

FADE IN:

INT: THERAPIST WAITING ROOM - DUSK

NICHOLE opens the door to the waiting room. She's an African-American sophomore in high school. She knocks on a door and after waiting a second rolls her eyes.

NICHOLE

Seriously? She's never on time.

Nichole sits on a chair in the waiting room, picks up Rolling Stone with a young Axl Rose with a close up of his leather pants on the cover and shakes her head. She pokes her head into the hall and heads into the room marked staff only. She snags a ginger ale out of the fridge.

COLLINS, Nichole's therapist, enters the room behind her. Collins is white. Aged 35-40. She looks a bit disheveled in her suit and has a lot of flyaways in her hair. She doesn't look pleased to see Nichole in the room.

COLLINS

(Exasperated)

You know you're supposed to wait for me to get you.

NICHOLE, startled, jumps and knocks her head on the fridge.

NICHOLE

(Irritated)

FUCK OW!

COLLINS

Language.

NICHOLE

Yeah, but you always let me get a rootbeer anyway, why wait?

COLLINS

Let's head into my office.

They head down the hall towards COLLINS' office. NICHOLE opens her rootbeer and raises it at COLLINS.

NICHOLE

(Teasingly, but also mildly irritated)
You know, you can still give me one if you want, then I'll have two. Besides, you were running late.

COLLINS

I'm sorry about that.

NICHOLE

How are we ever going to cure me if my therapist is perpetually late, leaving me to ruminate in my dark and miserable thoughts?

COLLINS opens the door

COLLINS

I'm running a little behind today.

NICHOLE and COLLINS enter the room and sit opposite each other.

COLLINS

So, how're you feeling?

NICHOLE

I'm good. Just chill, ya know?

COLLINS

Well that's good. Last session we talked about your plans for the weekend. How did that go?

NICHOLE sinks lower into her chair. COLLINS writes something in her notebook.

NICHOLE

Hey, do you have a crush on Axl Rose or something?

COLLINS

What do you mean?

NICHOLE

Axl Rose? The guy from that old rock band? Everytime I come to the waiting room, the Rolling Stone with his crotch on the cover is always at the top of the magazine stack.

COLLINS

I think that's just an unfortunate coincidence.

NICHOLE

That's what you would like me to think.

COLLINS

(Gentle, but firm reprimand)

Nichole, you can't always dodge questions. I usually go along with it. Remember last week's tangent about the zombie apocalypse?

NICHOLE

(Snarky, but uncomfortable)

Always have to be ready for the unexpected, right?

COLLINS

Nichole.

NICHOLE

(Shutting down)

I don't want to talk. I'm required to be here. I have minutes to fill, but the

NICHOLE (CONT.)

rules said nothing about the quality of those minutes.

COLLINS

Nichole, I am here to help you. You're here, because -

NICHOLE

(Edged monotone)

I know exactly why I'm here. I don't need you to remind me.

NICHOLE tenses in her seat, foot tapping, eyes fixed on the clock.

COLLINS

Despite what you might think, I'm here to help you.

NICHOLE

(Defensive)

I don't need help. I've been living with this. Thing - for years. I just slipped up. Just got overwhelmed. I can handle it.

COLLINS

(Gently)

This - thing, this burden doesn't have to be a secret forever. You can share it.

NICHOLE

(Defensive)

I don't have anything to share.

COLLINS

(Gentle, but firm)

Nichole, but you were sharing, just not with your words. You were screaming for help...it's literally scored across your skin.

NICHOLE tugs her sleeve and is rubbing her wrist. She stands up and heads towards the door. She pauses in the entryway.

NICHOLE

(Resigned)

You were late. So, I'm going to head out early.

NICHOLE stands silently for a few seconds.

COLLINS

I'm here to help you. I can't say that you finished the program if we never do the hard work. It's not supposed to be easy, Nichole, but you have to do it.

NICHOLE opens her mouth to speak, but her eyes go glassy and wet. She shakes her head and leaves.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE COLLINS' OFFICE - DUSK

NICHOLE bursts out of the office and is outside. The office is located on a hill and she sprints down. NICHOLE has tears in her eyes and keeps running. At the bottom of the hill she turns onto a small dirt path that leads to a playground. She runs to a swingset and sits down and swing.

TERI, African American and a senior. She's tall and athletically built. She's popular with everyone and fairly well liked. She's NICHOLE's senior mentor.

TERI

Hey kid, I thought I might find you here.

NICHOLE

Hey, Teri.

TERI comes over and sits on a swing next to NICHOLE.

TERI
(Hesitantly)
So, How did your session go?

NICHOLE
(Trying to act unbothered)
Same old, same old. It's just bullshit

TERI
Those don't look like bullshit tears to me. They look very real.

NICHOLE
Whatever.

TERI and NICHOLE sit silently for a few moments.

NICHOLE
Did you ever watch the show Recess?

TERI
Yeah, I used to watch it on Saturday mornings, why? That's mad random.

NICHOLE
There was an episode where Spinelli thought she saw Swinger Girl swing all the way over the bars and disappear. She thought she swung all the way over into another dimension.

TERI makes a kind of grunt of acknowledgement.

NICHOLE
Do you think if we swung hard enough - we might... go over, right into another dimension - where things are better?

TERI
(Gently)
TERI

(Cont'd)

There's no harm in trying.

TERI and NICHOLE start swinging silhouetted by the streetlamp. They start giggling and start getting really high. At some point they leap of the set together.

NICHOLE

Well, not this time. Let's head back.

TERI

Alright.

TERI gives NICHOLE a side hug.

TERI

It'll be ok, kid.

FADE OUT: