

Coverage, Ink.

PROFESSIONAL SCREENPLAY ANALYSIS, DEVELOPMENT AND EDITING

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COVERAGE, INK. ANALYSIS

TITLE: [title]
LOCALE: college campus, farm
WRITER(S):
PERIOD: the present
FORM: screenplay
GENRE: teen horror
BUDGET: moderate
PAGES: 100
DRAFT DATE: n/a
COVERAGE DATE:
PREPARED BY:

LOGLINE:

A college girl faces off with a serial killer while confronting the childhood trauma she always knew would come back to haunt her.

SYNOPSIS:

Junie Macketchum, 14, is at home alone when she hears a crash. She hides and listens as strangers trash her house and even when her parents come home, her fear won't allow her to show her face. The scene ends when someone flings open the closet door where Junie is hiding.

Fast-forward seven years, Junie is now 20 and at college. In her apartment she hears a noise that frightens her but it turns out it's only her two roommates, Sandra and Alicia, home early from Easter break. Alicia is Junie's sweet best friend while Sandra is the spoiled, superficial roommate they put up with. As they make plans for Junie's upcoming birthday, the girls read a ten-year-old article about their Professor Broussard and how he was caught having an affair with a student. They gossip about his proclivities until the next day when another friend, Charlene, announces she's leaving school to be a professional cheerleader and Broussard

will be naming Alicia his new T.A. The student caught with him also was a T.A.

Reggie, a nerdy classmate, enters by scaring Junie half to death. Her trauma still very real to her, Junie still can't handle any sort of surprise.

Charlene packs up her whole life while a secret stalker watches. A knock at the door stops her in her tracks as does the stalker who enters the apartment.

In class the next day, all the students are back in school in Broussard's class. Broussard also has a farm he tends to when he's not in school and offers Junie a chance at earning money by farm-sitting alone. Nervous, she declines and goes to meet Alicia after class. They enter a sorority house where a surprise party awaits Junie. Too scared to even enjoy it, Junie throws up in front of everyone, halting the party. Later, Alicia tries to comfort Junie but nothing helps. The sirens that keep ringing outside stop their activities, Charlene's body has been found.

Alicia leaves school because her parents are nervous when they hear the news report. Junie decides she shouldn't be on campus either and takes on Broussard's offer after having a chat with her mom.

At the Broussard's farm, Junie comes face to face with Helen, Broussard's disabled and sick wife. She and Broussard used to be the dream couple but after her accident and condition, their relationship are strained. She's got a patient with her, Stavros, who looks agitated and leaves quickly. The Broussard's hand over the keys and leave Junie in charge of the house, greenhouse, cat, and dog. They leave for separate destinations.

Alone, Junie keeps having a lot of little jumps and scares that all turn out to be nothing. Getting increasingly nervous, she makes her rounds and doesn't notice the same stalker watching her.

Back on campus, Sandra leaves a bar too drunk to drive. She spurns Reggie's offer to drive her home but accepts the class meathead's. Before he can pick her up, a hooded figure kills the meathead and then kidnaps Sandra. Reggie meanwhile goes out to the farm and succeeds in scaring Junie once again. He offers to keep her company but she declines. Dejected Reggie

leaves. Meanwhile the same figure that killed Charlene is slowly mutilating Sandra.

The next day Junie tries to write her paper then focuses on the tasks around the farm to keep her mind busy. She hears a news report that there's been another murder and decides to leave. She phones Helen who talks her into staying until that night. Reggie stops by again because he's worried about her and brings her a birthday present as well. Moved, Junie tells him about the event seven years ago that left her traumatized and her father wheelchair bound. Reggie understand why she's always so jumpy.

After he leaves, Junie is alone and a nervous still. A delivery makes her jump before she realizes it's a cake from Alicia. As she cuts into it, she hits something solid...Alicia's decapitated head. She also finds a DVD the killer left for her, showing Charlene and Sandra's deaths.

Hyperventilating, Junie runs out of the house and comes face to face with Stavros. He's also scared and tries to help her but she has twisted her ankle and has trouble walking. As they make their way through the woods, they come upon Alicia's headless body hanging from a tree. They run but are separated and the last thing Junie hears is Stavros' scream. She keeps running and mercifully sees Broussard driving back home on the road.

Back at the house Broussard tries to calm Junie and treat her wounds but nervous, Junie doesn't trust him and he doesn't believe a killer is after her. Junie gets increasingly nervous and finally runs for it but Broussard follows her as she tries to escape and they end up in the stable where Junie stabs him. Junie texts Reggie but he doesn't get the message. She steals Broussard's keys and starts to drive away when Stavros appears in front of her.

Junie comforts Stavros and leads him to the car where he tries to choke her. Junie manages to get away and back into the house with Stavros chasing her. He trails her all over the farm but Junie manages to land a few blows. It turns out; Stavros also killed the other girls. When Junie finally eludes him, she sees Helen coming up the driveway. Junie tries to convince Helen they have to get away when Stavros shows up again. Together with Helen, Stavros grabs Junie. She passes out.

When Junie comes to, she realizes she's tied to a chair. Helen tells her all about her husband's infidelities and her past beauty and happiness. She's just about to kill Junie when Reggie shows up. In the scuffle, Junie frees herself and she and Reggie run for it with Helen and Stavros in hot pursuit. They manage to kill Stavros but Reggie is gravely injured. Helen appears while they're in the stable with Broussard's dead body. He comes to long enough to say he only cheated on Helen once, and never again.

The final showdown is between Helen and Junie as Helen chases her through the fields. Junie manages to stay out of her way, even though she's injured until Helen jumps off the tractor she's been chasing Junie with and tries to fight her. Junie manages to shove Helen back where she lands on the tractor's blades and dies. Sirens start screaming soon after.

Junie and Reggie make a date a few days later. Junie now lives alone in her new apartment, not scared anymore.

COMMENTS

OVERALL

This was a very easy and interesting read. It caught my attention from the get-go and even horrified me with the details at the beginning. The scene with the squealing pig and the main character sitting unable to help, but hearing her parents, without knowing what was happening was especially strong. You could picture yourself in the protagonist's shoes.

Speaking of the protagonist, Junie is a pretty good one. Because of the intro, we already feel sympathy towards her, so when she reacts violently to surprises, we can't help but feel sorry for her and be on her side. We want her to be successful, to overcome whatever she needs to because she is a likeable character with real flaws that we can empathize with. It's fear that's holding her back and that's such a common thing that her victory could almost be ours. However, for that to happen she needs to show us that she *wants* to overcome it. There are just too many scenes where she's shrieking and hyperventilating. We need to see her steeling herself and trying to at least handle it in one scene. She can fail. In fact, she should fail. But she needs to be mentally stronger because an audience may not cheer for a weakling for too long. To go along with this, it would be an effective turning point to see her deciding to chase the dark rather than let it frighten her in the final scenes of the farmhouse. A moment where we can see she's made up her mind, an empowering moment, so that her actions aren't just the floundering reactions to what's going on but that there's a level of calculation there. Exactly like when she unleashes the manure on Broussard.

As for the rest of the characters, I think they all have the groundwork to be really interesting but right now they're just a bit too stereotypical and feel a bit like filler. You have the chance to really skewer the girl-in-danger-slasher-film trope while still abiding by the rules and I think you should take advantage of that. The jock is a typical meathead? Well then what is his relationship to the murders and Stavros/Helen? His death can be used as a method to throw off the audience; in fact, it works really well to do that because all the deaths so far have been girls and videotaped

ones. There's really an element of violation and creepiness with the videotaping. Use that further. Have evidence of the jock and others being videotaped. Maybe even Junie and Reggie. If you can connect the videos to Stavros and Helen's motives in some way that could even make their actions seem stronger and make more sense. Broussard was watching home videos when Junie arrived for her job. It could be even a jab at him. You have all the elements to round out the action and make it come full circle with all its twists and turns but it just needs to be connected.

Reggie is a great character. He's the loveable nerd everyone can't help but treat affectionately. Except Junie. Have him really prove himself to her. Jumping out and scaring her seems a bit too repetitive. Maybe he can be constantly trying out different ways of impressing her that backfire? There's a limited amount you can do with the un-wanted boy protagonist and possible love interest but use his nerdiness to get you there. Have him rescue Junie from a situation by hurling an action figure box at the killer. Then he can complain how it's no longer mint and worthless because the box has been crushed. That's just a suggestion but really use each character's defining personality traits to develop them and push them forward. Charlene with her cheerleading stuff, the jock with his sports stuff, Sandra and her superficiality, even Alicia with her niceness. They can all be stretched to the limit.

In terms of tone, there are some instances of quips that are so inappropriate that they're funny. On page 20 when the spinster makes her comment as the lock guy screams in horror when they discover Charlene's body is great. There should be more of those little bits so this story can elevate itself from the typical slasher to a dark comedy slasher movie. Alicia's head in a cake box is the perfect example. It's just so bizarre that it needs like a moment with the cat licking the frosting or something.

The dialogue is very natural in the story. It suits the characters and their ages as well. The Neil Gaiman joke Reggie makes in class is so good. Maybe not everyone will get it but the ones who do will appreciate it. However, the dialogue does seem to come in scenes that slow the action down. They're just too obviously a method for exposition like when Reggie asks Sandra about her make-up or the girls discuss Broussard. These things can all come naturally through showing the scene. Broussard comes to class wearing

overalls? Maybe change that to ripped jeans and a flannel shirt. No matter how hot the man is, I have a hard time believing overalls can be sexy but this way you can show that he's trying to be, "one of the students," and managing to pull it off even at his age. In direct contrast with his wife in stiff formal clothes and a noticeably older appearance, it'll be so obvious. The way Broussard talks could also be edited to reflect this. Yes, he can assign the paper but having him sit cross-legged on his desk, rolling his eyes, cracking jokes. All these small things that can be added to show his personality. The T.A. aspect can come when he introduces Alicia as the new one with a knowing glance. How about making Charlene the one he had an affair with? Her packing to go away could be a front for leaving the school in disgrace while the teacher gets away with it. There are so many little details you can coax out to tie these characters together, push the story forward, and not allow it to remain stagnant in the non-chase scenes. By page 25, I was still a little unsure where the story was going so cutting out the extraneous set-up scenes and dialogue could really help that since page 25 is a good chunk of the way into the story.

There are some details that ought to be addressed as well. I'll go through them as I noted them while reading.

On page five you use the word trepidatious and it's repeated a few more times throughout (34 and 65). Not only is it not a word but also the constant use takes away from its effect. It's okay to say with trepidation once but remember that Junie's actions really do describe her state of mind so describing it again is redundant. It slows the flow of the story and interrupts the natural progression. Let the action describe the emotions of the setting and character. It'll make a stronger impression.

When referring to the killer as Hoody, note that hoodie is spelled with an i-e. It's a very small thing but readers will take notice, so it's better to be safe than sorry. It's a quick fix though, so nothing to worry about.

In the same way trepidatious tripped me up, some of the descriptions of characters also took me a second to re-read and understand what you meant. You have a great way of describing the physical appearance of characters. Alicia as Martha Stewart was absolutely perfect because everyone can immediately imagine her in her Stepford perfection. But Sandra is described as, "Looking like she's dressed for a

part in a hooker movie," on page 8. I think you mean the part of a hooker in a movie. Small stuff like that can also be cleaned up to make it tighter. The less is said, the better. It just makes clutter on the screen and on paper.

Page 22 the reference of a herd of students with people mooing at them is a little confusing. The herd already denigrates an animal quality to the students. It would make more sense for them to be mooing and the others making some other sort of cacophony to differentiate them. It's not a huge deal but small stuff like this is also a distraction.

We know Broussard is leaving for the weekend, no need to repeat it on page 25.

The murders of Junie's friends are a little confusing. It seems they're all happening at the same time and it's also a little hard to work out when Alicia would have had the time to die. Though there are actually two killers involved, unless Helen does some killing too, it needs to be clearer that one person is doing all the legwork because as it reads right now, it seems like there are several.

On pages 40 and 41, the interaction between Junie and Reggie seems a little off. He was at the surprise party for her so he would know that it was her birthday. Dropping by twice is also odd especially since he scares her again with the first time. He already scared her at school. Offering a brownie after scaring her yet again seems a little weak and unbelievable. He needs better motives to interact with her rather than acting like a child and trying to win her over with a treat. In this same vein, Junie is far too jumpy and the animals are over-used as the excuse for noises and events. She calls 911 at one point. Even if she hangs up, they still would drive and come check it out. They can be the ones making noise at another point rather than blaming the cat and dog again. The hide-and-seek of scares is just too much especially since we know she's being watched. Helen trying to guilt her for being scared is also a little unbelievable. This whole segment is a bit long. Cutting the scares and building Reggie's motives to be at the far, can really help make him stronger and keep the story going.

With Broussard's reappearance, we already know something is up. It drags too long and even though it's ultimately not him Junie needs to fear, the interaction is too long. It needs to be cut to increase tension and not lose our interest because

the audience will already be suspicious. Use that and then quickly move to the Junie freak-out and Broussard's fate.

When it comes to the final chase and fight for survival, it's very high action and intense. Reading made me hold my breath so watching it would probably be even better. But again, there are some suggestions to punch it up. Junie seems to get away by rolling over too many times. It's a little repetitive. Googling the police also seems a little counter-productive. Wouldn't she just call 911 again? If she did, they can even provide for more tension by not believing her. The kiss on 89 comes at a bad moment. There is no reason for it and though Reggie says she's handling it all very well, she isn't. Either Junie needs to assert herself and stop being afraid and make a plan that works, or the kiss needs to come later. The showdown between Helen and Junie also seems too long especially with Broussard's final moment. If you want his death to have a bigger impact, make it clearer that all the rumors and insinuations about his affairs were false. Not just one ten years ago, none. Charlene could've even been lying about it if you decide to make her the student the rumors were about. Or the student ten years ago. It would make Helen's mental trauma that much more poignant if she had assumed everything and embarked on this murder spree for nothing. One more suggestion, if he lives it could also provide for an interesting and darkly comical ending; with Junie asking if she's receiving extra credit or not or something like that. It would just make more sense that he hasn't died yet because him coming back and dying again is just too handy for the story.

The ending is a good touch. We see that Junie has learned to face her fear and that Reggie has redeemed himself in her and our eyes. However, rather than having her tell us about it, why not show it? Junie and Reggie alone in an apartment and maybe him leaving and asking her if she'll be all right alone? Junie's calm reply of yes would be so much stronger than a simple exclamation that she now lives alone.

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STORY

The story develops naturally without force. It fits the trope of the teen slasher flick where the protagonist, a girl, faces her fears and ultimately saves herself. That being said, there really is nothing new put forward to the

overarching genre. Interesting twists but no real surprises, not even the double antagonist plotline. A few more twists and challenges to the familiar story-line would make it stand out against other films of its ilk and make it stronger.

STRUCTURE The structure is well organized. The beginning is short and attention grabbing while setting the story in motion. The middle works as a means of introduction for the other characters and the main storyline. The climax comes as the action peaks and there is a denouement to tie it all up and present an ending.

CHARACTERS

The main characters are decent in their introduction but there is no real development, especially in the protagonist. There is no natural progression of her character and only at the end do we get a glimpse of the change the events had on her. Junie has too many instances of hyperventilating and almost passing out. It's already been established that the events of her childhood traumatized her to this point; she doesn't like surprises. But there needs to be a stronger moment in which she decides she no longer wants to live like that. The actions scenes in the farmhouse are a good example of how she's facing her fears but there is no moment before that shows her change, no instances where she's at least trying. Her hysterics are very real but too many and the audience will get annoyed with her rather than be on her side. The female friends are too similar, they are almost indistinguishable except for character descriptions that introduce them then they get lost in the shuffle. Sandra stands out, though. The way she talks and treats the others sets her apart from them. But Charlene and Alicia are too similar and Charlene seems to be only there to start the killing. The token jock is too stereotypical. He doesn't even have a name because he is indistinguishable from all the other meathead side characters in the genre. It might be interesting to give him a bit of depth. Also, his death is the only one that does not suit the killer's motives. There needs to be a connection. Even if his death is supposed to throw off the audience, there needs to be a valid ulterior motive so that it can be connected. Reggie's character makes for a good love interest. He is clearly the nice-guy nerd but again, that seems a bit too stereotypical. He needs a bit more depth too. His clowning works well as an opposite to Junie's timidity. Exploit that and both characters will naturally develop further. Stavros and Helen also need to be

slightly more developed. We only get them at the house before Junie starts her stay but a longer interaction to show Stavros and Helen's relationship and even Stavros and Broussard's relationship could be a good hint and set-up for what's to come later and their motives.

THEME

The theme seems to be the ability for one to get past their fears and face them, and life, head-on. However, Junie remains jumpy and anxious all throughout the movie. The theme doesn't come into play until almost the very end. A slow depiction of Junie's development and how she suits the theme would make it stronger.

PLOT LOGIC

It makes sense almost throughout except for a few exceptions. The death of the lesser characters sort of fit the killer's motives but they're not solid enough. The jock, the cheerleader, and Alicia all need better connections to their murders via their relationship with the Broussards.

TONE

A little up and down. It seems to have some moments of dark humor set against the violence but they come abruptly and seem out of place such as the landlady making a joke at the discovery of her tenant's dead body. If there were more instances of jokes or quips, the whole story could have a firmer tone of black humor set against horror.

CRAFT

Good handle on writing and the rules therein. Needs to be proofread a little more carefully though to avoid those simple little mistakes. Variation in descriptive words and reactions would also benefit the script.

MARKETABILITY

It's a Halloween/autumn film. Though it does not take place on Halloween, it's the perfect sort of film to release around then for fun and scary thrills.

TITLE

Title is suitable and interesting as it's not immediately clear why it's called that. Still, it fits the story and references both the origins of the events as well as the final showdown's location.

MISCELLANEOUS

Too many descriptive words. "Junie walked forward trepidatiously," is an example. It is used several times and not only is the word non-existent, it's a little redundant. Junie's character is familiar and the tone of each scene is already set through the writer's build-up. It would already be obvious that Junie is walking forward in trepidation. Cutting out these extraneous bits (not all of them, after all, some need to clarify the action. Just the ones that are repeating the action) would make the story tighter and stronger.

CONCLUSION

This is a good draft, but it is a draft nonetheless. The action in the middle needs to be upped or the audience will lose interest. There are just too many exchanges between characters and their speaking seems mostly for exposition rather than character development or to push the action forward. It's the weakest part of the story especially compared to the beginning and ending where the action is so fast-paced and snappy. That level of intensity can be applied to times when there isn't that much action by increasing the tension and stakes. What will happen to Junie when she realizes a friend has been killed? Will Junie begin to believe the suspect is circling closer to her when every death is someone she knows? Why is the moment of realization so important to Junie and the story? Can it be related to the beginning in some way? In this same vein, the other characters need to be more developed so we can see the affect of their respective demises on Junie and each other. The story has the potential to be a slasher film that separates itself from the others and developing the characters could really benefit that. The audience can brush off most deaths in these sorts of stories quite easily. The ones in *Harm House* are memorable because of the method and the stalking. The groundwork is there so a little more introspection for them would really up the stakes and the audiences' stake in the finale.

The ending itself is a happy ending with everything working out and though that may sound cliché, in the world of the story and the genre, it works very well. The main character learns something about herself and grows as a result. It just needs to be a little more obvious.

Good luck!



CRITERIA	YOU BET!	YES	KINDA-SORTA	NOT SO MUCH	N/A
Strong PREMISE?			x		
Is the material ORIGINAL?			x		
Is the script COMMERCIAL? (mainstream or indie)		x			
Is the PROTAGONIST dimensional, well-developed?			x		
Does the story have a clear ANTAGONIST or ANTAGONISTIC FORCE?	x				
Are the SECONDARY CHARACTERS well-developed and believable?				x	
Is the STORYLINE believable and effective?		x			
Does the FOCUS remain clearly on the protagonist and not get lost in secondary characters' subplots?		x			
Are the STAKES high? If the protagonist fails in his/her quest, are the consequences of failure dire?		x			
Does the story have a strong STRUCTURE, 3-Act or other?		x			
Do the first ten pages set the TONE for the rest of the story?		x			
Does the script have solid PACING?			x		
Does each scene move the story forward?			x		
Does the CONFLICT rise effectively?		x			
Does character DIALOGUE sound natural?		x			
Does the DIALOGUE contain sufficient subtext?			x		
Does the writer's STYLE reflect professional quality and ability?		x			

Is the writing tight and punchy, with a minimum of bloat?			x		
Length appropriate for genre?		x			
Format/Mechanics/Spelling/Grammar?			x		
Is the TITLE a grabber? Does it reflect the material's genre or tone?		x			

SCRIPT: PASS
WRITER: PASS

(Ratings scale: Recommend, Strong Consider, Consider, Consider with Reservations, Pass. The vast majority of screenplays submitted are a "pass." It generally takes a lot of drafts and elbow grease to get a "consider.")

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Thanks for submitting your screenplay to Coverage Ink! We hope the analysis gives you the info you need to make the script as good as it can be. Here are some resources you may find helpful:

<http://www.coverageink.blogspot.com>

Our blog! Chock full of news, events, tips, columns and intel.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTVSfzynE68>

Our free video "Surviving Coverage." This is how we deal with getting feedback on our own projects.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGZSwh242PQ>

Our free video "Writer, Edit Thyself." Invaluable tips on figuring out what to trim and making your script as lean and mean as can be.

<http://www.coverageink.com/services/specguide.html>

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