



RIISING STAR

Screenplay by Stephen Hall

The Story

Set in New York City in 1989, detectives Logan Ford and rookie Malik Edwards are assigned to reluctantly work together on the death of sex worker Lucia Blinkley caused by an overdose of the drug Rising Star, who, having spent the night at the Chelmsford Hotel with politician Robert Sanderson, her body is found discarded at an abandoned industrial site. Later the coroner informs them she was pregnant.

Unbeknown to the detectives, Lucia worked for mobster Giacomo Pulcinella who owned the hotel and arranged for her body to be removed and who received the drug from corrupt police officers Bernie Hillcroft and Jim Kershaw who are in the pocket of the gangster, while Sanderson is in partnership with Pulcinella and councillor Fred Wilmot in a land grab within the city using the company Consolidated Construction Enterprise as the front through which payments are made to offshore accounts.

As part of the investigation, the detectives search Lucia's apartment where they find a connection to the hotel and that she has a social worker called Richard Evans.

Visiting the hotel to question the manager Harvey, they meet the corrupt police officers and their suspicions are aroused.

No sooner are they making progress in the investigation when Bernie Hillcroft is gruesomely murdered in his apartment in which he is strapped to an armchair with his throat slit and his eyes removed. Cord is pinned between his wrists and knees to the ceiling, similar to a marionette. Logan recognises some hallmarks from a serial killer who was never caught and who stopped murdering years ago.

The investigation rises a notch as they believe there is a connection and the detectives split to follow each path.

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The Story

Discovering that the police supplied the drug that caused Lucia's death, the detectives are sure she died at the hotel but the murder of Fred Wilmot only adds pressure to Captain Hanley and the force as both the media, the DA and Mayor want answers.

His body is found strung up in his office, facing out the window with a message cut into his back that says: "No Show Without Punch".

Malik finds out that Wilmot has been authorising land and property purchases to the company which Pulcinella has a stake in while the mobster, now in a rage that his plans are being disrupted, also wants to find out who is behind it.

During all of this, Logan has befriended his new neighbour, Peter Denton who he shares a few beers with on the porch. Logan has an opportunity to enter the house where he discovers a marionette that reminds him of the murder and Denton informs him that he moved from an area where the previous murders took place.

With the detectives keen to speak to Pulcinella, the mobster is unaware that he is being bugged by the killer. Logan and Malik re-visit the hotel to speak to Harvey who is pressurised to reveal what happened on the night of Lucia's death.

By now, the panicked Sanderson requests a meeting with the mobster at a building that is under construction. After the meeting Sanderson leaves and the mobster is murdered. His body is strung up with bank notes stuffed in his mouth and the message "An Eye For An Eye" sliced into his body.

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The Story

Logan, under intense pressure and frustrated, believes his neighbour is the murderer while Malik visits the coroner to get the DNA results of the pregnancy.

Logan confronts Denton and an argument ensues but the suspect confirms he has an alibi. It is during this that Logan realises Sanderson was involved and he rushes to find the politician while Malik discovers that Richard Evans was the father of the unborn and is the murderer.

At the home of Sanderson, the politician realises his life is in danger and both he and his wife pack bags to escape when Evans appears and binds the victims.

Strapping Sanderson to an armchair, he hears movement in the house.

Logan has arrived at the politician's home and attempts to rescue them but is shot and disarmed. Evans approaches the detective and takes aim when a shot rings out.

Malik has arrived on the scene and shoots the murderer dead.

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The Characters

Logan Ford

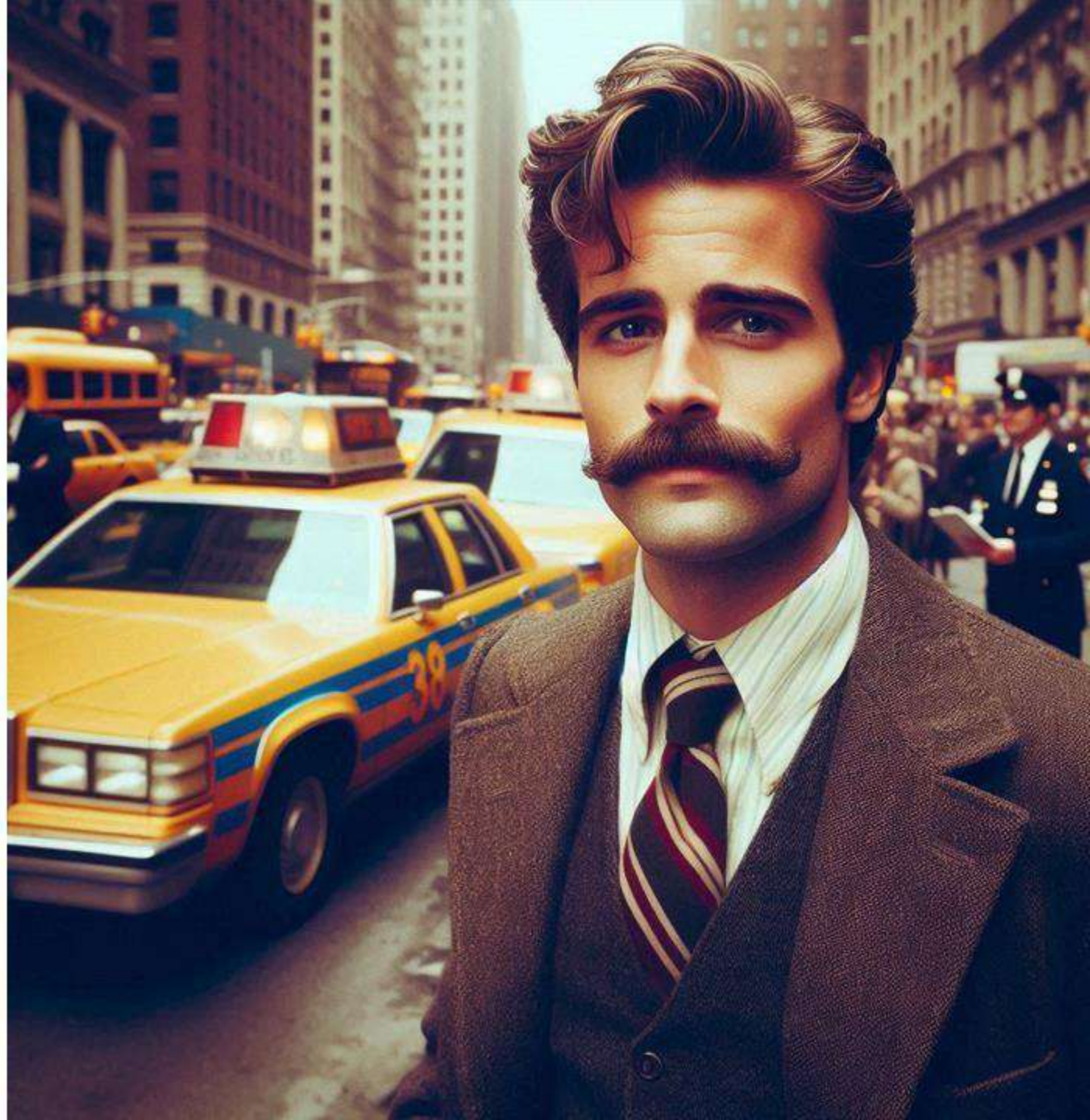
A maverick 37-year-old detective who is ridiculed by his colleagues, he prefers to work on his own. A drinker and smoker, his marriage to Audrey is shaky as she feels he is not stepping up as a father to his son Callum [6] and daughter Christina [16] (who dote over him) due to his work obsessions.

Despite appearing disorganised, his mind is sharp but he doesn't follow protocol when it comes to investigating as he is prepared to use any means to get answers.

A streetwise detective of the old-school type, Logan has been around the block a few times, but this investigation tests his mettle and questions his abilities.

He is the antithesis of Malik, and initially sees him as an educated upstart whose path has been predetermined which raises resentment, but his wife advises him to see sense and take him under his wing.

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The Characters

Malik Edwards

This 28-year-old gay detective has gone through university and is seen by the force as a promising up-and-coming detective with a bright future.

Quiet, unassuming and driven by logic, he reveals to Audrey Ford his sexuality which he feels needs to be hidden from his colleagues for fear of reprisals. In that same conversation he informs her of the loss of his partner to Aids, indicating he is a man of caution and control.

Malik, despite being seen by Logan as a threat, admires his partner and knows he can learn a lot from him.

Initially, he watches and listens but soon he plays his part in discovering who the killer is.

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The Characters

Robert Sanderson

This confident and popular 45-year-old politician believes he has a bright future and is preparing to run at the next election but behind the façade is a corrupt individual who is in league with Giacomo Pulcinella to make a fortune in a land grab linked to offshore accounts.

Married but unfaithful, he has a one-night stand with sex worker Lucia Blinky and as the murders unravel his plans, he is revealed as a weak-minded individual consumed with greed.

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The Characters

Giacomo Pulcinella

This 44-year-old gangster may exhibit himself as an affable, likeable man but, in reality, he is a hardened criminal who sees the world around him as disposable if it achieves his objectives.

A large man in both in physicality and character, he projects himself to Sanderson as a worthy business partner but behind the scenes he is gathering evidence of the politician which, if required, could blackmail him.

Untrustworthy, he is a sleekit, two-faced individual with a gang of henchmen at his command and the police in his pocket who dismisses the death of Lucia as an inconvenience.

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The Characters

Fred Wilmot

The corrupt 45-year-old councillor is the lynchpin that is enabling Sanderson and Pulcinella to see through their plan. Paid by the mobster, he plays his part in greenlighting the purchasing of land and property.

Slight in stature, this weedy character is looked down upon by Sanderson and Pulcinella who put up with his presence only because of what he can provide.

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The Characters

Bernie Hillcroft

At 42 years of age, this corrupt officer exhumes an air of entitlement as, with his partner Jim Kershaw, he patrols and protects Pulcinella's patch from the drug dealing competition.

Overweight and living alone, he's a bit of a slob living on tv dinners in his dishevelled apartment.

A big fish in a small pond, he thinks he's important as he rules the roost among the dregs of the street.

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The Characters

Lucia Blinkley

22-year-old single mother Lucia, works hard by any means to support her 4-year-old son, including evenings as a sex worker. Divorced, she has been attending family sessions with social worker Richard Evans and it is revealed the pair have been in a relationship.

A confident individual, she likes to party and is not shy in performing what is required of her as she partakes in drug consumption with Robert Sanderson.

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The Characters

Captain Hanley

The 51-year-old captain is a gruff fellow with a no-nonsense attitude who sees a bright future in Malik Edwards. Undeterred by Logan's protestations to partner Malik, he holds a secret admiration of Logan and knows he will be of benefit to the protégé.

Despite external pressures, he is prepared to support the duo as the tension ratches up with each murder.

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The Characters

Harvey

The chain-smoking 58-year-old receptionist is a sly individual who lurks in the background. Married to Betty, he watches the events unfold in the hotel as he sits in his office watching the transmission from the hidden camera in the ensuite where Lucia dies.

Subservient to Pulcinella, his boss, he is evasive during questioning from the detectives, but his instinct to keep the pin flag belonging to Sanderson, which he finds in the hotel room later, is his undoing.

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The Characters

Peter Denton

The 36-year-old loner is neighbour to Logan with whom a friendship is initiated after recently moving into the area. Admitting to Logan that he is a joiner to trade and works in entertainment, it is alluded that he makes marionettes which are eerily similar to the nature of the murders. In addition, he informs Logan that he previously resided in Philadelphia where a series of unresolved murders had taken place.

A quiet spoken man, he is amiable and welcoming and warms to Logan. His forgiving nature is revealed when Logan aggressively questions him in relation to the murders.

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The Characters

Richard Evans

The soft-spoken, genteel 33-year-old social worker is the murderer and a dark horse of a character. All that is discovered about him is that he had been in a relationship with Lucia who was carrying his child and who he cared greatly for. He reveals she “offered him a reprieve” alluding to the possibility that his relationship with her stopped him from continuing with his previous murders in Philadelphia.

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The Characters

Bettie

The world has clearly passed by Harvey's chain-smoking wife with her surly mannerisms who isn't intimidated by anyone...especially the police.

With aging skin and signs of someone who likes a drink too much, there is a no-nonsense attitude to her.

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The Characters

Veronica Sanderson

The suffering politician's wife who probably knows her husband is unfaithful but puts up with his philandering. She dutifully stands by him and smiles for the camera.

Always immaculately dressed with her hair styled and her perfect make-up.

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The Characters

Audrey Ford

Logan's wife is no push-over and she makes it clear she is not happy with his lack of parental responsibilities and contribution to the household.

It is Audrey who gets an insight into the good man that Malik is and advises Logan to get his act together.

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Scenes



The opening scene has Logan chasing a perp Logan and Malik are assigned to investigate through the streets of New York City. the death of Lucia Blinkley where her body is discovered at a disused industrial site.



discovered at a disused industrial site.

No sooner are the detectives making progress when Hillcroft is brutally murdered



with his eyes removed and his throat cut. Cord, nailed to his wrists and knees, is hooked up to the ceiling, like a marionette.



Scenes



Politician Sanderson speaks to reporters as
as the police search for the mobster.



The SWAT team prepare to enter Pulcinella's
ready to shoot. election on a ticket of reducing crime and promoting family values.



In seeking the killer, Logan is armed and he announces he is standing at the next office



The Writer

I started writing my first screenplay in December 2021 based on the true story: Burke and Hare – The West Port Murders, which has won numerous awards and positive reviews including one from the Cannes Film Festival.

Since then, I have completed two feature screenplays (Inside Reach and Greatrex) with one being a contemporary psychological suspense and the other a period crime drama.

Multiple drafts have been produced for each screenplay as I strive to create authentic, captivating stories that fire the imagination of the reader.

Stephen Hall

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