

DECEPTIVE VOWS

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. INSIDE A WOMAN'S PRISON - DAY

PATRICIA sits in her prison cell staring into space. GUARD #1 approaches Patricia's cell and opens it up. The Guard stands there with the cell door open as if to wait for Patricia to walk out.

GUARD #1

Patricia it is time for your therapy session. All the other ladies and the Doctor are already there waiting for you.

PATRICIA

I told you all I don't need no therapy!

GUARD #1

Patricia I don't want to argue with you about this everyday. Now you know that this is mandatory, so if you ever plan on getting out of here I suggest you go to your meetings peacefully.

PATRICIA

(with an attitude)

Fine, I will go to the stupid session!

Patricia gets up and storms out of her cell.

INT. A CLASSROOM INSIDE THE PRISON - DAY

Guard #1 escorts Patricia to the only remaining seat in the class. There are approximately ten women sitting at a group of tables that were brought together. At the head of the table is a gentleman peering over his glasses. The gentleman's name is DR. MORGAN. CAROL WITHERSPOON and SHARON WALKER are two of the ten other female inmates in the classroom.

DR. MORGAN

Patricia we are all glad you were able to make it.

PATRICIA

(mumbles, but audibly)

Yeah right.

GUARD #1
Excuse me young lady, what did you say?

PATRICIA
I was just saying. . .

GUARD #1
(cuts Patricia off)
Don't you start no shit in here because I will lock your ass down!

DR. MORGAN
That's okay, I will handle it from here. I think she will be all right now

Guard #1 backs up and stands with the other guards.

DR. MORGAN (CONT'D)
Actually you all can leave. I am sure I will be fine here alone with them.

GUARD #1
But Doctor Morgan you. . . .

DR. MORGAN
I said I will be fine!

The four guards leave.

DR. MORGAN (CONT'D)
(flips through his papers)
Okay it looks like we are up to you Carol Witherspoon. Remember we are all like friends and family here. No matter what happens outside these walls, we are family here. The thing that connects all of you is your past. Now I want you to remember we are not here to judge each other. We are here to help one another. In a way I guess you help each other out by sharing your experiences. Having said all that, we will start with Carol and work our way around the table.

Carol pulls the box of tissues next to her as tears well up in her eyes.

CAROL WITHERSPOON

Well, I have told my story so many times before, but it still hurts. I will say that the sessions have helped me a lot. That is actually why I came back to the sessions. I feel a certain freedom to express what happened to me. Anyway, I will try to make this short. My name is Carol Witherspoon and I am here because I killed my abusive husband John.

SHARON WALKER

(rubs Carol's back)

It's okay Carol.

CAROL WITHERSPOON

One night he came in drunk and started beating me. I was used to the beatings but that night he attacked my son. I just flipped out. I went to my son's room and got his Louisville Slugger bat and beat my husband John to death with it.

DR. MORGAN

Are you okay Carol? Are you sure you want to go on?

CAROL WITHERSPOON

Actually that is pretty much the whole story. The police came and arrested me. The question a lot of people ask is, "Why did you stay in your abusive relationship for five years?" I had four kids to think about. I kept asking myself, where would I go? How would I provide for them when I never had to work before?

DR. MORGAN

Believe me, I know the situations can become very complicated. Most women don't really see a way out of their situation. The question is: how do we stop this vicious cycle of violence from continually occurring? We know who, what, where, how and why it occurs, but we do not know how to stop it.

SHARON WALKER

Well in my case my husband just wouldn't let me go. He just kept on stalking me. I tried everything to escape him. I mean I even moved countless times. No matter where I went he would find me. Hell a restraining order is not even worth the ink and paper it uses. By the time the police got there he was always long gone, and there was no way to prove he harassed me. I blame the judicial system for not doing enough.

DR. MORGAN

(writing notes)

So you all believe the judicial system fails to do enough to stop this problem, right?

SHARON WALKER

Yeah I do. One time my husband punched me in the eye. I had a black eye, which was swollen almost shut. Sacramento's finest came and took my husband away for assault and battery. Would you believe he was back out in less than seventy-two hours? I got sick of the abuse and left him. As I said before he refused to let me live in peace even after I moved away from him.

Sharon pauses to wipe her tears.

CAROL WITHERSPOON

It's okay Sharon you can do this. Just let it go girl.

SHARON WALKER

I moved back with him and poisoned him to death. It was called premeditated murder. Sad thing was I didn't regret killing him. I knew he would never stalk or abuse me again. I have done ten years now and I still don't regret killing him. I just regret doing time for it. By the way I didn't say my name. I am Sharon Walker.

DR. MORGAN

Thank you for sharing your story with us Sharon, and you too Carol. Your stories were remarkable and powerful. Okay, it looks like we have time for one more story. Patricia we are up to you.

PATRICIA

I pass!

DR. MORGAN

Are you sure you want to pass?

PATRICIA

Yes I am sure! I don't have anything to say!

CAROL WITHERSPOON

Ladies, you are not going to help your situation by holding on to the pain you feel. You will feel a lot better if you let it go.

PATRICIA

Will you all just leave me alone? I said I don't want to do this. Why can't you fucking people understand that?

SHARON WALKER

Patricia you don't know how . . .

DR. MORGAN

(cuts Sharon off)

Remember what I told you all? We are not here to judge each other. If she doesn't feel like talking she does not have to. We can not force anyone here to talk.

SHARON WALKER

(with an attitude)

Fine, it is her life!

Patricia jumps across the table and grabs Sharon.

PATRICIA

You don't even know me bitch!

Several women try to pull the two ladies apart. Suddenly, about ten prison guards rush into the room and separate Patricia and Sharon.

They put some sort of cuffs or wrist restraints on Patricia and Sharon and escort both of them out.

GUARD #1

So Dr. Morgan, now you see why we stay in here.

DR. MORGAN

(looking puzzled)

Well this is the first time this has ever happened.

GUARD #1

Effective immediately, today's session is now officially closed. So ladies let's move out.

DR. MORGAN

Okay ladies, you heard. Hopefully we can continue this session tomorrow.

GUARD #1

I wouldn't bet on it!

INT. PATRICIA'S CELL - NIGHT

Patricia is having a nightmare as she lies in her bed. She twists and turns violently and she is sweating profusely.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ANDRE AND PATRICIA'S HOME - ONE YEAR EARLIER- DAY

ANDRE ROBINSON, Patricia's husband, walks towards her with a mean expression. He has both fists balled up. Patricia begins to back up slowly, but ends up in a corner. Her husband grabs her by the throat with his left hand, pins her against the wall and begins beating her violently with his right hand.

INT. PATRICIA'S CELL - MOMENTS LATER - NIGHT

Patricia begins to scream out loudly. Her cries break the night's silence.

PATRICIA

No Andre! No Andre! I'll do whatever you want!

An INMATE, who is Patricia's cell mate can be heard shouting at Patricia.

INMATE

Girl what the hell is wrong with you? Are you crazy or something?

Patricia awakens from her nightmare. She sits straight up like a dead person arising and begins breathing heavily.

GUARD #2 (O.S.)

Cell Block "C" ladies keep it down!

INMATE

That bitch is crazy!

GUARD #2 (O.S.)

I said keep it down! If I have to come in there somebody is going to the hole!

INT. DR. MORGAN'S OFFICE - MORNING

A guard brings Patricia to Dr. Morgan's office. This time she has on the wrist restraints and shackles.

GUARD #1

Here she is Dr. Morgan. You should be okay with her this time.

DR. MORGAN

(Straightening his desk)

Please take the restraints off of her.

GUARD #1

Are you sure? It's sort of against policy.

DR. MORGAN

I am positive.

Guard #1 starts to unshackle Patricia but then puts them back on.

GUARD #1

Doctor I think I better leave them on.

DR. MORGAN

I really don't think they will be necessary.

GUARD #1

Sorry Doctor Morgan, but It's for your own safety.

(MORE)

GUARD #1 (CONT'D)

I'll be right outside in case you have any problems with her. As for you young lady, don't you dare start no shit in here!

The guard turns and walks outside. Patricia sucks her teeth and flips off the guard once the guard turns her back to walk out.

DR. MORGAN

Hello Patricia.

Patricia does not respond, but she does look around the room. She then looks down at a picture that is sitting on Dr. Morgan's desk. The picture is of Dr. Morgan, his wife, his daughter and his son.

DR. MORGAN (CONT'D)

As I said in the session, nobody is going to force you to talk about your story, and if you don't want to talk about what happened to you, that is fine.

PATRICIA

(picks up a picture)

Is this your family?

DR. MORGAN

Yes it is. That is my wife Julie, my son Jerry and my daughter Cheryl. Why do you ask?

PATRICIA

I was just curious.

DR. MORGAN

Patricia I want to get straight to the point. I brought you here to tell you that I may have to release you from the sessions. I simply cannot let one person destroy this program. There has been too much success here with the program.

PATRICIA

You know that I will be stuck in this hell hole longer, right?

DR. MORGAN

I don't have anything to do with that.

PATRICIA

What do they want from me? I don't want to tell my damn story! I just want to forget about it.

DR. MORGAN

Unfortunately that is not what the state wants. They feel there has to be some sort of rehabilitation for any woman that has gone through what you went through. They mandate this program and frankly I agree with them.

PATRICIA

Okay fine! I will go through the session, but I do not want to do it with the other inmates.

DR. MORGAN

Is that what this is all about? You don't want to do this with the other inmates?

PATRICIA

I really don't want to do it at all, but if I have to do it, I would rather not do it with them.

DR. MORGAN

So basically you would like to have private sessions, right?

PATRICIA

Yes, that is exactly what I want.

DR. MORGAN

I will see what I can do. Now I am not going to make any guarantees, but I will see what I can do. Now if I do this for you, you are going to have to promise me that there will be no more outbursts.

PATRICIA

Don't worry Dr. Morgan. If you can do this you won't have any more problems out of me.

DR. MORGAN

Okay Patricia. I will see you on Friday to let you know what happens.

(MORE)

DR. MORGAN (CONT'D)
 Keep in mind that this is our last ditch effort to rehabilitate you and get you through this state mandated program.

PATRICIA
 Okay Dr. Morgan. I have one more question.

DR. MORGAN
 What is it Patricia?

PATRICIA
 How old is your baby?

DR. MORGAN
 He is about eighteen months old now, why?

PATRICIA
 I just wanted to know. . . Anyway I will see you Friday.

INT. THE PRISON CAFETERIA - AFTERNOON

Patricia is sitting at the table all by herself. Carol Witherspoon approaches with a tray of food.

CAROL WITHERSPOON
 Do you mind if I sit here?

PATRICIA
 No.

CAROL WITHERSPOON
 (With a puzzled look)
 No to sitting down here or no you don't mind?

PATRICIA
 No I do not mind if you sit here. You're Carol, right?

CAROL WITHERSPOON
 Yeah that's me.

PATRICIA
 Well I am sure you probably know me already, but my name is. . .

CAROL WITHERSPOON
 Patricia.

PATRICIA

I told you.

CAROL WITHERSPOON

Anyway, I just want to cut through the chase and ask you what your problem is.

PATRICIA

I don't know what you are talking about.

CAROL WITHERSPOON

Oh I think you do.

PATRICIA

Look, I just do not believe that they can help me. Shit, do you think anyone gives a damn about what happened to us?

CAROL WITHERSPOON

Maybe they do and maybe they don't, but we are going to have to trust somebody, right?

PATRICIA

To tell the truth I just want to forget about it. It hurts so bad and I do not want to keep re-living it over and over.

CAROL WITHERSPOON

So do you think holding it all in is going to make the pain go away?

PATRICIA

I don't know. All I know is that I am confused.

CAROL WITHERSPOON

Do you think you are the only woman that has gone through this shit? Every last woman in the program has a story to tell. Some of the stories are different, and some of the stories sound very much alike, but they all have terrifying stories to tell.

PATRICIA

Yeah I know. I heard your story and it sent chills up and down my spine.

CAROL WITHERSPOON

I am sure your story is just as terrifying.

PATRICIA

I don't know, I guess so.

CAROL WITHERSPOON

Well I just wanted to let you know that you do not have to feel ashamed of what you did. What it all comes down to is you were protecting yourself. Shit it was you or him.

PATRICIA

Yeah he definitely would have killed me. I am sure of that.

CAROL WITHERSPOON

I want you to know that I tried to bottle up the rage inside myself. It began to tear me apart from the inside out. I even thought about ending it all. I did not get any relief until I told my story. Now I feel like I can help other women get through the pain. Trust me Patricia, you will feel so much better if you just let it go.

PATRICIA

I am sorry, but I guess I am just not like the rest of you. It does not make me feel any better to talk about what happened to me. In fact I think it makes me feel worse. I tried going to one of these programs when my husband first started beating me. Some of the women in that program were beaten half to death. I had terrible nightmares for weeks. After that I just never wanted to go into any programs.

GUARD #2

Okay you two Princesses, you need to hurry up so the next group can come in and eat.

CAROL WITHERSPOON

Okay Patricia, I guess I will talk to you later.

PATRICIA
(dumps her tray)
Okay, take it easy. Which Cell
Block are you in?

CAROL WITHERSPOON
I'm in Cell Block "C."

PATRICIA
Okay I will see you later Carol.
I'm in "C" too.

CAROL WITHERSPOON
That's cool. Remember to stay
strong girl

PATRICIA
Oh I will.

INT. DR. MORGAN'S OFFICE - MORNING

Patricia has a conversation with Dr. Morgan. It seems
Patricia has finally come around to tell her story.

DR. MORGAN
Okay Patricia you wanted private
sessions so here we are.

PATRICIA
I actually changed my mind about
that.

DR. MORGAN
What do you mean you changed your
mind? I had to pull a lot of
strings to get you these sessions.
I don't have time for games. Now I
have quite a few women in here who
really do want my help. So what is
it going to be Patricia, do you
want my help or not?

PATRICIA
Yes Dr. Morgan I want your help. In
fact I am ready to tell my story.

DR. MORGAN
That's really great news Patricia.
What changed your mind if I may
ask?

PATRICIA

Well basically I had time to think about what you and some of the girls in the program were saying. If I can just stop one woman from going through the hell I have been through it would help me get through this.

DR. MORGAN

I am sure it would help you with the healing process too. (Looks at his watch) Well there is a group session in two hours; do you want to tell your story to me or the group?

PATRICIA

I will tell it to you first. I think it will help prepare me to tell it to the group. I guess you can call this a practice session.

DR. MORGAN

Okay Patricia that sounds like a good idea. Do you mind if I tape the session?

PATRICIA

No I don't mind.

DR. MORGAN

Are you comfortable?

PATRICIA

Yeah I'm fine. I just want to get this over with.

Dr. Morgan pushes the record button on the tape recorder and speaks into the microphone.

DR. MORGAN

I am Doctor Morgan from Hanford Women's Correctional Facility. It is the sixteenth day of November nineteen ninety-two. The time is zero eight hundred hours. I am interviewing Patricia Robinson, a victim of domestic violence, who is doing time here for killing her husband.

He gives Patricia the thumbs up sign to signify the start of the session to Patricia.

PATRICIA

Well my name is Patricia Robinson and I am serving time here for killing my husband like Doctor Morgan said. I decided to tell my story in hopes it will start the healing process and I figure it might help other domestic violence victims. So I guess I will start from the beginning and tell the whole story. It all started back about two years ago. . .

Patricia stares straight ahead. We fade out on Patricia and flash back to that summer and the events leading to that fatal confrontation with her husband.