

The Scriptwriter

LEVEL 3

A

Pushed Too Far

Plot Summary

The script explores the nature of friendship and the risks involved when money changes hands. It focuses on the pressure from friends to lend money. Ralph needs money to go away for the weekend. He asks his easygoing friend George for fifty dollars. George lends money to Ralph quite frequently, and always gets it back. However, Ralph has not paid him back from the last time, so George is having his doubts about lending him more money.

Character Descriptions

George: Works full-time and handles money well. He is generous and knows that some of his friends only have part-time jobs so he is usually willing to lend them money and is usually understanding when it comes to people repaying.

Ralph: Works part-time. He is easy-going, but careless with money. He is often running short of money before payday and often borrows from his best friend George to get him through.

Robert: Doesn't like Ralph very much. He likes to interfere and cause trouble.

B

The setting is in the living room of George's apartment. A sofa is in the centre of the stage with a small table to the right of it. A telephone sits on the table. The front door of George's apartment is downstage left.

(George is sitting on the sofa and the door bell rings)

George: *(Muttering to himself as he walks over to open the door).* I hope it's not my neighbour again.

Ralph: Hey George! Buddy! How are you? *(He enters the house)*

George: I've been better. My neighbour has been ringing my door bell all day. Now *(with annoyed tone)* he has asked me to lend him some money for a down payment on his car, and I haven't gotten back to him yet.

Ralph: Hmm. Well, why don't you just give it to him? You're always lending people money.

George: *(angrily)* For one thing, I'm kind of tired of lending people money all the time. I feel like a bank! Besides – a down payment on a car!! That's more than a few dollars! And I'd probably never see the money again. *(standing and shaking his head for a minute.)*

George: Anyway, let's sit down. What brings you here?

(Ralph seems puzzled by George's frustration. He just shrugs and they go sit down on the sofa)

Ralph: Um, well I kinda need something.

George: Well? What is it?

Ralph: Well I'm going away this weekend, and I have no money.

George: How did I know this was coming! Why does everyone ask me for money? Is there a Bank of George sign outside my house? *(His voice gets louder)*

Ralph: *(laughs)* No, no, not at all. It's just you always have money, and I always pay you back.

LEVEL 3

C

(The phone rings)

George: Hello! Bank of George! How may I help you?

Voice of Robert: George is that you? What's wrong?

George: *(Rolls his eyes)* Ughh, nothing. Ralph is over here, he needs money.

Voice of Robert: Did he pay you the \$30 from last time yet? I wouldn't give him any more money until you get that back if I were you.

Ralph: *(Yawning)* Who is that? Is it your neighbour again?

George: *(putting his hand over the phone)* No, it's Robert this time. Hey, did you ever pay me the \$30 back from the video game last month.?

Ralph: Well, about that. I almost have it.

Voice of Robert: I have to go and eat now, I'll call you later. Bye.

George: Bye. *(Hangs up the phone and is quite angry)* You aren't getting the money until I get my \$30 back, and that's final!

Ralph: *(His voice becomes desperate)* Please! I need \$50; I won't be able to go away without it. I really need it! *(He gets up from the couch)*

George: Good! That'll be a lesson to pay people back. I couldn't care less.

Ralph: *(amazed)* What kind of friend are you!?! You're never there for me! I hate you! *(Starts to walk towards the door)*

George: *(really angry now)* I have been a great friend, I am always there, I give you lots of money, and you don't repay it. You earn money and you just waste it and then come begging to me. What kind of friend are you? *(Gets up and points toward the door)* There's the door, don't let it hit you on the way out!

Ralph: I'm not going to listen to this. You could just say no. I don't need a lecture. *(goes out and slams the door)*

D

LATER THAT EVENING

(George is sitting on the sofa and the door bell ring)

George: *(goes to the door and sees that it is Ralph)* Hi.

Ralph: Hi George, do you have a minute?

George: I guess. What do you want?

Ralph: I just want to apologize for earlier. I was being an idiot. Please forgive me. I just take you for granted and I didn't understand how you must feel when everybody hits you for money all the time.

George: I was being an idiot too. I usually don't mind but being asked for a down deposit on a car put me over the top. I felt I was being used. But I learned something too. I had no right to lecture you. It is my choice whether I lend money or not. If I can help my friends out I will and if I can't I'll just say no and walk away, no hard feelings.

Ralph: By the way, here's the \$30.00.

George: Hey, I thought you needed money for the weekend.

Ralph: Nah. I thought I'd just hang out here. Want to catch a movie?

(George and Ralph grin at each other as the lights go down)

LEVEL 3

Teacher’s Notes**Knowledge/Understanding**

- The student provides information about the characters that is of considerable appropriateness. George is described as “generous” and as a person who is “usually willing” to lend money to his friends, and Ralph as someone who is “easy-going, but careless with money”. This information is borne out by their behaviour in the scene. However, too little information is provided about what motivates Robert (i.e., that he “[d]oesn’t like Ralph very much” does not really explain it).

Thinking/Inquiry

- The student portrays character development with considerable effectiveness. George’s frustration with Ralph and Ralph’s callous indifference to it are believable. George and Ralph come to understand each other’s point of view and, because of this understanding, are motivated to develop new attitudes about borrowing and lending money between friends. However, whereas George’s new insight comes to him gradually and the process is well developed, Ralph’s change in attitude seems abrupt.

Communication

- The student creates dialogue that is convincing to a considerable degree. Ralph’s lines realistically show his total disregard for his friend’s feelings (e.g., in his blithe “Well, why don’t you just give it to him? You’re always lending people money.”). Humour enhances the script (e.g., “Hello! Bank of George! How may I help you?”). However, Ralph’s response when George refuses to lend him any more money – “You’re never there for me! I hate you!” – is rather extreme for such an “easy-going” character.
- The student provides stage directions that are of considerable appropriateness. “*Ralph seems puzzled by George’s frustration. He just shrugs and they go sit down on the sofa*” exemplifies the clarity of most of the instructions. However, the student has the two characters remain seated on the sofa throughout a long and critical part of the scene’s action (consisting of Ralph’s request for money, the phone call from Robert, and the subsequent

rise in George’s anger), during which further directions for movement seem warranted. The student provides well-conceived directions for interaction among the characters (e.g., “*putting his hand over the phone*” economically indicates that George does not want Robert to know that he has forgotten about money Ralph still owes him). However, stage directions are lacking when George and Ralph meet later in the evening.

Application

- The student creates a working script that is of considerable effectiveness. He or she skilfully starts building tension at the beginning of the scene. With an excellent sense of stagecraft, the student allows the audience to be privy to the reasons for George’s growing frustration and annoyance, but keeps Ralph in the dark. The climax is cleverly precipitated by the phone call. However, there is no indication as to why the resolution comes about: the characters simply part and come back together, each having reversed his earlier position.

Comments

This work is representative of a solid level-3 performance. The student demonstrates a considerable degree of achievement of the expectations in all four categories of knowledge and skills.

Next Steps

In order to improve his or her performance, the student needs to:

- supply information about Robert that would make what he says on the phone more plausible;
- give more directions for movement by the actors;
- provide additional stage directions for George and Ralph for their later meeting;
- provide insight into what motivates the characters to resolve their conflict.