

RISING STAR

Main Character Arcs

Character development analysis based on the 16 July 2026 screenplay draft

Stephen Hall

1. Overview of the Character Architecture

Rising Star is structured around two parallel investigations: the detectives' search for the source of Lucia Blinkley's death and the serial killer's campaign of retribution against the corrupt network surrounding it. The character arcs are unified by questions of trust, moral authority, secrecy and whether justice can remain justice when pursued through intimidation, concealment or revenge.

Character	Arc Type	Starting Position	Ending Position
Logan Ford	Positive humility / partnership	Experienced but isolated detective who trusts instinct, coercion and his own authority	Wounded, proven fallible and emotionally integrated with Malik and his family
Malik Edwards	Positive emergence / belonging	Composed newcomer forced to prove himself while concealing personal grief	Equal partner whose insight, courage and loyalty save Logan and solve the case
Audrey Ford	Steadfast relational pressure	Frustrated wife asking Logan to be present as husband and father	Sees him begin to reconnect with family and accept Malik into their lives
Robert Sanderson	Negative exposure / downfall	Public family-values politician secretly allied with organised crime	Exposed, arrested and stripped of career, marriage and moral authority
Giacomo Pulcinella	Negative control / destruction	Confident criminal operator who believes money and violence can contain every problem	Tortured and killed by the consequences of the cover-up he organised
Richard Evans	Grief-to-vengeance negative arc	Lucia's social worker and the father of her unborn child	Becomes a ritualistic killer and dies while attempting final retribution
Peter Denton	Hidden steadfast antagonist	Friendly neighbour who appears ordinary and harmless	Revealed to the audience as the surviving Philadelphia killer

The emotional centre is the Logan-Malik partnership. Logan begins by treating partnership as an imposed burden and knowledge as personal territory. Malik begins by seeking professional legitimacy while protecting the most vulnerable parts of himself. The investigation requires both men to reveal what they would rather keep hidden.

2. Logan Ford

Logan follows a positive arc of humility, trust and partial reintegration. He does not cease being abrasive or instinctive, but the case forces him to confront the limits of solitary certainty and the personal cost of defining himself almost entirely through police work.

Logan begins by claiming the right to act alone and ends alive because another man has earned the right to stand beside him.

Starting State

- Logan is experienced, physically worn and mocked by colleagues, but remains convinced of his own street-earned authority.

- His interrogation of Darren shows that he treats rules as negotiable when they obstruct a result.
- He resents Malik's education, polish and fast-track reputation, assuming these qualities represent inexperience and ambition rather than ability.
- At home, he equates working hard with fulfilling his family role, while Audrey measures effort through presence and practical involvement.
- He has an unresolved connection to the Philadelphia murders and carries shame over having suspected the wrong person.

Driving Want and Internal Need

External want: Identify who supplied Rising Star, solve Lucia Blinkley's death and stop the ritual killings.

Internal need: Accept that instinct is fallible, partnership requires openness and being a good detective does not excuse absence from family life.

False belief: Experience gives him the right to operate alone and to trust his own judgement above procedure or another person's perspective.

Central contradiction: He expects suspects, family and partners to be honest with him while withholding his own mistakes and vulnerabilities.

Major Stages of the Arc

1. Authority without accountability

The opening interrogation establishes Logan's effectiveness and moral danger. His statement that he makes his own rights reveals a man who believes the value of the outcome legitimises his methods.

2. Partnership imposed

Logan rejects Malik before the younger detective has done anything wrong. The hostility protects Logan's independence and prevents comparison with a more disciplined professional model.

3. Competence recognises competence

During the Lucia investigation, Malik repeatedly notices evidence, asks precise questions and contributes cultural and literary knowledge. Logan begins to use rather than dismiss those strengths.

4. Personal empathy surfaces

Logan's response to Agnes Blinkley and his conversation about losing a child reveal compassion beneath the abrasive exterior. Malik's guarded reference to bereavement creates the first genuine point of recognition between them.

5. Audrey challenges his professional mythology

Audrey tells Logan he is sometimes a better cop than father and urges him to give Malik a chance. Her judgement connects his rejection of partnership with his wider habit of emotional absence.

6. The hidden Philadelphia failure

Malik discovers that Logan was involved in the earlier murders and had a suspect who proved wrong. Logan initially responds defensively, but the disclosure explains his obsession and fear of repeating the failure.

7. Partnership becomes investigative equality

The two men combine Logan's street instincts with Malik's research and pattern recognition. Their disagreement becomes productive rather than merely hostile, and Malik increasingly challenges Logan without withdrawing respect.

8. Certainty produces another error

Logan becomes convinced Peter Denton is the killer and illegally enters his basement. The discovery appears to validate him, but the conclusion is incomplete. His certainty nearly diverts him from the actual immediate threat.

9. The case becomes personal and physical

Logan identifies Sanderson's link through the flag pin and enters the house alone. His continued instinct to act without waiting for Malik places him at mortal risk.

10. Rescue and admission

After Malik kills Evans to save him, Logan admits that he got the case badly wrong. The admission is the clearest evidence of change: he no longer protects authority through denial.

11. Family and partner share the same frame

The baseball ending places Logan beside Audrey, Christina, Callum and Malik. The visual grouping suggests that professional partnership and family presence no longer occupy completely separate lives.

Arc Resolution

Logan does not become gentle, rule-bound or fully healed. His arc is credible because the movement is limited but meaningful: he accepts Malik's value, acknowledges error and appears at his son's game. The final Denton reveal also preserves the consequence of his imperfect judgement: he was wrong about the immediate killer but right that something was hidden next door.

3. Malik Edwards

Malik follows a positive emergence arc. He begins as an outsider whose education, race, composure and sexuality place him under scrutiny. Rather than becoming more like Logan, he earns equality by retaining his own methods and gradually allowing his private grief to be seen.

Malik's arc is not about proving he can imitate the veteran; it is about proving that his different intelligence and emotional restraint belong in the partnership.

Starting State

- Malik is sharply presented, educated and controlled, aware that others may interpret those qualities as arrogance or softness.
- He asks for the opportunity to prove himself but refuses to behave submissively.
- He carries grief over a former boyfriend who died of AIDS and knows that disclosure may expose him to prejudice.
- He wants to do the job properly rather than use the badge as a route to status.

Driving Want and Internal Need

External want: Prove his professional value and help solve the linked drug, corruption and murder cases.

Internal need: Trust that another person can know his history without reducing him to it, and claim equality without waiting for permission.

Strength: Research, empathy, composure, pattern recognition and willingness to challenge unsupported assumptions.

Fear: Being dismissed as inexperienced, judged for his sexuality or emotionally exposed through grief.

Major Stages of the Arc

1. Refusal to be diminished

Malik responds to Logan's mockery with controlled humour and clear boundaries. He accepts the difficulty of the partnership but not the premise that he is merely a passenger.

2. Human sensitivity within procedural work

His response to Lucia's mother and unborn child reveals that he experiences victims as people, not simply evidence. This quality initially contrasts with Logan's defensive detachment.

3. Personal disclosure in a safer relationship

At dinner, Malik tells Audrey that his former boyfriend died of AIDS. Audrey's acceptance provides emotional validation and indirectly prepares the possibility that Logan may also accept him.

4. Professional challenge

Malik researches the Philadelphia cases and confronts Logan for withholding his involvement. His insistence that partners share relevant truth marks a shift from proving himself to defining the terms of partnership.

5. Intellectual contribution becomes essential

Malik identifies the literary references, connects the half-moon image to a son and follows the DNA evidence to Richard Evans. The solution depends on knowledge Logan initially undervalues.

6. Independent action

While Logan follows the flag pin, Malik investigates Evans, discovers the collection of clippings and photographs and reaches Sanderson's home through his own reasoning.

7. Moral and physical decision

Malik shoots Evans when he raises the gun over Logan. The act is decisive, lawful and emotionally costly, establishing that his restraint is not hesitation.

8. Equality confirmed

He reassures Logan after the rescue, orders him to accept medical care and joins the Ford family at the baseball game. The final exchanges reverse the original hierarchy: Malik can now challenge Logan as a trusted equal.

Arc Resolution

Malik earns belonging without surrendering identity. His arc establishes the foundation for the trilogy: a guarded rookie becomes the person Logan trusts with his life, while Logan becomes someone Malik may eventually trust with more of his private self.

4. Audrey Ford

Audrey follows a steadfast relational arc. She does not require a fundamental transformation; she functions as the clearest judge of Logan's emotional absence and the person who insists that effort must be visible in family life.

Audrey measures change through behaviour: setting the table, giving Malik a chance and turning up for Callum.

Major Stages of the Arc

1. Frustration with habitual absence

Audrey immediately challenges Logan's claim that he is trying. She redirects him from beer and work-based self-justification toward a simple domestic action.

2. Naming the imbalance

She tells him directly that he can be a better cop than father. The criticism is not rejection of his vocation; it is a demand that professional competence stop excusing personal neglect.

3. Mediating the partnership

Audrey questions Logan's prejudice toward Malik's education and urges him to recognise the work behind it. She sees Malik more accurately before Logan does.

4. Offering Malik acceptance

Her conversation about his former boyfriend establishes the Ford home as a space where Malik can be treated without shame. She also correctly identifies Logan as stubborn rather than small-minded.

5. Recognition of the new bond

Audrey tells Logan that he has a good partner. Her judgement helps legitimise Malik inside both Logan's professional and domestic worlds.

6. Family reintegration

At the baseball game, Audrey sits with Logan and Malik while Callum plays. The scene suggests that Logan has taken at least one concrete step toward the presence she demanded.

Arc Resolution

Audrey's arc succeeds through influence rather than dramatic reversal. She does not solve Logan's problems for him; she establishes the standard against which his progress can be measured.

5. Robert Sanderson

Sanderson follows a negative exposure and downfall arc. His public campaign is built on family values, community safety and reform, while his private advancement depends on organised crime, bribery, exploitation and concealment.

Sanderson's downfall occurs when the private life he believed could be compartmentalised becomes the evidence that destroys the public identity.

Starting State

- Sanderson is a polished political performer selling change and public morality.
- He treats Pulcinella's criminal network as a controlled business alliance that can fund ambition and expand influence.
- His marriage is already compromised by deception, but he assumes Veronica will remain outside the truth.
- He believes status, connections and money can contain every consequence.

Major Stages of the Arc

1. Corruption presented as business

Sanderson exchanges public appointments and development access for offshore wealth and criminal support. He experiences corruption as sophisticated partnership rather than danger.

2. Lucia's death creates the original moral failure

When Lucia overdoses, Sanderson's first action is to call Pulcinella. He does not summon help or accept responsibility; he allows the body and evidence to be removed.

3. Private deceit infects marriage

The missing flag pin, the smell on his clothing and his evasions give Veronica fragments of truth. He continues to lie because he believes partial concealment is sufficient.

4. Murder converts confidence into terror

As members of the network are killed, Sanderson loses the composure that defines his public image. He recognises that Pulcinella's system cannot protect him.

5. Exposure within the marriage

At home, his panic forces him to reveal involvement with gangsters. Richard Evans then reveals Lucia's pregnancy, turning Veronica's suspicion into moral horror.

6. A limited human instinct appears too late

When Evans incapacitates Veronica, Sanderson pleads that she had nothing to do with the crime. The concern gives him a trace of humanity, but only after his decisions have placed her in danger.

7. Public and legal collapse

He and Veronica are escorted from the house after the killer is stopped. Logan's conclusion that Sanderson can kiss his career goodbye completes the collapse of the public persona.

Arc Resolution

Sanderson survives, but survival is not victory. He loses career, reputation, marital trust and control of the story. The man who campaigned on law, order and family values becomes evidence of the corruption he claimed he would oppose.

6. Giacomo Pulcinella

Pulcinella follows a negative control-to-destruction arc. He begins as the figure who can arrange locations, pay police, reward politicians, remove bodies and restore apparent normality. The serial killings demonstrate that this control is an illusion.

Pulcinella believes every crisis has a price, a threat or a cleaner; he is destroyed by a form of retribution that refuses negotiation.

Major Stages of the Arc

1. Quiet authority

Pulcinella enters spaces where others immediately adjust themselves. His control is expressed through routine, money and the expectation of obedience.

2. Corruption integrated across institutions

He manages drug distribution, compromised officers, hotel staff, political appointments and construction interests. Crime is presented as infrastructure rather than isolated violence.

3. Lucia's death treated as containment

He organises the cleaning of the hotel room and reassures Sanderson that the next day will look ordinary. This confidence creates the emotional basis for his downfall.

4. The network is dismantled

The killer targets the officers and associates connected to the cover-up. Pulcinella initially assumes a rival, aggrieved relative or business enemy can be located and removed.

5. Surveillance reverses power

The microphone in his office means the organiser has himself been organised. His private instructions guide the killer toward the Excelsior meeting.

6. Ritual punishment

Pulcinella is mutilated and displayed using the same theatrical logic applied to the other corrupt figures. His final attempt to identify Blinky and revenge comes too late to restore agency.

7. Death without control

He dies while police attempt to save him. The man who previously controlled who disappeared and what became visible is transformed into public evidence.

Arc Resolution

Pulcinella's death is both plot escalation and thematic consequence. His criminal system cannot protect him because it depends on fear, silence and transactional loyalty—the very conditions Richard Evans exploits.

7. Richard Evans

Richard Evans follows a negative grief-to-vengeance arc. He begins within Lucia's social world as her social worker and the concealed father of her unborn child. Her death and the cover-up transform personal loss into a campaign of ritual punishment.

Evans pursues a recognisable demand for accountability through methods that destroy the distinction between justice and murder.

Arc Components

Wound: Lucia and their unborn child are lost through a lethal drug, exploitation and a coordinated cover-up.

External want: Punish everyone connected to Lucia's death and force the concealed crime into visibility.

False belief: Because the institutions are corrupt, he alone may decide guilt, punishment and execution.

Method: Children's fables, puppetry and ritual staging turn victims into symbols within his private moral narrative.

Major Stages of the Arc

1. Hidden personal connection

Evans initially appears as a professional contact, allowing his grief and paternal connection to remain outside the detectives' understanding.

2. Research becomes obsession

His apartment reveals clippings, fables, photographs and evidence of long planning. He has converted private bereavement into an organised mythology of punishment.

3. The corrupt network becomes a moral tableau

Each victim is staged according to a literary image. Evans is not merely killing; he is trying to define the meaning of the deaths for police and public observers.

4. Sanderson as final target

The DNA result and photographs identify Sanderson's role and confirm Evans's connection to Lucia. The final confrontation is therefore both political revenge and intimate accusation.

5. Mercy narrowed to innocence

Evans spares Veronica from immediate execution and distinguishes her from the guilty men, showing that his moral logic retains categories even as it has become murderous.

6. Retribution consumes the avenger

He shoots and stabs Logan, then prepares to execute him despite Logan's lack of involvement in Lucia's death. At this point, vengeance has expanded beyond its original claim to justice.

7. Death by the partnership he underestimated

Malik kills Evans while saving Logan. Evans's final defeat occurs because the detectives operate together, countering the isolation that drove his own crusade.

Arc Resolution

Evans achieves partial exposure of the conspiracy but loses the moral argument. His crimes help reveal corruption, yet his willingness to kill Logan shows that retribution has become self-justifying.

8. Peter Denton

Peter Denton is the hidden unresolved antagonist. He does not undergo a conventional arc within this film because his function is delayed revelation: the apparently ordinary neighbour is the surviving Philadelphia killer.

Denton's apparent normality turns Logan's mistaken certainty into a disturbing partial truth.

Dramatic Function

- His friendliness and proximity place danger inside Logan's domestic world.
- His Philadelphia origin and puppet provide legitimate clues without identifying the current killer.
- Logan's suspicion appears to be another damaging error after Evans is exposed.
- The final jar of human eyes confirms that Logan's instinct detected a real threat, but not the threat he was presently investigating.

- The reveal creates unresolved tension for later films and prevents the case from ending in complete reassurance.

9. Supporting Character Arcs and Functions

Veronica Sanderson

Moves from sceptical spouse to horrified witness. She recognises signs of infidelity, then learns that Sanderson's deceit includes organised crime, Lucia's death and pregnancy. Her repeated condemnation destroys his ability to preserve the fiction of respectable family life.

Agnes Blinkley

Represents the innocent cost of the conspiracy. Her grief humanises Lucia before the wider corruption plot expands and prompts Logan's gentler investigative behaviour.

Christina and Callum Ford

Function as measures of Logan's availability as a father. Christina's recorded television footage becomes crucial evidence, while Callum's final baseball game gives Logan an opportunity to demonstrate presence rather than merely promise it.

Captain Hanley

Creates the partnership and repeatedly tests whether Logan and Malik will accept shared responsibility. He represents institutional authority in a more legitimate form than Logan's self-appointed authority.

Ernst Becker

Supplies scientific evidence that corrects assumption: the drug composition, pregnancy, fibres and DNA result. His work supports the screenplay's argument that instinct requires verification.

Harvey

Begins as a silent facilitator who treats concealment as routine. His theft of Sanderson's pin creates the physical clue that ultimately exposes the politician.

Bernie Hillcroft and Jim Kershaw

Show police authority corrupted into predation. Their theft, violence and service to Pulcinella make them both perpetrators and early targets of Evans's revenge.

10. Interlocking Relationship Arcs

Relationship	Beginning	Ending
Logan / Malik	Reluctant veteran and unwanted rookie, each defensive about status and experience.	Mutually dependent partners; Malik saves Logan and joins his family circle.
Logan / Audrey	Marriage strained by work, alcohol and emotional absence.	A small but concrete movement toward family presence and responsiveness.

Logan / Denton	Friendly neighbours with a moment of instinctive suspicion.	Logan's accusation appears false, while the audience learns Denton truly is dangerous.
Sanderson / Veronica	Publicly respectable marriage sustained by private evasions.	Trust collapses when corruption, infidelity and Lucia's pregnancy are exposed.
Sanderson / Pulcinella	Mutually beneficial political-criminal alliance.	Both lose control; Pulcinella dies and Sanderson is arrested.
Evans / Lucia	Hidden intimate relationship and unborn child.	Grief becomes the justification for a murderous campaign carried out in her name.

11. Overall Evaluation

The strongest arc construction lies in the way professional and personal trust intersect. The murder investigation is not only solved through evidence; it requires Logan and Malik to correct each other's blind spots. Logan has experience without sufficient openness. Malik has insight without institutional standing. Together, they become more effective than either man's preferred solitary identity.

- Logan's growth is expressed through admission of error, acceptance of Malik and physical presence with his family.
- Malik's growth is expressed through disclosure, professional challenge, independent deduction and decisive action.
- Audrey gives the story a behavioural definition of change rather than a verbal one.
- Sanderson and Pulcinella embody corruption disguised as respectable systems.
- Evans demonstrates how grief and moral certainty can mutate into cruelty.
- Denton leaves the audience with the knowledge that solving one case does not mean every danger has been understood.

Arc Classification Summary

Character	Arc Classification	Essential Movement
Logan Ford	Positive humility / partnership	Isolated certainty → fallibility acknowledged and partnership accepted
Malik Edwards	Positive emergence / belonging	Guarded outsider → equal detective, rescuer and trusted family presence
Audrey Ford	Steadfast relational influence	Frustrated spouse → witness to concrete, if incomplete, change
Robert Sanderson	Negative exposure / downfall	Public moral image → criminal truth, arrest and personal collapse
Giacomo Pulcinella	Negative destruction	Criminal controller → helpless victim of the network's consequences
Richard Evans	Negative vengeance	Bereaved partner → ritual killer destroyed by his own moral absolutism
Peter Denton	Hidden steadfast threat	Ordinary neighbour mask → unrevealed serial killer confirmed to the audience

The final baseball scene provides emotional resolution without implying that Logan's work or flaws are finished. The cut to Denton's hidden jar then reopens the world, turning the apparent false suspicion into a larger unresolved danger and preparing the continuing trilogy.

Source: Analysis based on RISING STAR, screenplay draft dated 16 July 2026.