

**THE BLACK LIST**

# WINDFALL

Evaluation

Overall	Premise	Plot	Character	Dialogue	Setting
8	8	8	8	7	7

Era	Various (pre-WWII, 1970s, contemporary)
Locations	Shanghai, California
Budget	Medium
Genre	Drama, Coming-of-Age, Family Drama
Logline	The conflict of World War Two is felt first as a wave then a ripple through three generations of one Chinese-American family as they must choose between what is expected of them, and what they hope for themselves.
Pages	114

## Strengths

Subtle and confident writing lays the bedrock for what could be a truly cinematic experience, leaning not on explanations or descriptions but on strong imagery and sound, bringing the reader into a dialogue with the themes at play. Where a lesser writer would lean on maudlin sentimentality or overt emotions, this script utilizes believably suppressed and repressed characters as they try to reckon with their past selves and the events happening to them. When the script ends, it is not tied with a beautiful bow and problems solved, it concludes with another small step on the road of generational progress, yet it feels like a triumph indeed. Specific nuances help keep the script grounded as the kids or teenagers behave, whether it's spreading playground rumors about another kid's father or berating a friend for his performance in last night's video games. As each chapter begins the script delves into the world full-blown, allowing the reader to observe characters behaving and intuiting their relationships and personalities--no one in this script is reduced to a stereotype. It is an intensely specific story, shedding light on an underrepresented portion of the American community, at once about the long-felt tremors of past conflict and about the complex relationship between wanting to please one's parents and follow a unique path.

## Weaknesses

While there is a wonderful symmetry (if it can be called symmetry in a triptych) in the script, from the nuances to the overall plot points, there may be so many similar points as to strain credibility. This is largely a matter of opinion, however, in a story that already takes such huge risks by switching protagonists not once, but twice. The dream-like quality that could be evoked as each character topples a piece of pottery over or as their hands begin to shake may evoke a treasure hunt quality to the story elements, waiting more for Ethan's hand tremors than focusing on the emotional journey, for example. The script also evokes an interesting theme in the idea of heredity, as photography seems to skip a generation, but music remains throughout. Again, this creates a nice unity, but moves the story away from its grounded-ness, which is one of its greatest strengths. While it would rupture the symmetry, it might be worth considering spending time with both Jing and Emelia outside of their own chapters (an adult Jing in Act Two, and an adult Emelia in Act Three) to key the audience into their humanity outside of their children's perception of them, but ultimately that could also distract from the story that is so grounded in a child's experience of the world as the protagonists slowly grow in age.

## Prospects

For all its well-crafted elements, the script takes a huge risk in the divided chapters, jumping not only generations but switching character focus twice in the script. This will not make it popular among a mainstream, Hollywood Studio crowd, particularly due to the understated, character-driven feel of the script (not to mention the tough subject matter at hand--war, child abuse, among other things.) For this reason it is crucial that the budget be kept low in order to increase the chances of the script being made; this could result in reducing the scope of the wartime scenes in Act One, or limiting the amount of work needed to transform into 1970s Chinatown in San Francisco. The audience could transcend the Asian-American community, growing to those interested in art and indie film, particularly those that represent cultures not typically depicted. Attaching an A-List name, even if it is only in a "cameo" role (Donnie Yen as Ahn in Act One for example) might be one way to help bring the script to life.