

# RIISING STAR



Screenplay by Stephen Hall

# The Story

**Format:** Crime

**Written By:** Stephen Hall

**Contact:** [www.hereandback.co.uk/contact](http://www.hereandback.co.uk/contact)

**Rising Star** is a gritty neo-noir crime thriller set in 1980s New York that follows burned-out detective **Logan Ford** and his newly assigned partner **Malik Edwards** as they investigate the death of a young woman found near the Williamsburg waterfront. What initially appears to be a drug overdose quickly leads them to a dangerous new street narcotic known as "*Rising Star*," a substance spreading rapidly through the city's nightlife and party scene. As Ford and Edwards dig deeper, they uncover a network connecting street dealers, corrupt police officers, organized crime figures, and powerful political interests.

As the investigation expands, the case becomes more than a routine homicide. The detectives begin to realise that the drug trade is part of a wider system of corruption protecting those at the top while exploiting the vulnerable below. Ford's hard-won street instincts clash with Edwards' idealism, but together they push through intimidation, institutional resistance, and mounting violence to expose the truth. What begins as the death of a single woman becomes a dangerous confrontation with a city where power, money, and crime are tightly entwined.

# RIISING STAR



# Logline

In 1986, a veteran New York detective and his guarded rookie investigate a suspicious overdose that uncovers a web of corruption, a deadly new drug, and a killer hiding in plain sight.

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# Tone, Genre and Style

**Genre:** Crime thriller / neo-noir procedural

**Tone:** Gritty, tense, character-driven with simmering moral conflict

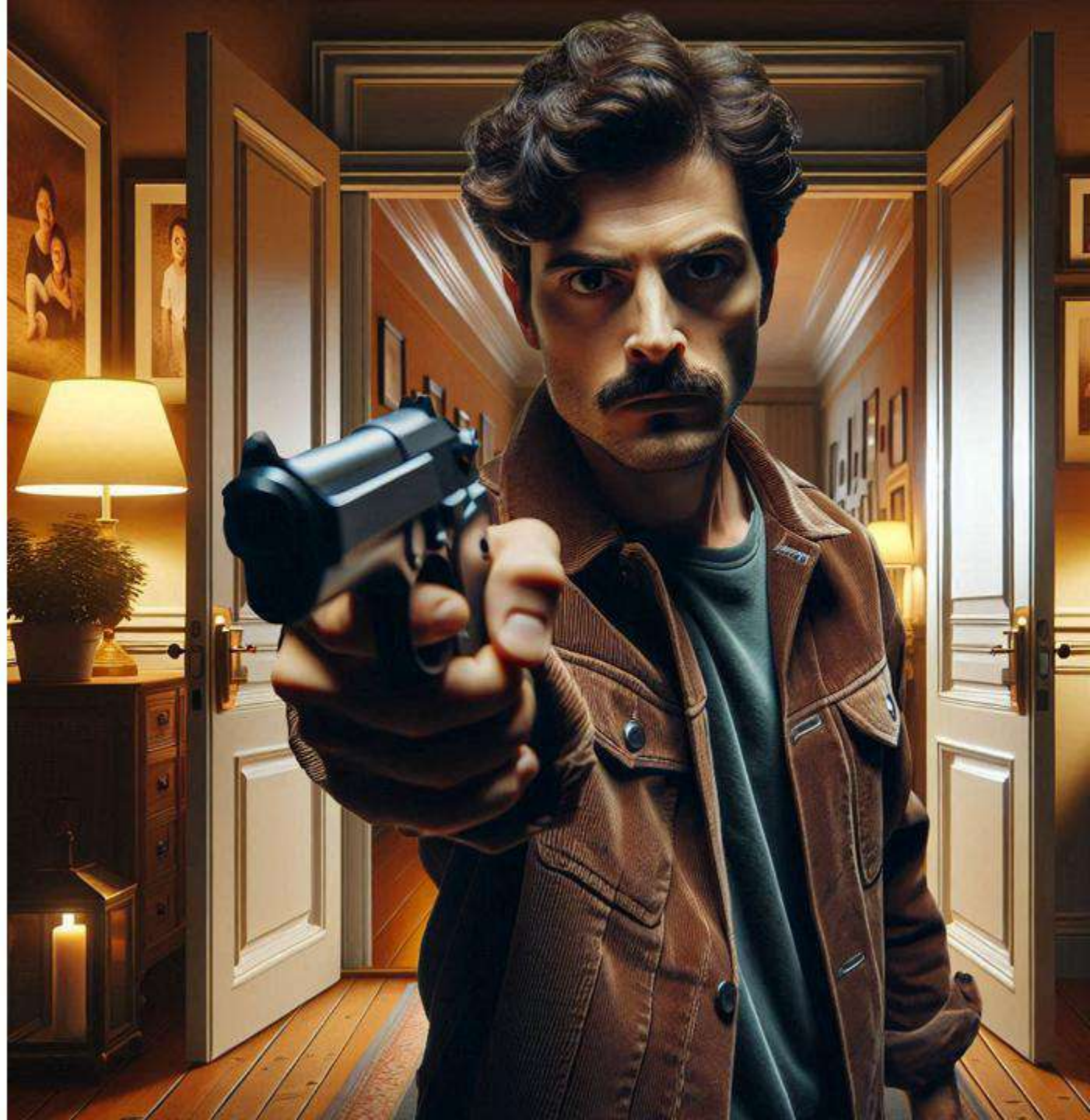
**Visual Style:** 1980s urban realism — neon nightlife, smoke-filled bars, rain-slick streets and decaying institutions, where the glamour of the city masks corruption beneath the surface

**Comparable Films:** *Serpico*, *The French Connection*, *L.A. Confidential*, *Seven*

**Rising Star** is a neo-noir crime thriller grounded in psychological realism and institutional tension, blending a classic detective investigation with a portrait of power, corruption, and moral compromise in 1980s New York. The tone is gritty and steadily tightening — beginning with a routine overdose investigation before escalating into a dangerous web linking street dealers, organized crime, corrupt police, and ambitious political figures. As veteran detective Logan Ford and his idealistic new partner Malik Edwards push deeper into the case, the line between law and criminality begins to blur, revealing a city where influence shields the powerful and truth comes at a cost.

Visually, the film leans into the atmosphere of late-twentieth-century urban decay: neon lights cutting through cigarette smoke, rain-soaked sidewalks reflecting police sirens, and dim interiors where deals are made behind closed doors. The style contrasts the seductive energy of nightlife with the cold brutality of the streets and the sterile power of political offices. Rather than relying on spectacle alone, the tension grows from character and investigation — a story where ambition collides with integrity, institutions struggle to contain their own corruption, and a single new drug becomes the thread that begins to unravel an entire system.

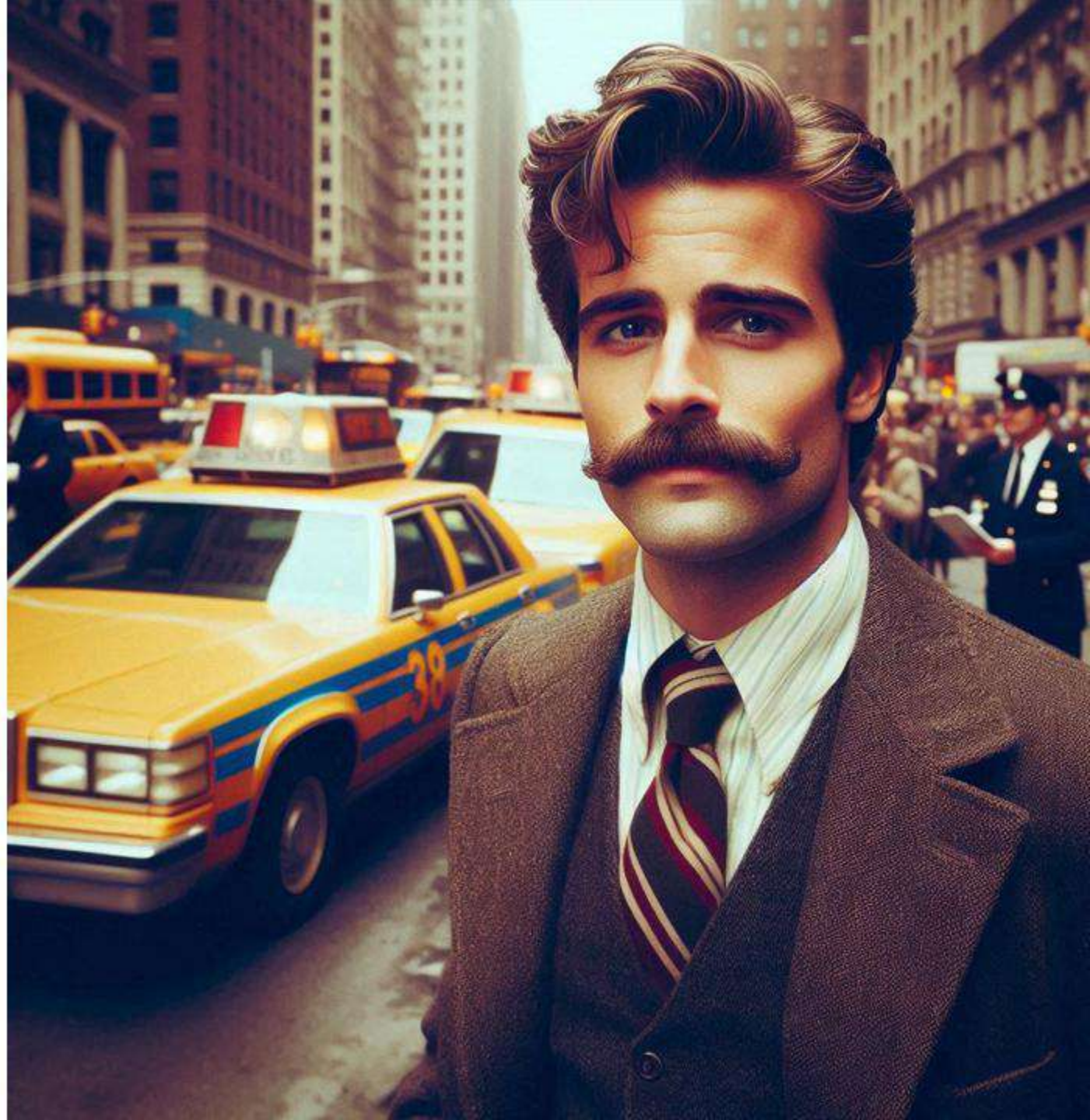
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# Themes

- **Corruption as a System** – Crime in *Rising Star* is not confined to the streets; it flows through institutions, revealing how power structures protect themselves while exploiting the vulnerable.
- **Truth vs. Power** – The pursuit of justice becomes a struggle against influence, where those with wealth and political authority can reshape reality to protect their interests.
- **Idealism vs. Experience** – The partnership between Malik Edwards and Logan Ford reflects two competing worldviews: youthful belief in the system confronting the hard-earned cynicism of a detective who has seen its failures.
- **The Cost of Integrity** – Doing the right thing carries personal risk, as those who challenge corruption must face intimidation, isolation, and the possibility of becoming targets themselves.
- **Vice and Vulnerability** – Drugs, sex, and nightlife expose how easily people can be manipulated, with pleasure and escape becoming tools used to control and exploit others.
- **Institutional Decay** – The film explores a city where the boundaries between law enforcement, organized crime, and politics blur, suggesting that corruption thrives when systems meant to uphold order lose their moral foundation.
- **Violence Beneath the Surface** – Beneath the glamour of urban nightlife and political respectability lies a volatile undercurrent where betrayal and brutality are never far away.
- **Justice vs. Survival** – As the investigation deepens, the detectives must decide whether exposing the truth is worth the personal and professional consequences that come with challenging a powerful system

RISING STAR



# The Characters

**Logan Ford** – A veteran New York detective worn down by years on the job, Logan Ford is tough, instinctive, and deeply cynical about the institutions he serves. Beneath the gruff exterior lies a man struggling to balance duty, family, and personal demons. Ford relies on hard-earned street knowledge and an uncompromising sense of justice, but his confrontational methods and disillusionment often put him at odds with both criminals and the system meant to uphold the law.

**Malik Edwards** – Intelligent, composed, and recently promoted to detective, Malik Edwards represents a new generation of policing. Educated and methodical, he approaches investigations with discipline and analytical thinking rather than brute force. Paired with Ford, Malik must prove he is more than a “college boy” outsider, gradually learning that the city’s corruption and violence demand both idealism and resilience.

**Lucia Blinkley** – A young single mother navigating the margins of the city’s nightlife economy, Lucia becomes the tragic catalyst for the investigation when her body is discovered after a night involving the new drug *Rising Star*. Her life reflects the vulnerability of those caught between poverty, opportunity, and exploitation, and her death exposes the hidden networks of power that profit from the city’s underground trade.

**Richard Evans** – A social worker responsible for overseeing vulnerable families, Evans occupies the uneasy boundary between care and bureaucracy. Professional and outwardly composed, he understands the complicated lives of people like Lucia Blinkley but is limited by the institutions meant to help them. His interactions reveal the social realities behind the case, exposing how poverty, desperation, and neglect can quietly funnel people toward dangerous choices.

**Captain Hanley** – The seasoned captain of the precinct, Hanley is a pragmatic leader trying to keep order within a department strained by politics, pressure, and internal divisions. While he believes in results above all else, he also understands the fragile balance between the realities of policing and the expectations of those above him. Assigning Malik Edwards to partner with Logan Ford is both a gamble and a test—forcing two very different detectives to work together in a department where loyalty and competence are constantly under scrutiny.

**Robert Sanderson** – A polished and ambitious politician with aspirations for greater power, Sanderson projects the image of respectability and reform. Behind the public façade, however, he is deeply entangled in corrupt dealings with organized crime, using influence and connections to shield himself from scrutiny. As the investigation unfolds, Sanderson represents the dangerous intersection of politics, money, and moral compromise.

**Giacomo Pulcinella** – A calculating and quietly powerful crime boss, Pulcinella oversees a sophisticated operation that moves drugs, money, and influence through the city’s underworld. Calm, strategic, and ruthless when necessary, he understands that control comes not only from violence but from alliances with those in positions of authority. To him, the drug *Rising Star* is more than a product — it is leverage over an entire system.

**Harvey** – The quiet, watchful manager of the Chelmsford Hotel, Harvey appears to be little more than a tired caretaker of a failing establishment. In reality, he sits at the intersection of the city’s hidden dealings, observing far more than he ever admits. His hotel functions as a discreet meeting place for those who prefer not to be seen, and Harvey’s survival depends on knowing when to stay silent and when to look the other way in a world where curiosity can be fatal.

**Peter Denton** – Logan Ford’s seemingly friendly new neighbour, Denton presents himself as an easygoing newcomer trying to settle into the quiet rhythms of suburban life. Polite, helpful, and unassuming, he quickly earns Logan’s trust. Beneath the calm exterior, however, lies a far more unsettling presence. Methodical and secretive, Denton harbours a darker psychology that gradually reveals itself as the investigation unfolds, suggesting that the violence spreading through the city may have a far more personal and unpredictable source than the detectives first imagined.

**Audrey Ford** – Logan Ford’s wife, Audrey is pragmatic, sharp-witted, and increasingly weary of the emotional distance created by her husband’s work. She represents the domestic reality Logan struggles to hold onto amid the chaos of the streets. While she cares deeply for him and their family, she refuses to romanticize the toll his career takes, challenging Logan to confront the ways his obsession with the job threatens to consume the life he claims to protect.



# 3-Act Structure Summary

## Act I – Discovery

When a young woman's body is found near the Williamsburg waterfront, veteran detective Logan Ford and his new partner Malik Edwards begin investigating what appears to be a drug overdose. The case quickly leads them to a dangerous new party drug known as *Rising Star*, spreading through the city's nightlife and underworld. As they trace the victim's final hours, the detectives begin to uncover links between street dealers, organized crime, and powerful political figures.

## Act II – Corruption

As Ford and Edwards dig deeper, they discover that the drug trade is protected by a web of corruption reaching far beyond the streets. Resistance from within the police force and intimidation from criminal figures complicate the investigation, while a series of violent killings suggests a new and unpredictable threat moving through the city.

## Act III – Consequence

Closing in on the truth, the detectives must confront the powerful network behind *Rising Star* and the system protecting it. As alliances fracture and secrets surface, Ford and Edwards face the cost of exposing corruption in a city where justice is never simple and truth can be dangerous.

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# Mood Board



Malik and coroner examine body



Crime scene where Lucia is found



The murder of Officer Bernie Hillcroft



Logan hunts the serial killer



# Why This Film

*Rising Star* tells a crime story that feels both classic and urgently contemporary — a city where corruption flows through politics, policing, and organized crime while ordinary people become casualties of systems designed to protect power. Set against the gritty backdrop of 1980s New York, the film explores how influence, money, and ambition can shape justice itself, allowing dangerous forces to operate in plain sight. What begins as a single unexplained death gradually reveals a network of relationships and secrets that expose the fragile line between law and criminality.

With its morally complex characters, escalating investigation, and atmosphere of urban decay, *Rising Star* occupies the space of prestige crime thrillers that combine character-driven storytelling with commercial tension. The film draws on the tradition of classic neo-noir while exploring themes that remain deeply relevant today — institutional corruption, the cost of integrity, and the struggle to uncover truth in a system built to conceal it. *Rising Star* is not just a detective story; it is a portrait of a city where power protects itself, and where justice depends on those willing to risk everything to expose it.

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# Rising Star

**Written By:** Stephen Hall

**Status:** Complete Feature Screenplay – Seeking Representation / Development

**Contact:** [shsc21441@gmail.com](mailto:shsc21441@gmail.com)

*“Rising Star delivers a gripping premise, a tense neo-noir atmosphere, and a compelling investigation driven by layered characters navigating a city where crime, politics, and power collide”*

RISING STAR



# The Writer

Stephen Hall is a screenwriter based in Edinburgh, Scotland. Since December 2021, he has completed nine screenplays, including eight feature films and one television project, reflecting a strong commitment to long-form, character-driven storytelling.

His work has received international recognition, with awards from the Cannes World Film Festival, the RED Movie Awards, and the Austin International Film Festival. His scripts often explore moral tension, identity, and the psychological forces that shape human behaviour.

His genre interests include historical narratives, crime stories, and period drama, with a focus on textured worlds and thematically ambitious storytelling.

Alongside screenwriting, he spent over 25 years as a web developer, a background that informs a disciplined approach to structure and long-form creative development.

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