

SMILEY'S PEOPLE

Adapted by

Chris Gorley & Hugh Johnson

Based on Smiley's People  
By  
John le Carre

INT. ART GALLERY. DAY

George walks slowly around the room of an upmarket art gallery. He takes in the overpriced paintings hanging on the walls, as well as any way in and out of the gallery. Each visitor is quickly assessed by his experienced eye. Satisfied, George approaches a young woman sitting at a desk.

GEORGE

If I could have a word with Mr. Benati. Tell him it's Mr. Angel.

CUT TO:

INT. BACK OFFICE. DAY (CONT'D)

Descending a spiral staircase into darkness, George is met by half a dozen picture lights illuminating an empty room. A door opens to reveal a short man with a shock of white hair. His black striped suit and pantomime buckle shoes complete the picture.

BENATI

Why, Mr. Angel, it has been far too long.

George is motioned into an inner room with Benati following. Benati closes the door and leans up against it. The two men stand opposite each other in silence. George takes in the room. It is decorated like a sleazy boudoir, with a chaise lounge and pink basin in one corner.

GEORGE

So, how's trade Toby?

TOBY

We have been lucky, George. We had a good opening. Autumn, George -

Toby tilts his little palm.

TOBY (CONT'D)

Autumn I would say is on the slow side.

GEORGE

Vladimir's dead.

TOBY

Too bad. That old man, huh?

GEORGE

As you ran him for me, I thought I'd have a word. You were his postman.

TOBY

Sure.

GEORGE

You knew, then?

TOBY

Read it in the papers.

It does not escape George's attention that there are no newspapers to be seen.

GEORGE

Any theories?

TOBY

At his age, George? No family, no prospects. I assumed he did it himself.

Cautiously, George sits on the chaise lounge and picks up a bronze maquette of a dancer from a side table.

GEORGE

Shouldn't this be numbered if it's a Degas, Toby?

TOBY

Degas, that's a very grey area, George. You got to know what you're dealing with.

GEORGE

When was the last time you had anything to do with Vladi's network?

TOBY

You call that crazy group a network?

GEORGE

Well we have to call it something.

George puts the bronze dancer back on the table.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

So, what's the answer?

TOBY

What answer?

GEORGE

When did you last have dealings with the group?

TOBY

Years ago.

GEORGE  
How many years?

TOBY  
I don't know. Are you trying to pin  
me down, George?

George gives a faint smile.

TOBY (CONT'D)  
Have you forgotten, George, how  
overworked we were? How many boys  
played postman to half the networks  
in the Circus? In one week how many  
meetings, pick-ups? Twenty, thirty?  
Go to the registry, draw the file,  
check the encounter sheets.

GEORGE  
Before Vladimir died, hours before,  
he rang the Circus. He wanted to  
give us information.

TOBY  
(exasperated)  
But this Vladimir was an old man,  
George! They get soft in the head,  
start writing crazy memoirs, seeing  
world plots everywhere.

GEORGE  
Now why do you say that exactly,  
Toby? I don't follow your  
reasoning.

TOBY  
They get cuckoo, hear voices. It's  
normal.

GEORGE  
Did Vladimir hear voices?

TOBY  
How should I know?

GEORGE  
That's why I was asking you, Toby.  
I told you Vladimir had information  
for us and you tell me he was going  
soft in the head. I wonder how you  
knew about his state of mind.

Toby stands upright, away from the door.

TOBY  
George, these are very old games  
you are playing.

Beat.

GEORGE

It wasn't suicide. I saw the body. What were those Russian guns the Moscow Centre used? "Inhumane killers", wasn't it?

Toby remains silent.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

You see, Toby, when Vladimir made that phone call he demanded Max, me in other words. Not you. Against all protocol. Never done it before. Can you tell me why he did that?

Moving away from the door, Toby is now clearly rattled.

TOBY

George, I mean really! These are shadows you are chasing!

GEORGE

Did you quarrel with him? Would that be the reason?

TOBY

Why should I quarrel with Vladimir? He was being dramatic, George. That's how these old guys are when they retire.

GEORGE

But not all of them get shot, do they, Toby? Toby quarrels with Vladimir one day, Vladimir gets shot with a Russian gun the next. That's what one calls an embarrassing chain of events.

TOBY

(exploding)

George, are you crazy? I never quarrel with this man in my life!

GEORGE

Mikhel said you did.

TOBY

Mikhel? You go talking to Mikhel?

GEORGE

According to Mikhel, the old man was very bitter about you. Kept saying you were no good. What happened that made Vladimir so passionate about you.

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
I'd like to keep it away from the  
police if I can.

Toby returns George's stare with a look of pity.

TOBY  
George, this is absurd.

A silence falls between the two men before George rises from the lounge and moves towards Toby.

GEORGE  
(brisk)  
Vladimir came to see you. I don't  
know when but within the last few  
weeks. He asked you to do something  
for him. You refused. That's why he  
demanded me. He'd had his answer  
already from you and it was no.  
That's why you were no good.

Now that George is standing close to him, he notices the lump in Toby's jacket pocket.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
And the gun, Toby? You're scared.  
You know enough about who killed  
Vladimir to think they might kill  
you too.

Toby moves to the hand basin and turns to face George.

TOBY  
George. Kindly answer me something.  
Who is speaking here actually?

GEORGE  
You saw Vladimir and spoke to him.  
What happened? You tell me that,  
and I'll tell you who is speaking  
here.

FADE TO:

INT. SCIENCE MUSEUM CAFE. DAY

Toby sits at a table with an old man, Vladimir, in a crowded cafe within the Science Museum. Both men are drinking coffee and glance around at the suspended aeroplanes nearby.

TOBY (V.O.)  
It was two weeks ago at the Science  
Museum. He had a proposition for me  
to carry a document.

GEORGE (V.O.)  
Where?

TOBY (V.O.)  
 Germany, our side. I should take a train and make the hand-over on route to North Hamburg. A private arrangement. No Circus. No Max.

GEORGE (V.O.)  
 And the compensation for your labours?

CUT TO:

INT. BACK OFFICE. DAY (CONT'D)

Toby moves to the chaise lounge and sits down.

TOBY  
 If we get the document, we first take it to Max. Tell Max the story. He will know its crucial importance and reward us. Gifts, promotions, medals. Only problem was Vladimir didn't know Max was on the shelf and the Circus have joined the Boy Scouts.

GEORGE  
 Did he know you were on the shelf?

TOBY  
 George, you want to drop this line of enquiry.

George moves towards the door, with his back to Toby.

GEORGE  
 The point is, you sent him packing. How could you do that, Toby? You of all people?

Toby rises swiftly from his seat.

TOBY  
 (furious)  
 And you want to know why? Why I told him to go to hell? You want to know who his connect was in North Germany that was going to makes us all millionaires overnight? Remember the name Otto Leipzig?

GEORGE  
 Vaguely. Tell me about him.

Toby moves closer to George.

TOBY

George, do you not even remember the incredible bilge that creep would push under fifteen different source names? I just got the Crown jewels for you - only trouble, I don't have the air fare? Jesus!

GEORGE

It wasn't all fabrication. I seem to remember some of it turned out to be rather good stuff.

TOBY

Count it on one finger.

GEORGE

I don't remember we faulted him on his Moscow Centre material, ever.

TOBY

Okay! So Centre gave him some decent chicken-feed occasionally. How else does anyone play a double, for God's sake?

GEORGE

I see. And he had a partner. An East German.

TOBY

Worse, a Saxon. Claus Kretzschmar. He was also a creep. It was a perfect marriage.

George moves to the side table and picks up the bronze dancer.

GEORGE

Then I expect it didn't last.

TOBY

George, listen to me once. Please! I owe you. You pulled me from the gutter and got me my job at the Circus. You remember the first rule of retirement, George? No moonlighting. No fooling with loose ends. You remember who preached this rule? You did. When it's over, it's over. Pull down the shutters, go home! We're over, George. They don't want us any more. So okay, Ann gave you a bad time with Bill Haydon. So there's Karla, and Karla was Bill's big daddy in Moscow. George, I mean this gets very crude, know what I mean?



George studies the bronze dancer as he contemplates Toby's words.

GEORGE

We never faulted Leipzig's reports on Moscow Centre. Nor on Karla. Vladimir trusted him implicitly. On the Moscow stuff, so did we. That was why we put up with him.

TOBY

George. You got to wake up. The crowds have all gone home.

George places the bronze dancer back on the side table and sits on the chaise lounge.

GEORGE

Will you tell me exactly what Vladimir said to you? Please?

Toby shakes his head softly and sits on a satin stool.

CUT TO:

INT. SCIENCE MUSEUM CAFE. DAY (CONT'D)

Toby sits awkwardly across from an increasingly excited Vladimir. Leaning across the table, Vladimir clutches Toby's arm and squeezes hard.

VLADIMIR

Otto Leipzig has managed the impossible! It's the big one, a chance in a million! Otto Leipzig has landed the one Max has always dreamed of.

TOBY

(sceptical)  
Like what?

VLADIMIR

Ask Max. Tell Max it's the big one.

TOBY

So what's the deal?

Vladimir leans back in his chair and releases his grip on Toby's arm.

VLADIMIR

First there is a document, the appetizer. This must be taken to Max personally. Moscow rules at all points. No middle man.

(MORE)

VLADIMIR (CONT'D)

Once the Circus declares their interest, they will make a down payment to Otto of five thousand Swiss francs. Otto is to be flown to a safe house in England for the audition. If the Circus wants to buy the material, including a letter which I hold, they must pay the sum of fifty thousand Swiss francs.

TOBY

(hushed)

Tell me what in life is so important that the Circus pays five thousand Swiss for a lousy audition with Otto Leipzig?

Vladimir reaches across and grabs Toby's arm.

VLADIMIR

Fetch the document for me, please.

The other diners in the cafe now stop their conversations and stare at the two men. Vladimir begins to cry as Toby nervously glances around the room.

VLADIMIR (CONT'D)

For the sake of God, I am an old man, I got no legs, no passport, no one I can trust but Otto Leipzig. When he sees the proof, Max will believe me, Max has faith.

TOBY

Vladimir, go home, play some chess.

FADE TO:

INT. BACK OFFICE. DAY (CONT'D)

TOBY

Listen, that was an old, sad man. Past it.

Toby moves to a cupboard, takes out two glasses and a bottle of sherry. He pours sherry into both glasses and places one on the side table next to George. Toby takes a large sip from the other glass.

TOBY (CONT'D)

So I killed him, George, okay? It's my fault, I'm personally and totally responsible for the old man's death. George! Advise me!

(MORE)

TOBY (CONT'D)

George for this story I should go to Hamburg, unofficial, no cover, no baby-sitter? Know where the East German border is up there? In Travemunde you got to stay on the left of the street or you've defected by mistake.

Toby smiles at his joke but George remains silent. After a moment, George rises and moves towards Toby. George reaches inside his jacket pocket and pulls out a battered packet of English cigarettes. From the packet, George removes a home-made contact print and passes it Toby.

GEORGE

Who's the second man?

TOBY

I don't know.

Toby hands back the print to George who threads it back into the cigarette packet.

TOBY (CONT'D)

People forge things like that these days, that's easy done, George. You don't buy photographs from Otto Leipzig, you don't buy Degas from Signor Benati, follow me?

GEORGE

Is this a forgery?

Pause.

TOBY

I don't think so.

GEORGE

So how did we raise Leipzig?

TOBY

For a routine rendezvous the Hamburg Abendblatt marriage ads. Leipzig is a dangerous bum.

GEORGE

What about emergencies?

TOBY

For crash meetings, Claus Kretzschmar.

GEORGE

So how did we reach Kretzschmar?

TOBY

He's got a couple of night-clubs.

A warning buzzer rings and from upstairs a heated argument can be heard. Toby looks up to the sound and with a sigh takes a grimy raincoat and hat from a wardrobe.

GEORGE

Kretzschmar's night-club - what's it called?

TOBY

The Blue Diamond. George, don't do it, okay? Whatever it is, drop it.

GEORGE

What else did Vladimir tell you about Leipzig's information?

TOBY

He said it was some old case come alive. Some crap about the Sandman.

Toby moves towards a far door at the back of the room.

GEORGE

What about the Sandman?

TOBY

To tell you it concerned the Sandman. That's all. The Sandman is making a legend for a girl. Max will understand. George, he was weeping for Christ's sake.

Toby stands by the far door with his back to George.

GEORGE

(urgent)

Years of investment and the Sandman was making a legend for a girl? What else? Toby, what else?

Toby turns to face George.

TOBY

He was behaving like a crazy man again.

GEORGE

(moving to Toby)

Vladi was?

TOBY

No, the Sandman. George, listen. The Sandman is behaving like a crazy man again, the Sandman is making a legend for a girl, Max will understand. Finito. Go easy now, hear me?

