

## COVERAGE, INK. COVERAGE

**TITLE:**  
**LOCALE:** U.S., Winchester College and environs  
**AUTHOR:**  
**PERIOD:** present  
**FORM:** screenplay  
**GENRE:** comedy  
**BUDGET:** low to medium  
**DRAFT DATE:** n/a  
**COVERAGE DATE:**  
**PREPARED BY:**

---

### **LOGLINE:**

A black professor recruits a young white man to fix up with the daughter of an Ivy League Association member he's trying to impress. But when the young man turns out to have become a hardcore white rapper, the professor recruits a feisty young society gal to make him presentable.

### **SYNOPSIS:**

Winchester College. Pretty 17-yr-old PRUDENCE pesters a PROF. THOMAS for an interview for HighSchoolUSA.com. The Prof. tries to blow Prudence off, but Prudence proves fast on her feet and gets a referral to Prof. CLAY HUFFINGTON (33, African-American.) Huffington, too, gives her the slip, rudely dismissing her. Huffington has made the short list for an Ivy League professorship. His assistant BECKY tells him that others who've moved onto Ivy League positions have done so by playing golf. So when MRS. KINNEY, President of the Ivy League Association, calls, Huffington invites her to a weekend golf game. She accepts and tells him she's bringing her 17-year-old daughter whose heart was recently broken. Clay asks if he can bring along TERRY, also 17, whom Huffington was a Big Brother to. Only problem is, Clay hasn't spoken to Terry in 3 years. Wife LUCINDA agrees to give Clay golf lessons. But when Terry arrives, he's become a wannabe white rapper, completely unpresentable to Society. Terry offers his old Mercedes to Terry if he can help out, but Terry says he'd do it for free to help out "Teach." Clay takes Terry to the Winchester library to mingle with smart students where he gets harassed by a couple of IZOD TYPES. Terry gets into a scene. Clay drops Terry off at his crib downtown—deal's off, thanks anyway. But Clay is reminded of the impending golf date. He finds Prudence's card and gives her a call. We meet Prudence at work at Macy's, blowing off her ex-boyfriend WAYNE who's trying to get her back. Clay visits and offers her \$200 if she can transform Terry into a presentable young man in 3 days. Prudence will do it for a referral to Ms. Kenney. Clay introduces Terry to his new tutor. Prudence has her work cut out for

her. Fortunately, she's up to the job—she's spunky and has attitude to match Terry's. She gets him a haircut, then works on elocution with him, makes him read "Catcher in the Rye" and watch Star Trek movies. Prudence calls Clay with good news and bad news: Terry is eager to help, but he sucks. Clay baits her by saying he'll use Wayne instead. That gets Prudence's goat, so she vows not to fail. Prudence then takes Terry down to the hood when she herself steps to some black girls with attitude. She can rap just like Terry. Terry is stunned. We reveal Prudence was pen-pals with one of the sistas, who is from England. Prudence takes Terry for a test lunch with her mother, DEAN BAUER from Winchester College. Terry stumbles a bit but gets through the lunch. Now the ultimate test—Prudence wants Terry to attend a preppy dance. If he can score some digits there, he's good to go. Terry asks Clay to get him into the dance, but Clay tells him he can't—but Prudence's grandfather—an eccentric, crotchety old guy—is on the board and can get him in. Prudence withers. Granddad won't help anyone. So Terry meets the grandfather on the park bench he frequents. Attempts at friendliness rebuffed, Terry insults FRITZ in street dialect. Fritz loves it, and asks Terry to teach him more. Before long, Fritz is speaking like Tone Loc. At the dance, Terry gets into a scrape with Prudence's ex just as Clay arrives. Later, Lucinda tells Clay to just meet Kinney and daughter by himself. But Clay decides to ask them to the NAACP Dance for some reason. Meanwhile, Terry feels bad about letting Clay down. He tells Prudence that Clay was a good Big Brother after his dad died. Prudence comes up with a plan. After telling Mrs. Kinney that Terry broke his foot, Clay and Prudence and Lucinda meet Kinney and daughter VALERI on the golf course. Prudence monopolizes the conversation, so Clay slips her one of his diuretics to get rid of her. Suddenly Terry arrives in black-face. He fools the Kinneys and gets a smile out of Valeri. He impresses them by co-opted Clay's classroom lecture about poetry and applying it to rap. Mrs. Kinney invites Terry to the NAACP function. Terry tries to duck it, but he's trapped. At the NAACP dance, Mrs. Kinney invites Terry on stage, where he throws off an improve rap that everyone loves. But Terry stumbles and Mrs. Kinney pulls off his afro wig. Terry bolts. Lucinda goes to find Terry, leaving Clay to explain. Prudence does find Terry and tells him Teach got his position after all. They kiss. Clay finally gives Prudence a decent quote she can build her article around.

## COMMENTS:

Like it says in the script -- Bizee, chezee! Lots of fun to be had in this silly but very funny comedy. The writer has a good knack for comic dialogue, and the execution overall is pretty good. However, there are some structural, character and execution issues that prevent the script from really achieving take-off. If we can nail down those areas, this piece will really shine.

Let's talk about the good stuff first. The best part of this script is definitely the dialogue. Terry's patois is positively hilarious. The raps are good, and the character of Prudence and her feisty, take-no-shit-kick-yer-ass attitude are terrific—as far as she goes (more on that in a moment.) There's also some good, witty wordplay and nice use of set-up and pay-off on display here. The writing chops are generally pretty good, too, although the writer has a little comma trouble (again, more on that in a bit.) Story pacing is also good. Terry teaching the old man to rap is terrific (although it goes a bit too far—Fritz picks up WAY too fast. Maybe he can be a little more inept. The scene where he reaches for “turd” is great—bit more of that.) As for the central idea of the story itself, it's a pretty typical fish-out-of-water thing, but it works—to a point.

The biggest problem with “(title)” is in the Act 1 structure. We start out with a nice sequence of Prudence pestering folks for interviews (although why is every professor at Winchester an asshole, we wonder?) which shows her as a very Reese Witherspoon-y type of take-charge gal with a brain. But then, out of the blue, she disappears completely, and we wind up following the not-nearly-as-interesting aforementioned asshole professor Clay for the whole first act. Okay, several problems here: first is that we need to parallel develop Clay and Prudence in Act 1. Intercut back and forth between them, otherwise it seems that the entire opening sequence with Prudence is irrelevant and even a non-sequitur until she's re-introduced much later. Worse, we miss the opportunity to really define Prudence as a character. She and Terry are really the leads in this picture, not Clay. As such, they both need to have more screen time, and in that screen time, they both need to have their known worlds established (home life, where they live, etc.) and they both need to have inner conflicts which they overcome via interacting with each other over the course of the story. Prudence's arc right now is really weak—she learns nothing, is just simply able to write her article at the end. Boring. Suppose she's on the outs with her family for some reason, and Terry helps reunite them? That would give her a real emotional core. Terry, too, needs to have an inner conflict. Perhaps he's adopted this street persona because he was tired of getting his ass kicked, but he learns to finally be himself at the end, and as such, he changes and gets the girl (Prudence.)

Clay is a bit problematic. We don't really care all that much about his plight, first off. We don't like the guy, since we've seen him dis Prudence. So how can we

give a rat's ass if he gets this Ivy League slot or not? The truth is, we really don't need to—he can be the schemer that gets our leads together, that's fine—but currently, the script suffers from a split personality. Is it Clay's movie, or is it Terry and Prudence's? The answer must be the latter. Therefore, Clay's screen time needs to get reduced. He should be in it just enough to keep the plot moving in a supporting character sort of way. Too, he also needs to arc. He starts out as an asshole. He blows off Prudence; he ditches Terry and doesn't even call him for 3 years. OK, that's all well and good, but let's have him change, too. First, he needs to feel guilty about abandoning Terry years ago. Where's the speech in Act 3 where Terry, fiercely loyal to Teach and thankful, tells Clay that he never would have made it through his teens without him—but Clay scoffs, overcome with his own guilt, and tells him not to admire him—he walked away when Terry needed him most, for his own selfish reasons. Clay needs to overcome this guilt and change as a person so that he can grow. Once he grows, THEN he is entitled to a reward—getting the Ivy League position. And his wife is a non-character. Let's give her some business, something to define her, even if she doesn't have much screen time.

The last problem with the whole set-up is there are just too many ways out for Clay. He mentions he could just hire someone to play Terry, which is what we're thinking all along. That'd be a lot cheaper than giving someone a Mercedes! Further, the way Clay just walks into the set-up and then plays ball defies credulity. It seems odd that Mrs. Kinney volunteers out of nowhere that her daughter has a broken heart. A bit more deft writing is required here so this is less on the nose. And the way Clay just reaches for Terry's name—someone he hasn't heard from in years—when he surely has students that he knows a lot better and can ask to tag along—seems really odd. Now if there was a specific reason WHY Terry is required—for example, Mrs. Kinney volunteers for Big Brothers, which opens the door for Clay to mention he is a Big Brother—works better, because the reveal after the call that Clay blew the kid off and hasn't spoken to him in 3 years makes it all sew together. Now we know it HAS to be Terry, because he really was the “little brother” and knows about the program in case they get any sort of in-depth questioning from Mrs. Kinney.

Another problem is Prudence starts out taken aback by Terry—that's fine, and all those scenes are pretty funny (although we wonder how “Star Trek” movies fit into the preppy milieu—beware of using a studio-specific property. Also, writer missed a great opportunity for a joke when Terry says “It's not Shakespeare, is it”—cut to “Star Trek 6” with General Chang spinning in his chair, spouting Shakespeare.) But later she's rapping with the homegirls herself. While this scene is funny, it's got to go. It's contradictory to the character and it's just not necessary.

A big potential comedic and romantic moment is missed completely here, too. What should happen during the story is that a romance builds between Prudence and Terry. This never happens. They grow closer and kiss at the end, but there's

no sexual tension or romantic chemistry. It should be that she is fighting with everything she has to avoid her attraction to this guy who is so TOTALLY not her type (and vice-versa.) These guys get along too easily, too fast. They need to start out more at loggerheads and then SLOWLY come together. The moment Terry proves himself should be at the dance where he defends Prudence from her asshole ex. After that it should be obvious these two are in love. NOW how do we ramp it up from there? The answer is obvious: VALERI needs to be exactly what Terry WAS. In other words, when we finally meet her, she's a white gangsta chick wannabe who embarrasses her mother! So when Terry meets her—surprise! He's been grooming himself to be Joe Prep, and it's all been for nothing. Suddenly we have an immediate love triangle with Prudence/Terry/Valeri. Prudence (who should NOT tag along on the golf game... but rather, maybe try to sneak in, get thrown out, and wind up spying on them from a distance) sees Terry making time with Valeri and finds herself inexplicably in a jealous rage. Boy loses girl. Then Terry has to prove his love to Prudence. As for Valeri, Terry needs to empower her enough to move forward with her life and get over her broken heart, even though not with him.

The last part of the script, the whole NAACP thing, unfortunately doesn't really work, either. Unless I missed something, the Kinneys are not black (are they?) and so why on Earth would Clay invite them to this dinner (and why would he even if they were?) What if it's instead a Big Brother Society dinner? We'd get to keep the sequence without it being viewed as potentially offensive. And the whole blackface thing is just a bad move. It's like the film suddenly becomes "Soul Man." Let's find a better way to get some comedy at this dinner by having Terry trying to avoid being exposed by a pal from the hood who's there. Mrs. Kinney feels used and tells Clay he'll never get the position. That's where Terry steps up and makes his big speech, in which he tells the room what a great guy Clay really is (the aforementioned big speech; Clay chokes back a tear because he knows he doesn't deserve this) and saves Clay, AND wins over Prudence. Then he whips off a rap and gets everyone dancing.

One last note on execution. The writing is generally pretty strong, but the writer trips himself up with a few grammar bugaboos, most notably improper comma usage. He often puts commas in the middle of sentences where they should not be, for example: "Call me, T-Reck." No comma there. And he omits commas where they should be used, which is: after an aside, before and after direct addresses, and to break up a compound sentence. At the risk of sounding too pedantic, here are some examples:

CORRECT: "Hey, Professor, how's it going?" Comma before and after direct address. INCORRECT: "I can't go in there so you're on your own Joe." This is a compound sentence. Both the front half and the back have a subject and a verb. Therefore this requires a comma after "there." Also need a comma before Joe.

The writer also needs to use hyphens when using compound adjectives (e.g., “self-conscious”) but NOT use hyphens when using an “ly” adverb (.e.g., “mostly overrated” does not require a hyphen.) There are a few other typos and such, like “empathic” for “empathetic” and such. The only reason I’m even pointing out these nitpicky details is because the writing is pretty strong to begin with, and more attention to grammar will help the writer really make his stuff look pro.

(title) has a lot going for it. If the writer can solve some of the story and character problems mentioned, this piece could merit serious consideration. I’m passing on it for now, but it’s a real close pass. The writer has a lot of talent and potential and I encourage him to keep at it.



	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Very Good</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>So-So</u>	<u>Not Good</u>
Artistically			X		
Commercial			X		
Premise			X		
Story				X	
Main Characters			X		
Minor Characters				X	
Dialogue			X		
Visual Elements				X	
Title				X	

SCRIPT:  
WRITER:

PASS  
CONSIDER WITH RESERVATIONS