

(Example Treatment)

Working Title: *Star Search*

Author: Brian N. Saxton

Logline:

*Star Search* is a character-driven crime drama that follows the investigation of a double homicide and kidnapping in a small, rural town in Kansas. As the town's Sherriff follows his hunch that the crime was committed by a local mentally-challenged boy, who has also gone missing, he discovers what may have been the horrifying motive behind the crimes and how destructive his own obsession with solving the case without making the killer's motive successful may be.

Synopsis:

- Act I: The police find a youngish couple beaten to death and burned in their home. Their four-year-old daughter is missing and is presumed to be kidnapped. The State Police assert jurisdiction over the local county Sherriff, but he determines to solve the case and develops a working theory.
- Act II: The Sherriff's investigation leads him to a possible, ugly motive for the crimes. He determines that his actions and investigation could actually help the killer achieve his goal and "profit" from the murders. He tries to find a way to investigate and find the killer and the missing child without furthering the killer's goals.
- Act III: The Sherriff, torn among being an effective investigator, sharing jurisdiction with the State Police, and his desire to thwart the suspected killer's plans, realizes that all of his efforts may have been futile – or worse yet, actually destructive. He realizes that he, himself, may share guilt in the worst crime of all.

Principal Characters:

- Sherriff Ed Halsey: an aging man with a hard edge who longs to do something truly heroic in the few years he thinks he has left
- David Kitchen: a slightly mentally-challenged teen in that awkward middle ground between being handicapped enough to require attention and kind treatment and normal enough to be given attention and kind treatment. With no real guidance or support, he has been allowed go wanting to the point where his want is all he really has.

Dramatization:

It is May of 1988. The sun rises slowly from behind the flat horizon over the lonely countryside just outside the small town of Mort, Kansas. David Kitchen, a lonely, slightly mentally-challenged 18-year-old drives his father's 1970s vintage Chevy truck down a long, straight road through expansive fields. He pulls quietly up the dirt drive to a farm house, turns off the engine, and rolls to a stop. Carefully, and virtually silently, David opens the driver's-side

door and climbs out. He reaches back into the cab and returns with a tire-iron. Reaching into the bed of the pickup, he retrieves a gasoline can and walks quietly, even casually, toward the house.

Inside the house, a couple in their early thirties lies asleep. They snore quietly amidst well-appointed furnishings and family photographs. Suddenly, the husband comes awake. He blinks his sleep and confusion away and sits up. Realizing he's heard something, he swings his legs out of bed, stands to pull the curtains aside and peers out the window. He sees the truck parked in the drive and becomes alarmed. Being careful not to wake his still-sleeping wife, he pulls his robe on over his pajamas and quickly exits the room. Inside his den, he pulls open the desk drawer for the key to the gun cabinet and arms himself with a shotgun and a few shells which he does not load into the gun. Opening the front door and stepping out on to the porch he yells, "David? David, I've got a gun. Leave the animals alone and go home before someone gets hurt."

Hearing no reply, he steps down from the porch with the shotgun at waist level and walks slowly toward the pickup in the gathering light. He can hear the ticks of the pickup's engine cooling and the soft sounds of the cows from the barn, but there is neither sound nor sight of David. He moves further from the house and peers into the cab of the truck through the passenger window. His back is turned to the house as David, who has been hiding behind one of the heavy shrubs near the still-open door, slides onto the porch, enters the house, and stealthily closes and locks the door behind him.

The next day, County Sherriff Ed Halsey, a slightly-overweight, mustachioed, cowboy type in his late fifties, arrives at the smoking shell of the farmhouse. Two State Police cruisers are parked blocking the long, dirt drive with their lights still flashing. Beyond them, a fire engine, a paramedic van, a Sherriff's Department patrol car, and an ambulance (with the lightbars off) sit at various angles on the front lawn. Uniformed people are milling in and about the house looking official but not hurried . . .