



**TITLE:**  
**LOCALE:** Chicago, Lake Michigan  
**AUTHOR:**  
**PERIOD:** Present Day  
**FORM:** Screenplay  
**GENRE:** Comedy  
**BUDGET:** Medium  
**DRAFT DATE:** Unknown  
**COVERAGE DATE:**  
**PREPARED BY:**

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#### **LOGLINE.**

After winning an award for his patents, a crazy engineer takes a sabbatical, buys a yacht and travels the Chicago to Mackinaw route with his wife, followed by a crazy neighbor and an odd cousin.

#### **SYNOPSIS:**

Present Day. Chicago. Yacht Club. 100 people at a luncheon. At the podium is MR. BOOSE, chairman of FoodCorp., who is giving an award to the most patent applications to TREVOR, who kisses his wife, ANN and stumbles up to the podium. MR. BOOSE wants Trevor to go on a one-year sabbatical, then come back and run a whole new division. Trevor says he'd like to spend the year doing the Chicago to Mackinaw and back boat route on a yacht. Ann is in agreement. Trevor is given the coveted Grimace & Gogh Award. While he is giving a speech, two boaters have to be rescued outside. Later, Mr. Boose, an expert boatman himself, offers to give Trevor advice on his trip. Later at dinner, BETSY, Mr. Boose's wife says there is an opening at the Yacht club.

Boose takes Trevor to the Chicago Boat Show. Boose introduces Trevor to GEORGE, who makes a "crap macerator." Trevor sees his Yuppie neighbors – HENRY and EUNICE, to avoid them. Marina. Trevor and Ann look at boats. Trevor wants to buy a yacht. The salesman says he can't sell them the boat until they take the Coast Guard Auxiliary classes. At work, Mr. Boose offers Trevor one of his "slips" for Trevor's future boat. Mr. Boose wants Trevor to join the club. It's expensive, but Boose says the "networking" will make it worth it. Trevor and Ann go to the Yacht Club. Ann meets George, who was the captain of a

boat that won the Chicago to Mackinaw race. Boose/ Betsy show Ann/Trevor their big yacht. Ann and Trevor buy a “starter yacht” from Boose. Trevor names the boat, the Grimace & Gogh. FLASH FORWARD. Ann and Trevor on their boat on Lake Michigan in stormy weather – out for a “joy ride.” A Coast Guard helicopter checks in with them to see if they are all right. FLASHBACK. Trevor and Ann in Coast Guard class. Ann and Trevor take the test. Ann passes the test and Trevor barely passes the test. They get their Coast Guard cards.

Trevor and Ann take their yacht on trips. Ann and Trevor spend Thanksgiving at Trevor’s mother, WILMA’s house. Their son, NATE and daughter LENORE, who is expecting a baby are there. They gather for Christmas. Trevor’s cousin, FREDDIE and Freddie’s wife DELORIS surprise Trevor. Trevor shows Freddie the “chart” of his trip from Chicago to Detroit and back – from April to October. Trevor takes Freddie to a boat show. At home Trevor has an altercation with his neighbor, HENRY. Trevor sees Henry one day. Henry has a boat, and Trevor says his boat is right next to Henry’s slip. Eunice is upset because their marina only for sailboats. An upset Henry calls his dockmaster and learns it was just an April Fools joke pulled by Trevor. Marina. Boose/Betsy have dinner with Trevor/Ann. Boose advises them to wait to end of May to leave on their trip.

Henry wants to get revenge, make Trevor’s summer miserable. He puts a GPS tracking device on Trevor’s yacht. Henry gets Trevor’s itinerary. Freddie calls Ann to say he got a boat as well. Days later, Ann and Trevor are at sea. They head for the Benton Marina. Later, they run into bad weather, heavy waves. They almost go into the shipping channels. When they get to the South Haven dock, they learn how close they came to hitting a ship. Henry and Eunice, in a sailboat, set out after Trevor and Ann. Trevor and Ann fish off their boat. Freddie and Deloris are on a floating “contraption” on the Lake, trying to catch up to Trevor. Trevor and Ann arrive at the Grand Rapids Marina. Trevor watches as Henry’s sailboat needs to be helped by the Coast Guard. Henry has a new plan. Henry, in a wet suit, sneaks on Trevor’s boat. Henry and Eunice have coffee with Trevor/Ann. Later, Henry reports a light flaw on Trevor’s boat. The Coast Guard stops Trevor. He has the wrong lights. Henry had switched them (payback for the April Fools joke). Trevor gets a fine. Trevor wants to turn back and get Henry, but Ann wants to meet “the kids” in Muskegon. Meanwhile, Henry sees Freddie stuck on the water. Henry wants to help, but sees it is Freddie and turns away. The Coast Guard stops Freddie, thinking he may be a drug trafficker. They just have worms in their pontoon. Henry and Eunice enjoy champagne. The Coast Guard stops them and arrests them for NOT helping Freddie and Deloris.

Freddie sells worms. Trevor arrives at Mackinaw, sees George and Boose. Meanwhile, fish jump INTO Freddie’s boat. Henry and Eunice at home want to un-impound their boat and go to Traverse City. Freddie finds Trevor. Trevor looks over Freddie’s boat. Henry and Eunice arrive. Ann gets a call that Lenore’s water broke. Trevor and Ann rush to the hospital as a Coast Guard officer arrests Henry. Lenore has twin girls. Trevor’s Home. The family is together again.

Henry and Eunice look over at Trevor – don't like him. Freddie arrives and tells Trevor how came up with a worm farm franchise. Marina Ballroom. Trevor gives a speech about his new patents – which he credits to Ann and Freddie.

## **COMMENTS:**

**OVERALL – This a lighthearted story that is fun and funny.** There are some good comic moments. The characters are all likable. The arena of the story is engaging and fresh – a boat trip from Chicago to Mackinaw. The author's writing style is engaging. The relationship between the characters are good. The story also has a nice warm heart underneath. The premise is good, but the execution of the premise did not deliver on its promise as much as we'd like. The story lacks a strong tension. There are far too many scenes that are devoid of conflict. The story feels episodic and does not have enough tension to keep the reader/audience engaged. The characters are likable, but the author needs to dig deeper into them on an emotional level. There are lots of fun moments in the script but they need to support a **STRONG** narrative. And the story needs to have characters that the audience can become fully invested in and can root for. The stakes of the story are also low. Even with a comedy, the story has to have strong structure and strong, **EMOTIONAL** characters. Emotions are what sell scripts, even comedies. The author needs to strengthen the structure, give the protagonist a strong, clear goal with strong obstacles and there needs to be a strong character arc – what does the protagonist learn on this journey? Why does this story matter? Why does this story **HAVE** to be told? It's a fun story, something you would tell to friends but what is it about it that makes it worthy of a full-scale film production. There are good pieces here, but the author just needs to make it all more compelling. The story does have good potential, however.

## **STRUCTURE**

All films/stories can be described this way: somebody wants something desperately and is having difficulty getting it. This describes a **PROTAGONIST** who is actively pursuing a goal he/she is **VERY** passionate about, but there are a **NUMBER** of **OBSTACLES** that are preventing him/her from achieving this goal. This is what hooks an audience – a strong, narrative engine. The engine in (TITLE) is weak. Trevor is the protagonist. He decides to take a trip from Chicago to Mackinaw. There are some obstacles – his lack of boating skills, his need to get a license, some conflict from his wife and family, Henry & Eunice and Freddie. But his goal has not stakes attached to it. What happens if he doesn't go on the trip? Well, right now it seems like he would just pick something else to do with his time. Why does he **HAVE** to take this trip? It would be much stronger if it were **HIS** idea in stead of Mr. Boose's. Perhaps Trevor **WANTED** to take a sabbatical. It is **TREVOR** that convinces Boose to let him take some time off and perhaps Trevor has wanted to take this boat trip his whole life. It is something that he **DESPERATELY** has always wanted to do. Perhaps it is something **HIS** father did and always talked about, but Trevor has been so engrossed in his work that he hasn't been able to do it. But **NOW** Trevor is ready to do it. Why now though? This is important also. Why is **THIS** day different from every other day? Why is **THIS** a seminal moment in Trevor's life? Protagonists usually have an arc in a story. What is Trevor's arc? He seems like

the same person at the end as he is at the beginning? What has he learned from this journey? What did he NEED to learn? This is the CORE of the story and it critical to adequately engage the audience. What is Trevor's flaw at the beginning and how has he overcome that flaw by the end? Hitchcock used to say that every protagonist goes from being a PERSONALITY to being a PERSON. That says it all. The protagonist is MORE of a human being at the end than he was at the beginning. How is this true for Trevor?

Protagonists typically have two goals: 1) external - called the character's WANT and 2) internal - called the character's NEED. Trevor WANTS to do this boat trip. That is a good external goal. What needs strengthening is the reason WHY he wants this goal and why he DESPERATELY wants this goal. AND what will happen if he doesn't ACHIEVE this goal? The stakes of the character's external goal - WANT - have to be HIGH. As far as Trevor's INTERNAL goal - his NEED - that is not clear at all. He seems to be a person that does well at work. And he seems to have a happy family life. It's a bit of a goofball, but that's not anything that has hindered him in his life. He does seem to have an issue with Freddie, but it is not very clear what that issue is. Basically, everything is going fine in Trevor's life and he decides to go on a boat trip for a year. Then the boat trip ends and he goes back to his life. Might be interesting and entertaining to some degree, but THAT story is NOT a movie. Movies need protagonists with STRONG goals that they actively pursue as if their life depended on it. The plot can stay the same, but the author needs to imbue the story with a strong dramatic engine.

FIRST ACT - First acts typically set up the characters and get the audience fully invested in the protagonist AND fully invested in the protagonist's goal. The goal of the author is to bring the characters as CLOSE as possible to the audience. This is by revealing as much about the protagonist as possible, especially the protagonist's inner life. What are his hopes and dreams? What does he want? WHY does he want it? Here, we meet Trevor at an award ceremony; we learn that he is a successful engineer/inventor and that his company values him. Then the BOSS suggests that he take a sabbatical and that he take a boat trip. We don't understand what TREVOR wants? He seems to be reactive rather than active. The author needs to show more about Trevor's relationship with his boss (and there should be some conflict here) as well as revealing more about his home life. Are there any problems at home with Ann? What is Trevor's flaw at the beginning? What is his scarcity? What is he missing in his life? Does he feel that he has worked too much? What does he want and why? The inciting incident is when Trevor first hears about the boat trip idea, then at around page 17 he should commit to taking the trip and by the end of the first act (somewhere between pages 25-30) he should have convinced Ann that they should take the trip. The end of the first act always has the protagonist making a decision, a choice. It seems too long to wait for him to decide to take the boat trip here. So, then what is the decision, the choice that Trevor makes at the end of the first act? This is important because it sets up the dramatic tension for the second act.

Perhaps he decides to go out on the trip alone – just he and Ann. Maybe prior to the end of the first act he was going to have help from some crewmembers or friends etcetera. Perhaps he decides he wants to do it alone – with Ann. That would set up a good dramatic question for the second act. Will he make it?

SECOND ACT – Roughly pp25-30 TO pp75-80. This is the meat of the story. This is where we see Trevor pursuing his goal and we see all the obstacles that are keeping him from achieving his goal. First let's specifically identify his goal. Perhaps it is "to get to Mackinaw by a certain date." This is good because it gives the story a TIMELOCK, which naturally creates tension – will he make it in time? That's good. Now, what are some of his obstacles? There should be 4-5 STRONG obstacles that keep him from achieving his goal. Usually, one of the main obstacles is the protagonist himself. Trevor will keep himself from achieving his own goal because he is not that skilled a boater and he is stubborn. That's good. Now, also the WEATHER is a good external obstacle. Bad weather can continually keep him from making it to his desired destination on time. Then, we have HENRY. Another good obstacle. Henry shouldn't simply want to get back Trevor for a simple April Fool's prank. It should be bigger. Perhaps Trevor did something (or Henry THOUGHT Trevor did something) that actually DID harm Henry in some perceived way. Henry should want to either 1) BEAT Trevor to his goal or 2) he should want to keep Trevor from achieving his goal. That is good. Now, Freddie could also be another obstacle, because he slows Trevor down because perhaps he is on a pontoon and he keeps getting into trouble and Trevor has to try to get him out. There is also another good built-in tension – Lenore's pregnancy. Perhaps Ann is constantly worried that they be in communication so that they do not miss the birth of their grandchild. Perhaps the communication system goes down. Screenwriters need to make things HARDER for their protagonist in Act Two – NOT easier. Always make things harder for Trevor. At the end of Act Two it should seem like Trevor is going to achieve his goal, but then something or something(s) happen and it looks like he will NEVER achieve his goal. The end of act two is often referred to as THE BIG GLOOM. What is the worst-case scenario for Trevor? Perhaps something happens to his boat and he won't make it to Mackinaw, plus Ann is upset with him, plus the Coast Guard is after him. Make it big, make it bad... The Big Gloom. This brings us to the...

THIRD ACT – pp. 75-80 TO pp. 105-110. The protagonist has a new goal in act three that he actively pursues. If act two is all about Trevor getting to a specific place at a specific time, perhaps act three is about him making it up to Ann or helping Freddie or simply making it back to Chicago. If the protagonist has the same goal in act three that he does in Act Two, then the story becomes boring. There has to be a new tension and then there has to be a STRONG climax. Right now, the end feels flat. Trevor and Ann get back. He has two new patents and he returns to his regular life. What happened? How is he a changed man? What has he learned? What has Ann learned? What has Henry learned? What has Freddie learned? Make it a satisfying and dramatic ending.

**SCENES – EVERY SCENE... EVERY SINGLE SCENE** in a script has to have conflict. Conflict is defined as two (or more) characters that have different intentions. Somebody wants to do something and the other character is opposing it in some way. There are many scenes in this script that are simply character chatting or bantering with each other. **EVERY** scene has to accomplish two goals: 1) move the story forward **AND** 2) expand our understanding of the characters. If the scene doesn't do both of these, then the scene has to be trimmed or cut. There are scenes here where people meet people – George meets Trevor, Freddie meets George etc... and there are scenes of the family enjoying meals together etcetera. There is fun dialogue in some of these scenes but if the scene does not have any conflict it will be boring. Neil Simon went even further. He felt that not only should every **SCENE** advance the plot and expand our understanding of characters, he also felt that **EVERY** joke should accomplish both things as well. Some of the jokes in this script are merely in the script as jokes, they don't move the story forward or help us to understand the characters. Don't put a joke (or comic moment) in the story unless it moves the story forward. Look at every scene. Does it have conflict? Does it move the story forward? Does it show the protagonist **ACTIVELY** pursuing a goal that he **DESPERATELY** wants? If the answer to any of the questions is "no" then the scene needs to be cut or reworked.

## **CHARACTERS**

**TREVOR** - A likable character, but the author needs to dig deeper. First, the author must identify the age of **EVERY** character when they are introduced. How old is Trevor? In the script it would appear like this: **TREVOR (55)**. Also, we need to know **WHY** this is an important time in his life? Why does he **HAVE** to take this trip now? Why does he **WANT** to take this trip? Even though this is a comedy, these questions have to be asked. Producers only buy comedies that have fully-realized three-dimensional characters. After reading the script twice, I still did not feel like I knew him. Yes, he is likable. Yes, I'd like to hang out with him, but what is it that he **NEEDS**? What is missing in his life at the beginning of the story? **AND** what does the Chicago-Mackinaw boat trip **MEAN** to him? Why is it important? **WHY** does he **HAVE** to take this trip? What is his relationship to Freddie? It seems when Freddie shows up at the Christmas dinner in the first act that there is some tension between Freddie and Trevor. What is it? How does Trevor feel about Freddie? How does Trevor feel about Ann? Are they happily married? How long have they been married? Does he have to convince her to take this trip? Why haven't they done this before now?

**ANN** – Also likable, but feels a bit one-note. Make her a three-dimensional character. Does she just go along with anything her husband wants? Does she like what Trevor does for a living? Does she like his business associates? What are **HER** dreams? What are **HER** goals? What does **SHE** want out of life? How does **SHE** change in this story?

HENRY – A good character. Lots of fun. The April Fool's prank is not a strong enough impetus to set Henry off. Make it bigger. This could be a GREAT comic character, but he needs to be motivated. Right now, it feels odd that he goes after Trevor. Why? Perhaps they've been having a feud for years and this is a chance for Henry to finally get back at Trevor.

FREDDIE – It might be better if he were directly related to Trevor. Perhaps he should be Trevor's brother. Increases the tension. Why does Freddie feel like he has to go on a boat trip now? What is his relationship to Trevor? Is he jealous of Trevor? Has he been trying to get Trevor to listen to his ideas for years? What is it? Make this relationship rich and put these two men in great conflict.

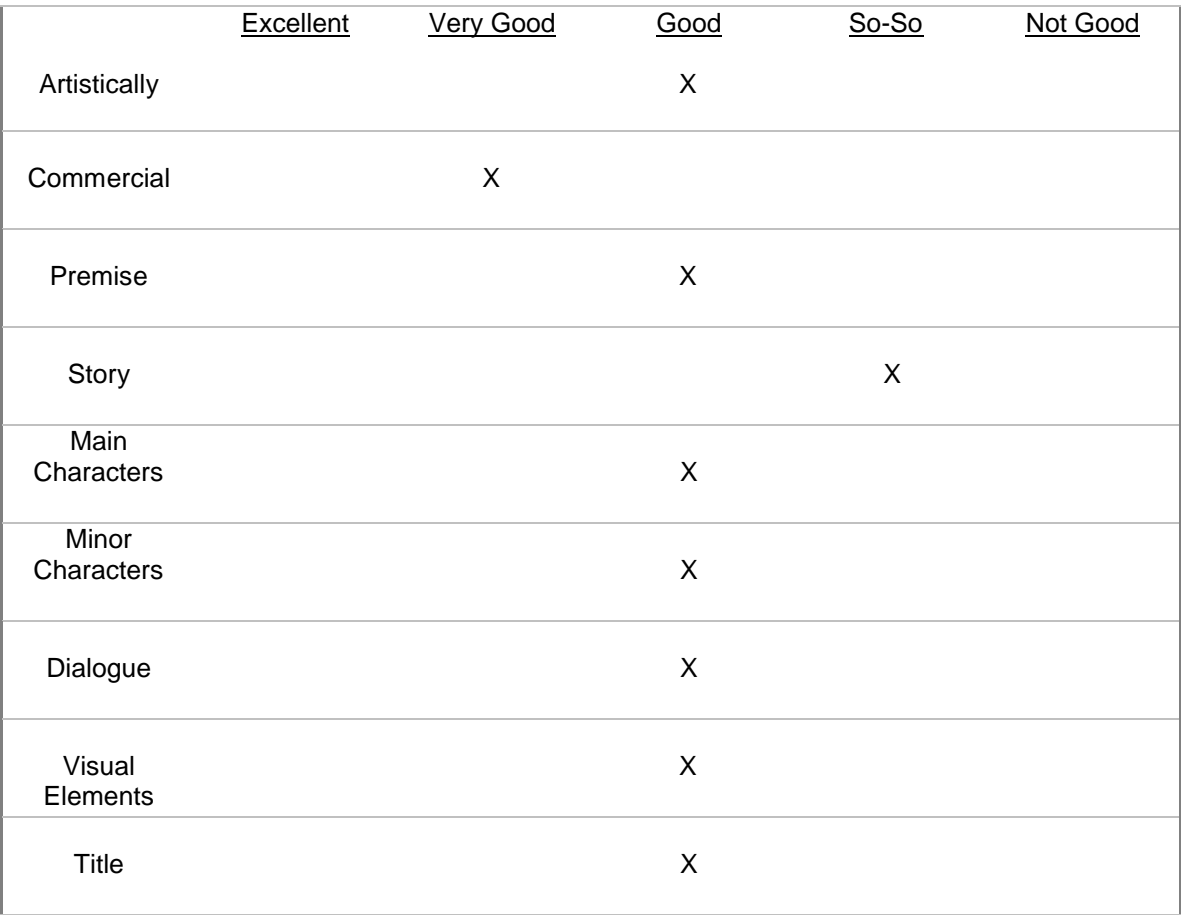
MR. BOOSE – Not much to him either. Nice guy. Typical boss. Why does he want Trevor to take a sabbatical? There are some times it seems he doesn't like Trevor – calls him a nutcase once. What is it? What is the CONFLICT between these men? There should be some. Does he want Trevor to succeed on his trip? Is HE jealous of Trevor?

The family subplot – Lenore – doesn't add much to the story. All subplots should ADD tension to the story. The Lenore story is nice, but not much conflict or tension there.

**SUBTEXT** – Some of the dialogue is too on-the-nose in the story. Try to use more subtext. Subtext is what's beneath the surface of the dialogue. Subtext is the unspoken thoughts and motives of your characters, what they really think and believe. In well-written dialogue, subtext seldom breaks through the surface. If the author lets his characters tell each other everything they think or feel, the actors can't do what they're trained to do best (revealing through gesture, intonation, and expression, the real essence of a character). Go back and look at each scene. See if you can spot dialogue that is on-the-nose. Then try to think of a more creative way to hint at what the character feels, without stating his/her exact thoughts. Remember, the point of subtext is that it enriches the story and can give the authors a chance to layer dialogue to give the script and scenes more depth. The power of subtext also lies in the growing sense of anticipation over the course of the script or scene. Whether they realize it or not, an audience is waiting for those moments when the gloves come off and your characters say what they really mean. As in real life, this should be reserved for times of intense emotion. At the climax of an argument, a woman might accuse her husband of the infidelity she's been hinting at for days. In a moment of great intimacy, a man might reveal a painful secret from his past. But until this rare moments of explosion, dialogue should have subtext otherwise readers and viewers will be bored.

**TITLE** - (TITLE) is a catchy title and does hint at comedy, but it doesn't completely reflect the story. The best titles give a potential audience a sense of the genre, tone and the arena the story is set in. We DO get a sense that it is a comedy and we know that it is set in a "water" arena, but it doesn't tell us much about a boat race or Chicago or that the protagonist is an inventor. (TITLE) could be a title for ANY comedy set around an ocean, a lake, a river, a bathtub etc... Titles are EXTREMELY important in this town now. Sometimes scripts sell on the title alone. The author is creative and talented, it would be worth the time to make sure the title for this material is one that is clever, smart and PERFECTLY represents the material. A killer title will help the script a great deal.

**GENERAL** - This IS a fun script. Lots of funny moments. I do like the writer's style as well. It was an easy, enjoyable read. But, the script needs to be focused and streamlined and, most importantly, it needs a STRONG tension and three-dimensional characters that deliver EMOTIONAL performances. The premise has a good deal of promise. The author should attack the rewrite. This script can be a real winner! Good luck!!



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