

purchase

noun

- 1 the action of buying something
- 2 a hold or position on something for applying power advantageously, or the advantage gained by such application

a [play] by <Jeffrey Gold>

Purchase

PURCHASE

A Play in One Act

by

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Woman - MIT Educated, but vulnerable

Man/Marcus - Investigative Reporter Type

Other Man/Anton - Shifty character, Photographer type

SYNOPSIS

Two men interrogate a woman to determine the veracity of her claim of being raped by someone in a position of power.

PURCHASE

SETTING:

A unmarried woman's living room.

AT RISE:

*A woman nervously paces, halts:
she is waiting for someone.*

*At some point, she finally
settles into a chair...almost
finding peace.*

*Before the serenity manifests,
she is jolted by the doorbell.*

*She looks at her watch...doesn't
seem right.*

She gets up to open the door.

A MAN.

MAN

Paulina?

A vague nod.

MAN

(beat)

Mrs. Bettencourt?

PAULINA

Ms. Bettencourt.

*He enters without invitation.
She is slightly taken aback by
his abrupt entrance, but doesn't
make it obvious. To her
surprise, there is another
man. He did notice her reaction.*

*The OTHER MAN enters too.
Doesn't say anything.*

*Both look like wolves, but not
in sheep's clothing. Some people
might construe this as getting
down to business.*

MARKUS

Marcus.

(shakes her hand;
then nonchalantly)

That's Anton.

She feels uncomfortable having shaken his hand; quietly wipes it off on her sleeve.

Anton brushes past her, as if being on the job means there's no time for social graces.

PAULINA

(somewhere between
a statement and a
question)

You're from the paper.

The two men look at each other, almost surreptitiously, although the gesture could be interpreted as "obviously".

MARKUS

Yeah.

(beat)

You wanna sit right there?

PAULINA

I usually...

MARKUS

(pointing)

Over there will be fine.

She is being forced to sit on a couch on which she never finds herself.

PAULINA

At first I wasn't sure if you would come, and now you're a bit early.

Paulina tries to settle in, when...

MARKUS

(gets the plural
version incorrect)

Anton may want to shoot some blacks-and-whites.

Concerned, she immediately rises...

PAULINA

I don't want any photos taken.

MARKUS

Not a problem.

(beatlet)

Anton?

With that simple prompt, Anton immediately moves back, away from the center of action.

PAULINA

Where's the camera?

MARKUS

He won't be taking any photos.

Markus shoots Anton a furtive look.

Half rising...

PAULINA

Can I get you something to drink? Coffee?

MARKUS

Let's just get started.

(trying a nicer
tack; false)

Shall we?

Markus sets up the tape recorder. Presses play.

He also readies a note pad.

MARKUS

I want you to cast your mind back to the day of the alleged incident.

PAULINA

Oh, I thought you were going to ask me about some background.

Markus looks at Anton: almost caught.

MARKUS

I'm not too worried about that right now because we know you're not a stripper.

PAULINA

How far back do you want me to start?

MARKUS

You received a phone call.

*Aware of Anton oozing around
the living room behind her.*

*As the interview goes on, Anton
continues to place himself in
threatening positions behind
her.*

PAULINA

That's right.

MARKUS

On what date?

PAULINA

October 13th.

MARKUS

And your memory of this date is precise.

PAULINA

Yes. I remember it clearly.

MARKUS

Why?...other than for the alleged...

PAULINA

Because it was the date the stock market went down.

MARKUS

Black Monday. When it took a tumble.

PAULINA

Yes.

MARKUS

(redirects)

What was the general tenor of that conversation?

PAULINA

Tenor?

MARKUS

Strike that. What exactly did he say?

PAULINA

He said he was staying in adjoining suites 239 and 241 at
the Edgemont Ambassador...

MARKUS

How do you remember that?

PAULINA

Those are fissile isotopes of plutonium.

MARKUS

Pardon?

PAULINA

Those are the two variants of Plutonium that can sustain chain reactions.

Markus shoots a look at Anton, raising his eyebrows.

PAULINA

That's how I remembered...

MARKUS

(cuts her off)

Did you record the conversation?

PAULINA

No. Should I have?

He looks up accusatorially.

MARKUS

That would be illegal.

(beat)

Did he impart anything else?

PAULINA

He said the documentation was signed off with emendations, wanted me to come over and review it.

MARKUS

'Documentation was signed' was code for something else.

PAULINA

No.

MARKUS

Did he say anything else?

PAULINA

He mentioned that we would meet at the Charthouse restaurant...at the floor level.

MARKUS

You mean ground level.

PAULINA

Yes.

MARKUS

At two o'clock in the morning.

PAULINA

I didn't choose the time.

MARKUS

Anyth...

PAULINA

I assumed he flew in late into town.

MARKUS

Assumed.

He writes that down.

MARKUS

Anything else?

PAULINA

No.

MARKUS

So, in effect then, that was the end of the conversation and the phone call. Correct?

PAULINA

Yes.

MARKUS

(statement of fact)

And you did not record that phone call or conversation.

PAULINA

No. You already asked me that.

Gives a her a quick flash of incredulity.

MARKUS

Then what?

PAULINA

You mean right after?

MARKUS

No, we can fast-forward to the time you arrive at the Edgemont.

PAULINA

Right. I drove to the Edgemont Amb...

MARKUS

(as if catching her)

You drove yourself?

PAULINA

No. I...

MARKUS

Took a cab?

PAULINA

No. I took Lyft.

MARKUS

Like an Uber.

PAULINA

Like an Uber, but without the reputation.

MARKUS

Gotcha!

PAULINA

(slightly alarmed)

Excuse me?

MARKUS

(matter of fact)

I said 'I gotcha'.

PAULINA

Oh. Okay.

MARKUS

Proceed.

PAULINA

I entered the hotel.

MARKUS

Okay.

PAULINA

And I went up to the room.

MARKUS

Now, why did you go up to the room when he said...

(clarifying)

you said he said...

(beatlet)

...he was going to meet you in the restaurant?

PAULINA

Oh. Let me backtrack a bit.

MARKUS

Please do. Will there be any additional backtracking?

PAULINA

No.

MARKUS

(sotto voce, taking
notes)

Backtracking.

PAULINA
(more emphatic)

No.

(beatlet, clarifying)

He texted me to come up. Said he wasn't ready to come down yet.

MARKUS

Because you had arrived early.

PAULINA

No. I didn't arrive early. I arrived on time.

MARKUS

In other words: not late.

PAULINA

I received the text as I walked into the lobby.

MARKUS

Did anyone else see you there?

PAULINA

In the lobby? Maybe the front desk clerk.

MARKUS

(assholish)

Maybe.

(beat)

Anyone else?

PAULINA

It was two o'clock in the morning.

MARKUS

Of course. I assume you took the elevator.

PAULINA

Yes.

MARKUS

Then what?

PAULINA

I knocked on the door...

MARKUS

Wait a minute. Where were his people?

PAULINA

I don't know. Perhaps in the adjoining suites.

MARKUS

You mean the adjacent suites.

PAULINA

Yes.

MARKUS

Go on...

PAULINA

He greeted me at the door, invited me in, made me a cocktail.

MARKUS

Do you think the cocktail was designed to inebriate you...an attempt to loosen you up in any way?

PAULINA

No. I don't think so.

MARKUS

Was he drinking?

PAULINA

I don't remember.

MARKUS

Really?

PAULINA

He may have already polished off a drink, because there was an empty tumbler by the TV. I don't really recall.

MARKUS

What happened after that?

PAULINA

He mentioned my work, how he liked it, got up from the armchair couch and was heading toward a manila envelope behind me. As he walked past me, he brushed up against me...

MARKUS

On purpose...

PAULINA

I don't know. I don't think so. Maybe.

(beat)

He swung around, grabbed me, and maneuvered me onto the bed.

*Reliving the horror of that,
she is visibly upset and
unsettled.*

MARKUS

Did you resist?

PAULINA

I couldn't.

MARKUS

Couldn't?

PAULINA

I couldn't move. I was mortified. I was frozen.

MARKUS

Then what?

PAULINA

He ripped my blouse open, and effectively proceeded..

MARKUS

Effectively.

PAULINA

...proceeded to have his way...

MARKUS

Without your consent.

PAULINA

Of course.

MARKUS

Of course? How would he know that?

PAULINA

(sharpening)

How would he know what?

MARKUS

That it wasn't consensual.

PAULINA

Because a man should know when a woman is not participating.

MARKUS

Isn't it possible in the scenario you describe a woman may not be as interested in the act as the man is, that it is still consensual...that the man may interpret a lack of resistance as consent, or that the woman may wish to not stop the act for the pleasure of her partner?

PAULINA

Yes. It's possible. But that's not what happened here. That may be reserved for a husband and wife, or lovers, or a clumsy new relationship.

MARKUS

Isn't this what this was: a clumsy new relationship?

PAULINA

No!

MARKUS

So was it more mature?

PAULINA

No!

MARKUS

Which was it, clumsy or mature?

PAULINA

You're giving me false choices.

MARKUS

Am I?

PAULINA

Yes. What kinds of reporters are you?

MARKUS

Before we act on this, we have to determine the veracity of your claim. Surely you understand the gravity of the situation here, don't you?

PAULINA

Of course I do.

MARKUS

Do you truly?

PAULINA

I know what happened to me.

MARKUS

That's not what I am asking. You understand what you're asking us to do here.

PAULINA

Of course.

MARKUS

I'm not so certain you are. If this goes to print, there will be a chain of consequences unleashed that affects everyone involved and many others beyond this. A perfect storm of unintended consequences will be borne of this. And I can say this with certainty: Life for you will never be the same again.

PAULINA

Excuse me.

Visibly upset, she runs out of the room.

Nonchalantly, he gets up.

MARKUS

What do you think?

Anton gives him a knowing look and closes his eyes, pinching the bridge of his nose, rocking his head.

MARKUS

That's what I was afraid of.

Markus walks over to the hallway and calls out.

MARKUS

Paulina? Would you please rejoin us?

After a bit of a delay, she re-enters, treading over to where she was sitting before.

The two wait until she is seated to retake their positions.

MARKUS

Here.

Markus hands her a large packet of documents wrapped in a manila folder.

Dabbing her eyes with a ball of kleenex...

PAULINA

What's this?

MARKUS

Read it.

Without opening it...

PAULINA

Do you believe me?

Markus looks at Anton.

MARKUS

We believe you.

Satisfied, she opens the manila folder and begins reading the thick packet.

Markus sits there waiting with intensity.

After a very long beat..

PAULINA

(slowly looks up,
realizing)

You're not with the paper, are you?

A beat.

The doorbell rings.

All three react, surprised.

End of scene.