

COVERAGE, INC. COVERAGE

TITLE:
LOCALE: U.K.
AUTHOR:
PERIOD: the present
FORM: screenplay
GENRE: thriller
BUDGET: medium
DRAFT DATE: none
COVERAGE DATE:
PREPARED BY:

LOGLINE:

College girl gets swept up into a plot of danger and intrigue when bad guys mistakenly believe she possesses a laptop with military secrets.

SYNOPSIS:

LAURA KENNETT (22) is a university student who has troubled dreams hinting at a horrible incident when she was a child. A VW is broken into by an unknown perp and a LAPTOP is stolen from the trunk. Laura sends her boyfriend ADAM an e-mail from the computer in the school library breaking up with him, saying she can't come home while "that bastard still draws breath," indicating trouble at home. Meanwhile, someone boots up the stolen laptop and logs in. Laura gets a text message on her cell phone from her friend FLEUR inviting her to go party that night. It is Laura's birthday. At TOSCA CAFÉ Laura is a waitress, working for MAC (42.) Fleur enters, a sexy, bold young lady who dresses provocatively. She brings Laura flowers. Fleur twists Laura's arm to go party with her, but Laura needs to study. GARY is at a table, and Laura cryptically tells him she hasn't got his money yet.

Later, Fleur dyes Laura's hair red and dresses her up. She looks great. Laura tells her she's dropping out of school. Fleur tells her she can't keep running away from her problems. Back at the café, bitchy EMMA (26) talks on her cell phone while telling TONY she's got a laptop for him. Meanwhile at the MOD, FORBES (30's) video conferences with JULIAN ROSE (50's.) Rose tells Forbes about a security breach on the Cubic Zirconia project, and the laptop that was stolen contains detailed plans for the whole project. Rose puts Forbes in charge of the investigation and alerts MI5. He gets an e-mail from ("Title") offering the laptop for sale to 30 nations for 100,000 pounds. Forbes tries to trace it.

At the café, Laura sends an e-mail and Mac asks her if it's to her boyfriend. Mac is a gentle sort and Laura tells him to keep out of her business. Laura confronts Emma, who is smoking at a non-smoking table. Emma talks down to Laura as Fleur arrives. Mac calls and says he's had an auto accident, can she cover for the 7PM meeting? TONY MORGAN enters and sits at Emma's table. Handsome man YASS also enters. Fleur and Laura discuss Yass. Laura takes his order and he tells her he's meeting a girl. Too bad for Laura. Tony negotiates with Emma and hands her an envelope thick with cash. Qas Emma leaves she drops her chrome mobile phone. Since Emma didn't even leave a tip, Laura takes the phone. Yass also leaves. A GREY-HAIRED MAN watching Laura makes a cryptic phone call: we've got a problem.

Laura gets dressed up to go out and takes the new phone with her. Cut to Tony's house—someone breaks in and grabs Tony. Back to Laura and Fleur, now shooting pool and drunk at a pub. At Tony's an unseen assailant breaks Tony's bones and he tells them he doesn't know what they mean, that's his only laptop. He tells them to call Emma. She's the one who sold him the laptop. Next, EMMA's apartment is broken into by the same unseen perps and searched. The girls return to Fleur's flat and break out the Stoli. Laura gets a message on her new phone: "I want it back." On TV is an Inspector named BERNARD GALT. Laura stares at him, distracted. At Fleur's prodding Laura sends a nasty reply on the cell. The message is received by a battered laptop in a hotel room and traced.

On TV, the girls see Tony—who they just saw at the café—has been shot dead. They sober quickly. Then a new text message: I'll kill you like I killed him." The girls get very worried.

The next morning they awake with hangovers. Laura leaves for class. She calls Fleur and leaves a message, but Fleur has been killed, her flat, trashed. At the café, Gary again asks for his money. Laura gets a text message from Fleur—meet me at the Botanical gardens. Meanwhile another email is sent from MACDONALD: Problems with drop last night. Please arrange new date and time.

At the gardens Laura looks for Fleur but finds only a stalker. Laura runs for it. A male grabs her, says where is it? Laura escapes. Laura goes to Fleur's flat, finds her dead. She returns home and packs in a hurry. At MI5, SIR MICHAEL gets an update from Julian Rose. The suspect has gone to ground. Sir Michael tells him to put his best man on the job. Laura rides the supertram and has another terrible dream. She awakens to kind YASS, the guy from the café, coincidentally sitting next to her. Laura says she's going home to see her folks, but they don't get on. Yass gives her his number and says to call if she needs a friend. Back to

Forbes, at the track, working the case. The e-mail came from an internet café, it could have come from anyone.

At a Meadowhall shopping mall, Laura shops but then is chased by security, who mistakenly believe she's shoplifted. Laura thinks she's being followed. She uses Wayne, an annoying young lad, to distract her stalker. She steals the family's old Ford and tries to call Mac on her cell, saying someone's trying to kill her, but gets only the machine. At the café, Forbes is there. Waitress MARY tells Mac that the girl from last night, Emma, was murdered. Now has anyone heard from Laura? Forbes questions Mac. Forbes checks out the computers while the Grey-haired man watches him. Forbes finds 200 mails from Nemesis. He also finds a mail saying merchandise was to be delivered at café last night at 7PM. Forbes tells Mac that the missing laptop has info which will allow anyone to easily make a nuclear weapon.

Inspector GALT leaves his expensive home and is spied upon by Laura. She receives an urgent text message from Forbes saying to contact her. Galt realizes Laura's watching him. Laura goes to see Adam and take solace in his arms. Another e-mail from Macdonald: call off your operative, he is making transaction difficult. Someone breaks into Adam's house and kills him. Laura barely escapes. She flees into a cow pasture and then a wind farm and is saved by a FARMER who interrupts her unseen stalker. Next AM Laura is outside walking and gets a call. Laura tells caller they've mistaken her for someone else. Male voice tells her he's not stupid, he knows it's LAURA, he wants the laptop back. She walks to the abandoned Hades Farm (swiping a cattle prod on the way) and falls asleep to another bad dream. When she wakes up, Galt is there. We learn he abused her as a child after her father died. After a bitter confrontation, the evil Galt leaves Laura to her fate. He knows someone will get her soon and that she's wanted on murder charges. She gets another call and tells the person she's ready to deal. She tells person to meet at Windscar sailing club. At the club, Laura waits in shadow and ZAPS her assailant with the prod. They struggle, but Laura escapes in a dinghy. But the stalker follows in a powerboat. Laura swims away and is rescued by Forbes. She goes with him. They check into a bed & breakfast and he tries to get info from her. When the B&B owner recognizes Laura from the news, she calls the cops. Forbes and Laura escape. Forbes pulls a gun on her. No more Mr. Nice Guy. Forbes confesses to marital and gambling problems. Now he wants the laptop. She stabs him with a screwdriver and escapes from the car. Forbes chases her to a summer fayre. Laura calls Yass for help. She goes into a tower. The Grey-haired man is also there, watching. Forbes confronts her. He says it wasn't him stalking Laura all the while. Yass suddenly arrives and brains Forbes with a fire extinguisher. Suddenly Yass turns evil—HE was the stalker.

And he wants the laptop, too. The Grey-Haired Man—MOD's best man for the job—shoots Yass and saves Laura.

Back at university, Laura is visited by Rose as she clears out her locker. She's leaving. Rose explains the laptop was just a decoy meant to expose the crooked Forbes. It had no top secret data on it. It was just a sting. Laura gets a call from Mac—the MACDONALD of the cryptic emails. BIG TWIST ENDING: Laura and Mac were in cahoots all along. They were working for the MOD and could get a million for the next job. Laura gets her payment in a train station locker and is met by GARY. She gives him the 50,000. Reveal Gary is a hitman, hired by Laura to take care of Galt.

COMMENTS: Wow! A "Marathon Man" update that delivers the goods. This script has major potential, and is only a polish or two away from being a RECOMMEND. Which is not to say the script does not have significant problems, which I will detail. But the story is twisty and unique, and the ending both took this reader by surprise and was set up beautifully. As it is, NEMESIS1412 earns a very solid CONSIDER for both script and writer.

Forbes' characterization is well-done, with the gambling problem deftly hinted at in the track scene. Another nice bit of writing is the Sir Michael/Julian scene while family photos are taken. Nice touches like that throughout.

The main problem here is Laura's behavior seems very odd and illogical at times. While much of this is explained when we learn exactly what her involvement really is at the end, it makes the script a tough read in places. Specifically: WHY don't Laura and Fleur immediately call the police after seeing the man murdered on the telly, then getting the threatening text message? No matter how drunk they are, there is no excuse for simply falling asleep. Then again, when Laura discovers Fleur dead, her reaction? No reaction. Again, this defies logic. Laura should be heartbroken, and she should go to, in no particular order: the police, her best remaining friend (Mac?), call her ex-boyfriend on the phone, and notify Fleur's family. She should also help with making funeral arrangements. Instead, she runs away. Now that may be set up earlier when Fleur says you always run away, but we must at least acknowledge that Laura is a WRECK, and that she knows she is fucking up, when she does run. Audience sympathy will be with her then, instead of confusion.

More Laura illogic: WHY does she spy on Galt? Now, we KNOW why by the end, but as we're reading, this seems like a very bizarre activity for someone on the run and scared for her life. Unless he's described as a family friend/policeman/the only one she can trust. Which of course is contrary to his role in the story. The writer needs to find a way to explain away this weird behavior satisfactorily. Maybe she doesn't stalk him, but there's a chance encounter when she returns home. And WHY does she go home, when there is no home to go to? Again, this is explained at the end, but as we're reading, it makes no sense. The way to do this is to have her rush home simply to be with Adam. Adam needs to be beefed up as a character anyway. Let's see him come into town for Laura's birthday in Act 1. Then he gets angry with her secretive nature which keeps her from ever getting close to him, and he leaves in a huff, their future uncertain. That will make much more sense then, for her to run to him

when there's trouble. Further, let's describe his character more. What if he was in the police academy? Even better for her to run to him. And why doesn't Laura call Forbes after getting his text message? This is never explained. And of course, we learn Yass was on the tram because he's following Laura. Yet until the big reveal that Yass is the stalker, this just seems like a ridiculous coincidence. Let's set up at the café that Yass says he takes this tram to and from work every day, so that it is not too out of the blue for Laura to bump into him there.

Now, let's be clear: what exactly IS Laura's involvement? I read the script twice and I'm still not sure. Are she and Mac working for the MOD as part of a special sting team? Or are they independent operatives? This needs to be made crystal clear. How did Laura get into this plot for real? Is Mac a current spy for MOD and the café is his cover? Again, clarify. And what is Laura's exact goal in this? It seems to be to simply get the money to kill Galt. Yet she doesn't seem too concerned that all her friends and boyfriend got killed on the way. That doesn't make her very sympathetic. The script runs pretty short, so there's time available to add more scenes at the end, flashbacks, etc., answering these questions. Also, why do we never see Laura or Mac with the laptop? Did Mac sell it? Let's see something that indicates what happened there. And why does Tony give Emma money, yet he doesn't receive a laptop at that time?

The staging in the break-in at Adam's seems odd. First, the intruder's in the house, then he isn't? Let's streamline this and make it clearer.

A final fault in the script has to do with the writing itself. While it is serviceable, it could be a lot stronger. There are many things that are written unclearly - for example, where is Mac when Laura leaves the message on the machine? Is he listening to the message at that time or not? And suddenly Forbes is there, but we were never told Forbes was in the café in the scene description. Clarity in the scene description is of utmost importance in this type of script, because as it is it's hard enough for the reader to figure out what's going on in this type of thriller, where so many details are withheld. The writer must make sure the staging is crystal-clear. In addition, two spaces need to be skipped (or CUT TO's added) before scene changes to help them stand out, and lastly, the writer needs to hire a proofreader, since the script is rife with mistakes - particularly comma errors and forgetting periods at the ends of sentences, and not knowing when to use its vs. it's, etc. These mistakes make the writing seem amateurish, and this story is better than that.

In the final analysis, this is a solid effort that could easily become a movie. The writer has a sharp eye for story and has a good handle on scene pacing and characterization.



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

SCRIPT:
WRITER:

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