



Title: DETOX

Format: Feature Screenplay

Genre: Psychological Horror, Mystery, Sci-Fi

Phase of project: ---

Financing Status: ---

Budget Level: Low

Date Submitted:

Submitted By: ---

Submitted To: ---

Target Market: 17-30, Women, Men

Producer: ---

Actors: ---

Director: ---

Writer: Kevin Armento, Jaki Bradley

Department: ---

Tags: ---

Additional notes: ---

Coverage By: Oscar Gervet

Logline: An overworked and grieving FDA employee joins her radiant friend at a mysterious “wellness retreat” in the middle of the desert, but soon, she suspects that the detox treatments are not what they seem.

Synopsis: In a city park at night, an OLD WOMAN power-walking witnesses a MAN falling to his death from a bridge. A year later, in the same city, SAM (early 30s), an overworked FDA employee who rarely takes time off, is considering a wellness retreat. At home, amidst clutter and neglect, Sam accepts a FaceTime from her college friend MADISON (early 30s), who is now a thriving and radiant actor. Despite Sam’s second thoughts on the wellness retreat, Madison convinces Sam to join her at Evexia. The next day, they drive together through the desert to Evexia. To Sam’s request, they stop at a Sonic Drive-In to eat a burger before their detox cure. Suddenly, a DISHEVELED WOMAN with a severed tongue comes to them. They attempt to help her, but the woman disappears. Sam and Madison take back the road and arrive at Evexia.

Day One: Gathering

At Evexia, Sam and Madison meet other guests, including HEDDY, who is overweight. The guests are all extremely wealthy, and it's clear that the retreat would have been unaffordable to Sam if Madison had not invited her. They meet four staff members called THE LAVENDERS, who all wear lavender jumpsuits. One of the Lavenders, NENITA (22, Filipino), introduces herself as Sam’s wellness consultant. At her yurt, Sam notices Nenita’s deep knowledge about the guests. Sam meets her neighbor, EVA, seemingly in distress before acting all joyful later, and other guests like AUBREY, who has a smoker’s rasp. The retreat emphasizes disconnection from the outside world, and the staff takes away the guests' phones and computers. Later, the guests eat minimalistic vegan meals and drink detox juices. WILLA (seemingly 40s), the retreat’s charismatic and radiant leader, speaks of transformation and promising new selves by the retreat’s end. In the evening, guests joyfully socialize and dance, but Sam notices a private moment between Madison and Willa that suggests a deeper connection between them. Back in her yurt, Sam is haunted by a hallucination of her deceased husband, DEVIN, before she vomits her burger with an unnatural substance.



Day Two: Purging

Nenita awakens Sam for a sunrise hike. During the walk, Eva collapses and is revived by Willa using a mysterious brown liquid. At the hike's summit, Willa prompts the participants to share their reasons for attending. Heddy came to lose weight. Sam briefly mentions her grief over her husband Devin's suicide. Later, back at Evexia, Sam undergoes a disturbing skin treatment featuring a microneedling derma roller that makes her bleed. Soon after, Heddy confronts Willa about the lack of food and the unusual detox methods that were never communicated. Willa explains that it's in the best interest of their transformation that guests don't know everything in advance. At night, Sam hears howling sounds from outside. She ventures out and witnesses Heddy, in a frenzied state, eating a dying coyote. Heddy aggressively runs after Sam on all four before being calmed by Willa, who makes her drink the mysterious brown liquid.

Day Three: Communing

Sam wakes up in bed with no memory of returning to bed. She doubts what is real and what she may have dreamt or hallucinated, especially given that Heddy acts all normal and joyful. Sam participates in group therapy aimed at confronting their traumas. As part of this "exercise," Aubrey role-plays Sam's deceased husband, Devin, accusing her of having killed their child, alluding to Sam's miscarriage that preceded Devin's suicide from a bridge (Devin is revealed to be the Man from the opening scene). Sam flees in distress to her yurt. In front of the mirror, she finds strange bumps on her forehead, which she aggressively pops when Nenita comes in to offer her a solo cryotherapy treatment to make her relax. There, Nenita leaves Sam with Willa, who forces her to relive painful memories about Devin while stuck in the cold of the cryotherapy chamber. When Sam finally gets out of the chamber, Willa has disappeared. Traumatized, Sam finds Madison and asks to leave Evexia. Madison comforts her and promises they will leave together first thing in the morning. Before going to bed, Sam secretly retrieves her phone but finds nothing online about Evexia or Willa.

Day Four: Restoring

In the morning, Sam does not find Madison anywhere. She investigates the Evexia main house and ventures upstairs to Willa's office, where she discovers that Willa has an ID under "Jane Krause." Suddenly, Willa comes in. Sam explains she is looking for Madison, and Willa claims the latter skipped the day's therapy sessions. Once back outside, Sam notices that Nenita is distressed about what they have planned next for the final day of the retreat. At her yurt, Sam googles "Jane Krause wellness retreat" and uncovers disturbing news about a former retreat's license being revoked for the use of drugs and subliminal messaging. At night, Sam leaves Evexia on foot and calls 911 as soon as she gets some signal, but her phone dies before she can get help. She ventures into an abandoned ranch only to find a brainwashed Madison preparing for the final day, carrying frozen human body parts. Sam notices someone else has come into the ranch, and she runs to her car at Evexia. Sam is driving out when her vehicle is violently halted by a magnetic barrier. Nenita comes to Sam to sedate her with a syringe.



Day Five: Transforming

Sam awakens restrained in the ranch. She discovers a photo of a happy-looking woman with her family and recognizes this is the disheveled woman with the missing tongue from the Sonic Drive-In. Sam realizes that this woman was a Lavender fleeing Evexia. Willa and Madison come in to present a choice to Sam: join the Lavenders in death or them in the cult in life. To choose life, Sam must drink a vial of mysterious brown liquid, like the one Willa gave to Eva, Heddy, and Madison. Sam reluctantly complies but secretly eats candle wax before drinking the vial to be less affected by the drug. Willa then brings the drugged-up guests to participate in a disturbing ritual in a crystal cave. Willa sets up a system to drain the blood of the four Lavenders to rejuvenate her and the guests' radiant youth. The Lavenders are willing to give their lives for the money the guests pay to help their impoverished families. But Sam interrupts the ritual and frees the Lavenders, leading to a violent fight with butcher knives and saws. Madison tries to kill Sam with a saw, but Nanita, in an act of redemption, chokes Madison to death to save Sam. The latter escapes Evexia in her car, only to be choked by Willa, who was hiding inside. Sam crashes the vehicle off the road to survive, killing Willa. Injured and bloodied, Sam struggles to a fast-food restaurant, where she notices a newfound radiance in herself, almost like Willa's.

Comments: In this contained psychological (and bloody) horror, the disturbing "wellness center" used for eternal youth of A CURE FOR WELLNESS meets the themes of cult, trauma, and grief of MIDSOMMAR, with a female-led cast and blood witchcraft in the vein of SUSPIRIA. DETOX's story feels derivative; the characters are stereotypical, the plot is "tropey," and the tone lacks humor considering the concept. However, the script has an impactful structure and excellent commercial potential.

DETOX feels like a horror B-movie lacking originality: almost as soon as we meet Willa, we expect her to sacrifice women to keep her radiant youth. The two significant twists in this expected storyline are that Madison knew about Evexia's disturbing practices all along (she is a fake ally) and that the staff (the Lavenders) are the ones to be sacrificed for the youthfulness of Willa and her guests. Other than that, the story and plot often feel derivative with expected outcomes.

Except for Sam and Nanita, most characters feel like stereotypes with a one-dimensional reason they came to Evexia: Heddy wants to lose weight; Jessica (another guest) wants to stop drinking; Aubrey wants to quit smoking; and Madison and Willa are aware and addicted to the youthful radiance of the sacrificial cure. As the lead antagonist, Willa is reminiscent of the charismatic, controlling, and psychotic Chef Slowik in THE MENU. Still, she lacks a meaningful backstory for why she has become who she is. That being said, the characters have distinct voices and Sam and Nanita are complex, layered, and well-developed, with impactful arcs.



DETOX's concept lends the film to have a funnier tone as a horror satirical comedy in the vein of what THE MENU did with the culinary culture of the rich. The world and characters of luxurious detox cures have great comedic potential, with wealthy guests paying lavish sums to eat some leaves, experience disturbing treatments, and be separated from their smartphones. While DETOX touches on those elements, it does not fully leverage the comedic and satirical potential and mostly keeps a serious tone instead.

While DETOX suffers from the aforementioned weaknesses, the structure impactfully builds tension and conflict throughout the five days of the cure/film, up to a cathartic climax on Day 5. The plot, while unoriginal, reveals information enticingly, and Sam has a clear and impactful arc, from tired and grieving in the beginning to radiant and reborn in the end (after the tumultuous "detox").

Lastly, DETOX has excellent commercial potential with a zeitgeisty high-concept that is easy to sell and market to women and men between 17 and 30 (DETOX would likely be rated R for graphic violence). Furthermore, as a contained film with a small cast, DETOX has the potential to be a low-budget production. Among XYZ's clients, Lorcan Finnegan could do a fantastic job directing DETOX and be interested in its world and themes, especially if the film dove deeper into its sociological (and satirical) analysis. Nevertheless, considering the female cast, point of view, and themes (e.g., miscarriage), a female horror director could be a more appropriate choice.

Evaluation				
Please check the boxes in the following manner				
Category	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Story			X	
Structure		X		
Commerciality	X			
Writing		X		
Dialogue		X		
Visual Elements		X		
Characters			X	

Recommendation			
Please check the boxes in the following manner			
Project		Writer	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Recommend	<input type="checkbox"/>	Recommend
<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Consider	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Consider
X	Consider	X	Consider
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider with Reservation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider with Reservation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pass	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pass