

# Coverage, Ink.

PROFESSIONAL SCREENPLAY ANALYSIS, DEVELOPMENT AND EDITING

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## COVERAGE, INK. JC ANALYSIS

**TITLE:** (title)  
**LOCALE:** NYC, Bordeaux, Normandy, France  
**WRITER:**  
**PERIOD:** 1895, 1918  
**FORM:** Screenplay  
**GENRE:** Period WW1 Drama/ Epic/ Saga  
**BUDGET:** High  
**PAGES:** 94  
**DRAFT DATE:** N/A  
**COVERAGE DATE:** 11/15/13  
**PREPARED BY:** JC

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### **LOGLINE :**

The story follows the tumultuous life of two inseparable identical twins during WWI to their ultimate suicide due to shell shock and hopelessness afterwards.

### **SYNOPSIS :**

In 1895, at the country mansion of J.J. Chesterson, when TWO IDENTICAL TWINS, 4 years old, jump in a water fountain, the MINDER and GARDENER pull them out and the STAFF gives them cocoa. It's obvious they're little troublemakers.

At a Private Girls School in 1918, the twins' father MR. J. J. CHESTERSON tries to convince the HEADMISTRESS not to let the twins volunteer for hospital nurse duty on the battlefield, but she trusts their decision to do so. On their way to Europe on a ship, the identical twins MIRIAM and AMELIA, now 26, tell friend ELIZABETH they have a brother who died and a brother who's in a hospital. Neither one of the twins like them because they dunked them underwater when they were younger children.

They arrive in Normandy, France, and on the battlefield later, while Amelia is being raped by a soldier, Lt. HAROLD

SPITZ comes to her rescue. Miriam senses Amelia is in danger and rushes out to tend to her wounds. Possessive of Amelia and sensing she's attracted to Harold, Miriam makes Amelia promise not to betray her.

Harold speaks fluent German and has a confrontation with a German Officer while he, Miriam and Amelia are interrogating the German wounded soldiers. While wading in a stream with the twins later, Harold notices that they have scars that were carved onto their ankles with broken bottles as a pact to defend each other.

Miriam begins to hate Harold, jealous of his romance with Amelia. Confronted about this, Amelia denies it and their trust begins breaking down. Later, Harold and the twins have a picnic near the German line on the farm of PIERRE DE GAULLE with his daughter LOUISE, and her mother ANN-MARIE and GRANDMOTHER. Notified by the MANAGER that the Huns are coming, Harold and the twins hide in Pierre's house. The German Soldiers tear it apart, unable to find them. After they leave, Harold and the twins leave in a horse-drawn carriage. When Miriam observes Harold and Amelia kissing, she snaps a bottleneck off, cutting her hand.

SGT. BURT ARMSTRONG meets with Miriam behind the supply tent when she gets off her nurse duties and Amelia surreptitiously observes Burt teaching Miriam how to shoot at a target, a close alliance being formed. She confronts Miriam about it later, but she says Burt is just a friend. They argue again about Harold, and MRS. MOORE and two soldiers have to break it up.

Later that night, Miriam follows Amelia to Harold's tent and overhears Harold advising her sister to tell her about their relationship and that he wants a future with her. But Amelia feels Miriam will complain to the commanding officer if she knows, so it's best to keep it a secret between them.

While having a picnic, Miriam and Harold race each other up the bank of a river. She knocks him over, straddles him, and when she tells him he spends more time with her than Amelia, he says he spends equal time with them both. Back at their tent, Miriam tries yet again to convince Amelia to stop seeing Harold.

Harold rejoins his unit, making a CORPORAL suspicious because he approached from the German line. Word gets back to Burt,

who tells Miriam he suspects Harold is working with the Germans. Miriam then tells Amelia she saw her and Harold meeting secretly and that he's a traitor and double agent, working for the Germans.

Amelia helps a DOCTOR perform surgery on the wounded soldiers and when Miriam is given permission by Mrs. Moore to choose which of the wounded are going to be operated on, she takes pleasure in letting some of them die who wouldn't otherwise.

Late at night, Miriam puts on Louise's clothes to disguise herself as a French woman and goes on a secret mission to find Harold. A German soldier stops her, and when Miriam gets back to their tent, she and Amelia argue about Harold again.

Miriam gets a LAKOTA INDIAN ARMY SCOUT to teach her how to scout without being seen. After making a failed attempt at a trial run, she finally sneaks up to the German's "no-man's-land" and watches Harold surreptitiously, making note of his route around the German patrols.

After assisting an OPERATING DOCTOR perform surgery on a soldier with a serious abdomen wound, Amelia follows Miriam to a field and gives her grief for letting Burt teach her how to shoot. Later, Amelia sends the Headmistress another letter, letting her know that she and Miriam fight all the time and she losing all trust in her.

Burt shows Miriam how to load his Luger and invites her to secretly go to the front with him. On the outskirts of a village, Miriam watches him shoot a German Officer in the neck. Burt's taken by her fearlessness, but when she flirts with him, he tells her they just need to stay buddies because he's in a romantic relationship with SHEILA. Later, Burt pacifies Sheila when she confronts him about Miriam.

Amelia secretly meets with Harold again and, wearing Louise's clothes, she explores a large medieval cathedral with him. Later that night, Miriam steals Burt's Luger, disguises herself as Amelia in army clothes, and stalks Harold. A soldier stops her, but she shoots him and two more soldiers, and finally shoots Harold in the forehead, taking the engagement ring he was planning to give to Amelia before she slithers back and returns the Luger, unnoticed by a sleeping Burt.

The DOCTOR who examined Harold's body tells a COLONEL he's suspicious of Harold's death, given he was shot at point blank range and because he appears to have known the person who shot him. Meanwhile, Burt gives Sheila his Lugar and tells her he knows someone used it and tried to clean it afterwards.

At the field hospital, CAPT. JONES tells a DOCTOR that Harold may have been killed by a spy and to look for a Lugar there. Learning that Harold spent most of his time with the twins, he questions them about their whereabouts, but doesn't let them know that Harold was killed. When he questions Sheila, she lets him know that Burt's Lugar was stolen and that Burt taught Miriam how to load and shoot it.

Amelia finally learns from Mrs. Moore that Harold was killed and is devastated. In a makeshift hospital, Amelia's hip is wounded by debris when a bomb explodes. And Miriam experiences a pounding in her head, both of them being shell-shocked.

While celebrating the end of WW1 in a café, Sheila tells Miriam she knows that she killed Harold, but Miriam denies it and continues to keep the secret from Amelia. The twins bond and become much closer on the train ride back to Bordeaux. However, Cpt. Jones tells the GENERAL they have evidence that Miriam killed Harold and that she's going to be arrested for his murder when she arrives in New York.

But while on the way to N.Y. on a ship, Miriam finally tells Amelia she killed Harold and shows her the engagement ring she took from him. Knowing that she'll be arrested, and with Amelia feeling so hopeless, the twins feel they have nothing to live for and both jump overboard and drown in the sea, leaving their father devastated.

**COMMENTS**

## OVERALL

The writer is first to be commended for his/her passion and efforts in writing this screenplay adaptation. It's an exciting and heartfelt story, and one that's fairly original in that it combines a period war drama, similar to movies such as JOYEUX NOEL and the '50s classic A FAREWELL TO ARMS, with an epic that follows the life and ultimate downfall of two inseparable identical twins, which reminded me a bit of Jeremy Irons' twins Beverly and Elliot (i.e., one good and one bad) in the film DEAD RINGERS.

I especially like the title of the screenplay, (TITLE), given it suggests the story's tone and its main conflict, as well as its two main protagonists. It's also a very memorable title, which is extremely important in this town because sometimes a script sells for its title alone. The way in which the twins gradually change is also pretty well-handled, and there were a few moments that genuinely surprised the reader, as well as some nice moments, such as the Cathedral bit on p. 61 and the burgeoning but chaste attraction between Amelia and Harold.

While the story's premise and basic conflict are quite good, there are issues with the presentation, which needs a bit of an overhaul. There are issues with formatting which we will get into, as well as the way one tells a story in screenplay format most effectively. There are a number of additional issues that need to be looked at more closely, involving the dialogue, structure, pacing, and plotting concerns, which may stop a studio or production company from ever considering it.

However, the good news is that the script does have a shot at getting a CONSIDER if the writer is willing to address all of the above issues on a rewrite. The following notes and suggestions will hopefully get it up to that rating. So, with that goal in mind, let's get to it.

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STRUCTURE/ PLOT ISSUES/ PACING:

In terms of story, while the yarn does have a nice evolution of the characters, it sometimes feels episodic. That's

because there isn't a clear throughline, or a strong character goal that any one character is trying to accomplish. Rather, it's more of a character study set against a very interesting backdrop. There's nothing wrong with that, of course, but it can also make the script feel a bit disjointed and lacking the focus it needs to really grab a buyer by the throat.

So with that said, let's go back to basics for a moment. Screenplays should have three acts with plot points in the correct places, shifting the story in unexpected but satisfying directions at each turn, with a great opening hook, inciting incident, and a satisfying climax.

The inciting incident here seems to be around p. 12, when Miriam senses that Amelia is attracted to Harold. And the first plot point seems to be around p. 16, when Miriam begins doing everything she can to keep Amelia and Harold apart.

However, the only real conflict that seems to drive the story forward from that point on is Miriam's continuous jealousy and hatred for Harold, which is caused by his burgeoning love for Amelia. And that comes across more like shifting emotional attachments and reactions. At least, until p. 65, when Miriam finally kills Harold, which is a startling turn of events (and also removes our lead actor from the picture - - but hey, they got away with it in GRAVITY, so...) But even after that happens, the story meanders off somewhat in different directions, until the final climax when Miriam and Amelia jump off the ship and drown. And unfortunately, that tragic event happens too abruptly, almost out of the blue, and thus feels a bit anticlimactic.

So I would suggest you consider giving your story a better progression of interconnected scenes within a more cohesive narrative, and ones that demonstrates a clear rising action as the dramatic stakes escalate. It will be well worth the effort. To that end, I am cutting and pasting the structural template from our Style Guide (which I'll also send along to you at no charge, since that will help with the formatting issues we'll go into as well.)

**1) THE HOOK.** Pages 1-3. A cool or visually interesting scene that grabs us and makes us want to know more. Could be a precredits action or horror or comedy sequence, or showing the protagonist doing what he does best. Above all, set the TONE for rest of the movie here, and once you establish the rules of the world, stick to them!

**2) GETTING TO KNOW YOU.** Pages 3-9. Showing the protagonist in his or her KNOWN WORLD. The everyday life before the storm hits. Also in these pages indicate the main character's PROBLEM. For example, "If only John wasn't so arrogant, maybe he'd get that damn promotion." Whatever he is NOT able to do here, he should be able to do at the end of the movie.

**3) INCITING INCIDENT.** Page 10-12. AKA "The Catalyst." This is the monkey wrench that comes along and sends the protagonist's world spinning. After this, life cannot remain the same. This then forces the character to make a decision: accept the challenge or not. Remember STAKES! In movies, the stakes must always be high. If the protagonist does not succeed in his mission, the consequences must be DIRE for the protagonist. If the hero can just go back to life as it was, then you shouldn't be writing this movie.

**4) HERO REFUSES THE CALL.** Pages 13-17. Per myth, the hero doesn't WANT to risk everything to set off on this dangerous adventure and has to be convinced into doing it by a MENTOR or other forces. The hero likely has to overcome his fears. Or another event occurs that gives the hero no other option but to take on the danger.

**5) HERO PREPARES.** Pages 18-25. Accepting what he must do, hero prepares—rallies friends, gathers necessary materials, etc.

**6) END OF ACT ONE.** Page 25-30. Hero debarks on The Journey, accepts the call to Adventure and sets out from the safety of his known world into the unknown new world of the second act. Note that this can come as early as page 22 or so, but not much earlier.

**7) ACT TWO FIRST HALF.** Pages 30-55. Several things happen here. First is we pay off the premise and have some fun. So if your movie concept is about a man dressing up like a chimp and going to live with apes at the Zoo, then these scenes show fun antics of what that's like. Think 'trailer moments.' Secondly, here we need to again emphasize the protagonist's dramatic flaw, which others are aware of, but HE is not—yet. Third, the protagonist makes allies here—new traveling companions or others met along the journey who could come in handy. And finally, the bad guy steps it up and tries to stop the hero. All the while, the hero is actively pursuing his or her quest. A passive hero makes for a lame flick.

**8) MIDPOINT ACT 2.** Page 55-60. The high point of the second act. Here we have a huge twist or change or a big set-piece. This is also generally where the hero finally begins to become self-aware—he finally starts to comprehend and accept what his problem is, although he still can't fix it yet. The hero makes a move to take control of the emotional dilemma—generally followed by an immediate reversal to challenge that decision.

**9) ACT TWO SECOND HALF.** Pages 55-75. Fun and games are over. The conflict suddenly amps up. Bad guy strikes back. Hero is forced to zig when he wanted to zag. The conflict expands and escalates.

**10) THE FALSE ENDING.** Page 75. It appears the protagonist is going to pull it off. He's within sight of his goal. He's overcome obstacles and is about to win. But, no such luck...

**11) THE BLACK MOMENT.** Page 85-90. As we roll into the end of Act 2, everything starts going wrong. Allies abandon the hero. Hero's plans fall apart. Perhaps he, or an ally or love interest, is captured. By the end of act 2, the hero should be at the farthest possible point from his goal. Despair and as Blake Snyder puts it, "a whiff of death" here.

**12) ACT 3.** Page 90-110. After the hero hits rock bottom, he has to pick himself up by his bootstraps. This often comes in the form of a mentor character imparting sage wisdom that enlightens and empowers the character. Thus the character CHANGES, and overcomes his dramatic flaw. In so doing he is now finally able to see how to defeat the menace. Also here allies met along the journey come back to help the protagonist succeed. Finally, and this is a MUST, is the showdown—the confrontation between the good guy and the bad guy.

**13) TAG, YOU'RE IT.** End of script. The protagonist succeeds and returns back to his known world of Act 1 a changed and better man, bringing with him "the elixir," or in other words, the spoils of his successful quest. He is now able to do the thing he was NOT able to do in the first few scenes of the movie.

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Now clearly this is formula, but formula is formula for a reason - it works, and most movies are based on it. Looking at this, it seems we're missing some structural waypoints, as well as a real throughline for your protagonist. I'm not saying you must completely rewrite the script to conform to this, but the point here is, things happen in this template when they do for a reason - they work. So make sure you have damn good reasons for doing so when you depart from it.

That said, I quite like the way the scenes roll out, gradually changing the tenor of the relationship between the characters from beginning to end. This is effectively done, and if we had some better drawn leads, it could be very compelling as a wartime character study film. Not super commercial, mind you, but possibly actor bait - and that's not a bad thing. We'll get into character depth in a moment.

#### PLOT LOGIC

There are a few things in the script which jump out and make us go huh? For example, in the scene on p. 28, Harold advises Amelia to tell her sister about their relationship and romance, but it should be obvious to them, and everyone for that matter, that Miriam knows about it by then. In other words, she shouldn't have to tell Miriam something she already has



indicated to her she knows. So maybe just have Amelia confirm once and for all to Miriam that she loves Harold and doesn't want her to come between them - either that or have Harold advise Amelia the same thing earlier than he does. The non-confrontational way the reveal finally comes lets the air out of the tires anyway, so if this is going to be a point of contention (obviously so) between Amelia and her far-more-dysfunctional-than-she-thought sister, let's have it out. Let's face it, Miriam must be rocking some serious mental issues to do what she does later in the script. Let's see more evidence she's capable of this early on. Even in the teaser, maybe make Miriam the inciter, the one who's always pushing things too far, and Amelia the reserved, prim one.

In the scene on p. 68, when Burt gives Sheila his Luger, he says he can tell that someone had taken it and had cleaned it after they used it. This is wonderful - of course he should be able to tell this. A refreshing moment of movie realism! But it's all dashed because it should be obvious to him that Miriam took it, given she's the only one who he let use it for target practice - unless, of course, he was trying to keep Sheila from knowing that because of her jealousy of Miriam. And if that's the case, you need to give that a bit more exposition in that regard. For example, you could show him looking sheepish or a bit guiltier than he does in the action description in that particular scene or trying to protect Miriam (subtext.)

This is a minor concern, but in the scene on p. 22-23, why would Sheila be so upset that Burt is teaching Miriam how to shoot at targets? She's jealous of him, but it just seems a little bit overkill, especially given how jealous Miriam is about Harold. The amount of time and loss of sleep this requires jumps out as a clear issue which is not exploited, so perhaps this can be the first sign of Miriam screwing up -- she's falling asleep at work, making mistakes, and it's all because of her dangerous cavortings with Burt.

At the same time, there's a scene where Harold notices that Amelia arches her right eyebrow in certain instances and Miriam doesn't, which distinguishes one from the other. This was a good little mannerism that I thought would serve to foreshadow something creative for later, so let's use it a little better. A good place for that would be when Miriam sneaks up to shoot Harold, he says something that generally would make Amelia arch her brow, but Miriam doesn't, but by then it's too late.

Throughout, there are moments where characters do or say things that seem unbelievable, such as Miriam saying "It was going to be so much fun, coming over here to the front." At this point Amelia should turn to her like she's nuts (she IS.) Who says something like this? Miriam better damn well play that line off with a laugh or else we think she's flat-out stupid.

On page 15, we have our characters unexpectedly speaking German, yet this was never set up. This seems like the type of thing we'd need to know in advance -- possibly in the "hero in his known world" first ten pages of the script, where the girls study German and then because of that, they are selected by the draft board and sent into service. Giving us 10 pages of them before we get to the front would go a long way towards allowing us to better paint them as characters. Similarly, we should know they're Canadian before we are told this on page 20. We'll get into the script's numerous "show, don't tell violations" as well as more on character depth in a moment.

Is Miriam really equipped to triage? This is a nice way to show her coldness, but it feels like we need to see her working up to this position of responsibility. Otherwise, she is pretty unequipped to make life and death calls.

Thunderbird's training sequence is good, but too easy. We go from "you can't learn" to she's learned everything she needs in one short, easy scene. Let's turn this into a sequence and have him train her.

Burt's plan on page 56 is nutso. I mean, Miriam is clearly nuts, but Burt? Why would he bring her along to the front? Insanity!

On page 58, we have the confrontation between Sheila and Burt - - but we never made clear there was anything between them in the first place. Obviously, Sheila gets jealous as hell earlier, but we never SAW anything from Burt one way or another. So let's SHOW them as a couple. Have her harping over him as he recuperates, kissing him, and Miriam setting her sights and moving in on him anyway.

More craziness as Harold offers to take Amelia behind enemy lines on page 60. How about he takes her in the OPPOSITE direction? Moments like this make the script seem like backwards line, like the front and German-occupied France are wonderful places everyone is trying to get to.

SHOW Amelia favoring a scarf before page 64. Maybe it was their mother's. Set this up in Act 1 -- don't tell us about it deep into the screenplay.

### PACING

Pacing is affected not only by the script's page count, but also by the combined strength of its structure, plot, characters, dialogue, and narrative. A solid structure, strong plot progression, and active, interesting characters with clear goals, objectives, and strong arcs will all serve to create a fast-paced script.

While the script has a lean and mean page count (great!) the pacing can feel sluggish at times. A lot of this comes from the lack of throughline -- an urgent quest which the protagonist must achieve, such that the audience invests in and roots them on. Also, the page count is deceptive, because the dialogue margins are too wide (see the markup to be returned.) So the real page count if formatted properly would probably be closer to 105-110 pages (still okay, page count-wise.) But there are also a few scenes in the script that are repetitive and superfluous. For example, the scene in the DeGaulle (name is too obvious -- reconsider) Manor House on p. 29, where Amelia confides her relationship with Harold to Louise, is repetitive and not necessary because we already knew she and Harold were keeping it secret in the previous scene. Additionally, there were a couple of scenes with Miriam trying to convince Amelia to leave Harold. In fact, Miriam repeats the very same dialogue she did in several previous scenes.

The same thing applies to the scenes on p. 51-55, where Amelia gives Miriam grief for lying to her about sneaking to no-man's-land and Miriam is angry with Amelia yet again about not leaving Harold.

The marked up script to be returned will hopefully indicate other trims for pacing. Of course, the short page count is generally indicative of a lack of character work in act 1, and that's the case here as well.

### CHARACTERS

AMELIA AND MIRIAM: There are great qualities to both these characters. Amelia obviously is the more earnest, good-hearted, and reliable of the two; Miriam the more unstable. During the course of the story, the strong bond between the twins is

tested and then shattered by Amelia's relationship with Harold, as well as the two girls keeping secrets from each other. This growing rift is nicely capped by them having to sleep together every night, and the earnest, caring "good-nights" which then turn forced. This is all good stuff.

But who is our protagonist? The two twins share an equal amount of screen time in the story, but as mentioned, neither really has a strong throughline, or critical task/mission/agenda that must be accomplished. Amelia seems to just be trying to do her job and find a way to survive it all in one piece, and come out of it with Harold. Fair enough. So basically that makes her our protagonist. But is it enough? Perhaps if there were something else to create more urgency, then we could invest more in her journey and root her on. Right now she's more a passenger really. The only thing she's really trying to do is keep her relationship a secret. Okay, well perhaps that's enough, if we can add more to it. For example, perhaps we should discuss that Amelia knows her sister is short-tempered and volatile and emotionally not quite there. Thus it becomes imperative to keep this a secret from Miriam. Of course this is crazy because we all know they'll be found out sooner or later, and Harold should say so. But maybe Amelia has a plan -- to escape from her sister. Maybe she can have Harold put in for a transfer, and she hopes to go with him, thus freeing her from her sister once and for all. Now this changes the dynamic of the character interaction significantly, but what it gets us is a real end game for Amelia with stakes, and a ticking clock. Perhaps Harold gets the transfer but it's not for 4 weeks. So they have to keep this secret from Miriam for that time because if Amelia simply tells Miriam the tMiriam, she's worried about what Miriam will do. Yeah, she's that crazy and her sister needs to know it (because otherwise the audience will find her hopelessly naïve that she didn't know what her own sister was capable of.)

Apart from that, we're lacking real depth of character for Amelia. This is partly because we don't have any real "protagonist in her known world" section of the story (generally the first 12 pages of the script) to show us who the movie is about. After a brief prologue, the movie launches right into the twins leaving for war. But that departure shouldn't come until page 12-14. Before that, we need ten pages of WHO IS AMELIA (and MIRIAM)? These scenes need to set up the whos, what, where, when and whys of these characters, and show us in particular What is Amelia's dramatic need? This is why we have "show don't tell" violations throughout the script,

learning about their skillsets by being told about them, throughout the narrative. Instead, we should be SHOWN what these skillsets are in the first ten. SHOW Amelia teaching German and volunteering at a hospital. Show her having a date but Miriam sabotages it without Amelia knowing about it. Show us where they live, how they live, what they're doing in life. Talk about their hopes and dreams. Show us what Amelia NEEDS. What's missing in her life? How does her close relationship with her sister help/hurt her? These are happy times at first, but they should still be tinged with darkness to set up where the script is going. Tonally they need to foreshadow Miriam's spiraling mental disease.

In addition, we should include other elements to really give us a well-rounded protagonist, such as hobbies, quirks, foibles, friends (and enemies,) etc. These crucial first ten pages will then give us everything we need to know so that when our girls sail off to war, we are already invested in them and have a clear idea who is the protagonist and why we like her.

MIRIAM: a much trickier character than straight-ahead Amelia, and with the makings of a really great antagonist. I love that she's the threat from within, and the bond between the twins makes their separation and the tragedy to come juicy. But many of the same notes apply to Miriam regarding character. She actually functions as a co-protagonist for a while, given that the screen time is equally split between her and Amelia. That's fine as well, but again we need to really underline their differences so we can get an idea of the darkness to come.

So again, in the first ten pages we really need to see what makes her tick. These new scenes should basically focus on Amelia, but there can be a Miriam scene as well, and then a scene with them both together. What makes her tick? What is HER dramatic need? If Amelia wants to serve, and hopefully find love, what does Miriam want? Let's see how her mental issues subtly undermine her in the beginning, and underline the differences between the two girls, even though both are at this point 100% a team. Again, giving Miriam hobbies, things she's good at (and not so good at) and friends and a life will all go a long way.

Once the story is underway, Miriam transforms into a real oddball, and we don't know what's driving her. There's no romantic attraction to Burt, so we don't really understand why she's obsessed with learning to shoot. Maybe she's a tomboy and a fierce woman's rights advocate and thinks a female soldier

can be as good as any man, and she tries to enlist as such but is laughed out of the recruitment office. So she sets out to prove to everyone she can be as good a soldier as any man.

Finally, we really need to understand that she is mentally ill, because shooting Harold like that is CRAZY. The bond between the sisters is not enough to provoke this, because clearly they've both had dates in life beforehand (which we should see.) If their bond is so strong that she will not tolerate any man taking her sister away, then basically that means she is in love with her sister in all the wrong ways. And apart from following her and spying on her, this would manifest in passive/aggressive behavior towards her sister and Harold long before trying to kill him. I mean, how good would she be at bottling these feelings up? Wouldn't she have a screaming hissy fit first? Maybe catch them in the act and confront Harold and Amelia? We need to really dig in to the psyche of the personality so that the stakes ramp up (again, after this confrontation could come the moment of Amelia realizing: she needs to abandon her sister and get away with Harold) and we put the wheels in motion for the ultimate betrayal: the murder of Harold.

HAROLD AND BURT: These are both good characters as far as they go, but like our two leads, both need a bit more fleshing out as well. Starting with Harold, the way the relationship develops with Amelia is pretty good, although we could use evidence of more chemistry on the page -- furtive looks, subtext, body language, sly inquiries and so forth. Make this attraction irresistible, even though it clearly is a threat to Amelia's relationship with nutty sister (which Harold should be concerned with and maybe pick up vibes from.)

Just like with our leads, we need to see more personality from Harold. Where is he from? Did he grow up in Germany or is he second generation? How did he get into the war and why? Is he career military? Does he have any skills outside of uniform? What does HE want? Now we can't give Harold scenes in the first ten, but we can certainly learn more about him in his scenes with Amelia -- talking about hopes and dreams, joshing around, reminiscing. The more dimensional he is, the greater the weight of his murder.

Burt has lots of good elements, and we don't need too much more here than is already there. But the main thing about Burt is, what the hell is his relationship with Sheila, and how does he feel about Miriam? It feels like we'd make more hay out of a

love triangle if he really did like Miriam, but was already "dating" Sheila (or having a hospital romance as it were.) Miriam might not reciprocate, but the pull of this sexy nutcase should be like a moth to a flame for poor Burt, who likes the sultry, dangerous edge of slightly crazy Miriam. The fact that she wants something from him but doesn't reciprocate his feelings will only add fuel to that fire, driving him crazy. There's so much great tension we can layer in here -- wonderful angst and subtext and passion to play with here, none of which is on the page. We're missing out of the meat of the story by cheating the emotion out of both "love" stories between each of our leads. More than anything else, this area is the one to really concentrate on moving forward.

Watch some great romance movies and pay attention to how the scenes play out. For example, AS GOOD AS IT GETS features wonderful character interplay between dysfunctional people, who finally come together. THE WAY THEY WERE has a wonderful build to the relationship between Streisand and Redford - we know they're going to get together, but they really have nothing in common at first and kind of dance around each other. So much is in the body language and subtext as the characters weigh their own attractions against the negatives of being with this person, and everything else going on in their lives. Particularly with a wartime backdrop, this should be a major element of the screenplay.

#### DIALOGUE:

A script's dialogue should advance the plot, reveal the character, and express the theme. It should have the rhythm of real conversation without being as dull as real conversation.

While your dialogue was fairly good and seemed to depict the various character types, sometimes it comes across wooden, too "on-the-nose" expositional, and even overly lengthy in places. Also, there are too many "talking head" bantering scenes between characters with superfluous and repetitive dialogue.

For example, the Headmistress's lofty incantation to Mr. Chesterson on p. 3 is lengthy and too on-the-nose expositional. This brings us back to SHOW DON'T TELL. Movies are a visual medium. Avoid TELLING us about characters in unnatural ways (exposition.) instead, come up with scenes that illustrate the facet of this person you wanted to tell us about (SHOW.) This is another advantage to those missing first ten pages of the script -- you can put all these character-defining beats into

the movie by SHOWING them. Without this, we're forced to resort to clunky lines telling us things we should already know about our leads. There are numerous "Show, Don't Tell" violations in the markup to be returned.

Miriam's dialogue to Harold on p. 8 is a bit choppy and includes dangling sentences, so I would suggest you consider the following snappier version, "Okay, Lieutenant, come with us. We'll get some alcohol for her in the kitchen. No one's there."

A good example of repetitive dialogue is on p. 9, where Miriam tells Harold they're going to keep it quiet, but she already said that before in the previous scene. Also, Miriam repeats the very same words Harold said in her last line of dialogue on p. 9, "We're not supposed to be backing you up."

On p. 19, Miriam's dialogue is a bit wooden and would sound better as, "We could stop by an 'estaminet' café and have a drink to see what they're like, but we'd need to wear clothes to appear like Frenchwomen." You misspelled "estaminet," by the way.

At the same time, there are a number of places where the dialogue is anachronistic and sounds like something young kids in our present era would say..

For example, on p. 12, Miriam asks Amelia, "You'll never betray me by 'hooking up' with a fella, will you?"

Also, Mrs. Moore even says "hooking up" in her dialogue to the Doctor on p. 13.

And again, on p. 46, Thunderbird tells Miriam, "Yeah, no problem."

#### FORMATTING/ TECHNICAL ISSUES:

The script needs to meet the industry standards in format, appearance, grammar, and spelling if you expect it to be considered by a producer, agent, or industry-type.

There are copious amount of mistakes in this regard, from the first page of your script to the very last, that will stop most industry types from ever considering it.



I've made note of the following errors, and there are many more in the markup. Again, our Style Guide will elucidate on many of these areas and improve your chances of getting your script sold.

On p. 1, you need to add the slug line "INT. COUNTRY MANSION OF J.J. CHESTERSON," for the scene where the staff is giving the twins hot cocoa. There are several missing location slugs throughout. Every time we move inside or outside, into a new room, etc, that requires a new location slug.

On p. 1, "...like Maggie Smith playing (not 'plying') Jean Brodie..." But this should be cut anyway - never refer to other movies. It will come across as derivative or worse, if the reader hasn't seen that reference, could work against you.

All of your main characters need to have their specific ages noted as well as their physical descriptions. And ALL CHARACTERS (first and last name) should be capitalized when they are first introduced. However, that's the ONLY time they should be capitalized. Thereafter, standard upper and lower case for all names.

Mrs. Chesterson isn't shown in the beginning of the scene on p. 2. Scene description must always tell us who is in the scene and what the characters are doing.

The flashback scene in the twins' mother's bedroom on p. 2 would be more effective in the opening scene, as it's not necessary to flashback from the later scene.

On p. 2, the Headmistress says, "...stop them (from) going on, right?"

Take out all of your FADE IN and FADE OUT notations on p. 2-3, and throughout your entire script, and notate EXT and INT slugs for your FLASHBACK scenes. These transitions are not the writer's call. Similarly, avoid all mention of CAMERA and CREDITS.

Delete "V.O. see screenwriter's note" on p. 3.

On p. 5 (and throughout your entire script), use a double space between your slug lines and your first line of action descriptions instead of 3-6 lines.

On p. 6, Miriam's first line of dialogue is missing a period at the end.

On p. 6 (and throughout your entire script) don't indicate "End of... sequence." This looks like you're copying your notes from your outline.

On p. 13, AMELIA is written instead of MIRIAM.

On p. 20, there needs to be a transition from the scene where the German Officer and his soldiers leave and Louise brings her guests out of the house.

NOTE: You included "shelling in distance" in the action descriptions of almost every scene in the 2nd Act, so just make that notation in the first scene that that occurs in all of those following scenes.

And speaking of action descriptions, you should streamline them more than you have and break them up in separate sentences or even combine some...

For example, on p. 33, your 3 sentences take up 8 lines of space and could easily be written as simply, "Miriam folds clothes while Amelia writes a letter on top of a small board held across her knees."

On p. 68, use a double space between Sheila's dialogue and Burt's dialogue, not 3 spaces. And on p. 67, use a single space between Sheila's dialogue name and her dialogue, not a double space. These mistakes occur in many other places throughout the script.

Writer often uses UK spellings as opposed to American ones.

#### MARKETABILITY

A bit of a mixed bag here. On the positive side, we have a great dual role for an actress, and that means the best way to market this may be to try to get one attached before shopping it. On the negative side, period piece = death for specs. No one wants to make a \$100 million movie not based on source material like a hit book (unless your name is Tarantino.) There are some expensive sequences here to be sure, but fortunately no gigantic bank-breakers. Still, the setting puts this movie firmly in studio or well-financed indie territory, and there are few of each. The best bet then is to find a passionate

director or actress and then try to raise the money through a film fund or overseas, since Europe seems to have no problem with period pieces. Given the twins Canadian, as well, there may be opportunities through the Canadian film programs to look into.

#### MISC.

As a side note, no one ever makes any "twins" jokes or observations in the script, and they never use their similar appearances to any end until late in the script. Considering they both work in the same place, people would be confusing them all the time, as well as making jokes. It would be great fun with the recovering men. Moreover, they'd quickly realize they have to differentiate their appearance, so one would surely have a different hairstyle (which Miriam might then have to borrow a wig or something to emulate her sister's appearance later on, or wear a bonnet or whatever.)

#### CONCLUSION:

There are many elements in this script that are unique and interesting. But as discussed, there are still a number of issues that need to be addressed, and the writer should attack them on a rewrite. If you're willing to do that, the script can be a real winner, and there's no reason why it wouldn't be appealing to a studio or a production company that makes films of this type.

Hollywood, especially now, is hungry for stories "that not only look but feel like awesome movies." But always remember that studio and production executives are in the business of saying no, so don't give them an excuse to reject your submitted script.

There's work to be done here, but the good news is this is a solid concept with a hook -- an actor bait dual lead role. It may be worth the heavy elbow grease to get it where it needs to be.

Job well done, and good luck on the rewrite!



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	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.")

+++++

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>

Our Format Guide – 80 fun and easy-to-read pages that will help you elevate your craft instantly. Used by university screenwriting classes! Only \$3.95.

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/coverageink/>

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