

PURGATORY

written by

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OVER BLACK

Silence.

Then we hear a TRAIN WHISTLE

Title Card: Purgatory

FADE IN:

1 INT. WILLOW ROAD - CLAIRE AND ABBI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

CLAIRE (20s) sits up in a cold sweat, panting. Her eyes dart wildly around the room.

PULL BACK to reveal:

Beige walls, a beige carpet and beige sheets on two twin sized cots with wooden bed frames. The bedroom is one of many in a residential psychiatric treatment center called Willow Road.

In the bed parallel to Claire, her roommate ABBI (20s) snores loudly.

2 INT. WILLOW ROAD - LIZ'S OFFICE - DAY

We're in a small, generically decorated (i.e. landscape paintings) office.

Claire sits cross legged on a small gray couch. If Natasha Lyonne and Shrek reproduced, you'd be looking at their offspring. She isn't green but she definitely has a "stay out of my swamp" vibe.

Sitting opposite Claire is her psychologist: earth-goddess-warrior-priestess-stubborn-as-fuck LIZ (early 30s). There's a salt rock lamp in the corner--Liz has done her best to decorate the space with the limited freedom she's been given as a post-doc.

LIZ

Why do you think the train hit you?

CLAIRE

(dream logic, duh)

I froze when I heard the whistle and that's exactly when I woke up. And, y'know, I actually got away this time too. Only to die.

LIZ
Only to wake up.

CLAIRE
Same difference.

Liz sighs. They've had versions of this conversation many times.

LIZ
Oh, Claire.

CLAIRE
(playful)
You're never letting me out of here.

LIZ
That's not my call. Nobody's committed
at Willow Road.

Claire picks at her nails.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Do you want to leave?

CLAIRE
(deadpan)
No, Liz. I love it here.

LIZ
When?

CLAIRE
When what?

LIZ
Do you want to leave?

CLAIRE
Yesterday.

LIZ
You haven't brought up discharge
before.

Claire realizes what she's walked into.

CLAIRE
I don't mean like leave leave.

LIZ
What do you mean?

CLAIRE
I don't know. (then) I guess I do mean
leave leave.

This is a big deal. Liz glances at the clock.

LIZ
We're at time. But if you want to get
the ball rolling...

She scribbles an office number on a sticky note and hands it
to Claire.

LIZ (CONT'D)
The Career Development Center is in
the East Hall. You can stop by their
office to make an appointment.

CLAIRE
Do you think I'm ready?

LIZ
Do you?

CLAIRE
God that's so unhelpful.

Claire gets up and walks to the door.

LIZ
Let's talk more about this tomorrow.

She grumbles under her breath--an attempt to regain her
defensive composure--and closes the door behind her.

LIZ (CONT'D)
(calling after her)
Have fun at community dinner.

3 INT. FIREHOUSE GRILL - EVENING

Firehouse Grill has a family-friendly/dive bar combination
that you can only find in an affluent suburb. The chairs look
like barrels for aesthetic purposes but don't worry: they're
fully upholstered. You get the picture.

Chaperoning the young adult PSYCHIATRIC PATIENTS is an earnest graduate student named BEN (late 20s). He makes gentle gestures for the patients to "shhhh."

We find Claire amongst the chaos. She leans over the table and speaks in hushed tones with her two confidants.

One of them is the sleeping roommate from earlier: Abbi. Subdued but not soft-spoken, Abbi's crippling depression keeps her in bed most community dinners but she loves the milkshakes here.

The other is RACHEL (20s) who still carries her Gucci purse despite her inpatient status.

ABBI

Liz didn't bring it up?

CLAIRE

No, I did.

RACHEL

Bitch.

ABBI

Rachel.

RACHEL

Some of us are gonna die here.

ABBI

Yeah: you. You're never at group.

RACHEL

I went to trauma group today. Joan was blathering on about how "nice it is that we're still here since we all tried to take our own lives."

Next to Rachel, IAN (20s) tunes into their conversation. He'll let you know he's smarter than any doctor here while he sips his off-brand energy drink.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

So I reminded her that I actually haven't attempted suicide and she said "well, you're very unstable so who knows what could happen."

ABBI

Joan's not a real psychologist, she's
(MORE)

ABBI (CONT'D)
an L.C.P.C.

CLAIRE
Don't be elitist.

RACHEL
How does that matter?

RACHEL (CONT'D)
She told me I should kill myself.

IAN
(to Rachel)
You're really misinterpreting her.

RACHEL
You're really a pretentious asshole.

CLAIRE
And you listen to "Africa" by Toto way
too much.

IAN
It's a classic song.

A WAITRESS (40s) attempts to take orders over the noise. She reads off of her notepad.

WAITRESS
I have four burgers, two Greek salads-

JOSH (20s) waltzes through the door with a large golden doodle on a leash; his presence as loud as the neon fleece he wears. You'd probably hate him if he wasn't so goddamn charismatic.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)
I'm sorry sir, we don't allow dogs.

JOSH
He's a service dog.

WAITRESS
He is?

JOSH
Yeah, emotional support.

WAITRESS
But he's not wearing a vest. The
manager will need to see his papers--

JOSH

It's fine.

Josh sits next to Ian. His dog goes under the table. Not knowing what else to do, the waitress goes back to reading off the table's orders.

CLAIRE

No, I don't think it's obvious we're from a psychiatric facility. Why do you ask?

A few seats down, MIA (20s) overhears this and laughs. She's an artistic intellect, the kind who says "motif"; resentful of the cards she's been dealt.

RACHEL

Oh! Mia, this is Claire, Abbi, Josh and Ian. Mia just came from Olympia Falls in D.C.

IAN

I went there.

JOSH

Same.

ABBI

Same.

RACHEL

This is Claire's first program. Ever.

MIA

Holy shit.

RACHEL

(laughing)

She's here on scholarship.

CLAIRE

I'm getting financial assistance.

ABBI

And now she's leaving.

CLAIRE

Abbi!

IAN

What?

JOSH

You're leaving?

Abbi offers Claire an apologetic grimace.

CLAIRE

No.
 (then)
 I don't know.

MIA

Are you going to a new program?

CLAIRE

Um, probably not. I think if I do
 leave I'll get a job or something.

Mia smiles at Claire; she knows she can get anyone she wants without trying.

MIA

Damn. One-and-done. I'd love to pick
 your brain sometime on how you managed
 that.

On the other side of the spectrum, Claire becomes Forrest Gump when pretty women flirt with her.

CLAIRE

Yeah! Absolutely. Sounds great. Sure.

Abbi and Rachel chuckle at Claire's lack of game. She flips them off.

The waitress sets a drink in front of Josh.

WAITRESS

Double bourbon on the rocks.

Josh sucks it down. It takes Ben way too long to notice.

BEN

(to Waitress)
 No! Hey! Miss? He can't have that. You
 need to take that from him.

The waitress takes the half empty glass, thoroughly fed up.

JOSH

Fuck you, Ben.

BEN

Language, Josh.

JOSH

Oh my bad.

Josh mimes bending Ben over, fucking him. The table erupts.

BEN

Come on man, we're at a restaurant.

4 INT. CLAIRE AND ABBI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Claire and Abbi lay in their beds. There are some taped polaroids on the walls: a decoration attempt from months prior. Their strewn dirty clothes give the room a homey quality.

Abbi giggles.

CLAIRE

What's wrong with you?

ABBI

What you said your first night. That I'd wake up to the stench of your rotting corpse.

CLAIRE

(deadpan)

I'm a lot of fun.

ABBI

But I didn't, you know? You survived.

Survive is a heavy word. It lingers in the room.

CLAIRE

What if something happens again?

ABBI

Like what happened before?

Claire nods.

Somewhere else on the floor we hear a PATIENT argue with a STAFF MEMBER.

STAFF (V.O)

You have five seconds to show me where you hid the blades. Five, four, three, two-

PATIENT (V.O)

I'm not gonna use them tonight!

ABBI
You can't come back here. You know
that, right?

We hear a tussle in the next room. The voices now come from
the hall.

PATIENT (V.O)
Fascist prick! Let me go!

And then they're gone.

ABBI
Not that you'd want to.

Claire shifts uncomfortably.

CLAIRE
I'll miss the free food.

ABBI
Free food isn't worth being tortured.

CLAIRE
Easy for a rich lawyer to say.

ABBI
(for the last time)
I'm not a lawyer.

CLAIRE
You have your Doctor Jury.

ABBI
Juris Doctor. And I didn't take the
bar exam so it doesn't matter.

CLAIRE
You'll take it when you leave.

ABBI
If.

CLAIRE
They can't physically make you stay.

ABBI
They'll try.

Claire doesn't entirely believe this.

CUT TO:

5 INT. WILLOW ROAD - MIA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUED

Music PLAYS from Mia's laptop as she hangs her artwork on the walls.

She hears a KNOCK at the door and opens to find an ambivalent Claire standing in the hallway.

MIA

Hey.

CLAIRE

Hey. Sorry.

MIA

Why are you sorry?

CLAIRE

Just perpetually guilty.

MIA

(amused)

Come in.

Claire steps into the room and eyes Mia's art. They're technically perfect though clearly the work of someone who's going through intensive therapy.

CLAIRE

You made all these?

MIA

Yeah. They're based on my nightmares.

Mia CHANGES the music and hops on her bed.

MIA (CONT'D)

Come, sit.

Claire does. It's a tight fit.

CLAIRE

I have nightmares too.

MIA

What are they about?

Claire laughs nervously at the blunt question. Mia is unfazed.

CLAIRE

Um. I do have a recurring dream where I'm trapped in a room with...this man. And last night I actually managed to get away from him, which hadn't happened before. But then I got hit by a train.

MIA

Lots of symbolism there. The freudians will have a field day.

CLAIRE

(to herself)

Or maybe I didn't. I don't know.

Mia flops back on her bed. Unsure if she should do the same--and realizing she doesn't exactly have the room--Claire leans sideways on her elbow. It looks uncomfortable.

MIA

How crazy that we're both these smart, beautiful people, yet we're laying on a bed in a psychiatric institution...

She glances at Claire then feigns embarrassment, looks away.

One of Mia's paintings catches Claire's eye.

CLAIRE'S POV - THE PAINTING

depicts a naked woman flying over the sea; a petrified look on her face.

BACK TO SCENE.

CLAIRE

Can I kiss you?

MIA

What?

CLAIRE

Sorry, was that predatory?

MIA

(overlapping)

No! I mean, yes! Yes, you can.

CLAIRE

Are you sure?

MIA

Yeah I've wanted to kiss you for like
six hours now.

Claire kisses Mia. They make out. Mia peels off Claire's
shirt while Claire fumbles with the buttons on Mia's flannel.

CLAIRE

Sorry.

MIA

Stop apologizing.

CLAIRE

I haven't done this in a long time.

MIA

(teasing)

I'll keep my expectations low.

Mia gets on top of Claire. It's all fun and games and "Girl,
Interrupted" fanfiction until Claire freezes. Mia clocks this
and puts the pieces together. She stops.

CLAIRE

I'm fine.

MIA

Yeah?

CLAIRE

Yeah.

They resume only for Claire to freeze up again seconds later.

MIA

Let's stop. Okay?

CLAIRE

Okay.

Claire tries unsuccessfully to hide her embarrassment.

MIA

I get it, I really do. Trauma drama
sticks around for a long time. I just
don't think you're ready is all.

She hands Claire her shirt.

6 INT. LIZ'S OFFICE - DAY

Same set up. Claire keeps her arms folded over her chest, there is an antsy resignation about her. Liz studies her pointedly.

CLAIRE

I'm permanently broken.

LIZ

What makes you say that?

CLAIRE

Something I've observed. And y'know, maybe that's not the end of the world. Maybe that's who I am and that's okay.

LIZ

Are you trying to convince me?

CLAIRE

Well, you're the one who's always saying I should be self-aware and accepting of how things really are.

Claire waits for Liz to say something. She doesn't.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

So I think I should stay.

This finality is a blow to both of them. But Liz remains optimistic.

LIZ

You don't have to decide right now.

CLAIRE

I know.

LIZ

Nobody's pushing you out the door. But we're not keeping you here either. This is all you.

Claire takes this in. She looks utterly terrified.

7 INT. WAITING ROOM - A FEW HOURS LATER

Claire, Abbi, Rachel, Josh and Mia play catch with a stress ball in a startlingly gray waiting room. Ian sits apart from the group, enthralled with a game on his phone.

CLAIRE

I'll probably go to my favorite sushi place, Sen Den.

JOSH

Will you get saké?

CLAIRE

Obviously.

JOSH

I fucking miss saké.

ABBI

Wait, I wanna change mine. Can we go back?

RACHEL

No, it's Ian's turn. Ian!

Rachel throws the ball at him.

IAN

Huh?

RACHEL

What's the first thing you'll do when you get out of here?

Ian takes his time to think about it. The others roll their eyes--it's just a game.

IAN

Go back to school.

JOSH

Oh blow me.

CLAIRE

God you're boring.

IAN

Alright, alright. I guess the very first thing I'll do is jack off in my own room.

Josh chuckles. Everyone else just sort of groans.

RACHEL

(to Mia)

So, this is our clique. Welcome. We're not exclusive but we're also not not exclusive.

MIA

(sarcastic)

You guys have ragers?

RACHEL

(playing along)

Even better: sometimes we go to that pizza place on the corner.

JOSH

Hold up, whose trauma group are you in?

MIA

I think Joan's.

They burst out laughing.

MIA (CONT'D)

What? Is she a bitch or something?

ABBI

No, no. She's like a PTA mom who volunteers as a counselor.

RACHEL

Let's see, what else? Oh! We get coffee every Tuesday morning before community meeting...

The rest of the dialogue can be IMPROVISED.

Claire listens as Rachel illustrates the weekly routine for Mia. She thinks about what Liz said as she watches her friends. For a moment she rejoins the conversation. Then she goes back to her thoughts.

CUT TO BLACK.