

My Shadow

Screenplay By
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(based on the short film "My Shadow" by Giovanni Zelko)

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INT. BEVERLY HILLS MANSION. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

ECU of a woman's beautiful eyes staring blankly. A few camera FLASHES are followed by a Zoom-Out to reveal her neck has been brutally slashed.

Lying in a pool of blood, her naked body is surrounded by a police forensic team. The forensic PHOTOGRAPHER meticulously takes her photos from various angles. He wears glasses and a "CORONER" ball-cap.

Two detectives, HANK and FRED, casually wander around the room, observing everything, looking for clues. They are both large, tall men. In his fifties, Hank is sloppy and a little heavy-set. Fred, in his forties, is more hawkish and has an athletic fit body. Hank sips on a coffee while looking at the lifeless body, tilting his head to study her.

HANK

Jeez... Scarlet Bachlan. Wait till the press gets a hold of this one, Fred. It's gonna be a circus.

Fred, standing by the window, peeps out the curtains to look at the street. A multitude of NEWS CREWS are reporting from behind a police line.

FRED

It already is, Hank. They're fucking animals; a pack of hyenas feasting on a dead carcass.

HANK

How'd they get here so fast?

FRED

Our friend over there called it in. He was shaking like a leaf when I got here.

In a nearby hallway, a man in his thirties nervously sits on a chair between two standing uniformed police men.

HANK

What was he doing here?

FRED

He's been shadowing her for weeks.

HANK

What for?

FRED

Same old paparazzi bullshit.
Shadows her all day and takes
photos of her sipping on soy
latte's so her fans can be part of
her ridiculous life.

HANK

Professional stalkers.

FRED

Like I said: fucking animals. He
probably called all his lame
photography buddies before he
called us.

The Forensic Photographer, listening to all this, pauses and looks up at Fred, not liking what he said. Fred notices his irritated look and stares him down. The photographer goes back to work, placing a measuring stick along the dead body.

HANK

So, who's the short list gonna be?

Fred walks along a grand bookshelf near the fireplace, studying an assortment of Scarlet's celebrity photographs, red carpet events, framed magazine covers, and awards.

FRED

Other than her lovers? Everyone
she works with: agents, producers,
managers, directors, publicists,
lawyers, spiritual advisors...

HANK

The whole fuckin Hollywood circus.
Maybe this is a good case for me to
retire on, huh Fred?

FRED

You said that twenty years ago when
we first met, pal.

HANK

Yeah, but now I can get my pension.

FRED

You'll never retire, Hank. You're
institutionalized. Without
criminals surrounding you day and
night, you'd lose your mind.

Fred arrives at the center of the fireplace mantle. He stops and stares at something. He reaches over and picks up an OSCAR statue. The statue looks back at him. Fred smiles.

FORENSIC OFFICER

(nervous)

Detective Armstrong! I wouldn't touch that! You may be contaminating evidence...

Fred puts down the Oscar and snaps back.

FRED

Shut up and keep looking for the killer's dandruff, will ya? What'ya think, the guy slashed her throat and then walked over here to check out her Oscar?

The forensic officer is silenced and turns away, none too happy. Hank smirks.

HANK

She had a hell of a career ahead of her. From starlet to Oscar winner in just a few years. Lucky kid.

FRED

Not so lucky anymore.

Hank, sipping on his coffee, glances at her dead body.

HANK

(callous)

Naw, guess not. Really liked her in that picture, though. The one she won the Oscar for. What was it called, where she played Joan of Arc?

Listening in, the Forensic Photographer chimes in.

PHOTOGRAPHER

"The Savior." I loved it too; saw it three times.

HANK

Yeah, that's it, "The Savior." Great picture. Did you like it, Fred?

Fred continues to study the contents around her apartment.

FRED

(nonchalant)

Haven't seen a movie in years.
It's torture enough that I have to
deal with pampered movie stars,
crazy directors, sleazy agents, and
the whole fuckin lot of them every
day on the job here in Holly-weird.
I don't need to pay money to sit in
a dark temple and worship these
idiots as they glorify themselves
in their imaginary world.

The Forensic Photographer, frowning, turns away and continues to take more photos of the dead body, kneeling down to get close-ups. Hank chuckles and shakes his head.

HANK

Tell us how you really feel, Fred.

The Forensic Photographer takes yet another shot, this time getting the flash right in Fred's eyes. Fred squints and puts his hand up, irritated.

FRED

Hey! Herb Ritts, you done yet?!
You're blinding me! You've taken
five hundred fuckin shots of her
already. I think you got what you
need, pal. Pack it up. You're
done.

The Forensic Photographer rises, putting his camera away.

PHOTOGRAPHER

(a bit sinister)

I got what I need, detective. We
all have a job to do, you know.

The Photographer exits the room. Hank laughs a little.

HANK

Making friends all over town, Fred.

FRED

Fuck him, fuckin pervert, wanna-be
photographer. He probably goes
home and jerks off to his
collection of gruesome shots at
night.

Hank walks to the window to look out at the street.

HANK
You're sick, man.

Fred steps over to the body and leans down, his demeanor changing, becoming more serious and focused. He studies her.

FRED
No. The guy who did this is sick.
Very sick.

Hank turns away from the window to look at Fred.

FRED (CONT'D)
(whispering)
Poor kid. You never had a chance,
did ya?

HANK
What'ya mean, Fred?

Fred gently closes her eyes with his fingers.

FRED
Well, we know the guy who did this
had sex with her right before he
killed her, which means she knew
him well enough to let him in her
home and fuck his brains out.

HANK
Match up the DNA from the cum and
we got our killer. Just one
problem: she's famous for shackin
up with a different guy almost
every night.

FRED
We'd have to get cum samples from
half the guys in Hollywood.

HANK
Yeah, the internet and supermarket
mags are full of her nightly
escapades.

FRED
A one-night stand with the wrong
guy? No. Not buying it.

HANK
Where do we start?

FRED

You interview the neighbors to find out if they saw anything odd last night, and if ther'd been anyone who frequented her home. Check with the gardener and the maid. Meet me back at the station when you're done.

Fred grabs his coat.

HANK

Okay. What are you gonna do?

Fred looks over to the hallway where the Paparazzi photographer is being held.

FRED

Me? I'm gonna take our paparazzi friend downtown and grill him. I'm gonna book him as our prime suspect.

HANK

(surprised)

Are you serious, Fred? You're booking him as the prime suspect? Thought you were just gonna ask him questions about Scarlet? You think he did it?

FRED

(smiling)

No, of course not, but I can learn a lot from him. He knows more about Scarlet's twisted life-style at night than anyone else. Plus, if the real killer thinks he's in the clear, he's more likely to make a mistake. As a bonus, those idiots out there will have something to write about and stay out of our way.

HANK

(uncomfortable)

I don't know, man... Last time you did something like this, the D.A. almost pulled your badge.

FRED

Fuck him, the Ivy League jealous prick. I'm not taking any chances.
(MORE)

FRED (CONT'D)

We don't do this right, and the killer is gonna walk. I guarantee it.

HANK

How long you gonna hold the photographer for?

FRED

Just a few days. That's about how much time we have to find our killer before he skips town.

Fred walks over to the hallway where the Paparazzi guy and the two officers are waiting.

PAPARAZZI

(cowering)

Can I go now, detective?

FRED

(ignoring him)

Boys, cuff him. We're taking him in.

The photographer's eyes widen in shock as the two officers stand him up and cuff him.

PAPARAZZI

What!? I didn't do this! Are you crazy!? I'm the one who called you, remember!?

FRED

Listen, pal! You've got photographs on your camera of a dead naked woman through her living-room window! I've got you on trespassing, stalking, pornography, and possible homicide. You're our A-1 star-suspect with GUILT written all over your face.

(to officers)

Read him his rights, and then lead this guy behind me right through that sea of reporters. And make sure he doesn't cover his face.

The paparazzi's eyes widen even further.

PAPARAZZI

You can't do this! Drag me in front of them out there and you'll ruin me! What's my family gonna think?

FRED

(smile)

Now you'll know what it feels like to be on the other side of flashing cameras, pal.

OFFICER

You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say may be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to an attorney.

The suspect is marched away as the Officer reads him his Miranda rights. Fred pauses in front of a mirror in the hallway and adjusts his hair, shirt collar, and jacket.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS MANSION. FRONT LAWN - MORNING

The door opens and Fred walks out with the suspect and two cops in tow. They walk to the front gate amidst a downpour of questions and camera flashes from reporters and photographers. The suspect writhes in horror.

REPORTER 1

Detective Armstrong! Detective Armstrong! Is this the killer? Is he your prime suspect?

PAPARAZZI

I didn't do it! It wasn't me!

REPORTER 2

Is Scarlet Bachlan really dead or just injured?

REPORTER 1

How did he kill her?

Fred and the boys are ushered to a squad car where the suspect is put into the back seat in cuffs. The two officers get in and Fred taps the police car roof twice, signalling it to drive off.

Fred enjoys all the attention. As Fred opens his unmarked car and begins to get in, he pauses to answer the nearest reporter. Microphones and cameras are thrust in his face.

FRED

Officially, all I can say right now is that we have a suspect in custody who we're going to question about the murder of Scarlet Bachlan. Thank you.

He smiles and slides into his car, closing the door. Swamped by reporters and cameras, he slowly drives off.

MONTAGE:

As Fred drives through Hollywood to the police station, a media frenzy with images of Scarlet and the murder erupts over television, radio, newspapers, and magazines. Photos of Scarlet, the suspect, the house, and Fred swirl together.

EXT. SUNSET BLVD. MAGAZINE STAND - DAY

A hand picks up a beauty magazine with Scarlet Bachlan on the cover, the title reading: "Hollywood's Princess."

A bubbly beautiful young woman in her mid twenties, KATE, hands the magazine to the NEWSPAPER GUY.

KATE

How much?

NEWSPAPER GUY

Five fifty.

KATE

Here you go.

She hands him the money and waits for the change.

NEWSPAPER GUY

Did you hear what happened to her this morning?

KATE

No. I just got out of Yoga class.

NEWSPAPER GUY

They found her murdered in her home; her head cut off.

KATE

What!? Are you kidding me?

NEWSPAPER GUY

Wish I was. She was a sweet kid.
Came here for years, even after she
was famous. Real nice person, you
know?

Kate, in shock, takes her change back in silence and walks away.

INT. KATE'S APARTMENT. HOLLYWOOD HILLS - DAY

Kate walks into her apartment with the magazine in her hand and a friend in tow, JACK. He's in his late twenties, stylish, and good looking. Her place is nice, but small. She leads him to the kitchen where she unloads a shopping bag into the fridge. They are obviously good friends, but not lovers.

JACK

It's crazy, huh?! Just like that!
One day you're on top of the world,
the next day you're underground.

KATE

(disturbed)

It really sucks. I feel so bad for
her, and especially her family.
Who would do such a sick thing?

JACK

Some psycho, I guess. Did you ever
work with her?

Kate stops what she's doing and faces Jack.

KATE

Sort of. We were roommates for a
few months.

JACK

(super excited)

What?! You never told me that
before! What's she like? Is she
cool or weird?

KATE

It's not like we were BFF's or
anything. We shared a tiny studio
apartment when we first moved here
together until we got our own
places.

JACK
You knew her before?

KATE
We went to college together and were in some of the same theatre classes. We didn't really know each other or hang out, but when we were both moving out to L.A., we decided to share a place.

JACK
And?

KATE
And that's it. We moved on, she became a famous actress, and I'm living off unemployment checks.

JACK
You never called her to see if she could hook you up with a part?

KATE
No. Scarlet wasn't the type to help anyone but herself. She was born to succeed in this town.

JACK
Well, I think you're ten times more talented and prettier than she is.

KATE
You're so sweet, Jack. Want a cup of coffee?

Jack looks at his watch.

JACK
I can't. I'm running a bit behind.

KATE
What'ya shooting today? Fashion stuff?

JACK
No, I wish. Same old shit. Just some head-shots.

Kate pulls a croissant out of a bag and puts it on a plate.

KATE
Well, it's money, right?

JACK

I'm getting tired of the whole paparazzi racket. I just wanna shoot editorial and fashion.

KATE

Your work's great, Jack. I'm sure you'll break through.

JACK

You sooner than me. Hey, I'll see you later.

KATE

(dramatic)

Fine! Leave me for another woman!

JACK

If you're bored later and wanna have lunch with me, I'll be at Fingers on Sunset. My treat.

KATE

What time?

JACK

Around two.

KATE

(excited)

Great! I have an audition on Sunset at three thirty.

JACK

Perfect. See you then.

Jack leans over and gives her a kiss on the cheek and leaves.

INT. POLICE STATION. FRED & HANK'S OFFICE - DAY

Fred is at his desk, mulling over a list of names. Hank walks in.

HANK

Saw you on the news, Fred. The camera does add ten pounds to your face, but you still look good, man!

FRED

Knock it off.

HANK

Get anything out of the paparazzi guy?

FRED

Nothing useful. He's not her regular stalker. Filled in for a buddy named JJ. He doesn't have an address or real name on the guy, so we'll have to track him down. Any luck with the neighbors?

HANK

Just what we already knew. She had "gentlemen callers" come by almost every night. No one in particular a regular, although the maid did say that a couple of her actor friends did come by somewhat often, and one spent the night every once in a while.

FRED

Yeah, who?

HANK

(smiling)
Dan Devlin.

FRED

I hate that fuckin guy.

HANK

I know.

FRED

Made cops look like limp dicks in that "Lethal Gun" series.

HANK

I kinda liked him in those flicks. Thought you didn't watch movies?

FRED

Don't, because of actors like him. He's no Pacino, man, and Pacino hasn't done a great movie since the early 80's. Anyway, when was the last time anyone saw Devlin at her house?

HANK

Paparazzi got a shot of the two of them together at her place a few days ago.

FRED

(interested)

Our "Hollywood Cop" just made the top of our list.

HANK

Oh, and Fred, you're gonna love this.

FRED

What?

HANK

Dan Devlin is filming "Lethal Gun 4" in town as we speak.

FRED

(eyebrows raise)

Really? Well, maybe it's time to visit set and show them how it's done.

HANK

Do you think we should let the Captain and the D.A. know what we're up to?

FRED

No, not yet. Jameson trusts us, and it's better to ask our District Asshole forgiveness than permission.

HANK

(smiling)

Taught you well, sonny.

Hank pats Fred on the back.

EXT. FINGERS RESTAURANT. SUNSET BLVD - DAY

Jack and Kate are at a table outside the trendy Hollywood restaurant, sipping on champagne mimosas.

JACK

So, what's the audition for, a commercial?

KATE
(smiling)
No, it's a movie part.

JACK
(excited)
That's great, Kate!

KATE
I'll never get it, though. I'm
either too short, too tall, too
beautiful, or not beautiful enough.
I'm starting to hate La La Land.

JACK
You gotta think positive. Make the
Universe come to you. What's the
role?

KATE
I play an old flame of Dan Devlin's
in some silly action spy flick.

JACK
(excited)
Are you kidding me!? Dan Devlin?
I love that guy!

KATE
Well, don't hold your breath. I
didn't get it yet, and it's a tiny
scene, anyway.

JACK
Well, you got the call-back, right?

KATE
Yeah, but I can't tell you how many
times I've gotten this far, and
then nothing. It's down to me and
two others. I meet the Director
and Dan Devlin today.

JACK
(excited)
You're meeting Dan Devlin!? That's
great, Kate! This is it! I can
feel it! You're time is now.

A WAITER arrives and puts plates down for them. He's about
to leave, and Jack calls him back.

JACK (CONT'D)
Hey! Waiter!

WAITER
Yeah? Something wrong with your
food?

JACK
No. I'm sure the food is fine, but
it's not our food.

A PATRON at the next table raises her hand.

PATRON
Excuse me, waiter, I think that's
our order.

The Waiter picks up both plates, puts them down at the
correct table, and exits without saying a word.

JACK
(turning to Kate)
Fuckin waiters in L.A., man! Any
other city in the world, waiters
are waiters. Here in L.A. where
everything is bullshit, the waiters
are actors trying to act, while
acting like waiters to pay the rent
until they can get a job as an
actor! It's all fuckin ludicrous!

Kate starts laughing.

KATE
Well, I need to get this gig. I'm
tired of watching other people
around me making it, you know?
I've spent years busting my ass and
getting nowhere.

JACK
You know the drill. You need a
publicist to get your face out
there in the papers; at parties and
stuff. You gotta play the game.

KATE
Ugh! I just wanna act! I really
need to book this movie. (Praying)
PLEASE let me get this part!

JACK
(joking)
Well, listen, if you book this
movie, I'll be your personal
paparazzi and follow you everywhere
you go... I'll make you famous!

Kate chokes on her drink and stares at Jack.

JACK (CONT'D)
What is it?

KATE
What you just said... about being
my personal paparazzi!

JACK
(confused)
Yeah? And?

KATE
(serious)
That could work. That could really
work, Jack.

JACK
How?

KATE
You're always out there, running
around chasing after stars, selling
images off to the mags and TMZ...

JACK
So? They're famous, Kate. I can't
sell shots of you to the mags.
You're not famous.

KATE
No, but I will be famous if I'm
seen with a super-famous person
tonight!

JACK
What are you talking about?

Kate leans forward in her chair to whisper across the table
to Jack.

KATE

No matter what happens at the call-back today, I'm gonna throw myself at Dan Devlin and ask him to dinner.

JACK

(surprised)
You think that'll work?

KATE

I know men. It'll work. Hell with the audition. I'm going for Devlin! I'll text you the address of wherever we go tonight and you make sure you're there. We'll get the whole night on film!

JACK

(impressed)
Yup. I think that'll work.

KATE

Get those shots to a magazine, and, BOOM, I'm on my way to being the new "It" girl in town.

JACK

(joking)
Well, what's in it for me?

KATE

Exclusive shots of me and Dan, PLUS, my undying love and affection!

JACK

Sounds like a plan, partner.

Kate smiles and leans over to give Jack a kiss on the cheek.

INT. POLICE STATION. CAPTAIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Sitting behind a giant desk full of files and knick-knacks, the POLICE CAPTAIN seems irritated as he reads over a report. Behind him, through the window, we can see the giant HOLLYWOOD sign perched on the hill-side. COLLINS, a 40 year old detective, enters without knocking.

COLLINS

(excited)
Captain! I got it, sir!

Collins extends a folder of papers to the Captain who takes it warily.

CAPTAIN
Got what, Collins? Shut the door
behind you, will ya?

COLLINS
Sure.

Collins shuts the door and comes back to lean on the Captain's desk. The Captain glances over the papers.

CAPTAIN
(confused)
What is all this, Collins?

COLLINS
(whispering)
I got the evidence we need to take
down Gregorian and the whole
Russian mob, for good! This is it,
Captain! We got them right where
we want them!

The Captain drops the file on his desk with a huff and leans back in his chair in disappointment.

CAPTAIN
Forget it, Collins. You're in over
your head. I can't back you on
this one. It's too big: too big
for you and too big for this
department. You gotta let it go.

COLLINS
(furious)
Let it go!? Are you kidding me!?
I've been working on this case for
two years, lost my partner to these
bastards, and now you want me to
let it go!?

CAPTAIN
You're life won't be worth spit out
there if you go after him like
this. He'll have you gunned down
in the streets, just like Bobby.

Collins thrusts his fist down on the Captain's desk.

COLLINS

(enraged)

I'm a cop, damn it! My life aint worth spit if I let animals like Gregorian run free out there! You won't help? Fine! I'll do it on my own!

Collins takes his badge and gun out, placing them on the Captain's desk with a grimace.

The captain stares at him blankly and there is a long, empty, awkward pause.

CAPTAIN

Line!

Off in the distance, we hear a woman's voice awkwardly reading:

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

What can one man do alone?

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

CUT! CUT, CUT! We'll do a pick-up from "I'm a cop, damn it."

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Okay, everyone, take eight is up! Picking it up from, "I'm a cop, damn it."

Collins leans up and stretches his back.

REVEAL: Collins is on a sound-stage, filming a scene.

COLLINS

Can I get a water?

As the two actors talk to one another, the camera pulls back to reveal the working set: makeup and hair rush in for touch-ups; a grip carrying a ladder walks in front of the fake Hollywood backdrop; a sound-guy adjusts a wireless microphone under Collins' shirt; a camera assistant pulls measuring tape out from the camera to the Captain's eye; the dolly-grip sprays down his track; the boom operator talks into his mic; a P.A. brings Collins a water.

The captain actually speaks with an Irish accent now.

CAPTAIN

Sorry, Danny boy. Just can't keep that one line straight in me head.