

**Art's Tattoo Removal**

by Mark Lyons

**[markielyons@yahoo.com](mailto:markielyons@yahoo.com)**

**FADE IN:**

**INT. OFFICE - DAY**

VINCENT DELVECCHIO, a mid-40's guido, sits behind his desk.

ART, mid-40's, a graying, stringy-haired German-Irish mutt, sits across in the boring room.

DELVECCHIO

... He's the most expensive artist around. Works right here out of the city.

ART

I've heard of him.

DELVECCHIO

You ever deliver any of his work before?

ART

A couple of his miniatures. I love delivering Guptas. Good money with minimal damage.

DELVECCHIO

Well, the piece I want is one of his larger ones.

Delvecchio pulls a photograph out of a lone manilla envelope on his desk and lays it out in front of Art.

It's the back of a shirtless young man neck-down. Leonardo's 'The Vitruvian Man' is tattooed on his back.

Art smiles wide.

ART

That's my favorite piece of artwork, ever.

DELVECCHIO

The Vitruvian Man?

ART

The Canon of Proportions.

Delvecchio points to different locations on the tattoo.

DELVECCHIO

It fits the same scale da Vinci had drawn it, precisely to keep the balance of the human body accurate, like in the original work.

Delvecchio points out da Vinci's text dimensions underneath the tattooed sketch in the picture.

DELVECCHIO

Gupta admitted so himself when we talked to him about it.

Delvecchio slides the picture and envelope over to Art.

DELVECCHIO

My friend across the waters was amazed when he saw it in the artist's portfolio.

Art admires the young man's tattoo.

DELVECCHIO

Gupta said he tattooed it on the man's back years ago. I want it.

Art motions to the photograph.

ART

Gupta give you the guy's name?

DELVECCHIO

Johnson Lamana. And he doesn't live too far away from here.

Art nods, interested.

ART

How much?

DELVECCHIO

Three-hundred and fifty-thousand.

ART

That's more than Nixdorf paid.

DELVECCHIO

Nixdorf might not ever see hers framed. I want to see this one laminated in a week.

Art continues to stare at the photo in front of him.

ART (V.O.)

I was smiling inside. I finally found that score I was looking for.

**FADE TO BLACK**

ART (V.O.)

They call me Artie. Or Art.

**FADE IN:**

**INT. BATHROOM - DAY**

Art wears a ratty t-shirt and brushes his teeth.

ART (V.O.)

It's short for Arthur Lionel.

He spits a sickening amount of toothpaste into the sink.

ART (V.O.)

I remove tattoos, but I don't have a shop; and you won't find me in the phone book. Not even under residential.

He has a tattoo high on his left arm of a face, very similar to his own.

ART (V.O.)

If you do any business with me, you have to be referred. And you can only get a hold of me through the grapevine. A lot of that vine consists of some very evil, rotten, and lowly grapes.

**INT. TATTOO PARLOR - DAY**

A MAN's bicep gets the name 'Patricia' tattooed on it inside a gothic heart.

ART (V.O.)

If you're one of those people who fondle someone for a couple weeks, fall in love and get that person's name on your calf or bicep;

**INT. TATTOO PARLOR - LATER**

A WOMAN gets a tribal on the small of her back.

ART (V.O.)

Or if you get that 'mark of the whore' stamp just above your ass crack and want it removed: Don't come to me. I don't do that business.

**INT. BATHROOM - DAY**

Art leans over the sink and swiftly dabs a contact lens into his eye.

ART (V.O.)

I remove the tattoo, canvas and all, and hand-deliver it to my client soaked in mineral oil so it doesn't lose any of the necessary pigmentation of the skin color. And it won't shrink or expand.

He leans close into the mirror and plucks wayward hairs out of his nose and ears.

ART (V.O.)

I used to execute people for money. Now I just cut little snippets out of their skin and the clinging capillaries and corpuscles underneath. If you ask me, I'm taking a step in the right direction.

#### **INT. DARK ROOM - NIGHT**

A scalpel punctures into tight, wet skin, and slices around a gorgeous tattoo. Blood seeps out the incision, but is carefully dabbed up.

ART (V.O.)

You'd think there wouldn't be a lot of money involved in something like this. And for the most part, you'd be right.

#### **INT. BEDROOM - DAY**

Art makes his bed. He tightly tucks in the edges of his blanket and sheets.

ART (V.O.)

There's really not a lot of people interested in slicing off a piece of a person just to have whatever picture or symbol is inked on their skin. It's too much of a hassle to keep the artwork in an even decent condition.

He picks up a flannel hanging off a desk chair.

ART (V.O.)

There are a few people, though, and they pay big. And I have a monopoly on the whole damn market.

#### **INT. KITCHEN - DAY**

Art drinks vegetable juice at the table. Next to him, he notices a tiny tear in the fabric of his flannel.

ART (V.O.)

No one delivers a better, more carefully removed piece of flesh art than me.

**INT. DARK ROOM - NIGHT**

One scalpel lifts the skin up as another slices off the gristle that holds it to the muscle underneath.

ART (V.O.)

A couple have tried, but they've all failed miserably. If someone wants it done right, they call me.

**INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY**

Art sews the tear in his shirt with a needle and thread. Careful, quick, and precise.

ART (V.O.)

I should've been a surgeon. That's why they pay me the handsome money.

**EXT. HOUSE AND YARD - DAY**

Wearing his flannel, Art leaves the quaint house and walks down to the bus stop at the end of the street.

ART (V.O.)

Not great money or anything, but handsome enough to pay for a cozy little house in Poughkeepsie and my gambling habit.

**INT. BUS - DAY**

Art sits as far away from the nearest person as he can.

ART (V.O.)

Honestly, I'm waiting for the market to explode, though. There's this guy who sold the tattoo right off his back to Zurich gallery owner Jutta Nixdorf for two-hundred and eighteen thousand dollars. True story.

**INT. MUSEUM GALLERY - STOCK FOOTAGE**

Among different paintings, an INKED MAN stands shirtless. On-lookers and connoisseurs stare at him in passing.

ART (V.O.)

Three times a year, this guy takes his shirt off at one of Nixdorf's exhibits. When he dies, she gets to flay him and keep the skin. Since then, I've been waiting for a call to come in from a collector who wants to skin the guy early and hold the canvas ransom from Nixdorf.

**INT. BUS - DAY**

Art still rides, bored.

ART (V.O.)

Nothing on that yet, though. Actually, that's all I'm waiting for right now: a big score to retire on. A nice six digits to run away to a secluded beach somewhere. A lonely oasis.

**EXT. STREETS - DAY**

Art walks New York City. He carries his flannel because of the heat.

ART (V.O.)

Me, personally? I've never really been that hung up on tattoos. I mean, I have two, but very few people have ever seen them.

Art turns down a sidestreet.

ART (V.O.)

The one on my back, a friend inked for free not very long after graduation as a thanks for a favor.

He rolls up the sleeves of his t-shirt.

ART (V.O.)

My other tattoo, the one high on my left arm so I can hide it with a short sleeve, I'm not so proud of. It's to remind me who I used to be, back when the evil grapes would hire me to kill people.

**EXT. STREETS - CONTINUOUS**

Art turns down different alleys. A closer look at his tattoo reveals teardrops filled in on his tattooed face.

ART (V.O.)

Me, I have an amateur portrait of my face on my bicep, with five tears falling from the eye. The first four are filled in and solid. The fifth one is empty. It's the last person I was hired to kill. I didn't. If the woman's kid wasn't with her that day, it'd be inked in, and who knows how many more tears would be falling.

Art walks towards Delvecchio's Bar & Grille.

ART (V.O.)

I gave the fifty percent down-payment back to it's rightful owner, who, coincidentally enough happens to be Vincent Delvecchio, and apologized to him, saying I couldn't follow through with it this time and I was looking for something else to do.

Art walks inside.

#### **INT. RESTAURANT KITCHEN - DAY**

A large filet is blackened with char seasoning and tossed into a sautee pan filled with simmering oil. It crackles and spits.

ART (V.O.)

Even though there's not as many jobs, the money's a lot better for this kind of hit. I'm not going to lie... Artwork sells big time. Even if it is only tattooed skin soaked in oil and mineral water.

#### **MONTAGE OF JONATHAN SHAW**

famous tattooist JONATHAN SHAW gives different people tats and clips of photos of different celebrities he's tatted.

ART (V.O.)

So far, I've peeled and delivered two of Jonathan Shaw's customers. Those weren't too much money because the tats weren't any of his celebrity work, like Kate Moss' or Johnny Depp's. But I do whatever I need to get fast food in my stomach.

**MONTAGE OF KAT VON D**

KAT VON D gives people different tats.

ART (V.O.)

Then there was some dyke way out in Reno who had a quite unsettling fondness of Kat Von D. She asked for the work from three of the popular tattooist's customers, and I obliged and delivered each one timely when she had asked... Then, the dyke crossed the line.

Pictures and close-ups of Von D.

ART (V.O.)

Butch, my nickname for her, asked for the skin of Kat Von D's pretty face. Although I loved the challenge of delivering a facial tattoo, the dyke didn't have the scratch to pay for that caliber a hit. KVD was too popular and it would draw too much attention. I want to stay below the radar with this shit. Once it would hit the headlines that Von D's skin around her temple, forehead, and cheek had been removed, I wouldn't have a monopoly anymore.

**INT. RESTAURANT DINING ROOM - DAY**

Art skillfully slices his Pittsburgh filet and eats.

ART (V.O.)

Every two-bit hit man with a paring knife would hit the streets, raping miniscule faded roses and crosses or chinese symbols or 'I Heart My Mother's. Not only would I lose business, I might get a potential big score ruined by some hack butcher and miss out on one of my six-digit payoffs. I already missed out on one big huge score back in ninety-four.

**MONTAGE OF HENK**

Stills of the now-dead tattooist, Henk.

ART (V.O.)

A consultant of some kind in Los Feliz offered a half-million reward for one of Henk's tattoo jobs. Henk was actually short for Hendrikus Johannes Everhardus Schiffmacher.

Close-up of a tiny tattoo on a forearm.

ART (V.O.)

The work in question: A 'K Record's symbol branded into someone's forearm. The person's arm:

Still of Kurt Cobain with his tattoo.

ART (V.O.)

The fresh carcass of a now-legendary blonde rock star. That was before I ventured into this kind of business, though. As far as I know, the reward was never collected. But also, as far as I know, the man's forearm was never inspected before he was cremated.

**INT. RESTAURANT DINING ROOM - DAY**

Art finishes eating the last of his Pittsburgh filet.

ART (V.O.)

One last score to retire. That's all I've been waiting on.

Delvecchio comes out of the kitchen and shakes hands with Art. They speak MOS.

ART (V.O.)

I never thought I'd hear from Vincent Delvecchio again after I gave him his down payment back for not killing that mistress. That was years ago. I was surprised when I heard he was trying to get in touch with me.

Delvecchio leads Art up a staircase.

**INT. OFFICE - DAY**

Delvecchio, the guido, sits behind his desk. Art, the gringo, sits across.

DELVECCHIO

I hear you're still out of the life.

ART

The cardinal-sin aspect, yeah. I still do the venial thing, though.

Delvecchio laughs hard. Too hard.

ART (V.O.)

Hardcore Italians love Roman-Catholic humor.

DELVECCHIO

I heard. That's why you're here. There's never been any bad blood between us and I got excited when your name came up after asking around about this kind of thing.

ART

I never thought you'd be the type to develop a spot for artwork.

DELVECCHIO

I'm not. But I have an associate, out of the country, who is. And he knows I have a spot for lots of money.

Art nods.

DELVECCHIO

The tattooist whose work it is I was asked to confiscate is Anil Gupta's. He's the most expensive artist around. Works right here out of the city.

ART

I've heard of him.

They continue to talk MOS.

ART (V.O.)

I really have heard of the tattooist he was talking about.

Delvecchio pulls out the photograph of the Vitruvian Man tattoo and they continue to talk MOS.

ART (V.O.)

Extremely good work. A definite master of his craft. Miniature art, perfect in detail and coloring. Precise life-like portraits.

Delvecchio slides the photograph and envelope over to Art and they still speak MOS.

ART (V.O.)  
The man's going to go down in  
history. Has to.

Delvecchio gives Art a grave stare.

DELVECCHIO  
... I want to see this one  
laminated in a week.

Art nods and ponders.

ART  
You know I still collect by the  
same process, right? Half now, the  
other half when I deliver.

Delvecchio says nothing. He just pulls open a desk drawer  
and lifts out a brand new Samsonite.

The weight of it echoes through the hollow office as the  
leather hits the desktop.

ART  
I don't think I even want to know  
what your friend's going to pay you  
for it.

Delvecchio makes no motion to tell him. He just unlocks and  
lifts the briefcase open.

DELVECCHIO  
One-hundred and seventy-five  
thousand dollars, nice and neat.

He shoves the case over to Art.

DELVECCHIO  
You can count it. It wouldn't hurt  
my feelings if you did.

ART  
It's good.

Art doesn't count. He just closes it and stares.

ART (V.O.)  
He was right. There never was any  
bad blood between us. Not yet.

ART  
I have a week, you said?

DELVECCHIO  
An extra fifteen thousand for every  
day you deliver it earlier.

Art and Delvecchio shake hands.

ART (V.O.)  
I wasn't going to deliver it early,  
though.

ART  
What was the man's name again? The  
one with the tattoo?

Delvecchio stands and walks Art to the door.

DELVECCHIO  
Johnson Lamana.

ART (V.O.)  
I asked him only to humor myself  
now.

Delvecchio pats Art on the back and escorts him out of the  
office.

He closes the door behind them.

ART (V.O.)  
I knew I wasn't even going to  
collect the other hundred and  
seventy-five thousand next week.

**EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY**

Art walks back into the streets, briefcase in tow.

ART (V.O.)  
I'd already be on the beach,  
thousands of miles away from here.

**INT. BUS - DAY**

Art sits as far as he can from the nearest passenger. The  
briefcase sits next to him.

ART (V.O.)  
I wonder what kind of expression  
will be on the dego's face when he  
does eventually speak to Anil.

**INT. INKLINE STUDIOS - DAY**

Delvecchio speaks to ANIL GUPTA, mit of sound. Anil points  
out a picture in an old book.

ART (V.O.)  
And Anil shows him his high school  
yearbook and points out Johnson  
Lamana.

Delvecchio looks at the senior portrait Anil points to. His  
eyes grow in fury.

ART (V.O.)

The friend, whom, many years ago not long after their graduation, he had given for free in return of a favor a brilliant, precise tattoo of Johnson's favorite piece of artwork ever.

**INT. BUS - DAY**

Art rests his head against a window and smiles wide.

ART (V.O.)

The Vitruvian Man.

**FLASHBACK:**

**INT. OFFICE - DAY**

Delvecchio stands and walks Art to the door. They speak  
MOS.

Delvecchio pats Art on the back and escorts him out of the office.

ART (V.O.)

I wonder if, after speaking to Anil, Delvecchio will look down at his left hand...

He closes the door behind them.

**CUT TO BLACK.**

ART (V.O.)

... And remember patting me on the back as he let me out of his office.