

Libby Egan

10/25/2020

FT 310

Little Miss Sunshine Script Differences

The first difference between the film and screenplay occurred right at the beginning with Richard. I read the script before viewing the movie and I felt like they changed the way he was perceived just by changing his appearance. The script described Richard in khakis, sneakers, and a golf shirt who moved like a 'former athlete'. I felt as though the Richard in the movie seemed more like a stickler, and he wore semi-professional attire which made me see him as more serious. Richard definitely carried the "peppy upbeat demeanor that barely masks a seething sense of insecurity and frustration" attitude, but when reading the script I interpreted it more as a very toxic-masculinity fueled attitude. I did not envision Richard as someone who appeared only slightly self-assured and even then it seemed as a mask to fool himself.

I assumed they changed the demeanor with the location switches as well. Geography is incredibly important and they switched the home state from Maryland to New Mexico and the destination from Florida to California. This is a big step considering both sides of the country are incredibly different. Maryland holds the East Coast mindset and culture whereas New Mexico has a rich historical, artistic, and more relaxed culture. Even Florida has a very different type of culture than California with the main similarity being the heat and sunshine. I think the location switch definitely helped them get the 'out in the middle of nowhere' setting because there would be a lot of sparsely populated land on that ride through the middle of the country to the west coast. It is fascinating though because although California definitely has a performative streak and pageant scene, pageants seem to fit Florida as well, if not more.

The relationship between Dwayne and Frank was much more muted in the film as well which was sad to see. Throughout the script Dwayne was trying to make himself an outlier in the family through his vow of silence and strict dedication to his goal. Frank was brought in and they both seemed to be similar in the fact that they were both outsiders and felt more normal than some of the dysfunction that occurred in the household. This was shown throughout the movie consistently. Starting with the first “conversation” between Dwayne and Frank when Dwayne said he did not hate Frank ‘yet’, after saying he hated everyone. Another bonding moment that was not present was when Richard was being obnoxious and Frank asked how Dwayne could stand Richard and Dwayne responded with “I can’t”. The movie downplayed Dwayne’s fear of Frank killing himself while they slept in the same room, by making the scene very early and very abrupt. The movie omitted the conversation where Frank told Dwayne his mom [Sheryl] could have achieved anything and her potential which was also a great bonding moment. They were small details and there is a budget and time restraint which is why they were probably cut but it was sad to not see their friendship live up to its full potential.

The fight between Richard and Sheryl did not seem as intense and relationship-ending as the screenplay. Divorce was not the looming problem and although they were angry it did not seem to dissolve their relationship like the script seemed to have. I think this worked better because it was easier for them to band together and there was less pressure of on the audience to wonder if ‘when the goal of finishing the pageant is over will they will have to face their marital and financial problems when they get back’. It definitely helped emphasize the true meaning behind the story (which was that persevering and family can overcome any obstacle). Sheryl is very strong and although the threat of divorce might make overcoming the challenge more rewarding, it was stronger when she was able to keep away from the damage.

The Last discrepancy I noticed in the movie was towards the end. The script had described the day as sunny and hot with Frank and Dwayne swimming in the ocean and they bought matching t-shirts that said “loser” on them before heading to the pageant. In the movie, it was grey and did not seem very sunny and they talked on a dock and did not buy the shirts. I think they decided to change the tone of the weather to be foreshadowing their doubts about Olive competing and realizing she was not going to win. Initially it was probably supposed to be sunny because they realized that they had endured quite an arduous journey and that they did win through the experience, but they chose to make the van bright yellow instead which served better that the van and their family held the happiness.