



## COVERAGE, INK. COVERAGE

**TITLE:**  
**LOCALE:** unspecified university  
**AUTHOR:**  
**PERIOD:** Present  
**FORM:** Screenplay  
**GENRE:** horror/thriller  
**BUDGET:** Low to Moderate  
**DRAFT DATE:** N/A  
**COVERAGE DATE:**  
**PREPARED BY:**

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### **LOGLINE:**

Disembodied hand of a long-dead church bell ringer returns to wreak havoc at a university.

### **SYNOPSIS:**

At a university library, student ANTONIO ribs ROBERTO and (ages unspecified) for his newfound devotion to studying. After Antonio leaves, Roberto snorts a line and then realizes he's being watched. It's a disembodied hand inside the air vent, and it attacks! After a tussle, Roberto thinks he's stabbed the hand with his pocket knife, but really he's stabbed Antonio's hand. Antonio blames Roberto and Roberto gets in a lot of trouble, with the DEAN accusing Roberto of having a cocaine-related hallucination and then expelling Roberto. Later, in the garden, history PROFESSOR VIDAL (50) inspects a full-scale bell tower—a replica of a demolished one that used to stand nearby—built by students. They have installed the original oven with had some buttons and a hair pin inside. Later, a BULLY taunts Roberto at the lockers. CRISTINA (age?) the love interest treats Roberto coldly at first but soon is defending him to the bully. Later, Cristina seems distracted in language class. She, too has a scare, this time with bloody

handprints and noises in the ladies room. But when she returns with Professor Vidal, there's no trace of it. A woman accuses Cristina of imagining it. Cristina visits Roberto at his waiter job, who tells her that he's heard from Antonio's lawyer. She confesses she saw bloody handprints at school. Back at school, a blood student is attacked and killed. Roberto reveals he's sleeping at a pension. The Dean decides to keep school open after the murder but still doesn't believe Cristina. Vidal hears someone ringing the bells in the new bell tower and investigates but doesn't see anyone there. He talks to a heritage foundation worker but is unable to get any historical data on the old ruins. At night he ventures out to the ruins and again hears the bells but can't tell where the sound is coming from. Roberto tells Cristina he's been fired and thrown out of the pension, so she offers to let him stay in her garage as long as her dad doesn't find out. Roberto sneaks into bed with her later and they make love. The next day, the Dean tells Vidal to look up an unnamed historian PRIEST who may know something about the ruins. The priest takes Vidal into his library and discovers an ancient book called 'The Abominable Crimes of the Bell Ringer.' It tells the tale of a bell ringer in a church accused of child molestation who is burned alive, with his severed hand remained clutched around the bell ropes. Vidal brings his Great Dane ATTILA to school to sniff around. Two boys CARLOS and JORGE get into a rock/paper/scissors game at the school auditorium that results in the hand stabbing Carlos with actual scissors! A boy finds the hand and thinks it's Carlos' and puts it on ice, but the hand crushes his head. Roberto and Cristina go to Vidal who now believes their stories and tells them they'll all search the university. Attila attacks the hand in the cellars. Two weeks later, things are settling back to normal and the cops have a vaguely plausible cover story they've told all the students. Vidal asks a foreman to take down the bell tower, but the Dean wants to keep it around for a while longer for the upcoming theater festival. Antonio returns from the hospital with his hand reattached and is warmly greeted by Roberto, the rift between them healed. They throw a party. But a doctor calls and tells Antonio there's been a terrible mistake—they're reattached the wrong hand. The hand attacks, and Antonio asks Roberto to cut it off—but accidentally cuts off the wrong hand. Antonio jumps to his death off the balcony (or is thrown by the hand? Unclear.) Vidal, Cristina and Roberto set a trap for the hand in the bell tower and burn it up in the oven. After

it's all over, Vidal invites Roberto and Cristina for dinner only to have the Bell Ringer himself (unseen) show up at the door...

## COMMENTS

### OVERALL

**A wild and fun ride, (TITLE) is peppered with moments of brilliance but is also hampered by characterization, throughline and plot logic issues.** The author smartly confines the action to a handful of characters and locations, making the script a natural for production companies looking for an affordable horror thriller. The protagonist Roberto is a likeable everyman/underdog, wrongly accused, which makes him easy to root for – but lean depth of character and ceding much of the story's forward momentum to Professor Vidal, who is not the protagonist, undercuts the script's pacing and is a structural misstep.

Visually, the script hits its marks, with some colorful and creepy deaths and attacks every ten or 15 pages or so, following horror convention. The story also creates compelling lore for the bell ringer, although this too can be better implemented in the story. We'll discuss all this in detail below.

Despite the positives listed above, the reader must 'pass' on the script at this time, for the reasons indicated above as well as language/localization issues that may stop Hollywood readers in their tracks. The reader also has one overarching concern regarding the whole evil hand motif in the first place. The good news is that most of the issues the reader will discuss here are pretty easy fixes, and moreover, the script is in a commercial and in-demand genre. If the reader is able to satisfactorily address the concerns discussed herein, there's no reason it can't rise to the rank of 'consider' down the line. So let's roll up our sleeves and look at the details and see how to make THE (TITLE) as strong as it can be.

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### CONCEPT

The first and perhaps most important point goes to marketability, and it concerns the killer hand concept. The reader wonders if the concept is fresh enough to warrant a movie at this time. The problem is that the killer hand has been done – There was Oliver Stone's 'The Hand,' as well as

the famous dismembered hand attack from the classic 'Evil Dead 2.' There may have even been another killer hand movie in the '70s but the reader can't recall it. Granted, these movies were a while ago, and there are recurring themes in horror movies all the time, such as serial killers, masks, dolls, torture and so on. But the reader would have the same note about a 'killer doll' movie, because the 'Chucky' series has pretty much cornered the market on that theme. The 'killer hand' is so offbeat and niche-y that one immediately thinks, 'It's been done.' It doesn't help that 'Evil Dead 2' did that segment so well and also played it for laughs, because after 'The Hand,' which was largely derided for its hokiness, a severed hand attack would almost *have* to be played for laughs for it to work. Oh yes, and of course there was 'Thing' from the 'Addams Family' movies and TV show. So the concept just doesn't seem all that fresh.

A secondary problem with the hand concept is the logistics. A severed hand would not have the strength or leverage needed to perform the type of tasks detailed in the story, such as crushing a boy's skull. Now obviously this is a nitpick, because a severed hand in real life can't actually do ANYTHING. But the reader brings it up because it underscores a hole in the mythology. By that I mean, exactly what sort of enchantment has gotten into this hand, and why? We'll look at this more below.

So how do we address this problem, since the concept of the severed hand is central to the story? The reader is of the opinion that the writer must find some way to bring something new to the table to justify another severed hand movie. And I'm not sure what that is, since a comedic approach has already been done. Look at it this way – perhaps it starts off with one hand but soon becomes HANDS, like, a whole army of severed hands on the attack in Act 3. Take a page from Jim Cameron's excellent ALIENS. He did not repeat the formula from the first movie but rather stepped it up 100-fold in the sequel. Perhaps a similar approach can work here. This would take a been-there, done-that concept and make it cool all over again. Or maybe the hand is not necessarily always a severed human hand but rather is a cosmic force that can possess objects and reshape them into a hand – chicken bones, spoons, sticks, whatever – to use for its purposes, and then dissipate when its done. In short, the writer needs to be aware of the problems with the concept and 'think outside the box' to come up with a

solution so you can have your cake – er, hand – and eat it, too.

## MYTHOLOGY

Most of the backstory of the bell ringer comes in the form of a couple of paragraphs about 2/3rds of the way through the script, wherein an unnamed priest tells Professor Vidal of the legend. This is reasonably well-handled, but there are a couple issues. Firstly from a formatting perspective, if the priest is saying all this as dialogue, it must be formatted as such, with the visuals written as scene description just like in any other movie scene. The priest's dialogue should be in voice-over (V.O.) as he narrates the scene.

But additional problems also surface here. Firstly, why isn't the priest named? He has a lot of dialogue – give him a name. Secondly, when exactly did this horrific sequence with the bell ringer take place – 50 years ago? 550 years ago? The script only says 'medieval.' Be clear. Also, if it's medieval, what country are we in? Certainly not the US. This also needs to be established.

But most importantly, we need to get at the WHYS that remain unanswered. We get that the bell ringer was wrongly persecuted for the child disappearances – or was he? This is unclear. Perhaps the bell ringer was guilty and the child who accuses him was right. Because we never get to know the bell ringer as a character or even learn his name, it's impossible to tell. It *\*seems\** that if he comes back from the dead to exact revenge, that he likely was guilty. That makes him more of a Freddy Krueger than someone seeking righteous vengeance, as none of the people the hand terrorizes in the script had anything to do with his cruel incineration. Clarify exactly what's going on here and why.

Another why – WHY does the hand come back now? If we assume that the bell ringer was killed 400 years ago or more, then there needs to be a reason why it comes back now. Was it somehow angered by the bell tower replica Sara and the students build (and if so, why?) That would be the most logical, but there's no indication that's the case other than the reader's supposition. Wouldn't the bell ringer be more angered that the original place was torn down than that a new one was built?

Another issue is that the reveal of the replica is unclearly written. The reader assumes they've built a scale model of the place. Yet it is revealed to be a full-sized working replica with period accoutrements and the original oven. This feels far-fetched. The original structure would have been huge, and a student undertaking to reconstruct it would not only cost a fortune, it's of dubious historical value and would take years. It's simply not believable. In short, there's a logic hole because the reader doesn't clearly get the connection between the bell ringer and the college and the reproduction. Make it a scale model of a still-existing ruins nearby that have been off-limits for centuries, but students (including Roberto and Antonio) break in there to take laser measurements to build their model, and in so doing, accidentally rile the spirit trapped within. Writer needs to connect the dots here. Perhaps the university founder was the chief persecutor back in 1679. That would establish some sort of connection and drive for vengeance – but still we'd have to establish why NOW?

And why is the hand not skeletal after being dead so long? What is the manner of magic (or curse) that brings it back, intact yet still severed, after all this time? All this needs to be explained. A logic point: of course the bell ringer was incinerated, but wouldn't it make sense to have the badly burned bell ringer come back to life, sans hand, rather than JUST the hand? Wouldn't that be a far more effective killer?

And lastly on this point, WHY does Professor Vidal suspect the bell tower has anything to do with the attacks on campus? There doesn't appear to be any obvious connection – e.g., eyewitnesses saying they saw a hand skittering up into the old bell tower, etc. Simply hearing the bell tower ringing (which is good and creepy) doesn't give us the logical basis to conclude that the old bell tower and the events at the University are related.

#### PROTAGONIST

Roberto is our lead, and he's not bad as far as he goes. Problem is that's not far enough in terms of depth of character. More importantly, our protagonist must drive the story. Yet Roberto sits back and lets Vidal drive the investigation and pretty much does nothing, disappearing for vast stretches. Now an argument could be made that

Vidal is the lead, and not Roberto, but if that's the case, then it is Vidal who needs to be front and center in every scene, and furthermore, it should be him who is attacked and accused, not Roberto. So we have a protagonist/focus issue. Give all the investigation scenes to Roberto, not Vidal, and have HIM drive the story as he desperately tries to clear his name to save his scholarship, life and career.

The cocaine issue is a bit troubling and is should be cut. The reader realizes that writer included it so that we'd wonder if Roberto really saw a hand early on or if he was just tripping. Problem is, coke is not a hallucinogen, and how would anyone know if he was doing it anyway? Was Roberto arrested and searched? If so, show it. Another problem is that coke is considered a hard drug in the US and there are many who won't have much sympathy for Roberto if he's a drug user. Simply having no one believe that he saw a hand will do a far better job of making him sympathetic. The last issue with the coke is, if this type of element is going to be included, it needs to be there for the protagonist to quit – arc out of the need to use it during the course of the story. The coke use is soon forgotten, making it feel tacked on and unnecessary. Lose it.

Roberto's depth of character leaves a bit to be desired. We know he likes to party a bit, he likes Cristina, he somehow got into a prestigious unnamed university, and he works in a restaurant and has some responsibility there only to get fired later for reasons unknown. Oh yeah, and he's a big meat eater. But that's about it. Not enough. We need some character-defining scenes with Roberto. Why is it we never go home with him, see where he lives? What's his major in school? What are his hopes and dreams? Does he live with family at first? It seems especially odd when he says he's living in a pension. What happened to him? Did his family throw him out after he got expelled? This is important stuff that cannot happen off-camera. Give us a clear idea of who we're watching a movie about with some character-defining scenes with friends or family early on.

#### OTHER CHARACTERS

Give the BULLY a name.

Cristina is kind of odd in that she so quickly turns around from cold to Roberto to defending him to the taunters. She,



too, is pretty lean on characterization. She's our female lead, so work on giving her some real personality. What are her likes and dislikes? What's her major?

Vidal is an interesting character, and one likes his tenacity in investigating -- and his dog. Problem is, as mentioned elsewhere, he is not our protagonist. So it should not be him going to visit the priest and showing up with the dog at school, but Roberto, desperate to clear his name.

#### TITLE

Title is problematic. Firstly, it appears to be a typo. What does '(TITLE)' mean exactly? Remember that titles are marketing tools, so the title should reflect not only the content but the genre (horror) if possible. 'Bell Ringer' is not a bad title -- it's short and punchy -- but it doesn't describe the genre of the script. The writer is very creative, so work on coming up with something with a bit more zing that also clearly says horror.

#### LANGUAGE/GRAMMAR/SPELLING

Writer needs to be aware that if he intends to shop the screenplay as a spec script in the US, the language is going to need to be worked on a bit. While the writer's English skills are commendable, the script still does not read as if written by a native English speaker. There are numerous instances of nonstandard sentence/word construction as well as plenty of typos and word misusages (for example, 'severe' instead of 'sever').

Presentation is critically important, so it is recommended that the writer find a native English speaking editor to help with proper idiomatic Americanized English before the script is sent to any industry types. Coverage, Ink also offers a proofreading and localization service wherein we go over with the script with a fine-toothed comb, localizing the dialect but changing none of the content. If the writer is interested in this service in the future, please contact CI.

Another craft issue is that it is important to stay consistent with character names and how you refer to people. Once you identify a character as Professor, you cannot use 'teacher' interchangeably. Same with Roberto --

you can't call him 'the boy' or worse, 'he' at the beginning of a new scene. ALWAYS identify the character you are talking about at the beginning of each new scene and then call them by that name and only by that name.

#### MISC. STORY ISSUES

Also give characters' ages in parenthesis like this:  
ROBERTO (20) when they first appear.

Do universities have lockers? High schools, yes, but universities? Maybe in the gym, but in general, I haven't seen that.

What is Roberto doing back at school the next day after he gets expelled? Shouldn't he have emptied his locker the day before with security? And if he's irrevocably expelled, how does he get readmitted? Perhaps he should only be suspended pending administrative review.

Don't tell us anything in the description that we can't possibly know, such as, 'Cristina is worried about Roberto's future.' Instead write, 'she's distracted, face lined with worry.' That's as much as the audience will be able to tell from the actor's performance. Remember, the movie audience is not reading the scene description. Anything important in the description needs to be in dialogue or depicted visually.

Why does Vidal have to ratify Roberto's expulsion?

Don't identify the restaurant Roberto works at as 'Roberto's Bar' in the slugline. It makes it seem like Roberto owns the place. Give the place a real name -

INT. MCSULLY'S TAVERN - NIGHT, for example.

Why does Cristina wait to tell Roberto she saw the bloody handprints? Wouldn't she breathlessly rush over to tell him, freaked out of her mind because she knows he's telling the truth? She's too cool about it all. Most 20-year-old girls would be flipping out.

Never TELL us what people are going to do beforehand, or what they're talking about, in the scene description. Just DO it.

You can't have major plot events happen to your protagonist off-screen. Write the scenes in which Roberto is fired and thrown out of the pension. Remember the first rule of screenwriting: show, don't tell.

There is an exquisite scene in this script, and that is the scene where Carlos and the hand do shadow animals and then play rock/paper scissors. I LOVE this scene. Only problem is, it doesn't quite fit tonally with the rest of the movie because it's funny and playful (at first.) If writer wants to keep this scene, the rest of the script is going to need to tonally lighten up a bit, from the very first scene onward.

It doesn't feel believable that the hospital could mistake The Hand for Antonios' – and that only upon becoming aware of it, that it would attack. Perhaps instead of it literally being the hand attached to his arm, it could be that the bell ringer can possess hands.

It never really makes sense how the hand gets onto Antonio's arm. First we think the dog has eaten it, but later it appears again unscathed, leaving us to wonder what happened. Next we see it being put on ice, and then it kills the boy trying to preserve it. And then somehow it gets to the hospital in an inexplicable mix-up winds up on Antonio's arm, whereas his actual hand would have been reattached long before. These are all good plot beats; we just need to find ways to explain how all this stuff can be happening, because unless the reader missed something, it feels like it doesn't quite make sense.

Don't put "two weeks has passed" in description. This needs to be on-screen like this:

Caption: TWO WEEKS LATER

## CONCLUSION

As we've discussed, there are some issues to look at here, but the bones of a good screenplay, and one that could be appealing to buyers, exists. If the writer is able to address the issues discussed herein, there's no reason the next draft shouldn't move up in score and be on its way to a vaunted 'consider' grade. There is talent on the page, so

the reader is confident that the writer has the skills to  
do the heavy lifting necessary to make this script work.

Good luck!

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	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Very Good</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>So-So</u>	<u>Not Good</u>
Artistically			X		
Commercial		X			
Premise				X	
Story				X	
Main Characters				X	
Minor Characters			X		
Dialogue			X		
Visual Elements		X			
Title					X

SCRIPT:  
WRITER:

CONSIDER WITH RESERVATIONS  
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