



Groupama

## Intro

I am humbled to be asked me back. Thank you again for having me and sending this lovely script through. I feel with each film we keep getting better. Pushing the creative, honing our voice, becoming more distinctive. This project is no different. It's especially meaningful to me because I have some personal experience with caregiving.

I'll never forget the day I brought my mom home in a wheelchair. A few months earlier, she'd had a stroke. Overnight she went from a witty, healthy, active woman to one that was frustrated and paralysed. Suddenly this self-reliant woman needed someone else to survive: eat, wake up, get dressed, got to the toilet. That someone was me.

I wanted so desperately to help. But she was a proud woman, and often my attempts to do so only made things worse. She felt invaded in her own home and everything I did annoyed her (usually I'm sure she thought I was very charming). Eventually, we found a way, a new normal, we learned to laugh again and mom got her spirit back, even if she never regained the ability to move.

Fortunately, our hero's injury is only temporary, but that loss of freedom and independence is still felt and takes its toll on him and those looking after him. In our case, his carer. Their relationship is the beating heart of this film. And the evolution of their dynamic and his character from bitter curmudgeon to appreciative father-figure will show that like your family, Groupama is there when you need them most.

## The Buddy Story

Structurally, this is a buddy story. Like in every good buddy story i.e. *Les Intouchables* the characters are opposites. The story is the journey of them coming together. When these two characters meet they couldn't be more different. The young, hopeful, active carer vs. the old, cynical, immobile patient. But despite his relentless criticism, she remains buoyant throughout until his grudging acceptance of her presence gives way to a grateful dependence.

*The Intouchables* has cast a long shadow when it comes to carer-patient relationships being depicted on screen. Of course, there are similarities with our story, but let's take the best of those - the heart, humour, and candour - and infuse it with our idiosyncratic characters, original story, and satisfying twist.

The buddy film archetype is crucial to landing this twist. Setting up the audience for what they feel is a predictable story of two people reconciling their differences, only to then pull the rug from under their feet with an explicit, yet elegant sleight of hand when we reveal the real daughter. As with all of our previous spots, the success of the commercial depends in large part on the execution of the twist.

## The Twist

The twist: that who we believe to be his daughter is his carer, is what makes this story so original and satisfying. It's an ingenious device that inextricably links Groupama Sante with the idea of family. But for us to defy our audience's expectations with the arrival of his daughter, we first need to establish them. How do we do this?

Well, first we create a believable family dynamic between the patient and carer. This means a subtle, but noticeable physical resemblance between the two. A direct style of communication that only exists between families, combining verbal candour with disparaging looks, throwaway gestures, and frustrated eye rolls. And a familial irrationality that expects forgiveness, like my mum finding fault wherever she could knowing that I'd keep trying regardless.

We also need to leave visual clues that our audience can connect and use VO and music to reaffirm our message. When his daughter finally arrives, we'll be left in no doubt about their relationship. Whether this means having his daughter kiss him on the cheek or having her children running up and embracing him with a drawing titled "Grandpa. At this moment he'll be a new man. His facial expressions and physicality shifting from slouched curmudgeon to jubilant Santa Claus. Any remaining doubt will be extinguished by the VO and music that follows, confirming that this is his daughter.

As with any story, these actions and exchanges are dependent on nuanced, authentic performances. It will be important to build rapport with the actors. We'll have them rehearse together in advance of shooting. Beyond that, let's send them on a field trip and have them get to know each other so they can start building character dynamics organically. I've found this technique does wonders for creating intimacy between the characters. And ultimately, that's what sells the idea of familiar relationships. Because families don't respect personal space the way strangers do. They tell you things you don't want to hear. They think they know what you're going to say and do before you say and do it. Let's explore all this and bring just a taste of it to the surface.

## POV

I love the singular point of view in the script. In my view, telling the story from the POV of the patient is the most compelling. It reinforces the message because the audience will be in lockstep with our hero, and allows us to build a compelling narrative in a short time frame. He is our protagonist and we see everything including the carer and her actions, through his eyes.

This singular perspective gives the film a cinematic feel, adding drama, pace, and emotional intensity as we track the subtle shifts in his appearance, mood, and behaviour from one frame to the next.

It also gives us his subjective take on the world which we can communicate through the language of cinema. So in the beginning, when he's anxious, we'll go handheld with a longer lens to create an organic feel. Then at the end, when the hero is calmer, the camera will be too. When the daughter arrives, a sense of stability and normalcy is restored. This culminates with Cerise.

## Tone

Like the best, most relatable stories, this script has highs and lows, comedy and drama. This helps the audience to empathise with our characters and their situation, immersing them in the world of the story and making them feel like they are watching a slice of real-life unfold in front of them.

Authenticity is key to striking this nuanced, shifting tonal balance, softening the darkness of our hero's situation with moments of levity that feel organic and are motivated by the clash of our contrasting character's attitudes, actions, and reactions.

The twist on which our story and its message are based also gives us the chance to shift the tone of our film from the seriousness of our opening scenes to something which feels warmer and more light-hearted by the end.

## Characters

There's no getting away from it, this is a character-driven story from start to finish. Our injured patient is the hero of our story and with his outstretched broken leg is directing where it goes. But as we know, every protagonist needs an antagonist. So let's meet them.

**George (55-60)** - greying, with a bit of a paunch - is a divorced teacher. He was the first in his family of construction workers to go to university and believes in a prescriptive

approach to teaching, refusing to embrace this modern concept of prioritising 'student experience' over a solid education. Master of the schoolyard, George is an alpha male who enjoys the authority that his position bestows. Like a stern but loving father. But he also believes that a good teacher is a visible one and likes nothing more than stretching his legs and patrolling the school grounds at breaks and lunchtime which makes his current impairment all the more frustrating. When the school day ends he likes to get leathered up then heads out on the road with a touring motorbike gang of local bikers - less Sons of Anarchy, more Dads of Disorder. But with no bike and an injured leg, the usually social George has descended into a state of self-pity which he unfairly directs at...

**Marie (25-30)** - fresh-faced and athletic - a peppy, upbeat, newly qualified carer who still treats every new patient like they're her first. She spent most of her teenage years taking care of her disabled single mother, so she is used to looking after people, and caring felt like a natural transition when she graduated from college. She bounces out of bed in the morning and still has the energy to go out at night after a full day at work. Then again, with patients like George, she needs to let her hair down.

## **Groupama 'The Daughter'**

Morning. From George's POV, we see the interior of a wheelchair ambulance. An AMBULANCE ATTENDANT waves goodbye unceremoniously into the camera which gradually lowers, producing a mechanical hum.

Close on George - his glum expression belying his naturally gregarious nature. His right leg is entombed in a full leg cast and sticks out at 90 degrees. It's kind of funny just how tragic he looks.

**VO: When George needs help he knows who he can count on. His daughter.**

Close on Marie (mid/late 20's) - bright-eyed and spritely - who trails behind George as he tries, but struggles to propel himself forward in the wheelchair. She steps in and takes over, unintentionally emasculating him as she pushes him towards the door.

George looks to his left and from his POV we see his damaged touring motorbike sitting in the driveway. He looks on with nostalgia, remembering the good times they shared. Marie senses his longing to get on it, but she knows what's best for him and turns him away, compounding his dejection.

Marie pushes George through the front door, but the wheelchair gets stuck. She gives him another push and knocks his leg. He cries out in pain.

**VO: She always takes good care of him.**

Marie tries to help George onto the couch, but he bats her away. She smiles politely. He just needs time.

It's another day, but George is in the same spot on the sofa. Dressed in his pyjamas and feeling sorry for himself. His outstretched leg rests on the pillow of a stool. Blue light from the TV hits his face as he changes the channel with the remote. We hear the opening notes of 'She's a Rainbow' coming from the television.

George's POV - from the couch he sees Marie unpacking groceries into one of the kitchen cupboards. George shakes his head, raising his hands to his face. She's doing it ALL wrong. Marie patiently abides. Her genuine smile, disarming and frustrating George in equal measure.

Yet another day as Marie sets a dish of pasta down on the table in front of George who is dressed in different clothes but STILL sitting in the same spot. We can tell from his face he doesn't like the food, even though it looks good. Marie takes it away, her smile weakening.

It's a new day and Marie is cleaning around George which he tolerates with a growing annoyance until she blocks the television. He shoos her away like a fly and Marie forces a tight smile.

Night. We're in the bathroom as Marie tries to help George onto the toilet, negotiating his outstretched leg. Embarrassed and frustrated, George yells at her to go away. Marie backs off and George tries but struggles to push himself out of the chair. Marie wants to help, but he won't let her do it. She holds up her hands. Fine, no problem.

**VO: She knows what he needs and what he doesn't.**

George is left alone in the bathroom, stuck. Unable to help himself, but unwilling to ask Marie. He sighs - a tacit admission of defeat as he realises he needs her help.

George wheels himself into the kitchen. There's a plate left out for him on the kid's table - at just the right height for him to eat. He tastes it and you know what? It's not bad. Actually, it's quite good.

George's POV - he sees Marie cleaning the sofa in the living room where he usually sits. She smiles. He smiles back.

Morning. Click. We hear a key in the door and kids chatter. A WOMAN enters (mid/late 20s, looks a lot like George) with her two rowdy kids. George wheels himself into the hallway and the kids bound towards him, narrowly missing his leg as they jump up on his

lap and try to kiss him. George lets them, albeit reluctantly. The woman kisses George on the forehead. It's George's daughter.

**VO: But when his daughter is not there, Georges can count on Marie.**

George's daughter thanks Marie who waves goodbye to George. From her POV - we see George amidst his daughter and grandkids. His mouth turned downward, regretful that Marie is leaving. The kids are already messing with his wheelchair and are going to annoy him 100 times more than her! George catches Marie's eye and they share a brief, but meaningful moment. Not a smile, but a grateful acknowledgment of the time they've spent together and what it meant.

**VO: Home help triggered in just 24 hours. More than 543,000 hours of home help delivered in 2019. 80 hours of home help reimbursed per year / up to 40h per member.**

We follow Marie towards a car waiting outside. She's greeted by CERISE, standing on the driver's side. In a natural and seamless action, Cerise turns to camera and says "He knows that Groupama's active healthcare offer is never far away ...". We realise the voiceover was her all along. They get in.

The car pulls away.

Logo on screen: Groupama. Real-life is guaranteed here.

## **Casting**

In a two-hander such as this, the story is dependent on the subtle performances and often unspoken exchanges between both characters. This requires experienced, professional actors who are capable of seamlessly moving between comedy and drama with no more than a look or a taut verbal exchange, packed with subtext and meaning.

Ideally, we'd cast a youthful-looking 55-60-year-old for George and a girlish woman in her mid-20s for Marie from the rich pool of TV and film actors available in France. It's important there is a noticeable physical resemblance between the two, as well as a natural, relaxed chemistry, that convinces our audience they're family.

When it comes to George's daughter and her two kids, it makes sense to cast them from Slovenia (if we end up shooting there.) She'll be similar in age to Marie, with two children between 4 and 6, and resemble George even more than Marie so the audience is left with no doubt that she is his daughter when the twist is revealed. I suggest we look for a

complete family - an actor and her kids and therefore keep ourselves a bit open in terms of the kids' age.

## **Location**

George is firmly middle-class and financially secure, so we're looking for a small house in a mid-size city with a little back garden and some plants out front. Something characterful, but not enough to identify it with a specific region of France. Thought it must look typically French.

Having something with two floors and a set of stairs, rather than a bungalow, would feed into the story and George's frustration at his inability to get around the house as he would like, requiring a carer.

A relatively open-plan ground floor with a living room that shares a common area with the kitchen would allow us to see and shoot easily between both, but perhaps not too spacious as this is a Groupama ad after all. It also works for the story, since we want to make it obvious that getting around the house is a pain for him now.

Here's a preliminary mood from Slovenia. We're happy with this as a direction and once we scout properly we will find the perfect space.

## **Sound and Music**

Sound isn't just a product of action. It says something about our hero's state of mind. Whether it is creating a sense of isolation and frustration by having him hear something in the other room that he can't see or have the carer do something that creates a repetitive, irritating sound, drawing scornful, derisive glances from our hero. When you're irritated, clanking glasses seem louder than when you're calm.

The idea is to have purely diegetic sound until the 'She's A Rainbow' begins. This approach immerses us into the world of our story and gets into the head of our hero, capturing his sense of isolation with weighty silences, his frustration with the unknown, repetitive noises made by Marie pottering about his home, and the monotony of his everyday existence with the indistinguishable hum of background noise. I have no doubt this will work wonderfully with a fast-paced edit.

If we want to establish 'She's a Rainbow' near the beginning, it could be playing from the TV. As we did previously, we will run this by RS management in advance of filming. I think if we involve them in the idea early we will have a positive result, as we did on 'Necklace'. I will personally supervise this of course with multiple options for them.

The VO by Cerise will provide us with a friendly and familiar aural guide through the narrative, explicitly echoing the message at the core of our film.

We'll then bring music in at the end of the film, playing 'She's a Rainbow' by the Rolling Stones as George's daughter walks through the door, maximising the impact of her arrival and conveying her importance to our audience as well as shifting the tone of the film into that upbeat crescendo which is an important part of all our Groupama films.

## **Look and Feel**

This film is a character portrait, so we'll use intimate, visceral photography to capture George's emotional state, his reactions to Marie, and his general experience of the world around him. Using a handheld camera with a long lens that compresses his world will make it feel smaller than it used to with him now trapped in a wheelchair.

The camera will stay with George, seeing what he sees, and focusing on his little reactions and responses to the triggers in each scene.

In terms of lighting mood, we'll keep a consistent look that's both naturalistic and optimistic. Even though George's mood is gloomy at the beginning, his world is not. There are ample amounts of natural light and warmth, providing an external contrast to how he feels on the inside.

## **Edit**

So much of this story is about the subtle, nuanced character interactions. A glance here. A gesture there. A forced smile or an exhalation. Like a TV show, we need a lot of coverage to capture all of these moments then we'll weave them together into a pacy cut that moves the story along with every beat.

Broken down into its simplest form, we start with anxiety and end in calm. We begin with the arrival in which we establish our characters and their conflicting temperaments. Then the pace speeds up as we rattle through a series of clashes, whether it's George turning his nose up at Marie's food, chastising her for clearing up, or rejecting her help in the bathroom. Then we stop for George's moment of realisation: that he can't do this on his own and needs help. We pick the pace back up as he starts warming to Marie, only for his daughter and grandchildren to arrive and disturb the well-earned peace. A shot of them altogether will demonstrate that wholeness and stability has been restored. Before Marie departs, we slow for a moment of mutual recognition and respect between her and George. Then we follow Marie out and into the car as it pulls off and heads into the distance. Onto her next job no doubt.



## **Cerise**

Cerise is a cornerstone of the Groupama brand and while she doesn't have a physical presence until the very end of this film, her familiar voice drives our story and delivers its message.

In contrast to the highs and lows, the comedy and drama of our story, her voice maintains a calm, knowing tone throughout - putting the audience at ease and guiding them through the unexpected twist until she appears at the end in her iconic blouse.

## **Thanks**

The well-drawn characters, human story, and surprising twist at the heart of this script combine beautifully to communicate the message that Groupama can be your family when you need them most. It's a powerful, emotive message and one that resonates with everyone who has ever felt vulnerable or needed help, especially people like me who have been through it. What I've suggested here are some ideas to elevate what is already an exciting project and I can't wait to work with you to realise its full potential.

Thanks again for thinking of me and trusting in me. I appreciate it so much.