

YOUR STORY STRUCTURE NOTES

You've done a nice job mapping out how we get from start to finish.

Generally the point A to point Z structure of this story is great. Almost everything works, and my only radical scene change suggestions come at the end of ACT 2, and ACT 3.

CENTRAL QUESTION

Is there a CENTRAL STORY QUESTION that the audience wants to answer and does your script create a sense of anticipation that builds from scene to scene in an effort to answer that question?

Your central story question is: Will Ridgely discover the truth about the murders that sent Kyle to prison? What happens if his coercion sent the wrong man to prison?

Your execution of answering this question is solid, but you don't focus on the why enough.

Your story moves forward... but the WHY of the GOAL is unfocused.

The WHY needs more attention.

YES, we want Ridgely to uncover the truth and set Kyle free, but WHY? Your next draft needs to focus more on the WHY of these events. It's there on the page but needs clarity at every moment that we move toward the finale.

OPENING SCENE

Your opening scene is interesting, and sets the events in motion. But I want more emotional intensity out of it. Show us how broken down Kyle is from the efforts of Ridgely's coercion.

More emotional intensity from both characters and maybe a bit of coercion from Landon as well.

THE HOOK - PG 10-13

Jane's got him by the balls and it's a great inciting incident for this story.

Your first 13 pages do a solid job of setting up your BEFORE world. Lots of things that need FIXING for Mike.

What's missing though, is the gravity of not only Kyle Hunt's case... but any other case that may be weighing on Mike's conscience over the years.

The way the first 13 pages are presented and play out, the events of Kyle Hunt's conviction are completely INCONSEQUENTIAL to Mike's work. I think that's a mistake.

I think you should clarify the affects these cases have on Mike. Does he feel guilty? Does he still think about these people who he's put away, Kyle especially?

If you do this, the revelation about Kyle's potential innocence from Jane would then attack his INNER CONFLICT. The thing Mike feared most could actually be true, Kyle Hunt was innocent and his methods of coercion put an innocent man in prison for life.

Maybe Mike knows Kyle has a kid. Maybe this bothers him, seeing as he has a hard time raising a kid of his own, and he's not even in prison. Explore Mike's feelings about what he does for a living in the BEFORE WORLD.

This will give us more of a chance to watch him change and grow throughout the story.

ACT ONE CLIMAX - PG 22

Your First Act is really well executed. The before world is setup well. The characters are well drawn. Everything is setup to be paid off later.

Mike making the decision to essentially re-investigate this case is a great. He propels us into the next act on his own accord. GREAT JOB!

ACT TWO - THE UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

Everything in the first section of ACT TWO is really well done. Your B-Story between Jane and Mike works well. Your fun and games section is the strongest part of your script. The scenes pop off the page. I was engrossed. And watching Ridgely work as he revisits the players in this investigation was enjoyable.

MIDPOINT - This story lacks a SOLID midpoint. I think it's when they interview

Whitney and we learn that Andy is Kyle's son coupled with Ridgely telling Kyle that Whitney was sleeping with Ian. Certainly emotional moments.

Just feels like we need something stronger. Your midpoint needs to be the emotional high of the story thus far coupled with a major FALSE VICTORY of FALSE DEFEAT related to your central story question.

The second half of Act 2 is where your story loses me a bit. While everything that happens on the page would pass a 50 question Greenlight test, I think the way the events unfold needs work.

Ridgely loses his job. The evidence is taken from Jane. Good. I believe it.

But then the whole angle with the picture of them in bed being FRONT PAGE NEWS just doesn't work for me. I don't buy it. I think you need to find another way for Mike to get kicked out of his house.

The revelation that Landon framed Kyle is AWESOME but happens too late.

ACT 2 CLIMAX - Again, I'm not sure this is the right moment for this. To me your intended Act 2 climax is Mike losing his job/coupled with getting kicked out of the house after the news of their affair leaks.

You need something stronger and more emotionally resonating for your Act 2 Climax. And you need our Hero Mike to be the facilitator of this moment, pushing us into the new world.

For me, despite the fact that it comes so late IAN'S CONFESSION is your true ACT 2 CLIMAX which propels you into the NEW WORLD. Mike coerces Ian to tell the truth, and it works. But in doing so he pushes Ian to the brink and the dude kills himself.

Mike is wracked with guilt and will never do something like this again. He's forced to learn the hard way.

ACT 3

I think the weakest aspect of your script is ACT 3. Not a fan of Mike rescuing his family from the intruder without filling her in on what the fuck is going on.

Also not a fan of Parker kidnapping Mike for the Chief despite the fact that I love

the dialogue in there Chief vs Mike showdown.

There's no real storming of the castle storyline here. Mike is on the defensive to survive for the remainder of Act 3 when he should be on the offensive to achieve his goal of getting Kyle released from jail.

For me what would work better is if ARMED WITH THE NEW EVIDENCE, both IAN and CANBERRA'S CONFESSIONS, Mike and Darren storm the castle - The Chief and his corrupt establishment.

Using the video of Ian's confession and the video Darren took of Lopez, they out the Chief for cheating their way to justice and having Lucy killed along with who knows how many others who stood in his way over the years.

RESOLUTION

Does the resolution result in a new awareness for the protagonist?

YES! Kyle was guilty after all. The twist is awesome and unexpected. But if you ask me, it's emotionally UNSATISFYING. And that's a problem.

As I said, this story needs to focus more on Mike's HUMANITY. If he arcs into a better person, then at least there's SOMETHING to be satisfied about by the end of your story.

I think you've done a great job setting up Mike's before world, and the things that need fixing, but NOTHING during the story actually gets fixed because of this finale. In fact, things are horribly worse than before. It's unclear whether his marriage is any better than it was before. He gets killed so he won't be around to be a better father to Kaitlyn, and it turned out that he let an innocent man go free and got 3 people (Jane, Ian, and Lopez) killed in the process.

I love the darkness, but it's emotionally unsatisfying if NOTHING is fixed.

If Mike's humanity was being explored more. If every major turn in the story, involved a hard look at Mike as a person... At who he is and what his moral compass is about.... it would resonate more in the end.

If you're gonna stick with this ending, then you need to have something to satisfy us. I think the key is SHOWING us the repercussions of Chief Landon's actions. It's unclear in the story as-is about what happens to the Chief. Does the Youtube video go viral? Is he punished? Is he forced to admit that cops can be wrong and

abusing power to get results is the wrong way to seek and achieve justice?

If you shift the current story to allow for Mike and Darren to publicly OUT Chief for his wrongdoings (in the style of DARK BLUE) we will at least get an emotionally satisfying achievement despite the dark denouement that follows for Mike and Kyle.

Just wanted to give you some food for thought!!!

YOUR CHARACTERS

Your characters are well drawn and memorable, but some of their individual story paths need work.

RIDGELY - He's an awesome lead character. He's well drawn. But you need to focus more on his INNER GOAL. The WHY of this story.

While the outer stakes are clear. His wife. His family. His job. His life...

The INNER STAKES are barely acknowledged.

His sense of self. His conscience. These aspects of his character need more attention.

Kyle's in jail, on his dying days. His son needs a father. This is all Ridgely's fault.

So what happens internally to Mike during his efforts to undo his wrong? What's at stake internally if he fails. What positive change will happen if he succeeds?

You need to address this as often as possible. It needs to be done subtly.

This is the key to further enhancing his character and giving his journey more emotional resonance.

JANE - You've done a FANTASTIC job with Jane. Her role as the B-Story helper character is nearly perfectly executed. I don't think she needs any work.

DARREN - I think he's great minor comic relief and his fun lines are welcome to this dark fairly grim storyline.

Throwing in the small conflict of crush on Jane is a nice touch and adds an extra

element off conflict to all of their scenes. Good job.

LUCY - Lucy is so well drawn for so much of this story and then she is transformed into a cardboard cutout weak/angry wife in distress during ACT 3.

I think the key to giving her more depth is to make Mike's mission more personal to her and their situation. At some point in the story, maybe it's not until the shit hits the fan and their house is broken into... but you need Mike to be forced to let Lucy in on the details of his mission.

He made a mistake. He put a man in jail who is innocent. He put a father in jail who has a kid who needs him. He's been a bad dad. A bad husband. But he's gotta make this right. Give Andy his father back. Before he can be a better father to Kaitlyn and husband to Lucy.

If you have him admit this and make her understand, showing her forgiveness and understanding to this situation will make both she and Mike better characters and give their marriage sub-plot a better end.

CHIEF LANDON - A number of high caliber older actors popped into my head every time he re-entered the story which is a great sign.

I loved everything about this character, even the dialogue he spews in the end. I just think there is a wasted opportunity for a more fitting/cinematic end for him.

My suggestion would be to use the video Darren takes of Lopez's confession before his death. Setup a situation in the Chief's office. A coming public event... that presents Ridgely with an opportunity in ACT 3 to publicly out the Chief (similar to Dark Blue). Then instead of having the Chief kidnap Mike and hold him at gunpoint, have the same exact EXCHANGES Mike and Chief have in their last scene together, but do it in a PUBLIC FORUM with Darren providing VIDEO EVIDENCE for all to see. If Chief says the same dialogue, pushed to the brink, and pulls the gun on Mike in front of EVERYONE-Colleagues, Citizens, Media, etc it will have more emotional impact.

I'm imagining a scene similar to Dr. Kimble confronting the Doctor who betrayed him at the Pharmaceutical Conference in The Fugitive. Or Kurt Russell confronting the Chief in Dark Blue. Make it your own, but to me this would be a way more satisfying way to punish the Chief and climax his subplot.

PARKER - I'm happy with Parker. His scenes jumped off the page. I think you

could still have him doing the Chief's bidding, but maybe it's trying to thwart Mike's attempts to publicly OUT the Chief rather than kidnapping him. Kidnapping is so cliché!

KYLE - I think you've done a great job with this character. Everything about him works. I believed his revelation at the end, but I just wasn't happy about it :)

Having him on his dying days add to the stakes and giving him a child that needs a father pushes the stakes even higher. Good job.

LOPEZ - His betrayal and attack against our heroes comes out of nowhere, and while it works as an unexpected twist... his role in ACT 3 is improperly SETUP therefore it lacks emotional resonance.

My suggestion, amp up the competition between Lopez and Landon. Maybe add him to the meet Parker scene? Or at least fine tune the scene in the Chief's office to clarify Lopez's potential as a force of antagonism. Even if it's innocent on the surface.

Why not make him competitive with Ridgely? Mike is the Chief's golden boy while Lopez is the Chief's errand boy. He wants the role Mike has. Wants to be the Chief's golden boy.

SETUP a professional rivalry between them then PAY IT OFF when Lopez goes too far to please the Chief.

Add a bit more "incriminating confession" aspect for the Youtube video Darren films before Mike kills him. Make sure the Chief's efforts are incriminated.

Regardless, the Lopez twist doesn't have the impact you'd like it to. If you spend more time on Lopez in his previous scenes, it will.

OTHER NOTES/CONCERNS

PG 34-35 - INT. JANE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

This is one of the weakest scenes in your script. It needs to be here but feels so obviously "here's what progress we've made dear audience".

I think the key to fixing this is infusing it with more conflict. Mike's fear of Fang is been-there-done-that so it's good he says "That's okay" when Fang enters.

What if he remembers he's late for Kaitlyn's birthday party while he's in this scene. All the same info is conveyed while he's searching Jane's house for something to give as gift.

He grabs some shitty excuse for birthday gift and asks Jane if he can have it.

Then has asks "Got any wrapping paper?" and we cut to the birthday party,

JANE & MIKE'S AFFAIR BEING FRONT PAGE NEWS

While I understand you need Lucy to get wind of the affair for Mike to get kicked out during the ALL IS LOST/DARK KNIGHT OF THE SOUL section, I feel like you need to find another way for Lucy to learn this.

I just don't buy their affair being FRONT PAGE NEWS. Neither of them are public figures. No one is going to care in the public. And a news service isn't going to consider them famous enough to publish these pictures. It's the one aspect of your story that truly doesn't work for me.

PG 87-89 - IAN'S CONFESSION/SUICIDE

Ian's confession feels underwhelming. This is the news we've been waiting for, yet somehow these series of scenes feels off.

The info comes out of him way too easily. Have him put up more of a fight.

I don't feel the pique of emotions we should be feeling from all involved in these moments. THIS IS A BIG FUCKING DEAL to all of them. This is what we've been building towards.

His SUICIDE also lacks impact. It sort of just HAPPENS instead of being this huge WTF moment that it should be.

If Ian put up more of a fight/resistance to confessing and was pushed to the brink of his emotional capacity and ultimately driven to suicide by what we see happen in Mike's efforts to COERCE him... before Jess takes over and calms shit down... Ian's suicide would feel like a result of Mike's overbearing coercion and have more emotional impact.

THE YOUTUBE VIDEO

I like that Darren takes video of Lopez's admission to the Chief getting him to do his bidding... but then we don't learn what happens with that video.

I say USE it in the climax of your story or LOSE IT.

SUGGESTED RE-WRITE STRUCTURE

OPENING SCENE - Kyle admits to guilt.

HOOK - 12 years later, Jane has interviewed him. She threatens to blackmail him to get Ridgely's attention. She succeeds. Kyle says he's innocent. He's dying and has little time left. Mike needs to re-evaluate this case and give him a chance to have some freedom before he dies.

ACT 1/BEFORE WORLD CLIMAX - Mike agrees to re-investigate the case.

MIDPOINT - Mike discovers that Landon framed Kyle. Emotional high. False victory.

ACT 2/UPSIDE DOWN WORLD CLIMAX - Mike coerces Ian to confess it fails. Jane does it the calm way. Ian confesses to killing the girl. Mike indeed put an innocent man in jail.

ACT 3 - NEW WORLD - Armed with Ian's confession, the trio plans to bring this to the attention of the Chief and get HIM to confess to framing Kyle as well.

But their plan is thwarted when Lopez kills Jane. Mike gets Lopez to admit that the Chief put him up to it, before he gets killed too. Darren tapes the confession

CLIMAX - Armed with Ian and Lopez's confession, Mike and Darren publicly out the Chief in front of his peers using the videos.

The Chief is punished. Kyle is released. Mike succeeds. Jane didn't die in vain.

DENOUEMENT - Kyle confronts Mike. Tells him he was guilty. Kills Mike. Kills himself.

STONE COLD STUNNING ending!