

DIALECTICAL

by

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FADE IN:

INT. CAR - AFTERNOON

A woman, JORDAN, in her early 20s and dressed casually but well, drives down a curvy, tree-lined road. She is alone in the car, the radio is off.

JORDAN

I was wondering if...no...I wanted to ask you about whether or not you think I'm improving at all...I wanted...Today I want to know if I'm doing...if you think I'm doing better than I was when I first started seeing you...

A police car passes in the opposite direction.

JORDAN

It's hard for me to tell, because I'm just, you know, trapped in *being me* and I'm...Oh goddamn it.

Jordan sighs and turns on the radio. A few seconds of driving pass, then the car rounds a sharp turn and a figure darts into the road. Jordan slams on the breaks. We see that she has not hit the figure.

JORDAN

Jesus.

A man, NICK, in his mid-thirties and dressed in a t-shirt and athletic pants, stands in front of JORDAN's car. He looks disheveled. The two stare at each other for a moment, then NICK lets out an anguished groan and puts his hands on his head, looking at the ground. He begins pacing in front of the car.

Jordan hesitates for a moment before stepping out of the car.

JORDAN

Hey, are you okay?

Nick lets out a deranged laugh.

NICK

No, I am not.

Nick continues to pace. Jordan eyes the road behind them nervously.

JORDAN
Hey, you know you should probably
get out of the road.

Nick ignores her, continues pacing.

JORDAN
I mean, I have to go, and also,
you're going to get, um...

Jordan trails off, eyeing a hospital wristband on Nick's
wrist.

JORDAN
Oh.

Nick yells again, then trudges off to the tree-line, slumps
down against a tree and puts his head in his hands.

NICK
I'm sorry. You can go.

JORDAN
Do you, uh...do you want a ride
back?

Nick looks up.

NICK
Back where?

JORDAN
Well, Rodgers.

Nick is surprised.

JORDAN
I mean, the wristband. And there's
nothing else out here. And the
whole, uh...jumping in front of my
car...thing.

Nick breaks eye contact, looks at a point behind Jordan.

JORDAN
It just seems like you should
probably go back. So. Do you want
a ride?

NICK
No.

Jordan hesitates.

JORDAN

I guess that's your call. I can't make you. But it's kind of either you come back with me or you come back in a cop car, don't you think?

NICK

(shaking his head)

That cop's been driving up and down this road for an hour and he hasn't spotted me.

JORDAN

Well, it'll be easier after I call 911.

NICK

(quietly)

Fuck.

JORDAN

I mean, really, what's the plan here, anyway? There are better ways to kill yourself. Ways that don't involve, you know. Other people.

NICK

Do you have any suggestions?

Jordan does not reply.

NICK

Why don't you just go?

JORDAN

It just seems...I can't leave you alone here. And we're going to the same place, anyway, so...are you sure I can't give you a ride?

NICK

I could hurt you, you know.

JORDAN

I...are you...do you plan to?

NICK

No. But I think you're an idiot if you believe me. You shouldn't be giving suicidal men rides places.

JORDAN

I mean, I give a suicidal woman rides every time I'm in a car, and I've survived every drive with her, so...do you get it? Because it's me?

Nick does not reply.

JORDAN

Will you please let me drive you back?

NICK

Fine.

Nick stands up, walks to Jordan's car, and sits in the passenger side front seat. After a beat, Jordan gets back in the drivers seat, restarts the car, and starts driving. She glances at the clock, which reads 2:53

JORDAN

Shit.

NICK

What?

JORDAN

I'm just gonna be late for my appointment.

NICK

Right. Sorry.

JORDAN

No it's not your...well. It's okay.

NICK

How far away are we, anyway?

JORDAN

Uh, about 10 minutes.

NICK

Son of a bitch. I've been out here for at least an hour and I made it 10 minutes from the goddamn hospital.

JORDAN

Well, you know. The speed limit's high through here.

NICK
(muttering)
Not high enough.

JORDAN
Wow.

NICK
Do you want to know why I want to
kill myself?

JORDAN
Um. Do you want to talk about it?

NICK
I accidentally killed my dad.

JORDAN
Oh.

NICK
He was punching my mom, and I
pushed him, and he fell down the
stairs, and he hit his head, and
he died. It was 16 years ago last
week. How old are you?

JORDAN
I'm 23.

NICK
I was a little younger than you,
then. It was 16 years ago, and it
was the right thing to do, and I
knew that then, and I know that
now, and I still have spent almost
every moment since wanting to rip
my own throat out, you know?

JORDAN
I know...some of that.

NICK
So why are you suicidal?

JORDAN
Bold.

NICK
I told *you*.

JORDAN
I didn't ask.

NICK
Are you bulimic?

JORDAN
What? No.

NICK
You've kind of got that look.

JORDAN
What does that even mean?

NICK
You're normal looking. Bulimics
look normal. Just more tired. You
look normal and tired.

JORDAN
Thank you?

Nick laughs.

NICK
So come on. Distract me from
myself a little here, I'm getting
a real strong tuck-and-roll urge.
What are you gonna talk about
today, when you arrive late to
your appointment?

JORDAN
Um, this.

NICK
Oh shit, that's fair. Well, what
were you going to talk about
before this?

JORDAN
Um, nothing. I didn't have
anything today.

NICK
You're suicidal with nothing to
talk about? Fuck. I think that's
worse than me.

JORDAN
I'm not like, actively suicidal. I
just...what do you think normal
people think when they stub their
toe?

NICK
"Ouch, my toe hurts?"

JORDAN
Right, sure. I think that. Then I think, "I wish I were dead."

NICK
Over a stubbed toe?

JORDAN
Over, uh, everything, basically.

NICK
Were you abused as a kid?

Jordan doesn't reply.

NICK
Yeah, me too. My dad, mostly. He was an alcoholic. A real piece of shit. I'm glad I killed him.

Jordan doesn't reply.

NICK
Apart from the suicidal thing.

There's a beat of silence in the car. They pass a sign that says "Rodgers Psychiatric Care Center, next left."

NICK
You ever been in inpatient here?

JORDAN
I have not.

NICK
It's pretty good. They don't abuse you or anything.

JORDAN
That's...good.

NICK
God, sorry, I make dumb jokes when I'm...I just wanted you to know, if you ever need it, it's a good program.

JORDAN
Then why'd you break out?

NICK

It's not the program's fault I'm unfixable. You didn't kill anyone. You've got some ptsd and a chemical imbalance, yeah? They can help you.

The car turns into a long driveway.

JORDAN

And they can't help you?

NICK

They haven't.

The car is quiet for a minute, as an abandoned barn passes on the left.

JORDAN

Do you remember the first time you came here? Seeing it?

NICK

I was in an ambulance.

JORDAN

Oh. Well. I wasn't. And it's this big long driveway off of this secluded back road, and you pass that creepy fucking barn and then you come around this corner and there it is.

The center comes into view.

JORDAN

And I remember thinking, the first time I saw it, *this place looks exactly like what it is.*

Nick laughs.

JORDAN

I mean it. This place looks like a mental hospital. And all I could think was, why does it have to look so much like what it is? Why can't it look like a house? Or a high school? Why does it have to look like a place where crazy people go to bitch?

NICK

Does it make you feel worse? To

feel like you're going to where
the crazy people go?

JORDAN
It makes me feel...seen.

NICK
(nodding)
Jesus. Yeah.

Jordan pulls the car into a parking spot, then turns it
off. The two exit.

FADE OUT.