

GWEN

You thought I bashed his head in? There's a laugh.
(she gives a forced laugh, followed by and uneasy silence)

VICTORIA

(to everyone, somewhat conspiratorially)
So... have you ever thought about it?

BRIGITTE

Thought about what? Killing Everett? That's just mean.

VICTORIA

Maybe not him...specifically. Although, more than one of us may have reason to.

LU

I'm pretty sure every person has thought about murder, if only for a brief moment, if only intellectually, sometime in their life.

VICTORIA

That's not what I mean.

LU

It's still a little bit sick, Victor, and trust me I know how sick people can be, I deal with sick all day, every day.

VICTORIA

Let me change the question. If you knew for certain that there was absolutely no way you would ever be caught or in any way be held accountable, could you kill someone? What would be horrible enough to push you over the edge? Who would it be? And how would you do it?

GWEN

Why is everyone looking at me?
(she looks back at each of them)
Alright, fine. I'll go first. If someone kidnapped, raped and murdered one of you, it might push me over the edge. And I would use any means available. But, first I would make them suffer... a lot. Maybe a cattle prod up the ...

VICTORIA

(interrupting)
I think we get the picture. That cattle prod scenario seems a bit out of character for you.

GWEN

Maybe it is. But I would certainly consider it.

VICTORIA

Let me refine it again. What would have to happen to you, personally, to elicit a murderous response?

LU

I'll bite. If somebody took something of great value, something that belonged to my family,
(she gets up and starts to transition to the flashback scene, as she gets there she slips off her jacket to indicate another time)
something for which they worked very hard, something representing the blood, sweat and tears of decades of effort, I might go off that cliff.

VICTORIA

It sounds to me like you've thought about this already.

LU

Well... there was an incident with one of my uncles. He owned a very profitable business and one of his employees ended up owning it through some rather suspicious circumstances.

LIGHTING CUE- transitions to other side as she paces, waiting. Others freeze for the duration of the flashback. EVERETT enters through the front as if with a key. He's wearing a light outdoor jacket.

EVERETT

How did you get in here? What do you want?

LU

Uncle Alfonso gave me a key years ago, just in case... We need to talk.

EVERETT

About what?

LU

About how you stole this restaurant from my family.

EVERETT

What are you talking about? You were there when the will was read. Your uncle left it to me as a way to take care of your aunt. I send her a check every month until fair value is reached or she passes on.

LU

He would never have done that voluntarily. I was supposed to get the restaurant. I was the one who was supposed to take care of my aunt. What did you do to him to get him to rewrite the will?

EVERETT

I didn't have to do anything... He did it to himself.

LU

Did what?

EVERETT

Are you sure you want to hear this? It might change how you feel about dear Uncle Alfonso.

LU

I can handle the truth.

EVERETT

Have it your way. Your Uncle had gambling debts. A lot of them. They were eating him up inside.

LU

I don't believe you.

EVERETT

Believe what you want. Here's how it went down. At least three times a week this bookie would come in before opening to take his bets. Pretty soon, after Uncle Alfonso stopped making his weekly payments, the bookie would bring an enforcer or... two. Far too many times I heard them threaten him with some pretty nasty stuff.

LU

Like what?

EVERETT

Like physical harm, to him, to your aunt, to you and other family members. When that didn't work, they threatened to have the mob take over the business.

LU

Why didn't he come to me or one of his brothers?

EVERETT

I think he was afraid and embarrassed. Of course, he kept it from your aunt. Why would he tell anyone else? I'm pretty sure he thought nobody else knew.

LU

But you knew and you blackmailed him...and then you killed him.

EVERETT

Oh, please. How can you even think that? I loved him like the father I never had. I saw an opportunity to save him and your whole family from some devastating circumstances. So I made arrangements to borrow some money to pay off his debts. In

exchange, upon his death, he would sign the restaurant over to me to operate and to take care of your aunt.

LU

How much money did he owe?

EVERETT

A lot, close to two hundred G's.

LU

I still find it highly coincidental that within two months of this "agreement", he was already dead.

EVERETT

And you think I had something to do with that?

LU

I know without a doubt you were involved. Unfortunately, I can't prove any of it. The Medical Examiner said he died from a heart attack, but I don't believe you. Still, I will not put my aunt through an exhumation and re-autopsy.

EVERETT

Probably wise on your part. 'Cause when she goes, 'A Taste of Tuscany' is all mine and there is nothing you can do about.

LU

Rest assured. When it's her time to go, I will reopen this case and investigate until I find the proof I need to convict you of murder. Assuming, of course, that you're still alive.

EVERETT

Is that a threat?

LU

You know I can crush you with my bare hands. So, consider it your first and only warning.

EVERETT

Take your best shot, little lady. You don't scare me and you never will.
(exits to kitchen)

LIGHTING CUE- Transition back to other table.

BRIGITTE

What happened? Did he ever fess up? Did your family get the business back?

LU

Not yet. We're still working on it.

GWEN

(suspiciously)

I can see that you have a pretty strong motive to see
(makes quote marks in the air)
'justice' done with that employee.

LU

And being a police detective, I might just be able to come up with a plan that would be un-traceable.

[only if Lu did it] GWEN

You mean like cocaine powder?

[only if LU did it] LU

Unless I have suddenly become the Dread Pirate Roberts, I don't think so. Most poisons leave some sort of residue or telltale sign. The ones that don't are very difficult to get a hold of.

BRIGITTE

So you think you could really do it?

LU

If pushed hard enough, I know I could. Who knows, I might even enjoy it.

VICTORIA

That's kinda creepy.

LU

I can be creepy when I want or *need* to be. What about you, Brigitte?