

## Act 1

- NAVY not NAVVY? Beware misspelling the first word of your script!
  - *Navvy is actually a term that describes a laborer who works in the construction of railroad or road or something analogous, so many of these places where railroads were built during the time were described as "Navvy Yards" at least in Australia, the UK, etc.*
- Strong opening scene, the Normal World established, but let's consider whether it telegraphs more than foreshadows; whether it might rob you of needed suspense, particularly since it's ending right now as an engulfing tragedy.
  - *This is something I wrestle with quite a bit as I'm not a huge fan of films that start near the end of the story and then spend the entire story recounting how we got there (even though I like writing stories like that. Strange, but true. )But I think we learn enough about Tom and his circumstances without really spoiling too much and become immediately invested in the story. I think that the brutality of the opening scene gets the point of the unforgiving world we're about to enter, and I think that's really important to establish.*
- Given the shape of the coming story, you might consider not showing us the opening scenes and flashing back. It will tend to crush any suspense.
  - *See above*
- Intriguing intro of a mystery in the Bill/Jake/Tom scene, Bill's weeping.
  - Is this the Inciting Incident, somehow? A foreshadowing of something that will imbalance Tom's world?
    - *I think it's more of foreshadowing as it doesn't really behave as much as an inciting incident as what usually defined by. In my mind, the inciting incident is when Tom is fired.*
- P 7 – If you move up to LIZZIE, it's a separate location (a la LOFT OFFICE, for example?) within the factory. Her proximity to the action below isn't clear in this scene. You're intercutting between an office and the factory floor so let's clarify this.
  - *Good note*
- P 9 – The conversation between Tom and Christofer here is unclear in a couple of ways. Revisit it to give us a better understanding. Interesting, too, that Christofer seems to have no remorse for the loss of Tom's pay.
  - *I'd like to talk about this scene more. There used to be a lot more to it before it was revised. They talked a lot more about the goldrushes, Tom's dad, etc. but I thought it was long winded. There's probably a happy medium that can be reached. Cristofer has no remorse most of the time. He's too blinded by his own*

- internal B.S. and he also expects Tom to take care of him, so it's almost like if he screws up, he expects Tom to pick up the pieces.*
- P 9-10 – Is this the same house in which Tom lies with his son and has the FLASHBACK? And how does a man hit his head on a ceiling?
    - *This is not the same house. I should probably change the location name to make that clear. These houses had really low ceilings, but I can make Tom do something else to break his bowl of soup if this is too far fetched, as I'm not an authority architectural accuracy.*
  - Pp 9-11 – Scenes establishing the gym are a bit overwritten. Be mindful of the fact that the script is running 15-20 pps long.
    - *Yes. This is another scene I want to revisit in terms of description. I want to really hone this part of my writing as I feel like I tend to over telegraph everything in the slug lines. And this is something I'd like to talk about not only with this scene, but in general (wannabe director over here).*
  - P 14-16 – Is Christofer insinuating that Tom should be talking to the MEN IN SUITS b/c they're promoters who can advance a career but Tom isn't doing business well or because Tom's resisting them because they're "throwing fights"? And if they're corrupt, how would we know from the earliest locker room scene w/ Bill to this in the gym? (We have not yet heard dialogue that establishes this dynamic.) Please make that a bit clearer because it seems to lead Tom to becoming more aggressive with Christofer as the scene progresses and we're not sure why.
    - *Good note. I agree. I think based on our conversation, doing more to establish these guys as coming off as more friendly to sucker others in will go along way to clarify this and will result in some dialogue revisions.*
  - P 17-18 – Again, clarify the proximity of Lizzie to the scene on the floor. And now the issue between Tom and Christofer is exacerbated. Why does Tom tolerate the other man to such a degree? And why doesn't the other man take responsibility for himself?
    - *I wonder about condensing these two factory scenes somehow for time's sake. It's pretty much the same action, same outcome, except worse. Maybe Cristofer doesn't screw up too much in the first scene and Tom is doing his best to help him and then this scene is where Cristofer really screws up to make the actual action in this scene have more of an impact. In terms of Tom tolerating Cristofer and the like, as we discussed, that's something I want to keep developing and would like to talk more about.*
  - P 18-19 – Confusing V.O. conversation between Joren/Christofer.
    - I presume that without a paycheck Tom can't continue to stay in the house?

- *I actually rewrote this scene after I sent you the last draft. I don't have the card shark scene anymore. It's just Tom. I think we can get more from Joren and Cristofer elsewhere. And yes, the job is tied to the tenement house. If you're not working the job, you can't live there anymore.*
- P 21-22 – The ‘molls beggin’ for cock’ metaphor is a curious one. Does it mean what it seems to mean—prostitutes desperate for a customer?
  - **Yes**
  - And now a challenge of Christofer by Tom, finally—the thank him appropriately. Let's see...
  - **At this point I think you need to make it clearer why Tom puts up with him at such sacrifice. It is becoming the central question of Act 1, alongside the boxing issue, the MEN IN SUITS.**
    - *I think we can get there beforehand but see his patience beginning to run thin so that by the time we get to Tom in this scene we feel his frustration more.*
  - Why have we waited so long to intro SID and JAMES, and what exactly does a ‘second’ do for boxers when no one is making real money?
    - *I'd like to figure out a better way to introduce them than in this scene and establish who the heck they are, their purpose, before we get to this moment.*
  - I'm not sure what Christofer's line, “I must have gotten through to Martin” means.
    - *This is Cristofer deluding himself into thinking he and Tom's conversation with Jacob when Cristofer was saying that Wilfred is pretty much a nobody was the reason that Tom is fighting someone worthwhile now.*
- P 23 – Chris exhibits some boxing expertise all of a sudden? Is he a good ‘corner man’ to be believed? Would Sid or James be more knowledgeable?
  - *This is a fair note. I'd like it to be Cristofer who may be a trash fighter himself, has an innate ability to at least see things during a fight where he can help Tom. It also allows for some connection with Cristofer to happen. Maybe there's a more organic way of doing this as you wouldn't think based on what you've read so far that he knows anything about fighting.*
  - You'll need to manage some TIME CUTS within the rounds/the fight unless these are going to be full 3-minute/3-page chronicles.
  - Please see Riley's book, *The Hollywood Standard* for proper formatting of all screenplay issues.

- *I have not heard of this book. I will check it out.*
- P 25 – So is this meant as the unlikely formation of a new kind of bond between Tom and Chris? It's potentially a good turning point here at what's usually the end of Act 1 but I'd foreshadow Chris's change a bit better....
  - ...perhaps with a few small side comments in the first locker room scene and perhaps in the workout with the heavy bag.
    - *Yes, this is supposed to start forming more of a bond between the cousins. Agreed, foreshadowing is needed. See my note above under your P.23 comment.*
  - **Let's work to offset some of the cloudiness I've pointed out in Act 1 and create a stronger sense of where/who the antagonists of this movie are, internal, interpersonal, and societal.**
  - Should we see any reaction to the victory from the crowd or the MEN IN SUITS? I'm still unclear as to Chris's interplay w/ Jacob, Joren, etc., and it's role in Tom's journey.
    - *I think this new idea of handling Joren/Jacob/Thompson will help alleviate these issues.*
- P 26 – Tom got Chris the fight? Hunh? How? And what is Chris's attitude here? It's hard to 'read' this scene.
  - *It is odd and probably not plausible that Tom gets Cris the fight. Cris's reaction to this is based on his odd sense of entitlement and his expectation of Tom to help him in all things. Clearly, that's not coming across though.*
- Again, what's the nature of this bond? Why does Chris want to box if he's so afraid of the bout and indifferent to training, etc.?
  - *I never thought about Cris truly wanting to box. I think I need to sit down and think about this character more in terms of his external objectives. I know he has this weird love-hate relationship with Tom and depends on him for survival. I think he's just sort of putzing along here, doing whatever Tom is doing. This was also trying to show that Cristofer has some humanity or innocence in him. He's afraid to do anything on his own because he's never truly had to.*
- P 29-31 – This locker room fight is not well-motivated and the friendship increasingly unclear. Cristofer accuses, blames, rails at their societal fate and then attacks the one guy who is trying to help him. The description of their fight is also way too long.
  - *I'd like to talk about this scene some more.*

Act 1 above: Typically, a first act ends as a "1<sup>st</sup> Point of No Return" in which antagonistic forces have been established and now bear down so hard on the protagonist that they must engage them in full in Act 2, the so-called Breakthrough of pps 30-40 or so, after which an Ordeal of Act 3 sets in.

*I think one of the biggest things missing is that point of no return. We never see Tom really make it except via montage which is kind of cheap. I'd like to see something where we actually see him with Jacob being told because of the results of the Bell fight he may start getting some better fights or something like that.*

How would you describe the dimensions of the antagonist[s] so far?

*I think we will establish this better by making the Thompson syndicate (not their real name) more of a force.*

- Act 2

- We still don't quite know what keeps them together, beyond blood-ties. It's a brother bond, obviously, unless it's more of an unacknowledged bond of another kind.
- P 33-- I don't understand Lizzie's last line at the end of the scene. If his excuses for the system or the encroaching ethnic tensions weren't a crock of shit....?

- *She's saying that Tom's ideals are a crock of shit. That if everyone truly had a chance to do what they wanted, they wouldn't be rotting in the lowest of the lower class.*

- P 38 – I don't understand the turn at the end of this scene either, re: the coin. He realizes he's got to make money as a boxer? Or that she cares for him? Or both?

- *That she cares for him.*

- And so she has brought him back into the house where they'll sleep together because of the 'understanding'? Unclear.

- *Yeah, that can probably end differently. Seems strange, particularly considering Tom can't enter the house because he was fired. In an older draft, Lizzie and Tom didn't live in the same house before he was fired. However, it's still kind of an odd ending.*

- P 40 – Okay, Tom ignores Cris here at first tho he went a few days earlier to find him at the factory.

- We do finally get a glimpse of the family roots of their bond, of it's unpleasant history, and of Tom's disgust with it now. I'd press deeper into the reasons for Tom's commitment to him, early on. And let's see if this is to be a 'brothers against the cruel world' story...?

- *Good note.*

- Bottom of page, when Tom is fighting another boxer let's see him following some advice from Cris., his corner man.

- *Good note.*

- P 43—After Tom's breakdown in the house....

☐ This feels like the end of Act 2, yes? He has broken through the obstacles of Acts 1 and 2, and now has a great deal to defend, a family, so the stakes have risen and Cris's place in it is a mystery.

- Act 3

- P 44-45 – So Tom rejects Joren’s intimation that Tom make a prediction about a second bout with Bell, thereby entering a kind of negotiation toward fixing the fight? Is that the subtext here? And Tom is just learning that the man behind Jake is Joren, corrupt though he may be? Tom’s resistance to illegitimate aspect of boxing is, I sense, intended as a major antagonist but it has been only glancingly presented so far, so how can we set it up better before this?
  - *It’s more about Joren trying to buddy up to him in an attempt to later exploit him.*
- P 47 – so the antagonists now are a corrupted fight game, a lone noble hold-out, and an encroaching physical ailment. Does Lizzie notice his shaking at the table or is she not yet aware of it?
  - *She does notice it, and that’s part of the scene where he’s shaking. The subtext over that is Lizzie asking him not if he likes his food, but that he likes the life he’s chosen. She realizes he will not accept her help and she’s asking him if he’s sure about this life he’s leading given the physical repercussions/general instability.*
  - So what are the terms of engagement in this fight vis-à-vis Thompson (same as Joren? Use one name for any given character once they’re introduced.) If I’m clear, Tom has refused to fix the fight, Tom’s not really ready for Bell, and it’s every man for himself?
- P 48-49 – Is there some subtext w/ Lizzie apart from the outcome of the fight? Is she souring on the fight game? Or worried for Tom’s health? Her character is a bit opaque so far.....
  - *The last two bits. This is kind of carrying on from the scene where they’re eating together, her continued worrying about what Tom is doing.*
- P 52-53 – Scene is pretty good but dialogue muddies the water in the last third, so we don’t quite get that Tom is folding. And is he doing so because of his health? A concession to corrupt realities because he needs the money and fears for his family?
- Okay, good turn w/ Tom reversing his choice to take a fall against Jordan.
- P 56 – Lizzie’s “do him” line is unclear and the repercussions of the polls (or rankings) need to be clearer a propos of Tom’s increasing vulnerability to Thompson, etc.
  - *Lizzie is just doing her best to try and motivate him at this point and is completely in the dark about the underworld of fighting. Tom is starting to realize that there’s more to this than he realizes.*

- Act 4
  - P. 62 – Why is Lizzie “alienated”? Because she anticipates an expenditure? How does she feel about Cristofer in general?
    - *She feels alienated because Tom is going out on a limb to help Cristofer.*
  - And is it any secret who is out to injure Cristofer and is probably intending to do the same to Tom?
    - *To Lizzie, yes.*
  - P 64 – Interesting that Jake is still a somewhat honest broker, albeit a realistic one, but what does “sacrifice my tenet” mean?
    - *Tenet being Tom’s beliefs/ideology on what he thinks his right. By playing by Thompson’s rules, those go out the window.*
  - At this stage, we have a morality play a la “Raging Bull.” There are a number of things you could do here to surprise or energize the conflict here, including have Tom seek a way to expose the fight racket to its fans by way of staking a claim to his career as one of “pure merit.” This would be naïve but surprising, unexpected. Let’s see what other options you use as we approach the Crisis, Climax and Resolution of the next three acts.
    - *This could be interesting, but I think considering what’s happened to Cristofer, Tom knows he has to play along considering what could happen to the rest of his family. This next part of the script is about Tom losing his identity/ideology and sacrificing those at first because he’s forced to and then because he needs to, to provide for his family.*
  - Are they sparing Tom a beating because he’s a strong fighter and they don’t want to injure him beyond repair?
    - *Thompson’s plan is to make an example out of Tom and then crush his dreams. That’ll be the most painful thing for Tom to experience.*
  - P 66 His declaration that he’ll “face it alone” kills any further suspense, it seems to me. The stakes are very nearly life or death and yet....
    - *Yeah, this is a stupid response for Tom at this moment.*
  - P 68 – Lizzie does not yet realize that Tom got Cristofer into the position that got his legs broken? And she “never understood” what? She seems to be ignorant of the simple dynamic in which Tom works. Lizzie risks being too sketchy a character at this point.
    - *She never understood why Tom gives a damn about Cristofer. I used to have her say something similar to that, but I thought Tom’s next line got the point across about who or what Lizzie was referencing.*
  - P 70 Aidan passes out but Tom won’t get a doctor until morning?! And what is the boy’s chronic illness? When Lizzie excoriates Tom



about “nothing to depend on,” is she advocating full compliance with Thompson’s rules for the sake of their survival?

- *This is Tom trying to deflect, trying to downplay the potential severeness of what Aiden is suffering from.*
- *The disease is based on a flu like illness that happened back then that was sometimes fatal.*
- P 72 might be the end of Act 4?
  - Tom is “shocked” by the amount? The terms seemed quite clear – “If you want to keep fighting, you’ll have to pay me back.”
    - *I think actually seeing the amount is when reality sets in. Maybe his reaction should be worded differently as shocked does intimate it comes out of nowhere.*
  - But can we assume that these are at least honest bouts?
    - *These are honest in the sense that there is no rigging, but these are fights that won’t get Tom anywhere and are beneath him considering the caliber of fighter he has defeated.*
- Act 5
  - Why does Cristofer “detest” Lizzie? And who is he in the process of becoming. He has been nearly inert as a character since his injuries.
    - *Lizzie is a threat to Tom’s affections/taking care of Cristofer. That is the source of why he detests her.*
  - P 77 Cristofer’s a thankless and detestable character by now but at least seems to be working on a plan of some sort? But Lizzie’s lack of full knowledge here is not believable. She seems only minimally aware of what’s going on.
    - *It’s not really her place to know. I’m not sure of a great way to get her more involved here, although I’m not averse to it. If done right, that could be really good.*
  - **so he is clearly not being groomed for more by Thompson, just gradually destroyed, correct?**
    - *Yes, gradually destroyed.*
  - P 77-78 -- Cris’s V.O. here is offbeat, something that could be laced in more deliberately as accompaniment to onscreen events, but let’s see him deliver the last of these words to Lizzie, if that’s what is happening, a monologue to her explaining the past. It is long overdue to learn such things and this is a good instinct but let’s find a way to make it more effective.
    - *All for making revisions to this. This scene has been the bane of my existence. I’ve never felt like it totally worked.*
    - And is this explanation meant to characterize their brother-like bond or what? And, aren’t these things that Tom would have told his wife himself, or are these men who were still adhering to the macho code of not confiding anything to a wife?



- *It is an outright lie, but even if it wasn't, your latter hypothesis applies here.*
- Does Tom have the option of finding regular work at this point?
  - *He could, but he would still have to do what Thompson tells him to. He also is deluding himself into believing that's not an option because that's one of his greatest fears.*
- P 83 – belatedly, we now know what Lizzie thinks, that the boxing dream was long over and his principled position has nearly destroyed him and the family.
  - Her arc needs significant work leading up to this bit of realistic assessment.
  - What do you see as the psychological stakes for Tom in giving up the fight game? What else does she see in him, beyond his pride and idealism?
    - *The stakes internally are becoming just another forgotten worker unable to free himself from the shackles society has placed on him that he worked so hard to escape from.*
    - *She sees someone who is compassionate and who cares for others. The whole point as to why she was drawn to him was because he was willing to do something selfless for another person (giving up his job for Cristofer) which she is not used to seeing at all.*
    - How will the syndicate view the 'draw' with Jones? Where is Tom in their regard? Are they just killing him off or actually tempering him for a comeback, a real purse, etc.?
      - *Still just killing him off, they don't care. And that's also hopefully driven home by the judges not even watching the rest of the fight.*
  - Now, however, we understand that Tom's commitment to fighting in the face of all rational odds is a sad choice to be oneself at any cost.
- P 93 – I'm not sure what deal is struck here re: payment on their home. New terms to save it?
  - *Basically establishing credit to save it because Tom isn't pulling in the same amount of money he used to and Lizzie's pay is negligible at best.*
- P 96 Jacob's mid-page explanation of why certain fights happened and the resolution of the scene are not clear, vis-à-vis Thompson.
  - And, we need to know what the financial and moral stakes are now. Will he be able to fight freely, on merit alone? And will he only get 20% of the purse either way in the title bout?
    - *This is meant to be the final dagger from Thompson. To embarrass Tom on the greatest stage possible. He is able to fight freely, but Bell is the superior athlete, is well*

*fed/trained/etc. and Tom has virtually no chance. All of those other fighters Tom faced were pawns in the game.*

- P 99 -100 Good monologue re: dad but it could be clearer what happened with “the rushes” and thereafter in his story.
- And a cliff-hanger w/ Lizzie’s last line? Okay. Whatever she might tell him seems like it needn’t wait, but let’s see...
  - *She tells Tom about the lie Cristofer told to her about Tom’s dad which causes Tom to sever all ties with Cristofer after the championship fight.*
  - The ‘takin’ the dive conversation, pivotal as it is, is opaque to me and continues to be through the discussion, until the fight. Was he supposed to have taken a dive in this bout with Bell?
    - *No, this was about the fight he was supposed to take the fall with initially that caused all of this hardship.*
  - Was there some sort of counter-narrative re: the father? I’m not getting the rest of the conversation re: Lizzie, except that he seems to have paid his debt to Thompson.
    - *Offscreen, Lizzie tells Tom that Cristofer lied to her after the monologue scene. Maybe that should happen on screen?*
- We need a stronger sense of the final stakes w/ Sandel. Tom’s jobless, obviously.
  - *If Tom loses this fight, he loses his home which is the last example of his independence. When he does lose, this causes him to go back to the factory to live completely under factory control because he doesn’t really have any options left. I need to figure out a way to make this clearer as this is the biggest moment in the story. It would bring Tom back to where he was in the beginning which the one place he never wants to return.*
- P 125 Tom loses the bout w/ Sandel, keeps the loser’s purse, presumably. So this then is the conclusion of his hopes for one last bout based on merit alone? How might Jake’s arc be refined as one of the bearers of his ‘end-of-innocence’, both here and earlier?
  - *One thing I need to make clear if we keep the loser’s purse idea is that he uses that money to take Aiden out, and maybe make a partial payment on the credit extended for his home. This needs to be the conclusion of any hope that he had for the life he wanted being permanently lost. That needs to be hammered home above all things.*