

What You Owe Him

By

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1 INT. INTERROGATION CELL

This room is probably deep underground. There are no windows in the blank white walls. Everything is clean and sterile. The air would smell of bleach.

In the centre of the room, facing each other, sit two uncomfortable metal chairs.

Standing on the far side of the room, with her back to the door is VICTORIA, early 20s. She wears a short, tight dress that shows off her figure. There is a discarded pair of high heels in the corner. She isn't wearing make-up.

Victoria has never really cared what everyone else thinks of her. She was bullied when she was young and has developed a strong independence because of it. She does what she wants.

Victoria's arms are crossed and she has a look of conviction on her face. Whatever comes at her, she will fight.

2 INT. HALLWAY

A long ornate hallway, as might be found in a church or high political office, seems to stretch on forever.

Coming from the far end is PAUL, mid 20s. As he walks, there is a heaviness to his footsteps and he keeps his legs close together.

He is dressed almost like a priest, in a high-necked black shirt and pressed pants. Over this he wears a lab coat. Covering the top half of his face, he wears a gold mask with a cross cut into it.

Paul is the youngest of three and was raised to be a team player. He believes if you say you're going to do something, you have a duty to do it. He believes the world can fit together perfectly and he will do what he can to ensure it.

Paul reaches an ornate wooden door with an ornate gold handle. He takes a deep breath, stands up as straight as he can, and turns the handle.

3 INT. INTERROGATION CELL

The door behind Victoria opens and Paul enters. She hears him, but doesn't turn around.

PAUL
You should sit down.

VICTORIA
I'll stand.

PAUL
I don't think you want to make this
difficult.

VICTORIA
That's not up to me.

PAUL
It is. The quicker you sit down,
the quicker we both get out of
here.

Victoria doesn't move. Paul takes a deep breath.

PAUL
Tori, please.

Victoria spins around. She stares at Paul. Unable to believe
her eyes.

VICTORIA
(uncomprehending)
No.

Paul looks at her innocently.

VICTORIA
Paul? What the hell are you doing
here? In that...mask

The realisation hits her on the final word. Paul doesn't
speak.

VICTORIA
So, what?...You're one of their
agents now?

PAUL
Victoria, sit down.

VICTORIA
(ignoring him)
How long?

PAUL
For a while now. Before we met.

VICTORIA
What's happened to you? I didn't
recognise...You don't sound like
yourself.

Paul takes a seat in one of the chairs. When he sits, he
almost seems to do it tenderly.

PAUL
Actually, I didn't sound like
myself before. This is the real me.

VICTORIA
You're wearing a mask.

PAUL
And it fits me pretty well. Now
come on, sit down. Don't make me
force you.

VICTORIA
I don't remember you being able to
force me to do anything.

For a second, there is a fire in Paul's eyes. But he
composes himself. He pulls out a piece of paper from his
pocket and reads it aloud.

PAUL
Victoria Winston, I'm required to
inform you that you have been
convicted of a violation of the
Articles of Placement.

VICTORIA
Those are a thing?

PAUL
(ignoring her)
A serious charge such as this would
never be made lacking evidence and
testimony, and in your case we have
substantial amounts of both. From
here, you have two options: Either
you formally repent of your crimes
or you will be rehabilitated. I am
in here to help you make the right
choice.

VICTORIA
(sarcastically)
So, there's a third option.

Paul looks up at Victoria.

PAUL

Victoria, you shouldn't waste time.
This isn't a game. I don't want you
to go to that place, but if you
don't talk to me...

VICTORIA

What did I do!?

The next sentence takes Paul a few seconds to formulate.
Like he's looking for the right words.

PAUL

You didn't hold up your end of the
deal.

VICTORIA

What deal?

PAUL

The deal..look, can you sit down?
It will be easier if we're seeing
eye to eye.

Victoria takes a moment to move. The seriousness of her
situation is beginning to sink in. After a second, she pulls
the chair back a few paces from Paul's and sits.

PAUL

(trying to smile)

There. That wasn't so hard. and
remember, you're helping yourself
every time you cooperate.

Victoria glares at him.

VICTORIA

What deal, Paul?

PAUL

Now, I know because of the way your
mind works, you probably don't
think you did anything wrong...

VICTORIA

What deal?

PAUL

(continuing)

And a little while ago, you
probably would have gotten away
with it. But under the laws that
are in place now...

VICTORIA
What deal??

PAUL
(continuing)
And I'm sure it wasn't your
intention to violate anything, but
that's why I'm here. To give you
some perspective.

This stops Victoria in her tracks.

VICTORIA
And you're going to help me?

PAUL
(obviously)
I'm the one in the mask.

VICTORIA
And that gives you some power over
me?

PAUL
No. No, you have the power, but so
far, you haven't been using it
right. I'm here to help you and I
want to help you. And believe me, I
don't want to have to enforce the
rules on you. This can be very
easy. All you have to do is repent
and we can find an outcome that
satisfies both of us.

VICTORIA
Paul...

PAUL
Look Victoria, we never expected
things to go this way. Honestly our
relationship was supposed to just
be a routine test. Word was that
you weren't one to say "no" and we
wanted to verify it. I never
intended on getting invested, but I
did and then...

VICTORIA
For Christ's sake, Paul! What
promise did I break!?

PAUL

You wouldn't have sex with me!

Silence. Victoria is trying to control herself. Paul is shaking. He grips the paper tightly in his hand. He stands up and starts pacing.

PAUL

Goddammit Tori. I mean...we met, we liked each other, like actually liked each other. Your smile was so exciting and there was that time we drove to all those haunted places at 3 in the morning. I was falling for you, we...we were falling for each other, we finally started getting physical and...then you stopped. You're not supposed to stop, Tori. You're just not.

VICTORIA

Paul...I never wanted to...

PAUL

And that's why you're in here! You made a promise and then didn't follow through.

VICTORIA

Ok, the hell promise are you talking about?

PAUL

Well, look at how you're dressed. That outfit alone hits 3 of the 5 Signifiers Of Promiscuous Behaviour.

VICTORIA

Are you kidding? What are you even talking about?

PAUL

3 of the 5...Victoria, it's Article 6 of the...why don't you people know the rules.

VICTORIA

Paul.

PAUL

And look at how you act. You're almost never seen with the same guy
(MORE)

PAUL (cont'd)
twice...You're setting up
expectations. You're making
promises about how you behave. You
can't break those and expect
nothing to happen.

VICTORIA
So, if I hadn't stopped you last
night...?

PAUL
You wouldn't be here now.

Silence. Paul pockets the paper and leans on the back of his
chair. Victoria is taking it in.

VICTORIA
Paul, let me try to explain. You're
hurt. I get it. For some reason,
you feel like I promised you sex
and then I didn't follow through.

PAUL
Well then, you shouldn't have acted
like you wanted to.

VICTORIA
I didn't.

PAUL
Look at what you're wearing! If you
weren't looking for sex, why did
you dress like that? Do you just
think it's attractive on you?

VICTORIA
So what if I do?

PAUL
Then you're intentionally
attracting men to you just so you
can turn them away? Victoria, what
sense does that make? Help me
understand.

Victoria gets to her feet.

VICTORIA
I don't care if you understand or
not! When I get dressed, I put on
whatever I damn well want to.

PAUL

But, then you have to understand how that looks to people and you have to be prepared for the consequences. I...this is the kind of thing I learned when I was five. Why can't you get it? Tori, You're legitimately lucky you weren't raped the way you parade around!

VICTORIA

Well, I'm sorry if you interpreted my outfit as saying I wanted to bang you. I never intended...

PAUL

You broke your promise to me!

Silence. Paul and Victoria are glaring at each other. After a moment, he breaks it and gestures to her seat. She walks away and sits on the floor at the far corner of the room.

PAUL

That's how it felt. I know it might not have been your intention, but like I said, the important thing is how I perceived it.

VICTORIA

Piss off.

Silence. After a moment, Paul takes his seat.

PAUL

Victoria, this is very simple. You told me you did theatre so let me try to explain it this way. What you did, what we all do is play a character. And just like on stage, your actions have to be consistent with your character. If you have a guy who seems really nice, but then you find out, he..I don't know...sets fire to orphans, then that's a badly written character and the show gets bad reviews. What you did last night was break character. And now you're getting a bad review. And there are some reviews bad enough to shut an entire theatre down. Now, I don't want that to happen, but you need to apologise and promise to fix the

(MORE)

PAUL (cont'd)
character before your next
performance. It's as simple as
that. You made a mistake, you did
something wrong. Just admit it.

Victoria hasn't looked at Paul this entire time. She is
staring at the floor and there are tears in her eyes.

VICTORIA
No.

PAUL
Why not?

VICTORIA
Because I didn't do anything wrong.

PAUL
Yes, Victoria. You did.

Victoria leaps to her feet, she towers over Paul.

VICTORIA
There is nothing wrong with how I
act!

Paul stands up to face her. He is taller and now he's the
one bearing down on her.

PAUL
Yes there is! Do you not understand
how the world works these days? It
doesn't matter what you think or
what you intended. Victoria. Right
and Wrong are not defined by you!

Victoria turns away from Paul.

PAUL
You can't change the way the world
works, Victoria. Not in your
position. The only way you're ever
going to leave this place is if you
turn yourself around and give me
what you owe me.

Silence. After a moment, Paul turns around and leans against
the wall. Victoria is still standing, the tears haven't left
her eyes.

VICTORIA
(venomous)
I don't owe you anything.

PAUL
You owe me an apology.

VICTORIA
It's not going to happen.

PAUL
Then you'll live out your life as a
slave.

VICTORIA
You can't make me apologise.

PAUL
(correcting)
No. I don't want to make you. You
need to realise it for yourself,
I'm just here to help you.

Paul closes his eyes, listening. Victoria turns around and
walks toward him.

VICTORIA
Help me? The hell do you care!? I'm
just an assignment to you, that's
all I've ever been. All in another
day's work. And hey, if I play my
part right, you get to fuck me too.
And then if I don't, I get dragged
in here so you can tell me how
wrong I am. You're pathetic.

Paul's eyes snap open. He bites his lip.

VICTORIA
Come on, say something!

Paul doesn't move.

VICTORIA
Come on, you pathetic bastard!
Say...

Paul spins around, grabs Victoria's head and slams it into
the wall.

He takes a step back, panting and staring at her as she
slides down to the floor.

PAUL

Now look what you made me do.

Victoria is bleeding. Blood runs from her hair and down her cheek.

PAUL

I gave you every chance to do the right thing. All you had to do was apologise, but you couldn't do that and now you've brought this on yourself.

Victoria looks up at him and spits.

VICTORIA

You stupid, sadistic son-of-a...

Paul kneels down next to Victoria.

PAUL

Don't finish that sentence, the one you're facing is bad enough.

Through the mask, it almost looks like there are tears in Paul's eyes. Victoria is openly crying.

PAUL

I didn't want to hit you Victoria, but you didn't give me a choice. Now, I can forgive your actions if you just repent and tell us you're sorry.

VICTORIA

I....I...

Victoria tries to choke out the words.

PAUL

That's it. You can't fight it anymore. There's a time when you have to let your mistakes go. You did the wrong thing. Admit it. Just open your heart and let it go. I'm here to help you.

VICTORIA

Why?

PAUL

Because I care about you and I don't want to see you hurt anyone else like you hurt me.

VICTORIA
I'm sorry.

PAUL
What?

VICTORIA
I'm so sorry I hurt you, Paul. It was my fault. I'll never do it again, I swear.

PAUL
Thank you, Victoria.

A lock is released and the door to the room opens. GABRIEL, late 20s, steps in. This man is a psychopath in an impeccable pinstripe suit.

Paul gets to his feet.

PAUL
Mr. Gabriel.

Gabriel nods toward the corner and Paul shrinks back away from him.

GABRIEL
(with a devil's smile)
Good morning, Victoria. You've completed the task. Well done.

VICTORIA
Get me out of here.

GABRIEL
Oooh! Not yet there, Miss Go-Getter. There's one more thing he's called for you to do.

Gabriel helps Victoria to her feet and carefully pulls guides her out of the room.

Finally alone, Paul braces himself against the wall for a moment before breaking down and sliding to the floor. His hands fumble for the mask and he pulls it off as if it was burning him.

Beneath the mask are scars and bruises. Some months old, some only a few hours.

Suddenly, the door opens and ROBERTSON, 40s, steps in. He is dressed jeans and a polo shirt under a blazer. The baseball cap on his head keeps his face in shadow. He is soft spoken and mentoring. He slowly approaches Paul, who does not notice him.

ROBERTSON
How are you feeling, man?

Paul sees Robertson for the first time. He immediately tries to pull himself to his feet but can't manage it.

ROBERTSON
Whoa, whoa. At ease. Relax.

PAUL
I wasn't expecting you.

ROBERTSON
(chuckling)
When I got this job, I promised
that I'd be personally involved.
This is part of that.

PAUL
This. Sir...is this really helping?

ROBERTSON
You were in the room, you tell me.

PAUL
I think, I mean, I know all this
will help in the long run, but... I
didn't realise it would hurt this
much.

ROBERTSON
Doing the right thing has never
been easy.

Silence for a moment.

ROBERTSON
I tell you, when I was elected and
I promised to deal with the whole
"gender equality" issue and put an
end to sexual harassment, I thought
it would be easy too. But now, I
know the truth and even though it's
painful, what we've accomplished is
worth all of it.

Silence again. Robertson is scrutinising Paul. Paul is looking at the door to the interrogation room.

PAUL
(slowly)
Will she be alright?

ROBERTSON
Better than ever. And others will
follow her example. You did
exemplary work.

After a moment.

ROBERTSON
How are the scars.

PAUL
They hurt.

ROBERTSON
Give them time. The physical ones,
they'll go away. But the deeper
ones, the ones in here...

He places his hand on Paul's chest. Paul straightens up.
Almost as if Robertson's touch is curing him of his pain.

ROBERTSON
(continuing)
They'll stay with you always and
remind you of what a good job you
did. How does that feel?

PAUL
Pretty good, Sir.

ROBERTSON
I'm proud of you, son.

PAUL
Thank you, Sir.

ROBERTSON
And we're not going to hear any
more from you about long-term
relationships.

PAUL
No, Sir. Never.

ROBERTSON
Good man, well you better run along
home. You got time to get home,
grab a shower and get on out to the
bar for a celebratory drink.

PAUL

Yes Sir.

ROBERTSON

And take your time, you come up with a good story about where those scars came from, you'll have a Victoria in your bed by the end of the night. Now get outta here.

Paul nods and walks out of the room. Robertson watches him go.

Paul passes Gabriel in the doorway. Robertson turns to face Gabriel who winks and bends down.

He lifts Paul's mask from the floor. It is to be used again.

4 INT. INTERROGATION CELL - DAYS LATER

GLORIA (early 20s) is sitting quietly in one of the chairs. She is a girl who has never had a lover but recently lost her virginity to a rapist. She is now dressed in an extremely conservative way that doesn't quite hide the bruises on her neck and wrists.

From her demeanour, just being outside her home is a trial but she has hope that coming here and telling what happened will bring her some closure.

The door opens and another young woman quickly enters. She is dressed in a long black skirt and black blouse. She wears the mask.

It is Victoria.

Gloria looks up at her but before she can speak:

VICTORIA

So what? You didn't think he was quite as cute the next morning?

Gloria stares up at Victoria in horror as the door to the room slams shut.

5 BLACKOUT