

The Perfect Family

A troubled young woman, struggling with alcoholism due to a string of abusive relationships takes on a job as a housekeeper for a 60-year-old man and his inanimate family.

Sarah Jo Brims
Third Draft

Sarah Jo Brims
sarah.brims@gmail.com

INT. CAR - DAY

Cracked iPhone screen. Chipped black nails scroll through a 'job wanted' thread. A couple of seedy ads- nothing of substance.

We then land on:

\$\$\$ HELP WANTED \$\$\$

Young woman with a motherly touch-

Family of four seeks nanny to keep house in order. No experience necessary. Accommodation included- start ASAP.

We now see the woman's face, RACHEL (early 30s). She's parked outside a two story home in a well-kept suburb.

EXT. HOUSE- DAY

Rachel rings the doorbell. JOHN (60) tall, hunched wearing glasses and daggy dad attire opens the door, he has a napkin stuffed into his shirt.

JOHN

Hello?

RACHEL

Hi, I'm Rachel- I'm here about-

JOHN

- the ad I posted, of course- please come on in, Rachel.

Rachel steps inside.

INT. HOUSE- CONTINUOUS

The house is some-what organised, but dusty. John motions to his napkin.

JOHN

I do apologise, you've caught us in the middle of breakfast... are you hungry?

RACHEL

No, I'm okay thank you.

JOHN

You have a kind face, Rachel.

Something tells me you've spent some time in the world... I trust you don't have judgements.

RACHEL

No, I'm pretty open minded.

JOHN

Good. Well, let me introduce you to the family.

John ushers her into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN- CONTINUOUS

THREE MANNEQUINS- a young boy, young girl and older woman. All propped up sitting at the table- each with an untouched plate of food laid out in front.

JOHN

This is Beth, Charlie and this is my wife, June.

Rachel laughs, notices John's serious expression.

RACHEL

This is your family?

JOHN

I know it can seem a bit unusual... but whose family isn't? I promise you'll get to love them. They don't make much of a mess and they're quiet most of the time.

Rachel looks at John, a wide smile on his face, seemingly harmless.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN- NIGHT

Rachel, John and the mannequin family seated at the dinner table.

JOHN

Tell me a bit about yourself.

RACHEL

Not much to tell, really. Finished highschool then made my way through

various jobs... a string of bad relationships. Pretty average, I guess.

JOHN
Bad relationships?

RACHEL
You've never been in a bad relationship, John?

JOHN
I'm divorced.

John tops up Rachel's glass.

JOHN
So Rachel, do you have a partner now?

Rachel shakes her head and feigns a smile.

RACHEL
Just me.

John looks at Rachel with empathy, he reaches and holds his wife's hand.

JOHN
Family is a gift, Rachel. I hope that you will also be blessed with it one day.

Rachel reaches for her glass of red.

INT. RACHEL'S ROOM- NIGHT

Rachel undresses in front of the mirror. She's badly bruised. Finger marks paint her breasts.

She pulls out a bottle of vodka.

INT. ROOM- LATER

Rachel passed out- the vodka bottle on her bedside table with a large dent out of it.

CUT TO:

INT. LOUNGE-ROOM- NIGHT

Rachel sits on the couch bored. She scrolls through her

newsfeed on her phone.

BABIES. WEDDINGS. COUPLES. HOMES. FAMILY HOLIDAYS. The photos flick through filling out the full frame.

A CREAK from upstairs.

Rachel looks towards the ceiling.

Silence. Focuses back on her phone.

The sound of the Grandfather clock in the lounge-room ticking becomes more apparent.

Tick.

Happy couple photo.

Tick.

Honeymoon photo.

Tick.

Rosy cheeked baby.

CLICK. Phone shut off. Close on Rachel. Closes eyes, takes a deep breath.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. SUPERMARKET- DAY

Rachel walks down the aisle of a supermarket. In her basket, toilet roll, vodka.

TWO WOMEN with strollers turn into the aisle.

Rachel clocks them, turns immediately- but it's too late.

WOMAN 1

Rachel! Rach, is that you?

Rachel slows and turns.

RACHEL

Hi, Caroline.

CAROLINE

I knew it! I haven't seen you since
highschool- but I never forget a face!

Caroline glances at her stroller.

RACHEL
You have kids.

CAROLINE
Yes! And you?

RACHEL
No.

Caroline smiles at WOMAN 2 who is still standing next to her.

CAROLINE
Well it was good seeing you, Rachel.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. KITCHEN- CONTINUOUS

Freezer door opening. Frozen peas shoved aside. Vodka.

Rachel pours herself a stiff drink. Downs it at the sink.
Pours another.

She pulls a pack of cigarettes from her pocket. Draws one.
Flicks the lighter and brings the flame up to ignite.

A WOMAN'S COUGH.

Rachel turns, shocked.

RACHEL
Hello?

She looks out to the lounge room. Just her and mannequin June
who is seated at the kitchen table.

Rachel leans into June's face, pulls her head right into hers
and pulls out the light again.

Slowly, she lifts the light to her cigarette, never taking
her eyes off June.

About to ignite when...

A CREAK from upstairs.

Rachel snaps up and rests the cigarette on the table.

Then the sound of something as if a table being dragged

across the floor.

Rachel looks back to June then exits the kitchen.

INT. LOUNGEROOM- CONTINUOUS

Rachel stands at the foot of the stairs.

INT. CHARLIE'S ROOM- CONTINUOUS

Mannequin Charlie is propped up in his bed, blankets pulled up to his chest.

Rachel enters, she looks to see one of the dressers pulled out from the wall.

She looks back to Charlie then makes her way over to the dresser, shoves it flush to the wall- as she does she notices a photo on the floor, jutting out from underneath.

A small boy smiling.

RACHEL
(to Charlie)
Who's this?

Rachel inspects the photo closer. The boy in the picture is wearing the same outfit as Charlie.

INT. KITCHEN- NIGHT

Rachel, John and the mannequin family at the table.

JOHN
How was your day?

RACHEL
It was fine. And yours?

JOHN
Fine.

A long silence.

RACHEL
You mentioned you were married?

John takes a large sip of his wine.

JOHN
Almost ten years.

RACHEL
Where is she now?

JOHN
An institution.

RACHEL
I'm sorry to hear that.

JOHN
She wasn't well. Ever since we had children, something changed in her.

RACHEL
I didn't realise you had children?

Rachel glances at the mannequins and corrects herself.

RACHEL
Other children.

JOHN
They're grown up and have their own families now... like me.

John pauses, reflects.

JOHN
After our second she became closed off. Something snapped inside of her... do you ever think that maybe some people shouldn't have children?

RACHEL
I've started to believe I'm one of those people.

INT. LOUNGE-ROOM- LATER

Rachel curled up on the couch. In her hand, the photo of the small boy wearing Charlie's clothes.

From upstairs, the sound of glass smashing. Furniture being heaved over. Screaming.

(INSERT SOUNDS O/S JOHN SHOUTING ABUSE AT HIS MANNEQUIN)

Rachel looks at the photos thoughtfully placed on top of the TV set. Photos of John and his mannequin family.

She turns the TV on and begins to remove her JEWELLERY

placing it on the table in front of her.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. CLOTHING STORE- DAY

A MANNEQUIN in a store window. Large painted smile, dressed in spring attire.

Rachel, outside a dressing room- regards the mannequin.

GIRL (O/S)

You're not going to see him again, are you?

Rachel, eyes glued to the mannequin responds.

RACHEL

No.

The GIRL (20s) exits from the dressing-room, appears behind Rachel. She's heavily pregnant.

GIRL

Rach.

Rachel turns, takes in her friend's appearance.

EASTER EGG: John in the BG serving customers.

RACHEL

You look great.

GIRL

I look fat.

Rachel turns back to look at the mannequin.

GIRL

He told you you weren't a woman. No man can decide that.

RACHEL

Are you getting the dress?

GIRL

How can you stay with someone like that?

RACHEL

They're just words.

GIRL (O/S)

Are they?

Rachel stares down her reflection in the store window by the mannequin.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. KITCHEN-EARLY MORNING

Morning light. Thunderstorm.

Rachel stands at the sink, cigarette hanging from mouth, scraping dishes.

John enters, June is pushed roughly into her seat at the table. Rachel turns to see June has a scar cut into her cheek.

John looks to Rachel.

JOHN

She fell.

RACHEL

Okay.

Rachel places a couple of plates down.

RACHEL

And the kids?

JOHN

Let them sleep in.

Rachel sits down with her breakfast.

RACHEL

You haven't seen my necklace have you,
John?

John deflects the question.

JOHN

Having a late one at the store
tonight. Don't wait up.

Rachel nods.

INT. LOUNGEROOM- NIGHT

Rachel passively watches TV. In her hands the photo of the small boy.

She makes her way out into the hall and looks down to where John's room is.

INT. JOHN'S ROOM- CONTINUOUS

Rachel ransacks John's room.

She pulls a dusty box out from underneath his bed.

Rachel delves into it. Video tapes.

INT. LOUNGE-ROOM- NIGHT

Rachel inserts the first tape into the VCR. Presses play.

Black screen for a moment.

Then John, setting up the camera on a tripod. He smiles once happy then moves away to reveal his mannequin family at the kitchen table.

He sits down, starts talking.

Rachel fast forwards through the tape. Through John sitting at the table talking to himself. It seems to go on forever, until the tape has run out.

Rachel ejects the tape and then inserts the next one. John reading a bed time story to Charlie.

Later...

Rachel, drunk, now asleep on the couch. The tape is still playing on the TV.

She wakes momentarily, brings her hand up to shield the brightness. She looks around to find the remote. As she turns her head she notices something for a split second.

Rachel shoots up. Pushes a few things around on the table. Finds the remote.

She begins to rewind.

Presses play once satisfied. Then pause.

A part of the tape that has been forgotten to be taped over. It's only a few frames, but it's enough.

A BLONDE WOMAN. Gagged. Bruised, tears flowing down her face.

Then...

Headlights through the curtains. John's home.

Adrenaline kicks in, Rachel quickly grabs at the tapes. Stuffs them back in the box.

She looks through the curtains at John. He exits the car. It appears there's another FIGURE in the passenger seat.

He runs around to the other side of the car, almost slipping in the rain. Opens the passenger door & pulls out a mannequin.

The mannequin has long brown hair.

Rachel subconsciously touches her brown hair.

RACHEL

Oh my God.

Lights flash as he locks the car.

Rachel watches as he begins to walk towards the house.

She grabs the box.

INT. HALL- CONTINUOUS

Rachel flees down the hall.

INT. JOHN'S ROOM- CONTINUOUS

She stuffs the box under John's bed. She goes to exit the room however now see's John enter the hallway. She gasps and looks around her. Then rolls under the bed.

John enters with the mannequin girl.

Rachel watches from underneath the bed.

He opens his cupboard, pushes his clothes aside and places the mannequin inside.

Now that Rachel has a clearer view of the mannequin she can see that it is wearing her necklace.

JOHN

I'm sorry, Rachel. You'll have to hide in here for now, but it won't be long til you can join the rest of our family.

John exits the room and Rachel rolls out from underneath the bed.

INT. LOUNGE ROOM- CONTINUOUS

Rachel makes it to the lounge room. The sound of John's footsteps upstairs.

She flees to the front door- when she hears a clattering from the kitchen.

She looks towards the kitchen doorway- can just make out June at the table.

INT. KITCHEN- CONTINUOUS

Mannequin June is at the table. Next to her hand- a butcher's knife.

Rachel looks at the scar on June's cheek, smooths it with her finger and then looks down at the knife by June's hand.

A beat, then--

Rachel takes the knife.

INT. LOUNGE ROOM- CONTINUOUS

John makes his way down the stairs, finds Rachel in the lounge room- knife concealed.

JOHN

I thought you would've been asleep by now.

RACHEL

I couldn't.

John starts stripping off his raincoat.

JOHN

A bottle of vodka usually does the trick.

RACHEL
Don't you pity me.

JOHN
Excuse me?

Rachel holds the photo of the small boy out in front of her.

RACHEL
Where are the bodies, John?

John starts to head for Rachel.

JOHN
Watch what you're saying.

Rachel pulls the knife.

RACHEL
You couldn't make them love you, could you? So you had to settle for your sick mannequin family. Who can never leave you.

JOHN
Who can't knock you around or take advantage of you- leave you broken and damaged, driven to take whatever work that will pay for your vices.

RACHEL
But they're not real, John. They're not a real family.

JOHN
Like yours?

A beat.

JOHN
That's what I thought. You're all alone and you're fucking miserable. You'd rather stay with someone who abuses you...

John moves to the kitchen. Pours a glass of liquor. He's now standing behind June.

JOHN
I didn't want to kill her. But she was so mad when she came home and found

their bodies...

RACHEL

Oh my God.

JOHN

She wouldn't listen to me. That I had done it for her, our relationship. She wasn't cut out to be a mother. I just wanted us to be the way we were before... that's all I wanted... But she kept screaming. That's when I had no choice but to restrain her in the basement. I tried for weeks to convince her, to try and make her understand. But she soon became unresponsive, she stopped eating. I had no choice but to end it.

Rachel now shaking, still holding the knife out in front of her.

JOHN

You're going to kill me?

John makes his way towards her.

JOHN

You're going to stand up for yourself now? A few years too late, don't you think?

John continues to make his way towards Rachel.

JOHN

Let's face it, Rachel. You're not a woman, you're just--

Rachel snaps. She SCREAMS and drives the knife into John's chest.

Pulls the knife out.

Strikes the knife in again.

FLASHBACK: Bathroom.

Pulls it out. Strikes again.

FLASHBACK: Pity on the women's' faces in the supermarket.

Strikes again.

FLASHBACK: her reflection in the store window.

Again.

FLASHBACK: 10 year old Rachel in her school uniform being cornered by a much OLDER MAN on her way to school.

Again. Again. Again.

Until she's covered in John's blood. His body now just a bloody lifeless heap on the floor.

Rachel knelt down next to him, begins to SOB.

INT. LOUNGEROOM- LATER

Mannequin June, Charlie and Beth lined up on the couch.

Rachel makes her way over. Curls up on the couch, rests her head on June's lap.

Close on: Rachel's face. A woman's hand stroking her hair.

END.