

BULLIES

Coverage by Anna Zeh

Writer: Megan Kingsbury

Genre: Comedy

Type: Feature

Length: 101 pages

PLOT:

35-year-old best friends - aspiring actress Naomi and job-applying Devin - struggle to make ends meet, and live off of donating blood to a dangerous degree. They stumble upon a magazine featuring a famous children's author Jenny Fish, their ex-best friend from Vindemere Academy who got the two of them expelled in a master plan to be initiated into the cool girls group, the Fab Four. Naomi and Devin decide to get their revenge, by exposing Jenny and ruining her life. They meet her at one of her events, of which she doesn't recognize them. They decide the best course of action is to get close to her in her life, learn about her, and find an opportune moment to pounce. Naomi pretends to be her new yoga instructor, Devin winds up working as her assistant, and the two pull little pranks on her to pick her apart piece by piece: for fashion, hair, dating, work, etc. Devin begins to have changed feelings towards Jenny, while Naomi stands strong in her revenge mindset.

At Jenny's birthday, they end up meeting the rest of the Four - Taryn, Kennie, and Leela - who barely changed, especially their leader Taryn, who grows suspicious of Naomi. They all go back to visit Vindemere, and through a poor initiation into the Fab Four and a staged fistfight, Naomi and Devin are ratted out once they find a class photo with all of them in it. Jenny forgives them, but Taryn does not. Vindemere presents an alumni award to Jenny, which she has to accept at a ceremony, but Naomi's stubborn rage from the past plans a "bomb" for the event, despite Devin's best efforts. She comes to terms with the weight of losing her best friend in the process of her inability to let go, and she jumps on stage to correct her wrong with Devin's help. Upon realizing how much Jenny saw Naomi's struggles, they hug and make up. Naomi stars in her new show on ice, and everyone's invited together as a happy friend group.

COMMENTS:

I think Naomi's character development needs more attention and variation. Devin went from hating Jenny just as much, to getting close to her, having a change of heart, and then being able to fight back against Naomi and disagree instead of being a pushover. He has more change than her, so much so that he feels more like the main character than Naomi does. This is because, if we pinpoint that the conflict in their eyes is Jenny, Devin has way more one-on-one time with her in ways to get personal, go through her files, etc. than Naomi does. Naomi and Jenny have that big heart to heart at the end, but not nearly enough emotional quality scenes together for Naomi to become complex. It seems that as soon as she has her eyes set on her goal to get revenge, she stays in that mindset at the same level for the majority of the script. For her character specifically, and to contrast with Devin's character, I think she needs to remember one horrible one-on-one event between her and Jenny that she just can't let go of for some reason, or

some event like that that happens halfway through the script, to give her another push towards rejuvenated purpose. If she becomes willing to abandon her and Devin's friendship to remedy what happened, there had to be some situation he wasn't involved in that he wasn't aware of so we feel the weight and complexity of what she's going through.

In terms of raising the stakes as well, I think developing her character complexity would help. Outside of that though, the general situation is 30-year-olds still holding onto stuff that happened in high school. Why? There has to be some sort of stake in the whole idea of the script. For example, in the initiation scene where Devin and Naomi are told to go steal the class photo. What's the stake? Why would they care at thirty years old? What happens if they don't want to do that? I think, along with more self-awareness from Naomi's character, self-awareness of the concept of 30-year-olds reliving their high school lives has to be addressed in a bit of a more realistic way to add to the comedy and complexity, and raise the stakes overall. Comedy needs some kind of complexity and self-awareness to it, to hit an audience harder than just slap-stick punchlines.

With that said, the one-liners and banter between the characters are super strong and eye-catching. The pacing is easy to keep up with as well, the plot makes sense, and the quality of the script in its functionality is strong. Could definitely see it in a cinematic light. The tone of the film reminds me a lot of Mean Girls. The concept of people 30-and-up reliving high school is a popular one in film and TV, but the potential for marketability could change depending on how this script is further developed, in ways that sets it apart from others. Maybe as an animated film, this kind of concept could be interesting, to match its playful, sarcastic, witty tone. Regardless, potential will grow once more time is put into character development along with figuring out the self-awareness of the concept of the film itself to help raise those stakes.