THE DEAD DON'T LIE

FINAL DRAFT — 5–6 MINUTE SHORT FILM SCREENPLAY

Genre: Crime Thriller / Mystery
Language: English
Setting: Maredumilli, Andhra Pradesh
Visual Tone: Dark, atmospheric, grounded investigative thriller
Aspect Ratio: 2.39:1 cinematic widescreen

00:00–00:35 — OPENING

EXT. MAREDUMILLI FOREST — WATERFALL — DAWN

Black screen. SFX: distant waterfall. Birds. Wind through trees. A single drop of blood falls onto a wet stone. CUT TO: A body lies partially hidden behind rocks. A police jeep cuts through the misty forest.

CLOSE ON — RAGHAV VASUDEV (48). A weathered police officer. Unshaven. Tired eyes. He gets out. CAMERA: low-angle tracking shot behind Raghav through the mist.

INSPECTOR ARJUN
Sir... MLA Varma.

RAGHAV
Who found him?

ARJUN
Forest workers. Around six this morning.

00:35–01:15 — THE CRIME SCENE

Forensic officers photograph the body. Gloves. Blood. Bullet casing. Footprints. A forensic officer lifts a fingerprint sample from a glass bottle.

FORENSIC OFFICER
Sir... we have a partial print.

RAGHAV
Send everything to the lab.

Raghav notices a tiny red thread caught on a tree branch. INSERT: his wedding ring. MATCH CUT to a framed photograph of Raghav and ANJALI.

01:15–01:45 — THE WIDOWER

INT. RAGHAV'S HOUSE — NIGHT

Dark room. Rain against the window. Raghav sits alone. Anjali's photograph is on the table. He touches the frame.

RAGHAV
(whispers) Two years...

He opens a drawer containing Anjali's belongings, then closes it. CUT TO BLACK.

01:45–02:20 — THE REPORT

INT. POLICE STATION — FORENSIC ROOM — DAY — SUPER: TWO DAYS LATER

Raghav enters. Arjun waits with a file.

ARJUN
Sir... the forensic report came.

RAGHAV
Anything useful?

ARJUN
The fingerprint from the crime scene... belongs to Anjali Vasudev.

Silence. Sound drops out. CLOSE-UP: Raghav's eyes.

RAGHAV
What did you say?

ARJUN
Sir... the system confirms it.

RAGHAV
That's impossible. She's dead.

ARJUN
Yes, sir.

02:20–02:55 — THE IMPOSSIBLE CASES

INT. POLICE STATION — NIGHT

Raghav stands before a board of photos, case numbers and fingerprint reports.

RAGHAV
How many cases like this?

ARJUN
I don't know.

RAGHAV
Then find out.

MONTAGE: old files, fingerprints scanned, screens, newspaper clippings, officers working through the night.

ARJUN
Sir... we found twelve.

RAGHAV
Twelve murders?

ARJUN
Different places. Different victims. Same problem.

RAGHAV
The accused?

ARJUN
Dead.

02:55–03:40 — THE CONNECTION

INT. POLICE STATION — EVIDENCE ROOM — NIGHT

Raghav connects photographs with red thread.

RAGHAV
How did they get fingerprints from dead people?

Nobody answers. Raghav notices: BODY DONATED TO GOVERNMENT HOSPITAL.

RAGHAV
Where were their bodies sent?

ARJUN
Government hospitals.

RAGHAV
All of them?

ARJUN
Yes.

RAGHAV
Then that's where we start.

03:40–04:25 — THE HOSPITAL

INT. GOVERNMENT HOSPITAL — MORGUE — NIGHT

Fluorescent lights flicker. Raghav and Arjun walk through the corridor.

RAGHAV
We need the records for donated bodies from the last three years.

WORKER
Sir... those records are—

RAGHAV
Don't tell me they're missing.

Raghav opens a locked room. Inside: identification forms, fingerprint cards, photographs and hospital records. Arjun finds ANJALI VASUDEV.

ARJUN
Sir...

RAGHAV
Someone has been stealing identities.

04:25–05:05 — THE REAL KILLER

INT. HOSPITAL STORAGE ROOM — CONTINUOUS

A frightened hospital worker finally breaks.

WORKER
We didn't kill anyone, sir.

RAGHAV
Who paid you?

WORKER
A broker.

RAGHAV
Name.

WORKER
I don't know his real name. But he worked for MLA Varma's son.

Raghav looks at Arjun.

05:05–05:50 — THE REVEAL

EXT. MLA VARMA'S SON'S HOUSE — NIGHT

Police vehicles surround the mansion. The MLA's son steps outside, irritated.

SON
What the hell is going on?

RAGHAV
Your father was murdered.

SON
I know.

RAGHAV
No. You know because you ordered it.

SON
Watch your words, Officer.

Raghav holds up the forensic report.

RAGHAV
I watched the evidence instead.

RAGHAV
You wanted your father's seat.

SON
You have nothing on me.

RAGHAV
We found your supplier.

RAGHAV
He stole fingerprints and identification details from deceased people.

Raghav steps closer.

RAGHAV
Then you bought a dead person's identity...

Beat.

RAGHAV
...and used it to kill your own father.

Silence.

SON
You can't prove that.

RAGHAV
We don't need the deceased person to speak.

He holds up the fingerprint report.

RAGHAV
The evidence already told us everything.

The son is handcuffed. Raghav watches without expression.

RAGHAV
You didn't just murder your father.

RAGHAV
You tried to bury the truth with him.

CUT TO BLACK.

05:50–06:00 — FINAL BEAT

EXT. MAREDUMILLI WATERFALL — DAWN

The forest is quiet. Raghav stands near the waterfall, looking at Anjali's photograph. Arjun approaches.

ARJUN
Sir... case closed?

RAGHAV
The case is.

RAGHAV
Not the truth.

Raghav walks away. CAMERA slowly rises above him, revealing the enormous forest. CUT TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD: THE DEAD DON'T LIE
SFX: One deep heartbeat.
END.

VISUAL & TECHNICAL DIRECTION

CINEMATOGRAPHY

24mm low-angle tracking for Raghav's introduction; 35mm/50mm shallow-focus crime-scene coverage; 85mm close-up for the forensic reveal; macro inserts for fingerprints and evidence; symmetrical hospital compositions; slightly handheld 35mm during the climax; wide 24mm/drone-style final establishing shot.

COLOUR GRADING

Desaturated forest greens, cyan-blue shadows, cool highlights, deep blacks and subtle grain for the investigation. Warm amber highlights and gentle bloom for Anjali memories. Increase contrast and reduce saturation during the climax. Bring subtle warmth into the final dawn shot.

SOUND DESIGN

Forest ambience, waterfall, insects and wind; forensic camera shutters and radio chatter; low-frequency rumble during the fingerprint reveal; fluorescent buzz and metallic hospital sounds; restrained percussion in the climax; waterfall rising into silence at the ending.

AI-FILMING CONSISTENCY

Use one Raghav reference image throughout: 48-year-old Indian police officer, weathered face, short salt-and-pepper hair, trimmed beard, tired eyes, fit build, understated uniform and serious expression. Keep face, hair, beard, uniform, age, proportions and wedding ring consistent. Prefer controlled camera movement.

Target runtime: approximately 5:30–5:50