

## World, meet Victoria Abernathy

The sun was setting over the forgotten town in some flyover state somewhere in the United States. It was a small town, only barley holding it together between larger cities who only grow larger and larger. The towns pride was a statue of some old man who had fought some war somewhere in a time long forgotten. The town had a church, a supermarket, a pub and the local diner. It was a classic diner, like the one in every movie with a 60's vibe, and an old lady in a pink uniform. It was named after said old lady, probably something like Patty's, or Flo's, and the locals were all patrons, they even had their own special booth and always ordered "the usual", and worst of all, Patty, or Flo, new what that meant for each and every one of them. The recent addition to the diner did however not know what that meant.

"I swear to god, if I hear one more order of 'the usual' from some old dude I will die. DIE I tell you!" The young girl stuck the scribbled orders on the pin by the kitchen window. The only one listening to her whining was the dishwasher in the back, who looked up and smiled at her. She had her blonde hair up in a messy bun right on top of her head, some loose strands tucked behind her ears. The black t-shirt she wore clung to her skinny form, the vapor from the hot dishwater making everything sticky.

"You'll learn. Bernie wants a BLT with sweet potato fries and extra mayo, Margret always takes the cheeseburger without ketchup and Andy, well good ol' Andy always orders pancakes no matter what time a day it is" The young waitress tightened her high ponytail, making sure the blonde hair was sleeked back and professional looking.

"How do you even know these things?!" She burst out as she fixed the pink uniform, making sure it fit as it should. The dishwasher carefully took off the large gloves she use while doing the dishes. She removed the apron as well and carefully loosened the t-shirt from her body.

"I just pay attention to what is happening out there. I listen and pick things up. It's all very boring in here" The large chef up to his elbows in grease didn't even look offended. "Besides, you can never be too careful" The waitress looked at her funny.

"You are really weird, you know that?" With that as the end of the conversation she turned around and headed back out in the dining area. Left standing, drying her hands, stood the dishwasher, a small smile on her lips. "Oh, you have no idea" was the reply no one listened to. A fifteen minutes break was needed.

The night was dark and Patty's had closed for the night. By the register stood a shadow, rummaging about in the cash. Patty couldn't say she was too surprised.

"Going so soon?" She stood in the doorway, the flickering light of the cigarette in her mouth lighting up her face. Her dishwasher looked up guiltily, caught in the act. She had a surprisingly small wad of cash in her hand considering she was caught stealing. Carefully, the dishwasher holds up the cash, showing how much is in her hand. It was only a couple of bucks, barley thirty dollars if Patty didn't vastly miscalculate. The thief looks strangely calm though, as if she was sure of her thing.

"I only take as much as today's work was worth, Patty. I am many things, but a cheater, I am not" She carefully pocketed the money and once again held up her hands. "You've been kind to me and let me stay here in exchange for doing the dishes but since I'm leaving tonight, I felt as if today's

work actually earned me some cash” She at least had the decency to look apologetic. “Sorry I didn’t tell you beforehand. I didn’t want to have to say goodbye” She looks down on her feet and she actually looks remorseful. Patty finds herself believing the girl. She had stayed in the diner at night, eating leftovers (if there were any) for a couple of weeks now and she had been nothing but honest and hardworking. And the money she just pocketed didn’t even match today’s hard work at all. Slowly, as if not to scare a frightened animal, Patty walked closer to the girl. She didn’t back away, or seem too keen on running for that matter, as Patty approached her.

“What’s your actual name hun? I suppose you aren’t Daisy as you said?” Patty walked up to the register and pushed the girl out of the way. She shook her head and smiled a small smile at Patty as she took out a wad of cash and started counting it in her old hands.

“Nah, not really, no” Her face changed in to utter surprise when Patty handed over the cash. It had to be at least another a hundred dollars there. “Patty, I can’t accept that. That’s way too much money!” She looked scandalized, as if she hadn’t been a charity case from the moment Patty took her in those weeks ago. Patty fixed her with a hard look.

“Look kiddo, you take that money and you go about whatever it was you were doing before showing up here. I can see that you obviously are running from something so go now while you still can kiddo” If Patty wasn’t reading too much into the situation she could have sworn she saw a light sheen in the girls eyes. Kindness obviously wasn’t what the girl was used to. She reverently took the money and stored it in the same pocket as the other cash. To Patty’s surprise she got a hug from the girl before she stormed towards the door. She stopped just by it though, turning to look back at Patty. “Victoria. My real name is Victoria” That was the only goodbye Patty got before Victoria disappeared into the night.

She walked along route 66, not a single car driving past her in the night. The large, dry fields of New Mexico stretching out in every direction. She took a deep breath, enjoying the crisp desert air.

She saw the headlights of the car long before she heard it. It cruised along the road, going in the same direction as her. As it drove closer she began to make out the shapes of the car: it was a white, old pickup truck. It looked well cared for as well as well used as it come to a crawling pace alongside of her. The passenger window was manually rolled down, just as she liked them, and she was met with the face of a Native American man looking attentive at her. At first glance he felt dangerous and her spine tingled a bit as they locked eyes.

“Hi there. Do you need a ride somewhere?” As she studied him, taking him in she found nothing to be afraid of beside her initial reaction. He didn’t seem to have any weird ideas or be the type to get her into his car before murdering her. And besides, she started to get tired from all the walking.

“It depends. Where are you heading?” By now they had stopped and she leaned into the car through the window. Her question made him grin.

“Wherever you wanna go really. I don’t really have anything planned for now” Huh, a free soul like her? She looked him up and down once again. He looked the part. She gave him an attentive smile before opening the door and jumping into the car.

“Sure, sounds fine to me. What’s your name stranger?” she asked as she made herself comfortable in the seat. He studied her a while longer before starting the car and continuing the journey.

“Me? I’m Damien” he smiled at her as if he had a secret. “And you are?”