

Brainstorming Plot Ideas before starting the book: I may develop some, delete others as I go (this is from Operation Mistletoe) Roxanne Rustand
(little of this makes sense to you , probably---since you don't know the story. But this is an example of brainstorming, and it made writing the book much easier.)

I. GAGE (hero/cop)

- o Rebuilding his house
- o Wants to keep town safe
- o Family issues--estrangement from cold mom/ dad...society
- o Relationship w/ Cliff--like a dad to him. Worries about Cliff's heart, obesity, heart disease.
- o Prickly relationship w/ Meredith
- o Hero worship by the ubiquitous kid, Josh Shueller
- o Drug classes --dare program,
- o Concerns over some kids on verge of trouble -- does traffic stops--local speeding in town
- o Cruises at night for suspicious activities
- o Uncle Ian--closer than his own dad but doesn't see him much.
- o Murder/suicide of two people in town. doesn't seem plausible.
- o wife worked at factory, she & dh are now dead....later find out she saw too much and was killed.
- o Looks into old murder case w/ Sara's Dad.
- o Neighborhood watch meetings...
- o Goes to scenes of accidents, investigates, fill out forms
- o County deputies have jurisdiction throughout county
- o Mobile meth labs out in the county
- o Arresting drunks
- o Looking into vandalism
- o Investigating thefts
- o Loose horses
- o Dog barking complaints
- o Changing of Christmas spirit

II. SARA

- o relationship w/ Mom
- o relationship w/ Jane
- o Relationship w/ brother?
- o Relationship w/ Josh
- o Drug plot
- o solving mystery of dad's crime/suicide
- o

III. BERNIECE

- o Angry/bitter --husband turned bad, left her poor
- o opens up a bit--maybe d/t josh being so ebullient/persistent
- o finally talks a little about the past
- o learns truth--is filled w/ regret at Ø trusting Neil
- o also--guilt because she never visited him in jail that night
- o resolution with Sara
- o start of her new, more open life--time to move on!
- o

IV. CLIFF BENSON -OLD SHERIFF

- o Card playing
- o Gruff, no nonsense old time sheriff
- o Show mild heart pain. Refusal of treatment
- o bored with retirement, wants some action
- o But, we learn that really, he wants to cover up tracks from the past
- o Increased heart pain as he gets more anxious
- o More like a favored uncle/mentor to Gage
- o Reveal that on that night, he allowed killing of Frank Grove and framing of Neil
- o BIG heart pain...to hospital, gives last bit of wisdom and regret to Gage and then dies

V. ELENA AND PATRICK

- o high faluting...elegant dinners, holidays, but cold contention between them over Gage's defection
- o mild disapproval of Sara
- o gradual acceptance

VI. KERMIT AND HIS SON LEON--

- o **Secrets of the town re: murder in the past** of Sara's dad -- dangers
- o still watching, still afraid...know the truth
- o See Sara is watching too...decide she's a cohort,
- o wants to tell her
- o Kermit found dead...↑ Gage's suspicions about HER
- o Simple Leon wary, avoids her.
- o Leon is a gifted piano player--a savant.
- o Leon ↑ trust
- o Leon brings her documents from Kermit's desk
- o Observation of factory but ALSO old coroner's report...proves dad didn't die of hanging

VII. DRUG PLOT

- o late noc meeting
- o Late night shipment
- o More and more shipments
- o Sara gets in factory, finds documents/or overhears
- o Bad guys from out of town see Sara spying
- o They go after her
- o Bad guys caught by Sara and Gage
- o Discover LOCAL bad guy is RICHARD not IAN???

VIII. JOSH AND CHRISTMAS

- o Kids taunt him at meeting/ shows he fights back to defend mom
- o Sure enuff- Ø gets the part. Just a shepherd. Hurt,
- o Gage--shallow, fancy Christmas

- o Sara--no Christmas spirit--dad died just before Christmas
- o Sara sees him being hounded by the local kids -port wine stain /mom
- o She gives him a pep talk,
- o Josh gets the part at the last minute...is thrilled
- o Sara and Gage discover what they want most of all is something they can't have---believe their love is hopeless: the joy of love and commitment
- o Christmas is happiest ever--the reason for the season. Its what's in your heart, not what you buy or decorate with

IX. JANE

- o Sara meets Jane when applying for a job
- o Sara joins her for a sack lunch--encounters surly Ian (bad guy??)
- o Jane grateful for friendship/Sara feels guilty! Jane asks to meet for supper
- o Sara gets back into plant on pretext of looking for Jane after hours
- o Sara learns Jane has a key...takes it to use later
- o Sara hears Richard & Jane talking...suspects Jane? Hints re; Ian, Richard, Jane
- o Maybe Jane suspect SARA of doing bad things, reports her d/t loyalty to company
- o Then Jane realizes what she has done when she overhears something bad?
- o Jane feels betrayed by Sara....hurt...
- o Jane comes out of her shell more--not so cowed as she was at beginning by Ian

X. ROMANCE

- o Chapt 1 meet
- o Chapt 2 Gage curious
- o Chapt 3 Gage intrigued by this unusual woman
- o Both feel spark, at library
- o Chapt 4 Gage sees Sara notice Yvonne flirting
- o Sara thinks on her attraxn to Gage
- o Chapt 5 H/H at post office, she refuses coffee.
- o Afraid to be seen w/ Gage by bad guys
- o Chapt 6 Gage ponders Sara's rebuff, decides he Is going to pursue her and see what happens. Tags along w/ her window shopping
- o Chapt 7 Sara out trying to meet Kermit at midnoc.
- o Kermit doesn't show, but Gage does...follows
- o Her home, and she sees a lot of heat in his eyes...or is it her imagination? Either way, it won't work out.
- o Embrace/kiss
- o Increased physical stage
- o Increased caring
- o Increased commitment
- o Black moment