

# Fragrant Vengeance

## **SYNOPSIS:**

A bereaved mother invents a camera that can capture smell. She exacts revenge on her son's all-powerful murderer by exploiting his peanut allergy, but the price might be too great.

## **CHARACTERS**

Smith	Age: 50-60y Sex: Male
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Professor	Age: 50-60y Sex: Female
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Chief	Age: 50-60y Sex: M
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Jordan	Age: 25-30y Sex: Any
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**Time:** Present

**Setting:** Inside Professor's mind/ police interrogation room. An empty stage with a couple of chairs.

(LIGHTS UP on two chairs facing each other. PROFESSOR is sitting on one, facing the audience and wiping her hands with a handkerchief. A cardboard box is beside the Professor's chair, near the center stage. CHIEF and JORDAN are standing behind the other chair near the wings. Jordan has a thick binder.)

PROFESSOR

Red- my hands are still red! It doesn't matter how many times I wash my hands- why are my hands still red?

*(She starts wiping her hands vigorously.)*

JORDAN

What's she doing, Chief?

CHIEF

I've no idea!

JORDAN

I don't see anything red-

*(The Professor jumps out of the chair and runs out.)*

PROFESSOR

No, no, no! I need to wash away all the blood-

JORDAN

Blood! What blood? Where?

CHIEF

She confessed that she had murdered Vincent Smith.

JORDAN

This old lady!

CHIEF

Professor Margaret Jefferson. A professor of biophysics in some small college.

JORDAN

This frail wraith of a lady murdered the CEO of MoneyCan!

CHIEF

So she says.

JORDAN

How? (*CHIEF slowly moves to the box.*) She might be back anytime-

CHIEF

She won't. She's trying to remove the imaginary blood stain from her hands, Jordan. The stain of blood- so difficult to wash away, right? And when it's imaginary- the guilt- the heaviness in your heart-

JORDAN

You okay, Chief?

CHIEF

Jessica's death anniversary was yesterday. It still makes me kind of- melancholic. I'm getting too old for this stuff, Jordan.

JORDAN

I'm sorry!

CHIEF

An inept father- a police chief who knows what he should have done- (*CHIEF sighs*) let's focus on the case.

JORDAN

(*Nodding*)

Umm- did she mention how she murdered Smith?

(*Chief removes a camera from the box.*)

CHIEF

Here.

(*Chief passes the camera to Jordan.*)

JORDAN

That's the murder weapon?

CHIEF

Allegedly, if you believe our self-confessed murderer.

JORDAN

Looks like a camera. The old ones, you know. My grandpa had one of these, you have to put a film roll- (*JORDAN opens the film chamber.*) Whoa... What's this?

CHIEF

That is where the film roll is supposed to go.

JORDAN

I know, but it looks like there's a computer motherboard in there ... so many tiny circuits.

CHIEF

That's all the forensics could say. It's a camera but much more than a camera. They have no idea what it's meant to do. Dr. Sebastian said he would love to examine it in more detail and, if possible, would like to talk to the person who made it.

*(There is the sound of a door closing offstage.)*

JORDAN

She's coming back.

CHIEF

Let's wait a bit before we start asking questions.

JORDAN

Seriously? You're actually going to wait before you interrogate a suspect! Are you okay, Chief?

CHIEF

Something sinister happened to Smith, Jordan, and to her, as well. Something severe enough to completely unhinge a college professor. Eerie- ominous- something really disturbing. We must wait- watch- listen and learn. In her current state, there's no other way to interrogate her-

JORDAN

She's coming back.

*(Chief and Jordan put the camera in the box and go back near the wings. The Professor comes in and sits on the chair, vigorously scrubbing her hands.)*

PROFESSOR

Red- it's still red. I just washed it- (*PROFESSOR looks up suddenly as if she heard something.*) Why are you still tormenting me? You're dead! I killed you! Erased your dirty existence-

(*SMITH appears behind her chair.*)

SMITH

Still can't erase me from your mind.

PROFESSOR

Not real! Nope!

JORDAN

(*Whispering*) Who's she talking to?

CHIEF

Shh- quiet, Jordan.

PROFESSOR

You're just a figment of my imagination. Not real, not real. Everything's happening inside my head-

SMITH

Makes these more visceral- more excruciating, right, Professor?

PROFESSOR

Twenty long years, but I finally fulfilled my promise. You're dead, Vincent Smith. The CEO of MoneyCan- Dale's murderer. I finally wiped that smug smile off your vile face-

SMITH

Did Dale come back? Do you have peace? Can you sleep now knowing that you've brutally, horribly murdered me?

PROFESSOR

Nope. Not listening, not listening.

SMITH

Murderer. There's no difference between us. You might even be worse. At least I don't pretend that my hands are not red.

PROFESSOR

Hands?

SMITH

Did you manage to remove all that blood, my dear Professor?

PROFESSOR

Blood! You died from anaphylaxis! There wasn't any blood-

SMITH

Don't you see the blood in your hands? Your hands are red, bloody red, Professor-

PROFESSOR

Yes- red, still red. I just need a bit more soap- yes, a bit more soap- that should do it-

*(PROFESSOR runs out. SMITH vanishes behind her chair.)*

CHIEF

This is the seventh time she went to wash her hands.

JORDAN

Lying, she is definitely lying. (*CHIEF looks at her inquiringly.*) Not possible, Chief! She's just a crazy old lady! You want me to believe that this batshit crazy professor- can't seem to articulate a few sentences together, keeps washing imaginary blood off her hands, keeps talking to herself- you really think she murdered the most powerful man this side of the river?

CHIEF

She came to us, Jordan. She confessed to murdering Vincent Smith. We didn't even think it was a murder.

JORDAN

She's lying. It's not possible ... it doesn't make any sense. Why would she kill Smith?

CHIEF

The motive is secondary right now. The most important problem is- how. How did she kill Smith? Smith died from anaphylaxis, severe allergic reaction to peanuts..

JORDAN

Though, there were no traces of peanuts anywhere in the bedroom.

CHIEF

And the reaction was severe, almost instantaneous ... he had his Epi-pen in the freeze next door, he couldn't even go there.

JORDAN

Lying, I don't know why, but the Professor is definitely lying.



CHIEF

But why? Why would an old professor claim to have murdered the CEO of one of the biggest companies-

JORDAN

Shadiest companies. Blatant corruption, bribery, drugs, political favors, and even murders...

CHIEF

Alleged murders.

JORDAN

Semantics ... judiciary jargon. We all know who Smith was and what he had done as the CEO of MoneyCan.

CHIEF

And yet none of us could do anything, Jordan, no investigations, no proper case-

JORDAN

I had him. I finally had him, Chief and no amount of money or political connection was going to save his ass this time. And yet, he escaped ... escaped again-

CHIEF

He died.

JORDAN

And escaped. He deserved to be tried in front of the whole country. Every newspaper was supposed to expose his rotten deals, enumerate his felonies, briberies- drugs, stock market, human trafficking- every news channel was supposed to broadcast his deepest darkest secrets, the original man beneath the veneer of the sophisticated CEO of MoneyCan. This death is nothing, this is too easy, too...

CHIEF

I understand, I know what you feel, how you feel. But please, Jordan, his death was not easy. Let me assure you if that is any consolation, not easy at all...

JORDAN

No?

CHIEF

Do you have allergies to any food or medicine or any other thing? Poison ivy, bee sting?

JORDAN

I don't think so ... at least, I am not aware of any.

CHIEF

Lucky you! Let me tell you ... from my personal experience.

JORDAN

I forgot you are allergic to shellfish, aren't you?

CHIEF

*(Nodding)* Of all the things that can happen to you, death by anaphylaxis is the worst.

JORDAN

You think so?

CHIEF

I know so.

JORDAN

Why?

CHIEF

Because you remain aware until the very end. You barely recognize what's happening, and immediately after exposure, your tongue starts to swell up, your throat swells up, nostrils close, you gasp for air, just a little bit of air- and all the while, your heart keeps racing faster and faster-

JORDAN

He deserved it, every bit of it. And much more...

CHIEF

And who are you to judge that? Not everybody deserves what they get. And most don't get what they deserve.

JORDAN

He killed my father, okay? And I know he killed my mother as well. Maybe my uncle, too-

CHIEF

Easy, easy.

JORDAN

He did it, I know he did it.

CHIEF

You guessed it, and you most likely are correct.

JORDAN

I am correct. I don't care what those juries said, what those judges claimed. I know what he did...

CHIEF

Innocent until proven guilty.

JORDAN

That's why people like Smith always get what they want. It's police officers like you ... always afraid of money, power, families...

CHIEF

What do you want me to do? Go inside his office and shoot him? Then why didn't you do it? You always claimed that you became a police officer so that you could put him behind bars. What exactly have you done?

JORDAN

I was so close, so close to the truth. I wove the net. It took me five years, but finally, I had all the evidence...

CHIEF

Hah, evidence!

JORDAN

Roquan Johnson finally agreed to testify.

CHIEF

Would have been bought or killed.

JORDAN

Samuel Reed said-

CHIEF

Do you think the jury would have paid any attention to what a drug addict with multiple charges of felony says, even if you managed to take him to court?

JORDAN

I showed you all the papers, illegal transactions, insider trading documents-

CHIEF

Papers, just more papers ... would have been destroyed before the trial, and the person in charge of these would disappear.

JORDAN

What are you...

CHIEF

Wake up ... open your eyes. You are no longer a junior trainee, an apprentice detective. And there are many more Vincent Smiths in this world.

JORDAN

Meaning?

CHIEF

Do you think you are the first one to try to take Smith down? MoneyCan has been going on for thirty years ... a huge multinational company with a big stinking gutter underneath ... how many detectives do you think tried to uncover his secrets?

JORDAN

What are you trying to say?

CHIEF

I don't want you to die. (*JORDAN looks at Chief incredulously.*) Believe me ... if you get too close to the sun, it will burn you. If you try to get inside MoneyCan, they will kill you. Or at least, they would have when Smith was the CEO.

JORDAN

You didn't even want to touch any of his files with a ten-foot pole. How do you know so much about MoneyCan?

CHIEF

Because he killed Jessica, he killed my daughter.

JORDAN

I ... Jessica ... I thought Jessica died in a car accident ... Oh my god. Smith manufactured the accident, didn't he? I am so sorry ...

(*PROFESSOR enters. CHIEF moves out to greet her.*)

CHIEF

Everything okay, Professor?

PROFESSOR

Okay? I- I am not sure, officer. I kept thinking that everything would be okay once that man disappeared- once I killed that man-

JORDAN

Did you really kill Vincent Smith?

PROFESSOR

*(Vehemently)*

Yes, I do. I, Professor Margaret Jefferson, being sound of mind, and not acting under duress or undue influence, and fully understanding the nature of my action, confess that I killed Vincent Smith, the CEO of MoneyCan. And may his soul rot in hell. I will do it again and again and again ...

*(PROFESSOR stops. Takes a deep breath. Takes his glasses off, wipes his eyes, looks straight at Jordan and whispers.)* Or so I thought.

*(CHIEF and JORDAN are taken aback by the sudden outburst from this frail old lady. CHIEF recovers first.)*

CHIEF

What exactly happened, Professor?

PROFESSOR

Nobody else seemed to have the power to touch his hide or hair. You guys were so afraid- the police, the politicians. Oh, so high and mighty- Vincent Smith. May I lick your boot, sir? Please, sir, let me wipe off your ass- oh, I am okay, sir, please keep giving me money- please don't touch my family- *(JORDAN shuffles uncomfortably and looks at Chief.)* So, I did something only a scientist could do. I created an excruciating death for him. And no political clowns- police officers- judge or jury in his payroll would ever think of implicating me.

CHIEF

What exactly did you do, professor?

*(PROFESSOR doesn't answer and starts cleaning her hands. JORDANS looks through some pages in the binder.)*

JORDAN

You said you were in Smith's study that night.

PROFESSOR

I was, officer. Have you been to that room?

CHIEF

Can't say we've had the pleasure, Professor.

PROFESSOR

Oh, what a grand room it was. All in black- a huge mahogany table- black leather- a room as black as his heart. I dreamt of his face every night- twenty years. Mr. Vincent Smith- slimy, conniving, disgusting- scheming from that black mahogany chair in his study. Ordering the murder of my Dale and so many other innocent people. That room has witnessed all the vile things Vincent Smith and his MoneyCan have done over the years. It's only fitting that he died in that room-

JORDAN

What were you doing in Smith's study, Professor?

*(SMITH appears behind the Professor's chair. He starts laughing- a mirthless, sinister laugh.)*

PROFESSOR

But there's blood in my hands. Don't you see? My hands are red!



*(SMITH throws a folder. Papers rain all over the stage. He sits on the other chair, facing Professor.)*

JORDAN

Why were you in his study that night?

SMITH

Bullshit! All bullshit! Why are you here, Professor? You know you will never get the grant from my company. MoneyCan will never fund your research. I know that- you know that. And yet- for the last five years- you've been submitting your application religiously. Why, Professor? Why do you keep applying?

*(PROFESSOR holds her head and starts screaming.)*

PROFESSOR

No! Stop! Why can't I stop this? Dead- you're dead-

JORDAN

Professor! Professor!

*(JORDAN tries to hold Professor, but CHIEF stops her. He slowly drags Jordan, and they fade into the background.)*

SMITH

Why, Professor? Why do you keep applying?

*(PROFESSOR turns to face Smith and relives the scene.)*

PROFESSOR

You know you will never give me the grant. You know your MoneyCan will never fund my research. I know that- you know that. And yet- you've been calling me for these "interviews." Very early in the morning- very late in the night- even your bodyguards know me by now. Why, Mr. Smith? Why?

SMITH

A fair point. Why do you think I call you, Professor?

PROFESSOR

I don't know, Mr. Smith. And I don't want to know. I can only tell you why I come.

SMITH

And why do you come? Every year?

*(PROFESSOR stays silent.)*

JORDAN

Professor. Why's she not talking? What's going on, Chief?

CHIEF

*(Whispering)*

And why did you go, Professor? Why did you go to these interviews every year?

*(PROFESSOR stands up and starts circling around SMITH, who stares at her vacant chair, looking for an answer.)*

PROFESSOR

I wanted to tell him the truth. I wanted to tell him how dearly I wished to see him suffer- as he made my Dale suffer. (*JORDAN and CHIEF look at each other.*) I wanted to tell him how I hoped to wipe that smug, vile smile off his disgusting face. And more importantly, I wanted to tell him that finally- after twenty painful, long years- I had a way to do exactly that.

SMITH

So, Professor- why do you come?

*(PROFESSOR takes the seat opposite Smith and faces him.)*

PROFESSOR

Hoping- as my research progresses- as I get close to the discovery that has the potential to change how humans think-

SMITH

I don't care how humans think. I am a businessman, Professor. The only thing I care about is money. Will your invention bring me money? Can I market it? Monopolize it? Will it entice humans to think about giving money to me? To my company?

PROFESSOR

What if I say yes?

SMITH

Seriously? (*SMITH starts laughing and then stopps.*) Oh, my my! You are actually serious!

PROFESSOR

I am, Mr. Smith.

SMITH

Go on, I'm listening.

PROFESSOR

Will you really fund my research if you think my invention will bring money to your company?

SMITH

No. Well, I'm inclined to say, no. I don't forget, Professor. And I don't forgive. You should thank me that you're still alive-

PROFESSOR

Unlike my son, Dale.

JORDAN

Her son!

SMITH

Dale- Dale- the name sounds familiar, doesn't it? Who's this Dale again?

PROFESSOR

You scoundrel-

*(SMITH starts laughing. PROFESSOR suddenly seems deflated. She looks down and starts scrubbing her hands again.)*

JORDAN

What happened to Dale, Chief?

CHIEF

Professor- Professor-

*(PROFESSOR looks at CHIEF. Her eyes are full of tears.)*

CHIEF

Dale- your son! What happened to him?

*(PROFESSOR tenderly picks up the box and caresses it like her baby.)*

PROFESSOR

I devoted my entire life to my research and made this! Please, believe me, officer, it wasn't meant to take lives. This was an invention, a beautiful creation. But in its own creator's hand, it became a terrible weapon. I have blood on my hands. For the last twenty years, I thought that's what I wanted ... but I am not sure anymore. *(Looking at CHIEF)* Officer. I feel... empty. My Dale had been gone for twenty years, I kept filling the void with a huge fire, revenge ... but can you create something when your sole purpose is to destroy?

JORDAN

But Dale-

SMITH

Dale- Dale- the name sounds familiar, doesn't it? Who's this Dale again? Oh, right! He is your son- oops, sorry! Was- was your son. Dead. But he's dead now. Poor, poor, Dale. Right, professor?

PROFESSOR

Dale- my son-

*(JORDAN gasps.)*

JORDAN

He killed him, didn't he?

SMITH

That pesky trainee- poking his nose where it didn't belong- when was this, professor? Five years- maybe ten-

PROFESSOR

Twenty. Twenty years, Mr. Smith. Twenty years since that night. *(SMITH starts laughing- a sinister, cruel laughter.)* Dale called me that night. I was still in my lab, busy doing some important experiments. Dale was terrified. He said he'd accidentally hacked into protected MoneyCan databases and discovered things- drugs, human trafficking, stock market- all linked to Vincent Smith. But I barely paid any attention. I was engrossed in my work. "Everything would be fine, Dale," I said. He said he was afraid, he was afraid that he had left a trace.

JORDAN

A what?

CHIEF

What's a trace, professor?

PROFESSOR

A trace- it's like a footprint. Something that can allow the administrator to identify the intruder or at least give some ideas about the identity of the intruder.

CHIEF

Then what happened?

PROFESSOR

Dale was almost hysteric! He cried that he didn't want to stay alone. But I was getting annoyed. He was keeping me from doing my critical experiments. "Now shut the door and sleep tight. I'll talk to you tomorrow." And- and- I hung up. I hung up, officer, my own son, afraid- needed my help- needed me- and I hung up- my son- needed me and- and- I hung up! (*SMITH laughs maniacally in the background.*) That tomorrow never came. The police called the next morning. Dale had an accident. When I reached there- I found that- that my young boy was murdered, after being tortured brutally. Dale never got a chance to tell me what exactly he found.

SMITH

It's a strange thing, you know, professor! Between you and me- I've killed dozens of men and women- maybe more-

PROFESSOR

Disgusting!

SMITH

Says the woman who just murdered me. Cold-blooded, after years of meticulous planning. Don't worry. The room is soundproof. The guards won't hear us.

PROFESSOR

I know. My plans depend on it. I've been here too many times, and every time I enter this room- I observe. You berate and humiliate me, and I calculate. I keep adding more data points to the plan. I might not be a good mother, but I am a good scientist, after all.

JORDAN

*(Whispering)*

What plan? What's she talking about, Chief?

SMITH

Your son is one of the very few people I still remember.

PROFESSOR

Seriously! How come?

SMITH

He was a brilliant man, what twenty-five? Twenty-six?

PROFESSOR

Twenty-two- just graduated from the university.

SMITH

Yes, a graduate- working in MoneyCan for barely a month- yet he cracked the security code and accessed our secret data. I paid millions of dollars to create those safeguards- the engineers promised that it was impenetrable-



PROFESSOR

He was a genius. His friends told me- his professors, too. Too bad I never paid too much attention to him. Never spent enough time with him. I was too busy with my experiments, my work, my science-

SMITH

Too bad he could not be bought. I offered him money, you know, Professor? Money I thought no sane man could refuse. I asked him to join my organization. With his talent, I could have done great things-

PROFESSOR

Dale's idea of great things must have been different.

SMITH

He said "no" straight to my face. My face! Can you believe the audacity? I am Vincent Smith, nobody says no to me! Oh, how he begged when Marjorie broke him- it was a necessary decision-

PROFESSOR

I went to the police- newspapers- politicians- begging for justice. But justice is only served to people who've money to buy it. The police insisted that MoneyCan wasn't involved. Dale got into bad company, drugs, human trafficking. All the things he'd found about Smith. The irony! And do you know what I learned from all this, officer?

JORDAN

Is she talking to us now? I've such a hard time following-

CHIEF

What, professor? What did you learn?

PROFESSOR

You can't win a battle against the king in the court of justice. It's his court, his rule, his judges, his jurors.

CHIEF

*(Nodding)* Justice is only served to people who've money to buy it.

JORDAN

*(Bitterly)*

And we are the figureheads who serve that justice! Great position, great power-

CHIEF

Greater restrictions- greater limitations.

PROFESSOR

You've to drag him down- into the muddy melee- fight him dirty, use his own tricks on him-

SMITH

It was a necessary decision- but I still regret it. What a waste of potential. I went to his funeral- told you how sorry I was.

PROFESSOR

I remember, Mr. Smith, verbatim- word by word- "I myself never met Dale, but everybody said that your boy was brilliant."

SMITH

And how did you react? In front of all those people you swore to kill me- I don't forget-

PROFESSOR

"I swear- you will suffer more severely, you'll choke and gasp-"

SMITH

"I swear- you will suffer more severely, you'll choke and gasp-" I could have dragged you to court, sued you for millions. Marjorie said I should break you the way she broke your son- but why bother? Stupid promises, empty threats of a grieving mother. But a mother bereaved- mourning his son for all eternity while I keep the wounds fresh- now that's a fitting punishment. Right, Professor? How're you enjoying your lonely motherhood?

PROFESSOR

How are you enjoying your peanuts, scoundrel? You like the smell of peanut roasting? The aroma of peanut butter? The fragrance of peanut oil?

*(PROFESSOR starts laughing maniacally. SMITH fades into the background.)*

JORDAN

Wasn't Vincent Smith severely allergic to peanuts?

CHIEF

*(Nodding)* And according to all the reports, he died from a severe allergic reaction to peanuts.

JORDAN

So? What's she talking about? Smith would never touch a peanut. He has guards that check for the trace of peanuts on you! You can't get anywhere near him with anything related to peanuts on you.

CHIEF

Professor. Professor. You there?

PROFESSOR

*(Still laughing)*

He isn't here anymore, officer. I made sure of it. Oh, how he begged.

CHIEF

What about peanuts?

JORDAN

What did you do with peanuts?

*(PROFESSOR stops abruptly. Her eyes shone with tears.)*

PROFESSOR

Can't even create an ant, a wasp, a butterfly ... but the first thing I did, with one of the most beautiful things ever created by human hands, I took another life. This could bring the entire outside world to paraplegic patients who can no longer move out of their room, too sick to enjoy a stroll in the garden...

JORDAN

But how? How, Professor?

*(SMITH comes to the front laughing.)*

SMITH

You asked me why I call you for these interviews. And there's your answer, professor. I call you because I want to see you suffer- to beg. You begged for justice, right? You went to police, to politicians, to the newspapers. Oh, how I laughed. They are all mine, you fool. All mine. You begged from people who bend their knees to me- to me, Vincent Smith. Now beg- beg before me like a dog- and I might throw a few millions to your face-

PROFESSOR

I thought you're interested in my invention-

SMITH

On your knees. Beg- and I will show my interest in your invention. Now!

PROFESSOR

Please, Mr. Smith. I beg you-

SMITH

On. Your. Knees.

*(PROFESSOR sits on her knees.)*

PROFESSOR

Please, Mr. Smith. I need the money to finish the experiments-

SMITH

*(Laughing maniacally, petting her like a dog.)*

Yes, that's right. That's great. The son could not be bought- clearly, the mother can be. MoneyCan, professor, the name of my company is MoneyCan because money can do anything. Now, what do we have here? Show me. Why are you standing up? On your knees, I said. Show me from there- present it to the king.

*(PROFESSOR drags herself to the box and brings out the camera. She gives it to SMITH.)*

JORDAN

The camera!

SMITH

A camera? That's all? With a film chamber! Who uses film these days- *(SMITH opens the film chamber.)* Whoa!

JORDAN & SMITH (TOGETHER)

It's like a computer motherboard! So many tiny circuits!

SMITH

What's this thing? A gun?

PROFESSOR

A gun! No! It's not a gun.

SMITH & CHIEF (TOGETHER)

Then what is it, professor?

PROFESSOR

*(With a strange smile)*

Well, if that's the analogy you understand. This camera is... say, an empty gun. So, what does it need?

JORDAN

Bullets! A gun is nothing without bullets.

PROFESSOR

And here is the bullet ...

*(PROFESSOR takes out a few envelopes from the box. She carefully chooses one and hands it to SMITH.)*

SMITH

What's in there? Are you trying to sneak in peanuts?

PROFESSOR

Your guards checked me ten ways to Sunday to make sure I didn't have any trace of peanuts on me.

SMITH

Every single one of them has severe peanut allergies. They would die first before somebody gets to me with peanuts—oh, don't be so shocked. You wouldn't be the first to try to exploit my peanut allergy to kill me. Now, what's this?

PROFESSOR

A photograph.

SMITH & CHIEF (TOGETHER)

A photograph!

PROFESSOR

Go on, open it, nothing will happen.

*(SMITH and JORDAN take the envelope. He carefully opens it and unwraps the plastic-covered object. JORDAN mimics his action of taking, then opening the envelope and unwrapping the plastic. There is a piece of paper inside, a photograph.)*

SMITH

A rose garden! You crazy or what?

JORDAN

It's just a photo of a rose garden...

*(JORDAN and SMITH stop mid-sentence and inhale deeply. CHIEF joins them. They inhale again and get hit by the fragrance. SMITH stumbles and sits on the chair, dropping the photo. CHIEF and JORDAN look completely overwhelmed. PROFESSOR picks up the photo, smiling serenely.)*

SMITH

What the ... Did you spray some rose perfume on the photo?

PROFESSOR

Mr. Smith, I present the greatest inventions of this century. A breakthrough in virtual reality technology. An ordinary camera captures light, it works like human eyes. This particular camera also works like a human nose, it can capture aroma.



*(SMITH, CHIEF, and JORDAN are still  
struggling with the smell.)*

SMITH

It doesn't make any sense.

CHIEF

I don't understand!

PROFESSOR

An aroma, a smell, a fragrance is just a collection of a tiny amount of chemicals that stimulate your olfactory neurons, the nerves in your nose. *(PROFESSOR takes the photo and points at it.)* Some of these chemicals elevate your mood, soothe your nerves. Some others, like chemicals released while cutting an onion, make you cry. This camera can capture and preserve all those chemicals on this special film.

SMITH

It's really-

JORDAN

A rose garden! On a piece of paper!

PROFESSOR

It's really a rose garden, Mr. Smith, exposed for six hours.

SMITH

What do you mean?

PROFESSOR

You get instantaneous exposure to six hours' worth of natural fragrance emitted by all these roses.

SMITH

What?

PROFESSOR

The film collected all the chemicals- everything- that all these roses emitted over a period of six hours. Overwhelming, isn't it?

JORDAN

But what does this have to do with-

*(CHIEF stops JORDAN, shaking his head.)*

CHIEF

I don't like where this is going, Jordan.

SMITH

More. I need more before I-

PROFESSOR

I have quite a few. Here.

*(PROFESSOR gives SMITH another envelope. SMITH opens the envelope and closes his eyes. Then he inhales deeply.)*

SMITH

Fruits- ripe bananas, mangoes, pineapples! Excellent, Professor! I might become the only person to sell smell- not just perfume- but actual sight and smell! No worrying about smuggling cocaine or meth or transporting weeds- just take pictures- change the exposure- how long does the smell last?

PROFESSOR

Not long enough. Hence the protective wrapping- and the money. I need to do more experiments-

SMITH

Do you have more? I want you to take some photos in front of me-

PROFESSOR

Here is another one.

*(PROFESSOR's hands tremble as she passes another envelope to SMITH.)*

CHIEF

Don't do this, professor. You're not a murderer. Don't-

*(CHIEF almost rushes out to stop the professor. JORDAN holds him.)*

JORDAN

It's already done, Chief. All done.

SMITH

*(Unwrapping)* What's this? Looks like the inside of a factory- *(SMITH inhales deeply.)* Peanuts?

*(SMITH gets hit by the smell and starts coughing.)*

PROFESSOR

*(With a cruel smile)*

A peanut processing factory where they roast peanuts, make peanut butter, flour, peanut oil. The picture was taken with five days of exposure. Five days' worth of peanut roasting.

SMITH

But smell never- *(SMITH coughs severely)*

PROFESSOR

Smelling peanuts never causes severe anaphylaxis. Too little protein to engage your immune system. But after a five-day exposure, you'll inhale a motherlode of materials, instantly overwhelming your system. A five-day exposure is sufficient to capture enough materials- enough to kill any person with a severe peanut allergy.

*(SMITH has a severe bout of cough. His condition is deteriorating rapidly. He chokes on thin air, gasps and hold his throat- struggling to get some air in.)*

SMITH

*(Whispers feebly)*

Guards- guards- my epi-pen-

PROFESSOR

The room's soundproof, Smith. The guards won't hear us.

SMITH

*(Wheezing on his knees)*

No- no- please.

PROFESSOR

*(Petting SMITH like a dog)*

Poor, poor Vincent! Begging already! Your tongue will swell up, your throat will burn and bloat, your nostrils will close. *(SMITH starts thrashing violently.)* Now you'll start gasping for air, your diaphragm will feel like it's going to burst, and yet, you will remain conscious, unable to breathe, to escape the torture I designed. Beg- beg, you swine. Beg all you want. My Dale must have begged- do you remember? Do you remember? Already going into cardiac arrest? No, you can't die now- no- no- no- you've got to suffer more. I've been suffering for twenty years, you hear me? *(SMITH's body becomes still.)*

See what you've done, Smith? You made me a murderer. My own invention, and yet the first thing I did, I extinguished another life. Will Dale come back? Dale, he's gone now- such a lousy mother I was- gone everybody's gone- only blood in my hands-

*(SMITH appears behind her.)*

SMITH

Still can't erase me from your mind. Can you?

PROFESSOR

No! You're just a figment of my imagination. Not real, not real. Everything's happening inside my head-

SMITH

Makes these more visceral- more excruciating, right, Professor?

PROFESSOR

Not listening! Not listening!

SMITH

Did Dale come back? Do you have peace now? *(SMITH laughs, throws a folder, sits- papers rain- exactly as before.)*  
Bullshit! You'll never get the money from MoneyCan.

PROFESSOR

Nope! I will not allow you to torment me- not anymore. I'm going to finish this.

CHIEF

Are you okay, professor?

PROFESSOR

The police told me to suck it up and move on. So I thought I would be the judge, jury, and executioner myself, and then I would have peace. But I haven't slept an hour since I murdered him ... I am a scientist ... all my life, I strove to create and explain things, and all I got with my life's worth is blood. Don't you see officers ... my hands are red-

SMITH

Says the woman who just murdered me. Cold-blooded, after years of meticulous planning.

PROFESSOR

I will not let this go on, you hear me. You can't torment me anymore. I've more- more- for me- cyanide-

*(PROFESSOR starts laughing hysterically while opening another envelope. She runs off stage with the envelope. SMITH follows her, laughing hysterically. JORDAN runs after them.)*

JORDAN

Oh, shit! Professor! No- professor.

*(CHIEF shakes his head, smiling ruefully.)*

JORDAN

(OFF)

Chief, we need to call an ambulance...

CHIEF

*(Starts packing the camera in the box)*

Isn't this justice? Do you think it would be better if the whole world came to know her as a criminal?

*(JORDAN comes back.)*

JORDAN

Do you want me to break the door? She's- what are you doing, Chief?

CHIEF

The professor was a genius. Her memory will not be tarnished by the blood her hands shed.

JORDAN

It's all our fault. If we did our duty-

CHIEF

If we're allowed to do our duty, you mean. *(JORDAN shrugs.)*  
Too much potential- all wasted! Too much bloodshed.

JORDAN

But the camera? We have to hand it over to ...

CHIEF

To the right people. Smith's case will close as an accidental death due to anaphylaxis. Are we clear?

JORDAN

Yes, Chief!

*(CHIEF closes the box and starts putting packing tape.)*

CHIEF

I just hope that someday, somebody will figure things out. Somebody better than us. A better human who will act properly, will not destroy everything they touch ...

*(JORDAN shrugs again.)*

JORDAN

Yes, chief. If you say so.

THE END