

Copyright

By

Zih-Yuan Huang

2010

The Report Committee for Zih-Yuan Huang
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following report:

**Unveiling the Dark Side of Mail-order Brides in Southeast Asia:
The Evolution of *Derailment***

APPROVED BY

SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:

Supervisor: _____

Stuart Kelban

Charles Ramirez Berg

Unveiling the Dark Side of Mail-order Brides in Southeast Asia:

The Evolution of *Derailment*

By

Zih-Yuan Huang, M.A.

Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

Of the University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2010

**Unveiling the Dark Side of Mail-order Brides in Southeast Asia:
The Evolution of *Derailment***

By

Zih-Yuan Huang, M.F.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2010

SUPERVISOR: Stuart Kelban

This report includes the process of developing and writing the feature length screenplay *Derailment*, a thriller about Vietnamese mail-order brides murdered in Taiwan. In addition to the evolution of the screenplay, I have offered the summation of my learning experience in the UT screenwriting M.F.A. program

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Chapter One: Ideas and Intentions..... | 1 |
| Chapter Two: Characters and Structure..... | 6 |
| Chapter Three: Writing and Rewriting..... | 16 |
| Chapter Four: Conclusion..... | 23 |
| Appendix A: First Treatment and Character Table..... | 25 |
| Appendix B: Final Step-outline..... | 29 |
| Bibliography..... | 41 |
| Vita..... | 42 |

List of Figures

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| Figure2.1: Character Arc..... | 7 |
| Figure2.2: Three-Act Structure..... | 12 |

Chapter One: Ideas and Intentions

My thesis script *Derailment* is based on real events that happened in Taiwan five years ago: A Vietnamese mail-order bride was murdered by her husband for the insurance money. It is still an unsolved case, so I decided to give it an answer and an ending by writing a screenplay.

I love reading society news in the papers because there are always inconceivable stories reflecting all aspects of life. I often contemplate the outrageous news and imagine what happened to those involved, or what pushed them to do the things reported in the paper or on television.

Five years ago, a serious train derailment occurred in south Taiwan. It was big news because there had not been such a big train accident for the past 40 years. It caught my eye immediately. Nowadays mass media is like an enormous octopus, forcing the real-time news into your space. When the derailment happened, I was watching a variety show, and the real-time midnight breaking news popped in. I was struck by the terrible train wreck scene: the train had turned over on the slope of a hill, and people were running around and crying at the spot. I saw a woman groaning on a stretcher and her husband crying off to the side. In my script, they became Helen Chen Shi, the Vietnamese bride, who wants to go home but never makes it, and her husband, Chuck Lee, who murders her for the insurance money.

Before the big derailment, there had been small derailments from time to

time. I love reading the society news, and I noticed those small derailments. I thought they were weird but never expected they would relate to the biggest derailment in Taiwan's history two years later. Watching the breaking news on television, I thought that a lot of people would have died in the wreck since it looked so horrible. Despite my worry, there weren't many casualties at all but only the woman I had seen on the stretcher. I felt bad for the husband who looked devastated by his wife's death, but it was soon discovered that he had purchased high life insurance policies for his Vietnamese wife, and that he was the beneficiary. Moreover, his previous wife had also been a Vietnamese bride, and had died in a weird accident as well. The woman in the news was actually his third wife. It was obvious that the Vietnamese woman's death in the train accident was not as simple as it appeared.

The police investigated the case. However, even though there was a lot of indirect evidence indicating the husband was behind the train derailment, the police force just couldn't find any conclusive evidence for the prosecutor to indict him; neither did they figure out how he pulled off a train derailment to kill his wife. The media stalked the suspect's house, interviewing his family members all day long. We television viewers were able to peek at the details of their everyday lives while waiting for the dead woman's autopsy report. As the police were about to arrest the husband and take him into custody for advanced interrogation, he killed himself, leaving a note proclaiming his innocence. It was a shocking and a tricky move. Later, the Taiwanese populace was divided into two groups of

opinion, arguing about how the law should be enforced, and how the media should be self-regulated, and so on and so forth. Years passed by, and the case remained unsolved. People forgot about the news. The follow-up to the case became a small piece of society news in the corner of the paper again.

As an observer of the news, from my perspective, those Vietnamese women were totally forgotten. They were the main victims but nobody cared for them, just as nobody cares about cheap goods from the supermarket if they are broken. Seriously, buying a woman and killing her for insurance money? It's unacceptable. But the phenomenon of mail-order brides indeed exists in Asian society— rich Asian men buy poor Asian women as wives.

A few years ago, I met with my friend, Gary Lin, who is also a filmmaker in Taiwan. We chatted about personal trivia, and he told me that he had been quite busy because his older brother had married a Vietnamese woman. I was shocked because I knew Gary's brother was slightly mentally-challenged. Reading my surprise, Gary explained hesitantly that his mom was worried about his brother's future so she bought a Vietnamese girl to help him establish a family. I was totally dumbfounded because I never expected that this act of buying a human could happen so close to me. I thought it was something that only happened in the news. At that moment I couldn't congratulate Gary because I felt bad for both his older brother and his sister-in-law, the Vietnamese girl. I dared not ask him how he felt about his mother's behavior because it was their "family business."

The perverse custom of mail-order brides is due to the strong patriarchal tradition in Asia. The idea that a man should get married and have his own family is deeply rooted, no matter what the man's situation is, and no matter what class he belongs to. Besides, carrying the family name has been an unbreakable idea in Eastern culture. Almost every family demands that a boy carry on the family name, even though it is the 21st century. Therefore, those men who want a wife, but cannot find one, pay for one. This phenomenon prevails in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea and Singapore. These countries are rich compared to other Southeast Asian countries, such as Vietnam, Cambodia, and Myanmar. In the beginning, the government only allowed laborers, domestics, and nurses to immigrate, but around the mid 90s, mail-order brides became legal as well. The business of mail-order bride soon flourishes since there is a big demand and supply. Women become goods sold in the name of marriage. Marriage agencies opened everywhere, especially in the rural areas where people's ideas about having a family are relatively stubborn. I am always shocked at the sight of the signs advertising the price of obtaining a Vietnamese wife when I visit my grandparents' place in the countryside.

To me, it is a terrible and undesirable custom, because it is literally human trafficking even though the government pretends it is not. Needless to say, problems ensue when they allow this inhuman business. Abuse of women, domestic trouble, and violence emerge endlessly; some of the incidents are heartbreaking tragedies since this kind of marriage is established on a shaky base.

Ugly things can happen in such an unfair relationship. The derailment murder is an extreme result of this mail-order bride phenomenon. The murderer purchased Vietnamese brides and sacrificed them to earn insurance money.

In addition to the bizarre derailment, I was also impressed by the suspect's father, who seemed to suffer from Alzheimer's disease. On television, he often talked about *The Art of War*, the ancient classic treatise of tactics, to show how wise and calm he was when he faced the tragedy. This weird old man never showed sadness in response to his daughter-in-law's death, or even his son's death, but insisted that he had the right to claim the insurance money. His unusual calmness and his misogynist attitude made me want to depict him as the archvillain in the story.

All the above-mentioned reasons made me want to write a screenplay to reveal the dark side of mail-order bride business in Taiwan. Witnessing the derailments, from the smallest to the biggest one, I felt I was involved in the whole sequence of events, and that I really should do something.

Lastly, movie-wise, I am a Hitchcock fan. I love all his movies, especially those that are suspenseful but still emotional at the same time. (*Vertigo* is my favorite movie all of time.) Therefore, even though I knew it would be a tough challenge to write a thriller demanding details of crimes, I decided to undertake it as my thesis.

Chapter Two: Characters and Structure

The two most important things I learned from the American screenwriting approach are “Character Arc” and “Three-Act Structure.” Being a new screenwriter, these two elements of screenwriting were extremely helpful for me as I composed my screenplay. In this chapter, I am going to explain how I designed my characters and their arcs, and how I structured the whole story. Also, I will talk about the difficulties I encountered in applying principles of character and structure.

Characters

My supervisor tells us, the most important things in a script are “character, character, and character.” I can’t agree with him more. Every time I am obsessed with a movie, and can’t sleep for days, it is always because of the amazing characters. However, creating great characters is not easy at all. It is said that screenwriters should be familiar with their characters -- their motivations, wants, goals, reactions, and everything about them. Otherwise the characters will not be real, and there will be no character arc. Without character arc, the viewer cannot feel for the characters step by step. Nothing is easy, not even naming the characters.

In *Derailment*, at first I gave my characters English first names and kept their last names Chinese for the reader’s ease. However, some of my classmates thought that was not realistic. They suggested that I use Chinese names. The reason why I didn’t use Chinese names was that I felt it was awkward to

pronounce those eastern names in English because they didn't sound even close to their Chinese pronunciations. Anyway, to make readers feel as if they were having a more authentic experience, I gave the characters Chinese names in English, such as Shan-Shan Kao or Chiao-Yang Lee, etc. But after three weeks of workshop in class, people mentioned politely that they couldn't remember the characters at all, and neither could I. Therefore, I changed the characters' names back to those simple and easy-to-remember English names.

I learned the inspiring Character Arc theory in the introductory screenwriting class, which was eye-opening and made me really excited. It is so simple but so powerful.

***Somebody wants something badly and is having difficulty getting it.*¹**

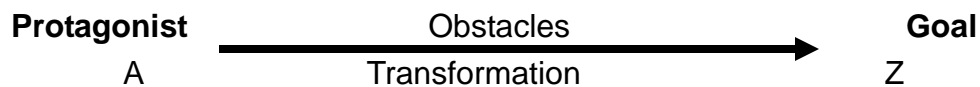


Figure 2.1

The principle of character arc is: A protagonist has a goal, and the movie is his or her journey to reach the goal. During the journey, the protagonist encounters obstacles. At the end, he changes from one point (A) to another (Z). He is not the same person he was at the beginning of the journey.

With that in mind, I created my protagonist, Sarah Kao, a young reporter at a television station. Considering that the media is an important "character" in my

¹ David Howard and Edward Mabley. *The Tools of Screenwriting*. 1993, p22

script, I created a woman journalist to be my protagonist. I intended to make the audience follow her experience and figure out the case over the course of the movie. I wrote this character based on some of my friends in Taiwan. They are young women reporters who are ambitious, aggressive and completely engrossed in the jobs that their bosses assign them. In addition, I wanted the audience to experience the character's arc with her. Sarah's arc is from innocence to disillusionment in terms of romance, and from being ignorant to insightful in terms of the Vietnamese brides issue.

My antagonist is Paul Lee, the patriarch of the Lees. I made him the head of the scheme to kill women in order to earn the insurance money. Although he is the archvillain of the whole story, I also wanted him to be a victim in a way. In the script, Paul has been destroyed by the war. Even though he survived the brutal battle physically, spiritually he is a walking corpse. His rationale that killing is fine is rooted in his early experience. Moreover, he thinks he is smart because he is an expert on *The Art of War*. But from my perspective, he misunderstands and misuses the philosophy. He is not the wise old man he thinks he is.

I wanted the theme of human bondage to be exposed in this family, not only through their acts of buying mail-order brides and abusing them, but also through the creepy father-son relationship. I made Paul an old sociopath and a nut who keeps his favorite son with him by providing drugs to feed his addiction. Todd Lee, the character whom Sarah falls for, is also a victim under this idea. He is a victim enslaved by his father. Along the same lines, I made the attorney, Karl

Woo, another of Paul's victims. Karl is obsessed with failing to save Todd in Todd's youth, and Paul takes advantage of that weakness. People do the wrong thing because they cannot deal with their obsessions.

The main subject matter of this script is human trafficking. Human trafficking for prostitution is forbidden and condemned, but in the name of marriage, people can sell women brazenly in Asia. A number of odd marriages, such as that of Kim Ran Shi and her disabled husband, happen in real life. Southeast Asian women mainly marry men who are in the lower tiers of society. They are usually economic minorities, or even disabled, suffering from major diseases. In any case, whether or not the mail-order brides' husbands are healthy, there's high percentage of them being abused. In the worst cases, they become nothing more than slaves. Kim's character was inspired by a real figure. I had seen a documentary about an Indonesian domestic worker in Taiwan. I was impressed by her because watching the way she talked and acted, I really felt like we were the same type of woman, and that she was even brighter and cooler than I was. Yet I don't have to be a domestic worker, taking care of an old man with a stroke, and getting no vacation at all. Kim is based on this Indonesian woman. I wanted to make her smart and likable. However, during the writing process, I found I lacked the real life knowledge to portray her. I have to admit that I don't have any substantial personal experience with these Southeast Asian women. My instructor in Rewriting class told me I should depict the mail-order brides' miserable situation more in order to evoke audience sympathy. I fell

short on depicting Kim in this draft. Therefore, I will try to interview these sisters to make my next draft more realistic and authentic.

Structure

The other important element of composing a screenplay is structure. Since film is a medium bound to a time of about 120 minutes, three-act structure is a rational and effective story tool. To me, three-act structure is one of the most valuable things I gained in this program because it is learnable and applicable. Therefore, the main goal of my thesis script is to deal with three-act structure. It is also a way for me to show my respect for the craftsmanship of screenwriting and filmmaking.

Three-act structure “is used to be the basis for every mainstream American screenplay. The three-act form is derived from Aristotle’s broad notion that all dramas have a beginning, a middle and an end, and that these parts are in some proportion to one another”.² Three-act structure leads the audience on the journey with the protagonist step by step. Here is the general idea that helped to shape it: Act One: Setup --- Act Two: Complication --- Act Three: Crisis and Ending

Three-act structure involves linear storytelling with a cause and effect chain like dominos. One incident leads to another. The setup in act one prepares the way for the complication in act two and the complication in act two leads to the crisis and ending in act three. The essential quality is that the story has to

² Ken Dancyger and Jeff Rush, *Alternative Scriptwriting: Successfully Breaking the Rules* (Focal Press, 1991), p.17.

escalate act by act until the crisis moment to keep the audience involved. Plot Points in the three-act structure help the story escalate effectively. There are five plot points:

1. Inciting incident
2. Act One break
3. Midpoint
4. Act Two break
5. Climax

Generally speaking, in a 90-120 minute-long movie, the inciting incident or catalyst happens around the first 15 minutes of the movie. It is “the first intrusion or cause of instability, forcing the protagonist to respond in some way.”³ The act one break occurs at approximately 30 minutes, and it is where the protagonist sets off on his journey, either physically or symbolically. The midpoint is halfway through the movie. It is the turning point where the main character begins to change, or realizes his real problem. Basically act two is twice as long as act one. Things get complicated, and the dramas heighten here. At the act two break, the protagonist usually faces a new direction or possibility. Some would say characters hit the dead end at the end of act two. At this point, the audience will be unaware of what will happen next in a well-figured-out screenplay. Act three is usually one-fourth of the movie, and it is where the protagonist reacts to the situation and the consequences that were planted in act one and act two.

³ Paul Joseph Gulino, *Screenwriting: The Sequence Approach* (Continuum, 2004), p.15.

The crisis or climax is always around ten minutes before the ending. The protagonist makes the final decision about how to solve the main conflict.

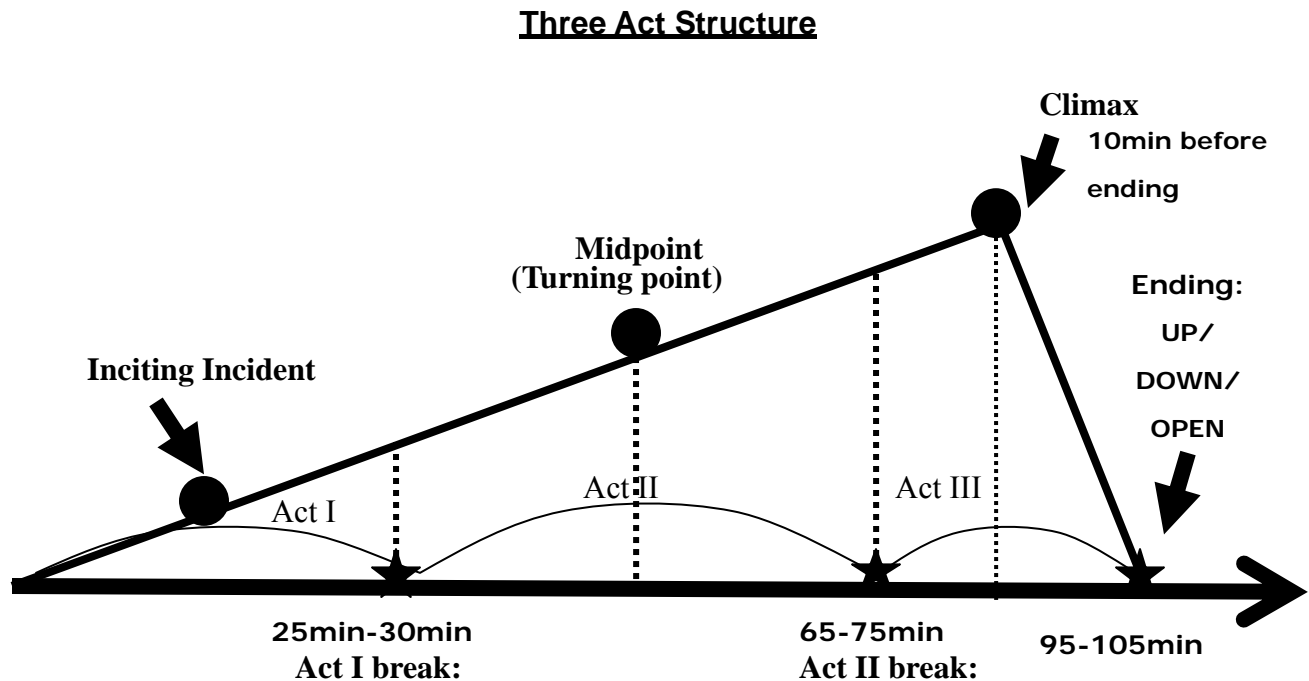


Figure 2.2

Three-act structure is also called restorative because, for the audience, the order of the story world is restored. The audience also feels restored psychologically when the movie ends. Using Aristotle's phrase, "purgation of emotion", the audience feels cleaned emotionally, learns something intellectually, and takes something away with the story.

Before examining my structure, clarifying the story in a couple of sentence is necessary. The premise of *Derailment* is this: a naïve woman reporter, Sarah Kao, is assigned to cover a huge derailment in which only a Vietnamese bride

died. During the course of her investigation, she falls for the victim's brother-in-law, Todd Lee. Gradually, she finds that Todd and his family are the murderers, killing mail-order brides to earn insurance money. When even the police are at their wit's end, Sarah digs out the family's secret, using what she finds to break the case.

Tonally, *Derailment* is supposed to be a crime investigation thriller, a film noir. It needs mastery of the genre to make it suspenseful and tense. It was a big challenge for me because, honestly, I had no idea how to do it. The only tools I had to shape the story were three-act structure and classic movies as references.

My first draft is 114 pages long. The inciting incident is the derailment at page 18. My first act ends around page 27 when the Vietnamese bride, Helen Chen Shi, dies due to the plotted train derailment. I intended to introduce all the main characters in act one. In addition, there were two goals I tried to achieve in act one. One is the motivation of my protagonist, Sarah Kao, who is interested in the derailment case, and wants an exclusive story. The other is to make the victim, Helen, accessible and worthy of sympathy, so that when she dies at the end of act one, the audience feels a clear shock.

Act two focuses on the revelation that the Lees are the murderers. I tried to simplify the details of the murder investigation to make room for the development of the characters' relationships. I intended to develop the friendship between Sarah and Kim so that, later in the story, when Sarah's selfishness causes a rift between the two women, it costs them the chance to catch Chuck. The other

relationship I wanted to focus on was Sarah and Todd's romantic relationship. However, the romance became a big chunk of act two and slowed the pacing. The midpoint is at page 68, when Chuck hangs himself, taking the case in a new direction. Sarah realizes she made a mistake, and she wants to correct it. After the midpoint, I introduced a new character, Karl Woo, to switch the story's direction to the second theme of my story -- human bondage. The end of act two is at page 84, when the Lees seem to win the media battle. Sarah and the police are at their wit's end here. My protagonist hits her lowest point: she loses the main suspect, grows apart from her Vietnamese friend, and falls in love with the murderer.

Nothing is easy in act two. So many intentions are there, but each of them demands good dramatization. Overall, I had a hard time creating higher and higher stakes and the obstacles preventing my protagonist from getting to the truth. Things were not very dangerous for her in act two. I was vexed about it. Besides, during the process of building up act two, I found myself struggling with what information to reveal and what to save to maintain the suspense. I worried that the audience would easily be ahead of my story.

Plot points were pushed into act three. Everything in my act three seemed hasty. It only has 23 pages. In act three Sarah is supposed to be reconciled with Kim and team up with her again. Also, she should solve the mystery of the Lees' past, answer how they pulled off the train derailment to kill a woman, and explain their rationale to do so. All of these plots leave a lot of holes, which should be

mended in the next draft. In any case, I set the crisis scene back on the train around page 108 to force Sarah to be in the Vietnamese brides' shoes, and to experience their ordeal. It's not very elaborate, but I intended to follow the film noir convention that the investigator becomes the victim at the end of the story.

As for the ending, I decided on a half-happy ending where the case is solved and the bad guy is thrown in jail. However, there are two things that my protagonist cannot resolve. One is the relationship between Paul and Karl, which symbolizes that once stubborn obsession is there, the bondage will never stop. The other is the fact that the trafficking of women is still going on in our everyday lives. It won't change overnight when the case is solved. After all, a movie, especially with the restorative three-act structure, is an illusion.

Chapter Three: Writing and Rewriting

I began developing this story in the summer of 2008. During that long summer break my friend J.D. Ho from the Michener Center invited me to a small workshop with two other writers, Kieran Fitzgerald and Stephen Hilderbrand. In the beginning, I was not clear about what direction I should take with this story, but they gave me a great deal of good notes and encouraged me to develop the story. Because of the workshop, I felt more confident about what I was going to write. Later, doing the news research made me more passionate about this subject matter. So I decided to bring it to screenwriting class in fall 2008 .

The motivation for writing this story is simple: I wanted to represent the derailment news that struck me, and to dramatize it as a feature film. At first, I didn't set the tone clearly. I thought of it as a social-commentary drama, but later from the feedback of my fellow screenwriters, I focused on it as a thriller, a detective movie, and even a film noir.

I referenced a couple of movies that I love as models. They are *Chinatown* (1974), directed by Roman Polanski, *High and Low* (1963), directed by Akira Kurosawa, and *Double Indemnity* (1944), directed by Billy Wilder. Other influences are *Strangers on a Train* (1951), directed by Alfred Hitchcock, and *Zodiac* (2007), directed by David Fincher.

During fall 2008, I had a synopsis, a step outline and a draft through the midpoint. Most of this work is not in the current thesis script. I was just tapping

the idea and trying to shape the script. Later, in spring 2009, we had a rewriting workshop to re-outline scripts we were working on. We rewrote our step-outlines for the whole semester. There were good and bad aspects of this work. The good was that we had the opportunity to discuss all the elements, characters, structures, and intentions very thoroughly. I loved and enjoyed that workshop. I had the opportunity to experiment with my characters' relationships. But what I was not sure about was if we needed to revise a step-outline so many times in a semester. We ended up having seven different step outlines, leaving me kind of confused. As far as I'm concerned, when I re-examined all my different step outlines before I rewrote my script, I was sure my last step outline was the worst one. It was horrible. This experience made me realize that keeping the writing energy fresh is quite important. Therefore, I put my thesis aside for a few months, went to L.A. to complete my internship, and settled all those confusing feelings. Fortunately, when I got back to work on the pages, I was still passionate for my thesis.

The first choice I encountered in rewriting was to re-choose a protagonist. I thought about different perspectives from which to tell the story. I thought about making the men in the family my protagonists, using Todd Lee as the main character, but soon I abandoned this idea because the story is mainly about Vietnamese women, not about the Taiwanese men. I decided to make the Lee family the subplot, and focus on the mail-order brides. With this focus, I needed a woman protagonist.

In the earliest version, the protagonist was a female prosecutor assigned to investigate the case. Later I added a woman reporter, and wanted to make it a dual-protagonist story. I wanted the prosecutor to take care of the law and order aspect, and the reporter to take care of the family secret aspect. I stuck to that dual-protagonist idea for a while. However, the workshop members felt the story was less dangerous if the protagonist was from the police force. I tried to refer to the movie *The Silence of the Lambs* but apparently I didn't make it work. Then I went back to single protagonist. Also, I had a Vietnamese bride character as a witness bringing conclusive clues. Then I thought, "What if I made the Vietnamese bride my protagonist?" Unless I had interviewed thirty of them, I didn't think I could make the voice authentic. One certain idea was that I wanted a female team to break the case. In the end, I chose the reporter as the protagonist because the media is an important character without a form in this story. It's more important than the law and order side. The other reason for using a woman reporter as the protagonist was that I could easily make her have a romance with Todd. I wanted to use the romance to raise the stakes for my protagonist, as in *Vertigo* and *Chinatown*. The other reason was that, somehow, I just couldn't figure out why a DA would fall in love with the criminal, whereas a journalist might fall in love with the criminal while seeking information.

After finishing the whole draft, I suddenly realized that no matter which protagonist I chose, it wouldn't matter much without something at stake. If I could convincingly create higher and higher stakes, any woman protagonist would

do.

The second difficulty I encountered was “Dramatic Irony.” It is “also known as omniscient narration...storytellers employ hierarchies of knowledge in the use of dramatic irony, between not only the audience and the characters but between characters themselves.”⁴ This skill is even more important in the thriller genre. I boiled this skill down to this sentence: “Who knows what when.”

As the creator of the story, I am the omniscient one who knows everything about the murder case. I have the power to decide what to reveal and what not to reveal. If I decide to reveal some information, I need to make sure it is in the right place, otherwise I am the movie spoiler. I am a lame God. I struggled with this throughout the whole script because if the audience is ahead of the story too much, they will lose their interest, and the thriller will become a snooze.

In my script, I felt it was hard not to let the audience know that the Lee family was responsible for the murder because I introduced the Lees in the first act. I tried to make it as ambiguous as I could. The key was to provide an unexpected twist to keep the audience involved.

I watched my reference movies again and again, and am still awed by their ability to tell compelling stories. Not only do they have the murder details, but they also have emotional stakes. I found that older movies didn’t bother to create back stories; some of them just used two or three lines to tell what had happened a long time ago.

⁴ Paul Joseph Gulino, *Screenwriting: The Sequence Approach*, Continuum, 2004, p.9.

At one point, I gave Sarah a disabled brother for whom her mom wanted to buy a mail-order bride. I wrote family scenes and conflicts in act one, trying to heighten the conflict Sarah would experience while covering the murder. However, it was difficult to embed Sarah's family in the movie, so I discarded that plot thread.

Without distracting back stories, the key is to set up an emotional engine -- the character's flaw or moral struggle -- right at the beginning. These things should play out all the way till the end. When I examined my draft, I knew I had to enhance this aspect of the story. For example, I should have written a scene conveying Sarah's naïve personality at the beginning. I also should have made Helen and Kim's friendship more poignant and the father-son relationship more quirky and ominous as well.

The third difficulty is dramatization: creating conflicts for the characters. It was my toughest job as a writer. Strong character conflicts separate good screenplays and bad screenplays. I guess that is where the talent and experience come in handy.

Fortunately, there are always great tools and skills from the experienced experts for us young screenwriters to use. For example, in my television writing class, I learned the "Option A, B, and C approach" as a tool to polish the dramatization. Option A is the solution in which everything is on the nose, a cliché; Option B is a layered solution that emerges after contemplation; Option C is the best solution, a sophisticated detour that all screenwriters should strive for.

With this in mind, I knew what I had to do to polish my plot.

In terms of the practical problems of dramatization in my script, the small ones are just everywhere in the script, while the big one is how to dramatize my central conflict. I debated my central conflict. What was my core drama? I defined the central conflict of my story as the battle between women and men -- but that was too big and abstract. So I made it “the game between Sarah and Paul,” the battle between a young woman and an old man. The romance between Sarah and Todd was actually a subplot for me. It has been a problem because, after reading my step outline, a friend whom I really trusted told me that he thought the central conflict of the story lay in the romance, although that was not my real intention. I became hesitant when I worked on the script, trying to embed the romance as well as I could. The romance ended up eating too many pages, watering down the stakes. I don’t know whether it is because I am not a romantic person in real life or because I lacked courage and resisted being shameless on the page, but I had hard time evolving the romantic relationship between Sarah and Todd. It affected the ending because the ending is about Sarah’s sacrifice and disillusionment. It was supposed to be a moment of hurt but I missed the mark.

All in all, I guess maybe because of my political science background, I know what my intentions are, what subject matter I want to discuss, or what the central conflict is — all those analytic things. They are easy for me. The difficult thing is how to dramatize them. I always feel there are gaps between intentions and

inventions. Creating great dramatization has become a really big challenge for me.

I remembered when David Simon, the creator of the television show *The Wire*, visited UT, he said something that really impressed me. He said he didn't like to hire staff writers by their specs but would rather evaluate their capability by their original work, such as short stories. I can totally see what he means. Even though a screenplay is not a literary form of writing, screenwriting demands the skills of mastering literature to certain extent. It shows the screenwriter's ability to observe and to create sophisticated drama. For example, when I watch some episodes of *Mad Men*, I really feel that I am reading well-written short stories.

The other guest speaker who impressed me was Melissa Rosenberg, the co-executive of *Dexter*. She said that she never hires young writers who have just graduated from college because they lack life experience. For writing dramas, she is right. If we only accumulate the abilities of dramatization from one movie to another, but lack real life experiences, how thin and shallow our stories will be.

There are so many things a screenwriter should equip herself with: writing skills, life experience, expertise in film language, and an ability to keep her head clear all the time. Most important of all, in my opinion, is to have passion for people and cinema. Otherwise, what do we write for? Screenwriting is really the most demanding writing in the world. I respect the craftsmanship.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

I chose *Derailment* as my thesis script is because it made me feel I was still passionate about film and people. The characters and the ideas never failed to make me feel something. I was happy to know that I still cared, and had feelings for people other than myself during the writing process. Because of the pressure of writing, I almost forgot what made me to set out on this journey of pursuing screenwriting. It's all about moving people with movies. During the process, I somehow focused on myself and got distracted by the difficulties too much. Most of the frustration came from that. But now, after completing my thesis script, I am glad that I remembered my original intention and felt very enthusiastic again.

The UT screenwriting program has been a dream come true for me. I am truly grateful to the people who admitted me to this program. I learned almost everything I dreamt of learning about screenwriting in the United States. I love American movies and TV shows; I love storytelling, three-act structure, and character-centered drama. It was such a great feeling to be involved with the sensibility I really embraced. Not to mention how great it was that I was exposed to the talents around me. I met several geniuses during the past three years, including my teachers and fellows. The conversations with them were precious. I am very happy to say that I never doubted my choice of studying abroad in the United States, and I finally found the treasure I dreamt about.

As an international student, I came from a country that seldom uses English

in everyday life. Simple as I was, I thought things would not be that hard because I love movies. However, the language barrier was greater than I imagined. The shock was huge. Taking part in such a professional program that relies heavily on language, the frustration of failing to express my ideas was overwhelming. I was distracted by it for a while. Fortunately, I met great people who were nice, considerate, and willing to help. Actually, almost everyone I met was gracious, even in L. A. Everything was so blessed. I even interned at 20th Century Fox in Hollywood! It was just like a dream. Looking back, I can't help laughing at myself -- how could I be so naïve that I thought I could write scripts in English? But I am glad I was naïve, otherwise I couldn't have had all this valuable experience.

Now I am ready to go home to share what I learned here with people who are enthusiastic and passionate about storytelling. With the language that I am familiar with, I believe there are more possibilities for me. Studying at UT will definitely be the best memory in my life.

Appendix A: First Treatment and Character Table

Title: Traffic in Women

NOTE: I used to give characters Taiwanese names but for readers' ease, I renamed them and have a table below on the last page.

The Lee family lives in a remote village in southern Taiwan. It consists of the father, PAUL LEE, 80s, the older son, TODD LEE, 30s, and the younger son, CHUCK LEE, 30. This family falls into the category of the poor and lower class in Taiwan. Only Chuck has a regular job: he is an employee of the railway company. He has a Vietnamese wife, HELEN CHEN SHI, 25, a mail-order bride from Southeast Asia.

Chuck organizes a trip back to Vietnam with Helen to visit her parents. Helen's neighborhood friend, KIM RAN SHI, 27, also a mail-order bride from Vietnam, asks Helen to bring money and gifts to her family. Helen and Kim both look forward to this trip. However, on the way to the airport, Chuck and Helen take on the train targeted by the "Train Oddity" who has been sabotaging the track from time to time. The train derails and Helen dies in this train accident. Chuck is devastated.

A society reporter, SARAH KAO, 30, is assigned to cover this infrastructure accident. Personally, Sarah is interested in the news because she has a brother, WALTER KAO, 28, suffering from cerebral palsy since he was 3 years old. Their mom, MRS. KAO, plans to buy a bride from Southeast Asia to take care of him. Mrs. Kao wants Walter to carry on the Kao's family name.

Sarah and Walter are so close, that she hesitates to marry her boyfriend, LAWRENCE YU, 26. They always bicker on Walter. What worries Sarah is who can take care of Walter as Mom ages? Therefore, assigned to and curious about the positive side of Chuck's cross-border marriage, Sarah sets off on the journey to cover the news, after having a big fight with Lawrence about Walter's prospective bride.

Arriving at the village, Sarah bonds with Todd quickly; Todd is mysterious and attractive

to her. At first Sarah sympathizes with the Lees just as other reporters do. But soon what the police find reveals the possible truth of Helen's death: she has been murdered and the train derailment has been well-orchestrated by Chuck and his accomplices. They find that Chuck has taken out a huge insurance policy right before the trip. In addition, it seems that he has been losing a lot of money in the stock market though he is just a low-level employee in the railroad company. Everyone on the spot is surprised, including Sarah, who already has chemistry with Todd. The police continuously find out evidence indicating that the Chuck is the suspect: Helen is Chuck's third wife and his second wife, also a Vietnamese bride, died in a weird poisoning accident years ago. The Lees got the insurance money at that time.

The leading prosecutor, LILY LIN, 40s, therefore, stops the cremation of Helen's body and conducts an autopsy to see if Helen was poisoned rather than hit in the wreck. The autopsy report indicates that Helen's cause of death is not that simple, at least there is some obscure thing in the blood. Just as Chuck is about to be arrested, he is found hanging himself in the backyard, leaving a letter saying he is innocent. Later, it is proved that Chuck didn't lose any money in his investment. Lily is chagrined and furious because she knows somebody leaked the arresting order to the Lees. Yes, Sarah did it, but she didn't expect that Chuck would kill himself. This shocks her. She also notices that Todd's reaction is weird and Paul is very calm about everything. She knows something is wrong with Todd and his family. Little by little, on covering this story, Sarah gets involved in this family's secrets deeper and deeper. Now Sarah has to deal with her brother's marriage problem and her love life simultaneously.

Interviewing everyone, Sarah pieces all the clues together and she starts to realize that Todd and Paul are the perpetrators of this murder. She finds out the chilling facts that the Lees were used to earn insurance money from all kinds of accidents. Everybody has a record of getting money from the insurance company. Todd lost his pinkie in an accident, Chuck lost his second wife and the oldest one--Paul lost his teen daughter adopted from a children's home in a bus accident 20 years ago. Sarah finds out this old story when she chats with Paul as he recalls how he relocates in Taiwan when the Chinese warlord loses the civil war, defeated by the Chinese Communist, who escaped to Taiwan in 1949. Paul recalls those brutal wars with a cold tone. Sarah knows this man is true poison.

Meanwhile, an attorney, KARL WU, 40s, shows up to volunteer to defend the Lees. Karl does his best to help the Lees against the prosecutor, but nobody knows why. He traps Lily successfully. Seeing this, Sarah investigates who Karl is. It turns out that Todd was addicted to drugs when he was a teen and Karl was his public defender. However, he failed to save young Todd but couldn't figure out why. It becomes Karl's obsession. Digging into Todd's secrets, Sarah unexpectedly figures out that Paul is none other than the one who gives Todd drugs, trying to keep him in this sociopath family.

Having feelings for Todd, Sarah wants to get Todd away from of Paul's manipulation. Sarah knows the prosecutor can never convict Paul of the crime, due to lack of direct evidence. She decides to work with Lily to break Todd. Now Todd faces a tough decision—admitting he's the accomplice, ending up in jail, but leaving his father forever or staying with old Paul and the insurance money in this barren village forever. Eventually he is broken by Sarah, whom he falls in love with. Todd chooses to turn himself in. Paul almost goes crazy when he learns Todd betrays him.

Back home, Sarah decides to take care of her disabled brother rather than purchasing a mail-order bride as his wife. But the business of traffic in women is still going on between Taiwan and Southeast Asia.

Traffic in Women is a crime story focusing on the father-son relationship in a marginal family in Taiwan with the background of the phenomenon of trafficking in mail-order brides in Southeast Asia. *Zodiac* (David Fincher), *China Town* (Polanski) and *High and Low* (Kurosawa) are model movies that this story tries to reference.

Character Table

| | American name | Taiwanese Name | Who he/she is |
|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| The Kao family | Sarah Kao(30) | Shan-Shan Kao | The woman reporter |
| | Walter Kao (28) | Wei- Hua Kao | Sarah's disabled brother |
| | Mrs. Kao (65) | Mrs. Kao | Sarah's mom |
| | Lawrence Yu(26) | Chi-Long Yu | A cop, Sarah's love interest |
| The Lee family | Todd Lee (35) | Tai-Ming Lee | The Lee's eldest son. |
| | Chuck Lee (30) | Chiao-Yang Lee | The Lee's second son. |
| | Paul Lee (80) | Ing-Pao Lee | The Lee's patriarch, Todd and Chuck's father |
| | John Lee (9) | Lung-Chang Lee | Chuck's son, Paul's grandson. |
| | Helen Chen Shi (25) | Hi-Ing Chen Shi | The Vietnamese wife, Chuck's wife |
| Main witness | Kim Ran Shi (27) | Kim-Mei Ran Shi | A Vietnamese wife, Helen's friend |
| The investigation team | Lily Lin (40) | Yu-Ling Lin | The prosecutor |
| | Jay Chou (38) | Kay-Jay Chou | The detective, Lily's colleague |

Appendix B: Final Step-Outline

DERAILMENT

ACT ONE

1. CHUCK LEE (30) and his wife, HELEN CHEN SHI (24), a Vietnamese, are on the train. Helen says she is carsick because the train keeps jolting. Chuck tells her that it's just because she is not used to take a train. He says that he works for the Railway Company for a dozen years and the train always jolts a bit. He hands her orange juice lovingly and suggests her sleep for a while.
2. As the train passes Fang-Shan and goes toward a turn, suddenly it derails off the track. All the passengers lurch and scream. Chuck holds the rails but he hits the window and his forehead bleeds. Asleep Helen bumps against and barfs on him.
3. Passengers and lookers-on stand beside the derailing train. Chuck squats to check out the track, too. He sees the engineer and asks him what happened. The engineer says just out of luck.
4. Two Vietnamese brides, Helen and KIM RAN SHI (26), chat at the small hog farm owned by Kim's husband. It's a small village in the south of Taiwan. Kim works hard for her husband like a slave. Helen is luckier; she is a housewife but she is not accustomed to the life in Taiwan. Neither does she like her husband, Chuck, and the whole family. She misses her family in Vietnam very much. However, it is not easy to visit home after marrying their husbands because both of Helen and Kim are mail-order brides. At the pig pen, Helen is thrilled to tell Kim that she is going to visit her family back in Vietnam in couple of weeks. Kim asks Helen to bring back some gifts and money to her family. The two young women talk about their dreams in Taiwan: they want to open a Vietnamese restaurant together in the future when they save enough money. Helen says she and Chuck will go to the airport by train which she dislikes. Kim jokes and reminds Helen to be careful because she watches TV news in which the "Train Phantom" sabotages the track of South Link Line from time to time. Helen says that indeed she doesn't like taking the train and asks Kim, "But what is 'TRAIN PHANTOM'?"
5. SARAH KAO (25) is a rookie reporter at a TV station in the K city. She has a dream

to report something really sensational to make her as a big-time journalist. However, she never produces anything cool. Nobody takes her assignment seriously. Sarah has been working on a story called “Train Phantom” for a while. “What the heck Train Phantom is?” yells her boss. “I don’t even know what that means.” Sarah is not happy about it and argues with her boss that it’s not silly. She restates the whole Train Phantom case. We follow her voice-over and see what it is. However, it sounds really ridiculous. It is a heavy-handed story. Her boss tells her it is lame and he will edit it as a really short clip. Sarah is pissed.

6. Sarah feels frustrated. Walking outside of her office, she sees her boyfriend, Lawrence (28), waiting for her. It occurs to Sarah that she stood him up. They have late dinner. Lawrence, a bookworm nerdy guy, wants Sarah to stop being a society reporter. Sarah doesn’t agree. Sarah says it’s most interesting job in the world. Lawrence’s academic style is so judgmental that makes Sarah annoying. They don’t have much in common. This date is that kind of begins good ends bad type of date.
7. Helen gets back to the Lees. It is a ratty and poor bungalow. Her father-in-law, PAUL LEE (80), seems to have Alzheimer, practicing Chinese calligraphy in the living room. And her brother-in-law, TODD LEE (30), a bum, talks on the phone about bidding the illegal lottery. Her husband, Chuck, looks quite, watching TV. And there is Chuck’s son JOHN LEE (9). They are having dinner and watching the TV news in which Sarah is stating the recent Train Phantom case. Helen looks at the TV news and asks some of the Chinese on TV; John tells her pronunciation is awkward. The atmosphere is cold. (more awkward thing here)
8. Days later short scene of Kim feeding pigs. It occurs to her that it’s the day Helen is gonna take off.
9. It’s the evening when Chuck and Helen go to the airport, they wait for Kim at the train station but she is late. Chuck is kind of impatient because they might miss their train. Finally Kim arrives at the last minute. Kim gives Helen some carsick pills and lots of stuff for traveling and Chuck tells her no bother because he has all that kind of things with thing. Kim and Helen hug and farewell.
10. Helen and Chuck find their seats and sit down. Passengers have settled down are wrapped up in their own business. Helen sleeps in her seats soundly. Chuck asks the passengers sitting in front of him if they have newspaper or not. They suggest Chuck to find it in other cars. Chuck gets up and leaves his seats as the train passes through a tunnel. Suddenly, the train swings violently, and there’s a blackout.

11. Midnight. TV studio. Phone call to Sarah. Her eyes go wide and she looks excited. Sarah volunteers the assignment. She stands Lawrence up again.
12. When watching TV and doing housework at home, the shocking news pops on the TV screen—the train was derailed and crashed, turning over down a slope. It is the train that Helen took on! Kim is shocked and makes a phone call. Nobody answers. She jumps on her scooter, rushing to the hospital regardless of her husband's shouting in the room.

Inciting incident

13. Cut to the news. Sarah is at the accident spot reporting excitedly. The train derails and the cars lie on the hills like a broken toy. Helen is seriously injured, groaning on the stretch held by paramedics. In the background Chuck is light injured and stands closely by the stretchers, crying, "Helen! Helen, are you okay?" The spot is a mess. Sarah covers, "The injured is a Vietnamese bride and beside her is her husband. Others injured passengers are sent to the hospital. We don't know how many casualties there are yet." she adds, "Will it be the Train Phantom's trick?"
14. Sarah gets to the hospital. She meets Todd who mistakes her for someone else at the parking lot when she is almost hit by a van. Then Sarah learns that Todd's family is a sufferer in the train derailment. And there rushes in Kim who crazily cries for Helen. Todd is looking for Chuck. Sarah follows them and tries to ask them who they are. Kim says she is the Vietnamese woman's best friend. Todd says he is her brother-in-law. There comes Chuck; Todd asks Chuck if he is all-right. They all ask doctors and nurses how Helen is. They say Helen is okay but still unconscious. The doctors and nurses don't let Kim into the intensive care unit—only family allowed. Anxious, Kim sees Chuck and Todd going into the ward. Sarah asks Kim if she know where Helen's home is. Kim nods and she recognizes Sarah as a TV reporter who covers the TP news. Kim and Sarah first meet. Todd and Sarah first meet.
15. The next day. Sarah is at the Lees. Sarah talks to the Lees. Paul mutters some old Chinese saying it's up to the Nature; it is fate, and you can't do anything about it. Chuck is still bandaged, looking exhausted on the couch. Sarah tries to interview Chuck. He and Helen are married for four years. They are in good shape and prepare to have a baby. As Chuck talks, the phone rings— it's Todd calling from the hospital-- Helen dies in the early morning. Kim bursts into tears. So does Chuck.

Sarah calls to her boss to talk about how she should cover next. She still wants to go that route of the Train Phantom to make it cool news.

ACT TWO

16. On TV is the news covered by Sarah. It is a sappy love story: a touching international marriage but death tears the couple apart. In the story Chuck is a loving husband, which is rare because in this kind of mail-order marriage. Moreover, Chuck's ex-wife died year ago so he is really unlucky and worth of sympathy. Sarah states the family's background: Paul is an old veteran from W.W. II. Todd is unemployed. Chuck is a low-level employee at the Railway Company. The Lees are poor and on the margins of society. Todd says he is arranging the funeral thing. Chuck sobs in front of the makeshift altar for the dead. It is obvious that Sarah struggles in the news, but she still covers it in the way her boss wants.
17. Lawrence calls Sarah. They have a big fight. Sarah vents her frustration to him. They break up.
18. The police say it is fortunate because such a big train derailment accident only causes one victim, who is a Vietnamese bride, Helen Chen. The Train Company also echoes the police. The police say the rail was sabotaged but they don't have any suspect or any suspicious lead yet. This infrastructure accident is highly likely an accident caused by some homeless who vandalizes the infrastructure. Nobody thinks a Vietnamese woman's life is that important.
19. Sarah goes back to the Lees. She first talks to Paul, asking what he is reading. Paul says: *The Art of War*. Sarah flatters Paul that he can read such a deep book. Paul says it is his favorite book. Paul says before war he is a school teacher and had a chance to go to college but deprived by the war. "I ended up from a writer to a soldier. It is fate, and you can't do anything about it." The conversation stops when Todd comes back. Sarah accosts him in a flirty way. He reacts to that quickly. Todd and Sarah second meet. She asks him about Helen's funeral arrangement. He says they don't have much money so decide to deal with it quick and simple. The cremation will be done in two or three days. Chuck says he wants Helen rest in peace as soon as possible. Sarah looks at John who is burning the fake money in front of the makeshift altar. She is skeptical.
20. At the police station. Kim waits for the detective, JAY (35), outside the police

station. She tells the detective that she has some clues. Jay is intrigued. Kim says Helen doesn't feel good every time when she takes the train. She is afraid of train. So? Jay can not relate this information to the case at all. Kim keeps going on about the news reported about Train Phantom; Helen must be murdered by this guy. Realized that Kim has no real evidence and just being emotional, Jay feels he is fooled and shushes her away. But Sarah, stands beside, listens to Kim very carefully. She goes up to Kim and asks where she lives. Kim says she is going back working otherwise her husband will kill her. But Sarah sets up an appointment with Kim. Sarah and Kim second meet.

21. Sarah is very interested in what Kim mentions so she goes to Kim's house. First time we see Kim's husband—a disabled man. Sarah is shocked. Interviewed, Kim cries that Helen is her best friend and they haven't made their dream come true yet. Now because of the goddamn Train Phantom, everything is ruined. Helen Kim retells Sarah the same thing she told the detective. As Sarah laments John loses his mom, Kim tells Sarah that John is not Helen's son. Helen is a step-mom. Chuck's ex-wife died from a drowning accident many years ago and she is also from Vietnam. (Make Sarah finds out this.) There are a lot of Vietnamese brides in this village. Sarah asks Kim if the quick cremation is a custom from Vietnam or something like that. Kim is wide-eyed and says Vietnamese never do that. They look at each other. Sarah asks Kim, "Are we thinking about the same thing?" The two women bound together in this scene.
22. Cut to the insurance company. Sarah is at there talking to the manager about Helen's insurance policy. Bingo. There is something wrong with the insurance. Chuck bought high insurance of Helen before setting off. The amount is astronomical. The police receive the info and they call to the funeral parlor to stop the cremation.
23. Sarah has a deal with her boss who wants to bring back her TP story while Sarah says it is not a good way to cover it now. She wants to save it and tells her boss she has key lead which will make an exclusive, a real big one but she needs time. She'll pass the some leads to another reporter in their company. She wants just focus on the TP. She promises she will do a great job. Her boss ponders and agrees. She starts her investigation.
24. Sarah and Todd have an excursion. Sarah asks Todd to take her to look around the village. They have a ride by his scooter. Todd stops at a grocery store to buy betel nuts. Some gamblers gather in front of the store playing pokers. Todd watches and

tells one of them which cards to play. That guy follows and wins the game. He thanks Todd and gives him some bonus. The woman storekeeper recognizes Todd-- he used to be the most brilliant student when he was in high school but inexplicably dropped out of school. The storekeeper thinks Sarah is Todd's girlfriend. She asks what he does for job. Todd tells her he earns his living by betting on illegal lottery. He doesn't have any jobs. Then the storekeepers wonder why he didn't go to college. Todd says it's too far away from home. Todd tells her that 80% of men marry mail-order brides in this village. Todd looks gloomy. Sarah tries to talk to him, telling him there is no concrete evidence so take it easy. The press is not the police. Todd says, "I hate police." Todd and Sarah go to the hill where they can view the whole village. Sarah says that Todd looks very smart. But Todd reveals that his late mother was mentally handicapped. Todd jokes that he actually almost went to medical school. Sarah is curious and asks: "then why didn't you become a doctor?" As they talk, Sarah notices that Todd lacks his left pinkie. Todd doesn't answer just saying he doesn't like bodies; but Sarah feels bad for him, thinking he may have wanted to be a doctor after all. Sarah asks why Todd is single. Todd tells her he doesn't want to marry Vietnamese. Only losers marry mail-order brides. She holds his hand and asks what happened to his pinkie. Todd says a gangster did it when he was young. They go back to the village. Todd speeds along the railroad, chasing the train as if venting his vexation. Sarah holds his back tight.

25. At the Lees, Paul gets the phone call from the police, frowns and then he asks Chuck to answer it—the cremation is halted. "And the police demand the autopsy." Also says Chuck.
26. Now the Lees is packed with the press. Now everyone knows the high insurance thing. The press insinuates that Chuck is the murderer. Chuck explains why he bought high insurance because he did it for John. He also bought high insurance of himself for Helen. All of a sudden, a reporter asks why Chuck did not tell them that his-ex is also a Vietnamese. Chuck chokes. Sarah is quiet beside. Among the press, he insurance company gloats over this case.
27. Now the police focus on Chuck as a suspect. They interrogate Chuck. He denies and objects to the insinuation, insisting he is innocent. The police search for the Lees. Nothing related to the sabotage the rail is found.
28. Paul calls Todd. Need father-son relationship here. Also the vasectomy and drug addition.

29. Kim goes to Chuck, asking for her money from Helen's bags. She makes a scene, calling him the murderer. Chuck change faces and swears her bitch as the press asks what he thinks about the autopsy. "Let's see what the autopsy will say. They'll know they have the wrong guy." Chuck doesn't look sad anymore. Paul looks very unhappy. Ted asks Chuck to shut up.
30. After the coverage, Sarah talks to John and finds out that Chuck and Todd had a late sister, who dies 15 years ago. Sarah finds out the late sis is adoptive. Sarah draws on her notebook. 1,2,3. Three women died and insurance money. Sarah has selfish ideas here—she really wants to have an exclusive.
31. At the forensics lab Jay and the forensic find some suspicious substance in Helen's blood test but they are not sure if it is poison because Helen had some medical treatment at the hospital and it contaminated the examination. In the end they deduce that Helen might be drugged and hit to death. Jay thinks it is enough to have the arrested order.
32. The police prepare to arrest Chuck as soon as the arrest order is issued. The autopsy report is coming out the next day. Jay sends cops to stake out the Lee's house.
33. Todd and Sarah visit the high school. Some romantic moments happen here. Then Sarah tells Todd that Chuck is going to be arrested. Sarah tries to persuade Todd to advise Chuck to turn himself in but Todd thinks she stands by the press side. The date ends unhappily.
34. Sarah and Kim meet. Sarah lists that dates which the train derailed from her Train Phantom coverage. Helen always took the train that was derailed. Sarah believes that it is obvious that Chuck is the murderer. They guess Chuck probably poisons Helen and makes it big derailment to earn the insurance money. They figure out how and when she is poisoned at the hospital but can't figure out how and why the train derailed and only kills a person. Kim asks why Sarah doesn't go to the police now. She explains that she wants catch the murderer at one blow and she needs to gather more concrete evidence. She feels if she can work out Todd, there must be something surprising. Anyway, Kim thinks they should go to the police yet Sarah wants to wait for a few days for the sake of her coverage. Kim senses Sarah's selfishness and is not happy about it but Sarah promises that as soon as the autopsy report comes out, it will prove their hypothesis and she'll gives all what she find to the police. As they are talking, Kim's husband yells, "Mind your business!" he warns Kim not to involve in the case otherwise he'll withdraw her identification

application. She won't have the identity to stay in Taiwan and she'll be repatriated back to Vietnam. He expels Sarah. (need a motive for Kim's husband to do so.)

35. That night Todd buys drinks for those surveillance cops. He plays poker with them and drinks till midnight. Paul closes the gate and puts John in bed.
36. Bad things happen the next day. When the police go to the Lees, Chuck is found dead. He hung himself to death in the middle of night. He left a letter saying he is innocent and this is the objection. Everyone is shocked. Sarah is chagrined. She knows she makes a big mistake.

Midpoint

37. The autopsy report is vague. It is not 100% positive about that Helen is poisoned to death or not. They bring Todd to interrogate but fail to find anything. Jay thinks Todd is the accomplice but there is nothing can indict him just like Chuck.
38. Meanwhile, a lawyer, Carl Woo, is zealous to volunteer to be the Lee's defendant. Sarah interviews Carl. He says it is not fair to the Lees just because Chuck bought high insurance of Helen. It is just social class discrimination. What Carl wants from this case is mysterious. Sarah thinks there must be something about him and the Lees. (But he is not—it is Todd's back story)
39. At the Lees, Sarah decides to seduce Todd who has an interest in her from the very beginning. She asks him out. When Sarah talking closely to Todd, Kim busts in and shouts, "Chuck is the murderer! He dreads the punishment so he kills himself." She will prove Chuck is the murderer even if he is dead because she knows how the women die in the Lees. Kim's words catch Paul's attention. Sarah brings Kim away.
40. At the pig sty, Kim has a meltdown. Kim says, "We Vietnamese brides are just like pigs bought and killed." Kim doesn't forgive Sarah's selfishness. They have a big argument. Now Todd and Paul and even Carl are all accomplice. So many people cooperate to kill Helen. She will revenge by all means. Sarah promises she will find another way to break this case. She still has a lot meaningful evidence. She'll take good use of them. Kim doubts her. She refuses to talk to Sarah. Kim says she will find evidence her way. Sarah says so will she.
41. That evening, Carl promises Paul and Todd that nobody can charge Chuck or Todd because there is no direct evidence or witness. Moreover, Carl sincerely tells Todd that he believes in him not committing the crime with Chuck. Nothing will be like

15 years ago.

42. Sarah asks Todd about Carl. Todd just tells her he knows him when he was in high school and have some drug problem. Paul asks him not to meet Sarah for sake of the case.
43. Kim breaks into the Lees. It is dangerous that Paul catches her almost. Kim finds some books about physics and some old info about the late sister. Someone is coming--Kim is caught by the little boy John and he tells Kim that grandpa will poison her like he poisoned Helen...
44. Kim visits a high school physics teacher. Sarah calls to Lawrence about the paragraph.
45. Sarah goes to Todd's high school and finds out what happened to his pinkie. He lost his pinkie before he is get admission form medical school of the top one college. She also finds Todd got insurance money from this accident. Also Sarah investigates the poison. She finds a drug dealer and knows Todd has been a drug addict since he got out from rehab. Carl is Todd's public dependent when Todd is a teenage. Sarah investigates and figures out why and how Todd becomes addicted Todd to drugs. It is Paul, Todd's father, offer him drugs. Paul wants to keep Todd with him forever. All Todd's story is here. Sarah feels bad for Todd.
46. Sarah and Ted have drugs and sex. Todd implies something clue to her kind of on purpose. Todd almost confesses but he says nothing. "He is afraid of blood" Todd sneaks away while Sarah is sleeping. He goes to sabotage the rail.
47. The reporters linger at the Lee's yard. Paul and Todd burns fake money as an offering to the dead. Some reporters take photos of them. Paul ignores the cameras and recites some paragraphs in *The Art of War*. Nobody knows what he's talking about, thinking he's got Alzheimer's. Sarah understands what Paul murmurs and goes over to him, trying to chat with him. Sarah chats with Paul about his past. Paul has the chance to get higher education but war deprived the chances. They talk about the art of the war and the last war in which Paul survive during the Chinese civil war. It is a brutal and cruel war. Paul sounds really creepy. Sarah asks Paul his late daughter. Paul answers that why she gets close to Todd and she should never get close to a man like Todd. Todd is not a good guy for a good girl like Sarah. Paul advice her to go home ASAP otherwise it is very dangerous. Sarah feels eerie.
48. The law enforcement is asked to dismiss from the case in two weeks if he can not find new evidence. Fast short scenes to show two weeks has passed, the police still

can not find any evidence to prove Chuck is the murderer, neither can they find any accomplice. On TV Paul talks about The Art of War...He explains one of the paragraphs really clearly and shows that he is sane and has no Alzheimer's at all. His voice over accompanies the scenes where Carl asks a councilor to launch the public opinions, giving the pressure to the police and prosecutors. The police force gets tired and prepares to close this case. The insurance company refuses to comment. The whole train derailment murder case seems come to a stop.

49. Sarah goes to the local household registration office and gets the information about the late sister—she died from a bus accident. She figures that it is Todd who pushes this girl to hit the bus. Of course they get a lot of insurance money. At the end of the registration report, she finds a photo of the girl. She is surprised as Kim shows up with the same photo too. The girl just looks like Sarah. Sarah feels dizzy.

ACT THREE

50. Paul finds that Sarah is investigating the Lee's history. Paul is calm and asks Todd to kill her, pushes Todd to make a choice. Chuck is sacrificed for this. Create a perfect alibi and another train derailment. It means the "Train Phantom" shows up again. It will prove that Todd doesn't relate to TP.
51. Kim shows up with what she finds. Kim and Sarah reconcile. Kim shares what she figures out with Sarah. Kim also helps Sarah reconstruct the process of sending Helen to the hospital. They watch the news tape on that day and recall when they met Todd and Chuck at the hospital.
52. (Back to scene 11 with Sarah's voice-over) Sarah re-interviews all the passengers who rode that fateful train and questions them one by one. He pieces together that Chuck left his seat right before the train derailed. After the derailment, he appeared in the safe car which didn't derail, to prevent himself from the wreck. This was all calculated by Todd precisely. That means Helen was left along while she slept in the crash car. Later, in chaos, Chuck shows up with Helen from the restroom where he inflicted Helen to make up some trauma. Todd was there helping, too. Then Helen is almost unconscious and groans in a delirium because the psychedelic.
53. (Back to Scene 14 with Sarah's voice-over) Helen was injected by Todd and Chuck with some snake poison causing the massive internal hemorrhage in the intensive care unit.

54. Kim helps solve some of the question-- how Todd set up the route and how he calculates the speed and the geography factor to make the train derailed at the hill accurately. Sarah is surprised how Kim figures this complex math and physics. Kim says she had opportunity to go to higher education but too many children in her family so she had to drop out. She says she understand Todd's feeling actually. But he should not kill a person. Sarah says Todd makes this so complex is because he really doesn't want to kill so many people. He tries his best to downsize the casualties. Kim says it is killing a person. He still kills a person! They are silent...(They reach to some plan.)
55. Now Sarah prepares all the evidence. She asks Todd to talk. Sarah accepts Todd's invitation to an excursion. He says he wants to run away Sarah tries to convince Todd to turn himself in. She takes on the same route that Helen got on. (need a reason to get on the train.)

Climax

56. Sarah and Todd have a confrontation on the train. Sarah reveals it is Todd that helped Paul hang Chuck. Chuck didn't commit suicide. He also helped Paul kill his adopted Todd sister. Sarah describes what she learned about him and Paul and how Paul ruined his life. Sarah knows he plot Todd this complex train derailment because deep down, he didn't want numerous people to die but things were out of control. "What's the difference?" Todd asks. He tells her that he is here to kill her. Todd admits everything and tries to kill Sarah but saved by Kim according to Sarah's plan at the last minute.
57. The next day, Paul and Carl are interviewed by dozens of TV stations. They got their non-prosecution. Now they are nationwide celebrities. They think the police lose at this point. Paul sees alive Sarah, surprised. Sarah asks Paul a paragraph about Sun Tzu. He explains and stares at her, telling her, they argue for a while. Paul says, "You don't understand *The Art of War*." Sarah answers. "And I think you misunderstand *The Art of War*. That's why you are not a general and you're always a lost private." Sarah also re-describes how Paul made Todd kill his own son, Chuck.
58. Then Kim comes in with Jay and tells Paul that Todd is arrested because he admits all the crimes. Paul snaps, goes crazy and tries to beat Sarah. The police stop him. Paul yells that Sarah gets nothing because Todd will be in jail forever. Carl threatens

Sarah that he'll get Todd out of jail. He won't let Todd in jail again. Sarah warns Carl not to get close to Paul, this old sociopath.

59. Sarah got her exclusive and Kim is pregnant (Need a more detailed ending.)

THE END

Bibliography

1. David Howard and Edward Mabley. *The Tools of Screenwriting: a writer's guide to the craft and elements of a screenplay*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.
2. Ken Dancyger and Jeff Rush. *Alternative Scriptwriting: successfully Breaking the Rules*. Amsterdam. Boston : Elsevier/Focal Press, 2007.
3. Paul Joseph Gulino, *Screenwriting: The Sequence Approach*. New York: Continuum,2004.
4. *Chinatown*. Dir. Roman Polanski. Paramount Pictures. 1974.
5. *Double Indemnity*. Dir. Billy Wilder. Paramount Pictures. 1944.
6. *High and Low*. Dir. Akira Kurosawa. Toho Company Ltd. 1963.
7. *The Silence of the Lambs*. Dir Jonathan Demme. 1991
8. *Strangers on a Train*. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Warner Bros Pictures. 1951.
9. *Vertigo*. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Paramount Pictures. 1958.
10. *Zodiac*. Dir. David Fincher. Warner Bros. Pictures. 2007.

VITA

Zih-Yuan Huang was born in Taipei City, Taiwan on October 21, 1976. She worked at the Democratic Progressive Party after receiving her B. A. of political science at National Taiwan University. She went to the film production program at National Taiwan University of Art and received the degree of Master of Arts in 2004. After a few years working in the telecine department at a post-production company in Taipei, she decided to focus on screenwriting. For learning the keys to movie storytelling, she entered the Graduate School at The University of Texas at Austin in 2007 to pursue a Masters of Fine Arts in screenwriting.

Permanent Address: 3rd Floor, No. 66, Wan-Long Street
 Taipei City 116, Taiwan

The report was typed by the author.