YOUR FIRST 20 PAGES EXAMPLE

TITLE: The Kiss
SERVICE: Your First 20 Pages
AUTHOR: -----

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Structure		XX		
Plot/Story Line		XX		
Character Development		XX		
Dialogue		XX		
First 20 Pages		XX		

Structure

The writer's job in the first act of any screenplay is threefold. First, the protagonist has to be introduced. In 'The Kiss' that lead is Ralph. Check. Second, the writer needs to do is give us some background and insight into this character so we know what kind of a person he or she is going forward. In 'The Kiss' we learn that Ralph is a middle-aged man looking to spice up his life a little with money, action, or both. Check. Last, but definitely not least, the writer must set up a MAIN WANT for this protagonist. What is our lead's main goal above all else? The quest to achieve this goal will make up the spine of our story. It will run through the remaining acts. This is our central narrative and it gives the story focus and direction. For example, in 'Die Hard' John McClane's main goal is to take down the terrorists and save his wife's life.

In 'The Kiss' Ralph hears about an interesting opportunity. Two businessmen are looking for someone to marry a woman to help her get citizenship. The opportunity comes with a solid payday and Ralph sees his chance to make some money and spice up his life. He agrees to the terms and before long he is marrying a stranger and meeting her family, and the family of the man she will marry her next (after her inevitable divorce from Ralph). So, coping with his new situation and surviving long enough to enjoy his pay is Ralph's main goal and the central narrative in the screenplay. Solid work setting things up in a timely and efficient manner.

Plot/Story Line

The reader's first issue here is that this storyline feels very dated. Going back to sitcoms in the US in the 70s and 80s, the gimmick of a man marrying a foreign woman (for money or lust) in order to help secure her green card is tired (there's even the movie 'Green Card' that covers similar territory). So, the premise feels somewhat generic. Not to mention that most countries have preventative measures in effect now to defeat these kinds of scams. It's not as simple as it used to be. People don't just get married, earn citizenship, and then divorce a year later with no questions asked. The couple has to meet with government officials for numerous interviews, prove they're in love. They have to take tests. And there's a contingency that if the marriage doesn't last a certain amount of time (five years?) then the citizenship is null and void.

Character Development

Next, Ralph is our protagonist but he comes across as a real loser in the first twenty pages of the script right now. Anyone willing to blindly marry a strange woman for a payday (or jolt of excitement) is obviously having a hard time in life. Simply put, it makes him look pathetic and sad. And it's NEVER good for the protagonist in a script to look pathetic and sad. Think about changing Ralph's circumstances so the reason he agrees feels understandable. Does he owe money to someone dangerous? Is he trying to make his ex jealous? Does he secretly know who the woman is ahead of time and does he already have feelings for her (so his real goal is to make her fall in love with him for real)? Give us ANY reason that makes sense and it will work better than just the idea that he is bored or anxious for cash. We need a protagonist we like and respect and unfortunately right now Ralph isn't that guy.

Dialogue

The dialogue is effective and feels authentic to time and location. The writer provides the different characters with unique voices that help them stand out. The real problem right now is the formatting. The script isn't formatted correctly, and that includes dialogue. The writer should download a produced screenplay and compare and contrast with what's on the page in this script. Dialogue (and the character name above it) should be in the center, not reading across left to right filling the page.

First 20 Pages

It's crucial that the writer understand just how important appearance is to a script's chances of success (right up there with the actual story being told in the screenplay). Continuing with the discussion above about formatting, dialogue isn't the only problem. The scene descriptions are off as well, the writer offering up exposition in them sometimes. Scene descriptions are literally stage directions, and should be limited to character actions and describing the environment. Right now this document is not presented as a feature screenplay. Download a produced screenplay and follow that as a lead.