

RISING STAR II

Main Character Arcs

Character development analysis based on the 17 July 2026 screenplay draft

Stephen Hall

1. Overview of the Character Architecture

Rising Star II develops the partnership established in the first film while shifting the principal threat from hidden corruption to political radicalisation. Peter Denton uses legitimate anger about authority, surveillance and police violence to recruit younger activists into a private campaign of murder and terrorism. The major arcs therefore examine the difference between resistance and control, conviction and manipulation, and partnership and blind loyalty.

Character	Arc Type	Starting Position	Ending Position
Logan Ford	Steadfast pursuit / restrained growth	Vindicated that Denton was dangerous and determined to finish the case despite jurisdictional limits	Stops Denton but remains physically reckless and emotionally affected by the cost
Malik Edwards	Positive partnership / moral burden	Established partner who balances Logan's impulsiveness with patience and procedure	Acts independently, kills Emily and Cheryl lawfully, and emerges as Logan's operational equal
Peter Denton	Negative radicalisation / authoritarian control	Fugitive serial killer who adopts political grievance as a new identity and recruiting tool	Creates a terrorist cell, sacrifices followers and dies pursuing control disguised as liberation
Emily Wishaw	Negative devotion / violent conversion	Angry activist attracted to Denton's certainty and personal attention	Becomes murderer and terrorist, dying while refusing surrender
Tilly Foster	Negative initiation / surviving threat	Reckless young activist seeking belonging, excitement and purpose	Kills for Denton, survives the failed attack and redirects her loyalty toward revenge against Logan
Cheryl Underwood	Negative complicity / instrumentalisation	Activist who initially appears capable of doubt	Kills Mitchell, participates in the attack and dies within Denton's plan
Audrey Ford	Steadfast relational conscience	Wife unsettled by Logan's secrecy and the danger brought to the family home	Remains the domestic counterweight as Logan returns physically safe but psychologically preoccupied

The sequel's central contrast is between two forms of leadership. Logan and Malik argue, correct one another and share responsibility. Denton demands secrecy, total commitment and obedience while calling that control revolution.

2. Logan Ford

Logan follows a largely steadfast pursuit arc with limited but meaningful growth. His instinct about Denton is vindicated, yet the screenplay continues to test whether being right excuses secrecy, jurisdictional defiance and physical recklessness.

Logan is right about the danger, but the story repeatedly asks whether certainty alone makes his method right.

Starting State

- The destruction of Denton's former house brings the unresolved threat directly back into Logan's family space.
- He feels vindicated after the first film's apparent mistake and interprets the FBI's failure as proof that official restraint is weakness.
- His partnership with Malik is established and affectionate, but he still expects support for decisions he has already made.
- He remains secretive with Audrey and dismissive of jurisdiction whenever it obstructs his sense of responsibility.

Driving Want and Internal Test

External want: Find Denton before he kills again and prevent the political cell from carrying out a major attack.

Internal need: Distinguish persistence from personal obsession and recognise that partnership includes disagreement, restraint and shared judgement.

Core strength: Instinct, courage, tenacity and an ability to recognise behavioural patterns before institutions connect them.

Continuing flaw: He acts first, withholds information and treats danger to himself as an acceptable cost without considering its effect on others.

Major Stages of the Arc

1. Vindication hardens certainty

Logan's discovery that Denton was the original Philadelphia killer confirms an instinct others doubted. Rather than humbling him, that confirmation initially strengthens his belief that he must ignore boundaries when authority moves too slowly.

2. Malik challenges rather than follows

When Logan expects Malik to back him against Hanley and the FBI, Malik argues that confrontation would achieve nothing. Logan must accept that loyalty does not mean automatic agreement.

3. The unofficial investigation

The trip to Philadelphia reveals Denton's family connection to Richard Evans. Logan and Malik work as a coordinated unit, but Logan continues concealing the investigation from Hanley.

4. Personal motive and public danger converge

Denton's attack nearly killed Logan's family, while the new murders connect him to a wider political group. Logan's pursuit is therefore both legitimate police work and emotionally charged unfinished business.

5. Forced cooperation with federal authority

Larry Drake's death, the escalating murders and the Pittsburgh threat require cooperation across agencies. Logan remains suspicious, but the case expands beyond what he and Malik can contain alone.

6. The cost becomes visible

Terry's body, Aiden's collapse and Hanley's injuries show that Denton has converted young people into expendable instruments. Logan's observation that Aiden is no longer just a kid captures the irreversible damage.

7. Recognition at the final target

At the Marshals building, Logan identifies the diversion and follows Denton. His instinct is again correct, but he enters the confrontation alone.

8. Attempted arrest rather than execution

Despite the personal threat, Logan tries to cuff Denton rather than simply kill him. This preserves the distinction between his anger and Denton's ideology of self-appointed punishment.

9. Survival and incomplete release

Denton falls after the sniper's shot, but Logan tries to hold him before unlocking the cuff. The instinct to save the man he pursued confirms Logan remains a police officer rather than an avenger.

10. Return home under continuing threat

Logan returns to Audrey and the family, but the ending with Tilly watching them shows that his professional choices continue to expose the domestic world to danger.

Arc Resolution

Logan succeeds externally and proves his central suspicion correct. Internally, however, he remains only partially changed. He has learned to work with Malik as an equal, but not fully to protect himself, disclose danger to Audrey or separate public duty from private obsession.

3. Malik Edwards

Malik follows a positive partnership and moral-burden arc. He is no longer proving that he belongs beside Logan; the sequel tests what equality requires when the younger detective must disagree, act independently and use lethal force.

Malik becomes Logan's equal not by adopting Logan's impulsiveness, but by making difficult decisions through his own restraint and judgement.

Starting State

- Malik is fully integrated into the daily rhythm of the partnership and comfortable challenging Logan's habits.
- He recognises Logan's instincts while refusing to confuse volume with effectiveness.
- His preferred method remains research, observation, cooperation and controlled escalation.
- He carries the memory of killing Evans to save Logan, giving the new violence an unspoken personal weight.

Major Stages of the Arc

1. Loyalty gains independence

Malik tells Logan that subtlety may achieve more than direct confrontation. He nevertheless joins the investigation because the Denton connection is real, not because Logan demands obedience.

2. Shared deduction

In Philadelphia, Malik's research uncovers the marriage linking Denton and Evans. The discovery confirms that the partnership's intellectual work is genuinely shared.

3. Institutional bridge

Malik is more willing than Logan to accept Larry Drake's cooperation and repeatedly argues that the FBI is not automatically the enemy.

4. Investigative authority

At the linked murder scenes, Malik questions witnesses, identifies connections and holds his own among detectives and federal agents. The rookie dynamic of the first film has disappeared.

5. Compassion for the recruited young

Malik's response to Aiden and Terry shows that he sees Denton's followers as manipulated people as well as offenders.

6. Independent pursuit in Pittsburgh

While Logan follows Denton inside the Marshals building, Malik recognises and pursues Emily and Cheryl through the street. The climax divides the partners into parallel responsibilities.

7. Lethal force and moral recognition

Malik shoots Cheryl and Emily only as each raises a weapon. His final reaction, 'What a waste,' frames the deaths as tragedy rather than victory.

8. Equal aftermath

He checks Logan's smoking, reports the deaths and drives him home. Their banter now belongs to an established friendship in which neither man is simply mentor or pupil.

Arc Resolution

Malik ends as the more emotionally conscious half of an equal team. His professional confidence is secure, but the deaths of Emily and Cheryl add to the burden he carries from killing Evans.

4. Peter Denton

Denton follows a negative radicalisation and authoritarian-control arc. He begins the sequel already a murderer and fugitive, but adopts political activism as a new system through which to justify violence, attract loyalty and enlarge his personal war.

Denton speaks of freedom while building a group in which only he defines the truth, the enemy and the acceptable sacrifice.

Starting State and Psychological Engine

- Denton carries a lifelong conviction that institutions conceal hidden agendas and use violence to maintain power.
- His childhood memory of political assassinations gives genuine emotional roots to his paranoia.
- He is charismatic, attentive and capable of appearing protective, particularly after saving Emily during the protest.
- His serial-killer identity has already taught him to convert grievance into theatrical punishment.

External want: Strike symbolic government targets and establish himself as the leader of a revolutionary cell.

False belief: Because authority is corrupt, violence directed by him is not domination but liberation.

Character engine: He identifies anger or insecurity, offers certainty and belonging, then demands secrecy and escalating proof of loyalty.

Major Stages of the Arc

1. The rescuer enters the movement

Denton protects Emily during the protest, giving his later influence an emotional foundation.

2. Legitimate frustration is redirected

He undermines Mitchell's petition and non-violent strategy by arguing that institutions only understand force.

3. Private cell replaces public movement

Denton separates selected members from the wider organisation and imposes the rules 'trust no one' and 'tell no one.' Activism becomes a closed hierarchy.

4. Loyalty is sexual, emotional and operational

His relationships with Emily, Cheryl and Tilly blur romance, approval and command.

5. Dissenters become expendable

Terry's fear and Mitchell's resistance threaten Denton's control. The group frames Terry for Mitchell's murder and later kills him.

6. Murder becomes initiation

Tilly's killing of Larry Drake is rewarded through Denton's approval. Her question about whether she did well shows that he has transformed homicide into a test of belonging.

7. Followers become tactical material

Denton abandons Aiden, uses Emily and Cheryl to create the Moorhead diversion and sends Tilly away as driver.

8. The final attack exposes dependence on control

When the bomb fails, Denton's composure breaks. The revolutionary prophet is revealed as a man dependent on mechanisms and frightened young followers.

9. Final invitation and death

Hanging outside the window, Denton asks Logan to join him. Logan refuses, and Denton falls alone.

Arc Resolution

Denton dies having produced destruction but no political change. His followers are dead, imprisoned or psychologically damaged. The man who promised collective liberation leaves behind a legacy of isolation.

5. Emily Wishaw

Emily follows a negative devotion and violent-conversion arc. Her anger at police brutality is authentic, but Denton's rescue and attention turn political grievance into personal loyalty.

Emily does not simply adopt Denton's politics; she makes Denton himself the measure of whether an action is meaningful.

Major Stages of the Arc

1. Anger seeks action

After being struck at the protest, Emily responds to Denton's intervention with admiration. His willingness to fight appears more honest than Mitchell's petition.

2. Political alignment becomes emotional attachment

She supports Denton's call to escalate and enters a romantic relationship with him.

3. First murder as empowerment

Emily lures Robards, kills him at close range and steals his gun. Her calm indicates that violence gives her a sense of agency.

4. Approval sustains escalation

She returns energised and reports that there is one less pig. Denton's practical response reinforces the idea that murder is useful work.

5. Jealousy and loyalty intertwine

Emily notices Denton's intimacy with Cheryl and later Tilly, but remains committed.

6. Terrorism becomes routine

She prepares incendiary devices, infiltrates the Moorhead Building and shoots an innocent employee who discovers her.

7. Refusal of surrender

After Cheryl is shot, Emily uses her body as cover and continues raising a weapon despite Malik's warnings.

Arc Resolution

Emily dies believing herself loyal and defiant. Malik's response identifies the tragedy: her courage and anger were real qualities, but Denton redirected them toward a cause that consumed her.

6. Tilly Foster

Tilly follows a negative initiation arc that remains unresolved at the end. She begins as the most playful and impulsive member of the group, but her hunger for approval allows Denton to accelerate her from rhetoric to intimate violence.

Tilly survives because she is placed at the edge of the final operation, allowing Denton's influence to continue beyond his death.

Major Stages of the Arc

1. Excitement and belonging

Tilly treats rebellion as identity, humour and adventure. Her early attitude shows attraction to the energy of radicalism before she understands its consequences.

2. Personal attachment within the group

Her relationship with Aiden and comfort among the others give the cell the emotional texture of a substitute family.

3. Denton's approval becomes decisive

Tilly kills Larry Drake with repeated knife blows, then asks Denton whether she did well. Moral judgement has been outsourced to the leader.

4. Violence becomes competence

After the murder, she joins preparations calmly, drives the group and handles operational responsibilities.

5. Loss breaks the collective fantasy

From the getaway car, she sees Malik beside Emily's body and realises the others are dead.

6. Survival redirects loyalty into revenge

The final image shows her observing Logan's family with a marked map and photograph.

Arc Resolution

Tilly is the sequel's bridge into the next film. She is no longer merely a follower, yet her emerging agency remains governed by Denton's legacy.

7. Cheryl Underwood

Cheryl follows a negative complicity and instrumentalisation arc. She initially appears more cautious than Emily and capable of recognising that Denton's influence may be dangerous. Instead of acting on that doubt, she uses it to entrap Mitchell.

Cheryl's tragedy is that discernment does not protect her once belonging and secrecy become more important than truth.

Major Stages of the Arc

1. Apparent concern

Cheryl approaches Mitchell claiming that Denton is placing dangerous ideas in Emily's head.

2. Concern revealed as manipulation

She turns Mitchell's own words against him, shoots him and plants Terry's gloves.

3. Practical enforcer

Cheryl retrieves the ledgers, plants the stolen gun and performs the group's logistical tasks with discipline.

4. Emotional entanglement

Her sexual relationship with Denton creates tension with Emily and entwines personal validation with the cause.

5. Final participation

She helps carry incendiary devices into the Moorhead Building and creates the diversion needed for Denton's attack.

6. Death within the imposed role

Cheryl reaches for her weapon when confronted by Malik and is shot. Emily then uses her body as cover.

Arc Resolution

Cheryl moves from activist to conspirator without a visible moment of moral resistance. Her competence makes her useful and therefore expendable.

8. Audrey Ford

Audrey remains a steadfast relational conscience rather than carrying a large independent arc. Her function is to remind the audience that Denton's threat is not abstract: Logan's secrecy and pursuit expose a family who do not share his control over the risk.

Audrey's concern is not that Logan cares about the case, but that he assumes the right to decide what his family is allowed to know.

Arc Function

- The explosion places Audrey and the children inside the consequences of the unresolved first-film case.
- Her question about whether Logan knew about Denton exposes his continuing instinct to conceal danger.
- Logan's avoidance of her eyes indicates that his growth with Malik has not been matched by equivalent openness at home.
- Her final wave offers domestic warmth immediately before Tilly is revealed watching the family.
- The ending preserves Audrey as both emotional home and potential collateral damage.

9. Supporting Character Arcs and Functions

Aiden Rourke

Begins as an eager young believer attracted to slogans and belonging. Terry's murder and the group's violence break the fantasy. His eventual cooperation with police is a late awakening, but the experience permanently damages him.

Terry Bridges

Functions as the internal dissenter. He recognises that Denton is dangerous, warns Mitchell and is framed and murdered, demonstrating that Denton's movement cannot tolerate independent thought.

Mitchell Hemmings

Represents principled non-violent activism. His murder removes the legitimate leader and allows Denton to replace political action with private terrorism.

Larry Drake

Moves from territorial federal agent to reluctant collaborator. His murder by Tilly turns institutional rivalry into a shared personal loss.

Captain Hanley

Attempts to enforce jurisdiction and protect his detectives from Logan's obsession. After being injured, he recognises the practical necessity of stopping Denton.

The recruited group

Collectively, Aiden, Emily, Cheryl, Terry and Tilly show the stages of radicalisation: grievance, admiration, secrecy, loyalty tests, first violence, internal purges and expendability.

10. Interlocking Relationship Arcs

Relationship	Beginning	Ending
Logan / Malik	Established partners who still disagree over confrontation, subtlety and federal cooperation.	Parallel equals handling separate parts of the climax and returning with mutual trust intact.
Logan / Denton	Detective vindicated in his suspicion versus fugitive who invaded his domestic world.	Direct confrontation ending with Denton's death and Logan refusing ideological identification.
Denton / Emily	Rescuer and angry activist; admiration becomes romance.	Leader and devoted combatant, ending in her death while carrying out his diversion.
Denton / Tilly	Charismatic leader and thrill-seeking recruit.	Moral authority and initiated killer; she survives to continue his personal war.
Denton / Mitchell	Radical challenger and lawful movement leader.	Denton's cell removes Mitchell and takes control through murder and deception.
Logan / Audrey	Marriage affected by secrecy and danger.	Warm reunion without full resolution, immediately threatened by Tilly's surveillance.

11. Overall Evaluation

The sequel's strongest character work comes from showing radicalisation as a relationship process rather than a purely ideological one. Denton does not recruit with policy detail. He rescues, listens, flatters, isolates and rewards. The violence escalates because emotional belonging becomes dependent on obedience.

- Logan's instinct is validated, but his method remains under moral and relational pressure.
- Malik's equality is demonstrated through disagreement, independent action and responsible use of force.
- Denton's language of freedom conceals a system built on secrecy and obedience.
- Emily shows grievance transformed into personal devotion and self-destruction.
- Tilly shows how approval can replace conscience and how a dead leader's influence can survive.
- Cheryl and Terry demonstrate the opposite outcomes of recognising danger: complicity versus resistance.
- Audrey keeps the public conflict connected to the continuing cost within Logan's family.

Arc Classification Summary

Character	Arc Classification	Essential Movement
Logan Ford	Steadfast pursuit / restrained growth	Vindicated investigator -> successful but still reckless protector
Malik Edwards	Positive partnership / moral burden	Balancing partner -> independent equal carrying further lethal responsibility

Peter Denton	Negative radicalisation / downfall	Fugitive ideologue -> authoritarian terrorist dying alone
Emily Wishaw	Negative violent conversion	Angry activist -> devoted murderer and terrorist
Tilly Foster	Negative initiation / continuation	Thrill-seeking recruit -> initiated killer and surviving avenger
Cheryl Underwood	Negative complicity	Questioning activist mask -> disciplined conspirator and expendable follower
Audrey Ford	Steadfast relational conscience	Concerned spouse -> home and family left vulnerable by unresolved secrecy

The ending resolves Denton's immediate campaign while deliberately transferring the emotional threat to Tilly. Logan and Malik have won the case, but the surviving follower's map and family photograph show that violence has moved from political spectacle into intimate revenge.

Source: Analysis based on RISING STAR II, screenplay draft dated 17 July 2026.