

Hero's Journey Analysis – "The Apartment"

Written by Billy Wilder & I.A.L. Diamond

Directed by Billy Wilder

Step 1 Ordinary World

Opening – pretty dark – not your normal romantic comedy

Credits 1.20

Series of statistics

C. C. Baxter

Boring world

Lots of people at similar desks

Hours staggered for the 31,259 employees

So they can use the 16? Lifts

The lifts are significant – as we'll find out

Stays on to work

Not overly ambitious – just to kill time

I have this little problem with my apartment 2.59

He's piquing our curiosity

Cosy apartment

Can't always get in

He's outside

Music playing

Exec Kirkeby inside with Sylvia

Makes a person feel cheap

Whose apartment is this?

"Some schnook who works in the office" – Baxter's ordinary world, his flaw.

Bring other girls here?

Certainly not

I'm a happily married man

Baxter finally gets into his apartment

5:17

The wife next door comes out

Baxter looks sad

Pathetic

Cleaning up mess

Music adds to that sense

Kirkeby comes back

The little lady left her galoshes

Foreshadowing the mirror that Fran will leave behind

Put in a good word for you with Mr Sheldrake
Baxter brightens
This is why he puts up with this shit
That is his external goal – to rise in the corporation
You're going places, buddy boy

Kirkeby has gone way over time
Unrepentant
Kirkeby complains about there not being enough liquor
Hasn't paid him for the last lot
Cheese crackers?
He's a doormat – his flaw again

Doc next door (A MENTOR figure)
Iron constitution
A nebbitsch like you ...

When you make out your will
And the way you're going you should
Leave body to science
They think that everything that's been going on next door
has been down to him

(Foreshadows when doc comes later)

Baxter doesn't correct him
He secretly likes that they believe he is this sexpot

As he settles down he finds a hairpin
More foreshadowing

Grand Hotel comes on to the TV

10:36

He turns TV off – disappears to a spot
This is his life

Mr Dobisch calls him up in the middle of the night
He's taken a sleeping pill (foreshadowing)
And despite putting up protests
I'm doing my efficiency reports
You're in my top 10
He caves in

13:16

Dobisch arrives and Baxter walks the streets

Doc hears the noise coming from within

Baxter goes down and sits in the park
Leaves falling around him 15:40

The next day at work
 Brighter music
 He's got a cold
 They go into the lift

We meet the hero's love interest
 Fran Kubelik
 The lift operator

CONTRAST
 Baxter is an aspiring executive
 She is at the bottom of the hierarchy
 A lift operator

She never gets a cold
 He gets colds all the time
 CONTRAST

Mr Kirkeby pinches her arse

No-one has made any progress with Miss Kubelik

That is a CALL TO ADVENTURE

Baxter calls Dobisch
 Not happy
 Dobisch left the wrong key
 Had to wake up the landlady at 4 in the morning
 He left the Exec washroom key
 They exchange

This key is the ELIXIR
 It's going to be the key to him discovering himself
 19:07

He's running a temperature
 He calls Vandahoff in PR
 To cancel
 If he gets pneumonia he'll be in bed for a month

He has to reshuffle
 Incredibly difficult
 21.32

Baxter gets a call from Sheldrake
 23:47

Step 2 Call to Adventure

Goes up in Fran's lift
 The only one who takes his hat off

He shows her respect of Kirkeby
 Baxter asks her out
 But she doesn't respond

Goes in to see Sheldrake
 Everyone wants Baxter to work for them

Just what kind of a joint are you running?

At this point, Sheldrake appears like a MENTOR
 He seems to be acting as a moral guardian
 Tells a story about he blew the whistle on a bookie

Exposition about how the whole thing got started
 Guy needed a place to change a tuxedo

No-one is going to use my apartment from now on

Mrs Sheldrake calls
 The Branch Manager from Kansas City is in town
 Taking him to The Music Man
 CC Baxter can have both tickets
 Sheldrake "has plans"
 Wants to swap the tickets
 For what?
 The key to the apartment

This is the call – the key is the elixir

You are executive material

Sheldrake moves from being a MENTOR to SHAPESHIFTER
 His morals can't be relied upon
 He is a SHADOW figure
 This is how Baxter will turn out if he continues on his
 path – the other four guys are other SHADOWS

I consider that this is the call – more than Fran –
 because this is the event that is going to change his
 world. It is Sheldrake starting to use his apartment that
 changes Bud's world – it puts into conflict his two
 goals: rising through the company, and making Fran his
 lover.

Step 3 Refusal of the Call - There is no refusal
 He is so weak
 He puts up no resistance whatsoever
 31:21

He hangs around and waits for Fran
 Hears Sylvia say she'd been taken to some "schnook's
 apartment" 31:39

Asks her out to The Music Man
CALL TO ADVENTURE

She can't go
REFUSAL
She's meeting someone
A date?
Serious?
I was serious. He wasn't.
The whole thing is kaput.

He persists
She agrees to go with him.

CROSSES THE THRESHOLD

He says he's feeling so much better

He knows everything about her

She goes into a bar 34:40
Pianist changes the tune

She meets up with Sheldrake
She'd cut her hair because he liked it long
He butters her up
She resists
Sweet and sour sauce
I'm so crazy about you Fran
She says she's getting over it
He doesn't believe it
Summer romance while the family is out of town
He wants her back
This is another CALL TO ADVENTURE

She refuses

She says she can't stay
Has a date
Not important

CC is waiting outside the theatre

Sheldrake says he's leaving his wife
Says he saw his lawyer
He says divorce is what he wants
He'll do it if she still loves him
She does

Sheldrake's secretary, MISS OLSEN sees them leave
39:35

He hails a cab
 She says she has a date
 Another REFUSAL

He says that he loves her

This, given his age, is effectively a MEETING WITH A MENTOR

She CROSSES THE THRESHOLD and gets into the cab

CC Baxter is left alone outside the theatre
 40:27

Step 6 Tests Allie, Enemies

At work the next day
 CC collects his stuff
 And heads upstairs
 Name on the door
 He's made his Faustian bargain
 Hangs his hat
 He's feeling good
 Four guys come in
 Guys who put in the good word

We made you and we can break you

He has made ENEMIES

Sheldrake comes in
 This appears to be his ALLY – but obviously he's a SHAPESHIFTER.

He's feeling so good about his promotion

He asks if it's Miss Olsen he's seeing
 To make it clear that he doesn't know who it is

He hands back the mirror
 Broken
 She threw it at me
 You see a girl a couple of times a week
 Right away they think you're going to leave your wife

The mirror is a seed we're about reap

44.39

Step 7 Approaching the inmost cave

Christmas party

Bud brings a drink to Fran
 Hasn't seen her in ages
 Because she stood him up

This phase often involves courtship

Miss Olsen comes up to Fran
 How is the Branch Manager from Kansas City
 Shelldrake was her lover too
 And he's had lots of lover
 Same story about divorcing his wife

Approach often involves reconnaissance
 Intelligence gathering
 Fran is given information she'd rather not have

Baxter takes her into the office
 What does she think of his hat?

Does she know Shelldrake?
 Can put in a good word
 Dramatic irony – we know very well that she knows
 Shelldrake

Shelldrake sent him a Xmas card
 Him with the family
 Rubs it in to Fran

He could try to get her promotion
 Too many girls with seniority
 This is a veiled reference to how many have been before
 her

She pulls out a mirror so Bud can see his hat
 (Rather than just powdering her nose)
 It's the mirror

Love RIVAL has been revealed

Mirror is broken
 Makes me look the way I feel

Fran has also held up a mirror to our hero
 You look ridiculous
 But he's not listening
 He's not awake at this point

49:41

But gets a phonecall from Shelldrake

Wants to make sure the apartment is ready
 It is
 Bud has prepared his apartment for the object of his
 affection to be seduced

Sick moment

Exec wants apartment
 Is going to come around at 4

CC Baxter doesn't answer
 Just leaves

Step 8 The Ordeal

He is drunk at a bar

Girl at the bar - Margie
 Approaches him

Her husband is in jail in Cuba

53:59

Horrible coming home to an empty apartment at Christmas
 I said I had no family
 I didn't say I had an empty apartment

At the apartment

Fran is crying
 Shelldrake fighting to stay in the game
 The wrong time for him to "bring it up"
 You're normally such a good sport

54:44

She gives him a present
 An album
 Better keep it here

He gives her \$100
 Like a prostitute

She starts to strip off
 I just thought as long as it was paid for

You must be paying someone for the use of the apartment

He walks out of the apartment carrying gifts for his wife
 and family

58:08

She cries

Goes through to the bathroom
Sees sleeping pills
(Foreshadowed by CC earlier)

She looks at the \$100 bill
And the sleeping pills
Music dramatises

CC dancing in the bar with the girl
But they're pissed
There's no joy in it
Along with Santa, they are the last in the bar
1:00:21

Might as well go to my place
Everybody else does

She's talking about her husband as she walks up to the
apartment

He is about to have sex
Margie is clearly up for it

So Bud is about to lower himself to the level of the
Shadow figures

He finds a record on the player
Gloves
Goes into the bedroom

It's a bit like Goldilocks and the 3 Bears

And finds Fran passed out on the bed
1:03:57

Dramatic irony here
We know she's taken sleeping pills
He doesn't
So instead of being immediately sympathetic
He's telling her to piss off

All right Miss Kubelik
Get up
It's all over between us
O-U-T

Then he finds the sleeping pill bottle
Makes him feel all the worse

Goes next door to get the doctor - MENTOR

Not this one.
In there, Doc

Pisses off Margie
When I tell my husband how you treated me
Irony that she would tell her husband how her almost
lover mistreated her

Music goes off

1:06:17

Doc gets Fran up
Walks her around

Fran throws up

Death and rebirth
Purging

He finds a letter
Pockets it

She is injected with something

Baxter takes the blame

Doc slaps her
Again and again

Quite common for the hero to be slapped at this point
(Bill Murray in Groundhog Day)
Even though Bud has not been hit himself
He reacts like he has been
Wake up!!! Is the message

1:10:20

Where are you?, the Doc asks Fran

She is surprised to see that it's CC Baxter
What are you doing here?

CC is making a SACRIFICE here
He is trying to protect her
He is willing to have his reputation damaged rather than
have her be judged

They march her
1:11:59

They put her to bed

Doc wants her details
 You don't have to report this
 No suicide note (he's lying)

You're not out of the woods yet you know
 They often try it again
 This is THE ROAD HOME moment
 The journey isn't over

Why don't you grow up
 Be a Mensch a human being
 He needs to change
 The Doctor is a MENTOR figure here
 If Bud is to become whole
 He needs to change

He looks at her lying in bed
 1:14:49

Mrs Liebovitz
 Complaining about the noise
 Warning you, Mr Baxter
 Another MENTOR figure

WARNING, WARNING

He calls Sheldrake at home on Christmas morning
 He's opening presents with his kids

Wants him to come around
 Tells him about suicide attempt
 Maybe you'd like to be here
 You'll have to handle the situation yourself
 Doesn't want him to read the letter
 Kept your name out of it

She thinks he's my girl
 We're not out of the woods yet
 Isn't there some sort of message

Sheldrake has been given a CALL TO ADVENTURE here
 If he were a hero he would accept it
 But he refuses

1:18:36

She had no idea it was his apartment

She wants to leave

But he won't let her go

As he gets her a toothbrush
He takes out the razor

Goes next door
He's still taking the heat

She's about to call her sister
He makes her realise that she needs to be careful
Mr Shelldrake is a married man

Bud lies for Shelldrake
Says that he's very concerned
He's a liar

Well, Bud is lying to her too
We are being reminded that Bud is really not much better
than Shelldrake

This is also a sign that Bud is still thinking career
rather than girl

The worst part is I still love him, says Fran
1:22:21

Step 9 Seizing the sword

So where's the victim?

The Doc's wife brings in food and insists that she eats

Very common to have feasts at this point

Thought Bud was a nice man when he moved in
He is. But he hasn't corrected their impression that he's
a sexpot.

You find yourself a nice substantial man
We know that she already had

I'm flattered
That she would think a girl like you would do something
like this over a guy like me

Again, Bud isn't being honest
He's been trying to be something that he's not

1:24

Did you find an envelope?
Opens it

Hundred dollar bill
 Will you see that Mr Sheldrake gets it

They play cards
 Gin rummy
 Some light relief – very typical of the Reward phase

I think I'm going to give it all up
 Why do people have to love people

Very common for heroes to reveal more of themselves after
 the Ordeal

We need to rest up
 While the pace is reduced, we are able to get more
 information without it interrupting the dramatic flow

She's a bad insurance risk with men
 First time she was kissed was in a cemetery

I just have this talent for falling in love with the
 wrong guy at the wrong time

Previous guy is in jail for embezzling

This is more of her ORDINARY WORLD

She can type but can't spell

She is fouled up
 Was he very upset
 Absolutely

I am going to write a letter to Mrs Sheldrake
 He dissuades her

She falls asleep

Step 10 The Road Home

Mr Kirkeby arrives to use the apartment
 (Set up at Christmas party)

You can't stay
 He has company
 Sees it's Kubelik
 Hit the jackpot

So he's still trapped in this world

Why can't I ever fall in love with someone nice like you

He shaves

His mask is coming off

Sheldrake fires Miss Olsen

Calls Baxter

Olsen picks up the call

Anything you need? Money?

Could you do something for her?

How can I help her? My hands are tied.

There's a call for you.

She doesn't want to talk to him

1:34:42

Let's pretend it never happened

Do what the nurse tells you

I mean Baxter

1:35:47

Olsen calls Mrs Sheldrake

Could we have lunch together

Thought I smelled gas coming from the apartment

She's all right

Just left the gas on

She's washing his socks

I'm the type of guy who can't say no.

Some are takers

Some get took

He bought a gun

Fell in love with his best friend's wife

Shot himself in the knee

She laughs

FORESHADOWING that he is capable of this – and that he has a gun

Fran's brother in law comes in

He comes in wanting to find out where Fran is

What happened to her?

His ENEMIES reveal who Buddy Boy is

He's cooking dinner

Singing

You know I used to live like Robinson Crusoe

Then I saw a footprint in the sand

That was you

You know what we're going to do after dinner?
 Not sex
 But Gin Rummy

Karl arrives
 Not happy
 1:44:54

Doc comes in
 How is Fran?
 What kind of doc?
 Why did you take sleeping pills?
 Who else?
 Punches him out
 ORDEAL
 She kisses him
 REWARD
 Intoxicates him

Doc says he had it coming

Doesn't hurt a bit

(This is the trigger for him to act – classic The Road Home)

Step 11 The Resurrection

Rehearses
 I am going to take her off your hands

He goes up to see Shel Drake
 New secretary is a dog

Shel Drake reverses
 Going to take her off Baxter's hands
 He's moved out of home
 His wife gave him the arse
 He didn't take the heroic path
 He was forced out

Shel Drake raises the stakes
 He promotes Baxter further
 Assistant Director
 The office right next door to his
 He's being tested
 Has he changed?

Baxter sees Fran
 She is pleased Shel Drake has left his wife
 Bud says he has a heavy date

Would be better if they didn't see each other for a while
 – Fran and Sheldrake

But lied about the heavy date

Baxter has failed the test at this point

New Years Eve

Sheldrake wants the key to Baxter's apartment
 Wants to borrow his key
 Sorry. You're not bringing anyone to the apartment
 Especially not Miss Kubelik
 No key.
 I picked you for my team
 Do you realise what you're doing?
 He's being tested.

Baxter gives him the key.
 We think he's failed the test.

Wrong key
 To the executive washroom
 Rather than his apartment

Just following doctor's orders
 He's being a Mensch

He walks out and leaves his hat

As he cleans out his apartment
 He finds his gun

He's giving up the apartment
 Need champagne?
 (foreshadowing the fact that he still has the bottle)

Whatever happened to her?
 Easy come, easy go.

He finds a noodle in his tennis racquet
 Reminds him of her

Step 12 Sharing the Elixir

New Year's Eve

Sheldrake has had trouble finding a room for him and Fran
 All Baxter's fault
 Wouldn't give him the key to the apartment

Threw that big fat job right in my face
Said he couldn't bring anyone
Especially Miss Kubelik

Lights go down

Should old acquaintance be forgot

She leaves Sheldrake – Baxter's resurrection has given
her the strength to be heroic as well

She runs to the apartment
Up the stairs

Gun!!!

He opens the door
It's only the champagne bottle.

How is your knee?

I love you
Did you hear me, Miss Kubelik. I adore you.
Shut up and deal

2.00