



TREATMENT / BIBLE REPORT

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

PROJECT TITLE:	UPSURGE
WRITER:	Paul Jones
MAIN GENRE:	Thriller
SUB-GENRE:	Action
SETTING:	Various – London, Spain
PERIOD:	Present Day
POSSIBLE BUDGET:	Medium
PAGE LENGTH:	17
FORMAT:	Treatment
LOGLINE:	Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline
COMPARABLE TITLES:	BODY OF LIES, THE AMERICAN
PROJECT VERDICT:	Low Consider
CONSULTANT:	FYZ
REPORT WORD COUNT:	2,451
REPORT DATE:	03/19/19

Project Overview

UPSURGE is a taut spy thriller in the vein of titles like BODY OF LIES, THE AMERICAN and MARATHON MAN. Even within the parameters of a treatment, what already sticks out about the concept is the way it tackles its tense action set-pieces, all of which are brilliantly constructed, constantly raising the stakes around a clear, tangible goal in the way the best action scenes do. Anna makes for a really fresh central character, too, one whose pre-existing struggles add even more weight and tension to those already-strong sequences. There is, however, more work to do when it comes to characterisation and, by extension, theme, neither of which feel as clear as they could. The narrative touches on some really interesting ideas regarding

Anna's internal struggle, but doesn't yet push them far enough to give her a clear, emotive arc.

Notes

UPSURGE's core concept has a lot going for it. As above, Anna herself makes for a brilliantly fresh action/thriller protagonist. Though female-led action/thrillers have become a little more prevalent of late, with titles like *ATOMIC BLONDE*, *PROUD MARY*, *WIDOWS* and *PEPPERMINT* in just the last year or two, in Anna UPSURGE manages to find a protagonist with the scope for some really distinct personal conflicts. It's a great touch to have her haunted by her military past, something the narrative explores quite viscerally through her trauma-fuelled vision of the moment Kate saved her in the first act, through her short-fuse insecurity surrounding her missing hand. This immediately builds a new level of conflict into the core premise – this is a character for whom diving into the twisting, violent tunnels of an action thriller is *specifically* challenging. This is a combat veteran who's been relegated to data inputting at the MOD, her physical capabilities presumably in question. This is someone who grapples with clear symptoms of PTSD being asked to go undercover on a dangerous mission, outside the comparatively safe parameters of an actual assignment.

And it's testament to the story-work here that these struggles get effective pay-offs in the meat of the story itself. There's a great moment later on when Anna spins her rental car around in order to take on the pursuing Russian thugs in their van. As they pepper her windscreen with bullets, she keeps her prosthetic hand on the wheel while she ducks for cover. It's a clever reversal of the scene on her bike early on, when she's mortified that her prosthetic has fallen off. There, she seems enraged by the way it affects outside perception of her, snapping at the man who tries to help her pick it up, as if she needs the help. Here, it's an asset allowing her to pull a dangerous manoeuvre while protecting herself from harm. It's a clever way of illustrating a development in her character purely through action.

We can see something similar with the PTSD-fuelled vision, too. It's something the narrative explicitly ties to Anna's motivation to help Kate: having refused Kate's request for help first time, it's a vision of the moment she lost her hand and Kate saved her that prompts Anna to change her mind. Similar visions/dreams crop up later on in relation to Harry, once when Anna looks in the mirror while searching Harry's house after his death and again when she slips out of consciousness in the hotel kitchen and has the dream about him laughing as she shoots him. Both cases nicely mirror the first, in

that they prompt a step up in determination or action from Anna, first in reminding her where to look for Harry's stash and second in steeling her resolve to get to Kate. It's nicely constructed.

Making the drive of the story Anna's love affair with Kate, too, sets this apart from many other titles in the genre. It gels particularly well with the specifics of the plot in the first half, i.e. the way Anna is forced to get close to Harry. Though *their* relationship never crosses over into romantic, there's definite tension in the way Anna is forced to cosy up to the man responsible for the suffering of the person she most cares about. This set-up gives rise to some of the story's best scenes, the stand-out being Harry knocking on Anna's door when she's with Kate (a *brilliant* scene).

That said, there is work to do when it comes to Anna and her core motivation. Currently, Kate's death at the end of the narrative deflates the tension of the story because saving her completely eclipses everything else as Anna's core drive. We're hinting at several other intriguing aspects of Anna's character, but not yet playing them out as well as we could. There's the struggle with her missing hand, as above. Though it gets a nice pay-off, it's worth noting that Anna never seemingly struggles with her hand in a significant way after that initial bike incident. If the narrative seeks to explore her battle to come to terms with this loss, the feeling of despondency implied in the logline, then it feels like we'd need to push that struggle further once the plot is fully underway. Can it cause her to fumble in a life or death moment? Can we see her struggling to engage with her enemies out of fear of being physically incapable? To really sell the sense that she's overcoming something, we need to see her grapple with it more extensively. We need to feel that sense of powerlessness that she's successfully overcome by the time she's storming the farmhouse at the climax of the film.

The same is true of her characterisation more broadly. We do highlight her PTSD, as above, but the story touches on a deeper idea here, through Anna's mother's VO, that Anna *needs* the danger and excitement in her life to be happy. Again, a great idea, but like the prosthetic, it's not something we see her struggle with as significantly as we need to. The reason this is an issue is that, without that clearer sense of Anna's journey as a character, specifically what she wants beyond the broad 'to help Kate', saving her lover becomes the be-all and end-all of the narrative. And that means when Kate dies it's less a moment of powerful emotional development for Anna and more a sudden 'well, she failed' before shifting focus onto Anna's new job at MI6, something that doesn't really feel like a clear enough resolution to anything we've delved into early on. Sure, we've seen her bored at a desk, but how are we really

showing that her life is a barren wasteland without the danger her mother's VO implies she needs? Has she been completely barred from active duty despite protesting? Does she ever deliberately escalate minor conflicts in her day-to-day life just to feel something, picking barfights, lashing out at people? It's about finding ways to make this really feel like a problem facing Anna at the beginning of the story. As it stands, these interesting character ideas feel quite peripheral, quite incidental, alluded to once or twice (and effectively) but never developed into a full-on character arc (even accepting the limitations of the treatment format).

This is where theme comes in. Because we aren't delving into these potentially deeper elements of the story, it's difficult to figure out what the story is about in the deeper, thematic sense. The idea that the adrenaline and danger of violent combat can be its own brand of addictive could definitely work as a core idea here, but as above, we'd need to explore it more extensively. Same with Anna overcoming her struggle with her injury – we set up the idea that this might be about someone grappling with a shift in both society's perception of them *and* their own self-perception, but it's something that never fully develops beyond the first act. There's an interesting idea touched on later in the narrative by the unusual dream Anna has at the hotel, in which Harry keeps repeating that he's rich as Anna's attacks fail to make any impact on him. This hints at another potential theme, the idea that wealth can immunise someone to the repercussions of their own actions. It's implicit in the set-up of the story, too, given Kate ends up unjustly losing her job for trying to speak out against Harry's crimes. But no one idea feels clearly baked into the story just yet. There are hints at theme, but no unifying 'thing' that the story emotively explores. It's worth figuring out exactly what that might be and allowing it to inform the characterisation and even the progression of the story that bit more.

Turning to the moment-to-moment of the story, it's worth noting that, even in treatment form, the story absolutely nails its action beats. Effective action/tension scenes tend to rely three key elements:

- 1) A clock (not necessarily literally)
- 2) A concrete goal
- 3) Either an environment or a series of events that seemingly conspire to keep our characters just shy of that goal until the close of the sequence – it's about these mini-victories and new problems constantly coming into play.

As above, probably the best example of this is the scene in which Harry knocks on Anna's door when she's with Kate. The stakes are constantly shifting and escalating, but all around a simple core goal: don't get caught. Each time we think the tension has abated, the narrative brings in some new element to ramp it up again. Anna has seemingly talked Harry into leaving... then he bursts forcefully through the door. Anna and Kate have successfully hidden his body from Maria... then Maria reveals she's called the police. Anna and Kate escape the apartment... but the police stop them for dangerous driving. This is masterfully constructed, continuously lulling us into thinking they've finally gotten away with it before shoving some new tension-builder into play.

It's also worth shouting out the *great* pay off with the lift, something the story inconspicuously sets up via Anna's first interaction with Maria at the start of the narrative, and then brings into play here when the police are unable to use it, drawing out the tension all the more tantalisingly. We can see this technique applied across all of the script's action set-pieces, drawing on elements of the environment to unpredictably exacerbate the tension in play, be it via the drunk people at the hotel or the parcel delivery man at the farmhouse. No action scene plays out in a straight line here – it's all about these incidental details swerving us in a new direction, and it works beautifully. This stands the concept in good stead – it's an action/thriller after all, so this is a *big* thing to get right.

If there's an issue facing the moment-to-moment story itself, it's that there's something of a step down as we enter the second half. What the first half of the narrative really has going for it, over and above solid action staging and a good lead character, is an interesting antagonist. Harry's odd switches between overtly charming and suddenly aggressive, even violent (e.g. when he pushes Anna or smashes her phone) make him a genuinely intriguing presence. We're never quite sure how much or how little he knows, and the weird game of cat and mouse he and Anna play, each snooping on the other, makes for a really tense sequence at the villa. It's bolstered by this sense that, given his twitchiness, perhaps he's suffering from very similar internal problems to Anna herself. His death is a great, surprising moment, and gives rise to a great little set-piece as Anna and Kate try to cover their tracks, but it's worth noting that Harry's 'replacements' in the role of antagonist never feel nearly as interesting as him.

Emil, Vasily, Viktor and Ivan, aside from slightly blending into one another in their own right, also feel like characters we've seen before, the archetype of a Russian thug. They spend most of the second half of the film repeatedly

asking the same question - Where's Harry? - and what little insight we get into them beyond that lines up with our expectations, like Viktor's tryst with a nameless woman being interrupted by an angry Emil. With Harry we're never sure whether he's actively malicious or just a bit self-serving and traumatised. With these guys, our knee-jerk judgement of them – that they're archetypal violent criminals – is consistently proven correct, rendering them quite unsurprising antagonists.

Of course, some of this will be about the way they're characterised on the page, the differences in their dialogue and so on. But it remains the case that, in concept, these characters don't feel particularly distinct from the kind of Russian thug archetype we might expect to see anywhere from a Bond film to JOHN WICK to the DAREDEVIL series (and those last two do make efforts to add a little more depth to theirs). It's a shame, particularly in a narrative that's so good at playing with unpredictability in the heat of its action, that our big bads just aren't as interesting as the other elements of the story.

Conclusion

So, a solid core concept here, one that really shines when it comes to its action set-pieces, and with a fresh narrative set-up to boot. The key areas moving forward are:

- Developing the intriguing elements of Anna's character further, from seeing her struggle with her injury a little more in the heat of the action to exploring her need for danger and violence, something that's currently stated but not yet unravelled.

- Making a clearer decision about the story's core theme. Are we exploring a woman overcoming her trauma, making a comment on the unfair freedom of those with wealth and power, or homing in on the idea that violence and danger can be a drug? Of course we can touch on multiple themes, but there isn't yet a central driving force here.

- Elevating the second half by making our antagonists more distinct, interesting presences. Part of this might be about giving them a little more to do. They're somewhat stuck at the moment sitting with Kate and pushing her for the same info (or battling Anna). Is there a broader plan they're working towards here?

About Your Script Consultant: FYZ

Your analyst is an experienced pro script consultant and editor who has assessed material extensively for Industrial Scripts, and is also a screenwriter 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 and critique 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!