

THE PERFECT STORY

Written by

Tom Batt

FADE IN:

INT. EDITOR'S OFFICE, DAILY HERALD NEWSPAPER - DAY

The editor RICK MARSHALL, 50s sits at his desk. He is slightly overweight and sweaty. He wears a white shirt with braces and a red bow-tie. He holds a cigar in between his sausage like fingers.

Opposite him sits SAM MARLOWE, 30s. He is slim and very rough looking with a five o'clock shadow and droopy eyes. His shirt and jacket are wrinkled and his tie has been pulled down. He has the distinct look of a desperate man.

RICK

Look Sam it's out of my hands. The paper's in deep shit right now. We can barely sell enough copies just to keep ourselves going. We need to trim the fat and you haven't given me a good story in months.

SAM

Come on Rick I can't lose this job. I'm behind on rent I have bills to pay. Just give me a chance to bring you something juicy. You know I'm good for it. I may not be a consistent writer, but when I get something good-

RICK

Alright, because I like you so much here's what I'll do. You got one day to get me an exclusive. Something that will sell millions of copies and hopefully get this paper back on it's feet. Or you're out.

SAM

Something exclusive? It would be easier to get an interview with Donald Logan. I don't know-

RICK

Hey now you're talking. An interview with famous millionaire recluse Donald Logan. We still don't know why he suddenly decided to shut himself away. You could be the man to tell the world. You get me the interview, you keep your job.

Sam wishes he hadn't opened his mouth.

INT. DAILY HERALD NEWSPAPER - DAY

Sam exits the editor's office and closes the door behind him nervous yet determined. He takes a deep breath and heads for the door.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Sam sits at a table with a cup of coffee reading documents on Donald Logan. He downs the last remaining drops then stands up and walks over to a pay-phone at the back. He puts in a few coins then dials.

SAM

Hello operator, could you connect me to the residence of Mr Donald Logan? The address is Westlake Manor. Thank you.

Sam waits for a moment. He looks around the cafe at the other customers. Suddenly a phone starts ringing the other end.

A well mannered voice picks up the other end.

VOICE

Logan residence.

SAM

Hello, I'd like to speak to Mr Logan please?

VOICE

I'm afraid he can't come to the phone at this present time. Who is calling?

SAM

My name is Sam Marlowe. I'm a reporter for the Daily Herald and I-

The phone goes dead on the other end.

SAM

Hello? Hello?

Sam takes some more change from his pocket and slots them into the pay phone. He dials once more and waits.

The well mannered voice answers again.

VOICE

Logan residence.

SAM

Hello again. I'd like to interview Mr Logan for the-

The phone goes dead again.

Sam slams the receiver down with such force it almost breaks.

He scratches his head with frustration and then leaves the cafe.

EXT. FRONT GATE, LOGAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Sam stands outside a large gate peering through the bars at the large house within the grounds. It seems very quiet.

Sam pushes the button for the intercom at the side of the gate. There is no answer. He pushes the button again, but still no answer.

He looks back at the house and catches a glimpse of a curtain in an upstairs window swinging back into position. He tries to look closer.

He heads round to the side of the grounds.

EXT. SIDE WALL, LOGAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Sam walks along the tall wall looking for a good place to climb over. There is no way in, but he can hear the faint sound of talking coming from inside. He tries to listen, but the voices are mumbled.

EXT. FRONT GATE, LOGAN'S HOUSE - DAY

As Sam makes his way round to the front of the house he notices the front gates closing.

He looks down the road to see a young woman (DOROTHY, 20s) in a maid's uniform walking away from him. She is small and very timid. She wears no make up and her hair is tied back.

He looks over at the house then starts walking following the maid.

EXT. DRY CLEANERS - DAY

Sam watches from a distance as Dorothy exits the dry cleaners carrying a suit bag. He continues to follow her.

INT. BUTCHERS - DAY

Dorothy stands at the counter as the butcher hands over a large bag of meat. She pays for it and exits.

EXT. MARKET STALL - DAY

Dorothy purchases a bag of various fruits from the stall. Sam is still watching her from a distance.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Dorothy enters the small quiet cafe and approaches the counter. She orders a cup of coffee.

Sam enters the cafe and approaches the counter next to her. The cup of coffee is placed down on the counter, Dorothy takes out her purse, but Sam jumps in handing over the money.

SAM

I'll get this.

DOROTHY

Oh, that's very kind of you, but there's no need.

SAM

Please, I'd like to.

DOROTHY

I'm not sure.

SAM

Come on. What has the world come to if a man can't buy a nice young lady a cup of coffee?

DOROTHY

Okay. I guess.

She picks up the cup of coffee and walks over to a small table in the centre of the cafe. She sits down. Sam walks over to the table.

SAM

Mind if I join you.

DOROTHY

I don't-

Sam sits down opposite her.

SAM

You look like you could do with the company.

Dorothy smiles.

DOROTHY

Thank you.

SAM
My name's Sam.

DOROTHY
Dorothy.

SAM
You work for Donald Logan, right?

Dorothy is shocked.

DOROTHY
How do you know that?

SAM
Listen, I'm a reporter for the Daily Herald. I would really like to get an interview with Mr Logan.

DOROTHY
That's not possible.

SAM
Come on don't give me that. You must agree with me it's mighty strange for him to suddenly seal himself away like he has. What's he hiding?

DOROTHY
Nothing. Mr Logan is a very personal man.

SAM
All I want is two minutes just to ask a couple of questions. People are curious to know.

DOROTHY
My mother always told me curiosity killed the cat.

SAM
Well in this case curiosity sells hundreds of newspapers. I really need this story and you'd be doing me a huge favour.

DOROTHY
There's nothing I can do. Mr Logan will not give you an interview.

SAM
Okay.

Sam smiles. He reaches into his inside jacket pocket and takes out a roll of money. He slips out a couple of notes and places them down on the table. He slides them toward Dorothy.

SAM
Will this help?

DOROTHY
I'm sorry Mr-

SAM
Call me Sam.

DOROTHY
I'm sorry Sam, but Mr Logan cannot
give you your interview and nothing
you do or say will change that.

Dorothy stands up.

DOROTHY
Thank you for the coffee.

She rushes out of the cafe. Sam puts the money back in his pocket and sighs.

EXT. FRONT GATE, LOGAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Sam stands outside the gate thinking. He looks left in the direction he went before. He looks right where there is a large wooded area. He heads for it disappearing amongst the trees.

EXT. SIDE HEDGE, LOGAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Sam walks along the tall hedge looking for a gap where he can slip through. He can hear the faint sound of people talking. He comes across a small hole at the bottom of the hedge and crouches down. He peers through into the large garden. He can see the house in the distance. He crawls through the hole to the other side.

EXT. GARDEN, LOGAN'S HOUSE- DAY

He slowly stands looking around making sure there is nobody around. He makes his way toward the house.

As he gets closer he can hear the talking getting louder. He spots three people lounging by the pool. He quickly takes cover behind a bush and peers over.

The three men sit around a garden table drinking. MARCUS, 50s (BUTLER) is tall and thin, he is bald with evil eyes, a face like a vulture. JIM, 40s (GARDENER) is well built with a worn face and rough stubble. GUNTER, 40s (COOK) is slightly overweight with a greasy rosy cheeked face; he is also bald like a giant baby. They all wear casual clothing and look very relaxed.

Sam is confused as to who the people are. He makes his way over to the house.

Dorothy steps through the patio doors of the house and approaches the three men at the table. She stands nervously avoiding eye contact.

DOROTHY
Mr Warwick?

Marcus turns to her.

MARCUS
Yes, my dear.

DOROTHY
I need to tell you something.

MARCUS
Go on my dear.

DOROTHY
I was approached today, by a reporter.

Marcus is suddenly very interested in what she has to say.

MARCUS
Really? And what did this reporter want?

DOROTHY
He wanted an interview with Mr Logan.

MARCUS
Probably the same gentlemen who telephoned this morning. What did you tell him?

DOROTHY
That it wasn't possible to speak to Mr Logan and there was nothing he could say or do to change that.

MARCUS
And how did he react to this?

DOROTHY
I don't know I walked away. I was so nervous. I thought maybe he knew-

Marcus stands and places his hands on Dorothy's shoulders.

MARCUS
Calm down my dear. Nobody knows and nobody ever will.
(MORE)

MARCUS (CONT'D)

As long as the four of us keep quiet, there is nothing to worry about.

DOROTHY

Yes, you're right. I'm so sorry.

MARCUS

No need to apologise.

DOROTHY

Anyway I have duties to attend to.

Dorothy turns around and heads back into the house. Marcus sits back down.

JIM

I think the girl may be a liability.

MARCUS

What are you suggesting?

JIM

If anyone is going to crack it's her. Maybe it would be best if she was no longer a part of this.

MARCUS

No, I don't think that's necessary. If she was going to tell, she would have done it by now. We'll just have to keep a close eye on her.

MEREDITH, 50s (LOGAN'S P.A.) exits the house via the patio doors walking toward Marcus. Her face lacks kindness with pinched lips and a low brow. She wears thin glasses that are attached to string around her neck.

MEREDITH

Mr Warwick.

Marcus turns and smiles at her.

MARCUS

Meredith.

MEREDITH

I've transferred this months sum to everyone's accounts. However Mr Logan made a substantial donation to a certain charity every year around this time. Should I still go ahead with that?

MARCUS

Of course, everything must seem perfectly normal.

(MORE)

MARCUS (CONT'D)

We cannot allow the faintest suggestion of suspicion.

MEREDITH

Very well.

Marcus watches Meredith head back inside the house.

JIM

I'm not too sure about her either.

Marcus turns to Jim with piercing eyes.

MARCUS

Your opinion of women is not a positive one, is it Jim?

JIM

I'm just saying.

MARCUS

Well, don't. Meredith is a very astute woman, not to be underestimated. She was Logan's best P.A. And without her access to Logan's money, we have nothing. So I suggest you be nice. I have witnessed that woman's fire, and I for one would not wish to be on the receiving end.

Jim turns away speechless. Marcus smiles taking a sip of his pimm's.

EXT. LOGAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Sam is confused by what he has just heard. He carefully walks along the side of the house and finds a window slightly open. He opens it fully and peers in, then climbs through.

INT. LIVING ROOM, LOGAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Sam gently places his feet on the floor and creeps across the room looking around at the ornately decorated living room. Photographs of Logan with certain celebrities and politicians hang on the walls. Sam reaches the door and peers out into the corridor.

INT. CORRIDOR, LOGAN'S HOUSE - DAY

He walks over to a coat stand with a hat and coat hanging on it. On the floor is a pair of smart shoes. He turns and looks up the large staircase. He places one foot gently on the first step and continues on to the top being careful not to make any noise.

INT. STUDY, LOGAN'S HOUSE - DAY

The door opens slowly and Sam peers into the tidy room. He enters and walks over to the desk where an old photo of Logan with his deceased wife stands. He looks around the various forms and letters scattered across the surface of the desk. Nothing of interest.

He glances down at a glass ashtray on the desk and something about it catches his eye. He picks it up for a closer inspection and finds a small amount of dried blood hidden within it's jagged surface.

He frowns with suspicion.

INT. KITCHEN, LOGAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Sam enters cautiously. Suddenly he hears voices coming toward the room. He looks around panicked, trying to find somewhere to hide.

He spots the freezer door and rushes toward it. He pulls the large door open and jumps inside sealing it behind him.

INT. FREEZER, KITCHEN, LOGAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Sam stands breathing nervously listening to the mumbled voices talking outside.

Something compels him to turn to his right where he discovers the frozen corpse of Donald Logan standing upright next to him. A gaping wound in his head.

Sam's eyes widen as his breathing increases.

The voices outside disappear. He hastily grabs the door handle and pushes it open, slipping out.

INT. KITCHEN, LOGAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Sam slams the freezer door shut. A rests his head upon it as he catches his breath.

SAM

They killed him. I have to get out
of here.

Sam turns to find Gunter before him. A rolling pin comes crashing down onto Sam's head.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN.

INT. CELLAR, LOGAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Sam wakes to find himself tied to a chair. He looks around the dark damp room. There are shelves up against the wall one side, bottles of wine stacked against the other. Sitting in front of him is Marcus.

MARCUS

You must be the reporter.

SAM

You killed him. You killed Logan.

MARCUS

I was really hoping nobody would find out. Murder is not something I enjoy.

SAM

Why did you do it?

MARCUS

Because the man was an insufferable oaf. He was demanding, abusive and exploitative. If the world only knew, they'd see justification in our actions.

SAM

Murder seems a bit extreme.

MARCUS

Maybe, but it was a means to an end. We no longer have to tolerate his incessant gross behaviour and yet we maintain a certain quality of life. Things were going rather swimmingly for a while the world accepted Logan had become a recluse and we lived in peace, until you started poking your nose around. You've put us in a very awkward position. I see only one option.

SAM

I suppose it wouldn't help if I promised to keep this quiet?

Marcus smiles.

MARCUS

I'd find the audacity amusing, but you're a reporter that's what you do. I'd be surprised if you did keep it quiet.

Marcus stands.

MARCUS

Anyway, time is of the essence. We must quash this before it gets too complicated.

He starts making his way over to the staircase.

SAM

You won't keep this quiet forever. Someone will expose you, eventually.

Marcus stops and stares at Sam.

MARCUS

Maybe, but it won't be you.

Marcus disappears out of the basement. Sam tries to break free from the binds.

INT. CORRIDOR, LOGAN'S HOUSE- DAY

Marcus steps through the basement door where Günter stands waiting. Marcus places a key in his hand.

MARCUS

Do it quickly and quietly. Jim will help you dispose of the body.

Günter nods and enters the basement.

INT. BASEMENT. LOGAN'S HOUSE- DAY

Günter locks the basement door and places the key in his shirt pocket. He stomps down the steps. Sam is still struggling to break free. He stops and looks at Günter.

SAM

Who are you, the cook?

Günter pulls a kitchen knife from his belt and smiles. Sam panics and tries to break free. Günter slowly walks toward him savouring the moment.

As Günter nears him, Sam thinks quickly and stands lifting the chair. He spins around, the chair leg knocking the knife from Günter's hand. It slides across the floor. Günter pushes Sam so he falls back sitting on the chair. His hands have loosened from the rope.

Günter walks over to the knife and picks it up. He turns to Sam and is met with a wooden chair crashing down onto him. He drops the knife and falls to the floor. Sam kicks him in the face then runs up the stairs.

He tries to open the door but it's locked. He turns to see Günter standing at the bottom of the stairs holding the key smiling. He places it back in his pocket then raises his fists enticing Sam to fight.

Sam slowly walks down the stairs, as he reaches the bottom he raises his fists. He manages to punch Günter twice in the face, but the man doesn't even flinch. Günter punches Sam in the stomach then in the face. Sam falls to the floor wheezing.

Günter grabs Sam by the shirt and lifts him up to his feet. He then pushes him up against the shelf and wraps his chubby fingers around Sam's neck choking him.

Sam tries to knock Günter's hands away whilst struggling to breath. He reaches behind him on the shelf and grabs the nearest thing to him a small stone statue. He raises it high, but Günter grabs his wrist, still with his other hand around Sam's throat.

Sam knees Günter in the groin. Günter weakens releasing his grip from both Sam's wrist and neck. Sam drops the statue down with so much force it knocks Günter out cold.

Sam drops the statue on the floor and takes the key from Günter's pocket. He rushes up the stairs and unlocks the door.

INT. DINING ROOM, LOGAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Sam cuts through the dining room to a set of patio doors. Torrential rain is pouring outside slamming against the windows. He turns the key on the lock and throws the door open.

EXT. GARDEN, LOGAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Sam exits the house and runs through the garden as fast as he can. He can hardly see where he is going the rain is so thick.

He reaches the hedge and stops. Sam looks over at the house once more, and then crawls back under the hedge.

INT. BASEMENT, LOGAN'S HOUSE - DAY

The door opens and Marcus comes down the steps.

MARCUS

Günter, I told you to lock the door.

Marcus stops when he sees Günter lying on the floor. He rushes down the stairs and over to Günter helping him to his feet.

MARCUS
Günter. Where is he?

GÜNTER
Gone.

Marcus looks at the statue on the ground.

EXT. GARDEN, LOGAN'S HOUSE - DAY

The four of them run out the back door into the rain looking out across the garden. Sam is nowhere to be seen.

JIM
What do we do now?

MARCUS
I think we better initiate our contingency plan. Jim, get the body from the freezer. Dorothy, phone the police.

DOROTHY
What should I tell them?

MARCUS
That there's been a murder.

INT. BASEMENT, LOGAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Marcus pulls a handkerchief from his pocket and uses it to pick up the statue.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sam sits at his desk furiously typing on a typewriter smoking a cigarette. He stops for a moment and thinks. He picks up the phone and is about to dial when there is a knock at the door.

Sam stands and heads over to the door and answers it. Two men in suits stand outside.

SAM
Yes?

One of the men shows a police badge.

DETECTIVE
Mr Marlowe?

SAM

That's me.

DETECTIVE

You're under arrest on the suspicion of murder.

SAM

What?

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM, POLICE STATION - DAY

Sam sits nervously at a table. The two detectives enter and sit down opposite him.

SAM

Listen this is ridiculous I haven't murdered anybody.

DETECTIVE

Mr Marlowe we have witnesses who claim you broke into the home of Mr Donald Logan and murdered him. We have a dead body and a murder weapon with blood and your prints on it. How do you explain that?

SAM

Okay, I admit I broke into his house, but I did not murder him. He was already dead. He was in the freezer. They killed him, not me.

DETECTIVE

They?

SAM

The butler, the cook, his entire staff. It was a conspiracy.

DETECTIVE

And why would they murder Mr Logan?

SAM

Because they hated him. Why would I kill him?

DETECTIVE

Well, they say you've been pestering Mr Logan for an interview. He wouldn't agree to give you one and you threatened to get violent.

SAM

I don't believe this. I did not murder Mr Logan.

DETECTIVE

You better get yourself a lawyer.
It's not looking very good.

The two detectives stand and leave.

INT. NEWSSTAND - DAY

On the front cover of the Daily Herald is the headline
'Donald Logan Slain By Stalking Reporter'. Every copy is sold
off the stand.

EXT. LOGAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Günter and Jim are loading their possessions into the boot of
a car. Dorothy sits quietly in the back. Marcus stands
outside staring up at the house.

Meredith walks over to him.

MEREDITH

I guess it was good while it
lasted. What now?

Marcus looks at Meredith and smiles. He looks back at the
house.

MARCUS

We've done it once. We can do it
again.

He turns and heads over to the car.

FADE OUT.