

**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)**

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

**II. SARA**

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

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

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

**V. ELENA AND PATRICK**

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

**VI. KERMIT AND HIS SON LEON--**

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

**VII. DRUG PLOT**

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

**VIII. JOSH AND CHRISTMAS**

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

- Sara--no Christmas spirit--dad died just before Christmas
- Sara sees him being hounded by the local kids -port wine stain /mom
- She gives him a pep talk,
- Josh gets the part at the last minute...is thrilled
- 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
- Christmas is happiest ever--the reason for the season. Its what's in your heart, not what you buy or decorate with

**IX. JANE**

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

**X. ROMANCE**

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