

Hero's Journey Analysis – "The Fugitive"

© Allen Palmer www.crackingyarns.com.au

As we come into the city, we see a crime re-enacted in black and white. A woman is killed. This is the first of a series of CALLS TO ADVENTURE.

Richard Kimble (Harrison Ford), heavily bearded, blood on his shirt, sits in a home.

He is led by police out from his home. Reporters tell us – EXPOSITION – that his wife has been killed. And that they had been at a fund raiser.

Flashback to the fundraiser – we now go back to his ORDINARY WORLD.

Kimble is a highly respected vascular surgeon. This is a huge contrast to the Special World he is about to enter.

Charles Nichols (Jeroen Krabbe) gives him back the keys to a car he's borrowed. He appears to be an ALLY.

He comes up to his wife, Helen – she is beautiful

On the way home, they hold hands in the car. They are telling us that this guy give loves his wife – he's going to be an innocent man wronged.

He gets called to go assist on an operation. This is a CALL TO ADVENTURE too. If he doesn't get this call, this story doesn't happen.

6.00

We see him perform the operation – more ORDINARY WORLD. He's a man who's good at what he does.

Back in real time

He's interviewed by the police – ANTAGONSITS – and they clearly don't believe his story that a "one armed guy" attacked his wife. He has scratches on him.

He is outraged when he finds they suspect him – this is a REFUSAL

Court room scene

In flashback

We see the killer smash her head in

Replay her 911 call – she says “Richard” and they think it means he has killed her

Judge sentences him to death – the HERALD – forcing him to CROSS THE FIRST THRESHOLD. (Not willingly).

12:30

He’s transported with a bunch of other crims in a bus

Appears to be something going on with the other prisoners – something seems to be planned.

Crim starts faking illness
Frothing at the mouth

When the guard comes to help – a THRESHOLD GUARDIAN
Guy pulls a knife

Other guard comes blazing with a shotgun
Shoots the driver accidentally

Bus flirts with a guardrail

Before heading over the edge

Kimble asks guy to release him

Sound of a train coming – escalation of jeopardy

Kimble has to run to get everyone out as train approaches
16.42

Just leaps clear at the last second – ORDEAL.

But the train derails and follows him

Not one problem, several problems

Eventually the dust settles and he’s alive. He’s survived the Ordeal.

Criminal, Copeland, still alive, tells Kimble to run – but in the opposite direction to him.

This forces Kimble to cross another THRESHOLD, and into the real SPECIAL WORLD of this story.

Kimble is injured – that’s going to complicate things as well.

Sam Gerard (Gerard Jones) arrives 19:30 –
ANTAGONIST/ENEMY of Kimble.

Very bright, colourful character
Clearly has good rapport with his TEAM

He is a strong ANTAGONIST – a worthy opponent for our
HERO

The guard is interviewed
He says that he doesn't think that Kimble made it

They find "leg-irons with no legs in them" – Kimble has
got away. Our Antagonist is right. He's smart. Kimble is
in trouble.

Gerard says that Kimble has been on the run for 90 mins –
the search radius is 6 miles. This is a CALL TO ADVENTURE
for Gerard and his team.

The story has begun in earnest

23:18

He steals some overalls from a pickup truck

Blood is found

Gerard has a bit of rapport with his team
Think me up a cup of coffee and a chocolate donut

Kimble enters a hospital
Steals some supplies
Opens his wound

Cop arrives

TEST coming up

Fax comes off the fax machine of Kimble's appearance

He's in the room with a guy who can't talk

Takes his clothes
Shaves – he's taking on a new identity for his Special
World.
Eats his food

Cop approaches him – a THRESHOLD GUARDIAN
Asks if he's seen anyone matching the description
TEST

Ambulance arrives
Guard from the bus is on a gurney
Has to cover up his mouth
29.03

Gerard Jones wants to phone tap his lawyer

Get reports of the sighting
Ambulance missing

See Kimble using the full powers of the ambulance

Ambulance spotted

Gerard Jones takes off in a helicopter

Chases Kimble in the ambulance

This is another Ordeal

Great scenery – a dam

He comes through a tunnel – the chopper waiting on the
other side

He jumps out – ambushed

Runs off

The cops meet in the middle – he's got away down a drain

So, he's passed that TEST

But now they're after him
33.48

The pipes diverge
Gerards's team splits up
He goes on alone

Gerard falls down – loses his gun

Kimble picks it up – points it at Gerard
Confrontation btw hero and antagonist

I didn't kill my wife
"I don't care" says Gerard

Kimble wrongly believes that Gerard, as a MENTOR, will
believe him. But Gerard doesn't see that as part of his
role. This means that Kimble will have to solve the

mystery himself. This has pushed us into another phase of the ADVENTURE>

Gerard pulls another gun from his belt

Chases Kimble again

And he finds himself at the end of the drain
Overlooking about a two hundred foot drop

Drop the gun says Gerard
Kimble drops it

Then jumps – crossing a THRESHOLD he enters an ORDEAL of the 200 foot drop of it.

Gerard looks over the edge
It looks like Kimble must have died

37:34

Gerard isn't convinced
Sends his team down to look for the body
The rest of the team is sure he must be dead
But Gerard is taking no chances
He's planning on making sure – a great ANTAGONIST

Kimble emerges – he's alive – he's faced down the Ordeal and lived.

38:52

He breaks down – REWARD
Sense of relief at having cheated death

Runs away
And collapses in the forest

It's now night fall
Gerard is still searching

Kimble wakes up
Sees his wife in his dream
He's making love to her

Then he's trying to revive her
And fighting with the guy with the one arm

So we now know that he's innocent

But this acts like a ROAD HOME
It's a reminder that his job isn't just to evade the police – the OUTER PROBLEM

It's to find the killer of his wife – that's his inner need

This re-energises the story and gives it more emotion

He dies his hair in a hotel room

A car stops and picks him up on the side of the road
43:36

They get info about one of the escapees
Approach the house in a range of disguises

Burst into the house
But it's not Kimble
It's Copeland

Takes a cop prisoner
Gerard shoots him
Risks shooting his own guy in the process

Gerard has passed his TEST and this is a reminder that our Antagonist literally takes no prisoners.
When the dead guy's girlfriend screams, he says "Shut up

Gerard's team member can't hear anything
Thinks he should have bargained
Guy says he's going to have permanent hearing damage
So he whispers to him "I don't bargain"
This guy is tough – Kimble is going to have to do this all on his own against an antagonist who is as smart as he is as and as motivated.

48:06
Kimble is on the El in Chicago
Almost gets run down by a cop

He calls his lawyer – MENTOR
Says he should give himself up
Lies about where he is

They've taped the call to his lawyer – foreshadowed earlier

They listen to the tape
Work out he's in Chicago

Great banter between Gerard and his staff
We need this because Kimble is alone
It would be dull without this colour

He approaches Charles Nichols – ALLY
Asks for money

Cop comes up and asks to move on

Gerard Jones asks the investigating officers about the case

Why did he do it?

Supposedly for the money

Kimble takes a room in a house

53:32

This is all low level stuff after all the previous drama

He comes to Cook County Hospital

APPROACH

He heads into the Prosthetics section

He's clearly trying to find someone who's had a false arm fitted

He slips into the room

Now this, unfortunately, is where the story loses its way a little. There is just no way that they can make this as exciting as what has preceded. It's true to the original TV story but ...

He steals a security tag – a TEST.

Gerard interviews Charles Nichols

He says that the guy is innocent

And that they won't catch him

He's too smart for them

Gerard interviews co-workers

And everyone says that he's innocent

He continues to research

Gerard continues to investigate

I'm not bored exactly but the momentum has been low for a long time now – 1:00:05

Kimble sleeps again

We re-enact the scene again

He remembers more details

Police have surrounded the house

But they are after the son of the landlady – a SHAPESHIFTER

1:01:42

This is sort of an ORDEAL – because he thought the game was up

He cries – REWARD – again a release at having escaped

He comes into the hospital
With his cleaning stuff

He goes into the records room and closes the blinds
She looks suspicious until he runs a brush over the blinds – TEST

He does a check on the computer
Search
Finds 5 matches

The guy who's been arrested spills the beans

Julianne Moore in the hospital

He comes through and notices a kid in trouble

Gerard goes to the house

Kimble keeps looking at the kid

Here's another TEST of his character
He can walk away and stay safe

Julianne Moore tells him to take the boy somewhere
She sees him looking at an x ray as they wheel away

He checks out the kid
Fills out a form and signs it
Saves him

Meanwhile Gerard knows that he's been making a badge for
CCH – Cook County Hospital

Julianne Moore challenges him over the change of orders
He runs off

Gerard arrives

1:09:51

Finds out that Kimble saved the boy's life – this is effectively a RESURRECTION but it's a little early in the structure and not sufficiently central to the story to have any emotional power.

They wonder why he's come here

Then a guy with no arm walks past – A HERALD
And they make the link

APPROACH TO THE INMOST CAVE

Kimble makes phone calls on all the guys he found
Trying to find the guy who killed his wife

One of them was charged with Armed Robbery – a little
light relief

1.12:46

It's St Patrick's Day
He goes to Town Hall

Cop gets in the lift with him
Several cops get in

Gerard is on the same trail
Talks about the humour of the one armed armed robber

Kimble goes in to see the one armed guy in jail
Gerard is coming up too

He's waiting
Prisoner comes up
Realises he's got the wrong guy – this isn't who he
fought

Walks out
Prisoner guy notices him

Takes the stairs

Gerard coming up

Kimble going down

They are on different flights
Sees him
Calls Richard

Another ordeal

He makes a run and gets through the door just as it shuts
They shoot
Ironically he's saved because it's bullet proof glass

He runs out and joins the St Patrick's Day march

Gerard thwarted

1:20:35

Another ordeal

Gerard interviewed

Reporters ask why he's come back to Chicago

Doesn't this prove he's innocent?

This is another weakness – what is Gerard's motivation here? He's a smart guy. Why hasn't he worked it out? What's the obstacle to the truth?

1:22:57

He heads to an apartment building

A police car waits outside

He breaks in – crossing THRESHOLD.

Finds that the one armed guy is a cop

Meritorious service

Finds the arm

Finds pictures of the guy with all the detectives

And one of a colleague we met back at the fund raiser – with the one armed guy

This is Kimble's REWARD for surviving the Ordeal.

See some flashbacks

Kimble calls Gerard (Gerard)

Tells him he's found a big piece of the puzzle

Leaves the phone of the hook leading them to Sykes' home.

Cops pull up

Kimble makes his escape

They explore the apartment

The one armed guy comes back

He says he has an alibi for the night

Story feels dead in the water here

There are too many strong forces marshalled against an opponent who isn't their equal

Nichols gets a call
Kimble tells him he found out why his wife was killed
He'd found out about liver damage
Lentz the guy who set it up is dead

Gerard comes up to him
Does he know this guy in the photo – Lentz
Says he doesn't

1:35:17

Sykes gets a call

Fire engine comes down the street

Sykes leaves with the distraction
Cops find Lentz died last summer

Kimble gets some samples from a black guy

He approaches a woman at the hospital

Gets her to examine a specimen
Finds that lab results have been falsified

Finds someone else must have done it. Not Lentz but
Charles Nichols. The ALLY has been a SHAPESHIFTER.

Kimble has solved the mystery.

Gerard says Nichols lied

Sykes finds Kimble – this is the ROAD HOME. It's not
enough to have found who killed his wife. He has a long
way to go to fulfil both his outer goal (avoiding the
cops) and inner need (achieving justice.)

1:40:35

Sykes follows Kimble onto the train

Guy on the train recognises him from the newspaper

Goes to a cop

Sykes appears – Double jeopardy

He holds a gun

Cop calls out
Sykes turns and fires

Pulls the cord on the train
Attacks Sykes – punches him

Handcuffs Sykes to the train

1:44:42

Get the sense we're heading for the Resurrection now

Gerard hears he's been on the El

Goes to a talk by Charles Nichols

Gerard is after him – but why does he have any interest
in Kimble? Surely now he knows he's innocent?

It can't be much of a climax – the forces opposed aren't
great enough

Kimble is prepared
What can Nichols do?

He stands at the end of the room looking at his SHADOW –
he is what Kimble could have been if he'd surrendered to
the dark forces.

Nichols sees him

He walks through the crowd and confronts him
He accuses him of switching the samples

Gerard arrives ... but where is the tension?

Kimble fights Nichols but Dr vs Dr?

Chopper circles

1:52:07

Cop is telling chopper to take Kimble out
They tell the helicopter to get out
Too easy

He punches Nichols
They are on a glass roof
Fall through

They are on the top of a lift
It goes down

Nichols comes to, he's in the elevator
Kimble is on the roof of the elevator

Nichols gets out

Kimble follows – just as the door closes – RESURRECTION

They are in a laundry
Gerard follows

1:55:07

I'm over it – I want it to end. Everything resolved as far as I'm concerned. It's not going to give me a whole lot more satisfaction to see Kimble finally get Nichols.

Gerard says there is no way out – says he knows he's innocent. Knows how he did it. Used the keys off the car he borrowed to get into the house.

RESURRECTION

Nichols is about to shoot at Gerard – Kimble takes him out

Kimble says this guy killed his wife
Gerard says he's glad. He needs the rest.

Sykes is taken away.

Kimble emerges with Gerard.
In the car
Takes off his handcuffs

Little banter

SUMMARY:

I think the first half of this film is fantastic. Great set pieces and Tommy Lee Jones' character really engages us. Smart and funny. The only problem is that the very qualities we like in Gerard to begin with make it hard for the film to move towards a satisfying conclusion. Because Gerard is smart and just and has no ulterior motive to maintain Kimble's guilt, he ultimately must join forces with him. What starts out as great hero against great antagonist has now become two heroes and the equation is unbalanced. We don't really know Nichols – we can't know him because to know him would eliminate the surprise that he is the true guilty party – so we just don't feel a huge edge of seat climax when Kimble finally confronts him. How can this doctor stand a chance against Kimble and Gerard?

The other problem is that, while Kimble has an inner need – finding justice – he has no character flaw. He doesn't develop as an individual over the course of the story.

Perhaps in their efforts to establish that he was a great guy, innocent and in love with his wife, they have deprived him of a redemptive motive. What if wasn't so squeaky clean and his wife had died with their relationship not in a good place. Then finding her killer would have more of a personal dimension to it. A nice film but not a great film.