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## Armed With A Heart

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# Armed With A Heart

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts  
in  
Film Theater and Communication Arts  
Screenwriting and Directing

by  
Willie Charles Horton, Jr.

B.A. University of New Orleans, 1999

December, 2009

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## Acknowledgments

As I purposefully make an effort to do regarding every achievement in my life, I give thanks to God, who has been my savior and my protector. Without Him nothing would be possible for me, but with him, all things are achievable.

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my late brother, Lindell Anthony Slater. You were my first tutor. Thanks for always believing in me.

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## Abstract

This paper thoroughly examines the production of the thesis short film, Armed With A Heart, from conception to completion. Each area of the film's production is carefully dissected, including the writing, production design, cinematography, editing, sound, technology, workflow, and direction. Each of these areas contain a myriad of decisions that were made in effort to fulfill the overall vision of the movie as being a character driven, psychological thriller produced with a high production value. The aforementioned decisions are discussed at length. Documented feedback from test audiences is also reviewed in an attempt to objectively critique the final film.

**Keywords:** writing, production design, cinematography, editing, sound, technology, workflow, direction

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Ever since Eadweard Muybridge's pioneering accident with multiple still cameras created the effect of motion with successive images of a galloping horse, the world has been enamored with the perfect marriage of two universal languages - sound and pictures. If applied effectively, the possibilities to communicate via the medium of film are limitless and endless. As a filmmaker, I view the cinematic language as an untouched stone languishing in hopes of being inscribed with new dialects that lie dormant within the filmmaker's conscious. Armed with the tools of the trade, the filmmaker must find new ways to communicate a well thought out concept in a way that maintains the identity of his single voice. I chose to produce a character driven, psychological thriller short film because every other film I made previously had not stepped outside of the Drama and Action genres. By venturing into new territory with the psychological thriller, I had hoped to become versed in the psychological thriller arena, as well as strengthen my abilities as an overall filmmaker. This paper chronicles that journey. It also illustrates the specific decisions I made while producing my thesis film Armed With A Heart that contributed to its high production value as well as its ability to disguise supernatural events of a psychological thriller with real world situations. Before moving forward, allow me to give a brief background of my work.



My earlier films intrinsically commented on relevant social issues. For example, in 1995, New Orleans was dubbed the “murder capital” of the United States. After losing friends to the war on drugs, I produced a call-to-action film entitled The Wake Up Call exposing the violence and murders occurring in urban communities as a result of drugs. It tells the story of a single mother of two who decides, on her off day from work, to spend quality time with her kids at an urban playground. When two thugs enter the park, remnants of their recent altercation with rivals quickly follow. A gunfight ensues. When the smoke clears, the mother is minus one child.

Another of my early films, The Million Man March, accompanies a group of native New Orleanian African-American men on a bus ride that departs from New Orleans en route to the Lincoln Mall in Washington D.C. for the Historic event. The men return home with the confidence that their obligation to strengthen their community support is greatly needed and necessary.

After making those films, and many drama-driven music videos, I longed to explore other genres of filmmaking in an effort to test my social awareness and sensibilities outside of my comfort zone. I wanted to make a socially conscious film that challenges our perception of reality, but in a fun and intriguing way.

Before I wrote the screenplay for Armed With A Heart, I brainstormed for over four months developing four different concepts. One day while watching the news, then President-elect Barack Obama reiterated his promise to extract U. S. troops from Iraq. This gave me an idea for the narrative concept for my film. I tried

to imagine the state of mind of those women and men who have lost loved ones fighting overseas in the current war, as well as their coping methods. I created a central character whose point of view I would use to tell the story. Then I strategically populated the world with characters that would support my main character on her quest. To broaden the appeal of my film, I chose the universal theme of friendship. I also centered the film around the day for lovers - Valentine's Day.

After I had written the first draft, the three act structure was realized. They are broken up as follows: 1) Secure a dinner date with a phantom male; 2) Announcement to overly protective friends that it is a real date; and 3) The struggle to maintain privacy on the vision date. I knew that the success of the film relied entirely on concealing the fact that the "Mystery Man", as known to the friends, is actually a figment of the main character's imagination. Therefore, careful consideration was given to the casting of the film as well as my ability to direct the actors. I decided against a massive cattle call; instead I solicited talent from actors with whom I had a worked. I used a local talent agency to fill out the supporting parts.

My approach to production design was to create a world where successful people dwell and work. This would work in contrast with the void of companionship felt within the main character. Marcelle Hathaway is a CEO of a company, but has difficulty seeking the love once shared by her and her deceased husband. I sought to find local locations that would compliment the world, and

then to dress them with props and set decoration. The number, in addition to the quality of the locations was important to the success of the film as well as increasing its production value, because this was not going to be the typical low-budget student film shot entirely in a one bedroom apartment.

As a cinematographer, I recognize that it is one of the most important elements in the filmmaking process. The use of lighting and camera angles was employed to set the mood and tone throughout the film. For instance, I opted for handheld camera movement during the scene where the main character is preparing dinner in the kitchen. This is the only scene that applies this technique, because I wanted to evoke a feeling of being in-the-moment of the protagonist. Also, I felt that it was imperative to shoot ample coverage of each scene, maximizing my choices in editing later.

The editing was greatly influenced by abundant coverage filmed in production. By having a variety of shots at my disposal, I was able to control the precise revelation of information in each scene. I often relied on the concealment of crucial information to maintain a sense of reality in the hallucinated world. For instance, when the protagonist reads a blank greeting card, only the front side is shown to the audience, while the ostensible sender is heard in voice over.

The sound design of my film relied heavily on natural sound. Two thirds of the film was shot in interior locations. This allowed me more control of unwanted background noises. I also used foley and sound effects to enhance onscreen moments for dramatic effect. For instance, whenever the protagonist's deceased

husband is mentioned or referred to, the sound of funeral bells are softly heard in the background.

Regardless of the budget, technical shortcomings of a film should be minimal. With this in mind, my thesis was photographed on the Panasonic HVX-200 high definition camera. This decision greatly affected my production workflow. Having edited my previous films, tape-to-tape, on a Matrox linear editing system, I now had to use the Avid nonlinear system to accommodate the HVX-200 P2 media cards for tapeless editing.

The concept of supporting a friend who is continuing a relationship with a non-living being actually originated in 3rd century BC when Quintus Ennius wrote: *Amicu certus in re incerta cernitur*. This translates as “a sure friend is known when in difficulty.” A more contemporary influence is La Vie En Rose (2007), a critically-acclaimed biopic about the legendary international singing icon Edith Piaf who imagines waking up to her love interest who recently died in a plane crash. Another influence is The Sixth Sense (2000) where hypersensitive nine year old Cole Sear is scared to affirm to his child psychologist he sees malevolent spirits - including the doctor himself. In both films the director led the audience to believe that a character onscreen was alive, when actually they were deceased.

Since my goal was to produce a character-driven, psychological thriller, I constructed methods to ascertain objective as well as subjective feedback from a viewing audience in order to gauge the success of my film. Subjectively, I screened the film to family and friends, carefully paying attention to their reactions on key

moments in the film. Objectively, I created survey sheets to be given to a test audience, with no relationship to me, to be filled out after watching the film. This qualitative data will be further discussed in order to determine what areas of the film were most effective.

Lastly, I will conclude with my thoughts and observations on producing the film. With these findings, I hope to learn from my choices in making this film. I will also try to show how producing this film has made me a better filmmaker.

## Chapter 2

### Pre-production

#### *Writing*

K.I.S.S. - Keep It Simple Stupid: an empirical principle coined by Lockheed engineer, Kelly Johnson, and later reiterated by writer director David Mamet in his lecture to students at the University of New York, was my approach to writing my screenplay. Mindful of the time restrictions placed on a short, I chose the simple idea of a dinner date to illustrate my concept *a friend in need is a friend indeed*. Although a cliché, friendship is a universal theme that I hoped to resonate across audiences, broadening the appeal of my film. I also imagined the story structure based on seven key story points: 1) Protagonist, 2) Want, 3) Need, 4) Action, 5) Conflict, 6) Climax, and 7) Resolution. These points will be further discussed as I give specific details illustrating each act.

After completing the first draft of my screenplay, I realized the three act structure, as noted by Syd Field, was already in place. The next step was to insure that each act contributed to the progression of the story. By dissecting each act from the screenplay, I hoped to treat them as miniature movies with their own objectives that reinforced the idea of friendship - the super objective.

While brainstorming for a protagonist to tell the story, I created Marcelle Hathaway, a successful business executive and widow in her early thirties. She has made unsuccessful attempts at finding true love again. She is young enough to start a life with a new love interest, but not too old to begin a family of her own.

By pairing her success in business with her lack of personal goals, I hoped to give Marcelle's character depth.

Act one begins with the introduction of the protagonist arriving at work. Marcelle receives an instant message from T.P., whom the audience will later discover is her deceased husband, via her laptop computer. His salutation reads "How's my favorite lady?" on the screen. Her *want*, *which* is to get an apology from him for leaving her, is vaguely introduced as she arranges a dinner date with T.P. When T.P asks "what he should bring to dinner", Marcelle begins typing "an opened mind". She quickly replaces the words with "Just you." While chatting with T.P., she is interrupted by a subordinate, Taz, barging in late with a finished proposal. She turns the screen away from him. The audience not only learns that Marcelle is a business executive, but also an advisor on relationships to Taz. While counseling Taz on his dysfunctional relationship, it is revealed that it is Valentine's Day. The central figure and color of the film are also introduced in this act when Marcelle ostensibly receives a bouquet of red roses from T.P. with a card attached. I chose roses because of their blossoming beauty that is short lived. This idea resonates later during Marcelle's dream date with her husband. While alone reading the card, T.P.'s voice is identified through voice over before he is introduced later in Act Three.

There is no drama without conflict. In order to create a story with dynamic intensity the protagonist' goal should not be easily obtainable. More so, there must be something at stake in achieving her objective. In Act Two, the conflict

appears in the form of Kay Delery, Marcelle's friend and crisis mentor from the Widows of War organization that is also revealed in Act Three. This is a support group for military wives who have lost their husbands at war. Kay plays an essential part in the development of the story. I chose an older character for Kay to give the audience a glimpse of the personality Marcelle is afraid of becoming. This is later revealed in Act Three during the dinner conversation between Marcelle and her husband - T.P. Kay is overprotective, defensive, and intrusive at times. This makes it difficult for Marcelle to enjoy a private dinner with her husband later. In this scene, once again Marcelle's *want* is hinted. At the cafe while enjoying lunch and girl time with Kay and her best friend, Ebony, Marcelle reveals her evening plans mindful to be evasive of the gentleman, which raises Kay's suspicion. I created the character Ebony, Marcelle's best friend, as the total opposite of Kay. She is young, free spirited, and attempts to enjoy everything she feels life has to offer before settling down. For instance she boasts of an upcoming date with a wealthy gentleman in hopes of possibly landing a wedding ring, or not. Marcelle was neither of these women when her husband was alive. The fact that she thinks she could become a replica of Kay is overwhelming to her. Marcelle's objective in this scene is to insure her friends that she will be okay on this date and to be left alone to enjoy it. However, Kay's radar is peaked when Marcelle distances herself emotionally from the widow organization by proclaiming to have an aversion toward military men. Also in the scene we learn that Marcelle's husband's real name is Dominick Hathaway.



Act Three begins with Marcelle cooking and preparing dinner in her kitchen. Once again, she is taking *action* in pursuit of her *want*. She is dressed in a sexy red dress and wearing her wedding set on her ring finger. The red rose bouquet is nearby on the countertop. Also, in this scene, a medal on a striped ribbon is introduced. This is the initiation necklace for the widow organization. I placed this object in the scene hoping to further tie Kay's investment in Marcelle's well being. Finally, in this scene we are visually introduced to Marcelle's husband - T.P. First, we hear his voice off screen with the dialogue, "How's my favorite lady." Then he appears dressed in civilian clothes. This I hoped would conceal his identity as Marcelle's deceased military husband Dominick. They embrace and we see a wedding band on his ring finger.

The act continues in the dining room with Marcelle and T.P. finishing their meals. The flower bouquet is displayed on the table. Again the K.I.S.S. principle is applied. Instead of showing the mundane task of two people eating an entire meal together, I chose to cut-to-the-chase and stay on schedule with Marcelle pursuing her *want*. The two exchange gifts which are not immediately opened. It is then revealed that T.P. is actually Dominick. Marcelle expresses to him her concerns about being a widow like Kay. Her heartfelt plea ultimately leads to her *want* - an apology from T.P. for leaving her to re-enlist in the Army. However, it is not what she *needs* in order to complete the arc of her character. During the conversation Marcelle's privacy is challenged by several unanswered door bell rings proceeded by hard knocks at the door. Of the two at the table Marcelle is the only

one aware of the knocks and rings. This subtly reinforces the idea that T.P. is dead, which the audience will soon learn in the climax.

Marcelle answers the door and sees Kay humbly asking to borrow a fondue set for the widows' gathering. She is expecting Marcelle to be alone. I chose the fondue dish because it comes in pieces that have to be assembled, mirroring Marcelle's mental state after the passing of her husband. After realizing Marcelle has company, Kay questions Marcelle's dating practices. This scene initiates the rising action for the climax of the film. Marcelle needs to keep Kay at bay. So she demands Kay wait at the door while she retrieves the item. By doing so, she infuriates Kay. After impatiently waiting for a moment, Kay carelessly heads into the house while T.P. unpacks his gift.

The scene, as well as the story, climaxes when Kay arrives into the dining room and sees an urn instead of T.P. His gift is unopened and his plate is untouched. Marcelle returns and drops the box, startled by Kay's presence and revelation of her dinner. The story resolves in a series of actions to reinforce the concept of friendship. For instance, Kay shuts the door then begins removing items from the table, starting with the urn. By doing so, I hoped to illustrate a deeper bond between the women. In the scene two photos are introduced. One is an obituary article of T.P. dressed in army regalia. The other is a group photo of the Widows of War organization featuring Marcelle and Kay among the women dressed in festive white blazers. The screenplay ends with Marcelle removing the wedding set from her finger. With this action I hoped to illustrate that Marcelle

has realized her *need, which is* to accept Dominick's death in order to move forward. Therefore, her character arc would be completed.

## Chapter 3

### Production

#### *Directing*

My approach to directing was to suppress the revelation of Marcelle's state of mind until the end of my film. In doing so, I hoped to give visual punch to the climax and resolution. Before casting the film, I analyzed the screenplay scene-by-scene noting the objectives of the acts, as well as the actions of each character. By doing so, I hoped to improve my communication with talent on set.

The quality of a film relies heavily on the casting. I had an idea of the actor who could play Kay Delery - the guardian angel and antagonist. I chose Deneen Tyler (*The Curious Case of Benjamin Button, 2008, The Skeleton Key, 2005*) not only for her acting ability, but our working relationship as well. Deneen was the lead actor in my previous film *The Wake Up Call*. Actors test their actions by how it affects the other actors in the scene. By casting a seasoned professional, I hoped to enhance the performances of the novice talent.

The protagonist was the most difficult role to cast. I hoped for an actor with abilities to play the part of a conflicted woman whose success in her career does not coincide with her personal life. Also, she needed to illustrate an emotional break through. After an extensive interview I cast twenty-seven year old Jessica Renea Smith (*Maid of Honor, 2008*) for the role Marcelle Reneak Hathaway who is in her middle thirties. Although younger, Jessica embodied and personified

Marcelle's character during the auditions. For the role of T.P., I chose my classmate, Derrick Deal. Derrick performed in numerous award-winning plays at the university. Once my lead actors were locked in, I then solicited the assistance of a local casting agency to fill in the remaining roles. I hoped to find supporting talent based on their on screen chemistry with my leads.

After giving my screenplay to the actors, I scheduled a read-through meeting. The actors read their respective roles without inflection. By having them not act the parts, I hoped to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the screenplay. Also, they would become familiar with the dialogue. I then scheduled individual beat meetings with the actors. In this meeting I listened to each actor's analysis of their character then offered suggestions to them. As I did in my screenplay analysis, I conversed with actors on the beats in each scene. I hoped to insure that each of the actors understood my overall vision for the film as well as their character. I finally scheduled rehearsals. In the rehearsals, I blocked the scenes according to the script. While the actors performed, I noted details that I hoped to improve on once on set and shared it with them.

My on-set approach to directing was to give the actors a tour of the dressed sets before ushering them into make up and wardrobe. By doing so, I hoped to quickly familiarize them with their work environment. Before rolling the cameras, I staged a blocking rehearsal that included dialogue. Therefore, each department was given a final look at the scene before making necessary adjustments. Also, I used that time as a final rehearsal for my actors. More than once, I would notice

awkwardness in the performance and then correct it before the camera rolled.

After every take I sought input from the actors on their performances as well. This was helpful in gaining the actors' trust and created a comfort level for open and honest dialogue between us.

My method for gauging the quality of an actor's performance was based on the following analysis: 1) Did he or she achieve his or her objective in the scene?, 2) Did he or she stay in character?, 3) To what degree of improvisation could he or she introduce during the scene?, and 4) Can he or she deliver variations of his or her performance?

During my script analysis, I gave each scene motivations based on either the overall objective of that scene or the beats within it. I also included a cap, or ending point, to determine when the information given in each scene was sufficient before proceeding to the next one. For example, in Act One when Taz, played by Tommy Vita, explains to Marcelle why he is late with the proposal. Marcelle's action was to let a subordinate know who is superior. I chose *reprimanding* as a tool for her to use to carry out this objective. The beat then changes to Marcelle having a heart-to-heart with Taz. Marcelle is now trying to build Taz's confidence to get him to pursue his love interest that is leaving soon for military duty.

For the most part, the actors were well prepared upon arriving on set. I attribute that to the rehearsals prior to the shoot, as well as their own analysis of their characters. When a scene veered off course, I immediately stepped in and

reminded the actors of the objective of the scene or beat. Since I had gained their trust as a director, they were open to my directions during filming. For example, the dinner scene was shot after lunch. During the prior break, I observed Jessica and Derrick joking and laughing together, instead of rehearsing the reveal part of the film. Unfortunately, the off-screen banter carried over into the filming of the dinner scene. Therefore, I had several takes that were unusable. I then quietly reminded Jessica that Marcelle is becoming infuriated because she cannot break through T.P.'s mental wall. Also, I asked Derrick to approach the scene as if he is five years older. They made the corrections, and then I ended up with what I hoped for the scene. For the novice actors, I created "what if" scenarios to get them on track. For instance, during the office exchange between Jessica and Tommy, I noticed Taz's "Your one in a million boss." line to Marcelle did not feel genuine for the moment when delivered by Tommy. I then explained to Tommy that he should deliver the line as if he is thanking his mother for hiding a bad report card from his abusive father. I noted delivery of the dialogue was as his most successful performances.

Often during filming, I allowed room for improvisation from the actors, only if the content remained within the context of the scene. Sometimes, when an actor was in character and committed to their objective, he or she would exhibit a nuance that was unscripted. For example, when writing the script I had hoped to create instances that call attention to T.P. being a deceased person, but not in an obvious way. During a take when Jessica is caressing the medallion with her hand

in the kitchen, she glances up to the ceiling for a moment before discarding it. I chose to keep that take because it illustrated a moment when a character is remembering a lost one. Another instance occurred during the establishing shot of the cafe scene when I asked the actors to generate a conversation based on the context of the scene. By doing so, this would give me another option in case I decided to use the shot with its sound. They agreed, and then presented me with dialogue that I was satisfied with before we shot it.

In my script analysis, I listed additional tools that each character could employ when attempting to achieve their actions in a scene. By shooting variations of their performances, I hoped to maximize my choices in editing. For example, in the cafe scene when Kay urges Marcelle to reveal the mystery date, Deneen delivered the lines too straight. In a succeeding take, I asked her to call Jessica's bluff. By doing so, it increased the dramatic tension between the two, and allowed me an alternate performance to choose later.

### *Production Design*

Working with a shoestring budget, I hoped to find ways to increase the production values in my film. I sought locations that illustrate the world where my story takes place. However, production design is not just spaces to house the characters. Other elements such as props, set decorating, make-up, and wardrobe also contribute to the overall design of a film. I secured local locations that closely



resembled the ones I had envisioned based on the screenplay. Also, I took into account room for equipment mobility within the space

For the office scene, I hoped to find a downtown high rise building for Marcelle's office. I chose Bright Moments' master suite not only for its spacious floor plan, but also for its view of the skyline from its height in the building. To recreate Marcelle's office in the screenplay, I rearranged the furniture so the bay window overlooking the city was behind the desk. I also placed a nearby chair in front of the desk for Tommy. I kept some of the wall plaques. However, the ones shown in the shot were replaced with awards and degrees I prefabricated for Marcelle in preproduction. I chose a grey business suit for Jessica to wear to work. The suit is befitting of Marcelle's career status, and with the neutral color I hoped to illustrate a blank pallet in which a work of art can be built upon, much like Marcelle's character. I chose a pinned up hairstyle for Marcelle. This conservative look was appropriate for her work environment. For the binder Marcelle is reading, I placed papers inside in case the camera got a glimpse of its side. The flowers were arranged the day before we shot the office scene and kept in my refrigerator. The roses are red, which is also a primary color for the film.

To further enhance the quality of the film, I added visual variety to the locations. By choosing an outdoor cafe I hoped to break the monotony of my characters existing in confined spaces. I chose Cafe Reconcile in Central City New Orleans because of its aesthetics as well as its proximity to downtown. This is an indoor restaurant. Therefore, I had to dress the sidewalk with tables, chairs, and

amenities to suggest an authentic outdoor eatery. I used a kitchen in a theater across the street to prepare the food props for the scene. It also doubled as the make-up and wardrobe areas for the actors. Given that the scene takes place moments after Marcelle leaves the office, she is still wearing her business suit minus the jacket. I chose a purple blouse for Kay to wear. Since purple compliments nicely with red I hoped to create a visual contrast between the characters with wardrobe. In order to give visual punch to Ebony, played by Lauren Channell Allen, I stepped outside of the established pallet of reds, whites, and purples and chose an electric blue single shoulder, strapped blouse.

I chose a friend's home for Marcelle's domicile. Not only was it already decorated in an upscale style, but the dining room floor plan matched the room in my screenplay. The kitchen scene required minimal dressing. I placed the flower bouquet onto the countertop, since it is a recurring motif in the film. Also, the working kitchen enabled me to prepare the food props for the scene. In the script, the medallion is hanging on a key hook on the wall in the kitchen. On set I chose to place it in a dish with keys and coupons because I did not want to be responsible for any damages cause to the location's wall. In the scene Marcelle is wearing a sexy red dress and stiletto heels as she prepares the food. Her hair is pinned up as a safety precaution while cooking. T.P., the deceased husband, is wearing a grey sweater and black slacks. This absence of color was chosen to symbolize a lack of mortality.

The dinner scene was the most intricate to dress. I relied heavily on the production designer and the art department, in preproduction, to construct production design elements for the film. They presented the samples to me for my approval and direction before continuing on to create the finished props. In the script, Marcelle and T.P. exchange gifts after eating dinner. In the second part of the scene, when Kay enters the home, T.P. is no longer there. He is then replaced with an urn. Marcelle's wrapped gift for T.P. had to be created in a set of two. T.P. opens the gift at the table while Marcelle is conversing with Kay at the door. When Kay enters the living room the second unopened gift needed to be present because T.P. was not actually there. Consequently, the doubling of props was also applied to T.P.'s dinner plate. It was empty at the head of the scene. However, during the reveal the plate needed to be full with the entree untouched. I also placed candles on the table and around the room to create a romantic setting for the dinner. By having a location with an open floor plan, it allowed me to position candles in the kitchen. In doing so it added visual depth to the background behind Marcelle.

### *Cinematography*

Like production design, the cinematography greatly contributes to the production value of a film, if not more. The cinematographic process for my thesis film Armed With A Heart started in preproduction after the completion of the screenplay. My thought process was focused on using the camera as another way

to tell the story. The first pre-visualization method was creating storyboards to give me an idea of the flow of the shots once assembled in editing. It also afforded me the opportunity to create a pace for the film based on the types of shots used in the scenes. I then discussed the overall look and shooting style I had envisioned with the director of photography (D.P.) and the production designer. I conducted detailed technical scouts (tech scout) at the locations with my team. In this meeting, we mapped out a virtual flow plan of where the camera will be placed in relation to the talent. Also, we factored in the lighting and support equipment needed to accommodate the shoot. My previous movies were shot on film stock. Therefore, I had to take into account the photographic adjustments I needed to make when filming my thesis on the new digital media in order to maintain a high quality product. For instance, digital cameras record images with less latitude than film cameras. This minimizes the range of light values from total black to bright white on the picture. In scenes that require high contrast, I ended up using the in camera meters to alert me when the bright areas over-peaked. In addition, the gradation of the tonal values is more pronounced as opposed to the softer adjustments in grey tones on film. Be that as it may, my choice of shots was greatly affected by these decisions. After a final consultation with my D.P., who is more versed in digital filmmaking than I am, and making several tweaks to the shot list, I reserved the necessary equipment to be used to film my movie. I was then ready to shoot my film.

When creating the look for my film I viewed the story as taking place in two worlds. One is the mortal world where Marcelle works and hangs out with her friends. The other is the imaginary instances when she interacts with her deceased husband in her mind. I wanted to visually differentiate the two worlds through lighting. I chose natural lighting for the mortal scenes. For example, when Marcelle arrives to her office we never see her flip on a light switch. The entire room is illuminated by the bay window behind her desk. I used daylight balanced Kinoflo units to enhance the available light. In doing so, it increased the ambient light in the room for a correct exposure on the camera. Also, it rendered the intended result of light that is motivated from sun. In another example, the lighting for the cafe scene was also illuminated with natural light. I scheduled the shooting at this location based on the position of the sun during the day. I wanted natural indirect light for the scene. The building has an overhang that covers the sidewalk where the scene is filmed. During the tech scout I noticed that at sunrise the sun faced directly under the overhang, making it difficult to achieve the look I envisioned. By starting the day at noon, it had allowed time for the sun to pivot far enough overhead that it alleviated any spill of direct sunlight from the set. Although the sun is the brightest known unit of light, I had to strategically position shiny boards to increase the intensity of the ambient light modeling the talent, which was more important. By doing so, the production quality of the Cafe scene increased as well. Marcelle communicates with her deceased husband T.P. throughout the film. However, the interaction is a figment of her imagination.

Conversely, I strictly chose artificial sources as the motivation for this imaginary world. The visual contrast was crucial in developing the look for the film, as well as its ability to aid in telling the story. For example, the initial introduction to T.P. is through instant messages between him and Marcelle via her laptop. In the shots of T.P.'s messages on the computer, naturally the screen has its own backlight. But, when Marcelle is engrossed in the computer conversation, the lighting on her face is motivated by the computer screen as well. For the dinner scene, I envisioned it as a romantic setting whereby the room is illuminated by candles. Because of the nature of the media, additional artificial sources were added to achieve this effect; therefore, fulfilling my desire to contrast this warm candle lit world with the normal tones of the earthly one. There were moments when the two worlds met up in the story. For instance, in the scene when Kay is conversing with Marcelle at the front door, Marcelle is convincing Kay that T.P. is still there. Visually, Marcelle's fantasy world spills over into this scene. I wanted to illustrate this concept with the warm illumination from the dining room feathering her at the door. On the opposite, Kay is illuminated by the cold blue tones of moonlight. The visual contrast of lighting adds to the dramatic tension of the scene.

The shooting style of my film was influenced by the concept of creating a fantasy film that was packaged in a drama. Therefore, the fantasy element needed to be suppressed until the proper moment to reveal it. My choices of shots and camera movement were greatly affected by this decision. I had hoped through cinematography to conceal T.P.'s lack of mortality until the climax of the film. For

example, when Marcelle reads the card, I blocked the shot so that only the front of the card is shown. Later in the script it is revealed that the card is actually blank. For that moment it invokes a state of realism, because usually there is a written note attached to a bouquet of flowers. Another example occurred when T.P. arrives in the kitchen. Up to that moment, although having not been seen, his presence had been felt in previous conversations and voice over dialogue. In adding to his mystery and also to give punch to the scene, I visually introduced T.P. in a handheld P.O.V. shot when he approaches Marcelle, who is standing at the counter waiting to greet him with open arms. The handheld application gives the shot a sense of reality with an in-the-moment feel. Finally, in the reveal, I needed a way to introduce the urn. Using an insert of plate of food that was already established in the kitchen scene afforded me this opportunity. I chose to visually navigate from the full plate of food to the urn with a simple camera tilt. By doing so, it added to the suspense of wanting to know what Kay sees in T.P.'s absence.

My coverage of the shots for my film was based on the detailed shot list I created and later modified in preproduction. I shot master takes establishing the scenes and give myself options during editing. Once I moved forward to cover the shots the camera angles of choice were based on the information I felt important to fill the frame with in order to tell the story. For example, Kay and Ebony are overprotective of Marcelle. For the cafe scene, I chose to shoot Marcelle's medium shots in between them, using Kay and Ebony as visual barriers. The scene is about Marcelle breaking away from her friends to enjoy an evening alone with her date.

Metaphorically, I wanted to illustrate through framing a prisoner attempting to widen the bars enough to escape. For the office scene I also chose to visually reinforce the concept of privacy. In the exchange between Taz and Marcelle, the two are never shown on screen together. Through dialogue you learn their relationship to one another. However, through close-ups, Taz is visually kept at a distance away from Marcelle's computer. During the blocking rehearsals, I noticed some shots were difficult to cover in a single take. If an actor has a great amount of business in a scene, I would break the scene into smaller takes to film the action. For example, when Marcelle is cooking and preparing the dinner, she walks into the frame from off screen and performs the following tasks: checks the fish in the oven for doneness, caresses the medal, seasons the asparagus, prepares food on plates, and then sips a glass of wine. Because it is an action that does not require dialogue, I was able to cover the actions from different angles applying the thirty degree rule to avoid jump cuts in editing later. Thus, each task was broken into individual shots. Also, if there were a line of dialogue or key reaction that I needed an actor to emphasize, I would single out that moment from the scene and re-shoot it. In doing so, it alleviated the time needed to rerecord the entire scene. For instance, in the final exchange of dialogue between Kay and Marcelle at the cafe table, I noticed in several takes Deneen looks away after deliver her lines. In this confrontation Kay is calling Marcelle's bluff. Therefore, I needed to shoot Deneen's piercing stare to Jessica that does not let up until she feels Jessica has either swung back or thrown in the towel. Instead of having the two actors play



the entire exchange over again, I punched in to a close up of Deneen and extracted that single moment.

I shot my thesis film using the Panasonic HVX-200 high definition cameras. Working with the digital cameras allowed for immediate reviewing of the takes. If I needed to compare a shot with that of one filmed earlier in the day, I could easily recall the shot through the digital playback feature built in the camera. Also, if there were mistakes with a shot that I know I would not use later, with the touch of a button the shot would be erased, thereby saving space on the memory card. However, shooting on digital media has its disadvantages as well. For one, the color saturation of the image is too high. The overall image is too sharp and it lacks gradual depth of field. To combat the naturally deep focus issue of the camera, I had to make several adjustments while filming the movie. For one, I lit the scene to accommodate the widest aperture setting on the camera. Another method was the placement of the camera in proximity to the subjects. For close-up shots I positioned the camera as far back as I could and zoomed-in to the maximum focal length. In doing so it softened the focus on the background, therefore giving visual separation of the subject from the background.

## Chapter 4

### Post-production

#### *Editing*

As soon as the shooting was over, I immediately started post-production on my film. With a ton of footage in hand, I mapped out the way I would assemble my movie based on the goals I had set for each scene, and eventually the film. Russian director V.I. Pudovkin has written: “Editing is the creative force of filmic reality.” This concept greatly influenced my decisions in the editing process. My film can be categorized as a thriller, because of the buildup to the sensational element of surprise in the ending when Kay discovers the preserved ashes on the dinner table. Also in this genre, the emphasis is more on plot and action rather than character. However, I chose to edit my film as a psychological thriller. Abiding by the laws of this sub-genre, I wanted the audience to focus on the main character, Marcelle, and not have a clue of what is to come later in the climax. In doing so, I had hoped to give my film a visual and an emotional impact with the viewing audience.

Firstly, I discarded any shots that might have obviously drawn attention to Marcelle’s mental state. By playing it straight, and disguising any indicators that would disclose the imaginary world inside of her mind, I felt the film had a better chance of successfully delivering the element of surprise that I intended. For example, when Marcelle is reading the card in the office scene, the inside of the card is blank. Also, unlike in the film The Sixth Sense, where the characters

interacted but never physically touched each another, my main characters, who are a married couple, not only embraced, but also kissed in the kitchen scene. Until that point in the film, T.P. was a “mystery man” to not only her friends, but to the audience as well. Therefore, I held the interaction of the two, during the embrace, on screen for an extended moment in an effort to solidify a belief in the audience’s mind that T.P. is a real person.

Secondly, I hoped to create suspense through the interaction of characters on screen. Important information was often communicated through the body language and facial expressions of the actors. In the cafe scene, Marcelle is reluctant to disclose her mystery date to her friends. Kay calls her bluff to spill the beans, and then exits with no success, but not without ruffling a few feathers on Marcelle’s back. Instead of cutting back and forth between Ebony, who stays behind, and Marcelle, I chose to focus on Marcelle’s glaring look at Kay walking away. By choosing this, I had hoped to instill these questions in the audience’s mind: 1) Who is the guy?; 2) Why is he a secret to her best friends?; and 3) What information does Kay have that we do not?

Lastly, the pacing and rhythm contributed to the emotional impact of the film. This was executed with the frequency and length of the cuts, which was often indicated by the emotional dynamics of the scene. For example, when Taz first arrives and Marcelle tries to get a straight answer from him about being tardy, the tempo is fast paced, employing quick successive cuts back and forth between him and Marcelle. Through buildup of shots, I had hoped to create a sense of

discomfort in the audience as Taz is feeling the pressure from his boss to explain why he is late. With editing I had hoped to create a moment similar to one being interviewed in a police interrogation room. Conversely, when Marcelle dotingly has a heart-to-heart with him, the pacing is much slower, which decreases the emotional tension felt earlier in the scene by the audience.

In the original screenplay, during the climax, Marcelle is away in another room when Kay discovers the urn. I felt that not having the protagonist be an active participant in the big reveal would lessen the dramatic impact of film. It would become Kay's moment instead of Marcelle's, who is our main focus. In the editing, I chose to move the shot of Marcelle returning to the dining room forward in time. By including Marcelle's return with the chafing dish, while Kay sees the urn, the dramatic tension in the climax was heightened, and therefore the audience's participation in it I had hoped would be as well.

In order to cut for emotional impact rather than aesthetics, I often deviated from the conventional rules of continuity. For instance, in the cafe scene, Marcelle always looks toward screen left to speak to Kay. However, in the exchange when Kay is preparing to leave, I used a shot of Marcelle looking screen right to answer Kay's question regarding her date. I could have easily replaced the shot with a "legal" close-up of Marcelle looking screen left, which I had available. However, her performance in the "illegal" shot was on par with the emotional intensity of the scene. Therefore, I stuck with what was dramatically better required for the moment.

## *Sound*

My thesis film Armed With A Heart is set in a world that actually exists - current day New Orleans. Even though it also has an alternate world that exists in the protagonist's imagination, I wanted the sound of the film to reflect the natural environment of each scene without disrupting the flow of the dramatic structure I had in place.

The quality of the sound is directly related to the style of microphone (mic) that is used to record it. For my film, I recorded the dialogue using both a boomed, shotgun microphone and a set of lavalieres (lavs). Each mic inherently has its own acoustical characteristics. I chose the shotgun microphone for its clarity and mobility. With it, I was able to isolate unwanted background noises, and also freely position the mic out of frame and near the actors in the scenes. However, there is a drawback when using a shotgun microphone indoors. Because of the directional pickup pattern of the mic, enclosed spaces reverberate the sounds off its walls, not only into the front of the mic, but through the back of it as well, thereby giving the room a hall-like sound. The lavalieres, on the other hand, were positioned underneath the wardrobe of the actors near the voice box. With this method, the dialogue on the clips sounded fuller, due to the proximity of the actors' mouths in relation to the microphones. However, it lacked the reverberation that adds depth to the sound, which identifies the room. It also picked up the rustling of cloth rubbing against it. After experimenting with the sounds in post, I discovered a happy medium by mixing the two different mic

tracks. I used the lav as the main source of sound for the dialogue. I then raised the shotgun mic's level until I reached the desired reverberation. If I ran into a problem with clothes brushing against the lavs, I would isolate the shotgun as the primary source for the moment. However, this method worked best when the onscreen actor was not speaking.

Additionally, I would use prerecorded sound effects and music hits from a music library to enhance the ambient sound or give dramatic punch to a moment. For example, when Marcelle reminisces about Dominick at the cafe table, I softly embedded the alarming sound of funeral bells in the background. It adds to the somber mood of the moment. It is also used as a sonic identifier for a deceased character that, at the moment, has yet to be seen. The sound of the bells is also heard later in the film during the dinner scene, and then finally in the resolution when Marcelle is removing the wedding ring from her finger. Another instance is when Kay arrives at the house. While conversing with Marcelle at the door, I added the sound of copiously barking dogs in the environment to add to the tension of the scene. To punch up a drama of the moment, I strategically applied stingers or hits. For example, in the climax montage, T.P., Marcelle's deceased husband, opens his gift and discovers an empty box. We hear a metallic sounding musical note stretching the length of the task. I chose this musical hit for its tinny, lifeless qualities. The sound lacks fullness from leaning heavily toward the upper frequencies.

Finally, music was added to enhance the mood. The film is centered around a romantic dinner date. Therefore, I chose a sensual love ballad for the date. This song also served as the theme music for the film. It is first introduced as an instrumental in the opening title sequence, and then softly played during the dinner. I also placed the synthesizer solo at full volume in the kitchen scene during Marcelle and T.P.'s kiss and embrace.

### *Technology and Workflow*

My workflow was greatly influenced by computer-based software dedicated to the filmmaking process. The script was written using Final Draft scriptwriting software. This program organizes the text and formats it into the standard screenplay format. It also generates cast lists, scenes, and locations. After retrieving this information, I manually inserted it into Microsoft Office and created the production book that I carried with me at all times during production. This binder included the script, shot list, schedule, cast and crew information, and all the necessary documents for production.

Most of the remaining portion of the workflow was dictated by my choice of camera. The Panasonic HVX-200 camera records MXF files onto solid-state P2 memory cards. I checked out two cards to record my footage. Periodically, when the cards were maxed out, I would save the MXF files from these cards onto an on-set laptop computer. I assigned my digital technician the role of monitoring the on-set laptop and preview of the digital footage at breaks. The sound was

recorded as WAV files on the Fostex digital audio recorder. The boom operator was in charge of downloading the audio WAV files to the on-set laptop. At the end of the day, both the MXF and WAV files were save to an external hard drive. Because the media is digital, which means there are no tapes involved, we had no physical copy of the footage and sound. I took precautions by saving a copy of the files to an off-set external hard drive in case a primary hard drive crashed, which would result in my original footage being lost forever.

Once I completed the production phase of my film, I imported the MXF and WAV files into the Avid Xpress ProHD video editing software. This is also where the fine cut version of my film was assembled. Once picture lock was reached, which is the final approved assembly of the video portion of the film with rough sound tracks, I premixed the audio in Avid. I then exported the audio as an AIF file into the Gold Wave audio editing software where I mastered the audio to two stereo channels. To create the fine cut of the film, I replaced the original audio in my sequence in Avid with the mastered stereo mix from Goldwave. I color corrected the film using Avid's native color correction tool. The opening and ending titles were created using Adobe After Effects. At that point the film had achieved its fine cut, and therefore was technically acceptable for public viewing.

I used the compression tools in Avid to create a standard definition MOV file for the purpose of DVD burning and online film festival entry. I then imported the MOV file into DVDit Pro authoring software for the final mastered copy for home viewing. I can now burn unlimited digital copies with no loss of quality. I also



preserved an uncompressed high definition master of the film for archive purpose and future use.

## Chapter 5

### Additional Influences on the Story

There are three major influences behind the concept, conflict, and character in my film Armed With A Heart. These three pillars for storytelling were taught to me in the University of New Orleans' graduate class FTCA 6060. When studying and creating films, you are always influenced by successful storytelling that was created before you. These are the influences that I am most conscious of: the book *Annales*, the film La Vie En Rose (2007), and the film The Sixth Sense (1999).

Known to many as the founder of Roman literature, poet and dramatist Quintus Ennius' greatest work was his epic *Annales*. This narrative explores the history of Rome from the expeditions of Aeneas to the 3rd century BC. Also in the book lies Ennis' famous quote: "*Amicu certus in re incerta cernitur.*" The Latin translation is *a sure friend is known when in difficulty* – in layman's terms as a "*friend in need is a friend indeed*". This was the influence behind the concept of my film.

Throughout my film, Kay's investment in Marcelle's emotional well being is illustrated through dialogue as well as action. It is often met with a cold shoulder from Marcelle which tests Kay's loyalty. Finally, Marcelle's defiance culminates in the climax when she quietly beseeches forgiveness from Kay after her mental state is exposed. Kay obliges, and then remains at her side.

A more contemporary influence is La Vie En Rose (2007). I chose this source because it has a protagonist whose moment of delusion affects her actions and the people close to her. In the final moments of the film, Edith Piaf implores the love of her life, heavyweight boxer Marcel Cerdan, to take a trip from Morocco to be with her in Paris. He agrees before hanging up the phone. The following morning Piaf wakes up and sees Marcel sitting in a chair gazing at her. She rises and greets him. After offering to make him coffee and breakfast, she proceeds to the kitchen lauding her love affair with Marcel to her entourage who were en route to deliver some disturbing news to Edith. The boxer was killed in a plane crash while traveling to be with Edith. Therefore, his presence in the bedroom was a mere figment of Edith's imagination. Stricken by this realization, Edith breaks down emotionally in the hallway. In my film, which is centered around a dinner date on Valentine's Day, my character Marcelle Hathaway imagines that her deceased husband is eating a meal that she prepared for him.

Another influence is the movie The Sixth Sense (1999). It not only inspired the conflict for my film, but the manner in which I revealed important details of information was influenced by the film as well. In the movie, 8 year old Cole Sear possesses the ability to communicate with the dead. This fact is kept secret until he reveals it to his child psychologist Dr. Malcolm Crowe. As Crowe digs deeper into Cole's supernatural powers, he realizes the state of his own mortality. Dr. Crowe is actually a ghost.

In my film, Marcelle is at comfort level communicating with her deceased husband only in her mind. She chats via the computer, and then he arrives to celebrate Valentine's Day. At a lunch with friends, she tries to keep them at bay and away from her home. When Kay arrives at the house, interrupting the date, it is then revealed that Marcelle is delusional. The husband does not exist, except in her mind.

## Chapter 6

### Analysis

Often, independent filmmakers are their own worst critics. Having seen the film through the entire process from concept to completion, their sensibilities in terms of what works for a target audience can be myopic. That is why it is important to test a film before a viewing audience in order to gauge its strengths and weaknesses. For my film, I invited friends and family over to my house and screened the rough cut. This was prior to the audio sweetening and color correction. Therefore, what I presented was the film in its most basic form in order to sense whether the story I was telling was effectively communicated. Some of the audience members were familiar with the story from having read the script prior to the screening. Others came with no prior knowledge of the film or its concept. I seized the moment as an opportunity to observe the viewers while they watched the film. In a way, I was an active audience participant for my initial test audience in hopes of finding out if I had produced the film I intended.

The films that I mostly enjoy are those that run a gamut of emotions throughout the length of the film. Even though my film is about grief, I hoped the humor would naturally arise from the dramatic tension in the scenes, instead of intended punch lines forced upon the audience. Although the film as a whole was well received by the viewers, many pointed out the lack of humor in the lines delivered by Taz, Marcelle's middle executive. According to the opinions, he was the least likable character in the film. These observations contrasted the majority

of the people's opinion who read the screenplay before I began filming the movie. Taz' character, according to most, was humorous and charismatic. Obviously this was a bad choice in casting. There was other constructive criticism I received from the audience. I noted them, and then made what I thought were necessary adjustments before completing the editing process of my film.

By only screening for your friends and family members, the feedback is often affected by your relationship to the audience member. You are never wrong in your mother's eyes. In order to elicit objective criticism, I created questionnaire and survey sheets. These were disseminated to eleven people, whom I had not come to know or contact, at a public screening that I held prior to completing this paper. With these sheets I hoped to ascertain information I could use to make my film better. When asked whether they like the film, and would recommend it to others, all eleven participants strongly agreed. Also one hundred percent of the participants strongly agreed or agreed that the ending was unexpected and satisfying. One female mentioned on the sheet that "she never saw it coming". This reassured me that my treatment of the deceased character as a mortal being until the climax was properly executed. Also I gathered from that information that playing the fantasy as a straight drama, which I set out to do, was rendered with satisfying results. Therefore, my goals were met, and I feel that I created the film I had originally intended to make.

## Chapter 7

### Conclusion

I learned many things during the production of my thesis film. Having a crew that is committed to your overall vision makes a difference when creating a high quality production. Even though the crew consisted of mostly film students, each brought a level of dedication and efficiency when executing their tasks. My director of photography, Ryan H. Martin, is one that was well prepared to achieve the look I envisioned for the film. His lighting scheme and camera movements were dictated by the mood and energy of the scene. Whenever he had questions about a lighting and camera setup, he would refer to the screenplay. Another valuable member of the team was the production designer, Jared Serigne. His diligence in working overtime in pre-production paid off in the meticulous details of the props and set decorations. For example, when the budget could not afford a real urn, he produced one by painting a tin vessel purchased at a second hand store.

Actors, also, are integral to the filming process. I came to realize that not casting the right talent for a role can dismantle the flow of a scene. For example, I cast Marcelle's administrative assistant based on a look on her headshot. By not auditioning her, I was stuck with a novice actor that seemingly read the lines from the page instead of becoming the character in the moment of the scene. I ended up showing less of her on screen to compensate for her lack of experience. If I had

to re-shoot my film, I would audition every role to alleviate the acting issues I encountered this time.

Another thing I learned was the importance of sticking to one idea from concept to completion. The overall concept of my film was friendship. Thus, each of my choices when directing the actors was influenced by this concept for every scene. In so doing, it unified the scenes and therefore gave the film a single focus.

With any film, the success of proper planning lies in pre-production. By doing my script analysis, and creating the storyboards that eventually influenced my shot list, I was able to effectively communicate my vision with my cast and crew. In turn, I recorded all of the shots I intended to tell my story. By having clear objectives for each actor in the scenes, I got a better performance from my talent.

When comparing my thesis film to my previous work, there is no doubt that I have become a better filmmaker. I noticed a growth in not only the content, but also in the creation and execution of the concept as well. The experience has encouraged me to pursue longer forms of storytelling. I hope to complete a feature length screenplay that I will produce in the near future. This time I might test my dramatic sensibilities in another genre of movie making.

As of this paper's writing, my thesis film Armed With A Heart has been entered into numerous film festivals across the United States in hopes of garnering attention as a competitive filmmaker, and allow audiences to enjoy the suspenseful fantasy drama that I created.



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# Appendices

## *Appendix A: Shooting Script*

ARMED WITH A HEART

by  
Will Horton

Original Screenplay

Alexx Films  
8535 Stroelitz Street  
New Orleans, LA 70118  
(504)301-8322

1 EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY 1

A white van pulls to the curb and parks. The DRIVER, in navy blue Dickey's and a white polo, steps out toting a bouquet of long stemmed, red roses in a vase and approaches the building.

2 INT. MARCELLE'S OFFICE - DAY 2

Upscale and lavishly decorated. A bay window on the back wall reveals the New Orleans skyline.

Seated behind a polished oak desk, we see a profile of MARCELLE HATHAWAY, early thirties, cute, tending to a laptop.

She checks the door, then her watch.

She types something on the computer.

On the screen it reads, "Dinner at eight?"

She clicks the 'send' button. The computer immediately BEEPS.

COMPUTER (V.O.)  
You have new mail.

She types again, Then clicks the mouse.

COMPUTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
You have new mail.

A DOOR opens. Marcelle closes the lid on the computer.

TAZ, A Caucasian male, mid thirties, spunky, clutching a binder, rushes in and plops into a chair in front of the desk.

Marcelle rotates frontward, extends a hand, motions for the binder.

Taz raises a finger, catches his breath.

MARCELLE  
I'm waiting.

TAZ  
I'm sorry for barging in. I was up all night, and I have the proposal finished for you.

Taz passes Marcelle the binder.

TAZ (CONT'D)  
I know that I'm a little late...

MARCELLE (CHECKING HER WATCH)  
A little late?

TAZ  
Okay, late. But I know how  
important this is to you.

Marcelle opens it and skims through the pages.

TAZ (CONT'D)  
I wanted to prove to you, Marcelle,  
that I am ready to step up to  
middle management. I would never  
disappoint you again. Because you  
took a chance on me, and if I were  
to lose my job, Oopsy doo...

MARCELLE  
You do know that this stunt will  
affect my recommendation for you.

Taz sinks into the chair. A sullen look on his face.

Marcelle notices his disposition, closes the binder.

MARCELLE (CONT'D)  
Were you and Hector fighting again?

TAZ  
I told you that I was through with  
him for good, this time.

MARCELLE  
This time?

Taz realizes his slip-up.

MARCELLE (CONT'D)  
Was the Taz-manian Devil caught on  
the prowl again?

Taz shifts his weight in the seat and looks away, trying to  
conceal his expression.

TAZ  
(shaking his head)  
Uh uh.

MARCELLE  
With whom this time, Taz?

TAZ  
It was only coffee.

MARCELLE  
Right.

TAZ  
And a movie.

MARCELLE  
Taz?

TAZ  
and one little kiss. Oopsy doo.

Taz springs upright in his seat.

TAZ (CONT'D)  
You got me again. Hector knows not  
to bring me around service men.  
Those muscles in those decorated  
uniforms bring out my wild side.  
You know what I mean.

MARCELLE  
I used to.

TAZ  
I messed up again, didn't I?

Marcelle closes the binder.

MARCELLE  
Well, let's see. You have only one  
night to make it up to him before  
he leaves for duty, right. . .

TAZ  
He won't forgive me this time...

MARCELLE  
Besides, who doesn't have a heart  
on the day for lovers?

Taz rises to his feet brandishing a confident smile.

TAZ  
You're one in a million. Thank you,  
Boss.

MARCELLE  
You're quite welcome.

Taz turns and exits the office brushing past NINA, Latino, early twenties, gorgeous, carefully toting in the rose bouquet.

TAZ (O.S.)  
The Taz-manian Devil is about to be  
a pris-o-ner of war. I surrender!

Nina approaches the desk.

MARCELLE  
And whom are these for?

NINA  
Someone has a secret admirer, Mrs.  
Hathaway.

Marcelle trades Nina the binder for the vase.

MARCELLE  
Can you take this proposal to the  
committee for review, please.

NINA  
(EYEING THE ROSES)  
Yes-I-Can!

Nina exits the room and shuts the door.

Marcelle detaches a small glittery, red card from the bouquet and quietly reads the printed text.

MALE'S VOICE (V.O.)  
Look forward to being with you  
tonight. Love, T.P.

Marcel turns and lifts the laptop open.

She notices a new message waiting in her in-box.

She opens it. The message reads, "Yes. Should I bring anything?"

She types a response. "Just You. By the way, they're gorgeous"

Marcelle waves her nose near the flowers for a moment. She clicks a button. The screen reads, "MESSAGE SENT".

The computer immediately BEEPS again.

COMPUTER (V.O.)  
You have new mail.

Marcelle ignores it, admires the roses for a moment.

She taps a button on the phone.

MARCELLE  
Nina, reschedule my afternoon  
appointments. I'm not returning  
after lunch.

NINA (V.O.)  
Yes-I-Can.

Marcelle laughs to herself, rises from the chair, slips on  
her suit jacket, then grabs her purse.

3 EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE - DAY 3

Marcel sitting opposite at the table, enjoys a lunch outdoors  
with her girlfriends.

KAY, early forties, modestly dressed, sips a bowl of soup.

Marcelle, nurses a shrimp salad, eyeing EBONY, late twenties,  
thin physique, devouring a boat of hot wings.

MARCELLE  
Slow down, Ebony. Hmmm. Makes me  
wonder where all the food goes.

KAY  
This child can eat a box of Popeyes  
and not once loosen her belt.

EBONY  
Don't hate on me, Heffas, because I  
can still fit my prom dress. . .

Ebony pulls a pair of tagged skimpy panties from a gift bag  
under the table.

EBONY (CONT'D)  
... and these.

She dangles the underwear on display. The women share a  
hearty chuckle.

MARCELLE  
Who's the flavor this month?

EBONY  
(still waving her  
underwear)  
(MORE)

EBONY (CONT'D)  
Paul, a very wealthy real estate investor.

KAY  
Ebony, put those away.

EBONY  
Why? I'm not ashamed of my intimates.

KAY  
I don't want your funky drawers anywhere near my gumbo.

Marcelle breaks into laughter, picks up a forkful of salad.

Ebony leans over and slides the panties into the bag.

EBONY  
Tonight my stocks are going through the roof...And I might get a ring. Okaaaay.

Kay, eyeing Marcelle, nudges Ebony in her side with an elbow.

EBONY (CONT'D)  
What, Kay?

Marcelle continues chomping her salad.

KAY  
Marcelle, you know Ebony. She didn't mean anything by that.  
(Cuing a yes from Ebony)  
Right, Eb?

EBONY  
What did I do?

KAY  
Would you like to come with me tonight? It's been a while.

MARCELLE  
(Gathering her salad)  
It's tempting. But, I won't be alone again this holiday.

EBONY  
(To Kay)  
See, I told you so.

Kay quietly agrees with Ebony.



EBONY (CONT'D)  
 (To Marcelle, pointing to  
 Kay)  
 Now we gotta hook this one up with  
 a man. Instead of her spending her  
 holidays with a bunch of women.  
 (To Kay)  
 What do ya'll do at those meetings?

KAY  
 Hush up, Ebony.  
 (To Marcel)  
 So, that's why you're glowing.

EBONY  
 Tell me, is he the guy with the  
 flowers?

MARCELLE  
 Yes. And from whom did you acquire  
 that information?

Kay turns to Marcelle.

KAY  
 Who else.

KAY AND MARCELLE  
 (In unison)  
 Taaaaazz.

EBONY  
 Oopsy doo, Boo.

Marcelle sips a glass of water. Continues eating.

Kay leans forward, folds both arms on the table. Ebony scoots  
 her chair up a bit.

EBONY (CONT'D)  
 Umm. Where'd you go? Do I need to  
 sign a missing person report for my  
 best friend? Cause I will.

MARCELLE  
 That's not necessary.

KAY  
 Is it Lawrence at Entergy?

MARCELLE  
 No.

EBONY  
 Good. He wasn't your type. Too hairy.  
 (In her best Denzel Washington impression)  
 King Kong ain't got nothing on him.

KAY  
 Hush up, Eb.  
 (To Marcelle)  
 Its gotta be Nathan at Chevron. He is perfect for you.

MARCELLE  
 Noooo!

KAY  
 Then who?

MARCELLE  
 Just know that he's a nice gentleman that accepts me for me.

EBONY  
 I am so happy for you, girl.

KAY  
 Me too, Marse.

MARCELLE  
 We've been talking via e-mail. Today he finally called and asked if we can get together.

KAY  
 Seems like you've come along fine since Dominic.

EBONY (O.S.)  
 Yeah, I was getting a bit worried about you, girl.

MARCELLE  
 I think about him sometimes. Wonder if he were still with me, how things could have turned out between us.

EBONY  
 It wasn't your fault, Marse. Dominic chose to leave.

KAY  
That's right.

MARCELLE  
But, I could have been a more  
supporting wife when he needed me  
to be...hmm.

Kay studies Marcelle for a moment.

EBONY  
Well, That's all behind you now.  
Right?

Ebony raises a glass of tea in the air.

MARCELLE  
You bet it is. No more military men  
for me.

Marcelle follows with only a swallow of water in her glass.

Kay leans back in the chair, takes a sip of her drink  
instead.

EBONY (O.S.)  
Happy Valentines Day.

MARCELLE  
Happy Valentines.

The glasses cling together.

EBONY  
Kay?

Marcelle finishes her water.

Kay squares Marcelle in the eyes.

KAY  
And when do we get to meet him?

MARCELLE  
I didn't say, Kay.

KAY  
Riight.

Kay rises to leave.

KAY (CONT'D)  
I gotta head across town to pick up  
a few things for tonight.

Marcelle turns to Ebony. Ebony shrugs her shoulders.  
Then to Kay.

EBONY  
We'll catch up with you later,  
girl.

Kay tosses a few bucks onto the table.

KAY  
God bless your evenings.

She heads off.

Marcelle stares at the empty glass for a moment.

Beads of water roll down the side of the glass.

EBONY  
(Shaking her head)  
She needs her a boo, quickly.

Marcelle looks at Ebony. Flashes a smile.

4 INT. MARCELLE'S CONDO - NIGHT

4

A page out of Home and Garden magazine. Dimly lit, but not dreary.

The dining room table is romantically prepared for two, filled with Valentine's Day amenities - chocolate covered strawberries, cheese tray, gold rimmed wine flutes, two dinner candles.

5 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

5

Fresh asparagus spears sizzle in a saute' pan on the stove.

Hair pinned up, Marcelle, dolled up in a cook's apron and stilettos, pulls the oven door open and slides out a sheet pan lined with a row of red snappers.

She checks a filet with a finger, then slides the pan back into the oven. Something grabs her attention.

She removes a GOLD STAR on a striped ribbon from a key hook on the wall. On her ring finger is a gold wedding set.

She studies it for a moment. The rose bouquet is in the background on a counter top.

Marcelle caresses the face of the medal with a finger, then carefully hangs the ribbon back on the hook.

Eyeing the clock on the wall, Marcelle grabs an open cookbook off the counter then scans a page.

With a free hand she sprinkles a pinch of salt onto the vegetables. Drops the book. Then follows it with a few grinds from a pepper mill.

A DOOR opens somewhere in the house. Marcelle checks the clock again.

It reads "Eight o'clock".

MARCELLE  
(Smiling to herself)  
He showed up.

In one motion, Marcelle lifts the pan from the stove then cranks the burner off.

She divides the asparagus between two elegant plates already adorned with dollops of steamed red potatoes.

Marcelle pauses for a moment, notices her hands shaking.

She doesn't see a tall, muscular, GENTLEMAN, dressed in a crisp button up shirt, approaching from behind.

She takes a sip of white wine from a flute for courage.

MARCELLE (CONT'D)  
(To herself)  
Come on, Marcelle, we can do this.

GENTLEMAN (O.S.)  
How's my favorite lady?

Marcelle whips around, facing the gentleman. She sets the glass on the counter.

MARCELLE  
Come here, T.P.?

Marcelle reaches her arms out, forces him into a firm embrace.

He clasp his hands into the small of her back. On his ring finger is a gold band.

T.P.  
What were you saying when I walked in?

MARCELLE  
(In a dreamy whisper)  
Nothing?

T.P.  
It smells awesome in here.

MARCELLE  
I know. Now go and take a seat, so I can finish your meal.

T.P.  
Okay, don't keep me waiting.

T.P. steals a kiss and heads toward the door.

Marcelle, watching him go, smiles and draws her shoulders.

He pauses at the door, looks back at Marcelle.

T.P. (CONT'D)  
Um, um, ummm.

MARCELLE  
What was that?

T.P.  
(Smiling)  
Nothing.

MARCELLE  
Go away.

He exits the kitchen.

Marcelle snaps back into action.

Using the microwave door as a mirror, she pulls a pin freeing her lustrous hair.

She slips out of the apron, unveiling an elegant evening dress underneath.

She checks around the kitchen.

MARCELLE (CONT'D)  
 (To herself)  
 Now what were we doing,  
 Marcelle?...The fish!

Marcelle grabs a mitt, then pulls the pan from the oven.

6 INT. DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

6

Marcelle and T.P., seated at opposite ends of the table,  
 finish their entrees.

The bouquet's card lays closed next to Marcelle's plate.

MARCELLE  
 Would you care for some dessert?

T.P.  
 (Circling his stomach with  
 his hand)  
 I don't know. I'm stuffed.

MARCELLE  
 I made your favorite, lemon  
 cheesecake. Remember?

T.P.  
 Well, in that case I might have  
 some room.

MARCELLE  
 I'll grab you a slice...

T.P.  
 Wait....

T.P. reaches under the chair, lifts a small decorated box.

T.P. (CONT'D)  
 I didn't come empty handed.

He passes her a box.

T.P. (CONT'D)  
 Happy valentine's Day.

Marcelle reaches under the table, then hands T.P. a gift  
 wrapped garment box.

T.P. (CONT'D)  
 What is this, baby?

MARCELLE

A little something for you, too.

T.P. starts opening his gift.

Marcelle stares at hers for a moment, then sets it on the table.

T.P. notices.

T.P.

It's not the best wrapping job.

MARCELLE

(Eyeing the gift)

It's perfect.

T.P. lowers the gift on the table

T.P.

What is it, then?

MARCELLE

I didn't give you a proper farewell last time I saw you.

T.P.

It wasn't easy for me, either.

MARCELLE

I thought of you waiting for me at the airport to see you off.

T.P.

You never showed...

MARCELLE

I should have driven you... I just didn't want to end up like...

T.P.

But you're not like Kay.

MARCELLE

Not yet.

T.P.

After losing my brother, you know ...

MARCELLE

But, you promised you wouldn't leave me again.



He looks over the table display.

MARCELLE (CONT'D)  
I needed you here, with me. Was  
that not worth fighting for...even  
if I lost?

Marcelle looks away. Then grabs her plate to leave.

T.P. reaches across the table and holds her hand in his palm.

T.P.  
Marcy, wait a minute.

Marcelle lowers the plate, takes a seat.

T.P. (CONT'D)  
Can we now put that behind us?

She turns to T.P.

T.P. (CONT'D)  
I promise ...

A few KNOCKS at the door. Marcelle's aware, but ignores them.

MARCELLE  
Just promise we'll fight our  
battles together, here this  
time...as husband and wife.

T.P. confirms with a nod.

T.P.  
Marcy, I forgive you.

Marcelle gently squeezes his hand.

A few more KNOCKS. Louder.

Marcelle reluctantly slips her hand from T.P.'s grip. Rises  
to her feet.

MARCELLE  
Let me see who it is.

T.P.  
Okay. I'll wait.

Marcelle heads for the door. In stride, she checks back to  
T.P. whose back is facing her.

He turns around.

T.P. (CONT'D)  
I love you.

Marcelle arrives at the door.

She turns the knob. Cracks the door a bit.

7 EXT. DOORWAY - NIGHT

7

Marcelle peeks through the door.

She sees Kay dressed in a white blazer. Around her neck is a GOLD STAR on a striped ribbon.

KAY  
Hey, Marse. I thought I'd catch  
you before you leave.

Marcelle opens the door half way.

Kay looks past Marcelle. Sees undulating light on the walls.

KAY (CONT'D)  
Are you alone?

MARCELLE  
No. Not at all. I was just...

Marcelle motions her head towards inside.

KAY  
Ohhh...Well, I forgot my sister  
borrowed my fondue dish. She won't  
be back in town until...

MARCELLE  
It's okay. Just wait here a minute.

Marcelle turns to leave.

KAY  
(Looking past Marcelle)  
Marse, is everything all right?

MARCELLE  
I'm okay.

KAY  
How long have you known him?

MARCELLE  
This is not the time.

KAY  
It's not like you to invite someone  
over so soon.

MARCELLE  
We're fine, Kay. Excuse me.

Marcelle shuts the door.

6 BACK INSIDE THE HOUSE

6

T.P.  
Are we expecting company?

MARCELLE  
It's Kay. And she's leaving.

T.P.  
What does she want?

Marcelle heads to a room.

MARCELLE  
She needs to borrow something. I'll  
be...

7 BACK TO THE DOORWAY

7

Kay paces the floor, then raises her hand to knock.

6 BACK INSIDE THE HOUSE

6

T.P. starts unwrapping his gift. There's a knock at the door.

T.P. Continues unwrapping.

The knob turns.

The door opens. Kay steps in.

She freezes in bewilderment, eyes locked on the dining room.

T.P.'s seat is empty. In his place, she sees a freshly  
wrapped garment box. An untouched red snapper dinner on a  
plate sitting before a polished urn on the table.

On Marcelle's plate are nibbles of vegetables.

KAY  
(To herself)  
Marcelle?

Marcelle returns from a room. Suddenly drops the fondue set on the floor.

Kay turns to Marcelle

Marcelle bends down, grabs the dishes from the floor.

Kay reaches a hand behind her back and shuts the door.

She flips the lights on, then heads towards the table.

MARCELLE  
(To herself)  
You don't have to do this.

Kay carefully removes the urn from the table then places it on a mantle between a PHOTO of women, standing two rows deep, and a newspaper CLIPPING.

Printed in bold letters on the paper reads: "N.O. Soldier Among US Casualties In Baghdad".

Inserted in the article below is a picture of Dominic dressed in military regalia.

Without uttering a sound, Marcelle takes her seat at the dining table.

Engraved in gold on the urn reads: "Dominic Hathaway". Below are the initials "T.P." in bold lettering.

Kay starts clearing the table, starting with Dominic's end.

Marcelle watches Kay carry dishes toward the kitchen.

She looks around the room and sees the unopened gift for T.P. in the chair.

Kay grabs Marcelle's plate, then heads back into the kitchen.

There's a crimson reflection on Marcelle's face.

Marcelle looks down, notices the glittery, red card on the table.

She pulls it to her.

Marcelle lifts the card from the table into her hand.

She opens it. It's blank.

DOMINIC (V.O.)  
Look forward to being...

She drops the card, watches it slowly hit the floor.

It lands beside her stiletto heel.

ON THE MANTLE

In the picture, the ladies are dressed in white blazers. Gold stars hang from striped ribbons around their necks. The caption reads: "Widows of War"

In the back row, Marcelle is half-hidden behind Kay's head.

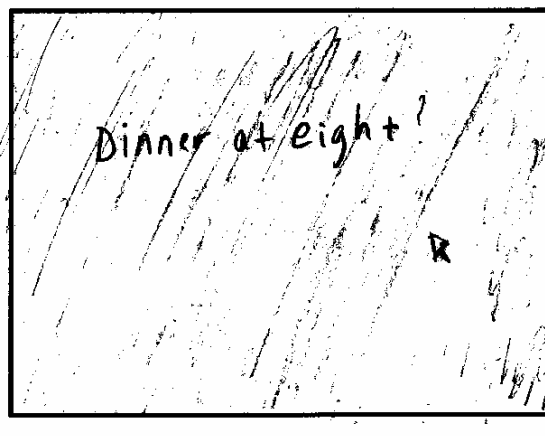
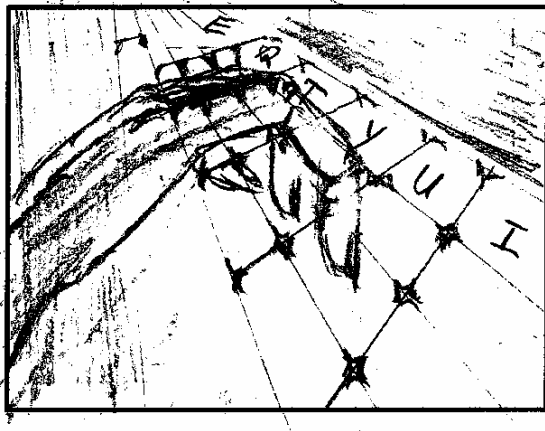
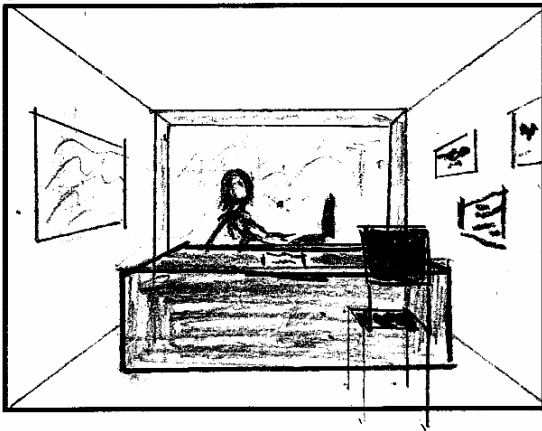
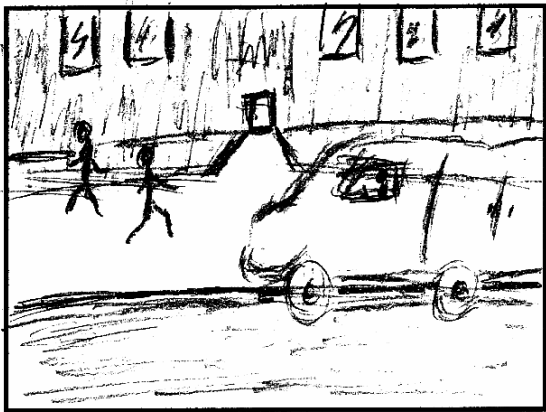
AT THE TABLE

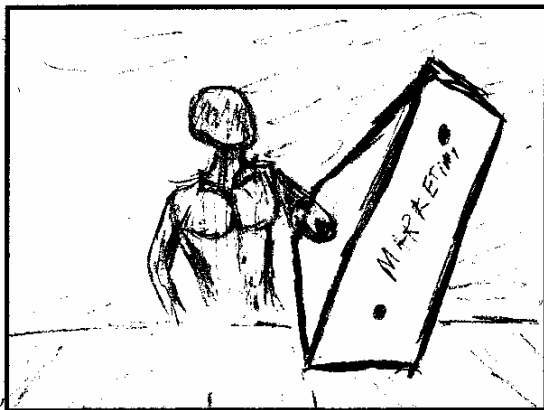
Marcelle blows out a candle, then sits alone for a moment.

She slides the wedding set from her finger onto the table.

FADE OUT.

Appendix B: Story Boards Sample





## Appendix C: Shooting Schedule

### Armed With A Heart

#### Shooting Schedule

Director: Will Horton

#### Office-Friday

Call time: 10:00am at location

10:30am 1 - *XLS* Establishing shot of Marcelle's office building as van drives up.  
10:45am 1A - *MS* Driver exits vehicle toting flower bouquet.

---

11:15 2 - *LS* Master shot of Marcelle at the computer. Taz enters and sits.  
12:15 2A - *MS* Marcelle speaks with Taz then Nina A cam  
2A1- *CU* Marcelle speaks with Taz then Nina B cam  
1:15 2B - *MS* Taz coverage in chair A cam  
2B1- *CU* Taz coverage in chair B cam  
2:00 2C - *MLS* Nina enters with flowers, Taz exits  
2:45 2C1- *MS* Nina speaks with Marcelle  
3:00 Voice over roomtone  
3:00 Lunch  
4:30 2D - *CU* Inserts of Marcelle's degrees on wall  
5:00 2E - *CU* Marcelle's typing on computer.  
5:30 2E1- *CU* Marcelle's POV of Computer screen.  
5:45 2E2- *CU* Marcelle's hand typing  
6:00 2E3- *CU* Marcelle's POV of Flowers  
6:30 2E4- *ECU* Marcelle smells the flowers

---

#### Café-Sunday

Call time: 10:00am

11:00 3 - *XLS* Establishing shot of Café with the friends eating  
11:30 3A - *MS* Kay and Ebony's POV of Marcelle  
3A1- *CU* Kay and Ebony's POV of Marcelle  
12:30 3B - *MS* Marcelle's POV of Kay and Ebony  
1:30 3B1- *CU* Kay A cam  
3B2- *CU* Ebony B cam  
2:30 3C - *MS* Kay rises and exits  
3:00 3D - *CU* The two glasses touch  
3:15 3E - *ECU* Marcelle's POV of her glass, beads of water roll down the side

---

4 - *CU* Inserts (lit candles, red and white tulips, chocolate covered strawberries)

---



## House-Saturday

7:00 Call time

9:00	5	-	LS	Marcelle preparing dinner
9:30	5A	-	MS	Marcelle preparing dinner
10:00	5B	-	CU	Marcelle's POV of her hand caressing gold star.
10:20	5C	-	CU	Clock reads 8:00pm
10:35	5D	-	CU	Asparagus sizzling in pan
10:50	5E	-	CU	Asparagus laid on plate
11:00	5F	-	CU	Marcelle's trembling hands
11:30	5G	-	MS	Marcelle embracing T.P.
12:00	5G1-		CU	Marcelle embracing T.P.
12:30	5E	-	CU	T.P. embracing Marcelle\
1:00	5E1-		CU	T.P.'s hands caressing Marcelle's lower back
1:20	5F	-	MS	Marcelle asking T.P. to leave kitchen
1:50	5G	-	MLS	T.P. exiting the kitchen door.

---

2:00 Lunch

3:30	6	-	XLS	Master of Marcelle and T.P. speak over dinner
4:15	6A	-	MS	TP's POV of Marcelle
5:00	6A1-		CU	TP's POV of Marcelle
5:45	6A2-		MLS	TP's POV of Marcelle answering the door
6:00	6C	-	MS	Kay entering house
6:25	7B	-	MS	Kay at outside door
6:35	7B1-		CU	Kay's Gold star on neck
6:45	7B2-		MLS	Kay pacing outside
7:00	7B3-		ECU	Doorknob turns
7:30	6A3-		MLS	Marcelle returns from room, drops the fondue dish
7:45	6A4-		XLS	Marcelle takes seat at table, Kay cleans up.
8:00	6A5-		MS	Marcelle seated at the table A cam
	6A6-		CU	Marcelle seated at the table B cam
8:10	6A7-		ECU	Marcelle opens card, then drops it
8:20	6A8-		ECU	Marcelle's hand sliding the ring off
8:30	6B	-	MS	Marcelle's POV of TP A cam
	6B1-		CU	Marcelle's POV of TP B cam
9:00	6B2-		XCU	TP's hand on Marcelle's
9:15	6B3-		CU	TP's profile while saying "I love you."
9:45	6B4-		MLS	TP opening his gift, Marcelle returns and heads to a room
10:00	6C1-		ECU	Doorknob turns
10:15	6D	-	XCU	Table inserts(plates, urn)
10:30	6F	-	CU	Mantle inserts(news clipping, photo, etc.)

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10:45	7	-	LS	Kay and Marcelle at the door
11:00	7A	-	MS	Marcelle in doorway

Appendix D: Production Budget

# Armed With A Heart

Budget

Camera Department	Qty	Price	SubTotal
Western Digital Hard Drive w/1 yr warranty	1	\$104.88	\$104.88
Camera Operator	1	\$150.00	\$150.00
Black Trash Bags	1	\$8.15	\$8.15
Art Department	Qty	Price	SubTotal
Miscellaneous	1	\$100.00	\$100.00
Walmart	1	\$43.42	\$43.42
Exxon	1	\$20.06	\$20.06
Office Depot	1	\$5.98	\$5.98
	1	\$11.95	\$11.95
Talent	Qty	Price	SubTotal
Marcelle	1	\$0.00	\$0.00
Kay	1	\$0.00	\$0.00
Ebony	1	\$100.00	\$100.00
Taz	1	\$50.00	\$50.00
T.P.	1	\$0.00	\$0.00
Nina	1	\$50.00	\$50.00
Van Driver	1	\$0.00	\$0.00
Wardrobe/Make-Up	Qty	Price	SubTotal
Make-Up Artist	1	\$200.00	\$200.00
Miscellaneous	Qty	Price	SubTotal
Southwest Airlines	1	\$297.70	\$297.70
Catering/Craft Services	Qty	Price	SubTotal
Black Dishpan	1	\$2.88	\$2.88
Family Dollar	1	\$45.59	\$45.59
Rouses	1	\$72.87	\$72.87
Rouses	1	\$38.31	\$38.31
Family Dollar	1	\$27.58	\$27.58
Rouses(Tunisia)	1	\$132.00	\$132.00
Manchu(Tunisia)	1	\$38.15	\$38.15
Tunisia	1	\$29.45	\$29.45

Wendy's	1	\$32.60	\$32.60
McDonalds	1	\$4.65	\$4.65
Family Dollar	1	\$23.76	\$23.76
<b>Festivals</b>	<b>Qty</b>	<b>Price</b>	<b>SubTotal</b>
Available Budget for Festivals	1	\$200.00	\$200.00
		Grand Total	\$1,789.98

## Appendix E: Release Forms

### LOCATION AGREEMENT

This agreement is to confirm the use of the location known as 1122 Amelia Street, Gretna, LA 70053 belonging to OWNER for the filming of the Motion Picture Armed With A Heart on or about **FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2009** and will continue until **SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2009**.

Owner agrees to allow WILL HORTON, Producer, and all production crew and cast associated with the Picture to enter with all of the required equipment to photograph and record the premises and that Producer assigns the irrevocable and perpetual right, throughout the universe, in any manner and in any media to use and exploit the films, photograph, and recordings made of or on the premises in such manner and to such extent as Producer desires in its sole discretion without payment of additional compensation and/consideration to Owner. Producer and its licensees, assigns, and successors shall be the sole and exclusive owner of all rights of whatever nature, including all copyrights, in and to all films, Pictures, products (including interactive and multimedia products), photographs and all recordings made on or of the Premises and in the advertising and publicity thereof, in perpetuity throughout the universe.

In consideration of the above and all agreed to in this agreement, the Owner will receive credit on the film in the "Special Thanks" section, a free copy of the DVD CD upon complete conclusion of all production aspects, and understands that there will be no monetary funds given under this Agreement.

Producer may assign or transfer this agreement or all of any part of its rights hereunder to any person, firm, corporation, or university; Owner agrees that he/she shall not have the right to assign or transfer the agreement. This agreement shall be binding upon and inure to the benefit of the parties hereto and their successors, representatives, assigns, and licensees. This document sets forth the entire understanding between Producer and Owner and may not be altered except by another written agreement signed by both parties.

AGREED AND ACCEPTED BY:

(Producer)

Signed Will Horton

Printed Will Horton

Date 10/20/09

(Owner)

Signed James E. Compton IV

Printed James E. Compton IV

Date 9/1/09

Address 1122 Amelia St.

Gretna LA 70053

## LOCATION AGREEMENT

This agreement is to confirm the use of the location known as 1122 Amelia Street, Gretna, LA 70053 belonging to OWNER for the filming of the Motion Picture Armed With A Heart on or about **FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2009** and will continue until **SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2009**.

Owner agrees to allow WILL HORTON, Producer, and all production crew and cast associated with the Picture to enter with all of the required equipment to photograph and record the premises and that Producer assigns the irrevocable and perpetual right, throughout the universe, in any manner and in any media to use and exploit the films, photograph, and recordings made of or on the premises in such manner and to such extent as Producer desires in its sole discretion without payment of additional compensation and/consideration to Owner. Producer and its licensees, assigns, and successors shall be the sole and exclusive owner of all rights of whatever nature, including all copyrights, in and to all films, Pictures, products (including interactive and multimedia products), photographs and all recordings made on or of the Premises and in the advertising and publicity thereof, in perpetuity throughout the universe.

In consideration of the above and all agreed to in this agreement, the Owner will receive credit on the film in the "Special Thanks" section, a free copy of the DVD CD upon complete conclusion of all production aspects, and understands that there will be no monetary funds given under this Agreement.

Producer may assign or transfer this agreement or all of any part of its rights hereunder to any person, firm, corporation, or university; Owner agrees that he/she shall not have the right to assign or transfer the agreement. This agreement shall be binding upon and inure to the benefit of the parties hereto and their successors, representatives, assigns, and licensees. This document sets forth the entire understanding between Producer and Owner and may not be altered except by another written agreement signed by both parties.

AGREED AND ACCEPTED BY:

(Producer)

Signed Will Horton  
Printed Will Horton  
Date 10/20/09

(Owner)

Signed William Rouse/le  
Printed William Rouse/le  
Date October 20, 2009  
Address 650 Barren St. Ste 304  
New Orleans, LA 70113

## TALENT RELEASE FORM

This will confirm the agreement between **WILL HORTON**, Producer working in association with the University of New Orleans – Department of Film, Theater, and Communication Arts and the individual, known as Talent, servicing in the motion picture now entitled **Armed With A Heart**.

Producer shall have the rights to photograph Talent and to record Talent's voice, performance, poses, actions, plays and appearances and use Talent's picture, silhouette, and other reproduction of Talent's physical likeness in connection with the Picture and any medium associated with the Picture.

Talent's services in connection with principal photography will commence on or about **FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2009** and will continue until **SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2009**. Call can be subject to change without prior notification.

Talent, in consideration of his/her time and dedication, will receive credit on the film and one (1) DVD copy of the motion picture for uses of resume attachments, future job interviews, and private non-commercial use. Also, Talent will receive the ability to place this experience on his/her resume for future job interviews and will receive references, to the best of their ability, from Producer.

At any time, Producer has the right to void this agreement with written notification to Talent at the valid mailing address submitted, or e-mail address provided Producer's discretion. If Talent chooses to void this contract, mutual written consent to do so will be by both Producer and Talent.

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AGREED AND ACCEPTED BY:

(Producer)

Signed Will Horton

Printed Will Horton

Date 10/20/09

(Talent)

Signed Lauren Allen

Printed Lauren Allen

Date 10-19-09

Address 7056 Durand St. Apt. 1

Metairie, LA 70001

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AGREED AND ACCEPTED BY:

(Producer)

Signed



Printed

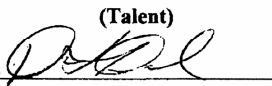
Will Horton

Date

10/20/09

(Talent)

Signed



Printed

Derrick Daulton

Date

10-20-09

Address

11109 Whites St

NO LA 70128

## TALENT RELEASE FORM

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AGREED AND ACCEPTED BY:

(Producer)

Signed

Printed

Date

Will Horton  
Will Horton  
10/20/09

(Talent)

Signed

Printed

Date

Marcela Martinez  
Marcela Martinez  
10.20.09  
2013 Spanish Oaks Dr.  
Harvey, LA 70058



## TALENT RELEASE FORM

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AGREED AND ACCEPTED BY:

(Talent)

(Producer)

Signed



Printed

Will Horton

Date

10/20/09

Printed

Jessica Renee Smith

Date

09. 11. 09

## TALENT RELEASE FORM

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AGREED AND ACCEPTED BY:

(Producer)

Signed

Printed

Date

Will Horton  
Will Horton  
10/20/09

(Talent)

Signed

Printed

Date

Deneen Tyler  
Deneen Tyler  
10/19/09  
2920 Oak Rd / #1702  
Pearland, TX 77584

## TALENT RELEASE FORM

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AGREED AND ACCEPTED BY:

(Producer)

Signed

Will Horton

Printed

Will Horton

Date

10/20/09

(Talent)

Signed

Tommy M. Vita

Printed

Tommy M. Vita

Date

10-19-09

Address

3712 Pecan Dr.

Chalmette, LA 70043

*Appendix F: Production Stills*

















## Appendix G: Test Audience Results

# Armed With a Heart

## Test Audience Questionnaire and Survey

Please circle one.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I liked the film.	0	0	0	0	0
I like the concept of the story.	0	0	0	0	0
The ending was satisfying.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the acting	0	0	0	0	0
The film was well paced.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the length of this movie.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the dialogue.	0	0	0	0	0
The ending surprised me.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the technical quality of this film.	0	0	0	0	0
I would recommend this film.	0	0	0	0	0

Which character did you like the most? Why?

Kay. She was very sister-like which gave the character a more depth to her and how close she was to Marcelle.

Which character did you like the least? Why?

-0- They were all very good.

Was the ending a surprise to you? Why?

YES! It was sad, just when I thought she finally got a decent date.

Would you change anything about this film to make it better and/or more suspenseful?

No. I really loved it. The sound quality was very good, and I also liked the make-up & lighting it worked very well.

Do you have any other opinions?

I "Agree" with the length of the movie. I just wish it was longer. The film made you hungry for MORE!

Please circle one.

Age Range: 18-25 26-34 35-44 45+

Gender: Male Female

# Armed With a Heart

## Test Audience Questionnaire and Survey

Please circle one.

Strongly Agree Agree Indifferent Disagree Strongly disagree

I liked the film.	0	0	0	0	0
I like the concept of the story.	0	0	0	0	0
The ending was satisfying.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the acting	0	0	0	0	0
The film was well paced.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the length of this movie.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the dialogue.	0	0	0	0	0
The ending surprised me.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the technical quality of this film.	0	0	0	0	0
I would recommend this film.	0	0	0	0	0

Which character did you like the most? Why?

*Like all of them*

Which character did you like the least? Why?

Was the ending a surprise to you? Why?

*Yes I didn't realize he was deceased*

Would you change anything about this film to make it better and/or more suspenseful?

*a little but longer - yes*

Do you have any other opinions?

*Film was very profound & stirred up much emotion*

Please circle one.

Age Range: 18-25 26-34 35-44 45+

Gender: Male Female

# Armed With a Heart

## Test Audience Questionnaire and Survey

Please circle one.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I liked the film.	0	0	0	0	0
I like the concept of the story.	0	0	0	0	0
The ending was satifying.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the acting	0	0	0	0	0
The film was well paced.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the length of this movie.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the dialogue.	0	0	0	0	0
The ending surprised me.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the technical quality of this film.	0	0	0	0	0
I would recommend this film.	0	0	0	0	0

Which character did you like the most? Why?

THE YOUNGER WIDOW... SHE'S A NATURAL!

Which character did you like the least? Why?

THE LAY EMPLOYEE... I GUESS I JUST MISSED THE POINT OF HIM BEING IN THE FILM. IT FELT SUPERFICIAL.

Was the ending a surprise to you? Why?

YES...

Would you change anything about this film to make it better and/or more suspenseful?

THE FOLEY OF BOILING WATER IN THE COOKING SCENE WENT ON TOO LONG (AFTER THE ASPARAGUS WAS ON THE PLATE)

Do you have any other opinions?

Please circle one.

Age Range: 18-25 26-34 35-44 45+

Gender: Male Female



# Armed With a Heart

## Test Audience Questionnaire and Survey

Please circle one.

Strongly Agree Agree Indifferent Disagree Strongly disagree

I liked the film.	0	0	0	0	0
I like the concept of the story.	0	0	0	0	0
The ending was satifying.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the acting	0	0	0	0	0
The film was well paced.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the length of this movie.	0	0	0	0 Longer	0
I liked the dialogue.	0	0	0	0	0
The ending surprised me.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the technical quality of this film.	0	0	0	0	0
I would recommend this film.	0	0	0	0	0

Which character did you like the most? Why?

Kay - New the story and what was going on

Which character did you like the least? Why?

Ehery - Liked her but she had no clue

Was the ending a surprise to you? Why?

Not totally but it was well done

Would you change anything about this film to make it better and/or more suspenseful?

No, but I just wanted more Adialogue with Kay

Do you have any other opinions?

Well done. I was emotionally grabbed and held.

Please circle one.

Age Range: 18-25 26-34 35-44 45+

Gender: Male Female

# Armed With a Heart

## Test Audience Questionnaire and Survey

Please circle one.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I liked the film.	0	0	0	0	0
I like the concept of the story.	0	0	0	0	0
The ending was satisfying.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the acting	0	0	0	0	0
The film was well paced.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the length of this movie.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the dialogue.	0	0	0	0	0
The ending surprised me. <i>would have been had if not been told to me beforehand</i>	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the technical quality of this film.	0	0	0	0	0
I would recommend this film.	0	0	0	0	0

Which character did you like the most? Why?

Marcelle — not being biased b/c she's gorgeous, but I felt that she was so natural and genuine. Nothing felt forced.

Which character did you like the least? Why?

Was the ending a surprise to you? Why?

It would have been if someone hadn't told me beforehand.

Would you change anything about this film to make it better and/or more suspenseful?

Trust in your audience. Even though I knew the ending, I felt like audience members would have understood that he had died. It was a beautiful story.

Do you have any other opinions?

However, some of the editing could've been smoother, but it would still be a movie I would recommend.

Please circle one.

Age Range: 18-25 26-34 35-44 45+

Gender: Male Female



# Armed With a Heart

## Test Audience Questionnaire and Survey

Please circle one.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I liked the film.	0	0	0	0	0
I like the concept of the story.	0	0	0	0	0
The ending was satisfying.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the acting	0	0	0	0	0
The film was well paced.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the length of this movie.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the dialogue.	0	0	0	0	0
The ending surprised me.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the technical quality of this film.	0	0	0	0	0
I would recommend this film.	0	0	0	0	0

Which character did you like the most? Why?

Marcella because her acting was natural.

Which character did you like the least? Why?

I least like the best friend due to the factor, that she did not have enough speaking parts.

Was the ending a surprise to you? Why?

Yes, I did not know that he was DEAD!!

Would you change anything about this film to make it better and/or more suspenseful?

No, it was PERFECT

Do you have any other opinions? No

Please circle one.

Age Range: 18-25 26-34 35-44 45+

Gender: Male Female

# Armed With a Heart

## Test Audience Questionnaire and Survey

Please circle one.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I liked the film.	0	0	0	0	0
I like the concept of the story.	0	0	0	0	0
The ending was satisfying.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the acting	0	0	0	0	0
The film was well paced.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the length of this movie.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the dialogue.	0	0	0	0	0
The ending surprised me.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the technical quality of this film.	0	0	0	0	0
I would recommend this film.	0	0	0	0	0

Which character did you like the most? Why? All

Which character did you like the least? Why? none

Was the ending a surprise to you? Why? yes

Would you change anything about this film to make it better and/or more suspenseful? It was so good I didn't want it to end

Do you have any other opinions? no

Please circle one.

Age Range: 18-25 26-34 35-44 45+

Gender: Male Female

# Armed With a Heart

## Test Audience Questionnaire and Survey

Please circle one.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I liked the film.	0	0	0	0	0
I like the concept of the story.	0	0	0	0	0
The ending was satisfying.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the acting	0	0	0	0	0
The film was well paced.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the length of this movie. <i>Wanted more</i>	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the dialogue.	0	0	0	0	0
The ending surprised me.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the technical quality of this film.	0	0	0	0	0
I would recommend this film.	0	0	0	0	0

Which character did you like the most? Why? *Ebon - Fawn X*

Which character did you like the least? Why? *Everyone was likeable*

Was the ending a surprise to you? Why? *Never saw it coming - was engrossed in their story.*

Would you change anything about this film to make it better and/or more suspenseful? *Film it on FILM.*

Do you have any other opinions? *would like to see a longer version developing the characters.*

Please circle one.

Age Range: 18-25 26-34 35-44 45+

Gender: Male Female



# Armed With a Heart

## Test Audience Questionnaire and Survey

Please circle one.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I liked the film.	0	0	0	0	0
I like the concept of the story.	0	0	0	0	0
The ending was satifying.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the acting	0	0	0	0	0
The film was well paced.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the length of this movie.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the dialogue.	0	0	0	0	0
The ending surprised me.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the technical quality of this film.	0	0	0	0	0
I would recommend this film.	0	0	0	0	0

Which character did you like the most? Why?

*Enjoyed Characters*

Which character did you like the least? Why?

*The Gay Guy*

Was the ending a surprise to you? Why?

*Yes, I did not know that her husband had died*

Would you change anything about this film to make it better and/or more suspenseful?

Do you have any other opinions?

*I truly enjoyed the Film*

Please circle one.

Age Range: 18-25 26-34 35-44 45+

Gender: Male Female

# Armed With a Heart

## Test Audience Questionnaire and Survey

Please circle one.

Strongly Agree Agree Indifferent Disagree Strongly disagree

I liked the film.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	0	0	0	0
I like the concept of the story.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	0	0	0	0
The ending was satifying.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	0	0	0	0
I liked the acting	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	0	0	0	0
The film was well paced.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	0	0	0	0
I liked the length of this movie.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	0	0	0	0
I liked the dialogue.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	0	0	0	0
The ending surprised me.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	0	0	0	0
I liked the technical quality of this film.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	0	0	0	0
I would recommend this film.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	0	0	0	0

Which character did you like the most? Why? Marci, great actress

Which character did you like the least? Why? None

Was the ending a surprise to you? Why? ~~No~~ Yes, because I thought T.P. left her (not deceased)

Would you change anything about this film to make it better and/or more suspenseful?  
no, excellent.

Do you have any other opinions?

I should have been in the film

Please circle one.

Age Range: 18-25 ☒ 26-34 35-44 45+

Gender: Male ☒ Female

# Armed With a Heart

## Test Audience Questionnaire and Survey

Please circle one.

Strongly Agree Agree Indifferent Disagree Strongly disagree

I liked the film.	0	0	0	0	0
I like the concept of the story.	0	0	0	0	0
The ending was satisfying.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the acting	0	0	0	0	0
The film was well paced.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the length of this movie.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the dialogue.	0	0	0	0	0
The ending surprised me.	0	0	0	0	0
I liked the technical quality of this film.	0	0	0	0	0
I would recommend this film.	0	0	0	0	0

Which character did you like the most? Why?

Marci. She was a strong character

Which character did you like the least? Why?

T.P. I think they could have found a better actor...

Was the ending a surprise to you? Why?

Yes. Once they got into the confrontation, I figured it out. Great plot twist though.

Would you change anything about this film to make it better and/or more suspenseful?

No.

Do you have any other opinions?

None. Great Film!

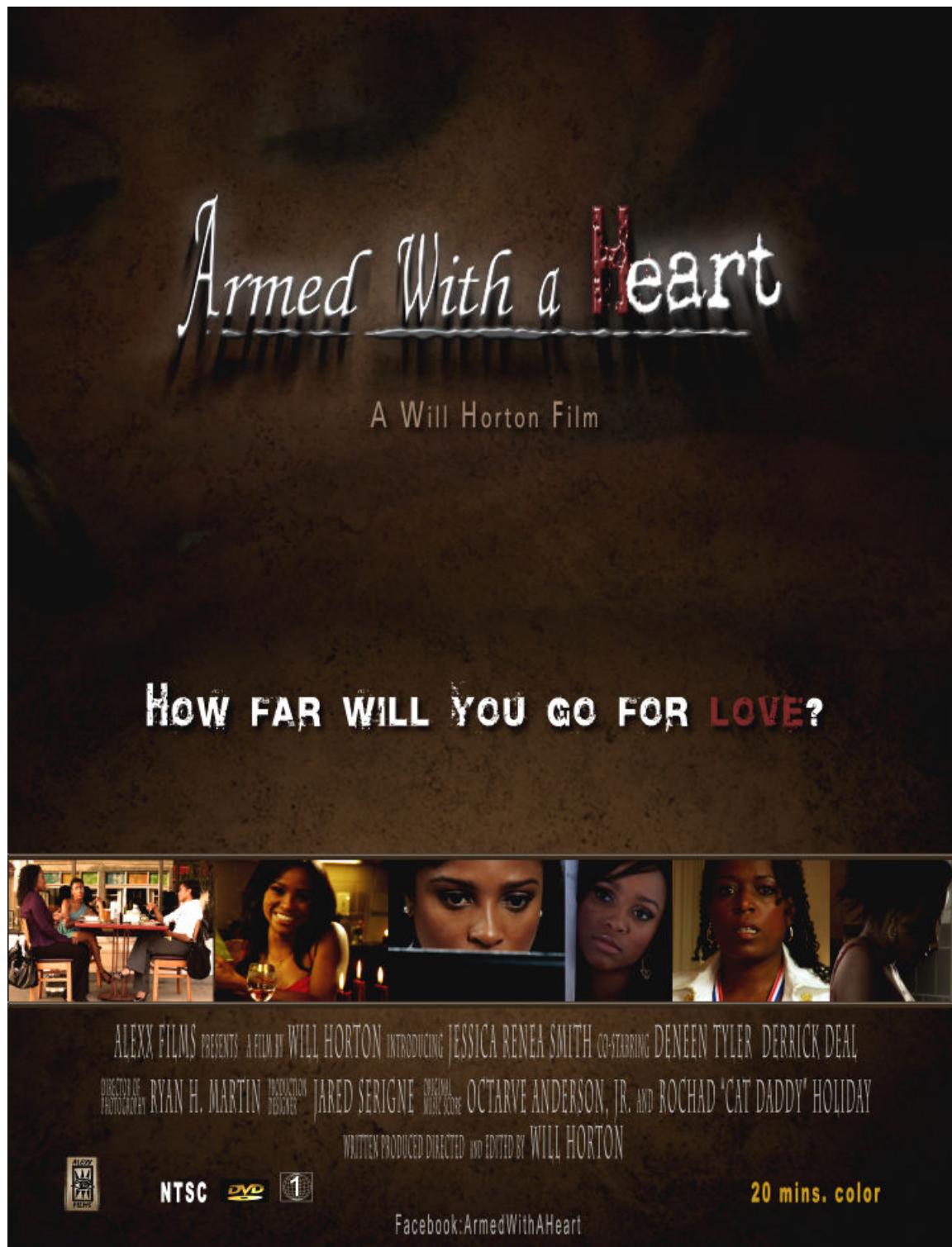
Please circle one.

Age Range: 18-25 26-34 35-44 45+

Gender: Male Female



Appendix H: Movie Poster



## *Appendix I: The Movie*



*Please click on the video screen to play movie.*

Quicktime 7.0 or later is required to play video .

## Vita

Willie Charles Horton, Jr. was born in New Orleans, Louisiana on February 5, 1972.

He graduated high school with honors in June 1990 from John Fitzgerald Kennedy High School in New Orleans. The following January he enrolled into Southern University at New Orleans while cross-enrolled at the University of New Orleans .

He next enrolled fulltime into the University of New Orleans in January, 1992 where he received his Bachelors of Arts in Drama and Communications with a focus in Directing, Cinematography, and Fine Art Photography. He graduated in December, 1999. He returned to the University of New Orleans in August, 2004 to pursue his candidacy for Master of Fine Arts in Directing and Screenwriting. He graduates in December, 2009.