

STORY SPECIALIST NOTES

TITLE: High-Tech	REF # 001
AUTHOR: Unlisted	DATE: 5/30/09
FORM: Feature Screenplay	PAGES: 125
TIME PERIOD: Early '90s.	GENRE: Action/Thriller
LOCATIONS: Computer Facility, Apartment, Bar, Gas. Station, Prison, Motel, Convention Center	BUDGET: 35-55 Million
	RATING: R

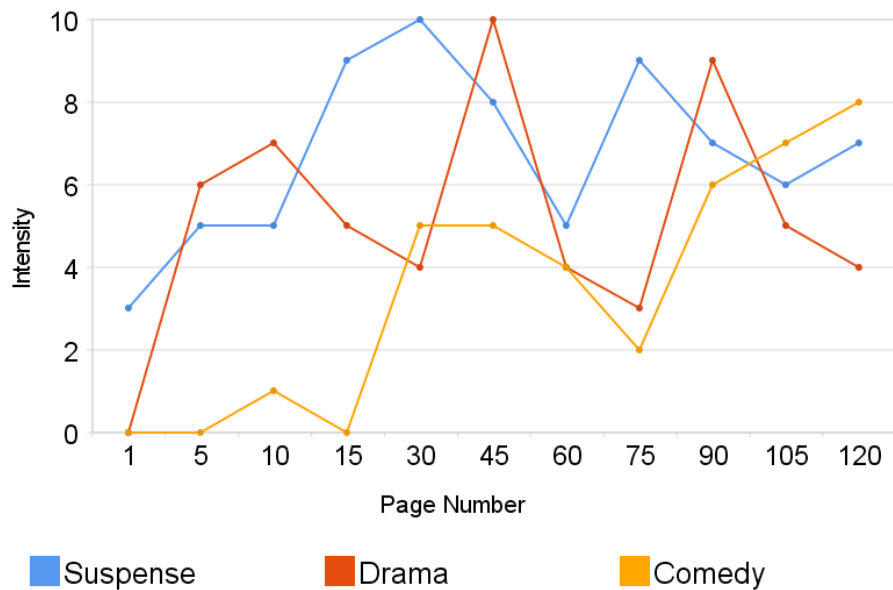
LOGLINE

Framed for murder, a computer genius escapes from jail to exact revenge on his former partner's company.

OVERALL NOTES

A cross between *The Fugitive* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *High-Tech* is filled with action-packed scenes that leap off the page. Unfortunately, the second act of the script is torn between two goals: evading the police and wreaking revenge on the person who put the protagonist, Collin, in jail. Because these two goals are constantly being juggled, there is little time for subplots or strong connections with the involved characters. The premise contains vast potential, but the script needs revisions to sharpen the focus and breadth of the story.

Emotional Response Chart



The Emotional Response Chart rates on an intensity scale of 0-10, 10 being the most intense, 0 lacking intensity.

	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCELLENT
CONCEPT			X	
PLOT		X		
PACING/STRUCTURE		X		
FORMAT				X
CHARACTERS	X			
DIALOGUE		X		
OVERALL		X		

SYNOPSIS

COLLIN CRAWFORD (20s) is on trial, accused of the cold-blooded murder of a stranger in an alley, though he has no recollection of the night of the crime. His history as a marine captured in the Iraq war makes him susceptible to blackouts, so his testimony is considered unreliable. When he is pronounced guilty and sentenced to 15 years in a Georgia State Prison, he loses everything - his wife, BETH, his booming computer company, Digibrave computer systems, and his best friend and company partner, ROY.

Four years later, Collin is resigned to his fate in prison. One day, a new inmate, NISBIT, arrives at the prison.. Collin recognizes Nisbit from the outside world and tries to strike up a conversation with him during lunch. Nisbit denies knowing Collin and leaves. The next time Collin is alone in the gym, Nisbit appears out of the shadows and attacks Collin with a rusty knife. Collin's marine skills kick in and he forces Nisbit to the ground, demanding information. As the guards race to break up the fight, Nisbit admits he was the one who set Collin up for murder. More so, the person who paid Nisbit for the set-up was Collin's best friend, Roy.

Outraged that his life has been yanked from him, Collin conspires with his sister, MARIE, a devout nun, to aid him in escaping prison. While on janitorial duties, Collin has time alone with the prison's mainframe. He hacks into it with ease and programs each security door to open and lock at a set time. Collin pulls the fire alarm as a distraction and simply walks right out of prison, the guards after him only once it's too late.

Collin forages through the swamps until he reaches a gas station. He changes in a bathroom where Marie has left him clean clothes. He hops a bus (where Marie waits inside) and they leave Georgia. Bent on getting back at Roy, Collin decides to go out to California where Roy has relocated. There, Collin stays with an ex-military barkeep named BOBBY who's willing to help Collin get new IDs and a new name: Patrick Daniels.

As Patrick, Collin applies for a maintenance position at Digibrave and, using Bobby as a fake reference, he gets the job. By acting lost and feigning confusion, Collin gains access to Digibrave's central computer, where he uploads a virus that he and Roy made years ago. The virus is very disruptive, but difficult to detect. Since Digibrave will soon be launching a new upgrade to their star program, Doors, the virus will be transferred to everyone who uses the new Doors.

While the first part of Collin's plan is in tact, he gets derailed when he sees Beth, his ex-wife, at Digibrave. She is now married to Roy and has a child. Beth notices Collin and tells him she knows it's him. Collin, however, puts on a New York accent and denies knowing her. Puzzled, but not quite convinced, Beth leaves.

Back at the bar, Collin develops a new program better than Digibrave's Doors. He shops it around to other computer companies, but none of them want to go against Digibrave... until Collin forces his way into Zorro Software where EVELYN, an ex-lawyer turned businesswoman, gives Collin's program consideration. They immediately form a partnership, in business and in the bedroom.

It isn't long before Evelyn recognizes Collin's face from the wanted posters and TV announcements. Evelyn calls Roy and offers to give up Collin if he will form a partnership with their software. One night, Evelyn drugs Collin and the police arrive after receiving an anonymous tip that Collin is inside. Drugged-up and blurry-eyed, he escapes on foot.

Collin returns to Bobby's bar, suspicious that Evelyn has set him up. He immediately taps her phone and overhears Evelyn's phone call to Roy. They're in cahoots to go into business together. Evelyn agrees to meet up with Roy to discuss merging their programs. Collin bugs Evelyn's purse, so he hears the meeting go from bad to worse. Instead of signing a contract to partner with Evelyn, Roy strangles her. Collin breaks down the door to save Evelyn, but it's too late. Roy's bodyguards knock Collin out and leave him entwined with Evelyn's body. Once again, Roy has framed Collin for murder.

Collin rouses as the police storm the building and escapes into the crowd outside via a disguise. He tries to go back to the bar, but Roy had his men burn it down. Collin has nowhere to go except to Beth.

Collin finds Beth at church, praying. Collin reveals himself and Beth confesses to Collin that the child is his. She married Roy shortly after Collin's incarceration so the child could have a father. However, she now believes Collin is innocent and that Roy is not the person he says he is. The two hide out in a motel and make passionate love, reunited at last.

Afterwards, Roy's face appears on the motel TV screen. Roy announces a new program, the one he and Evelyn were going to merge. It still contains part of the original program that contains Collin's virus (though Evelyn warned Roy about the virus). Roy announces plans to unveil the program at a Georgia tech convention then sell it on a national level.

Outraged, Collin vows to stop Roy at the convention. Beth and Collin drive out to Georgia where Marie waits for them. Together, they infiltrate the convention and Collin successfully hacks into Roy's computer in the middle of a large demonstration, posting the audio track of Roy admitting there is a virus in the program and then killing Evelyn. Just then, the Georgia police rush into the convention center, after Collin. Instead, they see Roy's murder evidence and arrest him as well.

Collin goes back to prison to await a retrial. Roy is put behind bars for murder. Collin speaks with his wife, confident that his crimes will be acquitted and he will soon walk back to his family a free man.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

CONCEPT

The concept of an action/thriller starring a computer hacker is a nice twist, emphasizing that the motherboard is mightier than the sword. There are strong action pieces, from escaping prison to infiltrating a high tech computer facility. Right now, the concept competes with two overall goals, fleeing the police and seeking revenge. In Act I, the script reads much more like *The Fugitive*, however it quickly turns into a revenge piece. Since revenge makes more sense with the direction the story is going, it may be more helpful to tone down the police threat. The police may still be something useful as a low point in Act II, however, it stunts Collin's revenge plans at the beginning of the act. As a revenge piece, this script is definitely a marketable story where justice is served, vigilante style.

PLOT/STRUCTURE

A key note regarding plot and the script on a whole is the need for simplicity. There are too many competing plots to easily follow the main character's goal and wants. While Collin quickly vows revenge on Roy, there are very few attempts or false starts throughout Act II to raise and lower hopes of Collin's success. Like a heist film, running into problems in the plan (such as an inability to get access to the building, a different computer system or security system that Collin is unfamiliar with) create a sense of tension and fear that Collin may not be able to complete his task.

While Act I is fast paced and cinematic, Act II suffers from inconsistencies. Split between Georgia and California, Collin's fugitive status quickly disappears and the story focuses on revenge. Beth and Roy are both aware of Collin's presence out of prison, yet neither call the police or report to the authorities. While Roy knows Collin is innocent, it would make sense that he would notify the police in order to keep Collin from coming anywhere near him. Beth, meanwhile, has been told Collin is a murderer, yet even she doesn't appear convinced. Therefore, the compounding conflict with the police disappears on page 40 until Evelyn's set up on page 72, meaning there are 32 pages in the heart of Act II where the police throughline has completely disappeared.

Evelyn is a great modern day femme fatale, but her appearance occurs very late for the large role she plays. Considering how torn-up Collin is over Evelyn's death, giving the characters more time to interact and be allies together is important. (She's introduced on page 62 and betrays him by page 68). It may improve the story to set up the Evelyn subplot much earlier in Act II, perhaps during or near the same time as Collin's infiltration of the Digibrave building. Not only will it give the story more tension if their partnership depends on his infiltration, but Collin will also have someone to talk to about his program while he is developing it. Plus, when Collin finds out the sickening truth that Beth is married to Roy, he will be more ready to leap into Evelyn's greedy arms.

A plot redundancy occurs on page 76 and page 96. Both times Collin is caught in Evelyn's building and must escape. These events are very similar to one another and may need to be combined. Perhaps on page 76, instead of the police showing up, it's Roy, for example and the bad transaction between Roy and Evelyn results in her death and Collin being framed.

Not only will this avoid two very similar action pieces, but the second escape ends in Collin leaving in a bearded disguise, which comes across as too over the top and cartoon-y.

One of the most obvious inconsistencies is with Collin's subplot with Beth. Beth has a toddler that she tells Collin is actually his. The toddler they are referring to is Aaron and he is introduced on page 40. However, on page 103, Collin states: "If you don't come home he'll get suspicious. Don't worry, he won't harm you. Especially if you're pregnant. And he thinks it's his." Is this a lie Collin has come up with, or is Beth pregnant again? Right now this part rings of inconsistency because Beth leaves for Georgia without their child in Act III. Not only has Beth left her child, but also Roy. Yet, Roy's reactions and suspicions are omitted from the piece. Surely when his wife is missing and the man he framed is on the loose, he must be suspicious or afraid of Collin reappearing.

The final conclusion in Georgia pays off because Collin can use his hacking abilities during Roy's presentation. Playing Roy's murder recording is a great way to catch Roy in the act, but it shows very little accomplishment on Collin's part. Once Collin recorded Evelyn's murder, it would have been very easy to anonymously submit that tape to the police. His computer hacking abilities were not a challenge (since it was his own program and he created it), nor was there a ticking time clock that if Roy went ahead with the presentation, certain doom would occur. Therefore, Act III needs revision to answer the "why here, why now" questions. It may be possible that Roy has kidnapped Beth and he must come to the convention to get her back. Or perhaps Collin recorded Evelyn's death in the computer Roy is using so he must hack Roy's computer. While these are mere suggestions, the point is to connect the event, time, and characters together for the final conclusion.

PACING

For an action/thriller, proper pacing is essential to keep the read fast, exciting, and kinetic. While the ambiguous opening slows down Act I, the action really takes off once Collin makes it to jail. Here, the environment, individuals, and information revealed creates immediacy and strong character-driven action that bursts into Act II.

Unfortunately, though Act II starts strong with Collin's run from the police, it quickly becomes less immediate without the threat of being discovered. The time Collin spends building a program and shopping it around feels like a different piece in comparison to the opening. Scenes of him programming are flat and lack the necessary conflict to push that specific task forward. It may be helpful to show Collin pursuing a more active task to get back at Roy. In fact, Collin's program may be something he devised in prison. That would eliminate the time he needs to develop it in the middle of Act II.

Act II picks up with the Evelyn subplot, however her betrayal and imminent demise marks a part in the script where the action isn't just plodding along, it's running. While this may help the speed of the script, the events that occur in Act III plow through without a moment's hesitation or quieter character revelations. While Act II is longer and needs a bigger fire under it to get going, Act III is the point where the pacing of the script can be slowed down and cherished as the reward of a story well told. As is, the pacing of Act III leans towards the comic, not the dramatic or suspenseful. The use of disguises and sneaking a nun into a convention has a sense of silliness to it. Collin's take-down of Roy is also humorous.

In the end, the take down is very simple on Collin's part, giving him time to toy with Roy. Since Collin has so much more power than Roy in the last battle, the scene plays comedic.

The narrative is vivid, well-written, and aids the pacing of the piece. Active verbs and strong but minimal details emphasize a sense of "show, don't tell" in an appealing and fun-to-read way.

Example:

Pg. 21: "...then begins to unscrew the plate off the card swipe with the bottom of an aerosol can-- Exposes a spaghetti dish made of different color wires. He crosses a select few..."

FORMAT

The format is impeccable, up-to-date, and aptly used throughout. The key to strong, professional format is using it to enhance the script and to provide clarity. There are several formatting choices, such as putting characters name in bold during introductions which are not traditional, but since it is used consistently throughout, it worked as well at putting the characters' names in CAPS the first time they are introduced.

The script contains several typos throughout and needs a careful proofread to spot these errors. Typos show a sense of hastiness in the draft and make the script seem less polished and professional.

Here are some typos found within the script:

Pg. 3: It's (Its) face is flashing. ("It's" is a contraction of "It is" where "Its" indicates possession).

Pg. 21: This part of the prison they kept oldschool (old school)

Pg. 33: He flips the lid off the trash can, finds Collin's claysoaked (clay-soaked) work boots. (And there may be a better word choice than 'soaked')

Pg. 77: Moving like on ocean where every wave plays by it's (its) own rules.

Also, there are more errors near the end of the script. In some areas, there is multiple spelling and grammatical errors per sentence:

Pg. 92: Collin keeps an eye on her, sipping an espresso (espresso), features somewhat blocked by a scarf warn (worn) high.

Pg. 107: And I'm disappointed you didn't listen--but right now non(e) of that matters because you're home and I agree with Beth, this plan of your's (yours) has a chance to make things right.

CHARACTERS

Collin has a military past as well as impeccable computer hacking skills. Instead of these abilities working together (i.e. Collin was a computer hacker for the military) they work separately in unfocused diverging directions. Having these two super abilities makes Collin a character of unstoppable force. Unfortunately, it's important to feel that Collin can be stopped and risks defeat every step of the way in order to feel invested in

the piece. Therefore, giving Collin weaknesses (i.e. not strong, not a master of disguise) puts him more at risk in situations that he must use his computers skills to evade and escape.

For example: On page 96, Collin is framed for Evelyn's murder and must escape the apartment building before the police show up. In the script, Collin puts on a disguise and walks out of the building. However, this is unlike Collin's character. He needs to use technology to evade the people after him. In an apartment building, he has options like jamming the elevator, triggering a burglary alarm, fire alarm, fire sprinklers, lawn sprinklers, building power, or intercom system, which would tie in with his technological abilities more than a disguise would.

While the above paragraph discusses Collin's abilities, it should also be noted that Collin's character needs more set up in Act I. Right now, the initial pages of discussion between the Marine and the Business Man provide more confusion than intrigue, and extra pages on Collin's life pre-jail could be useful here. Not only is it important to show who Collin is and how wrongly he was accused, but also to show the rich and happy life he had before it was torn away. Since this script is very similar to *The Count of Monte Cristo*, it may be beneficial to take a page from their set-up, showing a young man with everything going for him, the wife, the business, the little house with the picket fence. Now, when these things return in Act II, they have been tainted by Roy and his betrayal. Not only will setting up these characters and relationships help the audiences remember these characters when they show up 20 minutes to half an hour later in the piece, but they will also make Collin a sympathetic character right away.

Next, while Collin fights a tough battle on the outside against many people, he's fighting a very simplistic and superficial battle on the inside. While haunted by the past and by his current escaped convict status, Collin has no inner battle or scar that he can overcome by the end of the piece. The initial trial in Act I brings forth evidence that creates a possible doubt in Collin since he is susceptible to blackouts and flashbacks of war. However, these flashbacks never become a problem Collin needs to overcome in the piece. This may be the very character arc Collin needs. If Collin feels incapable because he can't escape the flashbacks, putting them aside to focus on the task at hand and take Roy down would be a real victory.

Much of the script is spent with Collin, but there are side characters that are also in need of development. The two key players are Roy and Beth. Roy's villainy is clear from the realization on pg. 15, but his motives and plans are foggy. It is often said that a hero can only be as good as the villain, and in that case, Roy needs more depth to show his plan and school of thought. For example, why did he feel the need to double-cross Collin in the first place? Was it power over the company? That may be possible, but many businessmen have discontinued partnerships without framing one another for murder. A more believable motive may be Beth. With Collin in the picture, Roy can never have Beth. Like with Roy, Beth also needs more in-depth concentration. Some of her lines, such as "You haven't done anything, but give me the greatest gift any man could ever give a woman" (pg. 101) comes across as clichéd and overstated. If there's one character that can bring Collin back from his streak of vengeance, it must be Beth. Therefore, she must be a strong yin to his yang.

DIALOGUE

Some passages in the dialogue are very natural and enhance the flow and momentum of the piece. However, often there are characters speaking or information pushed through the script that felt out of character, wooden, or forced. Good dialogue is coaxed out and often sounds like eavesdropping on a conversation.

It's imperative to avoid expository dialogue that comes across as unnatural and unconvincing. Often, this dialogue exists to advance the plot instead of to provide insight on the character. Good dialogue can infuse information subtly, or, if it isn't convincing, exposition can be introduced another way.

Here's an example with Nisbit's character:

Pg. 17:

I did it for the cash.

(then)

I don't know what you did to piss off your boy that bad. Have him payoff some ex-jarhead bookie to set up some ex-jarhead computer geek...

In the middle of a prison fight scene, this long explanation is out of character for Nisbit. The information of who paid whom and that Nisbit was a military man and a bookie comes across as way too information. Wouldn't Collin know they're both jarheads? Wouldn't he know Nisbit was a bookie? Why is Nisbit telling him this information, and more importantly, why now in the middle of a fight? Therefore, the dialogue comes across as overtly expository. A stronger place for this information may be in the scene on pg. 14 when Nisbit denies knowing Collin. Collin could then respond with some of this information (i.e., of course I know you Nisbit, you're an ex-jarhead bookie from South Beach Florida. And you look like shit.)

Also, as noted previously, this script follows similar themes to *The Count of Monte Cristo* and other vigilante/revenge type stories. However, dialogue that overly references this comes across as too obvious and unneeded.

Here are some examples where *The Count of Monte Cristo* shows up in the script:

Pg 23: You're not the Count of Monte Cristo, Collin.

And later:

Pg 105: I can't believe you. I should kill you, I should freaking kill you. I told you not to go around playing Count of Monte Cristo, didn't I?

And one more time:

Pg 118: Look who decided to show up. Hey,
you've been reading way too much
Count of Monte Cristo.

This dialogue, especially repeated, is far too on the nose on this subject matter.

OVERALL

The real strengths of the piece are the concept, format, and narrative. These elements show that the writer has potential and that there is a possibility that a story like this can be polished and revised to a more cohesive script. Until the screenplay is up to caliber, it is currently rated as a Pass. However, quick fixes and simplification can greatly enhance the piece.

SCRIPT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Fugitive, The Count of Monte Cristo, The Shawshank Redemption, Eagle Eye.

	PASS	CONSIDER	RECOMMEND
SCRIPT	X		
WRITER		X	