



## **Plot**

I think the plot needs developing so it introduces more story lines/threads and a stronger backstory as well as allowing further character development, especially villain development.

The story is rather difficult to get into. Characters are introduced in block descriptions, with no action and hardly any dialogue. By the end of the list of characters, all introduced at once, it's likely that readers will find it hard to remember who is who and what manager is doing what.

The story relies too much on coincidence and improbability to move forward. For instance, the confusion Fraser McIntyre/Fraser Macintyre, an improbable coincidence of crucial importance in the story. In order to improve the plausibility of this coincidence, consider employing a literary technique called *Chekhov's Rifle*. Chekhov is famous for saying that, in drama, if a rifle is casually hanging on a background wall in Scene 1, it needs to be fired by Scene 3. This means that no object/fact should be used without a certain reason and that we can create powerful and convincing twists in the story by using objects/details that seemingly bore no importance earlier in the story. If you mention the name similarity earlier in the story, when the detail is likely to pass almost unnoticed, when you later put it to good use to move the story forward, it will fall naturally in place, thus avoiding the "yeah, right, as if" effect.

In the same way, consider introducing Gill Rupert *before* she becomes important all of a sudden (very much in the way you introduce and develop the attraction Rob – Jenny).

Also, consider describing Stuart and Madeleine as deeply religious before the story needs it and mentioning Danielle's and Rob's parents' health problems before they are needed, as well as Fraser and Gloria's long weekend off in Paris, before we find out it's not going to happen.



Richard's character needs to be introduced earlier, before Thomas needs him to hack into the managers' emails and also let readers know that Melvyn Snoop had one year before retirement and didn't want any hassle before we need to know this in order to understand his lack of interest.

The main story shortcoming is however the lack of obstacles in the buyout process. The process does go one step forwards and two backwards, but that doesn't gain the dramatic effect on the reader, as it is presented linearly as almost part and parcel of any business acquisition. In order to add more drama to the process, you need serious obstacles from powerful and seriously menacing characters. The main source of menace at the moment is still Jeff González. As with all courtroom and boardroom thrillers, the main thrilling point is not the hero's wild action, it is the tension created by not knowing whether the quest will be solved or not, in this case, if the buyout will succeed or not. In order to deliver more drama, David Thomas needs to play a stronger part and be a more powerful and menacing villain. Just by describing him as tyrannical and generally unpleasant won't be enough to convince the readers. After all, Roald Dahl's Victor Hazell is portrayed as a deeply unpleasant character and he does do a lot of shouting and fuming about, but he doesn't give adult readership the creepy thrills a strong villain should. In order to do this, Thomas needs to pose serious obstacles to the management buyout. He comes across as plainly silly when his own bid to buy Jarvis Automotive is promptly rejected by investors. This is a flat discharge of tension, failing to gain the intended effect from the readers. Consider delaying the discharge of this particular thread and showing him making certain progress with his bid, increasing uncertainty and suspense for the readers. I also felt that the story discharges with Thomas in a too matter-of-factly manner. He deserves a stronger ending, more serious than just being fired, and readers will expect a satisfying ending for both the managers and their adversaries.

One of the more serious threats he could pose would be a blackmail. We all know that characters easy to blackmail are vulnerable characters. In this case, perhaps



he hires a private investigator to take a few photos of Lewis and Gill and threatens Lewis to show them to Susan if he doesn't undermine the buyout from the inside. The Gill – Lewis relationship doesn't seem to get anywhere and it does indeed feel that it serves no purpose in the book, but to create a distraction from the main story. Not that this is a bad thing in itself, it's only bad when the purpose of the distraction is *noticeable*.

A character's skeleton-in-the-cupboard scenario would also be a good choice.

The financial facts about the buyout need to be set right. The team has no idea how much (or how to estimate how much) Jarvis Automotive is worth. This will be a major question from the readers. The managers have no idea about how they are going to raise the money for their personal equity in the firm (or how much); when they get the deal in place and then they start thinking about it, it does feel rather meaningless to be mentioned so late in the story. It is also unconvincing that the bank would offer a loan on the shares of each individual when they would have nothing to lose if they couldn't pay it back, apart from the actual shares. This contradicts the very rationale of any lending decision and it will fail to convince the readers. These details damage the credibility of the story. Besides, showing the team trying to raise the money and failing at first, then succeeding, then failing again could be another tension-filled backstory thread.

It's also unconvincing that Marsgatt would produce only 31 products in total and at the same time be in a position to offer over £100m for a company. The discrepancy between the competitors (one produces 1500 different products, one produces only 31) is also too big to convince. Moreover, it's unlikely that a potential buyer wouldn't know exactly how many different products the company would make until the visit after the offer has been put in.

I also think the story would benefit from more different settings to break the monotony of the office meetings. One good opportunity would be to have the weekend meeting with Pavel Krestovnikoff at his holiday home in Cornwall in



July. The typical audience of corporate thrillers is used to descriptions of luxurious and extravagant lifestyle and a lot of meetings are held “on the boat”, “at the beach villa”, “on the Learjet”. It’s a good idea especially if the managers’ wives join the team for the weekend, as it will offer you further opportunity for interior monologue on the impression Krestovnikoff’s lifestyle and fortune makes on the wives as well as their willingness to support the buyout.

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