

THE SCRIPTWRITER

CAPSULE

Formerly a newspaper crime reporter, as the horrors she was witnessing became harder and harder to bear, she turned to the controllable world of fiction: she moved from press reporting to writing detective thrillers, and then to film scripts. She turns a chaotic, cruel world into logical story and pattern; and replaces incomprehensible, random people with solid, motivated characters. But this has not been enough to keep her from the progressive harm caused by reflecting on what she has seen. *Stolen Moments* may be the last script that she is capable of writing.

(Warning: this character is seriously self-destructive. It'll be up to you whether that's physical, psychological, or both; and how it operates, and how much you want to play upon it; but if this is a trigger issue for you, you will want to avoid this role.)

MEETING GOTTFRIED

A hot day, in an overcrowded art gallery. You had come here to get out away from your house and your typewriter and your novel which was going around in circles because every time you started writing the truth kept pushing its way back in.

You were pushing through crowds when you caught sight of a painting that froze you. There was something about the violence in it that felt real and you found panic flowing through your body, and there were so many people, and it was so hot and you couldn't breathe and you were probably dying, but you didn't want to die in public, you didn't want to make a scene.

And he was there, hand on your arm, guiding you away from the painting and out of the gallery. And you wanted to protest, but you still couldn't speak, couldn't breathe even, so you just let him.

Once you could talk again, told him you were fine, that you hadn't needed his help, that it was just the weather. He listened to your stuttering explanations and nodded.

"Feels like the world's on fire, doesn't it?"

He passed you a card.

“In case you need it.”

It had the name of a film company scribbled on the back, and Gottfried’s name on the front, embossed in elaborate gothic type.

You weren’t going to call – why would you? You were a crime novelist, you didn’t write films. Except you remembered the premiers that you had gone to, the glitz and the glamour that you had frowned on and how you had been a different person back then. Fun, charming, flirtatious and above all, unafraid.

Maybe a new start was what you needed. Everything would be better with a new start. So, hands shaking, you dialled the studio, unsure of what you would say. All you needed to say was your name.

They were pushing to impress you, to offer you more money, to bring you on board. You’d had no intention of actually working for them, but for a second you felt your old self returning. So you said yes.

BACKGROUND

An ambitious child, you always managed to demand attention despite your large family. You wanted to be a writer at first, but you were also pragmatic enough to realise that you couldn’t earn any real money that way, and becoming a journalist seemed a good way to get your name known.

You were never that interested in the world of fashion and films. It was never very appealing somehow. You weren’t sure why you ended up being given those stories. Maybe there was something about you, some charisma you had, that could get people to talk to you, and to let you in backstage where you didn’t belong. You wanted change though, and when you got an opportunity to write about the real conditions behind a current, much publicised film you took it. You told yourself that you were doing it to help film stars, to help aspiring actors and actresses and to improve the industry. The editor considered it good gossip.

After that you were promoted to crime scenes. You were good at your job. You could get a quote from a bereaved mother, who thought she was talking to someone who knew her child, only for it to appear as a headline. You saw violence and it's aftermath. You saw corpses, and you saw those who were left living and you wondered who was luckier. This pushed you further. You were determined to tie things up neatly and to find justice and happy endings. There were none. You saw court cases that allowed evil people to walk free on a technicality. You saw cases that never made it to court at all. The more you pushed, the more you found, the more you realised that the world was fundamentally unsafe and fundamentally unfair.

You started writing again. You wrote crime novels and gave your cases happy endings. The murderer was always discovered and locked away forever. The living victims always took revenge. The stories held the demons at bay, a bit, but you still jumped at shadows and still saw yourself, standing helpless with your notebook in hand when you shut your eyes.

You turned to film scripts and you found other ways of coping. It was easy to rationalise. You needed to function, and life had taught you that those who were broken didn't survive. So you did whatever you needed to keep yourself sane and present while working. And when you weren't working you gave in to your vices.

You know it's breaking you apart though. The things that you're doing are slowly killing you or at least robbing you of who you are. You don't see a future anymore, and sometimes you feel ready to succumb to that void.

- ☹ What is your name?
- ☹ Where are you from?
- ☹ How old are you?
- ☹ What was your family background like?
- ☹ How has your relationship/sexual history been?
- ☹ What's your current living situation like?
- ☹ How do you feel about your gender?
- ☹ How do you feel about your sexuality?
- ☹ Is there anyone outside the set of *Stolen Moments* who's important to you?

☉ What's the most significant memory from your childhood?

PRIMARY RELATIONSHIPS

THE CLOWN

Someone who never judges, whatever you do. It's almost pleasant to have someone who has gone to the depths of depravity with you, who isn't shocked and who doesn't ask questions.

What you get is unconditional acceptance. Someone who understands that telling you to stop isn't going to help. Someone who you can push and who can push you further and further from the real world. Sure, you feel guilt sometimes, but really what does it matter? You can make it go away quickly enough. You've both determined the worth of your own lives, and you both know what you're doing.

THE COSTUME DESIGNER

You thought of her many times, your little sister. She had been so quiet and back then you saw yourself as her protector. You think maybe you still do. She will never know of the times you begged your parents to intervene after she was accused of stealing, which you knew she would never do. It was too late for you by then and you couldn't draw her into the nightmares that haunted you. But it wasn't too late for her.

It's been years and she's survived and is as brilliant as ever. Maybe she was stronger than you ever were? You are so envious and so grateful she made it through. But what must she think of you, a shadow of your former self? What will she think of your spiral into self destruction? How can you protect her now?

THE ART DIRECTOR

Someone who believes in your work, the one part of you left that's pure. He admires your writing and understands the stories you're trying to tell and the meanings and emotions behind them long before anyone else.

But he keeps pushing you to do more. To leave the journalism behind you and create something more.. artful? Narratively driven? The idea compels you a bit, to create stories that are really yours. There is a feeling of dismissiveness behind it too though, like he thinks that would cheer you up or something. How fortunate for him, that he doesn't know that it really doesn't work like that.

THE METHOD ACTING INSTRUCTOR

She wasn't an instructor, back then and you didn't mean for things to happen like they did. You were just fed up. If you'd known you would turn back time for both of your sakes. You just didn't feel that you were being taken seriously as a journalist. Reviewing films and interviewing actresses was all very well but you weren't creating headlines.

All it took was a few cocktails and a promise of undying friendship and she spoke. About everything. About her fears about being an actress, the demands of people she'd worked with and the secrets of her co-stars. You wrote an expose about the filming of *Lonely Hearts* where she was playing the lead. They took you seriously after that. You got sent to crime scenes, and she never managed to get a good part again.

OTHER RELATIONSHIPS

Positive

THE BEST FRIEND – kind and non judgemental. She's helped you back to your room once or twice after things had got a bit messy, and never spoken about it again.

THE RIVAL – you've worked with him before and it's been easy. As long as the work gets done he doesn't care about your private life, which is as it should be.

Negative

THE VETERAN – he thinks he has all the answers and he doesn't. He thinks he's seen it all and he hasn't.

ANGEL

You can craft people's lives into beautiful stories and you don't judge them. You've seen enough of hate and division to know that it's pointless to. You can retell someone's story to them and make it sound beautiful. You can tidy up the messy aspects of human life and leave behind the beautiful, the narratively pleasing. And who doesn't love being told that they're a hero and their struggle is worth something.

You force yourself to see good in everyone and sometimes even good in the world, despite all evidence to the contrary. There were those in who risked themselves to save others and you need to believe that some of that exists in everyone.

DEVIL

You've sunk to the depths of hell. You know what true evil is and what it can inflict. You can try everything to block it out and forget, but nothing's ever enough. You need more and more and you're terrified one day nothing will work. You know you can't fight forever.

Maybe one day you'll just give up. The world has never been kind and you can't unsee that. You wake up with nightmares sometimes where you're trying to save someone but you can't move and you only have a notebook. That's the truth. You watched them fall apart, or saw them dead and wrote about it. You have seen evil, and in your darker moments you think that you must be part of it.

TASK

You need to keep everyone together and ready for the filming. That means making sure that they understand their roles, and the stories behind them. You need to create the narrative of the filming and give each person a starring role, showing them how important their contribution is. You can create stories for them all, from the main stars to the runner, about how necessary they are and how much the film depends on them. You can keep them believing in that ideal of themselves during the likely chaos of the early days.

Out of character

Your task in Act 1 is to assemble a draft script for Stolen Moments, using scenes given to you by the cast and those of your own composition. You should consult with THE SUBJECT over subject matter, and with THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR over practicalities of implementation – as much as you feel is necessary. After all, you are in charge of the script: you are not their servant, you are an extraordinary talent. During Act 2 you will probably be expected to revise and rework the script.

DILEMMA

You know how the world is and it haunts you. You want to give in to it and give up so badly. Maybe that means death, or maybe that means giving yourself over to your vices completely. The two might be indistinguishable. It's a comforting option. You're completely alone. The others haven't seen what you've seen, or known what you know about the world. Carrying the darkness in you has destroyed you and you don't want to let it destroy anyone else.

There is a part of you that can't quite give up though. The part of you that's been fighting for now, that fought to write *Stolen Moments*, that wants to reconnect with your sister, to make it up to the people who you've hurt. You don't believe that things can get better exactly. You don't see the future that clearly. But maybe you can try to fight it, even if you won't win. Maybe you should try to fight it because that's who you are, or at least who you want to be. A survivor, if only to prove that it's possible to survive.