



Entry Type: Bespoke Notes (WeScreenplay)

Marketing Blueprint: Analysis for Self-producing

Synopsis Included: No

Notes Date: January 8th, 2023

Analyst: 7X04V4

Ranking: 62nd Percentile

# RASCAL

Thriller

Feature

107 Pages

by Esmarelda Villalobos

**TOP 20%**  
CHARACTERS

**RATING**  
**PASS**  
PLACED IN THE TOP 38%

Percentiles are based on historical data of scores given out by this analyst.

For increased consistency, we calculate a project's pass/consider/recommend rating by using the scores input by the analyst and their history of scoring. Approximately 3% of projects receive a recommend and ~20% of projects receive a consider.

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## OPENING THOUGHTS

The setting and characters of this drama are distinctive and believable, and the main character, Rascal, is plucky and easy to root for. Her character arc, however needs to be expanded and more needs to happen in the plot. Roger is telegraphed early as the baddie, so there needs to be something aside from Marley's death to hold audience interest.

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## CHARACTERS

The hero (or anti-hero) of this piece is a prostitute named Rascal. She doesn't have much backstory, though she reveals- fairly late in the plot- that she and Marley have been besties since childhood. It's unclear why Rascal, who is sharp and self-possessed, has had to resort to selling herself. She declares that she enjoys her job, though she has no tolerance for dumb or cheap clients. If she's so beautiful and good at her job, why hasn't she gone south to ply her trade in Las Vegas, where there's potentially a much better payday?

Perhaps she's stuck at Roger's place to look after Marley, who is presented as a hopeless addict who is apathetic and always falling asleep. Rascal being protective of her makes sense, but there needs to be a more thorough picture of the two women's relationship. If Rascal cares so much about Marley that she's willing to murder and burn things down, then why hasn't she put energy towards helping Marley in some other way before her OD? Is money the only barrier or are the women locked in a co-dependent relationship? Has there been romance between the two? There are many potential links between the two women that could make the run-up to Marley's death more poignant.

Roger is the another important person in Rascal's life, for better or worse. At first, he's painted as a crotchety boss complaining about money- a difficult father figure who nevertheless keeps a roof over the women's heads. Later in the narrative, he becomes an outright monster that needs to be put down. This robs the story of a good bit of nuance and turns it into a straight revenge fantasy. It's not particularly meaningful for a one dimensional figure like Roger to be taken out.

Danny is the equivalent of a pilot fish, a naive young local who's fallen for Rascal and is by her side as her life disintegrates. While sympathetic, Danny is an ancillary figure in the Rascal-Roger melodrama. He could possibly be melded with the Hector character to get him closer to the action. HE could be working at the ranch just to get closer to Rascal.

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## PLOT

When this story wraps up with two dead leads- Rascal and Roger- the audience may not be clear why it has been told. If it's a tribute to Rascal's loyalty to her friend, that friendship needs to be detailed before Marley's death. If it's about justice, then the reason for Roger's crimes- and how he did them- should take center stage. As it stands, Rascal's theories about the overdose are unproven. She and Roger spar over the dead girls though it seems that he did off them for profit. There needs to be something more substantial like a graveyard to emphasize this. The most intriguing possible arc for Rascal is her liberation from a life that she insists she doesn't mind so much. Marley's death jolts her out of her complacency and sets her on a tragic course were she gets her revenge (and freedom) at the cost of her life. This isn't so much about punishing Roger as a tale of Rascal putting on end to her own self-punishment. Whichever main plot line the writer chooses needs to be more defined and tied in with the emotional events at the end of the story.

On a side note, there was one particularly jarring moment. On p. 27, MacReady tastes the powder at the bottom of Marley's drug bag when he's aware it could be deadly fentanyl. Not likely a chance he would take.

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## STRUCTURE

This is a standard sequential narrative that relies on a familiar mystery/thriller template but doesn't fully use- or tweak- genre conventions to create conflict and tension. Instead, it operates on what feels like a predetermined track to destruction. Unforgiven has a similar structure with the doomed lead, Bill Munny, called to avenge some wronged working girls. Tension is built as the lead gets closer to the point where he'll have to break his vow of non-violence. There needs to be a similar sense of destiny here. As mentioned in the plot section, this story develops late and suffers from a lack of detail about the Rascal-Marley relationship. Marley dies on p.27, a quarter of the way through but the her death gives her sudden importance (and impetus) to Rascal. The audience might be confused by this.

The next third of the story consists of Rascal clashing with Roger over his treatment of Marley's death and slowly uncovering clues about what happened to her friend. The first mini-climax is when Rascal sets the brothel on fire while confined to Roger's office. The second climax sees the final showdown of Rascal and Roger. Neither survives. The two moments are roughly equivalent in terms of conflict when the second one ought to up the stakes even further.

The ending is appropriately philosophical as the eternal Maxine's Ranch has been cleansed of its current residents and is ready to reboot into its next life. This is a memorable image but it also undercuts the importance of Rascal's sacrifice. Instead of being a hero, Rascal is just the latest victim of a cycle of existential meaninglessness. This revenge fantasy has morphed into a tragedy.

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## DIALOGUE

For a character who is supposedly trapped in her circumstances, Rascal's dialogue is surprisingly forthright and powerful. It's what differentiates her from the rest of the prostitutes and makes her easy for the audience to root for. Her verbal showdowns with Roger could be a place where the script's themes are laid out and tested. Unfortunately, the two characters end up repeating the same gripes instead of showing some sort of evolution. On p. 27, Rascal's dialogue post Marley's death shows her willingness to directly challenge Roger instead of just sparring with him. Then his refusal to postpone the Halloween party sets her on a course of confrontation. The time for conversation seems to be over as the two characters on p. 30-31 just repeat the same arguments fruitlessly. A more effective scene is when Rascal pretends to be melting down to get access to Roger's office (p. 30). She's using the skills she's gained lying to johns to now help her investigate Marley's fentanyl overdose.

So what's changed/resolved by the time Rascal and Roger have their final conversation? First, for some reason, Roger confesses outright to murdering the girls. Rascal has been vindicated but this doesn't change her course of action. She's become animalistic and screeches as she bludgeons Roger to death. What had started as a complex relationship of snarky reciprocity has devolved to a violent world where dialogue is no longer useful. The characters' regression is clear, but the implications for the overall theme are cloudy. If Rascal is now a murderer and is dead herself, should she be differentiated from Roger?

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## CONCEPT

This low budget (sub \$10 million) piece is a drama/thriller blend in the vein of Blood Simple but less nihilistic despite its setting and the bloody final sequence. Female protagonist is an avenging angel in lingerie, setting right a long series of wrongs done to women like her. This genre doesn't aim for a wide audience but could achieve cult status under the right circumstances. The idea of sex workers taking

revenge has an old west feel, and the description at the beginning of the story even mentions a certain out-of-time quality to the brothel, as if it were both a social oasis and a metaphorical island where the law doesn't apply.

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## FINAL THOUGHTS

This reads like a niche indie piece so should be honed with that marketplace and audience in mind. Rascal is a complex-enough character to perhaps appeal to a known actor who can bring in some financing. But the plot line needs to be expanded beyond her simply finding something out and taking revenge. Preparing the narrative ground for Marley's death could add emotional depth and context.

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## HOW WELL DOES THIS SCRIPT APPEAL TO A TARGET AUDIENCE?

It's unclear who the target audience is, or there are tonal or plot elements that make the story unsuitable for the target audience.

The target audience is clear. There may be a few tonal or plot elements that are out of step, but generally they are easily addressed/adjusted, and the script is in good shape.

The script is perfect for its target audience. The tone and content all serve the story in a way that is appropriate and appealing for the people who will be watching it.

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## ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS ABOUT THE TARGET AUDIENCE

It would seem like this piece has a whiff of girl power meant to appeal to a female audience, but the violence and the sexual element is more compatible with a male point of view. There may not be quite enough action, though, to snag a thriller cohort. Piece moves from spotlighting an offbeat family unit (the prostitutes) to more standard revenge fare ( Rascal's Kill Bill turn). This blending of genres as well as shifts in focus could be accommodated in the indie genre.

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## HOW IS THE SCRIPT'S FORMAT, GRAMMAR, AND SPELLING?

The script can become a slow read because of typos, formatting, or other issues.

The script has a few typos, formatting, or grammatical issues, but overall looks professional.

The script has limited errors, and the word choice and formatting make this an easy read. It feels professional.

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## ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS ABOUT THE PRESENTATION AND READABILITY

Overall, this script conforms to standard script format. There are a few minor quibbles including an overlong, editorializing introduction before the first scene. The general vibe could be gotten across more economically. On p. 68, there's a stylistic hiccup that has the stage direction "he knows what she's talking about" mirrored by Danny's line "Do you know what she's talking about?" Anything that might cause a reader to stop and go back should be avoided.

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## HOW DOES THE BUDGET AFFECT LIKELIHOOD OF THE SCRIPT FINDING FINANCING?

The budget required makes it unlikely that an independent producer will be able to secure the necessary financing.

With a few alterations, the script will fall within reasonable budgeting parameters.

The script seems possible to shoot at a budget that would make sense for the genre and likely market.

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## ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS ABOUT THE PRODUCIBLE BUDGET

There's nothing in the script that is prohibitive in terms of budget. On a macro level, it's subject

matter- sexual, violent/bloody- would categorize it at least as an R. R rated films have the lowest percentage box office return over the past twenty-five years, but the limited budget required to make this piece would make return on investment less of an issue. Watering down the story's content would neutralize it's identity.

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## HOW WOULD THE AMOUNT AND TYPE OF LOCATIONS IMPACT FINANCING?

Script has many locations, or requires hard-to-acquire locations that would be expensive to secure or build.

Minor alterations to the script would not impact the story and would significantly reduce the number or difficulty of locations.

The script has limited locations that would be easily acquired or inexpensive to build.

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## ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS ABOUT THE REALISTIC LOCATIONS

The main location is the brothel, which us both a refuge and a place of secrets. Other locations include the desert itself, the lonely bar and the interior of McCready's police car. The fire could possibly be a budgetary sticking point, but it's not that big. Financing shouldn't be affected negatively by location considerations.

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## HOW WOULD THE CAST SIZE IMPACT FINANCING?

Script contains scenes with crowds, or includes more than a handful of named, speaking characters that would add significant budget expenditures.

Script has a few scenes with crowds or a handful of unneeded speaking characters, but they can be adjusted to keep the budget within acceptable parameters.

Script has limited speaking characters and requires few or no extras.

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## ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS ABOUT THE CAST SIZE

This piece is pretty centralized but requires a certain number of prostitutes in order to create a believable world at the brothel. After the fire, there's a pretext for the cast to be trimmed down to the essentials as the final confrontations play out. Townspeople (men) are needed for the Halloween scene, the most populated sequence in the piece. The small number of workers begs the question of how Roger manages to pay them and eke out a living (occasional murders notwithstanding).



# RASCAL

**VIRTUALLY PERFECT**  
98th - 100th Percentile

**EXCELLENT**  
85th - 97th Percentile

**GOOD**  
50th - 84th Percentile

**IMPROVE**  
0th - 49th Percentile

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Overall  
Impression  
71st Percentile

Plot  
42nd Percentile

Concept  
61st Percentile

Structure  
57th Percentile

Characters  
80th Percentile

Dialogue  
71st Percentile

## RATING

**PASS**

PLACED IN THE TOP 38%

### ABOUT STORY ANALYST 7X04V4

I have been an industry professional for many years, working for film/tv clients such as Village Roadshow, Netflix, Skydance Media, Imperative Entertainment and Global Road Entertainment as both a script evaluator and a book-to-film specialist. I have also done evaluations for contests such as Universal's Global Talent Development and Inclusion.

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