Being Joanna

Trust can be the most dangerous illusion.

Pitch Deck Presentation
Presented By: Rita Hanner-Ward

Logline & Synopsis

LOGLINE

After helping a fragile new hire, a transgender recruitment specialist becomes the target of a coworker's escalating resentment — a slow psychological unraveling that ultimately erupts into a life-threatening confrontation in her own home.

SYNOPSIS

Joanna, a newly promoted ad rep at a local newspaper, becomes a lifeline for Millie — a colleague struggling with isolation and mental health challenges. Joanna's support draws the attention of Gwen, a resentful coworker whose quiet jealousy begins to warp ordinary workplace tensions into something more personal and unsettling.

As Gwen's fixation deepens, Joanna finds herself navigating a slow psychological unraveling that blurs professional boundaries and erodes her sense of safety. When Millie abruptly disappears, the tension shifts from unease to threat, culminating in a violent confrontation inside Joanna's home — where Gwen's escalating resentment erupts into a life-threatening attack. What begins as an act of compassion becomes a fight for survival.

Main Character

JOANNA SEBERG (JO)

A competent and indispensable recruitment specialist at a local newspaper, Joanna is kind-hearted, overly trusting, protective, and fiercely loyal — qualities that make her beloved by colleagues but also draw her into situations she should avoid. Her instinct to safeguard others blinds her to danger until it’s too late.

Joanna is also a woman in transition, approaching her final gender-affirming surgery — a moment defined by vulnerability, resolve, and emotional truth. She carries quiet strength, grounded realism, and the resilience of someone who has survived more than she ever speaks aloud.

Key Supporting Characters

GWEN TURNER — COWORKER / ANTAGONIST

Jo's trusted younger coworker, Gwen presents as warm, sweet, and indispensable — but beneath that façade she's jealous, conniving, and increasingly vicious. Her hidden envy curdles into cruelty, steering workplace tensions toward a collision course only Jo fails to see coming.

MILLIE COOPER — NEW HIRE / CATALYST

Socially fragile and medically vulnerable, Millie is homeless and living with bipolar disorder, her discomfort in social situations leading her to fixate on Joanna with a kind of hero-worship, yet beneath that awkwardness she carries deep loyalty and an enviable skill set that could finally give her solid ground if she can hold herself together.

CHRISTINE MANN — DEPARTMENT MANAGER

Christine runs the department with sharp efficiency and genuinely admires Jo, relying on her as the steady center that keeps chaos at bay. But as tensions rise, Jo begins to doubt Christine's neutrality, seeing her less as an advocate and more as a corporate mouthpiece whose loyalties may not be as clear as they once seemed.

FRANKLIN JEFFERSON — VP / COMPLICATION

A married VP at the newspaper, Franklin crosses professional and ethical lines by pursuing Jo while keeping her at arm's length. Charming but opaque, he manipulates through half-truths and treats their relationship as something he can compartmentalize rather than commit to.

Writer | Creator

SCREENWRITING RECOGNITION

Feature - Being Joanna

- Semi-Finalist: Berlin International Screenwriting Festival
- Quarterfinalist: Page Turner Screenplays International Competition
- Official Selection: StoryPros International Screenplay Contest

Feature — What We Leave Unsaid

- Finalist: Wiki Screenplay Contest
- Semifinalist: Santa Barbara International Screenplay Awards
- Quarterfinalist: Palm Springs Diversity Screenplay Contest

Short — Six Degrees of Ted

- Winner: Best Comedy Screenplay — Oregon Short Film Festival
- Finalist: Wiki Screenplay Contest
- Semifinalist: Flickers' Rhode Island International Film Festival
- Quarterfinalist: Outstanding Screenplays Shorts Competition
- Official Selection: Austin Short Film Festival

Short — The Pillar

- Winner — Best Short Screenplay, Wiki Screenplay Contest

WRITER BIO

Rita Hanner-Ward is a screenwriter and contemporary American author whose work centers on emotionally grounded, character-driven storytelling. She writes drama and dark comedy with a focus on transformation, reconciliation, and the quiet moments that define relationships. Her internationally set romantic-suspense fiction, published under the Kiva Wolfe™ brand, informs her strong sense of voice, atmosphere, and narrative tension. Across both mediums, her work is known for emotional clarity, intimate character arcs, and a restrained visual sensibility that honors the spaces between words.

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Slides Not Available for Public Viewing

Budget
Casting Potential
Director’s Vision
Distribution Strategy
Festival Strategy
Genre, Tone & Themes
Hype Media
Setting & Atmosphere
Target Audience
Why This Story Now?

Pitchdeck Presentation:
Being Joanna

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for your time and interest!

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