

SCRIPTCRAWLER
Standard Coverage

TITLE: ON THE RUN
AUTHOR: *** *****
FROM/PAGES: SP, 116
ANALYST: NT
COVERAGE DATE: 8/18/07

LOCALE: Washington D.C./Various
PERIOD: Present
GENRE: Comedy
BUDGET: Medium

LOGLINE: A Homeland Security investigator is assigned to tail his ex-fiancée, a CIA-operative, but joins forces with her upon discovering she's on the brink of exposing a terrorist plot.

OVERALL RATINGS:

Script

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Premise		X		
Structure			X	
Characterization			X	
Dialogue		X		
Pacing			X	

Writer

Writing Style			X	
Tone		X		
Visual Elements		X		
Description		X		
Strength of Voice			X	

SYNOPSIS:

BETH is a CIA operative, deep undercover and investigating terrorist activity. When she discovers evidence that CIA officials are aware of a government-planned attack on Las Vegas but reluctant to take action, she decides to blow the whistle. Little does Beth know that her bosses have trapped her: she's unwillingly become their scapegoat for the destruction of Sin City. EDDIE, a patriotic Homeland Security investigator, is assigned to apprehend Beth: she's his ex-fiancée, who left him for his best friend. Unaware of the extent of the accusations against Beth, Eddie gleefully tracks her down, excited to pay her back for breaking his heart two years ago.

Eddie finds Beth almost immediately, and she begs him to listen: there's going to be a terrorist attack in Vegas, two days from now, and she's got to stop it and find out who's behind it. Refusing to believe her, Eddie cuffs her and stuffs a sock in her mouth. At a rest stop, Beth manages to escape. Eddie chases her until - BANG! Someone opens fire on them! Eddie grabs Beth and speeds off: a chase ensues, but they escape. Beth reveals her only clue about

the attack: "Thursday: Glass will shatter, ride off on the Eagle." Eddie has no idea what it means, and still isn't sure if he can trust Beth. He calls his ex-partner RALPH and asks him to look into Beth's history with the CIA - could she be telling the truth? Ralph, a senior official with Homeland Security, begs Eddie to just turn Beth in and call it a day, but Eddie's arrogance pushes him toward Vegas. Beth and Eddie bicker as they head for Sin City, and don't even notice a black SUV trailing them...

Despite the tension, Eddie and Beth end up enjoying one another's company. They stay overnight in a small "lover's retreat" they've been to before - the night Eddie proposed. The staff remembers them, and it's incredibly awkward. To avoid the uncomfortable scene of coming clean to the upbeat staff, Eddie and Beth pretend to be married. It's a surprisingly natural ruse, and they have a great time. They head to their room, and just as they're about to kiss... Eddie gets a call from Ralph: Homeland Security has video evidence of a disguised Beth staking out the MGM Grand! Eddie is devastated, but doesn't have time to register it: Beth has already escaped! Eddie chases Beth to Vegas, heads for the MGM Grand and discovers her sneaking around the lobby. He apprehends her, reveals that Ralph told her about the tape. She's confused: What tape? But Eddie won't be fooled again. Ralph calls and says he's in Vegas: Eddie should bring Beth to the airport, where he's waiting on his private jet: the "Eagle!"

Beth overhears tourists discussing the beautiful glass ceiling at the Bellagio, and it clicks! Beth and Eddie head for the hotel, pursued by Ralph and his corrupt cohorts. They arrive, and discover the ticking bomb behind the glass ceiling! Eddie disarms the bomb as Beth single-handedly defeats Ralph and his men! She slams Ralph into a slot machine and knocks him out: Jackpot. With only a few seconds to go, Eddie manages to successfully stop the bomb. Months later, Eddie and Beth are engaged once again, and ready for a life of adventure.

COMMENTS:

This premise has a lot of potential, and the foundations of characterization suggest promising dynamics between the protagonists and minor characters as well. However, there are some areas that require further development, including the unfocused flow of action toward the end of the second act. Despite the potency of the threat, there's not a real sense of pressure. This absence of a "ticking clock" causes the script to lose its energy in its middle-third, but - as is the case with most of the script's issues - there are certainly several ways to approach a revision, and further explore this commercial, consistently entertaining comedy.

The script delivers on comedy and action, but its *dramatic* tone feels a bit clouded. The terrorist threat is never explained: how is Ralph involved, and why does he want to blow up a casino? How powerful is the bomb, and will it take out *all* of Vegas, or just the hotel? This is a key piece of logic and action that the script must address, as the entire story builds to this event. Further, Ralph's character is introduced far too late in the story: his scenes spark with originality, and it's clear that he and Eddie have a strong friendship. This makes his betrayal all the more wounding, and the script could further explore their friendship sooner in the script. Perhaps in an early scene, Eddie and Ralph are together, maybe even gambling, in a scene that could not only introduce their friendship, but also subtly hint toward Ralph's motive for blowing up the casino. If their friendship were introduced earlier, the script could also mine another level of conflict: Eddie never seems to face the decision of whether to trust his best friend, or the woman who left him at the altar. This could be an incredibly potent beat, especially since Beth as betrayed him constantly throughout the story. By forcing Eddie to choose between Ralph and Beth in a more cinematic way, the script could build to a more effective climax, and show Eddie's transformation as a character.

The extra-personal stakes almost feel as though they're a bit too high. The threat of a terrorist attack in some ways limits the comedy, in that the characters often become more concerned with each other than saving the lives of thousands of people. While this is ironic and darkly funny, the script is murky in expressing its intent. Exploring the terrorism angle could yield a dark, satirical comedy, but the script has potential for something much deeper. By downplaying the extra-personal stakes, the script could focus more on the personal dynamic between Beth and Eddie. Whether the script goes to that arena of dark comedy or not, Beth and Eddie should remain the focus - otherwise, the script runs the risk of becoming an action movie clone, and not the high-tension character-driven comedy it wants to be. This script definitely has potential is a big-budget, very commercial action/comedy, but must address the glaring tonal issues of the terrorist threat in relation to the scenes of broader humor.

Eddie and Beth have a terrific chemistry, and patches of their dialogue spark with a unique sense of style and rhythm. The cutthroat ambition of both of their characters offers scene-by-scene surprises, and the script could make more use of their sometimes vicious self-preservation. The script could give them a bit more back-and-forth in their dialogue, as their screwball interaction stands out as the script's strongest element. The script evokes ROMANCING THE STONE, in that Eddie and Beth's chemistry illuminates the events of the plot in unexpected, dynamic ways.

As a character, Beth is painted in a harsher light than Eddie, which undercuts her sense of empathy. She's more clinical and far more selfish, and has only a few moments of genuine humanity. Outfitting Eddie with a bigger flaw or a more potent backstory betrayal might punch up their conflict a bit. It's never clear why Beth left Eddie for his best friend, and that conflict could serve the script well in Act II. Was Eddie at fault in any way? It seems as though their past issue, which perhaps was never even addressed between them, should play a bigger role in their *present* storyline: now, in addition to dealing with this huge threat, they've got to overcome the thing that drove them apart in their past. In order to flesh this out visually, it could be interesting to introduce Eddie's best friend: is Beth still with him? If not, how long did the fling last? Either way, introducing him could really complicate their relationship, and add some unexpected scenes of comedy to the second act. Deepening that backstory a bit could give the script some potent conflict to explore, and serve as a springboard for more of the terrific rapid-fire dialogue between them.

The script's comic sensibility is occasionally cloudy: while the physical action is well-described, the scenes lack a comic edge. The romantic subplot feels inconsistent, and builds to a forced, unsatisfying conclusion. While the main beats of their love story are well-conceived, the scene-by-scene progression lacks clarity. Just as they're about to grow closer, they each suddenly turn on one other without purpose, or pull apart just as they are beginning to form trust. Perhaps this is the script's intent, but poor dramatization limits its effectiveness. By improving the sense of motivation for each character in any given scene, the script could reach a new level. For instance, in the motel sequence, as soon as Ralph calls Eddie, Beth runs off: does she know something about Ralph that Eddie doesn't? It seems forced that she simply decides to run off at this point, unless something else motivated her to do so. Instead of complicating the audience's impression of each protagonist, this scene simply builds the case against Beth. The story could gain much more dramatic tension if it constantly raised questions about who is after what, but the *motivation* behind what the characters do must be clear. As it stands, the physical action is strong, but the purpose behind it is murky, leaving the script in a gray area of logic and intent.

Line by line, there are some terrific pieces of action description. This serves the script well, and keeps the pace of many scenes moving briskly. Having addressed the overall tonal issue, the biggest issue facing the script at this stage is "voice." Most agencies and production companies look for not only a conceptual hook, but a unique voice from the writer. Think about a concept as simple as JUNO, that succeeds because of the stylized intricacies of the script's style. Not to say that everyone in this script should speak with such eccentricities as those characters, but by fleshing out *your own* style a bit more, the script becomes more personal and - whether or not it's a commercial action film or a character-driven drama - it becomes more memorable. Take a look at any script by Shane Black (LETHAL WEAPON, KISS KISS BANG BANG, THE LAST BOY SCOUT) to get a sense of a writer's style: while Shane Black takes this to an extreme (essentially using his description as a sort of "writer's narration"), it might spark some idea for more vivid action and description. As it stands, the script has so many interesting aspects to it, that it merely requires focus to tighten what already works well.

Overall, this script is well-written and consistently entertaining, but requires some fine-tuning to capitalize on what already works well.

SCRIPT OVERALL: CONSIDER

SCRIPTCRAWLER BREAKDOWN GRIDS

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Professionalism of script presentation	X			
Spelling & Grammar	X			
Title			X	
Opening Image/Hook		X		
First 10 Pages	X			
Narrative Through-Line			X	
Subplots			X	
Levels of Conflict			X	
Reversals, Complications & Twists			X	
Tension & Suspense			X	
Act I	X			
Act II		X		
Act III		X		
Conclusion/Resolution			X	

Revision/Marketing Strategy	YES	NO	N/A
This script suggests strong potential as a commercially viable feature.	X		
This script is ready to be seen by agents, executives, and readers.		X	
This script has desirable roles for actors.	X		
This script has a distinct cinematic flavor that could attract directors.			
The trailer/preview for this film is easy to visualize.	X		
The title is intriguing and fitting.		X	
The characters are unique and empathetic.		X	
The story is believable within its context.		X	
It's easy to visualize the action through the line-by-line writing.	X		
Dialogue rings true, and feels fresh.	X		
This concept is interesting and compelling.		X	
The script is distinctly cinematic.	X		
The writing is concise yet vivid.	X		