

Story Plan Checklist Example

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Working Title: *Dead Drop*, Book 4 of the Incognito Series

Working Genres: romance, action/adventure, suspense

Working POV Specification: Scenes are either from Roan's POV, or Perry's

Estimated Length of Book/Number of Sparks: 60,000 words/3 sparks

Beginning Story Spark: After being approached by a recruiter, a man is unwillingly inducted into a covert government organization. Daniel Sands was inducted at the age of 20 against his will. Parris "Perry" L'Engle, the only woman Roan ever loved, was never convinced that the car accident that took his life was legitimate, regardless of the evidence to the fact. She's never stopped searching for him. Alone, Perry gave birth to a child Daniel never knew she was carrying. Twenty-five years later, when their son is approached by the same covert agency that tried to recruit Daniel before his disappearance, Perry knows the man she loves isn't dead. As an FBI agent, Perry is determined to find Daniel—the only man who can save their son from the same fate that destroyed both of their lives.

Main Character Overview: Daniel Sands (always referred to as Daniel to prevent confusion with his son), 20 years old when inducted. Daniel had flirted constantly with every woman around him, whether the woman was attractive or not. He loved to make women feel good. Grandmothers, little girls, beautiful women—everyone loved him. Effortlessly, he made himself irresistible to all females in his path. He was fun-loving. While he'd been restless almost constantly, he'd also been happy. He possessed a seemingly endless supply of energy and the tenacity to draw others into his perpetual excitement about life. Daniel Sands believed in world peace, love making the world going around, being a neighbor to everyone he met and doing good to everyone, including the wicked.

Roan Emory (the former Daniel Sands). 45 years old when the story opens and a Network operative, has been trained to be an emotionless, calculating machine, silky-smooth and sensual in his manner. Restless, reckless, he nevertheless never fails to do what he needs to.

Main Character Overview: Parris "Perry" L'Engle (45 years old when the story opens) is a highly respected woman, mother, daughter and FBI agent.

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Perry has an inextinguishable fire, an ambitious drive to keep plugging on until the answers eluding everyone else come to her through sheer force of will or seduction. Those around her see her as very capable and driven, skilled at her profession. However, as both of her parents are also FBI agents, they believe that if they haven't found an explanation for Daniel's disappearance 25 years ago, then it truly must have been an unfortunate accident. Perhaps, they and her own partner believe, Perry is projecting unrealistic wishes into the situation.

Perry defines herself by the roles she plays as mother, FBI agent, daughter, lover. When she had Daniel in her life, she was completely satisfied and felt whole. Since his death, she sees herself as only half a person, even with her son, and, as such, there's nothing she wouldn't do to get back the missing piece of herself. Her life has become her son, her work, and searching for the man she lost. She's unwilling to accept that she might never get her life and love back. To Perry, admitting to the car accident is admitting that Daniel really is dead. She's nowhere near ready to do that.

Daniel's Occupational Skills: Taught microbiology at the university, but his real love was his research into strengthening the human immune system to resist multiple diseases. He'd accumulated a massive body of work and was much touted work in the academic field. He was blessed with genius level IQ that had justifiably caught the attention of some of the largest intelligence networks in the world, including NASA and the American government.

Roan's Occupational Skills: Network operative. He can disappear into thin air, kill with the stealth and precision of an otherworldly being. If he doesn't want to be found, he won't be. He's the most dangerous man in the world. And he wants out or wants it to end.

Perry's Occupational Skills: Her parents' positive influence led her to follow in their footsteps by becoming an FBI agent. Her mother is the Special Agent in Charge (SAC) of the Minneapolis field office, where her father also is an agent.

Roan's Symbolic Element (character-defining): The ability to play elaborate classical pieces on the piano. This balanced his scientific side with a touch of the artistic and lends a romanticism when he realizes. Also, he's a man hard as granite, and he needed softness. As Roan, he owns a grand piano yet never plays it because to do so would resurrect memories of a life stolen from him. The first time he plays it again after Perry enters his life

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again is the signal that the defenses and guards he's constructed for himself are beginning to crumble.

Perry's Symbolic Element (character- and plot-defining): A love of growing roses, particularly lush, blackish-red blossoms in a hybrid tea rose called Ink Spots. It's in her rose garden that Roan makes his "dead drops" to keep in touch with her after they come together again, and it's this same rose that reunites them in the end.

Secondary Character Overview: Danny Sands, Perry and Daniel's son (always referred to as Danny to prevent confusion with his father). Engaged to Aimee. Like his father, his research makes him a fanatically workaholic. He's strong, independent, capable, not afraid to face anything in life. He won't hide behind his mother if the recruiter steps beyond request. Danny teaches microbiology at the university, but his real love was his research into strengthening the human immune system to resist multiple diseases. Danny had become interested in the massive body of work his father left behind early on, and he's taken over his father's much touted work in the academic field. Danny is also blessed with genius level IQs that has justifiably caught the attention of some of the largest intelligence networks in the world, including NASA and the American government.

Perry's Setting Descriptions: Perry lives in a picturesque neighborhood just outside the city. Instead of traffic and sirens at midnight, she hears crickets and the wind's breath. She owns a 1923-era, craftsman style home, surrounded by fragrant woods and the explosively lush, colorful garden she loved babying throughout the year. The interior boasts knotty pine walls stained a warm honey; beamed, twenty-foot ceilings; and expansive rooms filled with plump, oversized chairs, generous tables, and a profusion of pillows and throws that help create the informal coziness she prizes. In the living room is a polished Bosendorfer piano.

Roan's Setting Descriptions: The Network was the most covert organization in the world with branches all over the globe. It was funded by a major technology corporation that designed innovative equipment both for public use—computers, cell and satellite phones, software and the like—and devices to which only the Network had access. The corporation, Expanding Technology Industries—ETI—functioned exactly as a real business did and was the perfect cover for the Network. Below the ETI skyscraper in Chicago, in an underground bunker deep in the earth was the Network headquarters, inaccessible to anyone without clearance.

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The American government sanctioned the organization, but only the highest officials knew about it, including the President and a select committee in the White House, called Oversight. In the half-century the Network had been in existence—formed by the then-President of the United States along with Captain Tom McKee, a career officer and a decorated war hero—it'd had surprisingly few bumps. Tom McKee had been the first Network head. When McKee had been killed unexpectedly, his daughter—who'd also had a lifetime of military training—stepped in. Shannon McKee fills the role of 1st-in-command—head of the Oversight Committee, which acted as liaison in Washington, D.C. between the government and the Network.

Having the unchallenged authority and skill to disable and destroy criminals the way few other law enforcement agencies can, the Network takes over where regular law enforcement leaves off. The organization represents an absolute justice in a world overrun with evil. The price for that justice is high, requiring the life of every man and woman who serves it. For them, there is no life and no love, only duty.

Roan's Conflicts (Internal): The only way to keep himself sane in this insane place was to shut down his emotions and put everything into his work. Nothing has challenged those safeguards in the twenty-five years since he was inducted. But, after so many years on the edge, he wants out or wants it to end. An operative on the edge, death is the only way to end the pressure, the oppression, the lack of freedom the Network offers him. He'll never be completely free of the Network, especially not to return to the life he had with Perry. They'll never let him go. Having his freedom out in the world would be dangerous for them. Even if they willingly let him go and cut all ties with him, wiped away his memories of them and his years in service, enemies of the Network will see him as collateral. His presence outside could cripple them in a short time. Only legitimate death will free him.

Plot Conflicts (External): A week before Daniel disappeared, Perry had overheard a voice just outside his office door. Later, Daniel told her that the man refused to give his name or the government organization he worked for, had told Daniel to tell no one anything about the meeting where Daniel had been propositioned to join a covert government organization. Daniel had been promised the moon. The price? His life. He would have to give up everything he knew, even his family. Those he loved. Stopping short of laughing in the man's face, Daniel had turned him down flat. Though Perry had only just completed her FBI training at that time and had accepted a job at the Minneapolis field office, she'd spent a lifetime with two FBI agents. At

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the time she'd assumed the fact that she came up with absolutely nothing on this supposed government agent was because she didn't have the skills or the clearance to find him. Now, 25 years later, she's discovered that the man is an enigma. She has no idea who he was, and she's never been able to locate him.

On the heels of the strange, hush-hush attempt to recruit Daniel, Perry had come up with endless scenarios about what could have taken place that day. Almost all of those she'd come up with pointed to the fact that Daniel Sands wasn't dead. Yet she's been unable to locate him and solid evidence—however slight—that the only man she's ever loved is still alive. Nevertheless, there are too many strange things about Daniel's death for Perry to let it go. He was on a rural road in the middle of nowhere—there wasn't a house for over a mile. He was over 25 miles from home, in an area where he didn't know anyone. His teaching assistant had confirmed that a call had come in at about 5:30 that day, and Daniel had left immediately after it, looking extremely upset. Perry herself had had a last-minute doctor's appointment. That appointment had confirmed her suspicions for the past few weeks—she was pregnant. The cause of Daniel's accident had never been discovered, but the front end of his car had been badly damaged before it'd blown up. His body hadn't been recovered, but his blood had been found in the smoking hull of his car.

Perry's Conflicts (Internal): There's a good possibility Perry had never really known Daniel Sands at all and an even better possibility Daniel willingly gave up his life to join this secret government organization. He'd gone along with the faked car accident, surrendered his very blood to make it look authentic. He'd willingly given her up, their love and life together. He'd conceded loss on all of it for the chance to discover more than he could 'ever have believed possible'. As hard as she rebelled against it, there are plenty of reasons Daniel would give up everything. His research had been so important to him. His thirst for knowledge was unbearable even for him. He'd spent his life meeting problems head-on—problems that had been insurmountable for nearly everyone who came before him—and solving them. If the recruiter had given Daniel an utterly compelling, impossible problem to solve and the resources to solve it., Perry can imagine that Daniel would have given up his life as he knew it to discover what had been hidden from him in that life. His confident, almost cocky mind no doubt convinced him he'd return to his original life when he finished. For the first time, he may have met his match and discovered there was no going back.

Roan's Evolving Motivations and Goals: He believes in nothing, nothing

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except the missions he's called to do.

Perry's Evolving Motivations and Goals: Outside Danny's office, she hears voices. One of them is her son's, the other makes her go stock still and cold. She recognizes it as belonging to the recruiter who'd propositioned Daniel 25 years ago. She listens to him give the same recruiting pitch to Danny. Horrified, she vows to protect her son at all cost. But how? Perry realizes she might be able to find Daniel after all these years, by following this recruiter.

Middle Story Spark: Upon following the recruiter, Perry meets the man called Roan Emory...quite possibly Daniel Sands.

Perry's Conflicts (Internal): She's horrified by the ramifications. This unemotional man who'd held her throat in his powerful hand and promised he'd kill her if she didn't do what he told her to could be the man she'd loved, a man who'd once held her heart completely in his sway. She would have followed him to the ends of the earth just to have him look in her direction. To have him give her that melting smile that made her feel all the love she'd ever need in the world. The grief Perry has never fully allowed herself to feel—because she couldn't accept Daniel was truly dead—comes over her, and she's immobilized and overwhelmed by it. Even if that man is Daniel, she now knows he's truly dead to her.

Perry's Evolving Motivations and Goals: Perry has to find out the truth and possibly face that Daniel had given up the life he knew voluntarily. He might be aware the organization he works for is trying to recruit his son. He could very well be willing to do anything to see to it personally that his son follows in his footsteps. She has to protect her son, possibly from his own father. She realizes she has to make plans, but she's at a complete loss as to how. Her mother has done her a favor by putting Danny and Aimee in protective custody, but it's a temporary solution. Her son won't live his life, running, living in fear, anyway. Perry now knows that there is no fairness with this organization. If they want Danny, they'll have him, one way or another.

Plot Conflicts (External): For the past few years, the Network's Alpha Mission had been to bring down the most dangerous terrorist group in the world—R.E.D. R.E.D. is an invisible, highly militant terrorist group out of Mexico. They're both elusive and vast, spread out all over the world in small groups called remote command centers. R.E.D. is led by a man called 'the Black Pope', a ruthless killer who seems to have God—or the devil—on his

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side. Roan was to infiltrate and then destroy R.E.D. from the inside out. That's what he's been doing for the past year, but his contact, whom he passes information to, never leads him to the next level within the group. He hasn't gotten anywhere near the Black Pope because the R.C.C.'s are self-contained. Only the highest figures within the organization have access to him. All the information Roan has passed to his contact has panned out. Roan has also been able to get valuable information from them without his contact knowing. Nevertheless, his contact had gotten suspicious of him not long ago for no accountable reason and pulled out of their deal. Befitting his role as a traitor, Roan has retaliated and the Network has descended on R.E.D., destroying R.C.C.'s one after another with a vengeance. Roan has vowed to take them apart a piece at a time. Roan and his team have just retrieved a briefcase nuclear weapon R.E.D. has developed.

Roan's Conflicts (Internal): Knowing that Perry married Lincoln Sands, the late Daniel Sands' older brother, less than six months after his death, Roan believes Danny is Linc's son. He'd never had any real choice about joining the Network. Once they'd decided they wanted him, everything had been arranged without his approval, including Parris being out of contact that day so he couldn't verify the car accident he'd been told she'd been in wasn't real. By the time he'd figured that out, it was too late to do anything about it, outside of fighting them and making his training hard on them, making them regret bringing him in against his will. They'd told him Perry betrayed him by being secretly in love with his brother and getting pregnant, and, when she'd married him, Roan had no reason not to believe them. Linc had died of a heart attack a few years ago, less than a year after Daniel Sands' supposed death. Roan had learned to accept his place over the years. He'd even come to relish his job and the fact that no one can equal his skills. Of late, however, his appreciation has been robbed of him along with his soul. He considers himself dead, more man than machine; if he functions, it's on an instinctive level and the memories are residual past.

Plot Conflict (External): Roan doesn't know anything about Danny's recruitment. When Perry asks him to help her save their son, and he says he'll do everything in his power to help Danny. Everything in his power might not be enough to save his son from what Roan would easily describe as a fate worse than death.

Roan's Evolving Motivations and Goals: He has to know if Perry ever loved him, or it'd been his brother she loved all along. He goes to her, allows her to know that he is Daniel. He asks her who Danny's father is, and she tells him the truth—Daniel Sands is her son's father, and her son has always

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known that fact. When he asks Perry why she married Linc, she says she did it because Danny needed a father who would love him almost as much as his real one. She and Linc were never married in the intimate sense of the word. Something breaks loose inside him then. Not feeling—it's how he's existed these past 25 years. Better not to feel anything when he couldn't change his circumstances. Better to control it so it couldn't control him. Now, as he becomes resurrected to the man he once was, he's furious about what the Network took from him, all he could have had if they'd accepted his refusal. In many ways he's coming back to life, yet pieces the Network took from him are missing.

Plot Conflicts (External): Roan's Network evaluations prove that their best operative is on the edge. He no longer cares if he lives or dies. Time off and re-location won't help. At the time, he's at his peak efficiency and he'll continue to be that way...until something pushes him over the edge completely. And then they won't be able to bring him back. Daniel Sand's son could replace him in time, and that's why they believe his recruitment is vital to the future success of the organization. Even if Roan is able to save their son, he can never save himself.

Perry is fully aware that Roan can never have a regular life, but she's falling in love with this man who is her Daniel and yet is so different. Whatever this organization is, it wants it all. It *takes* it all from those it "employs." Roan can never leave the life they require of him behind to return to the past. He can't have a future. He can't have a family. If her old life hadn't been taken from her, she knows exactly what it would be like now. She and Daniel would have married, they would have had the three children they'd talked about. The only danger to their happiness would have been her job, which carried a degree of risk that she'd accepted and even thrived on. She can't help hating this organization that took all of it away from them. He's given them 25 years—why can't that be enough? But Roan seems unwilling...or unable...to change his life. If they let him go, is he even capable of love anymore?

End Story Spark: The current 3rd in Network Command, Head of Operations, Angelo Pluzetti, never wanted to draft Daniel/Roan into service. His predecessor was corrupt had different ideas, just as Angelo now has a conflict about this same thing with the 2nd in Command. He believes an injustice was done with Daniel/Roan and could still be done with the man's son if Danny Sands is also involuntarily inducted into the Network. Behind his superior's backs, Angelo has come up with a plan to give Roan his freedom by convincing Network superiors and operatives, along with their

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enemies, that the most dangerous man in the world is dead.

Plot Conflicts (External): R.E.D. is targeting Roan with everything they've got. They've put a bounty on his head with other terrorist groups they work with. They don't care who takes him out, just so someone does.

Inducting Danny involuntarily is a security risk to the Network. Perry's FBI status, along with his grandmother as the FBI director of the Minneapolis field office, make him a containment risk. His family is on the alert. If the Network proceeds now or in a year, they'll suspect, and that could endanger Network anonymity. Besides, Perry and her mother have the skills and resources to find them if they look hard enough. The Network can't risk a breach, especially now that they're so vulnerable because their best operative is on the edge and over a controversial new recruit with a family that will cause them no end of trouble. Perry has already gotten too close to them.

Roan's Conflicts (Internal): As soon as the alpha mission is contained, Roan's superiors plan to relocate him to a retirement facility that, for all intents and purposes, is a prison disguised as paradise. There's no way in or out of the place, no escape. It's the only recourse for operatives since they have more enemies than any other organized justice system in the world. Roan knows he'll never survive in a cage of any kind. His superiors can't simply let him go. Either way, he'll never see Perry or Danny again. Angelo believes that if he and Dr. Celine Hunter, the Network's head of the Medical Department, can convince everyone on the inside and the outside that Roan is dead, it means he's free. Roan isn't so sure.

Angelo's plan for freeing Roan by faking his death and then giving him a whole new, untraceable identity requires outside help. Authenticating Roan's death will be Angelo and Celine's first priority, and only then can they complete his transformation. The only way to give him a new life is not to allow any indication whatsoever that his death isn't genuine—to Network operatives, superiors and enemies. No one on the inside can be involved, but they need someone competent enough to handle his disappearance—someone with training in covert operations. Someone who can aid them in helping Roan disappear while his death is confirmed. Only one person on the outside possessed the skills to help them. Perry. And Roan won't take that risk. If she's seen by anyone, she and Danny will be hunted forever, too.

Perry's Conflicts (Internal): Angelo comes to Perry and tells her briefly about a terrorist organization planning to set off nuclear weapons in ten

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major cities soon. While preventing this is his organization's first priority, he sees an opportunity to free Roan, whom he'd never had any choice in recruiting. Angelo can't be absent during any phase of the operation. There can't allow indication whatsoever that Roan's death isn't genuine—to both their superiors and their enemies. He tells Perry his plan to have Roan taken out of the mission at the last minute. A body will be recovered which will be proved to be his. They need someone on the outside, and Perry has the training to pull it off. #1 will move immediately after the operation to retire Roan. And once he's put out, there'll no way back to the Network or the real world for him. When they confirm when the projected terrorist strike will take place, they'll have to move quickly. She'll have to be ready. This is the last opportunity they'll ever have to get Roan out. Once Roan is in the safe house, she needs to return to her home. If Perry is at home and nothing amiss seems to be happening, then it'll be further conviction to everyone that Roan really is dead. Roan won't be able to come to her right away—possibly not for a year or more—and she won't recognize him immediately either. But, if all goes well, someday they'll be together again and the Network won't suspect a thing.

Perry doesn't know if she can trust the Network or Angelo, but there's no time to do anything but. She wonders if it's worth losing her life and leaving her son without a parent for the chance to have Daniel back, to give Danny the father he so desperately wants.

Perry's Evolving Motivations and Goals: Maybe it won't be the same, maybe Roan will never love her the way he used to, but it's a risk she believes is worth taking. But what if Roan is too scarred to come back to her when it's safe?

Roan's Evolving Motivations and Goals: Roan would rather be dead than to put his family at risk. And maybe he should be dead. He hasn't been whole in so long, he isn't sure he can ever be again...not even to be with Perry and to finally get to know his son. He can't have a life, sure can't have *back* what should have been buried twenty-five years ago. Impossible, but he can't fight the knowledge that he's waking from the dead. And, just like the Frankenstein monster, he *wants* to live again. When it's safe and the time is right, he returns as Douglas Lazarus, a man truly risen from the dead, and hands Perry a black rose.

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