

-ScreenplayCoverage.com Coverage Form
09/15/2011

Title: (kept private for sample at client's request)

Logline: Serial killers on a spree unknowingly pick up the nonviolent wife of a cop they've taken hostage.

Writer: (kept private for sample at client's request)

Genre: Drama

Pages: 97

Reader: SS

REVISION COVERAGE ON LATEST DRAFT

Positive elements in this screenplay:

This revision has a better pace and characterization than the original draft. Frank doesn't die in this one, which is a plus; it makes the story flow better. There's more emphasis in this draft on Alicia's transformation from non-violent to violent avenger, which gives her a good character arc. The length remains a plus; it's short enough to encapsulate a lot of violent images without dragging. Definitely, the revision is stronger than the original.

Areas that need improvement:

Some of the dialogue does not make much sense, given the situations. This is especially true of Frank's dialogue with Alicia when they're under maximum stress at the hands of the killers. He's trusting her to be strong and do the right thing as a hostage, when he KNOWS she has no experience with this and he, as a police officer, knows she's facing something that she almost certainly can't handle. In fact, most of the dialogue from the police should be much more urgent and emotionally demanding; these are crazed killers on a (so far) successful crime spree; there needs to be more fear and worry and the tension needs to be ramped up.

Alicia's escape from the car in the lake seems too easy; she needs to do more on her own to achieve that escape, not just have windows burst out conveniently. We need to see her WORKING to save her own life.

Her bursting into tears (or wanting to) several times after she is in the killers' hands makes little sense, esp. as she is growing and hardening to face the challenges they're putting in her path. The tears should not be part of her character for very long at all.

Mindy should last longer; it would be interesting to have her face Alicia, woman to woman, and for her to be the first of the killers that Alicia defeats. (That worked well in the original.)

Scores are 1-10 (10 being highest)

Concept: 8

The idea of a modern day Bonnie & Clyde is interesting and if the characters are well developed enough, can have resonance.

Presentation: 9

Script is well formatted, with very few grammatical or spelling errors.

Structure: 6

The rewrite is focused on showing Alicia, the nonviolent and usually ineffectual unemployed journalist, using her creativity and resourcefulness to outwit deadly killers. That works very well, though we need more setup of her nonviolent nature. It's not enough to have her razzing Frank about a violent TV show; he's a cop, and that could be a bone of contention between them. We need some satisfying turning points in the script to mark the end of the first act and the midpoint and Act II ending. Right now it's pretty straightforward, with the only change being increased danger for the heroine. We need to know that the killers have a plan and that she is working to defeat their plan, once she finds out what it is.

Plot: 7

Generally works well, though it would help to have some history of this crime spree that we could make sense of it. When did it start? What set it off? (Almost certainly, it was someone they knew.) How long have they been at it? Have they gone back anywhere once they've been there? How many have they killed? (This could be in a news story or something.)

Alicia's confrontation with the killers and the ease with which she persuades them that she's not going to be a threat is a little too easy. We need to see her having to WORK to achieve each victory here, and each one should take her a little further out of her comfort zone (of course, being a hostage in the first place and seeing your husband's colleague murdered and your husband injured and other people dying is a little out of most people's comfort zones already).

Characters: 6

We need to see Alicia's character arc be even more dramatic – perhaps she's not only nonviolent, she's gone to peace rallies, she believes in gun control, she thinks everyone in the world would be better off if there were no weapons. This brings her into conflict with her husband, who is a cop and believes in carrying weapons, maybe hunts on his days off. She has to

be certain that her position on this is the right one, which is why when she has to meet violence with violence, it's such an enormous, life-altering upheaval for her. (Maybe at the end, she tells Frank she wants to learn to shoot ... ?)

Pacing: 9

The script moves very fast and the story never flags. Very good.

Dialogue: 7

Most of the dialogue rings true. It's minimal, which works well for this type of action piece, and the characters seem to speak as individuals.

However, there are moments that make no sense – ie, on p. 62 when Alicia and Frank have a hurried moment to talk before she leaves with the killers. He tells her to be careful; he should be BEGGING her not to go with them and in no way believing that she can handle herself with them. ALL the police dialogue should be urgent, demanding: DON'T GO! DON'T DO THIS! Instead, it's wishy-washy, which makes no sense for the situation.

The early dialogue with Kevin and the first victims of his that we see makes no sense – he says something about their going to a big wedding, but they haven't mentioned that, though we know it from their previous dialogue with each other. Kevin's continual droning about rich people thinking they're better than other people does provide good motivation for what he's doing (would make more sense, though, if most if not all of his victims at least SEEMED as though they might rich).

Theme: 7

Violence being stopped with violence from a nonviolent person is not original, but if written well, will continue to work. Here it seems to work.

Tone: 7

Matches well with the theme and the plot; nothing jarring.

Commercial Potential: 8

With a small rewrite to address more of Alicia's character arc and some of the police dialogue amended, this might have a good shot as a small studio film.

Advice for executives would be:

RECOMMEND

CONSIDER

PASS

Ways to improve this screenplay, additional advice:

Start Alicia's character arc much more toward the peaceful side. Give us multiple examples of her feelings about weapons and violence before she gets taken hostage. Show her growing rage and feelings of frustration and pain as she sees more and more people become victims of Kevin and Dan. Show her taking SERIOUS pleasure in their suffering, as she inflicts violence on them and eventually kills them.

Show Kevin and Dan as much smarter than they come across in the script. If they've eluded police detection all this time, they have to be pretty smart. Why would they buy Alicia's story that she wants to interview them? Or would they pretend to buy it and decide that with Mindy dead, they'll take out on Alicia their rage that Mindy was killed? Would they be nice to her, even try to play on her sympathies, in order to keep her quiet until they got to the cabin, where they could do what they liked with her? Show them talking about it when Alicia isn't around, so we know they're a lot smarter than she's giving them credit for. It's a serious mistake to underestimate a psychotic.

Ramp up the tension in the police dialogue, and don't let Frank allow Alicia on a ride-along – maybe she stows away and ironically then gets taken hostage, in a situation she should never have been in in the first place.

A lot of good work has gone into the rewrite. There are more possible improvements, but this script looks considerably better than the original. Well done.