



SCREENPLAY READERS

SCRIPT NOTES * SCRIPT COVERAGE * CONSULTATION

THE DARK

J. BECKER

110 pages

SCI-FI/ACTION / 2060s

Analyst: JB

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LOGLINE:

After a bio-weapon infects an American crew at a research facility on the moon a doctor pushes herself to the limit to find a cure, defend her colleagues against attacks from the US Navy and expose Big Pharma's collusion with the military.

BRIEF SYNOPSIS:

[REDACTED]

WHAT WORKS / WHAT DOESN'T / SUGGESTIONS

This is an enjoyable, professional and confidently written Science Fiction script with some really truthful elements and a strong action storyline. It feels plausible for the most part, and there are only a few issues with the world and the plot.

It feels well structured and nails all the traditional story beats right on cue. Readers will want to know what happens in the end. Technical information is kept to a minimum. We know just enough to follow the story, which cleverly emphasizes character and human drama to create tension.

Without laying it on too thick or patronizing the reader, the story explores the senselessness of many international conflicts and the personal enrichment and corporate greed that actually ignites so many of them. The monster in this movie is Big Pharma, and as most working people today can't afford adequate healthcare largely due to profiteering, this is a great thematic hook, and a buzz-worthy concept driving the plot. The message is well-integrated into the story.

We really come to care about and root for Hannah, who is a likable protagonist. Her first interactions with Linda and with Mi show us that she's sensitive and values life but uses humor as a defensive shield. Her chat with Mi is also very relatable and fun. Later, by believing she has lost Randy, she learns not to deny that she loves him. She also seems like the kind of earthling that, because of her moral backbone, deserves to survive. We know she strongly dislikes Ellis and suspects him of being up to something, yet when he is injured she immediately wants to help him anyway. She meant it when she took the Hippocratic oath, is willing to admit the North Koreans who are sick to an already overloaded sick back. She is the antithesis of those Ellis is working for and makes a great female hero in the story.

Dr. Hyeon is a welcome relief after the overly dualistic portrayals of North Koreans we tend to see in the media, which seem to seek to dehumanize all North Koreans in preparation for war when North Koreans are themselves suffering under an oppressive militaristic system that doesn't tolerate even moderate dissent. His professional attitude as a doctor - that every sick person is his patient - is a powerful antidote to very common stereotypes of North Koreans as implacable rule-followers devoted to their crazy leaders.

It's easy to see why Randy - who is not only a hunk but also very clever and brave - is attractive and the fact that Harding is his ex-girlfriend makes sense too. She seems like his type.

The characters' points of view and intentions are well set up and often very helpful to the plot without obviously catering to it. A few things spring to mind. Of course, the setup of Hannah's softball skills, which become crucial when she has to catch and return grenades, springs to mind. Also, Chris and Drexler's romance is suggested without being obvious and explains Drexler's decision to break protocol and help Hannah solve the issues. Chris's attack on Hannah is so out of character that really helps sell the devastating effect of the virus during this particular stage of its development. It's also interesting that the bio-weapon affects men and women differently and each person differently. Lynda has the self-awareness to counteract her aggression while none of the men do, and Hannah also demonstrates more self-control, never losing it in the way that the males in her crew did.

While the mentions of how attractive or well-toned characters are or how they do their hair shows little gender bias, it may not be the most important thing to tell us about the characters, especially as we tend to assume that most actors in starring roles are attractive. Consider what could be said about Hanna other than this. Perhaps instead of detailing her physique, her first action or the first sentence about her could instead take the time to suggest that she's honorable but emotionally defensive without hammering us over the head with it. The whole idea of a bunch of hot people in tight suits is something of a sci-fi trope in any case so it's probably best not to over-emphasize it in the description.

Randy's marriage proposal in the final pages seems out of place tonally and overly sentimental in this story. Consider ways to make it a bit more playful. While it's believable that Hannah has become more open to her feelings and would agree to marry Randy, think about taking a more playful approach to this. Perhaps when she says "Til death do us part?" he could respond along the lines of:

"If death is what you want to focus on... if that what it takes... sure."

The action that has Hannah picking up a picture of her parents (on page 66) feels a little unnecessary. Showing a character looking at a photo is a rather well-worn technique. It also feels like it belongs in a different era - not in a space station in 2065. If it stays in, at least consider having her re-arranging the room and reorganizing things that were knocked over. That action gives her a reason other than emotional exposition to pick it up and show it to us. Then, when she mentions her dad, we'll connect the dots.

It's unclear why Randy doesn't become aggressive when infected, while every other man seems to react that way. It doesn't seem like a useful anomaly. Perhaps he could mock the Koreans after they've been welcomed by Hannah, telling them they'll be dead soon too, which aggravates the situation and serves to escalate the aggression they feel as the virus kicks in.

From a layperson's point of view, the nuclear bomb sequence is hard to follow. It sounds like the American Navy has bombed the research station so as to kill everybody there, but it's not too clear how Hannah survives it without bringing radiation into the station or how the Koreans then enter without the radiation coming with them. If - as the script says - the radiation is also very easily diffused because of the Moon's lack of atmosphere, it's unclear how this not a very serious situation. It doesn't really seem to get addressed. It's possible that lack of scientific knowledge might make it difficult for some to follow what is actually explained, so consider finding a explain it as one would to a third-grader, at some stage.

It can become hard to keep track of all the characters and plotlines, but the script does a good job of juggling them as clearly as possible. Consider helping the reader out by making the character names as different as possible. Harding and Hannah, for instance, could be easier to tell apart. Hoon, Hyeon, and Gyeong are also hard to differentiate and it is even possible Hoon needn't be identified by name at all as he doesn't play a memorable role in the story.

The script is almost completely error-free, but it's always worth doing a careful check for typos and oddities like this sentence on page 75: "And we both I have the antibodies" (the I is extra) so they don't take us out of the story at key moments.

Overall, this script makes a good writing sample and with a few tweaks should be ready to go.



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SCREENPLAY READERS SCRIPT ANALYSIS GRID

STORY	SCORE
Concept is fresh and/or original	88
Concept is/contains a strong and/or buzzworthy hook	95
Theme is well executed/interweaved well	92
First 10 pages set up the story well	95
First 10 pages are compelling	90
Script is well structured	95
Every scene in the script feels essential	90
Scenes are the appropriate length	90
Stakes are clear/conflict is strong and/or compelling	95
Characters' choices drive the story forward	95
Pacing is strong and the story keeps moving	90
Story is not overly complicated or hard to follow	88
Story is not bogged down by exposition	88
Tension builds/escalates throughout	90
The climax/resolution is satisfying	90
CHARACTER / DIALOGUE	
Protagonist(s) is (are) likable and/or compelling	95
Supporting characters are likable and/or compelling	90
No characters were extraneous	88
Dialogue reads naturally/believable within this story	90
Dialogue reveals character	92
READABILITY	
Format/presentation adheres to industry standards	100
Spelling, punctuation, grammar, and usage	100
Action text is concise, not overly descriptive/prose	95
Action text "shows" rather than "tells"	90
Overall readability	90
AVERAGE SCORE	92.04
RECOMMENDATION	Consider

GLOSSARY OF ANALYSIS GRID TERMS

Concept is fresh or original

How original, fresh, or unique our analyst found your script's concept to be. A low score in this category isn't always bad, as many script buyers prefer tried and true concepts.

Concept is/contains a strong and/or "buzzworthy" hook

Does your concept have a strong hook? In short, this is a measure of how much our analyst estimates it would cause people who hear it say "I wish I'd thought of that."

Theme is well executed/interweaved well

Does your story have a strong theme or motif? Is it worked into your story well?

First 10 pages set up the story well

How our analyst feels your first 10 pages help get things in motion.

First 10 pages are compelling

Do your first 10 pages draw the reader and the audience into your story and engage them?

Script is well structured

Does your script have a structure, whether it's 3-act, 8-act or something completely different? If it sets up a new structural convention, does it serve the story well?

Every scene in the script feels essential

Does each and every scene serve a purpose in propelling the plot, or revealing character, or setting a tone, or engaging the reader?

Scenes are the appropriate length

Are your scenes too long, or too short, for what they're presenting?

Stakes are clear/conflict is strong and/or compelling

Are the stakes high enough? Is it clear what they are? Does your story have conflict?

Characters' choices drive the story forward

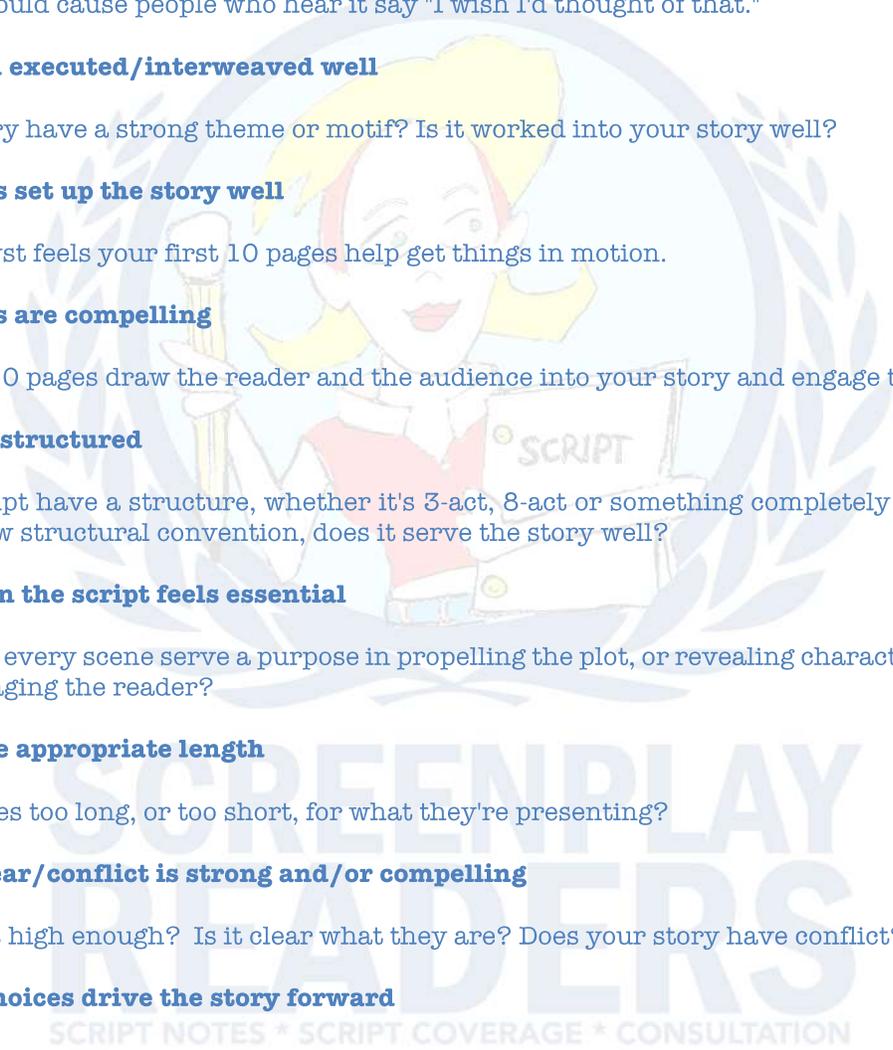
Do your characters' actions, choices, and reactions drive the story? Does causality drive your plot, or do your scenes unfold too arbitrarily, or too episodically?

Pacing is strong and the story keeps moving

Whether your story is intended to be fast-paced or a slow burn, does the pacing feel right?

Story is not overly complicated or hard to follow

Do you have too many scenes, characters, plot threads, reveals, or any other elements that are making things too hard for a reader or audience to follow?



Story is not bogged down by exposition

Is your story explaining things a bit too much? For example, over-explaining via too much backstory, too many flashbacks, too much voiceover, etc.?

Tension builds/escalates throughout

Does your story build tension? Does it do it well?

The climax/resolution is satisfying

Did everything in your story come to a resolution in a way that makes sense, and will be entertaining to an audience?

Protagonist(s) is (are) likable and/or compelling

The protagonist doesn't necessarily have to be likable, but they should at least be fun to watch.

Supporting characters are likable and/or compelling

Are your supporting characters interesting to watch?

No characters were extraneous

Does every character in your script serve a purpose? Or do we spend time with characters that don't do much for the story?

Dialogue reads as natural and/or believable within this story

Does your dialogue sound authentic within the parameters you've set up for your story? If it's a modern, gritty cop movie, do the cops sound real? If it's an alien space adventure, do the alien overlords speak in a way that lets us suspend our disbelief?

Dialogue reveals character

When your characters talk, does what they say or how they say it tell us more about them as characters?

Format and presentation adheres to industry standards

Does your script look and feel like what the film industry at large would consider to be a pro screenplay?

Spelling, punctuation, grammar, and usage

How well did you manually check spelling? Did you use "their" when you meant "there?"

Action text is concise, not overly descriptive/prose

Are your action lines crisp, brief, and easy to visualize quickly? Or do they have a lot of extraneous description?



Action text "shows" rather than "tells."

Does the action/description text tell us how a character is feeling? Or, preferably, does it show us by having that character do or say something?

Overall readability

How easy to read our analyst feels your script would be for an agent, agent's assistant, contest reader, producer, or other film industry reader.

Overall Rating

Please note: We give our analysts great leeway in determining the Analysis Grid scores of your script. These scores can and do vary significantly from analyst to analyst. Further, the scores do not equate to any particular recommendation grade (PASS, CONSIDER, or RECOMMEND).

PASS - The script is definitely not a lost cause, but it needs a lot of work. 95% of the scripts we read receive a PASS.

CONSIDER - The script still needs work, but may be considered by an agency, producer, contest, et cetera. 4% of the scripts we read receive a CONSIDER.

RECOMMEND - The script is good to go, or very close. 1% or fewer of the scripts we read receive a RECOMMEND.

Does this project pass THE BECHDEL TEST - Yes

The Bechdel Test is a quick, casual litmus test that many readers, agents, producers, and executives apply to a project when looking for projects with strong female roles. The Bechdel Test asks:

Does the work feature (a) at least two women, (b) who talk to each other, (c) about something other than a man?

It's absolutely not Screenplay Readers' place to tell you your work needs stronger female roles or more diversity, but because the film and tv market is shifting, undeniably, towards more diversity in casting, we feel we owe it to our clients to provide this metric so you can decide for yourself whether or not it's even applicable and/or something you can use when considering your project's submission strategy.

Please note that your Bechdel Test grade has absolutely no bearing on any of your coverage, nor your Analysis Grid scores, nor your recommendation grade (PASS, CONSIDER, or RECOMMEND). We recognize the fact that the Bechdel Test is not always applicable, nor its results always indicative of a project's true female representation.

THANK YOU!

Thank you sincerely for allowing us to read and critique your submitted work. Please keep in mind that the comments and opinions in this script coverage are not intended to be the final say on the potential of the script or its writer.



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