

SCRIPT COVERAGE SAMPLE

TITLE: WIND RIVER
WRITTEN BY: TAYLOR SHERIDAN
FORM: FEATURE-LENGTH SCREENPLAY
GENRE: DRAMA, MYSTERY
COVERAGE BY: CHRISTIAN LOCANTORE

LOGLINE: When the frozen body of an 18-year-old Native girl is found barefoot in the snow on Wyoming's Wind River Reservation, a seasoned local tracker and an inexperienced FBI Agent from Florida must uncover what she was running from.

SYNOPSIS: WIND RIVER opens on a young native woman running for her life, barefoot, through the freezing cold, snow-filled desert of the Wind River Indian Reservation. The story takes its time to come back to this woman as we meet our protagonist, Cory Lambert, 40s, half-native half-white, hunting two coyotes stalking a herd of sheep. Cory is told about new predators on the loose, mountain lions. After an intense opening, the script begins to slow down as it spends time showing Cory pick up his son from his ex-wife, and we see a picture of their daughter on a mantle--a shrine of sorts. Cory teaches Casey how to ride a horse before taking him to Casey's grandparents as Cory has to investigate the possible mountain lions lurking about. Except, when Cory goes out looking for their tracks, he finds footprints that lead to a body lying frozen dead in the snow. He sees her face, a familiar one, then calls in assistance.

We are back at Casey's grandparents home where Cory, tribal police chief Ben, and Casey's grandfather await on the porch in the midst of a snowstorm for the FBI. We meet Jane Banner(28), struggling to make her way through the storm as she can't see the roads. They spot her SUV and Cory fetches her. It becomes clear from her clothing, Floridian look, and fervent shivering on the porch after a few minutes that Jane is inexperienced and out of her league in the Wyoming winter. When Cory takes her to the body, Jane attempts to sound experienced, but receives condescending remarks from nearby officers and EMT. The body is identified as Natalie Hanson. Jane orders a rape kit and declares this a homicide, then Cory shows her Natalie's tracks and puts together some of the pieces that lead to her death. Jane asks Cory who he works for/what's his job, and he states he hunts predators, which Jane asks him to hunt one for him.

The script takes us through the Wind River Reservation, showing the despair, hopelessness, and poverty that is abundant.

Along the way, so too do we see Jane's naivety and inexperience, particularly with her offending Natalie's father with ignorant questions and then walking in on Natalie's mother cutting herself as she intended to question her too. They get their first lead, Natalie's brother, who lives in a trailer with meth addicts down the road. Upon investigating, Jane and Ben are pepper sprayed, Jane being forced to kill one of the men living there as Cory knocks out Natalie's brother who attempts to flee through the back. Cory spots tracks from the trailer that lead up a mountain, and Jane joins him, where they find a white man's body torn to shreds. They return to the crime scene below and Cory illegally interrogates Natalie's brother in the back of a police van, getting their first major lead: the name and whereabouts of Natalie's boyfriend, Matt, a security guard on a nearby drill site, who Cory suspects was the identity of the body they found prior.

Before investigating the drill site the next day, Jane visits Cory at his home for the night. We learn what happened to Cory's daughter, Emily(16), as Jane sees a photo and Cory explains. When Cory treated his wife to a night together at a motel, friends caught on to their absence, and a party occurred at their home. Eventually, some who weren't friends must have came by, Cory doesn't know the rest except Natalie reported their daughter missing. She was found dead in the snow twenty miles away, torn apart by coyotes, which Cory has been hunting ever since. Jane finally understands why he is helping, and gets comfort in knowing why he is so good at this, now being able to fully trust him.

The next day Cory, Ben, Jane, and two other deputies head out to the drill site. Cory separates from the group and heads up the mountains nearby where he previously found the body of Matt, looking for a connection. The rest of the group is met by a security guard of the drill site, Curtis. He leads them back to the trailers when a few more security guards join in escorting them. The deputies notice the drill site security guards are flanking them, and draw their weapons. Chaos ensues. All weapons are drawn. Yelling and panic consumes everyone. Jane steps up to take command, announcing herself as FBI and gets everyone to holster their weapons, her leading by example first. They make their way to Matt's trailer. Curtis informs her Pete, their bunkmate, is inside and Jane steps up to knock on the door when we are taken into a flashback. Natalie is at the door, surprise visiting Matt. They lay in bed and speak about getting off the Rez, moving to Cheyenne where Matt will have police training. Then, vehicles are heard outside as the rest of the security team returns to the trailer from a drunken night out. We finally meet our antagonist, Pete, who instigates a fight by sitting on their bed, trying to peek under the covers at Natalie. Matt punches him, a fight ensues, they are both knocked out.

Natalie wakes up Pete raping her, the rest of the guys waiting for their turn. Matt wakes too and fights them off once again, giving Natalie room to get away and run out of the trailer while Matt is left getting beaten. We come back to the present with Jane knocking on the door and Cory radioing in to Ben as he found more tracks leading down the mountain to the drill site, putting the pieces together. Its too late though as shotgun shells fly out of the door, knocking Jane off onto the ground. A shootout begins and everyone on Jane's team is killed, including Ben. Curtis, another security guard, and Pete remain. Curtis and the security guard finish off anyone who is still breathing, but as Curtis stands over Jane, a rifle sounds and he is shot dead. No one knows where the bullet came from. Pete and the security guard panic and hide in the trailer. The security guard points out the window where the bullet came from, before he too is shot dead. Jane hides under the trailer, and as Pete jumps out the back, she shoots at him. He falls, but gets back up and keeps running as his vest protects him. Cory pops under the trailer, revealing himself as the sharp shooter, and helps Jane inside. Jane is otherwise fine as Cory checks on her, putting pressure on a neck wound, then she clears him to chase Pete--knowing Cory will not bring him back alive. Cory finds Pete, knocks him out, and brings him much further up the mountain. Pete awakes blindfolded and barefoot, feet frozen. Cory gets Pete to confess to everything we saw in the flashback, then tells Pete that Natalie ran for six miles--doubting Pete will make it six hundred feet. Cory says he will give him the same chance she got. If Pete can make it to the highway, he is free, but he barely makes it a few hundred feet before falling and drowning in his frozen, blood-filled lungs.

The story ends with Cory visiting Jane in the hospital, making a joke about the bulletproof vest which he takes back as it saved her life. Jane says she was merely lucky. Cory gives a powerful monologue that luck does not live out here, and she is a warrior just like Natalie was. Jane fought for her life, and now she gets to leave with it. Cory picks up a magazine and reads to her, making more jokes, and Jane says she knows what he is doing. The scene ends with Jane's laughter turning into tears, trying to fight them back, but Cory squeezes her hand and she lets them flow, both knowing she needed this. The last scene of the script is not as powerful as the one before. We end on Cory spending time ice fishing with Casey, both agreeing they don't like it, and Cory stating it doesn't matter what they do as long as they are both doing it together.

Comments:

Wind River is a chilling, emotional, and shocking character-driven mystery that explores harsh themes of life on an Indian reservation, especially as a native woman. The script anchors itself on a strong, knowledgeable protagonist while utilizing the supporting lead as an outsider, symbolizing the ignorance and naivety the audience may have to this story. The bulk of this script paces itself well between powerful, tense moments with slower, dialogue-fueled beats. It does well hooking the audience in with the inciting incident of a young woman running for her life through a frozen desert, but loses that urgency by establishing too much of the protagonist's personal life. Similarly, the script ends off on a powerful scene of our once naive protagonist coming to terms on the horrid situation of the victim's death, but then adds an extra scene that feels unnecessary, losing that powerful ending.

The characterizations of Cory Lambert and Jane Banner are a standout in this script, solidifying it as a character-driven story. Cory reliving his grief of his daughter through hunting the predator of the victim slowly unravels in the script. Meanwhile, Jane, despite her clear inexperience with a homicide and this environment, tries to present herself as strong and knowledgeable, though she is surrounded by many of whom, in this case, know better than her. The minor characters, like police chief Ben and the snippets of Natalie during the flashback, also help set the tone and themes of life on the reservation. Even the characterizations of the homes do a convincing job at showing the poverty but also the great efforts put in to keep these spaces welcoming and homely, specifically at the start with the homes of Cory's ex-wife and the home of Natalie's parents.

That said, the issues of certain scenes taking away from the pacing are prevalent throughout the script. Early and ending scenes that focus on Cory's personal life and his relationship with his son either dilute the urgency of the core mystery, or take away from powerful scenes. There are also moments in the middle of the script where some scenes feel misplaced, having characters jump around too much. Specifically after Cory, Jane, and Ben investigate the trailer where Natalie's brother is at. Instead of expecting them to interrogate her brother, we jump to Cory and Jane chasing snowmobile tracks up a mountain and then return to Natalie's brother pages later.

Despite this, the script offers a powerful and sobering narrative that provides moments of intensity and thrills intertwined between emotional monologues and harsh realities of life on the Wind River reservation.

The critical success is strong with the dialogue and characterizations of our protagonists, while still offering moderate commercial interests with thrilling scenes and themes that will resonate with many.

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	So-So	Not Good
Premise:		X			
Story:		X			
Main Char:	X				
Minor Char:			X		
Dialogue:		X			
Setting:	X				
Structure:			X		
Overall Impression:	Consider				