

## PROFESSIONAL SCRIPT COVERAGE

# Sicario

Feature screenplay coverage — border-war procedural that withholds its own protagonist.

MATERIAL

**Feature screenplay**

GENRE

**Crime / Thriller /  
Political Drama**

VERDICT

**RECOMMEND**

COVERAGE DATE

**Sample output**

# Coverage Verdict

|                          |                                                                                      |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>VERDICT</b>           | RECOMMEND                                                                            |
| <b>WRITER'S VERDICT</b>  | RECOMMEND — severe, controlled voice with an unusual command of withheld information |
| <b>MATERIAL</b>          | Original feature screenplay, 121 pages                                               |
| <b>GENRE</b>             | Crime / Thriller / Political Drama                                                   |
| <b>FORM</b>              | Feature screenplay                                                                   |
| <b>BUDGET TIER</b>       | Mid-budget prestige thriller                                                         |
| <b>COMPARABLE TITLES</b> | Traffic, Zero Dark Thirty, No Country for Old Men, The Hurt Locker                   |

A severe, expertly controlled thriller that runs on a single structural risk and wins the bet. The reader follows an FBI agent, KATE MACER, into an inter-agency task force whose purpose is deliberately kept from her — and therefore from us — for eighty pages. The script converts the audience's ignorance into the primary suspense engine, which is a difficult thing to sustain without the reader feeling withheld from rather than pulled along. It works because every scene gives Kate a concrete tactical problem to solve in the present while the larger question compounds. The final act then executes a genuinely bold move: Kate is displaced from her own film, and the climactic sequence belongs to ALEJANDRO, whose motivation has been hidden in plain sight the entire time. Some readers will call this a structural flaw. It is the thesis.

## HEADLINE ASSESSMENT

*The screenplay's protagonist is deliberately made irrelevant by its own climax. Handled with less discipline this would be a catastrophic failure of construction; here it is the argument — that the rule of law is a bystander in this war — and it lands.*

# Industry Scorecard

Weighted against produced material in the same genre and budget tier. Scores below 6 indicate a development priority; scores of 9 or 10 indicate a commercial asset that should be protected through every revision.

|                       |                        |       |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-------|
| Premise / originality | <div><div></div></div> | 8/10  |
| Structure             | <div><div></div></div> | 9/10  |
| Characterisation      | <div><div></div></div> | 8/10  |
| Dialogue              | <div><div></div></div> | 9/10  |
| Emotional engagement  | <div><div></div></div> | 7/10  |
| Atmosphere / tension  | <div><div></div></div> | 10/10 |
| Commercial potential  | <div><div></div></div> | 7/10  |

Production feasibility



7/10

Overall readiness



9/10

Emotional engagement scores lowest and should stay there: the script's coldness is deliberate and any note that warms Kate would damage the ending. Commercial potential is capped by the bleakness, not by the craft — this is an awards-corridor release, not a four-quadrant one.

## Logline

An idealistic FBI agent is recruited into a shadow task force hunting a cartel leader, only to discover that the operation she is lending her badge to exists to deliver one man his revenge — and that her presence is the legal fiction that makes it possible.

## Synopsis

A hostage raid in Chandler, Arizona opens the script at full pressure: Kate Macer's team breaches a suburban house and finds forty-two bodies sealed inside the walls, then loses two officers to a booby-trapped shed. The sequence establishes her competence, her jurisdiction, and the limits of both.

She is recruited by MATT GRAVER, a Department of Defense adviser who answers questions with other questions, and introduced to Alejandro, a silent 'consultant' whose agency affiliation no one will state. The task force's first operation crosses into Juárez to extract a cartel lieutenant. Kate is told she is there to observe. She is in fact there so that a federal agent's presence can be recorded.

The middle movement is a sequence of operations — the border crossing, the tunnel, the bank records, the immigration holding cells — each of which answers a tactical question and deepens a moral one. The script's best sustained passage is the convoy crawl through the Juárez traffic queue: eleven pages in which almost nothing happens and the reader cannot breathe.

Kate's attempts to reassert legal process fail in escalating order: her supervisor is overruled, her legal adviser is stonewalled, and the local officer she sleeps with turns out to be on a cartel payroll and nearly kills her. Every institutional handhold is removed in sequence, which is the script's structural method for isolating her.

In the final movement Alejandro takes the tunnel operation as cover, walks Kate out of the story at gunpoint, and completes his real objective: he was a Juárez prosecutor whose wife was beheaded and daughter thrown into acid, and he kills the cartel boss Fausto Alarcón at his dinner table in front of his family. The closing scene returns to Kate, forced at gunpoint to sign a statement affirming the operation was lawful. She signs. The final image is children playing football in a Juárez suburb, flinching at distant gunfire and then resuming the game.

## Structure and Narrative Logic

### Act architecture

| Movement          | Pages   | Function                                                                         |
|-------------------|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chandler raid     | 1–11    | Establishes Kate's competence and the scale of the horror she is unequipped for. |
| Recruitment       | 12–29   | Graver and Alejandro introduced; the operation's purpose withheld by design.     |
| Juárez extraction | 30–52   | First crossing; the convoy sequence; Kate realises she is an instrument.         |
| Escalation        | 53–84   | Bank, cells, the compromised officer; every legal handhold removed.              |
| Tunnel            | 85–104  | The operation Kate believes she is part of; Alejandro's real objective begins.   |
| Alarcón           | 105–115 | Alejandro's climax. Kate is absent — the script's deliberate displacement.       |
| Signature / coda  | 116–121 | Kate signs; the football match resumes. The argument closes.                     |

## Assessment

The construction is unusually disciplined. Information is released on a strict schedule and never early, and the writer is rigorous about giving Kate a solvable near-term task in every scene so that the withheld larger question reads as dread rather than as coyness. The displacement of the protagonist in the final movement is prepared from page 12 — Alejandro is watched, not explained, for ninety pages — so the handover feels like a revelation of what the film was always about rather than a swerve.

- The convoy sequence (pp. 41–52) is a masterclass in writing suspense without incident: geography, sightlines and heat, and no dialogue that isn't tactical.
- Kate's isolation is engineered institutionally rather than emotionally — supervisor, lawyer, lover, agency — which keeps the script's coldness intact.
- The Alejandro flashback information is delivered in a single spoken paragraph on p. 98 and nowhere else. Restraint here is correct and should be protected in any revision.
- Only soft patch: pp. 61–70, where two consecutive briefing scenes cover overlapping ground.

## Characters

### KATE MACER — protagonist

Kate is written as procedural integrity in a story with no use for it. Her want is simple and unattainable — to do this legally — and the script's structure is the repeated denial of that want. She is active throughout, which matters: she is not passive, she is outranked. The reservation is that she is defined almost entirely by the job. One specific, non-thematic detail of a private life would make her signature in the final scene cost more, and the script can afford two lines for it.

**ALEJANDRO GILLICK — shadow protagonist / antagonist**

The most accomplished character in the script and a genuinely difficult construction: he must hold the reader's attention for ninety pages while revealing almost nothing, then carry a twelve-page climax on backstory delivered in one paragraph. It works because the writer gives him physical behaviour instead of dialogue — he sleeps in a car, he does not flinch, he watches Kate the way a man watches a tool. His dinner-table scene is the best writing in the script and the most disturbing, because he is not enjoying it.

**MATT GRAVER — operator**

Functionally the script's exposition valve, and made tolerable by the decision that he finds his own cynicism funny. Flip-flops in tone by design. His sandals-and-clipboard informality against the violence is the right choice. He is slightly overused in the middle third, where he explains developments the reader has already understood.

**REGGIE WAYNE — Kate's partner**

The script's only moral chorus and its most underwritten major role. He exists to voice the objection Kate is suppressing. Two scenes would fix it: one where he is right and she overrules him, one where he is wrong.

**SILVIO and family — the counterpoint**

A Juárez police officer on the cartel payroll, his wife and his son, threaded through the script in four short scenes with no plot function until page 110. This is the material's most humane instinct: the intercut gives the body count an address and a breakfast table.

---

## Dialogue

Dialogue is a genuine strength. It is sparse, tactical and almost entirely free of exposition, and characters withhold in ways that read as character rather than as authorial teasing. Graver deflects, Alejandro refuses, Kate asks direct questions that go unanswered — the pattern itself dramatises the power structure without a line of comment.

- Best line economy: Alejandro's 'You are asking me how a watch works. Just keep an eye on the time.' Character, theme and refusal in one beat.
- The dinner-table scene runs on ordinary courtesy against unspeakable intent, and it never reaches for a monologue.
- Graver's briefing dialogue occasionally over-clarifies on pp. 63–68; two of those speeches can be cut entirely.
- Kate's dialogue is deliberately plainer than everyone else's. Protect this — she is the only character not performing.

# Screenplay Craft

Extremely assured. Action is written with military specificity that never becomes jargon soup, geography is always legible, and the writer trusts silence on the page — several high-tension pages carry no dialogue at all and read faster for it. Scene description is economical and sensory: heat, dust, sightlines, the sound of a helicopter changing pitch.

- 121 pages with no fat outside the pp. 61–70 briefing overlap. Lean for the genre.
- Night-vision and thermal sequences are described in terms of what is legible and what is not, which is both cinematic and honest about the limitation.
- Slug-line discipline across the border makes jurisdiction — the script's real subject — spatially clear at all times.
- One craft risk: two sequences depend on the reader tracking radio callsigns. Simplify to roles.

# Theme and Meaning

The script's argument is that the rule of law is not a combatant in this conflict but a document to be signed afterwards. Kate's badge is not protection; it is paperwork. The film refuses the consolation of either a heroic outcome or a nihilistic shrug — Alejandro's revenge is total, satisfying and worthless, and the final image of children resuming a football match after gunfire states the cost without commentary. The coldness is the position, not a failure of feeling.

# Market Position and Comparables

This is a prestige thriller with awards-corridor credentials and a hard ceiling. The withheld-protagonist structure and the absence of catharsis will cap broad appeal, but the material is critic-proof in the best sense: it is about something, and the craft is visible in every scene. Strong festival launch, strong international, and a durable library title.

| Comparable             | Relation        | What it indicates                                                       |
|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Traffic                | Subject comp    | Multi-strand drug-war material can reach prestige audiences at scale.   |
| Zero Dark Thirty       | Structural comp | Procedural coldness with a female lead denied catharsis.                |
| No Country for Old Men | Tonal comp      | Dread as the primary register; violence as arithmetic.                  |
| The Hurt Locker        | Audience comp   | Tension-driven, apolitical-seeming war material with critical traction. |

# Casting Recommendations

Offered as tonal calibration for packaging conversations, not as availability guidance.

| Role      | Casting note                                                                                                             |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Kate      | An actress who can play competence eroding without self-pity; the part dies if she plays victim.                         |
| Alejandro | Latin American dramatic lead with stillness and physical threat; must be sympathetic and unforgivable in the same scene. |
| Graver    | A likeable character actor — the cynicism only works if the audience enjoys his company.                                 |
| Reggie    | Warm, grounded presence; the audience's only friend in the script.                                                       |
| Silvio    | Regional casting, unstarry; the intercut depends on him reading as an ordinary man.                                      |

## Strengths

- Sustains eighty pages of withheld purpose without the reader disengaging — a rare technical achievement.
- The convoy sequence: suspense built entirely from geography, heat and sightlines.
- Alejandro, a character who reveals almost nothing for ninety pages and still holds the script.
- Dialogue that dramatises the power structure through what characters refuse to say.
- The Silvio intercut, which gives the violence a domestic address.
- A closing image that states the thesis with no commentary whatsoever.

## Development Opportunities

- Kate has no life outside the job. Two lines of specific private detail would make her final signature cost more.
- Briefing overlap on pp. 61–70: two scenes cover the same ground. Cut one.
- Reggie carries the script's moral objection and is given too little to do with it.
- Radio callsigns in two sequences will lose readers; convert to plain roles.
- Graver over-explains in the middle third, softening the withholding the structure depends on.
- The protagonist displacement will read as a flaw to some readers; a single earlier beat of Alejandro acting on his own agenda would inoculate it.

## Prioritized Revision Roadmap

Ordered by impact on the material's readiness. Pass one addresses anything that affects the reader's comprehension; pass three is polish.

| Pass | Priority | Action |
|------|----------|--------|
|------|----------|--------|

|   |                        |                                                                                           |
|---|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Briefing cut           | Remove one of the two overlapping briefing scenes (pp. 61-70) and redistribute two lines. |
| 1 | Inoculate the handover | Add one short beat of Alejandro pursuing his own objective before p. 60.                  |
| 2 | Kate detail            | Insert two lines of non-thematic private life so the ending costs her something specific. |
| 2 | Reggie                 | Give him one scene where he is right and overruled, and one where he is wrong.            |
| 2 | Graver                 | Trim explanatory speeches; let the reader stay one step behind.                           |
| 3 | Polish                 | Replace radio callsigns with roles; tighten two overwritten action paragraphs.            |

---

---

## Reader's Closing Note

A ferociously well-made thriller with a thesis it is willing to sacrifice its own protagonist for. It is ready to go out. The most useful note is the smallest: give Kate two lines of a life, so that when she signs the statement we know exactly what she is signing away.

NARRATORA

---

# Generated on Narratora

Transform your screenplay into coverage, pitch decks, and production breakdowns today at [narratora.com](https://narratora.com).

**Start free at [narratora.com](https://narratora.com)**