

SCRIPT COVERAGE

TITLE: [REDACTED]

AUTHOR: [REDACTED]

LOGLINE: A startup recruiter working to sell her parents' Colorado ranch becomes the unlucky witness to the inner world of a sexual sadist and discovers a thin line between hero and prey.

INDUSTRY SCORING: *(these scoring metrics reflect industry standards so you can see what I would have graded this and how I would have recommended it to professional companies: EXCELLENT, GOOD, FAIR, POOR, PITIFUL)*

CONCEPT: GOOD

STORY: FAIR

CHARACTERS: FAIR

DIALOGUE: FAIR

STRUCTURE: POOR

WRITER RECOMMENDATION: PASS

PROJECT RECOMMENDATION: PASS

COMMENTS:

CONCEPT: The concept itself is intriguing, centering around a woman in recruiting whose job it is to hire others and give them a new opportunity at a tech company. She's in the business of acceptance as far as she's concerned (though, depending on where you stand, you might also say she's in the business of rejecting). Initially, that's the eternal struggle within our protagonist Taylor. Her realization that job recruiting doesn't really give her life that much purpose. What does she really contribute to the world? But does she abandon her job as a recruiter, and start interviewing elsewhere to find her zest for life again? Or is the comfort zone too appealing to let go? One of her defining characteristics seems to be her indecision, as well as her unwillingness to let go of the past, in the form of her lost loved ones. While the execution of the narrative could use some work, there's interesting potential for Taylor as she, interestingly enough, "finds her way" (so to speak) in the form of a tragic heroine. Armed with a false sense of security and eventual confidence, the journey she embarks on in order to stop her antagonist from hurting someone else is as noble as it is self destructive.

STRUCTURE: The structure, I feel, is in need of the most amount of work. Many of the changes will naturally fall into place with the change in story, but the pacing is where the most attention should be directed. The rise and fall in tension in this rich psychological thriller is reliant on consistent pacing. The note that can be applied in broad strokes throughout is the fact that the shift between scenes in which Taylor is interacting with or investigating Marek, and scenes that include her romantic entanglements & connections to her parents often stop the momentum dead in its tracks. Considering the fact that Taylor (at least at first) is not in any immediate danger, scenes like the bridge from page 84-85 often spoil the fantastic suspense building though each increasingly concerning interaction with Marek.

The story does have natural peaks and valleys when it comes to the main storyline, peaking during the intense phone calls and experiencing a “valley” during Taylor’s amateur investigation. The counter to this is that most of her interactions with people and places that have nothing to do with Marek can sometimes fall flat. While I understand the idea of her searching for a level of connection (which I will address in more detail in the CHARACTER section), having a multitude of characters including Reeve, Rye, Scott, and many of her coworkers all providing context as to how they have purpose and drive when Taylor does not, just seems like too many cooks in the kitchen. They all serve the same purpose in the story, for the most part. Additionally, a few editorial suggestions: it’s not necessary to conceal characters’ names until they are introduced in the natural dialogue of the story. For example, while Taylor’s identity would be a mystery to the audience until her name is spoken, the script should introduce her as “TAYLOR” the moment she’s described in the action lines as opposed to WOMAN. This limits any confusion as to the identity of the character. The same goes for Scott and any other characters who are simply being introduced with no sinister or mysterious purposes.

STORY: As I see it, there seems to be a few considerable elements to this story at large:

1. Taylor’s reluctance to take a leap of faith in terms of changing her life, on the heels of losing all of the most important people in her life
2. Marek’s enjoyment of this twisted game wherein he infiltrates Taylor’s life, teasing her with a woman in peril she feels compelled to save.
3. Taylor’s desire to sell her parents’ ranch home in Colorado
4. The concept of control in the form of BDSM
5. The world of recruiting and Taylor’s desire to do more in life

The reason I lay everything out in this way is because I believe that each of these elements are addressed in various scenes in the plot, but have some difficulty in blending. The way I often think about it is this: “if an element was removed... what would change about the story?” The most glaring of these is the idea that Taylor is working from her parents’ cabin as she tries to sell it. However, there aren’t that many instances of her trying to do just that. Does she want to sell it? What actions does she take in trying to do so? Does it hold symbolic importance to her and thus prohibits her from going through with it? Is it even a crucial part of the plot? Especially when its resolution is signing it over to Rye, a man who she’s shared a few scenes with that partially derails the narrative. It’s a convenient solution to a story whose focus is directed at a far more intriguing plot. Answering these questions might further legitimize its inclusion in the story because, as of now, it just seems to get in the way for brief moments before it’s pushed to the side.

Additionally, there’s room for improvement in terms of thematically linking Taylor’s connection to a tech company to the fact that Marek is hacking her by way of said technology. An element I enjoyed was the idea of Marek technologically shackling her and forcing her to follow his directions at all times. It seemed like karmic retribution in a way. And when he eventually charms his way into a job and starts working with Taylor, this is one of the initial turning points. The irony of a dangerous serial rapist finding himself in an AI “SECURITY” position. While I don’t often like to make suggestions, I wonder if there could be more power behind the fact that Marek is now behind a recruiting desk. As it currently stands, Marek simply inserts himself into

Taylor's life and gains the trust of her fellow employees. He becomes her boss in a sense, asking her to interview candidates. However, the consequences of this action don't seem to shift the trajectory of the story or amplify the stakes. If this is a serial rapist and confirmed cyber stalker, shouldn't this newfound influence of being a recruiter only empower him more? (i.e. shouldn't these employees be at risk of being targeted?) Most of these interviews Taylor conducts under his orders are as standard as they come (obviously setting aside the huge elephant in the room). But what if Taylor had to figure out a way to not put them at risk of suffering the same fate as Marek?

The only reason I suggest this is due to the fact that much of Act 2 is less suspenseful than Acts 1 & 3. My initial assessment of this was that there were too many subplots that had to be accounted for: (i.e. breaking to visit Reeve, discussing her parents' ranch with her neighbor and their old friend, working her job, and trying to figure out a way to save this girl). Taylor almost has a to-do list of such an extent that stopping this villain seems to be a high priority, but can be shifted around depending on what each scene requires. However, upon further reflection, I feel that oftentimes, there's more emphasis placed on what will happen to the captive woman than Taylor. Considering the fact that she's the protagonist, Marek's actions must affect Taylor herself too. There are many points in time when Taylor does things like tamper with her phone, threaten him, demand to see this captive, and all the while, no direct consequences are established as a result. He "lets one slide" or simply doesn't react insulted when she starts commanding him to do things. While the status quo is still dire, Taylor's actions haven't made Marek tighten his grip in any way. He seems to be proceeding as usual. And despite him getting a job where they must work together, even this inclusion doesn't change the fact that Taylor mostly engages in tying up other subplots and taking interviews that, again, don't place anyone in danger, shift momentum, or place Taylor in an awkward spot.

The scene that, in my opinion, has the highest level of tension and the most cinematic "juice" so to speak, is when Marek not only insinuates to her superiors that Taylor wants to quit, but makes her sound as though she's been harassing and berating him with threatening phone calls. *This* scene, to me, should be the epitome of what the rest of the script should strive towards. Creating consequences for her beyond the threats of "I'm going to hurt this woman I have captive." Because, at the end of the day, it's Taylor's story, and thus her life should be the one turned upside down in a more introspective and personal manner. The story isn't "about" Dawn, it's about Taylor. Although there's an inconsistency over whether or not Taylor even wants her job in the first place, this scene was the first time where the lack of control Taylor had over her emotions and inability to do anything to save Dawn (or tell anyone about it) affects the story in such a gut-wrenching way.

CHARACTERS: The first question that immediately came to my mind in regards to Taylor was *what is she lacking in life?* There are a few false starts to the story in regards to setting up her character arc. On one hand, she understands that she's drifting in life in some capacity and believes that quitting her job might provide her with the freedom she needs. She's also attempting to sell her parents' ranch after her mother's death, a loss that's deeply affected her. Previously stated above, multiple aspects of the story seem disconnected and I believe it starts with addressing this character and her journey. Because, by the most basic of definitions, she is a tragic heroine. Below, I've provided:

Six attributes of a tragic heroine

(and the way in which Taylor fits into each of these categories):

- **Hubris** (excessive pride or self confidence): This, perhaps, is the one category in which she's lacking. Somewhat indecisive when it comes to her career, Taylor has limited conviction in anything, which complicates things when the story asks "what does Taylor have to lose?" With the inclusion of Marek, what are the stakes for *her* as opposed to the captive young woman? What *does* Taylor take pride in? How does she convey that pride? Is it quiet pride? Is she obvious and deliberate about it? What would happen to her if this prideful nature is challenged? While her desire to leave recruiting life behind is an interesting way to establish her character, it only creates a paradox in and of itself when Marek threatens her job and... she's fine with it? There are hints of pride when Taylor transforms from being meek and indecisive to deliberate and a little reckless with her threats against her antagonist. Which brings me to my next point.
- **Hamartia** (their fatal flaw): Taylor's fatal flaw seems to me to be a short fuse and an impulsive mind. Throughout the story, she does things like tamper with her phone, threaten and demand from a man who has a metaphorical gun to an innocent woman's head, and even consult an ex-mobster's wife to determine different ways to KILL this man. And while she does initially outsmart him, all of her reckless actions performed in an attempt to counterbalance her listless life, wind up being her undoing.
- **Peripeteia** (a sudden reversal of fortune): This one is a little tricky, and perhaps ties into potential edits in regards to the structure of the story. At a certain point, though in this draft it's not clear when, Marek seems to intend for Taylor to feel as though she's in control (or, at the very least, he doesn't want another woman that acts like meek little prey). While she manages to outsmart him in the climax of the story, that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about establishing the illusion of control from Taylor's perspective when Marek never really lost control. Something in Act 2 other than the casual rendezvous with various characters, teases that others might be in danger, and otherwise aesthetic scenes that appear to change the status quo, but don't quite shift the story into a different light. All this leading up to the moment she's confronted by Marek and his partner in crime, Twilight.
- **Anagnorisis** (moment of recognition): And thus, this is the moment of recognition. The culmination of what Marek has driven her to, in his own sick way, and the power fantasy she now has. She's outsmarted him. She's done something good. And she's about to win. Until, that is, Marek ultimately deals the final and fatal blow to her.
- **Nemesis** (the agent of downfall): This title clearly goes to Marek. A few questions I'd like to pose when it comes to his character, the first being: what is his psychological reasoning for his actions? And moreover, is he the type of villain whose deviant desires are self-serving? Or does he truly think he's imparting some great lesson for Taylor? Because, at the start there's a fascinating notion of Marek (as mentioned in the CONCEPT section) threatening her out of spite for her role as a woman whose job it is to

turn people away and deny them a way to make a living. He also discusses the idea of “training her” for some purpose. However, if the climax is merely going to consist of him using her for his own selfish gains, he loses a bit of intrigue. There’s nothing wrong with a villain with no point to make (often, they are more intimidating). But, if Marek is meant to be scary for a terrifying truth he holds near and dear, lean into that.

- **Catharsis** (the release of repressed emotions): I suppose, using this model, the moment of catharsis is when Taylor is dying in Dawn’s arms and she recognizes the good that she’s done. What she’s contributed to the world. Additionally, she has a note she instructs Dawn to give to Reeve that reinforces the good that she gave back for once. The arc still tracks from beginning to end, but there are a few steps to potentially navigate.

Additional Notes:

While the preceding notes were heavy on Taylor, I truly think understanding her journey more and focusing on her character will result in everything else falling into place. Just to close out this section, I wanted to rapid-fire some minute details worth noting. For one, I found her relationships with the various men in her life a little unclear. These include Reeve, Rye, Scott, and to a lesser extent, Rowan. From what I gathered, they are meant to showcase their purpose to contrast Taylor’s lack thereof. But with so many of them, Reeve (who seems to be the primary supporting character) gets lost in the shuffle and I was unclear as to what *his* role in the story is. Especially when it comes to sharing the screen time with Rye. I’ve already established their scenes interrupting the tension, but I just wanted to suggest potentially reworking them. Particularly so that Reeve gets more than just a scene or two every 20-40 pages of the story, before Taylor’s untimely death.

DIALOGUE: The dialogue is serviceable and reflects the intensity of the situation. Particularly between Taylor and Marek. However, an opportunity you could grab ahold of is to give them both certain phrases or curses they repeat often in order to differentiate them. There are times, especially when they are arguing, that Taylor becomes a little overzealous (which, most of the time, fails to have any consequences), and as a result she and Marek start to sound the same. There’s such an emphasis on the power dynamics at play, so another way to improve the dialogue is to examine every scene the two are in together. Consider which is more dominant and which is more submissive. Then, you can tailor the dialogue with that in mind. An interesting byproduct of this is that when Taylor starts becoming more dominant, this could give her the false impression that she’s in control whilst also satisfying Marek’s desire for her to be more forthcoming, not as easy a target as women he’s preyed upon in the past.