates.

JARED  
I don't think Mom would have liked that.

LIAM  
How would you know?

JARED  
Liam, you're 13. Just get in.

Liam SLAMS the passenger door harder than he should.

JARED  
What am I supposed to do with you?

Jared gets in the car.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Liam is hunkered down on the couch engrossed in his laptop. Jared walks past into the kitchen.

JARED  
Do you want me to make you something to eat before I go?

You are very factual when you write dialogue. I know you want the audience to know everything that is going on but remember the context will reveal subtext. I.e. He

is next to a kitchen, you already established he has to go to work, people would normally just say: "Want something?" or "Want something to eat?"

What was the purpose of this scene?

~~Why? Yes, they had an argument but that's not good enough... pretend you took out that argument~~

I realize he means he knows his dad will try to make mom's sandwich.

No.

LIAM

Too late. Jared is already grabbing bread.

JARED

How about a Mom-style sandwich?

LIAM

You can't make them right.

JARED

~~Well gosh, sorry.~~ It's really hard to keep the olives from falling off the lettuce.

LIAM

They're supposed to go into the mayo.

Jared walks the food delivery to Liam and sets it on the coffee table. Loose olives roll off onto the plate.

JARED

I know this might be hard for you, but I think you need to stop wearing the jacket.

LIAM

Why? ~~I like it.~~

JARED

I don't really have time to deal with another problem like this. You need to move on and give the jacket up.

LIAM

I won't punch anyone anymore.

Liam goes back to his laptop screen.

JARED

Fine. You're grounded from your computer.

LIAM

Dad, I'm doing homework.

Oh.

stop with the pickering!

The premise for wanting Liam to take off the jacket seems weak. Remember imagine, if your husband died and your son always wore his jacket, would you be mindlessly cruel? Probably not.

irrelevant

way too factual! "I'll try to keep the olives on right" is fine. Yes, we won't understand right away but that is what keeps us reading? We want to find out!

already factual, we ~~already~~ know

This defined why he wants the jacket and I think you'll lose people's interest

Side Note: The jacket never is a key goal/objective for Liam, going to Native Lake is. This taking the jacket is a distraction from the real problem. The only thing important in this scene is the sandwich and Jared leaving. Find something else for Liam to discover his mom's stash.

I don't believe this struggle. A father wouldn't do this. ~~May~~ May need to cut this.

JARED

Let me see.

Liam spins the screen around. Yup, that looks like homework.

JARED

Then give me the jacket.

LIAM

Dad, no!

JARED

Take it off, Liam. You need to move on.

Jared's face is stern, his hand out. Liam pulls his arms tight.

LIAM

~~If I have to stop wearing the jacket then you have to stop wearing the ring!~~

Stay away from Logic "if/then" statements

Jared hesitates. Frustration clouds his face. Jared pulls his ring off and drops it on the table.

JARED

I said I don't have time for this!

Liam rips the jacket off and throws it across the table. Jared snatches it off the floor.

JARED

Don't leave the house.

The front door SLAMS shut. Liam looks around the house.

The walls, bare like plain yogurt, leave behind faded marks of the previous wall decor.

Liam picks up the ring.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Liam whips open the master bedroom closet doors. He ravages through the clothes.

No jacket, but there's a pile of different sized landscape photographs. He spreads them out around the room.

Liam searches underneath a queen size bed. There is only one pillow at the head.

Liam's face appears under the bed. Ah ha!

I think the focus of this story needs to be finding Liam. Take out their arguing and focus on what is important

way too much off-hand. It TV show feels like a reality

Jared went to work, how did the jacket end up stairs?

**INITIAL REACTION:** Characters are very awkward. I don't believe their situation/relationship tension. Climax did not deliver the desired change of heart because the important set ups for character arcs were not present throughout the script (too many unreasonable character expressions from Liam and Jared). May need to redesign characters appropriate to the situation, which will provide opportunities to add those important set ups, a heartfelt climax, and take away the awkwardness in dialogue and character representation.

**MAMMA'S BOY** by

12

**GENRE:** Drama, Family, Indie

**LOCATION(S):** Modern Suburbia, Small Town, Woods/Trailheads

**BUDGET:** Low Budget (\$1000 - \$5000)

**CIRCA:** Present Day

**DATE:** December 16, 2017

**LOGLINE:** An outcast teenager fights to hold on to what he has left of his dead mother.

**CONTENT SUMMARY:** I focus on dialogue, character, story structure and focus in the COMMENTS section below. The initial idea has potential but there needs to be some new ground work. It feels like many many parts that don't go together are rammed together, building up to a climax/resolution that does not satisfy.

**RECOMMENDATION:**                    **CONSIDER**

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
<b>Premise:</b>		X		
<b>Storyline:</b>			X	
<b>Structure:</b>			X	
<b>Characterization:</b>				X
<b>Dialogue:</b>				X

**SYNOPSIS:** The story begins with Liam, the main protagonist at the age of 13, being bullied at his school for wearing a woman's jacket, his dead mother's denim jacket. After punching the kid in the face, Liam faces suspension and is picked up by his father. They fall into an argument which disturbs their relationship until the end of the story. Soon, they arrive home and Jared, the father, offers Liam a sandwich. Even though Liam did not want one because he knew Jared would not properly make it, Jared hands him a sandwich. This sparks on another argument about Liam always wearing the jacket.

Jared believes in order for Liam to move on, Liam needs to give up the jacket. Liam gives it up and Jared hides it, but Liam sneaks around the master bedroom to find it.

When Liam finds the jacket, he stumbles upon a box of his mom's old photos, camera, and maps. This inspires him to go fishing at a lake called Native Lake. While there, he ends up breaking the fishing pole and dropping his mother's old film camera. Jared walks in on Liam and becomes furious. They engage in another argument. After this argument, Liam sneaks out of the house and takes Jared's car to drive to Native Lake.

Jared finds out his car is missing and chases after Liam with a bike and map printed off Google. He finds the car abandoned and searches for his son in the woods. There is a tent but it is empty. After searching around the trees, he finds Liam under some leaves as camouflage. They have a heart to heart conversation about mom. Liam reveals his true intention was to help his dad get out the business of work and enter into the serenity of nature. They leave the woods with a memorial to Mom.

**COMMENTS:** Before I enter into specifics of the script, I believe it is appropriate to go over fundamental issues. And before that, I do want to say I love the initial premise. There just needs to be a lot of work done.

This story needs more focus as to what it is about. The beginning establishes a tone about school and bullying but then never shows up again. After that, there are lots of arguments about Liam needing to move on but in the end Liam was trying to have Jared move on (which would be fine for a twist but we follow Liam chasing after his mom's memories in the box and not experience Jared's "busyness" besides one time in the beginning). Then we have several scenes which nothing really moves the story, so they are empty and not help build to that climax you are wanting. When I say they are empty, I literally mean the two argue and nothing is revealed. Liam and Jared are in the car in the beginning and argue...for what? There is a tiny hint of mom but it makes no sense, she's dead so why would she care if he drives or not? The other partial set up is camping, mentioned by Liam. But instead of the scene feeling like it is there to reveal important things to us, it feels like it is their to watch them wine and complain. Next scene with the sandwich, same thing. Yes, there is a sandwich set up and establish about moving on, but it is not believable and again they are just yelling at each other. The whole thing with the laptop is taking time and focus away from your story. Things like that are what create "holes" in your rising climax. We don't need to know he's doing homework. We would if it was important to the story but it didn't resolve anything later. He wasn't researching how to get to Native Lake. Page 6 through 8 devastated your story. It had no point besides more arguing, which was exhausting. It feels like an easy way out to create drama. Yes, there are tiny tries to build set ups for later pay off, like Liam saying, "I want to be like Mom," and when Jared says, "I have an important meeting." Other than that, it was a crater that did not build up the story.

What was this story about? Was it about moving on or the importance of nature? Moving on has critical steps to creating a believable arc. It may be best to stay away from this unless you interview and experience people on a deep level who have gone through this kind of pain. You don't just walk into a field and all of a sudden feel like you need to apologize, suddenly realizing you were in the wrong for something. It is a particular process. The onion layers of insecurity needs to be pulled back in careful and thoughtful ways. I do believe you know very well the importance of nature and the need to escape the busy, hectic life. Write from there. I believe that is what your heart truly wants to express. It may be best to take out the mom completely and focus on the importance of nature. Do you still want Liam to help his dad climb out of his busy life? Write everything to that

climax. Make sure every scene has importance and moves the story along. Who is the main character? If it is about Jared needing to find the importance of the peace of nature, he may have to be the main character, since he is the one experiencing the character arc. However, you have to have why it is important to rest in nature. What is something the main character cannot do until they realize nature is needed for them? A job needs a certain creativity and he can't do it because he's so buried in the noise of the city? If you want to stick with the death of mom, why is it important for the success of the story that, whomever you choose is the main character, to move on? Can someone not get the job? If it is about Liam, is he not able to get good grades in school? It was tough starting in a school but then never going back, it was another random piece thrown into the story.

For the rest of the comments, I want to focus on specifics to the story, going along with my notes.

The pacifiers are a good example of randomness. They are strangely specific and yet they do not go anywhere in the story. It would make far more sense to have pictures of a woman (Mom, but we wouldn't know that yet). The first scene punching the bully is actually fine. The only issue is that it does not fit with the rest of the story. Why did we start here? Why didn't you start the story during Summer Vacation? That is, if we are never visiting the school again. Think practically as well. Shooting in a school is hard to come by. And for a scene that isn't really important to the rest of the story, it would be a huge waste of your resources.

Liam punching the bully sounds like an inciting incident but the story says it is not. The rest of the story did not depend on Liam punching the kid. I know you were trying to have Liam stay home but there are other ways to do that. But also be careful to have scenes that are just functional, like trying to get Liam home. They don't hold very much weight other than to fill space, since they were put there for a weak reason.

Depending what you decide the focus of the story is should pan out what your inciting incident should be. If we are going out into the forest with the main character, finding the box, or something leading us to the box, should be the inciting incident. Punching the bully has us assume we are going to see this bully again...but we don't. Keeping the inciting incident on the first page will strengthen your story, since it is 12 pages. If anything, try to keep from adding it beyond your second page.

Page 2 defines all the weak points in the rest of the script. Just on page 2 I can tell the rest of the story will be out of sync, emotionally inconsistent, and other common writing issues (i.e. using a question in dialogue to start a scene (which is not inherently bad but it when the other character responds, they are answering a question and not moving the plot along with their own input), each character sounding the same, and dialogue is factual rather than conversational). Also, given the circumstances, I do not believe a conversation would go like this. It would be silent. There is hurt. And the dad would understand. Later in the car ride, a conversation might start up and something would set off one of them. Pain that is held back eventually bursts from interesting triggers. The conversation/argument may focus more on Liam always fighting in school. Dad wants his son to act right but he understands why his son is mad, which triggers his memory of his wife. On the surface, they are arguing about doing good in school but sub-textually they are reliving pain that hasn't healed yet. See how complex these things can get? It doesn't have to be as dramatic as a death but great dialogue can communicate both the immediate conversation in a scene and also a subtext conversation. Subtext conversations could be "it's your fault," or, "I wish mom was still alive," or, "I hate you," or, "I want you to be sensitive to me." These subtexts aren't always known to the character but their subconscious reveals them without their control.

Be careful of factual dialogue. This was a struggle in the 48 Hour script as well. Many times characters will say what they really feel, think, and want, or say way too much than there needs to. Like at the bottom of page 2: Jared, "Do you want me to make you something to eat before I go?" In your previous scene, we established Jared needed to go somewhere and he is standing by a kitchen in a house... Would you ask someone in that way? Probably not. "What something to eat?" would work perfect. Anytime you feel like you are clarifying something through someone's dialogue, delete it immediately. The dialogue's influence has to be the character's motivation, objective, emotion, and relationship with the other character(s). Not how to make sense of things to the audience. The trick is to reveal the things the audience needs while maintaining the character's proper mindset. Factual dialogue breaks the character and pokes you through the pages.

I am going to skip over the comments except the ending. When I wrote on page 10, I realized what I was writing was potentially you intended with your script. I wrote as ideas came to me, which allowed me to enter into your mind for the intent of each part of the story. Most of what I wrote is covered in the first part of the comments above.

"I'm capturing nature like Mom did," has potential to be a climactic moment for Jared. But again, whose story is this and what is the focus of this story? I was seeing how everything should have built up until that moment, and when Jared hears those words, that should make him realize something. Unfortunately, it became irrelevant that he was doing anything like Mom because the script turned to focus on the importance of nature ("You are always too busy to listen"). Then it takes a turn and focuses on how mom actually died...another thing that is not helpful to your story. I understand you may have tried to use it to make Jared the way he was...but to be frank, I do not believe it worked as you planned. The ending could have been impactful but Jared's sharp turn to redemption, quick changes in focus, and a difficult set up throughout the script took away from the final line, "We're both Mamma's boys." What did Jared do to be considered a Mamma's Boy? I don't believe anything redeemed him to gain this title. Even with his change in the end.

I am going to share with you one of the most valuable things I have learned that changed everything for me. My story construction enhanced dramatically when I realized what was keeping me back from writing good stories (or at least the start to writing good stories).

Throughout my years at film school, I probably wrote 30 scripts. I was tired of the cross look on people's faces after they finished what I wrote. Instead of improving on what I already had, I tossed it and started on a brand new script. I knew there was something more than just some dialogue issues or lack of story understanding. Each script seemed to get me no where. Every time I felt like I found the secret to my problems but each time that crossed look came across people's faces. I ran through different genres, characters, plots, concepts... I was running out of places to search. What was the problem? I eventually wrote a couple scripts for my Prod III (and unfortunately I never got to do one of them because the structure for the class was ambiguous and different back when I did it) and Dirk allowed his class to read my newest script. It was about a boy being trusted to protect a pocket watch until his dad returned home. The class tried to stay positive but it was obvious something was missing...that same crossed look. But then one of the classmates said something worth more than gold. He said, something along these lines, the main character just floats through the story. Now, that by itself may mean nothing, but listen to why this was so important.

I realized I myself float through life. I feel like everyone else around me experiences the hard decisions, hardships, faces all odds, and fight for what they want...but in the end, I expected the reward. All my characters, without fault, always sat through a story and was rewarded in the end for

doing it. This was because this was me and I wrote from what I knew. Even if I tried to make my main characters face hardships, I still ended up giving all the precious character arcs to the supporting characters. All my scripts felt awkward because I forced my readers to believe my main character was the main character but I never could establish the proper traits for a main character, because I was a passive, selfish, and arrogant individual. Now, I wasn't oozing with arrogance but there was that expectation I should be recognized and rewarded even if I did not do anything, or partially did something. In the end, it was a hint of hiding arrogance. Ever since then, I realized I needed to change myself before I could effectively write a compelling script.

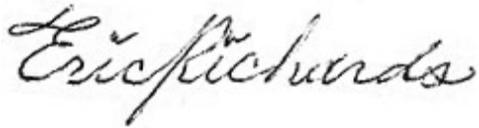
I'm going to hand this over to you now. There are obvious struggles revealed in your writing that are keeping your story from being the best it can be. They aren't the same as mine, we all have our personal struggles. I do advise that you search yourself as you go on writing your future drafts. I mention a lot that there is cat like bickering between characters and nipping comments to each other. All I know this has been consistent between this script and the 48 Hour script. I find it is most important to realize how we affect our own scripts because of our blind spots in life. This is probably the hardest critique to give but it is the most valuable. I believe, once you find whatever it is that keeps you back, you will know how to display emotional consistency and be sensitive to delicate topics like death. When I say emotional consistency, I mean people can't just flip on a dime. They gradually incline to that climax. But while they climb, they don't change as a person, they improve as a person. While they improve, something wants to keep them back from freedom, success, or happiness, etc.

Know that I greatly appreciate you! :) I just have discovered that, in order to dive deeper in story telling, we need to personally be ready for that. Or we can stick to writing shallow romantic comedies (haha). Great work writing this script and moving forward with film school. This stuff is not easy! I do love the potential this script has. There are a lot of secret goodies hidden in there. I would love to hear where this idea came from and what inspired you to write it.

Don't give up! I am always available if you want more insight into future scripts, either this one or others.

**Script Coverage by:** Eric Richards

Empyrean Media Arts, LLC approves this document to be genuine. Eric Richards, on behalf of Empyrean Media Arts, LLC, releases his signature to secure this document's authenticity.



Eric Richards  
*Founder of Empyrean Media Arts, LLC*

[www.empyreanma.com](http://www.empyreanma.com)  
[empyrean.ma@gmail.com](mailto:empyrean.ma@gmail.com)  
[Facebook.com/Empyrean.ma](https://www.facebook.com/Empyrean.ma)



The logo for Empyrean Media Arts features the word "Empyrean" in a serif font, with "media" in a smaller serif font below it. To the right, the word "Arts" is written in a large, elegant, cursive script.



## 8 Turn Structure

### **Hook:**

In your story, you have the hook establishing:

- A school
- Liam
  - wearing his mom's jacket
  - a messy locker of pacifier and baby cutouts

What does this hook imply? To me, the hook implies that this school will be important for some reason. It starts the story after all. Liam's messy locker and jacket implies something is heavy on his mind and it may keep him from focussing. There is something he does not want to let go. However, in your story, none of this is important. We never visit the school again but yet we start here. Liam has these cut outs but in your script Jared is the one that needs to move on. The hook is actually amazing but it does not support the story you end up telling.

Suggestion: Find a hook that correlates closely to the end, or your "punch line." What are you wanting to tell the audience? Why is it important that we start *here*. What is missing in the world we start off with that the characters need to go through to get it? (I.e. hidden grief, bitterness, anger, etc.)

### **Inciting Incident:**

In your story, you actually have two inciting incidents, which drags your story back. The first one is Liam punching the bully. This sends Liam off to an odd argument with his dad, then soon another inciting incident takes place: Jared takes the jacket. This finally pushes the story forward because this leads Liam to finding the box of his mom's things. However, Jared does not take the jacket until page 4. For a short, you *need* to have the inciting incident during page one (like punching the bully, which was perfect) or page two at the latest.

Which one is it? It depends on what story you want to tell. The story cannot start until the inciting incident triggers or sets off the story.

### **Dramatic/Central Question:**

Your script had several different central questions which took away its focus. Based on how the story is set up, we assume it has to do with Liam overcoming his mother's death. Then it seemed like Jared needed to overcome his wife's death. Then it seemed like it was, "Will Liam find the jacket?" But that ended up being another inciting incident. Then it seemed to focus on, "Will Liam be like his mother?" when he took the fishing pole and camera. But then he comes home to an agree dad and runs off to Native Lake. Then the central question is, "Will Jared find Liam?" In the end, it showed that you wanted to answer the dramatic central question, "Will Jared move on from his wife's death?" I hope you understand why this did not work. 1) There were no set ups for Jared to come to that conclusion. For example, when learning math, you start with small basic addition and subtraction. Then you go to division and multiplication. Eventually you can start understanding logarithms and calculus. But you have to go through those small steps first. Same thing for people to realize something deep about themselves. In the story, you had Jared do a 180 and suddenly realize his "fault." But the story never gave him things to build up to that realization to make him feel sorry. Think of a joke. You know how every set up doesn't really make sense until the punch line hits. You need those set ups. These next steps in the 8 Turn Structure, in a way, help with that.

## 8 Turn Structure

However, there needs to be a careful understanding between a practical central question and a moral/abstract central question. Overcoming grief means nothing unless it allows the character to achieve the ultimate goal. I would strongly suggest finding something very practical for your main character to strive for. Think like: Will Frodo deliver the ring to Mordor? Maybe: Will Jared get his promotion? I say Jared because it seems like he needs to be the main character by how you built and ended your story. He experienced the arc and change, not really Liam.

This starts to establish your character's wants/needs. Jared *wants* a promotion and he *thinks* he *needs* to get it a certain way (let's say, work really hard). However, what he really *needs* is to come to terms and overcome grief hiding in his heart. Here is an example that you could use as your HOOK: Jared tries to do work, more work than he normally does to get this promotion, but every time he strains his mind he starts to shake and lose focus. He needs to take pills to calm him down and focus. But the drugs take away his brilliance and numbs him. He does not know the real reason why this happens is because he has hidden grief not dealt with/processed/worked through. The story will reveal what he really needs to get what he wants.

### **Reaction to Dramatic/Central Question:**

Once you establish your central question, your main character takes his first step to answering/solving it. It could either be running from it or toward it. If the central question revolves around Jared earning that promotion, good chances are he will take a step forward to it but in how he thinks it needs to be done.

### **First Big Hurdle:**

This is the first road block for Jared. This forces him to take a step in a new direction, preparing him to experience what he *really needs*. An idea is: Liam knows Jared is held back by grief (somehow, it would be revealed in the story) and decides to disappear, maybe to Native Lake. Jared is shocked and now juggles between finding Liam and working for that job promotion.

### **Apex:**

This is the turning point for the story. Sometimes a new character is revealed but I would suggest, for a short, to not introduce a new character if you can help it, but it is not a hardened rule. A good example would be: there is a clue to where Liam may be, where Jared proposed to his wife. Maybe Jared found that his box with his wife's things has been tampered with and he starts to put the pieces together.

### **False Ending:**

Jared may have found Liam but what Jared *really needs* has not happened yet. Finding Liam is a false summit and Jared thinks it is time to go home.

False endings are used to reveal the main character has yet truly dealt with their inner struggle.

### **Low Point:**

Jared sees the memorial Liam put up looking over the valley. It is beautiful. And up to this point, you have set ups that lead to his emotional moment (the drugs, maybe plays with his ring, looks at an old

## 8 Turn Structure

photo, never cleans up the last thing his wife left out, etc). When Jared breaks down, it is human and makes sense.

From here, you climb to the climax and resolution. Jared gets home and everything makes sense now. And he doesn't need the drugs anymore because he doesn't shake. Promotion and boom, ending. Or whatever you want your audience to be left with.

In your script, the characters have heavy flaws, which is okay but they: all sounded the same and did not have any real redeeming qualities. If Jared is to be snippy and sharp, be sure to add in why he is someone we should care about in the first place (unless he is an antagonist). Is he a good father? Show us! Things like that. It builds dimension and believability to your characters.

Imagine everything in your story is being built up to the "punch line," especially in a short. That was one thing I disliked in film school. They never went over how to construct shorts, only features. Shorts need to be straight to the point and hit with a punch line that everything is being built up to. That does not mean it has to be a joke.

My previous critic focused on the heart of the story. This focuses on the structure of the story. I hope this provides a practical step by step analysis to digest your story!