

DECEPTIVE VOWS

by

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Based on the play "Until Death Do Us Part," by Gary G. Tavares.

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WGAE Registration #1355345(exp. 6/20/32)

FADE IN:

INT. INSIDE HANFORD WOMAN'S PRISON - DAY

PATRICIA, a 25-year-old black woman, 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 every day. Now you know this is mandatory, so if you ever plan to get out of here, I suggest you attend 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  
 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  
 (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. What 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?

(MORE)

DR. MORGAN (cont'd)

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 had harassed me. I blame the judicial system for not doing enough.

DR. MORGAN

(writing notes)

So you all believe the judicial system isn't doing 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. The 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.

(MORE)

SHARON WALKER (cont'd)

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 escorted 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. ANDREW AND PATRICIA'S HOME - ONE YEAR EARLIER- DAY

ANDREW ROBINSON, Patricia's husband, and a 32-year-old Caucasian male, 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-THAT NIGHT

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

PATRICIA  
 No Andrew! No Andrew! I'll do  
 whatever you want!

An INMATE, who is Patricia's cellmate, 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 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 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'd 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. I'll be right outside in case you have any problems with her. As for you, young lady, don't you dare start any 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 on Dr. Morgan's desk.

The picture is of Dr. Morgan, his wife, his daughter, and his son.

DR. MORGAN

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 with the program here.

PATRICIA

You know that I will be stuck in this hellhole 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 who 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, I would rather not do it with them.

DR. MORGAN

So, you would like 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 with me.

DR. MORGAN

Okay Patricia. I will see you on Friday to let you know what happens. 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 on Friday. I will tell you my whole story from beginning to end... I promise.

DR. MORGAN

Okay Patricia. I am going to hold you to that. And please, no more outbursts! I will see you on Friday.

FADE OUT.