

OUTPATIENT

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

An ornamental desk clock, STUCK. A tiny crack in its face.

DR. SIEBREN TSHERING (37) reaches a hand, places the clock face down. Dr. Tshering is the picture for "tired" in the dictionary.

Across from him, laid up therapy-style on the couch: **JONAS WITT (22)**. He looks unkempt and his hands fidget.

JONAS

Thank you. Sorry.

TSHERING

Anxiety related to time--clocks--is more common than you think.

JONAS

People get clock anxiety?

TSHERING

"Clock anxiety" isn't exactly what I mean. It relates more to control.

Realization hits Jonas. *Control*. He stops fidgeting.

TSHERING (CONT'D)

Why does looking at the time make you anxious, Jonas?

JONAS

(bullshitting)

No clue.

Beat. Dr. Tshering glances at a paper. A hint of frustration.

TSHERING

(as though talking about the weather)

Have you ever tried to kill yourself, Jonas?

Stunned silence. Jonas sits up.

TSHERING (CONT'D)

You don't have to answer but it'd help me out.

Jonas nods; first in understanding, then in confirmation.

TSHERING (CONT'D)
How long ago was this?

JONAS
Couple months ago.

TSHERING
Are you still experiencing any
suicidal ideation?

JONAS
No, not really. I'm good, it was
just... shit timing?

TSHERING
(gentler)
Can you tell me about that?

Jonas takes a breath.

JONAS
I... uhm. I lost someone. We were
close, I think. As close as we
could be, in our situation. And he
helped me through a lot. He's the
strongest person I know. Knew.
(beat)
So, uh, yeah. It was just really
jarring. Really weird. I didn't
believe it when I was told he'd
killed himself. And now I'm just--I
don't know--*hopeless*? Like, if
someone like him can kill himself--
why do I bother? Nobody's safe,
nobody can survive their own head;
"let's skip to the end!" and all
that, y'know?

Dr. Tshering takes this all in.

TSHERING
That sounds like a lot, Jonas.
(then,)
I like to think that this is why we
have *therapy*--

JONAS
(like "Fuck you.")
It was my last therapist.
(beat)
He killed himself. And he--you--
fuck! Fuck. You say the same shit
he did so why should I even bother
listening to a word--

TSHERING

Stop.

Dr. Tshering takes off his glasses. Considers for a moment. Takes a breath, then:

TSHERING (CONT'D)

That clock doesn't actually tick.

Jonas throws him a look like "*What?*"

TSHERING (CONT'D)

It's stuck. The gears are *fucked*.

The *language* makes Jonas sit up a little.

TSHERING (CONT'D)

I had a panic attack. In-between patients, thank God.

(beat)

The ticking kept...ticking, and I was about to cry so I... *clocked* it. Hah. Get it?

JONAS

Why--

TSHERING

We're just people, Jonas. We're not these bastions of mental health; we're people. We do people stuff. Like get anxious. Like punching clocks. Like kill ourselves.

Jonas has calmed. *The honesty seems to have worked.*

JONAS

Sounds hopeless.

TSHERING

That's the gig. We're people... trying to keep each other's clocks ticking.

A phone alarm RINGS.

TSHERING (CONT'D)

Well, that's our time. See you next week?

FADE OUT.

END.