

Message in a Bottle

By

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FADE IN:

INT. DORM BUILDING LOBBY - NIGHT

WE SEE PAUL (21), a tall, lanky guy with brown hair and glasses walk in through the front door. He is wearing a blue Polo and khakis. He is carrying a brown bag with a bottle of Jack Daniel's inside.

The lobby is full of students who are quietly studying. Paul turns to them with arms raised up.

PAUL:
What the fuck are you guys doing?
Let's party!

Most of the students recognize him and laugh off his suggestion.

STUDENT #1:
It's a Wednesday night Paul.

Paul starts laughing maniacally and takes a small sip from his bag.

PAUL:
(scoffs) Yeah, so?

He goes to the elevator, presses the button and then pulls out his phone.

The lights of the lobby start to flicker for a second, and then continue working properly.

We hear the front door opening again and WE SEE VICTORIA (20), about 5'5, a blonde-haired girl with striking beauty, almost as if she is glowing. And she's also Paul's ex-girlfriend. Oh shit.

She is on the phone, so he recognizes her voice without turning around. His face turns red, and he takes a big swig from the bottle.

VICTORIA:(ON THE PHONE)
Okay hey but listen I have to call
you back, I'm about to get on the
elevator. (beat) Okay then, text
me, bye.

She stands behind and to the left of Paul. Once he is sure she's off the phone, he turns around and says...

(CONTINUED)

PAUL:
HEY VICKY.

His voice is excessively loud.

PAUL:
(almost whispering) How are you?

She's now on her phone texting.

VICTORIA:
Oh hi. Good. How are you?

Now she looks up at him, and they make eye contact for a few seconds. He looks away.

PAUL:
I'm doing alright. I thought you lived across the street?

VICTORIA:
I do, just came over to visit a friend. On your floor, actually.

PAUL:
Oh, cool.

VICTORIA:
What's that smell?

Victoria has now started to notice the scent of alcohol in the air.

The awkwardness is evident, Paul is now tapping his feet. Victoria just continues to text, we see a slight grin on her face. The elevator can't come soon enough.

The 'ding' noise of the elevator announces its arrival. It is extremely loud, which causes Paul to jump. Paul let's his ex get in the elevator first by signaling with his hand, a gentleman as always. She smiles

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR

The two get in and quickly scuttle to opposite corners of the elevator, Paul near the buttons and Victoria right across from him. He presses '12' and right afterwards presses the 'door close' button.

We hear the scraping of the elevator going up. It's going to be a slow ride.

(CONTINUED)

As soon as the doors close, Victoria starts inspecting her phone.

VICTORIA
I think I need a new phone. Stupid
thing stops working all the time.

PAUL:
That sucks.

His voice sounds like its starting to crack.

PAUL: (CONT'D.)
My phone last week fell on the
toilet and--

WE HEAR a loud bang. Victoria jumps.

VICTORIA:
What the fuck was that?

PAUL:
I have no idea...

He starts looking up, as if trying to find an answer.

PAUL: (CONT'D.)
We might be stuck.

Victoria remains silent. She goes back to her phone to send a text.

PAUL: (CONT'D.)
It's fine, didn't you hear about
the best part of the elevator
business? It has its ups and downs!

Victoria is not amused. She now looks him straight in the eyes.

VICTORIA:
That's the biggest problem, you
never take things seriously.

Paul shrugs it off and lets out a wry smile. His attempt at humor has failed. When they dated, she would laugh at every joke he made. Perhaps his goofy attitude is what caused their relationship to end.

Paul moves his attention to getting them out of the elevator. He is attentively looking at the button panel.

PAUL:

Let's see what this one does.

WE SEE the button panel as Paul presses the ALARM button. An alarm rings twice.

PAUL:

That was loud. If there's anyone downstairs, they might hear the alarm. If nothing happens, I'll call for help.

He begins to sit down.

VICTORIA:

Are you seriously sitting down?
That's gross.

PAUL:

Hey, we're gonna be here for a while. Might as well rest.

He drinks from the bottle in the bag.

Victoria rolls her eyes. She is still on her phone.

VICTORIA:

There's no signal in here.

She keeps trying, raising her phone as if that will help.

Paul just looks at her and laughs.

PAUL:

"Can you hear me now? Good."

He laughs.

PAUL (CONT'D):

In five minutes I'll call for help.
What time is it?

VICTORIA:

10:23. Why not now?

PAUL:

I don't want to call the fire department if someone in the building already did after hearing the alarm.

VICTORIA:
Oh Paul, always thinking about
others before yourself.

Her observation makes him smile. Maybe that was why they
broke up? He gave just as much attention to everyone as he
did to Victoria? Maybe it was his lackadaisical attitude
towards things?

PAUL:
Want some?

VICTORIA:
Ew no, is that rum?

PAUL:
I wish. It's whiskey. But I'm going
slow with it, you know, the night
is young.

Victoria doesn't respond.

Paul starts to hum a song, while Victoria gives up on her
quest for a signal. She is now slouched against the wall of
the elevator.

PAUL:
How long was it since we last saw
each other? A few months right?

VICTORIA:
Yeah, I've just been so busy.

PAUL:
I bet.

VICTORIA:
What does that mean?

PAUL:
I don't know. I admire you. You're
smart and caring. To you.

He drinks from the bag. Vicky shakes her head in
disapproval.

And like that, an attempt at a conversation is over. Vicky
tries to close her eyes to maybe imagine she is in some
other place.

Paul stands up.

PAUL:
What time is it?

VICTORIA:
10:27.

He goes to the button panel and presses the help button. A dial tone starts, and then, it rings as if it is a telephone call. A female 911 operator picks up.

911 OPERATOR (THROUGH PANEL):
911, what's your emergency?

PAUL:
Hi, uh, we're stuck in an elevator.

911 OPERATOR:
Is everyone alright? Any need for medical assistance? How many people are there? What happened?

VICTORIA:
We're fine we just want to get out of here.

PAUL:
There's two people in here. And we don't know, it just stopped working.

911 OPERATOR:
I'm currently relaying your situation to the fire department and they should be there shortly. The light will start flashing when they're on their way.

She hangs up.

Paul looks at the button and sees that it is outlined with a white light. It is currently not flashing.

PAUL:
Okay, we'll be here.

Victoria laughs.

VICTORIA:
'We'll be here?' Really?

PAUL:
Well, we aren't going anywhere yet. Did you notice all the questions
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PAUL: (cont'd)
she asked? She probably thinks
we're in like a lot of danger and
there's smoke coming from the
outside and a giant fire and--

VICTORIA:
Please, stop. There's no need for
that shit.

Paul tried to be funny, but failed once again.

Victoria sits down slowly, as if trying to avoid any
inevitable contact with the ground.

VICTORIA:
As long as I shower afterwards...

PAUL:
There's hand sanitizer in my room.

VICTORIA:
And you used to say I was the germ
freak.

She laughs.

VICTORIA: (CONT'D.)
I remember you bought me a little
Kleenex pack for my purse, and told
me to tell you if I ever ran out so
you could buy me more.

Paul laughs.

PAUL:
Maybe the best gift I ever gave
you.

They both laugh.

PAUL: (CONT'D.)
I hope you still have some. You
know, being in this space, with all
the germs and bacteria flying
around...

VICTORIA:
Stop.

Paul looks at her and smiles. The awkwardness from before
has now gone, and they are now acting as friends in a more
informal tone.

(CONTINUED)

Paul moves in to kiss her in a violent manner. The kiss turns passionate as Victoria doesn't push him away. Suddenly she stops.

VICTORIA:
What the fuck Paul?

PAUL:
Sorry, it was the alcohol talking.
Or moving. Moving me. Towards you.

VICTORIA:
That's not how it works, I've found
someone e---

Paul quickly interrupts her. The conversation continues like nothing happened.

PAUL:
So, everything going okay with your
classes? I miss giving you math
tutoring.

VICTORIA:
Yeah I'm doing fine just a lot of
homework and working on some
internships. Hopefully I can get
one in the summer with an
Architecture firm in the city.

PAUL:
Well that's something. You're
starting to sound like an adult.

Victoria dismisses his remark.

VICTORIA:
What about you? Don't you graduate
in May?

PAUL:
Yeah well, you know, I'm just
letting it all fall in place.

VICTORIA:
What does that mean?

PAUL:
You know, I'm not set on any plan.
I'm just like drifting, hoping I
can get something.

VICTORIA:
So you have no plans after
graduation?

PAUL:
Not yet. Maybe soon, I mean... I
don't know...

VICTORIA:(TO HERSELF)
Just going to drink your trust fund
away.

PAUL: (ALMOST YELLING)
What was that?

VICTORIA:
Nothing, nothing.

Paul starts to feel the awkwardness creep in. He starts to
tap the floor with his finger, and then takes a long swig
from the bottle.

PAUL: (CONT'D.)
The light isn't flashing yet.
Should I call again?

VICTORIA:
Yeah.

Paul stands up and struggles to hit the HELP button again.

PAUL: (ALMOST WHISPERING TO HIMSELF)
Sorry, a little tipsy.

The same lady from before answers.

911 OPERATOR:
911, what's your emergency?

Paul is starting to slur his words but trying to keep his
composure.

PAUL:
Yeah, hi, we're the people stuck in
the elevator. We were wondering
when will someone come (beat) to
save us.

911 OPERATOR:
Oh, you were serious about that? I
thought it was just a joke. I'll
dispatch a rescue unit right away.
Stay calm.

(CONTINUED)

She hangs up.

PAUL:
What the fuck? 'Thought it was just
a joke'?

VICTORIA:
Guess I'm not the only one that
doesn't take you that seriously.

WE SEE the HELP button start to flash.

PAUL:
I'm offended... is it my voice? My
accent?

VICTORIA:
It's just you, you know?

She laughs.

PAUL:
It's always that, then.

He sits back down. Victoria is still trying to find signal
on her phone.

VICTORIA:
I see you're wearing my favorite
shirt. I love that color. Despite
the whiskey stains.

PAUL:
Yeah, it's a good one.

VICTORIA:
You know girls love navy blue.

PAUL:
You used to say that, but the shirt
isn't working its magic just yet.

VICTORIA:
I'm sure you'll find someone. You
know, even though we went through a
lot, you're a great guy.

PAUL:
Well, thank you for the compliment.
You're not too bad yourself.

They both smile. Victoria moves to sit closer to him.

VICTORIA:

Think of everything that had to happen for this moment to happen. The circumstances that had to fall in place for us to meet here at this hour, for this elevator to fail. The things we talk about are also a complete set of different possibilities now that we are no longer romantically involved.

PAUL:

Have you been taking philosophy classes?

They both laugh. Paul finds it strange that Victoria went from only caring about getting a signal on her phone to full-on Aristotle.

VICTORIA:

I'm serious. Why do things happen? We broke up, and life continued. I'm as happy right now as I was with you. Do I miss it? Sure, but I just take what I learned from it and move on.

PAUL:

You're saying I should move on? What makes you think I haven't?

VICTORIA:

I'm just saying. We haven't seen each other in a while, and then we get stuck in an elevator. Don't you find it strange to be in this little area with someone who you have so many memories with? And yet it's as if we are ghosts, when we used to be everything to each other.

PAUL:

Wow, we break up and you become Nietzsche. Anyway, I like to think we--

She interrupts him.

VICTORIA:

I heard you stopped going to class for a while after we broke up. Is that true?

(CONTINUED)

PAUL:

Maybe. Can we make out again?

VICTORIA:

And you would stay in your room on the weekends even when your friends told you to go out.

PAUL:

You sure know a lot about me. I had that cliche, 'hopeless romantic loses the love of his life' period. But now that's over.

VICTORIA:

I'm glad.

PAUL:(TO HIMSELF)

I think.

The awkwardness from the lobby starts to creep up again. Paul feels his cheeks getting red. He knows he still has feelings for her. He takes a big swig from the bag.

PAUL: (CONT'D.)

I guess, if this elevator continues we never get to have this conversation. You would just be someone I used to know, with a broken phone. Is that what you're trying to say?

VICTORIA:

Exactly. And believe me, I also had a hard time erasing you from my life. And seeing you now, just brings back so many things.

Paul can't wait for her to shut up.

PAUL:

But life goes on.

VICTORIA:

Aren't you going to ask me who I'm coming to see on your floor?

Paul goes cold. He was trying to avoid the reason as to why she was in his building. He takes a big gulp, and stammers.

PAUL:

Wh-wh-what?

He lets out a really loud burp.

(CONTINUED)

VICTORIA:

Do you not want to know why I'm here?

PAUL:

Well, I- uh- I thought -

We see Paul almost about to throw up.

A loud bang is heard. The doors start to open slowly. Paul lets out a sigh of relief. A fireman on the other side of the door tells them to stay calm.

FIREMAN:

This'll only take a sec. Everyone okay in there?

PAUL:

We're fine.

The doors open completely. It is the sixth floor. A FIREMAN (45) in full uniform is standing in front of them.

FIREMAN:

Good God, it reeks of alcohol in here. That's going in the report. (beat) I thought you said there were two of you.

CUT TO:

INT. DORM FLOOR LOBBY- NIGHT

WE SEE a POV from the fireman's perspective. Only Paul is in the elevator.

PAUL:

Yeah me and--

He looks over. There is no one there, just an empty bottle of whiskey. Paul is terrified.

PAUL:

Me and myself.

He lets out a laugh. The fireman shrugs it off, and continues to inspect the elevator. Paul looks lost, and takes out his phone to look at the time. It's 10:50, having been in the elevator for almost a half hour.

FIREMAN:

You gotta take the other elevator kid, either that or the stairs. And

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

FIREMAN: (cont'd)
easy with the booze, it'll make you
see things that aren't there.

PAUL:
That's fine, thanks a lot. Have a
good night.

Paul presses the button to call the other elevator. We hear
the doors open. The bag is still in his hand.

He walks into the elevator and takes yet another swig.

CUT TO:

INT. DORM FLOOR LOBBY- NIGHT

Paul steps off the elevator in the 12th floor. His friends
Ryan (19) and Nick (20) are watching TV in the lounge.

RYAN:
Rough night, P?

PAUL:
Just a typical Wednesday night.

RYAN:
I getcha. Dude you stink.

PAUL:
Yeah, no, the elevator smelled bad
so I think I caught some of it.

NICK:
You smell like bad decisions and
regret.

PAUL:
Fuck you.

He takes another swig.

NICK:
Are you drinking?

RYAN:
He's gotta drown his sorrows
somehow.

PAUL:
I'm just having fun.

(CONTINUED)

NICK:
Wanna go downstairs to get
something to drink Ry?

RYAN:
Nah, I'm straight.

PAUL:
I'll get you guys something.

NICK:
Coke, please. Appreciate it P.

Paul walks to the elevator. We hear a door opening. Paul presses the down button to call the elevator. As Paul looks to the left, we see Victoria coming out of a room with Steve (20), a short, Italian-looking kid with greasy hair. Victoria is wearing a beautiful red dress.

As he starts to doubt whether what he is seeing is real or not, the elevator comes. The doors open and inside is the most gorgeous blonde Paul has ever seen staring back at him with blue eyes. She smiles at him with pearl-white teeth.

He hesitates to get in the elevator, but is able to crack a friendly smile at her. She smiles back. As he's walking into the elevator, he throws out the brown bag in the trash can.

We see Paul stand next to the girl in the elevator. As the doors start to close, we see him move his head to look at her as if to say something.

When the doors close we...

FADE TO BLACK.