

FADE IN:

EXT. STREET - DAY

A young man, FRANKIE QUINTERO, late twenties with slick black hair, steps from a narrow stairway to the street. He wears a light brown pin-striped suit, a flower in his lapel and freshly shined shoes.

He looks at his hands, wipes them off and wrinkles his nose at the odor. He squints in the sunlight and looks suspiciously both ways down the sidewalk before he crosses the street and disappears.

A small, weathered bronze plaque on the stairway wall reads "Dixon Agency".

INT. DIXON'S OFFICE - DAY

A dingy, spacious office that has seen better days. A large window overlooks a city that is hard to see through dirty glass. There is a couch, upholstered chairs and bookcases.

MRS. FELSINGER, a well-dressed lady in her mid forties, stands in front of a desk littered with files and assorted items, including a bowl of pistachios.

She is a fine-looking forties. She clutches a handbag in front of her and stands quite still, overtly haughty, a little nervous and uncomfortable with the surroundings.

Behind the desk sits a ruffled, but charismatic, SAM DIXON, charming and affable, a good-looking man in his late thirties. He is easy on the eyes and the lady goes there.

DIXON

Missing persons? Look, lady, I don't like these kind of jobs. Why don't you go to the police?

MRS. FELSINGER

It's not that kind of...

DIXON

You sure you won't have a seat?

MRS. FELSINGER

No. I'm fine.

DIXON

It's just that, psychologically, if you're standing over someone...

MRS. FELSINGER

Oh, it's a control thing.

DIXON

Not exactly.

She loses her nervousness and shows her true colors in an instant. A sly smile.

MRS. FELSINGER

I make you nervous? You might like a woman in control.

Dixon stands and doesn't take the bait.

DIXON

Interesting point of view, but to the business at hand.

MRS. FELSINGER

The police won't help yet. They have to be dead for twenty-four hours.

DIXON

You mean, missing.

MRS. FELSINGER

What?

DIXON

Missing for twenty-four hours.

MRS. FELSINGER

That's what I said.

Dixon walks around to the front of the desk.

DIXON

Is that the reason they won't help?

MRS. FELSINGER

No. The police aren't taking me seriously because it's my dog that's missing.

Dixon's sarcasm is evident, but not to her.

DIXON

It's hard to understand why the police wouldn't investigate that.

MRS. FELSINGER

She was attached to my husband.

DIXON

Oh, she liked him a lot.

MRS. FELSINGER

No. She was attached to him. The leash, you know. When I got home last night they were gone.

DIXON

Are you trying to tell me your husband's missing?

Mrs. Felsinger rubs her diamond ring.

MRS. FELSINGER

Not exactly, but... well, if you want to think of it like that.

DIXON

It would make it easier for me.

MRS. FELSINGER

It's just that her collar is very valuable.

DIXON

Uh-huh.

MRS. FELSINGER

It's my diamond necklace.

DIXON

You sure it's around the *dog's* neck?

She glares at him.

DIXON (CONT'D)

You want to sit down, Missus Felsinger?

The office door opens. DENISE, early thirties, tall and lanky, savvy and direct, pokes her head in.

DENISE

Mister Dixon, you better get out here. There's a dead animal in the office.

Mrs. Felsingher cries out and moves to the door.

MRS. FELSINGER

Is it a dog?