



## FILM FORENSIC NOTES ANALYSIS

**Note: this sample report has been edited to be fit for public download.**

PROJECT TITLE:	<b>WHEELS OF FATE</b>
WRITER:	Alex Jarman
MAIN GENRE:	Sci-fi
SUB-GENRE:	Action/Thriller
SETTING:	Sci-fi Spaceships
PERIOD:	Unspecified Future
POSSIBLE BUDGET:	High
PAGE LENGTH:	109
FORMAT:	Feature Script
LOGLINE:	Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline
COMPARABLE TITLES:	ENDER'S GAME, THE LAST STARFIGHTER, READY PLAYER ONE, JOHN CARTER
PROJECT VERDICT:	Low Consider
CONSULTANT:	yfz
REPORT WORD COUNT:	6,496
REPORT DATE:	5/3/19

### **Project Overview**

WHEELS OF FATE is an inventive sci-fi epic with echoes of titles like ENDER'S GAME, JOHN CARTER and READY PLAYER ONE. The script's real strength is the world it creates, this complex, clearly thought-out, living alien society into which our human characters are dragged, and its twisted political hierarchy (later reveals about the true relationship between Brutes and Doers hit particularly hard). This is bolstered by a slew of inventive sci-fi tech concepts that lend the script what feels like a unique visual style, and makes its action beats particularly effective. However, the story running through this rich world fares less well than its environment. There's definitely

© Industrial Scripts® – for private, educational use only. [IndustrialScripts.com](http://IndustrialScripts.com)

This document is the property of Industrial Scripts® and the comments herein may not be used or distributed in any public or private arena. Use of these comments, or the IS name, to endorse or promote projects is prohibited.

a compelling set-up here, and there are great moments dotted throughout the story, but once Nell is inducted into the alien ship, it feels like the narrative doesn't yet have a clear central narrative that effectively strings these moments together around a clear goal. Our protagonist, Nell, though hers and others' characterisation is nicely handled, ends up feeling like quite a passive presence (at least ahead of the film's climax) as a result.

## Notes

### Premise/Market

There a tonne of great narrative ingredients here. WHEELS OF FATE's slant on an alien invasion narrative sidesteps many of the genre's typical restrictions really neatly, and a lot of this is down to two great narrative decisions. One issue entries in this genre invariably have to contend with is scale. The arrival of an alien species is an event of global significance, and illustrating something on a global scale makes hefty narrative demands of our story. Do we hone in on one location or country (almost always the US) and use potentially clunky newscasts to imply that this is happening everywhere? Do we include structurally awkward montages cutting across various famous Earthen landmarks or cities, showing secondary characters contend with what's happening to illustrate its scale to the audience. These are considerations WHEELS OF FATE doesn't have to make for, as above, two reasons:

- 1) That the invasion in question has taken place before our narrative begins.
- 2) That the central narrative takes place (almost) entirely on the aliens' ship.

This grants the film something a lot of similar narratives struggle to achieve: a real sense of the global impact of this huge shift in human history. We can see it most clearly in the brilliantly broad cast of characters at the core of the film, from our young, British main character Nell to the South African Bock to the Chinese Nuan to the Peruvian Alvaro to, later on, the Canadian/Masaai Veronica (p.57). The size of the conflict in play here is made stark by the breadth of people it ends up throwing together in these dire circumstances (something the narrative plays with along socio-economic lines, too, via the difference between Nell and Mason on p.39/40). From a coldly pragmatic standpoint this is good market-wise, in that we have a diverse cast of distinct, representative characters. But it's also of real benefit to the narrative itself, illustrating an interesting point about the way interpersonal differences suddenly become moot when presented with something far bigger and more

important to focus on. The invasion becomes this 'great equaliser', putting people from all walks of life in the same exact situation and challenging them to work together to survive. A really effective hook.

Another element that really sets COS apart is the way in which it characterises its alien contingent. We're a world away from the more drone-like invasions of WAR OF THE WORLDS or INDEPENDENCE DAY or SIGNS, and that's something the script shows us right out the gate with the great little moment on p.13 when we see the Brute overjoyed that it's caught a human, showing off to his friends. These are far more nuanced foes than the genre tends to present, and of course that's something the concept expands on massively when we get to their ship. Probably the script's strongest ingredient is the complexity it adds to this alien culture. Even aside from the more overt master/slave dynamic between the Brutes and the Doers, there are these brilliant tidbits of worldbuilding, like the fact that there's discrimination between breeds of Brute that we see on p.74 or the late narrative reveal that all of these aliens are unwittingly fighting for the 'petty sibling jealousy' of the Original they so worship (p.96). And, of course, there's a breeding process that conjures to mind ALIEN in its visceral exploitation of the unwilling 'hosts' that birth each generation of Brutes.

Aside from creating what feels like a thrumming, functional society, this also adds an extra level of emotional investment to the narrative itself. The humans vs aliens/invaded vs invaders narrative that a lot of extra-terrestrial driven sci-fi hinges on is present and correct, but it's made fresh by the fact that it plays into these interesting cultural dynamics among the aliens themselves. A moment like p.85/86 sticks out in particular, when Nell talks to Mike about the decorations left behind by his ancestors and the fact that the Brutes have tried to cover that history up. A great moment in itself, but the reason details like this add so much to the script's concept is that they massively boost the emotional impact of overthrowing the oppressors. We don't just have our human POV characters suddenly brought into this environment and then deciding they've had enough, we have this richer history in place that makes 'winning' feel that much bigger, righting a wrong that's been going on for God knows how long. It's really well constructed.

More broadly, in terms of, per the writer's note, pitching the film as an action thriller for a teen demographic, a lot of the base ingredients of the premise definitely fit that goal well. Nell is the obvious example of this. Like Wade in READY PLAYER ONE or Alex in THE LAST STARFIGHTER, she provides us with an effective POV character that mirrors that demo, an 'everygirl' it's easy to invest in. Her struggle, one that paints her as initially as inexperienced,

scared, overshadowed by her sister Lottie, and then develops her to be independent, brave, resourceful (more on this below) is simple but fits the intended genre perfectly. It feeds nicely into a central theme that picks apart oppression, sacrifice, and self-empowerment.

The above said, it is also worth noting that this is concept that comes with a hefty price tag. This is where some of the concept's more interesting ingredients actually work against it a little. A significant contingent of our characters are alien; the vast majority of the film takes place in often quite detailed/complex areas of the alien ship, from the Killing Decks to the Laser Room; the action scenes, and the elaborate tech used during them – flexiropes, eyespies, the suspension gel – imply quite significant and thus costly VFX. Stack this up with the fact that we're talking a non-established IP and it does, unfortunately, hurt the chances of being greenlit. In terms of mitigating that problem, there are really two ways to do so. One is to consider reducing the scale of the concept, though of course that does have stark implications for the story itself. The second is simply to make sure that the premise, the central narrative, the characters and so on are as strong as possible – in a sense they have a higher bar to clear. We can explore this below.

## **Theme**

There are two key themes that most clearly run through the story. Obviously we have power/oppression and independence via the kind of three-tier hierarchy on the ship (Brutes, Doers, Humans). But more intimately we have this idea of familial relationships (blood or otherwise), specifically sibling rivalry, being overshadowed or out-performed by someone close to you and feeling the need to prove yourself. Like a lot of action/genre thrillers aimed at this demographic, there's a broader message here about self-belief/confidence if we take a look at Nell's journey from dependent and scared (Ben's 'There's always one...' line on p.8 being a good example) to the leader of a revolution (p.79/80), but it's this more specific familial/co-dependent theme that ends up giving this familiar journey a fresh angle.

As soon as we cut back from the opening sting, we establish this dynamic really nicely with Nell in the tree, happy at her achievement before Lottie returns and immediately outdoes her. Throughout the Earth-set sequence at the start of the script, this dynamic is reiterated: Lottie making fun of Nell on p.5; Nell being too nervous to help Ben on p.6/7; Ben's aforementioned line on p.8; Nell's arguments with Lottie across p.9-11; the way Lottie and Mum protect Nell in the ensuing chaos. Simply put, Nell is overtly characterised as

dependent, outmatched, and we can see in that opening tree-climbing scene or in her arguments with Lottie that this is a source of insecurity for her.

What's brilliant about the script's approach from here is that this simple, personal concept is then repeated and magnified across the story proper. The relationship between the Brutes and the Doers, for example, actually gets to the heart of what Nell herself must learn as a character. The Doers erroneously place value in the approval of their stupid, violent overlords, trapping themselves in service of the Original when, as we later learn on p.74, they actually have far more power of their own, to the extent that it's actively suppressed via their food. This nicely parallels the Nell we see at the front end of the story, one acutely aware of her sister's competence to the extent that it's an active point of contention (Nell tries to excel physically too p.3, tries to cast Lottie as the lesser child on p.11, lamenting the implication that she's less likely to survive). Of course, her manner is far different to the submissive Doers, but what both are doing is judging their own value in the context of someone or something else – Nell is small and less physically competent than Lottie, just as the Doers are to the Brutes – rather than finding in themselves what makes *them* valuable. As the story progresses, Nell begins to learn the value of her own traits. It's her size that facilitates her escape with Bock on p.17/18, and that allows her to hide on p.73 so that she can discover the truth about the Brute's suppression of the Doer's through their food. And, of course, it's her size that suits her to the final plan that wins the day, as she points out on p.80 to the Doer crowd. It's her stubbornness that helps galvanise the revolution of the final act, breaking through to Mike and the other Doers.

This is what's so clever about the broader narrative – the massive revolution that caps off the story is a kind of macrocosm of Nell's arc. It's a group realising that they don't have to define themselves in comparison to others – in this case buying into the 'privilege' of getting to meet the Original and accepting the structure of this grossly unfair society – but can instead follow their own path, fulfil their own potential. With the Doers, this obviously manifests pretty literally, in that they *physically* reach a new potential once the Brutes' dominion over them is ended (as we see from Mike when he's reintroduced in his 'final form' on p.106/107). For Nell, though, it's more emotional. Rather than trying, as she does early on, to compete with Lottie in Lottie's arena, so to speak, she steps up to the plate by conjuring up an inventive plan and, far from the little girl who needed protection back in act one, attempting to make the ultimate sacrifice to ensure the revolution.

This is balanced out by some neat thematic touches on the antagonists' side of the fence. Just as the Doers and Nell learn not to define themselves by others' standards, the Brutes suffer for making that exact mistake. It's a great touch that the Original's ultimate motivation turns out to be 'petty sibling jealousy' on p.96, and we see a smaller example of something similar in the dynamic between the senior Brute and the bison Brute on p.74. The script therefore lands on a clear thematic point (and one well suited to its genre and demographic): defining yourself through competition with others obviously leads to conflict, to animosity, while capitalising on your own proficiencies allows you to overcome the obstacles in your path, and even turn them into assets (Nell's size being a nice example). Simple, clear, and effectively outlined.

### Story/Structure

It's here that the script runs into its biggest hurdles. But it's first worth noting that the initial set-up works really well. It's a great idea to start the narrative post-invasion but *without* showing us the aliens. Those first 11/12 pages do a great job building the suspense surrounding these new visitors by dancing around the creatures themselves, showing us only aftermath and implication. Details like Ben's animal bunker on p.6, the fact that Lottie believes the written word is done for without schools on p.10, the references to the inhabitants of London being completely wiped out (also p.10), do a great job implying the scale of the threat, making the aliens themselves into this dramatic question the audience is itching to see answered.

That said, there is scope for a little more clarity when it comes to the 'capture' itself. The implication on p.7 from Ben is that the aliens tend to come at night, and it's a great touch that he's prepped for that by creating this semi-bunker to keep his animals safe. But with that context, it seems a little odd that the village is otherwise so unprepared for the alien's arrival. We're expecting people to leap into some protocol they've established since the alien's arrival, and then they essentially just run wildly into the woods and, as would be expected, get caught. Is there scope to push the idea implied by Ben's animal bunker a little further? Wouldn't these people have a more developed plan than just legging it?

A small point, though. It's once we reach the alien craft that the script's broader story problems rear their heads. There are two key problems here:

1) Nell doesn't yet have a clear enough goal as a character, which renders the story an often quite passive one.

2)By extension, the extended middle act of the film does feel like it meanders, a series of 'and then' events rather than a series of events in which each clearly causes the next.

Turning first to 1), there are certainly already hints of a goal for Nell. After getting separated from her Mum, Nell clings to the idea that she's still alive for some time (e.g. p.22), and it isn't until around p.41 that she seems to accept the likely reality that she's gone. But this isn't really something Nell takes any action towards, even after discovering her Mum is alive on p.76, so it doesn't land as a clear motivator for her as a character. Lottie, too, provides the shadow of a goal. This one's a little stronger, in that we see Nell openly express her desire to get back home and find Lottie on p.26 and later on p.41. But, again, this isn't something that drives her *actively*. The closest we get is her immediately-quashed attempt to get Mason to show her how to work the ship on p.42.

Instead, Nell ends up kind of carried through her own story. First, she's captured by the aliens and inducted into their spaceship. Then she's saved by Bock on p.17/18 and inducted into his group with Taras, Alvaro and Nuan. Then she stumbles into Mike on p.28 and is inducted into the group of humans who have made lives among the Doers across p.34-38. She does, to be fair, take some action on p.47-49 to bring her initial saviors into the safety of Doer society, but, like her initial run-in with Bock and then Mike, this happens by chance when he appears under the floor she's walking over at that given moment. We aren't yet giving the audience a clear central purpose in which to invest.

It's easy to see why this might be the case. The final act of the film centres on the Doers and humans overthrowing the Brutes, and investing in that battle requires a lot of context, a lot of world-building. The problem at present is that filling in that context ends up coming at the cost of the story itself. Particularly in the immediate aftermath of Mike bringing Nell back around p.30, the pacing takes a significant slump as we get these quite drawn out scenes geared to get us up to speed with Doer/Brute dynamics, the Doers' human assistants (Mason, Didier, Ishwani etc) and the Doers tech/culture itself. There are some 15/16 pages of filling us in on Nell's new situation and the world-building around it before our next notable plot point when she sees Bock again on p.47. And, even then, there's actually no immediate, tangible fallout to this event.

As such, the middle act ends up feeling like this expanse in which we tick off a list of necessary events to make the final act work, rather than really

building on the initial set-up via a clear central goal for Nell and the choices she makes in its pursuit. We can see this in the fact that a lot of the bigger plot points here are actually relatively incidental. As above, it's chance that Bock happens to be beneath their feet on p.47. The subsequent 'saving' mission from p.53-57 doesn't really flow directly into or out of the surrounding events – it does come with the reveal of Didier's necklace, but Mike's privilege quickly comes into play after and as such this discover doesn't really prompt a direct, active response. Mike 'qualifying' for the privilege on p.59 is, while not necessarily random, not really a direct consequence of any other key story beat. Nell discovering the truth about the Brute breeding programme on p.62/63 is also somewhat chance, the result of her running from pursuing Brutes and getting curious when she hears the peacock's cry on p.62.

It's worth noting that conceptually a lot of these story developments are really solid. The reveal about the 'truth' of the Doer's subjugation is great. It's nice that we set up the white spray on Picasso back on p.33 so that we get the 'oh shit' moment when Mike is sprayed on p.59. Mason leaping to his Doer's defense because he suspects so deeply that the privilege is a hoax is a really effective beat, not least because we've established how important this new life is to him based on his experiences back on Earth (p.40-42). And the general idea of the 'safe' humans embarking

The issue, though, is that these beats aren't yet connected by a clear, driven story that rests on the active choices of our central character(s).

So, it's worth looking at potential ways to tie this all together:

1) One relatively drastic shift worth considering is getting rid of Bock's group (at least structurally speaking). The problem with the early part of the second act is that, in a section of the narrative that ideally needs to be riding off the dramatic impact of the inciting incident (in this case Nell and her Mum getting captured), we end up with a series of events that keeps stop-starting the momentum of the story. Nell is taken into the ship and we introduce the killing decks and the environment in which the captive humans are forced to exist. There's immediate tension in play as we question how on earth she's going to survive in this environment, particularly given a set-up that iterates and reiterates how dependent she is. This is good. Then Bock rescues her and she's inducted into his group on p.20. We then spend some four pages getting acquainted with them, before they're on the move as the Brutes pursue, leading us into an extended chase sequence until p.28, when Mike picks her up. Then we're into another, longer induction as we're introduced to the Doer group. It ends up layering three set-ups on top of one another with no room

for Nell to start making choices. She's just whisked from environment to environment as the characters around her fill her in or tell her where to run. This leaves us in a situation where it feels like we're still laying the groundwork by not-far-shy of half way through the film. Bock's reappearance on p.47 is, really, the first active plot development after Nell's initial series of escapes that end up leading her to Mike's.

As such, it feels like skipping the intermediate step and going from the Killing Decks straight to Mike would keep things moving and spare us the slump in pace that comes with having two groups in turn filling Nell in on the situation she and humanity are in. It's also worth noting that, despite the fact that the diversity of the cast is a plus, there are *a lot* of secondary characters given the two groups, and that sense that the story is meandering a little in this middle section is compounded by the fact that we're being introduced to so many on top of one another within a 15/16 page window (8 humans, 4 Doers).

There are a number of ways of going about this. One would be to make Nell's first escape (p.17/18) something she does alone, with pressure from her Mum. Given the initial set-up of the story iterates this idea that she's dependent and needs protecting, having Mum realise what's about to happen to them and telling Nell to just run, to clamber into that hole and get away all on her own, could prove a powerful moment. Or, if having another character pluck her from the queue feels crucial, then perhaps that character could be one of the Doer companions right off the bat. Alternatively, there's scope to move some characters around and, say, make Bock (to choose a more prominent secondary player) a part of the group surrounding Mike, Picasso, Nuke and Big Man. Obviously it depends on what feels right for the story, but the overarching point here is that we're somewhat stalling our set-up if we have our hero saved and brought into a group of escapee heroes and then repeat that beat (albeit in a different context) some ten/fifteen pages later. We're taking too long to get the core story in motion.

2) We need to give Nell a goal that she actively pursues. Of course, this will likely shift somewhat as the story progresses – it has to, if we're to take her from scared child to revolutionary leader – but it nonetheless needs to be clearly and actively in play. Using what's already in the script, her Mum and Lottie feel like the most obvious motivators, so it's about finding ways to have Nell make choices in that direction. Can an ill-judged attempt to venture out and save her mother put Mike or Mason or the other Doer's in jeopardy? Could the discovery of her mother's sign (a great moment) that now falls on p.76 come a little earlier to give her that impetus? The implication we really need to capitalise on is the one we currently get on p.42. Nell asks about

learning to fly the ship and Mason immediately latches onto a potential conflict of priorities, worried that Nell is going to use the resources now available to her to go and save her mother or Lottie. That's a conflict that we need to actually see in play. It's something it would be easy enough to tie back into the human/Doer relationship that becomes the core of the narrative from here. Perhaps Nell initially resents Mike and the Doers, seeing them as an active part of the mechanism that killed her mother and took her away from her sister. Perhaps the Doer's are held responsible for the actions of their 'pet' humans by the Brutes. And, as such, perhaps when Nell takes the resources now available to her – flexirope, eyespies etc – and ventures out to try and find her mum, it brings consequences down on the characters around her, on Mike and Mason. Maybe seeing them take the fall for her shifts something in her, can sow the seed for her desire to actively help them later on...

There are a number of ways to go here, but, as above, there's an overarching point to note here – actually two in this case. The first is that we need to enter the second act with a clear impetus in play for our lead character. She needs to want something, and to act in pursuit of getting it. The second is that we need more solid conflict in play, particularly in the first half of the second act. Currently, we have this slightly explanatory extended dialogue sequences across p.34-43 in which we're really just laying the set-up/foundations of Nell's new life and not notably moving the story forward. It immediately becomes easier to make this more active if Nell's goal gives her a reason to oppose her new situation, to clash with Mason, with Mike, even to, as above, put them in danger by selfishly pursuing her own goal without realising the consequences for them...

3) We find ways to more effectively causally link some of the beats that currently feel a little adrift in the second act. It's probably easiest to form a kind of example structure using some of the beats already in the script to illustrate this. So, let's take the second half of the second act and try to forge links between some of the story developments there:

-So, going with the idea that Nell fulfils Mason's suspicion and actually does try and use her new resources to run off and try and help her mother, let's say that after that has brought down some consequences on Mason and Mike, the former feels some sympathy and decides to go with Nell on another scout/saving run to see what they can find. As is roughly the case now, this attempt results in finding Didier's necklace (currently p.58).

-This confirms Mason's suspicions about the privilege (as now), and when he hears that he and Mike are going to be going out to fix some important

machinery in the satellite spaceship, he makes a plan to investigate the truth (this would obviously require a little more of gap between him finding out they're being sent there and them actually going, as all of it currently takes place at once on p.58/59).

-This goes quickly awry when Mike gets sprayed and Mason lashes out, getting him fatally wounded. Now, a distraught Nell has to go with Mike, and she decides to take on Mason's plan, too, having formed a connection with him.

-This makes the discovery of the breeding programme a more conscious one. Now, Nell is actively trying to figure out what's really happening on the breeding spaceship, which adds weight to her discovery – it's achieving a stated goal.

-This would then need to feed back into her final exchange with Mason on p.63/64. Currently, it feels odd that, given how vocal Mason has been about his suspicions, Nell wouldn't be rushing to tell him that he was right all along, that she's seen the truth first hand. Perhaps he asks her to save Mike, which is what then feeds into the clash she has with Mike right after...

Again, just an example, but we need that clear-cut cause-and-effect between the beats of the story that just isn't there yet. Otherwise it risks feeling like a loosely connected series of events that we just need to take place so that the final act's revolution is justified.

The script's final act definitely fares better. It's actually another fairly solid case for getting into the 'Mike' portion of the story that bit quicker, given it hinges on audience investment in the Doers as a people. There are some brilliant details here, not least the plan itself, which is a marvellously inventive way of avoiding the more standard 'final battle' sequences that can often plague fantasy/sci-fi/superhero films aimed at this same demo. For one, we get to pay-off the great sci-fi concept/visual of the suspension gel from back on p.48 when Nell suspends the Original in the same on p.94/95. But it's a real masterstroke to have Nell distract the Brute fleet by kidnapping the Original and then shooting off at close to lightspeed, so that time dilation allows the revolutionaries *years* to overthrow the system while she and the fleet engage in a chase that takes just minutes or hours. It brings to mind the conclusion of DR STRANGE, and its inventive time loop climax. Again, a really clever way to avoid the final act descending into pure spectacle, no mean feat when we're talking an actual revolution as our climax.

That said, there are some story considerations to make in this section, too, specifically at the very end of the script. On p.108, Nell is finally reunited with her family, and it's worth noting that the moment currently feels a little weak. These are the characters with whom we initially established Nell across the first 12 or so pages. Her relationship with them was the entire basis for her character arc, that dependency to self-actualisation arc referenced in the theme section above, and as such we're being conditioned to expect a lot from its pay-off. So, when all we get is a hug, it can't help but feel like a bit of a damp squib, even more so given the time dilation trickery that has shifted their relative ages. Especially given Nell needs that clearer active goal early on, it really feels like there's more to mine from this important reunion. How has their dynamic changed from the exchanges we saw back in the first section of the story? How does Nell's transformation change the way she interacts with Lottie? There's perhaps even scope for a little reversal of their first scene together from p.3, in which Nell's achievement is immediately eclipsed by Lottie's. Given Nell has just saved two species, there could easily be an effective emotional/comedic moment playing on that rivalry and how trivial it's now become. This crosses over into...

### **Characterisation**

The broader arc is obviously covered above. Nell's central arc is a strong one, as above, and the more prominent secondary characters, Mike and Mason, are really nicely handled. It's a brilliant choice to keep Mike and Nell at a distance through language across the early part of their relationship. It adds to this sense that Nell, and we, still have a lot to uncover about the way this society works, a sense of mystery that gets its pay-off with the reveals of p.62/63 on the breeding spaceship. It also allows the script to engage in some really effective visual characterisation. Mike moving the knife during his conversation with Mason on p.38, for instance, is a beautiful touch. In part it feels as if he's fascinated by these humans in the way we might be by a cat, seeing how they respond to this little game. But there's also a sense that it illustrates a disconnect between he and Mason, reflecting their different views of, for example, the privilege. And it's this second reading that gets a neat pay-off on p.71, when Nell has already misaligned the knife. It distinguishes her from Mason, for one, but also suggests an alignment between her and the Doer that's mirrored by the fact that she's the one to convince them to rise up. The other benefit of the language barrier is in adding emotional weight to some of the later story developments. Mason's death, for instance, is felt all the more given Nell is granted access to a translator in its aftermath, particularly when Mike adopts his voice. And, like the knife, the fact that Nell

and Mike can now understand each other strengthens our sense of the bond between them. It's deft character-work.

Mason, too, is a well-conceived character. Good characters often represent distinct facets of the same thematic idea, and Mason does this perfectly. He's Nell's opposite. He's someone who, as we start to realise on p.39, had no one to depend on and had to resort to crime. He's someone who has no attachment to Earth or its people, and instead focuses on making the best of what he has right now. But, crucially, he's also someone who won't back down on what he believes to be true, essentially giving his life in protest of Mike getting something that *Mike actively wants*. If Mike serves as a kind of parallel to Nell's flaws of dependency, Mason (though obviously flawed himself), embodies the lessons she has to learn. This is true in the literal sense, given he actually teaches her to adapt to her new environment, as we see on p.43/44. But it also applies to Mason's characterisation. Nell has to learn his independence. She has to learn his willingness to let go and focus on what's in front of her (something reflected in her shift from focusing on her family to focusing on the Doers plight in the second half). And she has to learn his willingness to sacrifice, which she very much does in the final act of the film with her clever plan. Again, really well constructed.

The problem facing the script in this area is one touched on above: there are currently too many significant secondary characters in play, to the extent that the more prominent ones get a little less focus than they might need. Mason is great, but it doesn't feel like there's enough time for his relationship with Nell to develop to the point that his death carries real weight, for example. Instead, we have the quite meaty dialogue scenes across p.30-44 in which it's like the script is trying to get all that characterisation in at once. As above, removing the first group, or conflating them with the second, will really help here, as it will allow a relationship like Nell's and Mason's to unfold over a wider breadth of scenes (ideally more active ones).

And the benefit isn't just to the core players, either. Take someone like Didier, for instance. It wouldn't hurt to have a little more investment in him to bolster the impact when his necklace turns up and we realise he's likely dead (p.58). There's scope to pick, choose and even combine some of these characters to tighten up the story. As above, a character like Bock (who works well, and even gets a neat pay-off at the close of the film on p.108 when we realise he no longer bashes his head), could easily be transplanted into the Doer group in place of one of the others, particularly if it feels important to keep a 'saver' in play.

There's a common rule that we want to avoid opening up a film by introducing a slew of characters, but in a sense that rule applies even more to the climax of a first act. This is when we want the momentum of the dramatic events of the first act to be at its most powerful, and currently that pacing is hampered here by the number of people we bring into play within that 15 or so pages following Nell's initial escape on p.17. As such, it's worth being a little more ruthless with who is included (at least prominently).

### **Visuals/Cinematic**

Finally, it's worth really commending how effective and often unique the visuals here feel. Obviously, there are the aliens themselves, who are granted an inventive level of variety via the ALIEN franchise-esque trait of taking physical qualities from the animals that birthed them (like the bison brute on p.73). The Original sticks out in particular, the visceral description on p.91 painting a pretty gut-churning picture, not least when he vomits his embryo into Mike's open stomach on p.92.

But it's the tech that really sticks out here. The scene in which the horse are captured in the suspension gel on p.48 is brilliant in the moment, and made all the more so by the fact that it's a kind of disguised set-up for the final plan. This is true of all the film's inventive tech. Not only are eyespies and flexirope inventive sci-fi ideas, the script manages to avoid making them feel incidental, which is no mean feat. A common genre pitfall is over-thinking the technology, putting unnecessary flashy elements on simple tools that too clearly exist for purely aesthetic reasons rather than as a functional part of the story world.

Not so here, because each bit of tech has something to actively contribute to the story. The flexirope is granted emotive significance by the fact that Mason teaches it to Nell, and it facilitates her escape on p.61. The suspension gel, as above, is crucial in the climax of the film. And the eyespies slot neatly into a narrative that ends up resting on uncovering a piece of information that's being kept hidden from our heroes. The climactic revolution doesn't happen without Nell's footage of the Doers' true fate. This is a really good way of building a visual world: making sure that everything has a function *as well as*, in this case, suggesting scenes that will look great on the big screen.

### **Conclusion**

So, a tonne of great concepts here, and a well-constructed sci-fi/fantasy world in which to explore them. However, the script isn't yet working as the result

of its quite significant story issues across the bulk of the narrative (particularly the middle act). The good news is, so many of the ingredients here work. But it's the base framework that needs significant development. Key areas are:

-Making sure Nell has a clear goal throughout, and that the story is driven by the choices she makes in trying to achieve it, rather than leaving her a passive presence dragged from place to place by more decisive characters.

-Finding ways to connect some of the already strong story beats with a clearer sense of cause and effect. Currently too much is incidental, even random. We need each development to stem from a character choice, or at least to facilitate some.

### Your Project's Statistical Performance:

	<b><u>PERFORMANCE AREA</u></b>	<b><u>RATING /100</u></b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Premise</b>	70/100
2	Market Potential	60/100
3	Originality	70/100
4	Clarity of Genre Positioning	70/100
5	Marketing Capability	60/100
<b>6</b>	<b>Structure</b>	40/100
7	Scene Flow	50/100
8	Sequence Flow	30/100
9	Originality of Structure	40/100
10	Cliché avoidance	60/100
11	Pace	40/100
<b>12</b>	<b>Character</b>	60/100
13	Distinctiveness from one another	70/100
14	Originality	70/100
15	Empathy generated	60/100
16	Casting potential	70/100

<b>17</b>	<b>Setting/Milieu</b>	80/100
18	Visual Ambition/Flair	90/100
19	Originality of setting	80/100
20	Cinematic moments	90/100
21	Match for the genre	80/100
<b>22</b>	<b>Dialogue</b>	60/100
23	Authenticity/Credibility	60/100
24	Succinct, says a lot with a little?	50/100
25	Character Dialogue Distinctiveness	60/100
<b>26</b>	<b>Themes</b>	70/100
27	Originality of themes	60/100
28	Sophistication of theme exploration	60/100
29	Clarity of theme exploration	70/100
30	Relevance/topicality of themes	70/100
<b>31</b>	<b>OVERALL % AVERAGE:</b>	<b>63/100</b>

To put your score in context, here at Industrial Scripts we rate some of the following scripts as follows:

THE SOCIAL NETWORK	89/100
SE7EN	93/100
THE TERMINATOR	90/100
THE GODFATHER PART II	96/100
THELMA & LOUISE	88/100

### **About Your Consultant: YFZ**

Your analyst is an experienced pro script consultant who has assessed material extensively for Industrial Scripts, Lionsgate, Disney and is also a repped writer with several projects under option.

## Useful Resources

There's already a plethora of information online about screenwriting, so we thought we'd cut to the chase in this section and describe the best link for the scenario you might find yourself in.

- What you need if you're **struggling to see the wood from the trees** and want to get back to the essentials of screenwriting – the really important stuff: our [ULTIMATE Screenwriting Online Course](#) (free with FFN).
- What you need if you're **looking for inspiration**: our list of [31 screenwriting books](#) you might enjoy.
- What you need if you want to know which of your ideas should become your next script: our [Which Logline? Service](#)
- If you feel like you have a precise idea of what your project should be, but can't get it there yourself, for whatever reason...consider our [Script Doctoring and ReWrite service](#)
- If you just need a good ol' pick me up! Our article on "[10 Great Tales of Screenwriting Determination](#)" will get you there!

## Glossary of Script Development Terms

### Overall Rating

Note: we give our script consultants great leeway in terms of the verdict they deliver. Their decision is based on myriad factors, and no one score in any column is decisive.

- **PASS** – the script is not ready to be shown to agents, managers or the industry yet and to do so would be foolhardy. Upwards of 80% of the

scripts we receive are Passes. Many scripts have, through a thorough development process with us, improved their rating significantly and been upgraded to Considers and Recommends. Whilst a Pass is by no means the death knell for a project, it's important not to shy away from the script's shortcomings, at least at this stage.

- **LOW CONSIDER** – the script *might* be ready to be shown to the industry, but it could be risky. In this case the script displays significant promise, but is letting itself down in a few key areas. Plenty to build on for the next draft.
- **CONSIDER** – this is a strong script, which is likely to provoke a favourable reaction from the industry, without blowing anyone away. The script has a number of strong attributes, but isn't "taste-proof" yet. Many will like it, a smaller number will have a lukewarm reaction.
- **RECOMMEND** – this script is pretty much good to go, or very close to being so. Scripts at the higher end of Recommend will be essentially taste-proof: even if the project itself isn't for that agent or that executive or that producer, they can't fail to be impressed by it, and good things will entail when they tell their friends about it. Less than 1% of script we assess receive a Recommend verdict.

## Statistical Performance Explanations

- **MARKET POTENTIAL** – How well does the script fit into the marketplace? Is it in a genre likely to attract an audience? Do the concept and characters have demographic appeal?
- **ORIGINALITY** – Does the script stand apart?
- **CLARITY OF GENRE POSITIONING** – How well does the script fit into its intended genre? Does it manage to uphold the necessary conventions and tone? Is it clearly marketable as a certain 'type' of story?
- **MARKET CAPABILITY** – How well is the script likely to perform once in the marketplace?
- **SCENE FLOW** – How effectively are scenes constructed? Does each beat serve to lead us to a clear point of resolution? Or does the scene feel drawn out and aimless?
- **SEQUENCE FLOW** – How effective is the script's act structure? Is there a sense of cause and effect from scene to scene?
- **ORIGINALITY OF STRUCTURE** – How cleverly is the script constructed? Does the structure serve a clear purpose to the story or the perspective from which it's told?

- **CLICHÉ AVOIDANCE** – Does the script avoid well-worn story beats or lines of dialogue? If it's a genre piece, does it manage to fit into that genre without falling back on tired tropes?
- **PACE** – The flow of the overall story. Do action scenes as written convey a sense of speed or urgency? Do slower sections work effectively to build tension, or do they drag? Does the speed and flow of the narrative fit with the premise/story itself?
- **CHARACTER DISTINCTIVENESS** – Are the characters sufficiently different from one another? Do they have clear, separate motivations, voices, mannerisms and so on? Or do they all sound like the writer?
- **CHARACTER ORIGINALITY** – Is this character just an archetype (grizzled male action hero; ruthless businesswoman), or are they a unique, nuanced creation
- **EMPATHY GENERATED** – The extent to which we can invest in the core characters, their motivations and their struggles.
- **CASTING POTENTIAL** –
- **VISUAL AMBITION/FLAIR** – Does the script display a keen understanding of the visual medium? Is information conveyed to the audience in a visually arresting way? Does that style feel integrated or gimmicky?
- **ORIGINALITY OF SETTING** – Does the setting feel fresh for the genre? Are we avoiding log cabins in horror films and eerily empty spacecraft in sci-fi?
- **CINEMATIC MOMENTS** – Does the story facilitate impressive moments of spectacle? Clever set-pieces? Well-staged reveals?
- **MATCH FOR THE GENRE** – How well does the setting suit the core premise of the piece? Is it a natural fit?
- **DIALOGUE AUTHENTICITY** – Does the dialogue sound believable? Or is it too obviously a vessel through which to convey story information?
- **SUCCINCTNESS** – Fairly self-explanatory. Is the dialogue concise? Does it avoid clunky, drawn-out exposition or pontification and clearly articulate the intended dramatic/character point.
- **DIALOGUE DISTINCTIVENESS** – Do the characters have a clear voice, as distinct from the work of other writers? Within the script itself, is dialogue sufficiently varied to reflect shifts in emotion or the voices of distinct characters?
- **ORIGINALITY OF THEMES** – Does the script's core message/theme feel like something that hasn't been fully explored before? Or are we reiterating that 'if you believe in yourself you can accomplish anything'?

- **SOPHISTICATION OF THEME EXPLORATION** – Does the script have something complex to say about its core theme?
- **CLARITY OF THEME EXPLORATION** – How clearly is the script's central theme conveyed? Is it clearly represented in each character and the broader course of events?
- **RELEVANCE/TOPICALITY OF THEME** – Does the central theme or message of the piece draw on something that will resonate today? Does it have something important to say about the world we live in?

## Thank You!

Thank you sincerely for allowing us to read your project.

Please bear 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.

*Everything in the world of script development is subjective.*

Yes, an impartial, truly trained eye that assesses screenplays 24/7 has written this report but ultimately the comments herein remain one human being's *opinion*.

As a Hollywood screenwriter we know put it:

*"a script note is only as good as you think it is".*

For more info on Talent Connector, Character-Driven (our blog) or any of the other products and services we offer just visit the link below:

**<https://industrialscripts.com>**

Thanks and we hope to work with you again soon!