

Abuela

By

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EXT. VALLEY STATE PRISON (CHOWCHILLA, CA) - DAY

The bright afternoon sun shines over a desert landscape as a young Hispanic woman is escorted out of Valley State Prison by two burly prison guards. She is a pretty girl with olive skin and jet black hair, but has the sad eyes of someone that has been through a lot. Her right arm is filled with tattoos of flowers and the Psalm 51 scripture. She is holding a weathered purse, a jean jacket, and an outdated cellular phone; her wristband reads, "PEREZ, VICTORIA".

EXT. PRISON FENCE - DAY

A flamboyant young black man named MIKEY WALLACE waits outside the confines of the prison fence. He is wearing short red shorts, a blue tank top, and RayBan shades. He is leaning against his white mustang with his arms crossed and a smile on his face. He stands up straight as the Prison fence opens and Victoria walks toward him.

MIKEY

Well, well, well...you look as ravishing as ever.

VICTORIA

(smiling)

I'm not even two steps out of the prison gate and your sarcastic ass is already at it.

MIKEY

But of course, honey! Now get over here and give me mucho hugs.

As they lock in a tight embrace, Victoria breathes a sigh of relief and tears begin to form in her eyes. Mikey pulls back dramatically with a surprised expression.

MIKEY

Girl, are those tears? Stop that! Your face will be all red for your post prison selfie!

Mikey extracts his phone and poses with a resisting Victoria, strategically getting the prison behind them in the picture.

VICTORIA

(Laughing)

Stop, fool! I don't want ANY reminders of this desert shit hole.

(CONTINUED)

MIKEY  
Ugghh, you're STILL no fun.

Mikey puts his arm around her and they walk toward the car.

INT. MIKEY'S CAR - LATER

The sun shines brightly into the car as Mikey and Victoria drive through the rolling hills of the Valley. Sublime is playing through the speakers. Victoria pulls her cell phone off of the charger and starts scrolling through her camera roll. Mikey looks over nosily and shouts over the music...

MIKEY  
I'm surprised that ancient thing works. Blackberry's are OUT honey, we need to get you an iphone.

Victoria puts her hand in his face and continues to scroll. She stops on a picture of an older Hispanic woman with tan skin and stark white hair. She is wearing a sash that says, "60 and fabulous!" Spotting this, Mikey turns down the music.

MIKEY  
I remember that day.

Victoria keeps her eyes locked on the picture. She smiles and her eyes begin to water.

VICTORIA  
I can't believe she's gone, Mikey.

Mikey stays silent, his eyes fixed on the road.

VICTORIA  
We can talk about it...

MIKEY  
I was waiting on you to break the ice, Vicky.

Mikey reaches into his arm rest and pulls out an obituary and Death Certificate for the same woman and hands it to Victoria. It reads, "Victoria "Carolyn" Garcia, March 18, 1935 - June 10, 2012. Victoria takes it and her eyes begin to well up.

VICTORIA  
(through tears)  
I'm a criminal piece of shit Granddaughter. I should have been there...

(CONTINUED)

MIKEY

She lived a long life, Victoria. It was just her time...

VICTORIA

(through tears)

I just wish I was there to say goodbye...

Mikey reaches over and rubs Victoria's shaking back to console her. Tears begin to fall down his face too as they drive on through the Valley.

EXT. ABUELA AND VICTORIA'S HOME - EVENING

Victoria steps out of the car onto unkempt grass that is brown and dying. She stands for a second and takes in the expanse of the desolate brick home. She and Mikey walk past empty flower pots and overgrown weeds, and there are rakes and gardening tools scattered about. Remnants of a once plentiful garden remain.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - EVENING

They walk up the stairs to the front door where a small wooden cross hangs above the door. Victoria extracts her keys from her purse.

VICTORIA

Let's hope these still work.  
Knowing Abuela she changed the locks.

Victoria sticks the key in the lock and turns. It clicks and opens. She looks at Mikey and they both give a sigh of relief.

INT. ABUELA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

On the nightstand the clock reads midnight. Next to it is a bible with a small Mexican flag stuck into it as it's bookmark. The room is filled with antique furniture, and a small cross hangs above the four poster bed that Victoria and Mikey are sitting on. Pictures, jewelry, clothes and documents are everywhere. A box of tissues sits between them; their eyes are red and their faces are blotchy. They are currently laughing while looking at a picture of Victoria and a young guy wearing a red bandana. There is a heart drawn around their faces and they are blowing smoke into the camera. "Bonnie and Clyde" is written on the bottom of the photo. She shows it to Mikey.

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VICTORIA

(Laughing)

He thought he was so hard. He was so WACK.

MIKEY

He sure was, but you were right with his WACK ass making WACK ass decisions. Mmmhmm...

Victoria throws her hands up in agreement as she says,

VICTORIA

I have no rebuttal, you're right!

She rips the picture in half then tosses it in a trash bag that's sitting on the floor by their feet; Mikey applauds. Victoria reaches over and grabs a shoe box that is stuffed with random items. She opens it and picks up a worn envelope that is addressed to her. The return address is stamped in green ink and says, "Gateways Mental Hospital". She opens the letter and scans it until she gets to the bottom. There is a drawing of Mickey Mouse and a closing that says, "I Love You, Sincerely- Mommy". Victoria rolls her eyes and puts this aside. She begins to rummage through the box and finds pictures of a teenage man and woman. There are also pictures of these two people with a little girl of about 1 year. The man in the picture is wearing a gold cross necklace, Victoria instinctively touches the identical necklace around her neck.

MIKEY

What's wrong?

Victoria hands Mikey the photo and he flips it over to read the back. It says, Victoria Perez, Jesse Perez, Lina Perez 92'

MIKEY

Is this your DAD?

VICTORIA

You mean the sperm donor? Yep.

MIKEY

He's HOT! I always wondered who you looked like. For a while I thought you were adopted.

He winks at Victoria and she flicks him off, shooting him a sarcastic smile. She pulls another box close to her and opens it. A rosary sits at the top of the pile, she moves it aside. Under it we see a professional photo of Abuela, she

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looks to be about 50 years old. She is happy and her eyes are full of life. Victoria hugs the picture to her chest and closes her eyes.

VICTORIA

I'd give anything to hug her again.  
This is my favorite picture of her.

Mikey looks on sympathetically.

VICTORIA

I should get this tatted. That way  
I'll always have her with me.

EXT. VENICE BEACH BOARDWALK- DAY

Victoria is walking down a busy Venice Beach boardwalk. Street performers and tourists fill the area, and several panhandlers walk up to her trying to sell merchandise. She is politely declining but full of smiles and at ease.

EXT. VENICE INK - DAY

Victoria walks up to a shabby tattoo shop with blacked out windows and bright green letters that say "VENICE INK". She puts her hands up to the window to peer in, squinting hard to see inside. She reaches into her purse, extracts the picture of Abuela, and pulls the grubby door handle open.

INT. VENICE INK- DAY

Heavy metal plays loudly in the shop as Victoria walks in. It is bright inside, with white walls and colorful graffiti. The place is all but empty except for a cute blond receptionist that is sitting at the front desk. She is bopping her head to the music as Victoria approaches...

RECEPTIONIST

Hola! What are you getting done  
today?

VICTORIA

Hey! I wanted to get a portrait  
done.

The receptionist calls over her shoulder for an artist named JACKSON. A heavily tattooed man with a big red beard and bald head saunters over. Victoria hands him the photo.

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JACKSON  
(lazily)  
You're in luck. I have an opening  
right now. Follow me...

EXT. VENICE INK - LATER

The sun seems to be shining brighter as Victoria exits the shop with a huge smile and a big beautiful tattoo on her upper left arm. She walks up the boardwalk happily, occasionally looking down at her new ink. She even slips a panhandler a \$5 bill as she walks by...

INT. VICTORIA'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Steak is cooking on the stove top. The Mexican artist, Selena, is belting her song "Como la Flor" through the kitchen speakers. Victoria is chopping onions while dancing and singing to the music. Just as Victoria is about to drop the onions into the simmering pan, a door slams on the upstairs landing. She turns down the music and listens intently. She calls out loudly...

VICTORIA  
Hello...?

She waits a second for a response then grabs her chopping knife. She turns off the stove and walks out of the kitchen toward the bottom of the stairs.

INT. BOTTOM OF STAIRS - EVENING

She looks up the stairs into the dark hallway above. She flips the light switch and it illuminates the top landing.

VICTORIA  
Is someone up there...? Mikey, that  
better not be you motherf..

At this moment the floor upstairs creaks as if someone is walking by. She waits a moment and then walks up the stairs

INT. UPSTAIRS LANDING - EVENING

Victoria reaches the top and takes a peak in both directions. She slowly creeps toward the closest door with the cross on it and places her hand on the doorknob. She takes a deep breath and grips her knife before barging in.

INT. ABUELA'S ROOM - EVENING

Her entry into the room is abrupt and loud. She flips the switch and peers around with bated breath. Shear white curtains flutter at the window as the wind whistles by; Victoria sighs in relief. She walks over to close and lock the window, then plops down on the bed and laughs.

VICTORIA  
I'm losing it.

INT. VICTORIA'S BEDROOM - MIDNIGHT

Victoria is sitting up in her bed reading a book. She is dozing off but jumps every time she feels herself falling asleep. She soon dozes off into a deep slumber, snoring...

INT. VICTORIA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Victoria is shaken awake by a tan, wrinkled hand. She struggles to bring the scene before her into focus as crashing noises fill the room. She sits up and sees the back of an elderly woman with stark white hair throwing things out of her closet. She speaks with a thick Spanish accent.

ABUELA  
Where are the drugs!!? I told you  
not to bring them into my home!!!!

Victoria sits up straighter now, placing one foot on the floor. She is shaking from head to foot.

VICTORIA  
Abuela...?????

ABUELA  
YOU ALWAYS WERE A ROTTEN APPLE!  
WHERE IS IT!?

Victoria stands up and walks cautiously toward her Grandmother.

VICTORIA  
Por favor(please) Abuela, there are  
no drugs... Abuela, por favor...

Shoes and clothes fly as Abuela kneels hunch backed into the closet. Victoria stretches a shaking hand toward Abuela's shoulder and rests it there. Abuela freezes.

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VICTORIA  
Abuela?... how are you here?  
You're.....dead.

Abuela turns around slowly to reveal a face filled with fury

ABUELA  
GET.YOUR.HANDS.OFF.OF.ME.SINNER!!!

Victoria's eyes bulge. Abuela grabs Victoria roughly, digging her nails into her fresh tattoo. She pushes Victoria with force and she falls back onto her bed, startled.

INT. VICTORIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Victoria's eyes fly open and she sits up with a start. Sweat beads trickle down her forehead as tears form in her eyes. She turns in the direction of the closed closet. She walks over and grips the handle with an unsteady hand

VICTORIA  
One...two...THREE!

She pulls the door open and nothing but clothes meet her eyes. She slides down on the floor and begins to bawl.

INT. VICTORIA'S BATHROOM - DAY

The sun shines through a small window that illuminates Victoria's tired face. She is looking in the mirror at the dark circles around her eyes. She grabs some foundation and packs it on, then turns her attention to her tattoo.

VICTORIA  
What the Fu...

The tattoo is red, swollen and puss seeps through the cracks of her skin that the needle penetrated. She begins to tenderly wash it with soap, her face screwed up in pain.

INT. VENICE INK - LATER

Victoria stomps into Venice Ink and walks right up to the front desk. She is greeted by the same Receptionist.

RECEPTIONIST  
Hey! Back for another tat already!?

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VICTORIA  
Where is Jackson!?

RECEPTIONIST  
He's in the ba..

Before she finishes her sentence Victoria stomps angrily in the direction of the back room. Patrons and other artists look on in interest.

INT. BREAK ROOM - DAY

Jackson is about to bite into a burger when Victoria barges in. He calmly puts down his food and faces her as she stands over him.

VICTORIA  
Jackson what the HELL did you do to my arm, dude!?

JACKSON  
Uh, a gnarly tattoo?

Victoria begins to unwrap the bandage as she says...

VICTORIA  
This unsanitary shop probably gave me a staph infection! Look at this shit!

The bandage falls and Jackson looks at the tattoo nonchalantly.

JACKSON  
Rad color. It's healing nicely...

He picks up his burger and takes a bite; sauce drips on his t shirt. Victoria speaks through clenched teeth...

VICTORIA  
Nicely? My Grandma's face looks like mush! You better PRAY I don't have a staph infection, Jackson!

Victoria turns and stomps toward the door. Jackson chews his food and shrugs his shoulders as he watches her leave.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Victoria sits on a gurney rocking back and forth and checking the clock. The curtain is drawn but she can hear the hustle and bustle of other patients being wheeled by. The curtain slides open and an older Indian woman walks in and extends her hand to Victoria.

DOCTOR SHAMIM

Hi, Miss Perez. I'm Doctor Shamim.  
The nurse told me you're  
complaining about an infected  
tattoo?

VICTORIA

Yes, it's infected and it's sore to  
the touch.

Dr. Shamim begins to unwrap the bandage on the tattoo and then takes a look at it.

DOCTOR SHAMIM

...and may I ask who this is?

VICTORIA

My Grandma, she passed away  
recently.

DOCTOR SHAMIM

I see, and can you take a look at  
it now and tell me if it appears to  
be worse or better?

Victoria looks down at the tattoo and screams at the top of her lungs. Maggots are crawling out of where Abuela's eyes should be. Nurses rush in on cue and help Dr. Shamim constrain Victoria. She is flailing uncontrollably. They successfully constrain a screaming Victoria as a nurse hands the Doctor a syringe full of fluid.

DOCTOR SHAMIM

TENDERLY

My dear, you are having a grief  
induced psychotic break. I am  
giving you something that will calm  
you down, okay? Just breathe  
dear...

A nurse steadies Victoria's arm as Dr. Shamim injects it. Victoria's eyes close slowly...

INT. DARK HALLWAY - NIGHT

Victoria opens her eyes and blinks continuously, trying to bring the room into focus. She is being wheeled down a dark hallway by two male nurses wearing white scrubs. They pass bolted doors with their inhabitants faces pressed against small windows. They get to the end of the hall to the "P's" and pass a room with a woman inside. She is waving merrily at Victoria and banging on the door.

NURSE 1

Calm down, Perez, or you'll miss  
Movie Night.

Victoria's eyes bulge in horror as she turns to look at the badge hanging from the Nurses neck; it reads, "Gateways Mental Hospital". At this moment she weakly struggles to break free, and can be faintly heard saying...

VICTORIA

No..... no..... no...

...as she is wheeled into her own padded room.