

the come down

A TV drama pitch by Geoff Gedroyc

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Format

1 hour serialised drama series

Genre

Drama/Crime Thriller

Logline

A father, devastated by the death of his estranged son under mysterious circumstances, joins forces with his son's boyfriend in a quest for justice.

The Pitch

PAUL (50s) lives a retired and emotionally walled off life in rural Yorkshire. He has his trusted group of drinking buddies. He owns his dream car – a 1990 reg Land Rover Defender. And he has his loyal German Shephard, Ellie. Life may be a tad lonely at times, but it's simple. It's straightforward. That is, until his son – SIMON (23) – dies, under mysterious drug related circumstances in east London.

Separated from Simon for years, partly due to Simon's homosexuality and lifestyle choices, partly due to Paul's marriage to his career in the army, Paul feels incredible guilt for never knowing who his son was. After it becomes apparent that Simon's death is low down the police's priority list and that the case risks being abandoned altogether, Paul decides to dust off his old twelve gauge shotgun and join forces with Simon's boyfriend, MARCUS (27), in a search for justice, where traditional law enforcement has fallen short.

Marcus was only with Simon for a month, but had already developed a powerful loving bond with him. Where Paul is stuck in the codes of dinosaurish 1970s masculinity, Marcus is at the opposite end of the spectrum. He looks after his appearance, he's urban, sexually liberated, open and emotional. He's a millennial, through and through. However, like Paul, he's somehow unfulfilled, stuck in a comfortable rut that he needs to be shaken from. He still works in his supermarket job that he should have quit years ago. He's always teetering on the brink of drug dependence. And he's over-reliant on short term pleasure rather than substance and hard work.

On Marcus and Paul's trail is DS RIYA CHOPRA. A heavily pregnant and conscientious detective, struggling to deal with the horrors at work as she contemplates what sort of mother she's going to be to her soon-to-arrive son. Her and her DI – AMANDA BAIN – are horrendously overworked, often having to pick up the slack from other units. Though Amanda, a veteran (if stuck in her ways), is convinced that Simon's death is a drugs overdose and that little can be gained from pursuing it further, Riya is unsure. She sees Simon's death as an omen. A loose end that needs to be tied up before she can start her family in peace. As she builds up her own "off book" investigation, Simon's death begins to look less and less like the simple overdose it started out as.

Though Riya and Amanda start out as antagonistic forces – obstacles to Paul and Marcus's mission – they slowly mutate into semi allies. Riya, in particular, keeps tabs on the two men and watches their back, even when police interest in the case continues to dwindle. She's eager to help the men, but also keen not to compromise herself or promote vigilantism. She's also painfully aware of the need to negotiate Amanda, only telling her what she needs to know, when she needs to know it. Amanda's naturally suspicious and has something of an ego. It's a delicate tight rope walk at all times.

For Paul and Marcus, their amateur investigation will become a springboard for each to learn from the other and develop their own unique healing process. They'll fight and bicker constantly, but also come to form an inseparable bond. Whilst Marcus will learn how to apply himself, how to toughen up and find that grit he's always had, Paul will learn to soften, to broaden his horizons and open up emotionally. For Marcus, Paul is the strong father figure he never had growing up. For Paul, who was never any kind of real father to Simon, Marcus is his second chance to be a father. A chance to find some redemption amidst the chaos of just about the worst thing that can happen to a parent.

Form & Themes

At its heart, TCD is a buddy story of two flawed men finding peace and redemption through the goal they seek and through each other's company. It's a story about masculinity in its competing old vs young forms and how either side can be harnessed to provide cathartic synthesis. It's an old formula, but in TCD, rather than exploring serial killers and gumshoe cops, we're exploring something that most people – indeed Paul himself (the voice of many of the audience) – don't know very much about: the gay chemsex scene in London.

The scene is long overdue a look in British drama. It's sexy, salacious and provides intense clandestine pleasure for so many gay men of all ages. The flipside is that two or more men a month are dying from GHB overdoses and a great many more are finding themselves, quite from nowhere, in the throes of a crystal meth addiction. This is a public health crisis that has gone on under the radar for many years. In addition, real life rapists and murderers, most notably Stephen Port, who dumped his victims in a Barking cemetery, have gone unnoticed by the police, because such a blind eye has traditionally been turned to the scene.

TCD picks up from where the stories of men like Stephen Port leaves us, painting a Britain of austerity and alienation, bursting at the seams in hospitals and police stations. Breaking point has been met. And it's this that has created a justice vacuum to be filled by a pair of desperate, disenfranchised civilians, in Marcus and Paul. Ultimately, despite being a gay show, TCD is not *about* being gay. It's about loneliness, self-acceptance and the fight for closure, justice and truth.

TCD's characters will touch on the world of Lennie James's kidnap drama *Save Me*, with a story vehicle akin to *True Detective* (season one) and a nihilistic gruffness that one might associate with a Mike Hodges film. The fact that Paul and Marcus are being watched by the two female cops assigned to Simon's death (themselves in conflict with each other about how seriously to take the case) will add an extra element of threat and *Happy Valley*-like pleasure as we watch these disparate forces collide.

Episode formula

The episodes will typically contain two to three of the following basic strands:

- Marcus and Paul working out what happened. Following up leads. Their methods flirting with violence.
- Marcus and Paul's personal relationship and how it evolves.
- Riya's covert investigations and her ongoing conflict with Amanda.
- Riya and Amanda's respective home lives.
- Paul's softening and learning about new lifestyles.
- Marcus getting his life on track and fighting drug dependence.

Main Arc of S1:

Marcus and Paul's journey starts with Daryl, Simon's flatmate, who was paid to leave the flat on the night Simon was murdered. The journey will also turn to Anthony, who had an indirect connection to associates of Simon's killer. Delving deeper, they discover Simon's secret life of

high rolling affairs, plus a stash of money he was building up after an affair with a Qatari prince, living a life of luxury in Mayfair. After the affair went sour, the prince, aghast at how his affair opened him up to embarrassment and potential blackmail, indirectly employed a contract killer to kill Simon as a pre-emptive measure.

After delving into all the machinations, cover ups and separate pieces of this puzzle, Marcus and Paul's quest culminates in seeming success. The address of the prince. Their final destination. But from there, the question becomes "What to do with this information?" After Paul and Marcus's relationship has evolved so far and come to a mutually understanding place, a rupture looms over their competing ideas on what justice would look like. Is it simply confronting the prince? Is it killing him? Is it framing him? Is it handing the case to the police and stepping back? When they finally decide on a hybrid approach – a confrontation, followed by a call to the police – the plan goes well at first, before then going badly wrong. The prince learns of their plan and goes after them. In the ensuing chaos, the prince is killed by Paul, leaving him and Marcus to cover up.

Supporting Arcs of S1:

Marcus's battle with drug dependence and gradual development toward some direction in life. His friendship with Paul as he learns from Paul's watchwords of self control, ethics and resourcefulness. His flowering into a highly intelligent, competent young man with many hidden talents, including an interest in law.

Paul's struggle to piece together what went wrong in his relationship with Simon. His gradual adoption of Marcus as the son he never had. The son he must protect and put onto the right path at all costs. Eventually Marcus becomes his saviour. Someone to love and live for.

Despite Riya's marriage suffering as a result of her distractions, her sleuthing eventually pays off, evolving into her and Amanda's quest to get to the truth before Paul and Marcus get themselves into too much trouble. They only get part of the way there and never manage to stop Marcus and Paul. Riya has become closer with Amanda by the end though, and the two have resolved many of their differences. With Marcus and Paul's cover up of what really happened to the prince, the case is eventually abandoned. Amanda's content but Riya still has her doubts, even as she goes into labour with her baby in the final act.

S2:

A short series order would probably require us to stay with the main story and tell it over two series. However, if we had the time to take Marcus and Paul on the full arc proposed, over eight episodes say, the most natural approach is to set S2 several years after S1 and examine the events of S1 coming back to haunt the principals. We'd focus on Marcus's new life as he's about to graduate his final year of law college, an exciting new horizon awaiting him. What stops him is an anonymous blackmail note, stemming from the unfinished business of S1. He'd then need to rekindle his partnership with Paul, all over again.

Meanwhile, Riya, now with a young family to raise, could still feel that she has unfinished business from all those years back. When she finds out that Paul's in town again, her attentions are torn away from the day to day routine. Soon she's hot on Marcus and Paul's trail once more.

Where S1 is about opening up the past to forge new alliances and grow personally, S2 would focus on the ugly compromises we make to put the past firmly behind us and keep it there.