

Production Coverage

TITLE: "The Princess Bride" By William Goldman

STORY ANALYST: Allison Hambrick

FORM: Screenplay

PAGES: 121 pages

PERIOD: Medieval

SETTING: Fairytale

GENRE: Comedy

ELEMENTS: Rob Reiner-Director. Andrew Scheinman-Producer.

COMMERCIAL POTENTIAL: Family film: Young kids, 8-15. Grandparents, ages 55+

RATING: PG

BUDGET: Low

LOGLINE: A young woman finds herself in the midst of a political plot when she agrees to marry a duplicitous prince, her fate dependent upon a lovable giant, a vengeful Spaniard, and her true love.

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN:

BUTTERCUP: (Late teens to early 20's) – Described as "probably the most beautiful woman in the world." Introduced as a young woman living on a farm, whose hobbies include ordering around her farm boy, WESTLEY, who she falls in love with. After he left her to make money for their marriage, she is distressed to learn that Westley was captured by the DREAD PIRATE ROBERTS and enters into a loveless betrothal with PRINCE HUMPERDINCK five years later. Finding herself kidnapped by VIZZINI, FEZZIK, and INIGO MONTOYA, she is caught in a

political conspiracy which involves multiple failed kidnappings, a premeditated attempt on her life, and a near-suicide.

WESTLEY/ MAN IN BLACK/ DREAD PIRATE ROBERTS: (Reads as 20's) – “Maybe as handsome as [Buttercup] is beautiful.” Becomes the Dread Pirate Roberts after leaving to seek his fortune overseas and winning over the previous Dread Pirate Roberts with his dedication to Buttercup. He is in pursuit of Buttercup after she is kidnapped and bests Vizzini, Inigo, and Fezzik one by one. Facing the dreaded fire swamp, torture, and certain death, Westley keeps a promise he made to Buttercup: that he “will always come for” her.

PRINCE HUMPERDINCK: (Reads as 40's) – “A man of incredible power and bearing.” Is engaged to marry Buttercup at the start of the script. When she is kidnapped by Vizzini and his men, Humperdinck pursues her with his men on horseback. His manner of speaking is incredibly pompous, and he appears to care little for his fiancé. After he finds Buttercup with the Man in Black, Humperdinck returns to his kingdom with his bride and turns Westley over to his vizier, **COUNT RUGEN**. Shortly thereafter, Humperdinck accelerates the wedding preparations, and his motives to do so are called into question.

INIGO MONTROYA: (30's) - An alcoholic Spaniard with particularly good posture. He is a skilled fencer, having trained for twenty years. His primary motivation is to take revenge on a six-fingered man who murdered his father when he was a child. He works for Vizzini because “there's not a lot of money in revenge,” but is shown to be a man of honor when he helps the Man in Black scale a cliff so that they can duel properly. After he is bested by Westley in a swordfight, he returns to await his payment from Vizzini until Fezzik arrives to inform him that Vizzini is dead and more importantly, that the six fingered man is Count Rugen. Fezzik sobers him up, and the friends pursue Westley to aid in Inigo's revenge.

FEZZIK: (30's to 40's) - A mustachioed giant with a penchant for rhyming. He is beaten by Westley in a wrestling match and later aids Inigo and Westley in their respective revenge schemes.

VIZZINI: (40's) - An arrogant Sicilian, tiny with an angelic face. He is the leader of the group that kidnapped Buttercup, and believing his failure to be "inconceivable," he challenges Westley to a battle of wits. After failing to deduce that Westley had put poison in both of their goblets, Vizzini is killed.

COUNT RUGEN: (40's) - "A dark, bearded man who seems the Prince's match in strength." Rugen is Humperdinck's royal vizier who is entrusted with torturing his enemies. He is also the six-fingered man who killed Inigo's father.

THE KID: (Seven or eight years old) - A sick child who is skeptical of the "kissing" story that GRANDFATHER visited to read to him and becomes more invested as the story progresses.

GRANDFATHER: (60's to 70's)- The kid's loving grandfather who has a rumpled appearance and bright eyes. His personality is playful and sarcastic. He comes to cheer up his sick grandson by reading to him.

MIRACLE MAX: (Elderly) - A diminutive old man who looks as if he is 2000 years old. He is a healer who used to work for the royal family until Humperdinck fired him. Max won't work for free, but he can be persuaded to help out for "a noble cause."

VALERIE: (Elderly) - Max's sassy wife and assistant, who is described as ancient and fury-like.

ALBINO: (Indeterminate Age) - A "bloodless looking" man who assists Count Rugen in his torture chamber.

YELLIN: (30's to 40's) - A shifty eyed man who is Chief Enforcer of Humperdinck's kingdom.

IMPRESSIVE CLERGYMAN: (50's to 60's) - An impressive, intelligent looking clergyman, who has a very pronounced speech impediment. He officiates Buttercup and Humperdinck's wedding.

SYNOPSIS:

The story of "The Princess Bride" begins when a young boy falls ill and his grandfather pays him a visit to make him feel better. As he begins reading a book to the uninterested boy, the plot shifts towards the fictional characters of that story. A beautiful young woman living on a farm falls in love with her farm boy. The woman, Buttercup, slowly starts to realize that her farmboy, Westley, loves her in return, relaying this in a simple utterance of "as you wish" every time she asks for something. He leaves her in order to make money for them to get married. Unfortunately, Westley is believed dead after his ship is attacked by the Dread Pirate Roberts, leading Buttercup to become engaged to Prince Humperdinck.

Five years later, on the eve of her wedding, Buttercup is kidnapped by a band of rogues, consisting of Spaniard Inigo Montoya, lovable giant Fezzik, and their Sicilian leader, Vizzini. They are followed by the mysterious Man in Black, as well as Humperdinck and his men. The Man in Black defeats each of Vizzini's men: Inigo by beating him in a sword fight, Fezzik by putting him in a sleeper hold, and Vizzini himself by besting him in a battle of wits. It is revealed that Westley is the Man in Black, having taken over for the previous Dread Pirate Roberts. The two reconcile after Westley accuses her of being unfaithful, and they make it through the dreaded fire swamp together.

After this victory, Humperdinck arrives and threatens to kill the both of them. Buttercup agrees to return with Humperdinck in exchange for Westley's life. Instead of sparing Westley, Humperdinck has his vizier, Count Rugen, take Westley to a torture chamber, unbeknownst to

Buttercup. Buttercup gets Humperdinck to agree to send a letter to Westley to give him a fair shot at coming back to her, on the condition that she will marry him if Westley shows no interest. He does not actually send the letter, and he intends to kill Buttercup in order to frame the neighboring kingdom, revealing that he had hired Vizzini to kill Buttercup.

Meanwhile, Inigo and Fezzik reunite when Humperdinck orders the thieves arrested in the nearby forest, and Fezzik tells Inigo about Rugen. Inigo decides that they need Westley's help to get into the castle. Buttercup argues with Humperdinck after learning that he didn't try to find Westley, leading Humperdinck to imprison Buttercup in her room. He then goes to the torture chamber and uses a machine to torture Westley to death. Inigo and Fezzik follow the sound of his screams. They find Westley's body and bring him to a healer Miracle Max, whom Humperdinck had recently fired. He discovers that Westley is only "mostly dead" due to being sustained by his love for Buttercup and is able to revive him.

After Westley, Inigo, and Fezzik fool the guards into abandoning their post, Humperdinck orders a quick wedding ceremony. Inigo finds and kills Count Rugen in a duel. Buttercup is about to commit suicide when she discovers Westley in her bedroom, assuring her that the marriage is invalid because she never said "I do". Unable to use his full strength, Westley fakes his way out of a duel with Humperdinck. Westley rides away with Buttercup, Inigo, and Fezzik, before sharing a passionate kiss with Buttercup.

After reaching the end of the story, the young boy asks his grandfather to read him the book again, to which the grandfather replies, "as you wish."

COMMENTS:

Overall, this script is excellent. The premise of the frame story being a grandfather reading his sick grandson a book is sweet and relatable, and it provides an “in” for younger audiences to become more invested in the main story. The premise of a young woman being reunited with her true love against all odds amid a political scheme with several twists and turns along the way holds enough interest for parents and children alike to enjoy.

The plot of the main story is good, but there is one sequence that causes the movie’s pace to slow down. A little after the midpoint of the film, Buttercup has a nightmare sequence that involves the king dying and her marrying Humperdinck. While this provides an excellent opportunity to showcase that the grandson is more invested in the story than he would care to admit, it provides little narrative value.

The true victory of “The Princess Bride” is its ability to create entertaining characters. Both Westley and Buttercup are engaging leads, and Humperdinck is perfectly pompous in his villainy. The standout character, however, is Inigo. From the moment he is introduced in the script to when he exacts his revenge to the very last scene of the film, Inigo is established as a likable character with a sharp wit and deep convictions, so much so that the reader is endeared to him even before he becomes Westley’s ally.

Similarly, the dialogue in this script is intelligent and off-beat in a good way. Conversations do not progress predictably, with a particular favorite moment being when Humperdinck says that if anything happens to Buttercup he “shall be very put out.” This and other clever lines are sure to keep older audiences entertained.

Between the characters and the dialogue, this script shows great potential, and the writer is clearly adept in his craft.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Premise	X			
Plot		X		
Characters	X			
Dialogue	X			
Setting		X		
	Recommend	Consider	Pass	
Script	X			
Writer	X			