



SCRIPT READER PRO

DELUXE SCRIPT COVERAGE

TITLE	XXXXXX	GENRE	Legal Thriller
WRITER(S)	XXXXXX	CIRCA	Present day
SUBMITTED BY	XXXXXX	LOCATION	US
FORM / PAGES	Screenplay / 116 pages	BUDGET	Mid
DATE	XXXXXX	ANALYST	XXXXXX

LOGLINE

Removed for writer confidentiality.

SYNOPSIS

Removed for writer confidentiality.

INTRO

Thanks for submitting your script for review, XXXXXX. What you have here is a deeply woven dramatic thriller that takes us into the world of KC as she deals with both personal and professional issues. It is at times dark, at times heartfelt, and takes us on twists and turns that we don't expect to be taken on. And you have created a story that reveals much more to us than we ever expected it to.

You create a fine balance between the personal and work aspects of KC's life, her baggage and how it has damaged her. You have created angles and moments that force KC to stop and look at herself and how far she has fallen, and how this young girl in her life may be what can save her from total inner destruction.

There are so many things I want to touch on here, and a few issues that are holding the script back a little bit from being as great as it could be. I will go over all of this in the areas below and try to go into as much detail as possible. But, keep in mind as you read these notes, that this script is pretty solid. Your presentation pulled me in and kept me there, and even though you break some of the so-called "rules", you do it in a way that allows us to hear your voice and be enticed into this world and what it may hold for us.

CONCEPT

What we have here is a revenge plot hatched by KC, over many years, to finally take down the man who has ruined her life. That is the actual concept here beneath the script. The smaller concept, the visible one until the reveal, is the story of an inmate who may or may not be responsible for past crimes that show him to be a serial killer spanning three decades. So, the two concepts live apart from each other, but also need each other to exist. This makes it incredibly complicated, and a lot of complication can cause confusion and make our level of suspension of disbelief a little too far to reach. But let's look at each of these on their own and then together.

I have to say that the first half of the script was really quite impressive. It pulled me in, I was impressed with the writing, the dialogue and the characters. As things started to develop and the stakes were raised a bit, I became quite intrigued. But I have to say, once the darker side of what KC was doing was revealed, the script felt like it became something else completely, and as though it was trying really hard to make itself be believed, instead of becoming something that felt real and flowed and was easy to understand.

Usually in a feature film, if there is a twist in the end of it all, it comes out of nowhere and is delivered fast and easily, and we understand it and see it and the great twists make us shake our heads that we didn't see them coming and we want to replay it all to see why we may have missed it. It is a psychological thing that happens. In your script, however, it feels like the twist is revealed too soon, and then explained over a long period of time.

That could be because it was overly complicated and the connection of dots almost had to be forced on us so that we could see it all come together and not have a chance to question things. You have the twist revealed on page 92 when KC speaks it out loud and explains it all to Britt. And then the script runs for another 25 pages. So it feels like we are at the end when we find out what she has done, but then it gets played out and explained so we can see how it all came together for another act.

The reason twists are fun is because they come to us in the end and softly sweep us back into the fold so we can think back with a quick flashback or explanation and it makes it all the more fun for us. That is how they effectively work. A twist revealed too early gives us too much time to try and deconstruct it all and see if we really believe it all was how you say it was. Because that is the real concept, the deeper concept, at the core of the screenplay, the revenge plot finally being played out in the end of it all. You do set some of it up near the start, when you show KC doing something strange with the water and panties and all of it, so we know she has some deeper plans. But we assume it is just her protecting herself so if she has a chance to stop Britt and ruin him, she can. So, that was great to put in there, and when the reveal comes, we understand what she was really doing. And because of that, the twist is fun. But I would suggest perhaps cutting some of the last 25 pages down, and not spelling out every single motivation and moment of choice and misdirection in the end.

I will touch more on character later, which plays into all of these choices deeply, so I will go into more on this in that later section. But for now, try and give some thought to how you can have the reveal of the twist fall nearer to the end of the story, and in a fulfilling way that really makes us happy she was able to pull all of this off.

Twists are tricky, because when we look back at the choices the character made, who had a hidden agenda and was working the strings behind the curtain, the character must NEVER be acting like she doesn't know what is really happening when she is alone.

STRUCTURE/PLOT

Let's get deep into the plot here. As I mentioned above, the reveal messes up the structure a bit and leaves us with a final act that is void of climax and tension because all has been revealed. Because of this, I will break the plot coverage here into two sections: before the reveal and after the reveal.

Like I said, I really enjoyed the first half of the screenplay. It was clear from the first page that you know how to write, how to create characters, how to engage us. You set us softly into this world of KC and made us wonder how layered she is, what baggage she has, what the damage is that she clearly blames herself for, and what type of story we are going to be pulled into. You start the script off with KC watching her sister's funeral. A quick note here – the way you have the church stuff and symbolism and then KC says how some sister she turned out to be – I thought she meant a nun. So, I was moving forward thinking she was a failed nun and this was going to be a religious themed story. Adding in a single word, like "big sister" would alleviate any confusion or assumptions. But that's just me.

From there we meet the Sheriff, whom we assume is dirty in some way as he buys a burner phone, and then move to the CJC with KC. Now, with the Colonel, and the assigning of court cases, I was unsure if this was military or not. But then the cases she got were not military in nature, so I was confused here. Later on, we learn she was in the armed forces, but the law side of it didn't seem to be connected anymore. So then, was Colonel just a nickname or was he an actual Colonel? It was a bit confusing there.

But once KC gets into court and the fun and games begin and we see her in her element. I thought it was such a smart choice to not make Dale a cliché DA. He was actually a good guy who wanted justice but in an honest way. Most writers play to type and cliché and it is the norm it seems. It was nice to see something not that way. So, thanks and good job on that front. The judge as well, not what you would expect. You then have Myste come into the picture and we know then that KC has a lot of baggage to deal with. And then Bill comes into the picture and we see this case may be what the story is going to be about. And Bill is a fresh and gritty character as well.

Again, you play against type and add some nice color that we haven't seen before. And then we see KC in her martial arts home, and we get a solid understanding of the inner and outer strength KC has, and the way she works out her anger and tension. Overall, this is shaping nicely and the flow and pace are well crafted. Now, you want to make sure you don't talk to us and tell us things that would cheat the experience, like on Page 13 when you give us five lines about what Britt thinks of her. Keep it in the dialogue and action or reaction, the subtext of it all. Because a couple pages later when she turns and lets him take down her pants and clearly have sex with her, we see their relationship, their dialogue tells us how they see each other, and we get all we need to know. It's shocking. Don't take that away by explaining in your description how he sees her.

So, by here, we see what KC is all about, we are thrown another direction because of her and Britt, and we wonder what such a smart woman is allowing this to happen to her. In the next scene you add a deeper air to the mystery of KC with the strange way she does mysterious work in her kitchen. But it shows us this girl is even smarter than we thought.

From here we spend a good chunk of time with Myste and KC together and connecting. This is good for the characters. Then you throw TB and Britt into the mix, letting us know something odd is connected with Bill and things are going to get dirty. It's a good angle to go on, and it makes us wonder just what KC has gotten herself into. We already want KC to take down Britt because he is a sleaze, and now this show he really is crooked and something bad is going to happen. The good thing, is that we feel KC is strong enough to rise up against it, if she can find her way through.

From here Bill goes missing and KC can feel the pull of something bad coming. She then heads out to find a Priest to confess some things to. I wasn't sure if this was needed or even belonged in the story. You spend a lot of time setting this up, building it up, the cameras and timing and all of the inner workings of it, but yet, it doesn't really do anything for the character of KC, and doesn't move the story forward in any specific way. It doesn't even do much when it wraps up late on. I think there can be more creative ways for KC to voice her fears and sins – like with Myste. They have a connection, they know about Myste's father, and it bonds them. KC can really show Myste how committed to making them connect and be there for each other by sharing darker secrets with her. I just feel like the Priest stuff here, and the subsequent visits, do nothing at all for the story or character, and because of that, could be removed without much instance.

We then move back into court, and Bill being found. There is some legal stuff and courtroom play and great dialogue with the judge. But I did find it stalled the momentum a bit. Having Bill in court already made me wonder where it is able to go next. I am not sure it's needed. You could even have her play the judge in an interview room recording, and then have them all talk. Having it in the courtroom, and Bill in there sharing his story so soon, it felt rushed.

I would love to see more of TB earlier on. We see him in the short scene with Britt. Then on the stand. Then when he shows up to confess to her in her apartment. I didn't really get an emotional score in that last sequence because we barely see him. We feel he is dangerous because of what he did to Bill, but we are just told that and never see it. Look at putting TB in action, creating a scary character that really incites fear in KC and in what we feel for KC.

The confrontation scene with Steve and KC showed how important Myste is to her, and how she doesn't plan on turning back now. We then get personal again and learn of KC's backstory with her father and the church. This is the one thing that anchors the Priest into the story. And how she uses confession to get the backstory information to the reader/audience. But if you think of it without the reader/audience experience, does it feel like KC would finally be getting this all out now, or that she would need to? She doesn't feel to me like anyone who would be confessing. Especially since she is about to rain it all down on those who hurt her, in an act of revenge. You always have to remember to think if a character would act or reveal the same way and same things if the audience wasn't there. Try not to do things for the sake of the audience, without making sure it fits or helps the character in their world.

Bill is then revealed to be this serial killer of old, at least from what Britt and TB say. But then also, the fun stuff with the burner phone and Britt being in the store buying one. This is all fun because of how KC was really behind all of this in the end. I wasn't sure about the "talking to the gravestone" scene. These scenes just never seem real and they reduce the effectiveness of the scene. This same something can be said to Myste and actually have some real drama to it. Having her sit there talking to the ground is flat, and the flashback breaks it up but still, it is a long time spent in the cemetery talking to nobody.

And then we get to the TB scene. There could be so much drama here, so much conflict, but there isn't. And in the end when we find out the twist and how KC is behind everything, it makes sense why it is so easy going as she just wants him to speak and get on with things. But TB as a character is never developed enough and we don't spend any real time with him, so this confession scene just seems pat. This could be an incredibly tense scene. And here is this cop who has the lack of conscience enough to torture a guy into confessing, but when it comes down to it and he feels he would be caught he just confesses and walks away? He wouldn't try to cover it up more? Fix it? Kill or hurt KC? It feels off, and lacks tension and conflict, so see what you can do about increasing the tension, even in the dialogue.

From here, Britt gets arrested and we learn how he has something on KC and why she tortures herself and allows him to have sex with her to hide her secret. She then reveals to him her big plan and how it all happened and how screwed he is and it's all over for him, and for them.

We then spend some time intercutting between Myste at her therapist, and Dale with the Judge. And then KC helps Bill move along. You keep us engaged to have Bill go home and find his stuff burning and Bill calls KC about it.

Now she knows about all this, so why would she not just hide out and walk up to drop the bomb on him. Why the charade? The audience knows she had all this in line, so why the play along? It feels contrived. It feels like there is just more and more piled on here. Adding Bill into the mix with the rape of Myste and all that, almost too coincidental, even though she planned for Bill to go down as the patsy at first.

She then tells Bill way too much, going into deeply personal detail she has only ever told the Priest, so it feels odd. And then Bill finally asks the question we are all wondering, why not kill him or make sure he goes to jail for life, since she kind of had that option ready? But she is going to let him free, just so he can think about all of the awful things he did? I didn't get it. I can see what she is thinking about, and how she can possibly help curve the healing process for Myste, but it seems a reach she would let him walk to possibly hurt someone again.

Again, it felt like too many things were piled on here and it begins to feel unbelievable that she could have planned and orchestrated that many things without one of the balls dropping. It was too perfect. She needs to have some stress there, she needs to be able to freak out and have to fix something. TB and Britt going in and framing the very guy she put in jail as a patsy... how could she have known Britt would have made the misstep that makes this all work? It's a bit of a stretch. If it were not so complicated, and there were not so much happening in her plan, then it is easier to buy into. And while it's fun and clever, the logistics of it all seem like they happened too perfectly for KC.

The script ends with KC and Myste on their path to healing, together. It is a sweet moment and we know they are both going to be okay, as long as they both keep working and are honest with themselves. We know KC will protect her and fight for her and be the family member she always wished she could have been.

So, to summarize, I was pulled into the structure easily. It flowed well, we got to know her world, and what she was about, or at least trying to be about. And it kept moving well, with a solid pace and smooth flow. It stood out as great work. But like I said, when the twist came, and the story kept going, and more and more reveals were piled on, they felt anti-climactic. Because the deeper I think about it, the real reason KC set all of this in motion was to get Bill in jail, but not to make him pay for the rape of her niece, but to manipulate the man who has been raping her for years. But Bill gets to walk, instead of her being able to somehow put him away forever.

And the thing is, both sides can't be given the same weight. They can't both work. One has to fail in some way or the drama isn't as hard hitting either. KC should be able to get away with part of it, most of it even, but she needs to lose a part of it to understand that she can't control everything, that she can't be the end all and do all, that she is going to hurt again and again, because that is the human condition. Having her walk away having pulled it all off, and not have her conscience hit by it at all, makes it less fulfilling and effective than it would if we got to see the look in her eye, and her heart skip a beat, when something doesn't work like she thought. Like even a small conversation or line from Dale, or the Judge, letting her know they know something wasn't quite right, that everything happened too seamlessly, that smart men made mistakes they shouldn't have, that sort of thing. So, something is left in the air making us wonder if she really will be able to walk away from this all.

CHARACTERS

KC

You have added so many layers to her, which is wonderful to see. The tricky part is like I said, looking at the script again and making sure that in the moments outside of work, she is always acting like she has all of these balls up in the air at all times. Other than that, she has a wonderful arc. I would love to see her let something slip though, or realize she didn't tie up all the loose ends. That would give us a great walking away feeling, that we hope she manages to fix it or move on, or maybe if she doesn't it will be okay because she did what she could to save Myste and move her onto a path of healing.

Britt

You did a great job of making him an old sleaze. Of course, the old corrupt sheriff is a bit of a cliché, but you intertwine so much else with it, and play the political role, and you have him using KC as a sex slave basically by holding over the past issues of her father against her. So, he is gross and dirty and we hate him. He becomes somewhat the antagonist in a script where there doesn't really seem to be one. Leading to...

TB

You may want to give him a name, his real name, in place of the initials, just because KC has that and when he has it as well it takes it away from her. But more importantly, we need to have TB become the bad guy. We need to see the torture scene, we need to see him ready to do anything to advance his career, and we need to know why.

He is the only real antagonistic force. It is hard to see Britt as a solid antagonist because she is allowing him to do this to her, and she has plans for him. But TB is thrown into this, and he ends up doing some awful stuff, but then easily slips forward and confesses to KC. But he is never really the bad guy.

One suggestion would be to have him confront KC, maybe when she is with Myste. You set up a little scare moment in the parking lot with the decoy character in the hooded jacket. But why not replace that with TB paying KC a visit. He needs to do something to let her know that she needs to stop sniffing around him, or things may end badly for everyone involved, something like that. There needs to be a fear character, because we never really fear for KC or Myste.

Even the scene with Myste calling the police because of the security thing at the house feels like there is no real fear that is justified. TB is a great character to have that work from, and he could be used in a great way. And in the apartment scene in the end, it will work much better if he has instilled fear into her already, so when she finds herself alone in a room with him, that nobody knows about, it will increase the tension ten-fold.

Myste

You set a lot of stuff up with her, with the self-defense and martial arts class, and her feeling better there than she ever has, and it makes sense once we find out that Bill raped her. But you never actually use her as the stakes character, and you should. You have her in trouble and alone with the house thing and the police, but it doesn't really go anywhere, just like the scare moment in the parking lot. You have her scream and freak out and it seems over the top, until in the final scene we find out she was raped not too long ago by Bill. But that information would be so much more powerful if it came from Myste.

Here she is, with this new maternal figure, who cares about her genuinely, and is a lawyer and knows things, and is a strong woman. Why not have Myste tell her, use her as a place to be safe and explain what happened to her and asks if there is anything they can do about it now. Then, if we know this, when she explains to Bill what she saw him do, it will all come together in a stronger moment.

Always try and suck the juice out of every situation. That piece of information is something you have tried to hold on to so that your final reveal has some justification.

But it would be so much stronger and emotionally effective to hear Myste confess it, and then have it come out in the end that Myste knew all along and all of what she is doing is for the kid.

Dale and others

Like I said, you play against type here and create characters that are more like real life people. They care, they think for themselves, they push boundaries, burn bridges, etc. It works well.

The only character that I think can be removed is the Priest. He just does nothing for this story. And the time wasted on KC there, not really telling us anything, and seeing her with the cameras and surveillance and all of that business, leading to a final confession of what she saw her father doing, really could be removed. The reveal of her backstory is important, but all leading up to it is a distraction, and so I would encourage you to try and reveal it in another way.

A couple options are to use it to increase TB's evil side or for Britt to make her feel small. Britt could, subtly, and by avoiding on the nose dialogue, speak about it when he's with her, as a reminder of what he has over her. But I like the idea of TB talking to her about it, as maybe she gets in his grill or threatens him, and he speaks quietly, lets her know that he knows what Britt has, and how maybe when Britt is old and out of service, he can take up the torch and keep her in line, because of what he knows, mentioning what it is. These are just examples that can show a more interesting way to reveal the information that changes her character, instead of just a confession flashback.

THEME

There are couple of themes at play in your script that I picked up on. One is revenge, and one is redemption. Through her plans and how she conducts herself with Myste, redemption and forgiveness are important to KC, and what she is striving for in this story. The best parts of a theme are when you can tie the central theme not just to one character, but to all of them. If there is a different theme that I may have missed, then I apologize, but redemption stands out to me more than revenge. It is also about crawling out from under the shadow of blame and guilt you have placed yourself under. But those tie into redemption as well.

KC has all of her choices and motives driven by the idea of redeeming herself and saving her niece, since she was unable to save her sister and rise back from the mistake she made years ago. She also wants to bring Britt down because it will redeem her soul to not only stop him from what he is doing to her, but to claim her body back and make him pay for all of the hurt he has caused. And Bill will have a chance to redeem himself in the end, and she will feel less guilty about ruining Britt and TB if she lets Bill learn from his ways and change his path going forward.

See what can be done about having that theme move throughout the other characters. Myste as an example is someone looking to reclaim her life and become an adult, and so she doesn't have anything to redeem in that way. But she is seeking redemption in the fact that she never reported the rape, she blames herself for him getting away, and she needs to be a less angry woman and be in control. So, that theme sort of carries across to her as well.

As for Bill, he needs redemption for sure. He thinks he has become a better man, he needs to be, and KC gives him the opportunity. Britt needs some redemption, but he needs to burn in hell for his. The great thing about theme is that even though a character needs what the theme offers, they don't always have to get it. Britt doesn't deserve redemption but he will get it in a roundabout way because KC delivers her own through him.

And TB. I would love to see more of TB and get deeper in him, I am sure you can see that by now. See what you can do about giving TB a back story and adding in some level of redemption. Almost like he gets what's coming to him in the end because of all the hurt he has caused in the past. It would be cool to learn more or know more about this guy.

SCENES

You have some wonderful moments in your scenes, but at times you do have tendency to make a choice where you tell instead of show. Specifically, the torture scenes. Always think of how much more powerful a certain story within the script would be if it were shown instead of told.

Also, watch the amount of flashbacks here. You do spend a lot of time inside of the flashbacks when you do bring them to light. A good flashback is quick imagery, not an entire back story or reveal explained in full flashback. Pop us in and out, keep it quick, keep it visual, and don't make the character then have to be explanatory to have us understand what we were just shown.

The visuals should be able to give us everything we need to know, and then the dialogue can be just dialogue instead of back story explanation. Another thing to make sure you lock in hard on is conflict. You have conflicting moments between characters a lot, but some of the scenes like I mentioned above would be more powerful and make their mark if the conflict and tension were increased.

Finally, see what you can do about keeping scenes shorter while inside. The script doesn't need to be 116 pages. There are a lot areas where things can be cut and sped up within a scene. Look at every beat and line and challenge it, asking if it can be cut down, removed, sped up. Don't let character get overly talkative, as it slows down the movement. Look at scene like with Myste and her therapist. It goes for pages, even though we go back and forth with other scenes. But it doesn't need to. Keep things short and sweet, hit the high points, remove the low, keep us focused on what we need to be focusing on, and all scenes will hit harder than they do now.

DIALOGUE

Your words spoken by your characters are all strong and well thought out and their voices are heard. Their speech defines them and there is never an issue with your dialogue. I can't really say much more about it, as it would only muddy it up if you were to change it.

If you do further develop the script, I would encourage you to tighten and shorten any dialogue at any time that you can, as economy is extremely important, and dialogue spoken in fewer words, made clever and specific, can elevate a script even higher, even a great one. But make sure to stay true to the characters as well. Some pages do have a lot of short monologues on them, so try and reduce it a few words at a time until it is as clean and concise and terse as possible.

WRITING STYLE

I mentioned off the start how you broke some of the so-called rules of screenwriting. And I am sure you have heard it before, but having thick chunks of text make the page look daunting and the instant reaction is to skim or skip. There is an expectation for a page not to be like that, and people who have to get through a pile of scripts, if their eye isn't pulled along fast enough and with a lot of white on the page, they will instinctively skip or assume you over-write.

And you don't want to have readers making those assumptions. Most of the time your writing is great. But there are times when too much of the large blocks of prose make it feel more like a novel than a screenplay. And I am not one for sticking to the rules, but sometimes, in certain areas, it is better to be safe than sorry.

The school of thought is rarely more than four lines together should be crafted. And this is for economical as well as pace reasons. If you broke up most of the blocks you have, adding lines and momentum, it would add a lot of pages to the script, making it feel like you are cheating a bit. And as much as I would love to say it doesn't really matter, well, based on the readers who look for this stuff as signs of an amateur, it is important to heed.

It's not like it is all pages, or even most pages, but some, especially early on, may get you marks against by picky readers. Especially the first couple of pages. Yours are quite thick and it feels like there is just too much being typed and described on those pages. And others like: 16, 18, 57, 86, and 90. You want to do all you can to keep a reader flying through the story. It's part of the job as a screenwriter, that recognizing your first audience is your reader. You have to play to them as well.

FORMATTING/PRESENTATION

Presentation, grammar, and format are great. You just have a few page specific issues here:

Your choice to connect slugs like OFFICE BUILDING/KC'S OFFICE/RECEPTION AREA. I have never seen done before, and it feels like cheating as well and like it doesn't fit. Slugs are per scene, per location, they are a production thing. I would recommend on making each room or area a single slug if they move between them during the scenes.

Page 13 – don't tell us in explanation how she feels about Britt, show it. Which you do, so the lines about how she feels about him should not be there.

Page 79 – looks at his (him) with...

CONCLUSION

Overall, I think you have a script with a lot of potential. You have great style and a specific voice. Your detail and care when crafting your characters is wonderful, but they talk a little too much, and the pages could be a little smoother and little cleaner.

I think if you can clean it up a bit, smooth it out, and make the pages after the first reveal shorter, and the second reveal more impactful and full, it would make this script a read you couldn't put down.

RATINGS GRID

	1ST CLASS	SOLID	NOT BAD	WEAK
Concept		X		
Story		X		
Structure		X		
Protagonist		X		
Antagonist			X	
Stakes Character			X	
Minor Characters		X		
Dialogue		X		
Scenes		X		
Pacing		X		
Theme			X	
Tone	X			
Writing Style		X		
Marketability		X		
Formatting	X			
Grammar	X			
Title		X		

SCRIPT RECOMMENDATION: CONSIDER
WRITER RECOMMENDATION: N/A

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We look forward to working with you,

The Script Reader Pro team