

"THE VERDICT"

a screenplay by

David Mamet

FINAL DRAFT
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156 West 56th Street
Penthouse
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(212) 246-7171

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"THE VERDICT"

FADE IN

INT. FIRST FUNERAL PARLOR - DAY

1

A working-class funeral in progress. THIRTY PEOPLE and an inexpensive bier SEEN from the back of the hall.

ANGLE

A MAN's back FILLS the SCREEN. He is dressed in a black suit; his hands are clasped behind him. ANOTHER MAN stands next to him. The Second Man reaches behind the First Man's back and puts a discreetly folded ten-dollar bill into his hands.

ANGLE

These Two Men from the front. Both somber, in their early fifties. They begin to walk down the aisle of the funeral parlor.

ANGLE

The WIDOW. A woman in her late fifties sitting by the bier receiving condolences. The Two Men approach her. The First Man (the recipient of the money) speaks:

FUNERAL DIRECTOR

Mrs. Dee, this is Joe Galvin -- a very good friend of ours, and a very fine attorney.

GALVIN

It's a shame about your husband, Mrs. Dee.

The Widow nods.

GALVIN

I knew him vaguely through the Lodge. He was a wonderful man.
(shakes head in sympathy)

It was a crime what happened to him. A crime. If there's anything that I could do to help...

GALVIN removes a business card from his jacket pocket and hands it to her as if he were giving her money. (i.e., "Take it. Really. I want you to have it...") She takes the card. Beat.

GALVIN

(thoughtfully realizes he is usurping her time)

Well...

He shakes her hand and moves on.

at first, we think funeral, death... could be genre of crime, drama...

Hmmm, it gets more interesting... 'cause who sees this at a funeral? Plus it adds humor.

now we know he's Galvin and an attorney... but what about the \$10?

here the connection could be made, but it's not explicit yet

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

2

Galvin sitting in the deserted coffee shop in his raincoat. Reading a section of the paper. He picks up his teacup, drinks. Lowers it to the table.

ANGLE - INSERT

Galvin twists tea bag around a spoon to extract last drops of tea. His hand moves to his felt pen lying on the table. He moves his hand to the paper, open at the obituary section. We SEE several names crossed out. He circles one funeral listing.

ANGLE

Galvin sitting, raises cup of tea to his lips. Looks around deserted coffee shop. Sighs.

INT. SECOND FUNERAL HOME AND STREET - AFTERNOON

3

Galvin outside a second funeral home. WORKING-CLASS PEOPLE entering, Galvin enters the home.

ANGLE

Galvin, coming down the aisle toward the front, shrugging himself out of his overcoat, he approaches the BEREAVED WIDOW sitting by the front of the home, he extracts his card from his pocket, starts to speak. He is stopped by the WIDOW'S SON, a hefty man in his mid-forties, who interjects himself between Galvin and the widow.

SON

(of the card)

What is that...?

GALVIN

I...

SON

What the hell is that...

GALVIN

...I was a friend of your fa...

SON

You never knew my father...(hits card out
of Galvin's hand)You get out of here, who the
hell do you think you are...

The FUNERAL MANAGER hurries down the aisle, and starts extracating Galvin from the commotion.

now we ask
who is this man
really? And
what does he
want? He's
become a very
interesting
character

now it becomes
explicit. Galvin
is like an
ambulance
chaser, only
he's a corpse
chaser!

Cont.

GALVIN
 (to Funeral Manager)
 I'm talking to this man...

FUNERAL MANAGER
 (to widow)
Excuse me, Mrs. Cleary...

He is manhandling Galvin toward the back of the funeral parlor.
 The Son calls after him:

SON
 Who the hell do you think you
 are...?

EXT. SECOND FUNERAL PARLOR - AFTERNOON

4

The Funeral Manager and Galvin standing in the cold.

FUNERAL MANAGER
 I don't want you coming back
 here. Ever. Do you understand?

GALVIN
 ...I was just talking to...

FUNERAL MANAGER
 Those are bereaved people in there.

The Funeral Manager gives Galvin a small shove, and goes back
 to his post at the door, greeting the entering mourners.
 "Good evening..."

ANGLE

Galvin, the ground cut out from under him. Standing watching
 the mourners enter.

This first sequence establishes the hook. It's funny and sad. We know Galvin is an attorney, and probably not a very good one where he has get work from bereaved people. But we like he's ingenuity. It makes us want to read more about him. It hooks us in.