

"DUSTED FOR PRINTS"

(A Screenplay, based on An Original Short Story)

by

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FADE IN:

INT. JOHN SMYTH'S OFFICE - DAY

Polished bookshelves, neatly stacked. Plush furniture, like you'd find in an old English gentlemen's club. Everything spotless, and positioned as if by design.

Except.

Behind the desk, an upturned swivel chair. Sprawled in it, the body of JOHN SMYTH, fifties. Well-groomed, and polished as his office. Save for the bloody hole, in his forehead.

On the wall above Smyth, a circular depression, at the center of a splatter of blood, bone, and brain tissue.

GIANNI VITALE, early thirties, and LENNOX GARBER, forties, stand at the desk. Both men wear surgical gloves. They prod occasionally at the knick-knacks on the table top. Which also look to have been placed there by careful deliberation.

VITALE

Shouldn't it be "Smythe?" I mean, that's how it's spelt.

GARBER

Class thing, maybe? Fellow of his standing, station in life, he'd want to be a cut above. Set himself apart from all the other John Smith's, out there. Guys with solid names, like us - Vitale, Garber - we don't have that problem.

VITALE

Hmph. Why the hell doesn't he spell it right. Did. Didn't he.

Vitale turns to sneer at a framed photograph on the wall. It's perfectly lined up between a legal diploma, and a commendation from the American Bar Association: Smyth, and another man in fishing gear, grinning broadly.

VITALE

Hmph. His Highness, and the Attorney

General. Probably had an intern catch those bass, for 'em.

GARBER

Privilege of power. Our Mister Smyth moved in exalted circles.

Behind the two detectives, Forensic investigator MATTHEW CLAPTON, thirties, a little geeky, but solid-looking, fusses around the body. Plotting trajectories, doing scrapings. He's meticulous. Thorough. Slow.

VITALE

Hey, Matty. What do you say? D'you think he's dead?

He doesn't even look up. Ignoring Vitale, as he carries on with his work.

Vitale turns back, to a frowning Garber.

VITALE

So, Lenny--

Garber's frown deepens.

VITALE

Len. So, what's it look like, to you?

GARBER

I'm not sure...

Garber nudges a drinking bird paperweight, on the desk. Nestled neatly behind it is a sleek little cell phone.

Garber picks up the cell, and hits last number redial. Holds the phone to his ear.

Clearly audible, a whiny, nasal voice, on the other end.

ARNOLD GLEISSNER (O.S.)

Arnold Gleissner, paparazzo. Hello? Hello?

Garber cuts the connection. Mouthing the word, "Paparazzo?", he turns toward the Forensics man.

Clapton holds out a clear plastic evidence bag, with a scrap of paper in it.

CLAPTON

Pried this out of the victim's hand. I had to smooth it out, a little. Well, a lot, actually. See the edges, there--?

Garber, not listening, holds the bag up to the light. And grins.

GARBER

Paparazzo.

He hands the bag over to Vitale, who studies the paper. It's a fragment from a glossy photograph, showing--

VITALE

Ha! Couple of exalted circles there, all right. Hey! Isn't that--?

GARBER

Mm-hmm.

CLAPTON

You guys can go ahead. I've dusted for prints, already.

A harsh laugh, from Vitale, as he gestures toward the corpse.

VITALE

Yeah. That's what this guy was, looks like. Dusted. For prints.

GARBER

Indeed.

Let's go pay a visit to an Arnold Gleissner, photographer. See if he can put us in the picture.

FADE TO BLACK