

Whiteout: Notes on 1st draft outline

General

PG: The side characters are a distraction. The strings of the plot need to be pulled tighter. AZ: Each peripheral character needs a moment in the spotlight. Each should have some skill or knowledge which proves important in combating the gang. KF: For each, there should be a moment when the plot turns on him or her.

NN: An opening which sets a suspense tone.

KF: Possible prologue in which: Davy loses money gambling; Nigel approaches him, at first threatening violence if he does not pay his debts, then proposing a solution; Davy agrees to devise a scheme for breaking into the lab. Nigel says he has been hired by a wealthy animal rights charity, and Davy (and the reader) believe this.

Davy is handsome and lovable but untrustworthy and unscrupulous, a charming rogue, lazy and deceitful. All the family adore him, despite his faults. He has a record of great success at something, maybe a sport; and in consequence feels he is pretty smart; but in fact he is a failure at most things. He worked at the lab until a year or so ago, when Toni unveiled his involvement in a scam, and his father fired him. He is bitter about this, towards Toni as much as towards his father.

Davy looks on this whole thing as something of a lark, a harmless way to get revenge on Stanley for firing him and at the same time pay off his debts.

Some surprises:

- i. We think this is about animal rights until the gang actually get inside the lab.
- ii We think the gang leader and Davy are two separate people until late.
- iii The treachery of Steve Tremlett
- iv Caroline is with AAF.

NN: There is a family secret, possibly known to Lukey and Lori, which comes out during the course of the story, and is a big shock to the reader. One of the siblings is in fact the child of Stanley's partner: we expect this to be Davy, but in fact it is Ned.

KT: The children would get worked up if their long term future was threatened by their father's taking up with a younger woman.

KF: Some irregularity bothers Toni. She can't think why. Then, later on, she connects it with the treachery of Steve (or Davy).

By chapter

1. AZ: Add a demonstration outside. Toni manages this security issue with confidence.

KF: In a brilliant counterstroke, she serves hot coffee to the demonstrators when the snow starts to fall. Stanley comments admiringly on this.

Stanley is the scientist directing the work. He may have a team of young, often foreign scientists under him, doing the leading-edge science, but he is in charge of the overall scientific and commercial direction of the firm. Tall, good-looking, well-cut

tweeds, short hair, warm smile, twinkle in the eye.

Add a romance between Toni and Stanley. Mamma Marta died a year or so ago. There is a woman scientist of Stanley's age who fancies him, but he is not really interested. Toni lived with a fellow policeman for five years but the relationship broke up when she was fired from the force. Now Toni and Stanley are strongly attracted to one another, but they are at the stage when each is unsure whether the feelings are reciprocated. Toni is bothered by a couple of remarks Stanley has made: i) He feels his children would resent any woman who tried to take the place of their mother; ii) He already has so many problems with his children that the last thing he needs is another baby—whereas Toni, at 40, wants to have a baby.

KF: A scene: Toni observes Stanley with Deborah Reilly, the bosomy blonde who runs the isolation lab. Debbie is showing cleavage and giving Stanley all the signs of availability, to a degree that Toni disapproves; but Stanley is not responding at all!

PG: The obstacles to the romance should be more closely connected to the plot. Say, one of the Oxenford family is opposed to Toni, and to the possibility of more Oxenford children, because it will diminish the shares in the will. *Olya.*

AZ: This Christmas holiday is also supposed to be a big reconciliation between Stanley and Davy.

Is Toni angling for an invitation to Steepfall on Boxing Day? And Stanley conspicuously fails to take the bait (because of his anxiety about Davy). But, of course, Toni shows up anyway, in the course of the drama.

Steve Tremlett is a crony of Davy's. At this stage, however, he seems loyal to Toni and is helpful, so she believes he has got over his resentment

2. AZ: Ned is a charming and erudite type who edits the book section of the New Statesman and makes a pittance.

AZ: Miranda is a triathlon competitor.

✓ Sophie must be a step-grandchild.

3. AZ: ✓ If there's a cliff edge, someone has to fall off it. KF: Or turn it into a beach.

Make Cliffie more admirable. He is something of an athlete, charming, taller than Sophie and quite tough. He has met her once before, and has been thinking about her ever since.

KF: There is a noticeable gap in the family where Mamma Marta was. People keep mentioning it or thinking about it.

AZ: Caroline is an animal lover. She brings her two cats with her in a basket. She argues with Grandpa about laboratory animals. (Or, as a late shock, she is revealed to be in cahoots with Davy.)

4. Lose Karim.

5. Sophie initially rejects Cliffie simply because she sees herself with a boy who is much more of a trophy, someone older, more cool and impressive to her friends. (Maybe she has a friend who is dating a nineteen-year-old with a sports car.)

✓ Miranda did not sleep with Hugo, just had a couple of dates with him until she

discovered he was married. Nevertheless, this will make her vulnerable to attack by Olga.

✓ Veronique is disposable.

6. Toni's mother is blind, and cannot be left alone, but she is compos mentis. However, she is very tactless. In company she often says the embarrassing things everyone is thinking but nobody else voices.

Does the need to take care of Mother initially scupper Toni's chance of an invitation to Steepfall?

7. It is Davy who is looking through drawers.

8. Who is the phone hacker? Maybe reintroduce Karim in a lesser role. A friend of Davy's who worked on the Oxenford security system and was fired along with Davy for being part of the scam.

Davy is the planner and organiser here, and considers himself the mastermind, but Nigel is the real power, as we will later see.

Around here, the shock of realising that Steve Tremlett is working with the gang, and his loyalty to Toni is fake.

9. KF: Ned knows he is entitled to his share of the Poussin (or, better, some piece of property, e.g. a house in Portugal?) but is unwilling to fight for it, so Miranda has to fight for him. This arouses the wrath of Olga, who has been used to making all the decisions for her weaker younger brothers.

10. ✓ AZ: Davy needs a disguise when he enters the lab.

KF: At this point, Nigel reveals that they are not going to liberate the animals. Instead they are going to steal samples of the virus. Davy is horrified—but he is stuck. He still needs the money. He is already implicated, so if he blows the whistle he will go to jail. His main concern now becomes getting out of this without getting arrested.

Nigel has to deliver the virus to his customer by midnight on Christmas Day.

11. Sophie in reality needs someone to admire her and let her be herself but at the same time protect and love her.

The adolescent sex, if any, needs to be tender and moving, not comical, not too lascivious.

12. Carl Osborne has four functions: i) In his sensationalising, although he has no honest motives, nevertheless he points up the dangers of what is going on, especially when Toni and Stanley are playing down the danger; ii) He makes sure the story appears on TV, to be seen by the people at Steepfall, who are otherwise cut off from communication with the outside world; iii) He makes life even more difficult for Toni; iv) Because he is an eligible suitor for Toni—good-looking, well paid, somewhat famous—her rejection of him builds her and incidentally builds Stanley.

16. KF: Toni learns from the FBI that Nigel's customer plans to release the virus on New Year's Eve in Trafalgar Square.

18. At first, the local police may fail to realise the gravity of the incident. This gives Toni a chance to use her own initiative. Her FBI contact is a personal friend whom she met at Hendon Police College. However, this inertia of the British police cannot go on very long without diminishing the urgency in the eyes of the reader, so they have to get galvanised very quickly.

20. Clifffe and Sophie making love (or petting) while the drama is going on downstairs.

21. Davy from now on wavers in his resolution, especially when members of his family are threatened with violence. But Nigel will stiffen his resolve, when necessary, by reminding him of his debts, and pointing out that he will suffer the same fate as the rest of the gang if they are caught.

24. Toni shows up at Steepfall with the police and a snowplough. She does not know that the gang have taken over. Davy greets her, all innocence. The police and the snowplough depart. Then Toni sees the gang.

From now on, Toni's challenge will be to manage those family members who are helping her (Miranda, Clifffe, Stanley?). She will have trouble controlling them. She will make some moves which are successful and some that fail. She will not be able to control Clifffe, whose impulsive acts will sometimes be disastrous but sometimes save the day.

39. Nigel threatens to open the vials and release the virus in the house. Davy risks his life to prevent this. (Or maybe Davy dies preventing it.) (Maybe salt water kills the virus, and he jumps over the cliff with the vials clutched to his chest.)