HELD FOR QUESTIONING

By

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Three suspects in a robbery/homicide are arrested and then released without explanation.

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INT. – OBSERVATION ROOM

We see three men floating suspended in sensory deprivation tanks wearing high-tech helmets and special gloves.

Above them the ceiling is transparent and on the level above we see a large room with dozens of monitors on the walls. In the center of the room is a slightly raised circular platform ringed with additional monitors like an architect’s angled drawing table. Within the ring of monitors is DR. LIBOR (an older MD), DET. YANCY (a haggard cop), D.A. WELCH (young good looking, ambitious), and ERIC MARCUS (the inventor, Tony Stark without a conscience).

D.A. WELCH

If this doesn’t work…

ERIC MARCUS

It costs you nothing D.A. Welch. This is my technology and my dime.

DET. YANCY

Is there anyone here *not* tired of hearing that?

D.A. WELCH

Actually, Yancy, it protects the DA’s office and the department in case something goes wrong. So keep blowing your own horn Mr. Marcus.

ERIC MARCUS

Nothing is going to go wrong! And it’s Eric.

DR. LIBOR

Actually patient…I mean suspect two is experiencing an increased heart rate…

ERIC MARCUS

Tell me something more specific Dr. Libor.

DR. LIBOR

…never mind. He’s just getting laid.

D.A. WELCH

I’m not going to ask how you’re making that work.

ERIC MARCUS

Sciency goodness and two hundred IQ points.

INT. – NIGHT – A LOCAL DIVE BAR

MERKINS, JONSEY and ALEC, three local thugs are drinking and celebrating in an otherwise empty bar. The BARTENDER is a huge man with a boxer’s flat nose and cauliflower ears. He’s serving them unenthusiastically.

BARTENDER

Merkins, you three getting braced for more trouble?

MERKINS

We’re celebratin’ ya mook. Didn’t ya hear?

BARTENDER

I heard you were being held for questioning.

JONSIE

Yeah, but it didn’t take.

ALEC

Good one Jonsey! It didn’t take. You know like we weren’t really feelin’ it.

BARTENDER

Alec you ever have an original thought?

MERKINS

Watch your fucking mouth bartender. If something were to happen to you we can just as easily pour our own drinks.

BARTENDER

Yeah whatever you say tough guy. I ain’t no pussy-ass armored car driver. I’ll flatten the three of you.

Jonsey slips his hand inside his jacket. The Bartender pulls a sawed-off shotgun from under the bar and points it at him.

MERKINS

You think you can get all of us with that thing?

BARTENDER

Nope.

Jonsey slowly removes a pack of cigarettes from his jacket. The Bartender keeps the gun leveled.

BARTENDER

There’s no smoking inside.

JONSEY

We was just leaving.

Merkins throws a bloody fifty dollar bill on the counter.

BARTENDER

I’m not taking that.

MERKINS

It’s for your mother. Thank her for me will ya?

The three leave the bar.

INT. – OBSERVATION ROOM

We see the three leaving the bar and getting into a vehicle on several monitors.

DET. YANCY

These guys and their mouths are going to have a tough time in the joint.

D.A. WELCH

Good. They killed three guards they deserve some suffering.

INT. –NIGHT – Charger

Merkins is driving, Jonsey is sitting up front, Alec is in back.

JONSEY

What I need is to eat a real fucking hamburger.

ALEC

With bacon and mayo and…

MERKINS

It doesn’t make sense them letting us go like that.

JONSEY

You think we’re being surveilled?

MERKINS

Nah, I been watching. No unmarks, no plain clothes and none of us has used their phone. But something ain’t right and whatever *they* got planned *I* plan to be long gone before it happens.

ALEC

What does that mean Merk?

JONSEY

Yeah, what does that mean?

MERKINS

I’m leaving town for a while.

JONSEY

For how long?

ALEC

Leaving town? For how long?

MERKINS

Until this feeling in my gut goes away or they close the case. Whichever comes first. In the meantime leave the money where it is. We’ll go together to get it when I get back.

EXT. – DAY – PUBLIC PARK. ON SCREEN: 18 MONTHS LATER

Alec and Jonsey are sitting on a picnic table drinking out of brown paper bags. Merkins approaches them from behind.

MERKINS

Is this the hand-job table?

JONSEY

Yeah, depending on your grip I may not charge.

Alec and Jonesy jump off the table laughing and hug Merkins.

INT. – AFTERNOON – RESTAURANT BOOTH

Jonsey, Merkins, and Alec laughing and talking.

JONSEY

I still can’t figure why you went to Miami. You know somebody there or something?

MERKINS

No. That was the point.

ALEC

I’m glad you’re back Merks. This guy’s making me crazy talking about getting married.

MERKINS

The fuck’s he talking about Jonsey?

JONSEY

Yeah, you’re invited even.

MERKINS

Well I can’t say she isn’t loyal.

JONSEY

Damn right she is. She’s been sitting on that money like a mother hen. Never asks about it, never touched it.

MERKINS

Is she gonna be pissed when we rip up her kitchen floor?

JONSEY

When she sees that ten million dollars she’ll be sucking my dick in gratitude for the rest of her life.

MERKINS

Well me and Alec helped.

JONSEY

Yeah, so?

MERKINS

Just saying this blow-job payout is something I think you should have mentioned when we were planning the score. (holding back a chuckle)

JONSEY

I tell you what; if each of you will split your share with her I’ll see what I can arrange.

They all start laughing.

INT. – OBSERVATION ROOM

Within the ring of monitors are DR. LIBOR, DET. YANCY, D.A. WELCH, and ERIC MARCUS. They are watching the three on different monitors.

DET. YANCY

Gotcha mother-fuckers!

ERIC MARCUS

Damn right we do Detective.

D.A. WELCH

We have her in Interrogation Seven. Yancy go to her house. I’ll have the warrant by the time you get there. Great work everyone! Great work! And please remember this is an ongoing investigation no one is to discuss anything about tonight with anyone.

Yancy grabs his coat and leaves, DA Welch pulls out her phone and makes a call.

DR. LIBOR

Mr. Marcus if I may have a word?

ERIC MARCUS

Certainly doctor.

DR. LIBOR

I wasn’t told the details of this project and I didn’t really pry but now that it seems to have concluded…

ERIC MARCUS

You want to know how it works?

DR. LIBOR

In laymen’s terms please, I’m only a physician.

ERIC MARCUS

Of course. You remember that game where people could create characters with avatars and basically live a life of their choosing online?

DR. LIBOR

Yes. It was popular for several years.

ERIC MARCUS

We sedated the suspects and put them in sensory deprivation tanks, used sonics to create a sense of touch and motion, tapped into their sensory lobes to create smells, tastes, and sounds.And as a final touch we tweaked that old gaming technology to create a virtual world where we control everything down to the passage of time.

DR. LIBOR

Creating a false reality for them.

ERIC MARCUS

Yes but, we don’t plant ideas. The reality we saw was how they live or at least how they see their lives.

DA Welch approaches.

DR. LIBOR

I’m no lawyer but what about their Fifth Amendment rights?

D.A. WELCH

We can hold them for up to twenty-four hours and at no time did anyone ask them anything. What we saw has the validity of a spontaneous confession. They will all wake up in a holding cell slightly damp, very confused, but unharmed.

ERIC MARCUS

Look I think we all know this is going to get challenged. But the main thing is the technology works and the bad guys don’t know we have it. And if the police don’t license it from me I know the military will.

D.A. WELCH

Remarkable.

ERIC MARCUS

Thank you.

D.A. WELCH

Well gentlemen as much as I have enjoyed the last twelve hours. I need some claret about now, care to join me?

ERIC MARCUS

That is an excellent idea.

The three exit.