

Virtuoso

INT. SAL'S BASEMENT. NIGHT.

Jazz MUSIC softly plays. There are two men seated at opposite ends of a dining table. The table and room have a luxurious setup, with the sensibilities of someone presumably wealthy. Ten photographs of men are lined up in two rows by the stairs. There is an enormous grand piano.

OLIVER WALSH, 30, a cocky yet clever male musician is tied up with rope to a chair. He wakes from a drug-induced sleep and harbors a fresh scar on his forehead. He is wearing an expensive suit, not fitted to him, clothing he'd otherwise never be seen wearing. There is a level of panic in Oliver's eyes as he takes in his surroundings and new clothes, but he slowly settles into the vibe the gentle music is supplying.

SAL RUSSO, 41, egoistic but strikingly cordial business man and on the loose serial killer sits at the other end of the table with an upper class, carefree, veneer. He continues dining casually until he notices Oliver has woken up.

SAL
Good evening, Oliver.

Sal continues eating. Oliver desperately attempts to remain calm and collected. This proves a struggle when Sal suddenly drops his knife and fork and stands up. He takes his chair and places it adjacent to Oliver's. He picks up the fork and knife, cutting into the meat on Oliver's plate. He lifts the cut of meat to Oliver's lips. Oliver refuses it.

SAL (CONT'D)
Turkey.

Oliver tightens his lips. Sal stares into his eyes.

SAL (CONT'D)
(slowly)
It is a perception that in...

Sal moves a hand over the ropes binding Oliver to the chair.

SAL (CONT'D)
...situations such as these,
kindness...

Sal scrapes the end of the fork against Oliver's bottom lip.

SAL (CONT'D)
...is a rare gift.

Oliver stares back at Sal and comes to an understanding about his offer. He takes the meat between his teeth and begins to eat. Once he swallows, Sal grins.

Sal feeds him another bite, and reaches his hand over to move hair from out of Oliver's eyes. Oliver flinches away.

SAL (CONT'D)
Gratitude is always rewarded.

Oliver keeps chewing, following Sal's every move with his eyes. Sal maintains eye contact with him

Sal takes out a pocket knife, and flips it open. Oliver swallows and tenses as Sal leans down, cutting him loose from the ropes. Oliver stretches his arms, and watches Sal with a newfound disbelief.

Sal moves his chair back to his own plate, and resumes his meal. Oliver sits in shock for a beat before following suit. Sal has placed the pocket knife right next to his own plate.

Oliver looks around again, focusing on the wall of ten framed photos in two rows of five. They are all white, brunette, men around his own age. The tenth frame is empty.

He focuses on the man that comes before the empty frame.

OLIVER
Andy Hughes.

Sal looks up, instantly intrigued.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
He was on the news last fall.

Sal follows Oliver's gaze to the wall of photos.

SAL
Not all of them made the news.

Oliver thinks hard.

OLIVER
Only five of them. At least only five of them that I know of were linked to...

Oliver puts his fork down.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
You're the Eater of Edison.

Sal continues eating, staring at Oliver's plate. He points with his fork.

SAL
It is turkey, I promise.

OLIVER
Is feeding people to other people
not your style?

SAL
I don't like to share.

Oliver continues eating and is remarkably unfazed.

A beat.

OLIVER
What's your favorite part?

SAL
Excuse me?

OLIVER
Of the body?

Oliver takes another bite of turkey.

A beat.

SAL
The thigh.

Oliver's nonchalant attitude clashes dangerously with Sal's desire for complete dominance.

SAL (CONT'D)
Do you not fear me, Oliver?

OLIVER
I don't find you particularly
intimidating.

SAL
And why is that?

OLIVER
(smiling)
You respond well to gratitude. And
I am a receptive person.

Sal continues to eat and is mildly unnerved.

SAL
You seem to have the impression
that under the right circumstances,
I will feel obligated to set you
free.

OLIVER SAL (CONT'D)
I do not. Why would I do that?

Sal is stunned to silence for a beat. Oliver remains placid.

 SAL (CONT'D)
 (with the composure of an
 everyman)
I am going to eat you, Oliver
Walsh. Down to your bone. I am
going to murder you and cook you.
And I am going to put your picture
up on my wall. You are going to
finish my collection. For ten days,
I am going to allow you to live as
I sweeten your flesh. The eleventh
day is when I will carry out with
the execution. I do not hold a
sliver of gratitude within myself
that would be enough to change the
finality of this arrangement. Do
you understand?

Oliver is mesmerized by this rundown.

 OLIVER
I understand.
 (growing bold)
Seeing as I am already going to be
an appetizer, an entree, and a
dessert, may I ask what your name
is?

 SAL
 (with difficulty)
Sal.

Oliver smiles, taking a sip of champagne.

 OLIVER
Sal. I want to tell you something
that I'm sure you haven't heard
from your other...

Oliver looks to the pictures of Sal's victims.

 SAL
And what is that?

 OLIVER
I don't care. You can kill me, if
that's what you want. You can eat
me too. I'd just prefer not to be
tortured.

(MORE)

OLIVER (CONT'D)

You've caught me at a good time in my life. I really don't have much to live for.

SAL

(dumbfounded)

You want this.

OLIVER

Want is a strong word. I accept this. Though, I'm afraid of the pain. Will my death hurt?

SAL

You won't feel a thing.

OLIVER

Then Sal, you can do with me as you wish. Although, I know you don't need my permission.

Sal is grappling with an enthusiasm he is unfamiliar with.

Sal stands and moves over to where Oliver sits. He sits on the table and runs a hand over Oliver's facial features. He pauses with his thumb against Oliver's bottom lip.

SAL

You won't beg for mercy or scream when your time comes?

OLIVER

If you think it'd be amusing to watch me kiss your ass and then beg like a coward for my life, then you're not going to be very entertained.

Sal moves his hand to Oliver's throat. Oliver swallows.

SAL

(whispering)

If you intend to confuse me, I will show you no mercy. I have no qualms with removing a limb without any anesthetic, an arm maybe.

OLIVER

(mock whispering)

I'm ambidextrous.

Sal smiles, and moves away. His expression is unreadable as he pockets his knife, and takes out a key chain.

Oliver focuses on the keys and which pocket he took them out of. He watches Sal climb the stairs of the basement that lead back into his home.

SAL

This might prove to be interesting,
Oliver. Feel free to explore the
space, by the way.

Sal unlocks the door at the top of the steps. He stops.

SAL (CONT'D)

It's all for you.

The door is opened, Sal exits, and it locks automatically behind him with a loud CLICK.

Oliver is staring at where Sal exited, and turns to notice the grand piano. He walks over to it and sits down. He plays a single measure of one of Chopin's Nocturnes and looks up at the ceiling as if he can see through it. His bold composure is crumpling visibly.

There is fear present within him.

He plays one note.