

Isolation / Connection



An interview-based, documentary theatre play
created by
the students in EGL 284: Public Humanities.

Instructor: Ken Weitzman

PART 1:

METAMORPHOSIS

Writing Team: Minju, Jacky, Tina, Syerra

CAST:

ANONYMOUS (Margaret)

ADAM (Lauren)

CASEY (Michael M.)

PASTOR CHAPLAIN ROSCOE (Syerra)

DR. MELISSA (Maria)

T (Michelle)

HENRY (Kevin)

NARRATOR (Minju)

Narrator: **Moment: How It All Began**

NARRATOR
ANONYMOUS

ANONYMOUS (Margaret)

I think of being confined... I feel like mental isolation feels very dark and like... (*pauses*) um, it's hard to explain how I feel about isolation anymore or what it makes me feel like.

NARRATOR
T

T (Michelle)

Around fourth grade, I was playing in the play- playground area of my school and then I was on the monkey bars, all of a sudden one of my arms slipped and I landed straight down on my right arm.

NARRATOR
DR. MELISSA, special education teacher.

DR. MELISSA (Maria)

It's great living in a little town. It's like you go anywhere and you know someone. and that has its perks and obviously its down sides... Sometimes you want to be able to go out without having to make any small talk or even go out in your sweats but living in this small town makes you feel like you need to be perfect at all times. I'm sure you can relate, it's a wealthy town and sometimes I think it's more like keeping up with the Joneses...Basically everyones trying to be better and do better and it's all a show, a very exhausting one...

NARRATOR
Casey, College Student.

CASEY (Michael M.)

At the start of march when school closed down my grandpa passed away and we didn't really know what it was from until we realized covid was happening and it was covid.

NARRATOR
ADAM, Hunter College Student.

ADAM (Lauren)

Yea, I didn't have a girlfriend. Like from 8th grade to the end of junior year I ALWAYS had a girlfriend. You know, in ninth grade, around the formal season, 5 girls had crushes on me. I almost ruined their friend group.

NARRATOR
ROSCOE, the Pastor.

PASTOR CHAPLAIN ROSCOE (Syerra)

Well I'd say my connection to the people comes from God if I was at a bigger church I'd be much more isolated because my main concern is the sheep you know? I'm always concerned with the sheep and at bigger church I'm just sad. It's harder at the bigger church for me because I like that individual relationship and connection with the sheep.

DR. MELISSA (Maria)

My drive is connected to my mom's passing so young, I mean I was twenty years old. She always emphasized getting an education and striving for something greater. And I wanted to make her proud. Especially because she wasn't able to do all the things she wanted before she passed.

CASEY (Michael M.)

So march 23rd, around 6am, I received a phone call from my cousin, and when I picked up I knew something was wrong because im a heavy sleeper... I asked, "whats wrong george". He said 'dieda' passed away and at that moment i didn't know how to feel like, but then i just started crying and our family was losing it.

T (Michelle)

when I woke up, I found out they put two plates and then seven titanium screws into my arm... "She could have been an amputee if you came in a minute later."

ANONYMOUS (Margaret)

Um, I was there for 18 days, the hospital itself didn't feel like prison, it felt like prison to yourself because you're outside your comfort and your life.

ANONYMOUS (Margaret) rubs her hands between her legs (as she did in the original interview).

ADAM (Lauren)

They used to even have a codename for me - it was dumb like uh "broccoli" or something. .. Something that was really obviously a code name... wasn't even discreet.

NARRATOR

HENRY

HENRY (Kevin)

it started when, I was finishing middle school... That year was bad -- awful, I mean. I was, let me be nice to myself, a little troll child who was really, really lonely. My closest friends were on the other end of the island; my next closest friends, the neighborhood kids found other friends

CASEY (Michael M.)

I was really close with my grandpa and we would always make inside jokes with each other, knowing that my best friend was gone, I just didn't know what to do with myself. We found out that my grandma and great grandma contracted covid right after.

ANONYMOUS (Margaret)

It probably made me feel like... being physically isolated feels draining. I was worried about things I couldn't control and was taken out of my environment.

DR. MELISSA (Maria)

Not having my mother from such a young age isolated me, it was hard to see my friends and cousins able to spend time with their moms and I couldn't anymore. It separated me from people and kept me guarded for many years.

PASTOR CHAPLAIN ROSCOE (Syerra)

The congregation is important when I'm in the office on Sunday and I come out to preach, the seats are empty I'm just staring at empty pews. It really affects me that's why when you hear me say it's nice to see and hear my family it really does me good today I spoke about Noah right and his family I hope you remember this because the congregation doesn't know- doesn't realize just how important they are.

CASEY (Michael M.)

At this point I didn't know if she would make it and I didn't know how to support my grandma because it was really hard losing one of your loved ones. It was just really depressing.

ADAM (Lauren)

I don't think so, really, I don't know. I think I've been ... well ... mentally ill I guess. Junior and senior year it was the worst though. I remember my junior year we were all at a party together and I was feeling really depressed... And Faith and Sean sat on the couch with me.

T (Michelle)

And...it just made me really self-conscious and anxious about it later on too, because my scar is gigantic. It runs from the middle of my forearm to about the back of my- the midsection of my bicep. So...it's a pretty big scar.

T (Michelle) shows the location and size of the scar (as she did in the original interview).

PASTOR CHAPLAIN ROSCOE (Syerra)

I love it! I love that there's a place just for veterans and it's both a social place and a connection. Because they get it, I'm sure other people just don't get it and yes veterans all have more or less experience. It's experience, years, and all that but it's nice to relate to everyone...And we'll talk about wife problems, family, army stories and if someone asks a question and is cranky or tight we understand because we all get like that.

ANONYMOUS (Margaret)

I guess the reason they make you go to a hospital is to make you alone but it's also weird to be alone after that."

HENRY (Kevin)

I... did not talk to anybody. My parents included. It started as an eventless, boring summer, and became an eventless, boring my-entire-life.

CASEY (Michael M.)

So after my grandma was in the hospital for like 4 days, i get a call from my great grandma and she said she didn't feel well.

PASTOR CHAPLAIN ROSCOE (Syerra)

It's hard to talk to them but the nurses and doctors they are not 100%. But they always respect and care about us but you can't really talk to them because they're mandated... mandated. You'll see where I'm going in the sec... When I want to talk about my emotions (*Long pause*) see for example I'm feeling sad today and low self worth sometimes I wake up and say why did I even wake up today? Then they come at you with a craziness.

DR. MELISSA (Maria)

...from that point on I had such a large responsibility to take care of my brothers and my father of course, he became very depressed and basically didn't want to live. It was equally as heartbreaking as my mom's death at that time because I was hurting so much and I really needed him. But he needed me more.

PASTOR CHAPLAIN ROSCOE (Syerra)

Do you have thoughts of harming yourself? Do you think of killing yourself? And then I'm surrounded by police and doctors with the straitjacket waiting for me...

HENRY (Kevin)

You know, ever hear about how if you stop texting people, you'll find out who your real friends are because they're the ones who'll hit you up. That's bullshit. If you want to talk to someone just talk to them.

Narrator: **Moment: Breaking Point**

CASEY (Michael M.)

I stayed home 24/7 which didn't really help me with my mental health because in order for me to get away from things I have to be doing something and sitting home and having so much time, I couldn't really cope the way I wanted to. Having so much time in the day leads you to think about so many thoughts you don't want to think about.

ANONYMOUS (Margaret)

I was in a single room and you had to leave the door open and that was super weird. It made it surreal that I was confided, someone would always check on me.

T (Michelle)

Um... that kind of kickstarted my anxiety from a very young age where I thought that people won't like me because I'm different or that people won't..." Um...people would just look at me like I'm some roadside carnival because I have a weird scar in a different place.

ADAM (Lauren)

Uh everyone knew that I was depressed at the time, you could just see it I guess.

HENRY (Kevin)

But, really, it's like I stopped existing, and the world kept spinning. I don't know if it was me thinking I knew better or what, I stopped feeling like I had to play a part in my own life.

PASTOR CHAPLAIN ROSCOE (Syerra)

At Pilgrim State...there's people there who, before I came had never spoken, never talked, never made a noise, but when I started doing my sermons they'd make some noises and talk or you know, say words or something... You have to be connected and be ready and prepared to deal with that type of genealogy there's people there that lost. Their. Mind. It doesn't take much to lose your mind you know anytime anywhere young old you can lose your mind.

PASTOR CHAPLAIN ROSCOE (Syerra) uses a lot of hand gestures (as she did in the original interview).

HENRY (Kevin)

I was passed around between a few doctors when I decided I wanted to know what was wrong with me. It was bad. Bad. My family came up with a word for the people I saw: magos. Magicians. Every social worker, psychologist, counselor, educated person I saw with their special white lab coat or super premium deluxe white noise machine said something different, like they were pulling from a hat.

CASEY (Michael M.)

At this point, I don't really even remember, I was so depressed, I literally did nothing I was just fucking forced to stay at home.

ADAM (Lauren)

But anyways, faith comes up to me, looks me dead in the eyes (*points to eyes*) and says "Do you think you are so depressed because for the first time ALL of your friends have girlfriends and you don't?" Who the fuck says that to someone?

T (Michelle)

..my dad would come by after dinner and he would say, "We need to rub aloe on it, we need to rub moisturizer on it to get rid of it and smooth out the edges." And I would ask why I need to do this and he would say, "Who's going to love someone with a big, ugly scar on their arm?"

DR. MELISSA (Maria)

Last year my father passed away, it was heart wrenching. Losing my mother so early in my life was hard enough but now as a grown woman losing my father the pain is unimaginable.

CASEY (Michael M.)

When I was isolated the first time I was able to see my grandma in the ICU, I waved to her through the window. Which meant a lot to me. After that day we got a phone call that she was feeling better and I still think that me waving was a miracle moment.

ANONYMOUS (Margaret)

It's really shitty. They ask you the same 30 questions. You see so many people. You're constantly talking to people about your issues and I feel like it took away the importance of why I was there.

ADAM (Lauren)

... I guess Sean thought I was sad for too long or something. He's never understood what it's like to be depressed. So he's giving me all of these things he does to be productive like working out, reading, getting to bed early, shit like that. And I did that stuff for a week or two and he thought he was some sorta mental health guru! (smiles) Sean single handedly cured me! He went around telling everyone that because of my conversation with him I changed my life - like I didn't have depression anymore. And he never asked me how I was doing or like tried to help me again... It got worse.

PASTOR CHAPLAIN ROSCOE (SYERRA)

Well our Bishop Gaylord died from covid and that hurt me in an emotional way and in a spiritual way. It hasn't affected our home church. Now we have a new bishop...He's not good, not good leadership like Gaylord was... Its chaos yea and everything's different... Even if they were in chaos while Gaylord was there I'd stay connected with the jurisdictional church. Gaylord was really my connection over there now I'm very isolated. We all are and still all our meetings are virtual.

HENRY (Kevin)

Schizophrenia. Bipolar disorder. Anxiety. Depression. Autism. Neglect. I couldn't talk to any of them. Literally. And they made these guesses that -- I'm going to be realer than real with you -- still have me guessing sometimes now. [pause] Those people are there to help. But a teenager -- a kid -- a kid can't go through that by themselves. I had to do that myself. And I couldn't say what I desperately had to say to save my life.

DR. MELISSA (Maria)

He was a very successful man owned multiple properties, and there was a huge inheritance battle. My older brother's wife got absolutely crazy about money... She believed he (and she) were entitled to the house in Montauk because he had the most kids... but that wasn't the point.

CASEY (Michael M.)

After that day i made a tik tok about it and i got famous. People in my comments said they were praying in the comments and i really hope they were being serious.

T (Michelle)

And then...that made me really anxious. If the person I really loved thought of me like this, then what about the people that I also care for? Do they see me the same way as him? I would be so anxious that...I pulled away from myself instead. They didn't isolate me, but I more so... isolated myself because of the anxious and intruding thoughts.

ADAM (Lauren)

Like Hunter's in my favorite place - the city, but I haven't really made a single friend. (*breathes*) Sometimes I wonder how I live in the biggest city in the world and I don't have any friends?

ANONYMOUS (Margaret)

Before I went to the hospital, I was very mentally isolated and while I was there I felt it physically. Before I went into the hospital... I uh... I felt like super, I was super sad about not feeling okay and feeling like I had no one who would understand how I felt. I just couldn't do it anymore. I was put on medication that made me feel numb.

CASEY (Michael M.)

The next day she was taken off the ventilation and we were like wow shes better. That was my most crazy memory from isolation honestly.

DR. MELISSA (Maria)

When my father became sick we would spend all of the free time we could out in the Montauk house, just the two of us. We had so many memories there... My sister in law tried to take the one memory I kept so near to my heart, and made it all about the money. I would trade all the money he had to get him back.

ADAM (Lauren)

Being here sucks though. I absolutely hate it here... But hanging out with... Chloe definitely helped a lot. I like that every Thursday I'd come over and we'd hang out.

ANONYMOUS (Margaret)

There was a moment I felt something, I felt like I wanted to kill myself

Narrator: **Moment: Where We Are Now**

CASEY (Michael M.)

Oh yea let me tell you how I coped, um I tried a lot of new things like cooking, which I really suck at cause I caused a fire trying to make french fries, im being dead serious. And then, this wasnt really for me so I stopped cooking because I didn't wanna burn down my house during the pandemic.

T (Michelle)

You have to do what you need to do or what's better for you because can't always be hiding behind that fear and the anxiety of not being able to do that or not being able to do this.

HENRY (Kevin)

It took a long time for me to get where I am now. There wasn't a 'dad let go, I'm really riding my bike my myself!' moment. No 'Ha-ha, I knew I had it in me. I'm a beautiful butterfly out my cocoon.' Just... pain. Was it worth it? Just to complain, to quote Lil Jon: yeah. Yeah it was.

CASEY (Michael M.)

I was able to pick up new hobbies and spend more time on my mental health. This was about the time my grandpa passed away and I was able to learn how to express my feelings. Usually I don't express my feelings and I hold them in.

ANONYMOUS (Margaret)

I've had a lot of self growth. I guess taking a step back from reality I was able to focus on what was affecting me mentally. I don't view it as a completely negative experience but It wasn't positive.

PASTOR CHAPLAIN ROSCOE (Syerra)

Ever since I was a kid in boy scouts I've been a leader. oh so your laughing at my boyscouts now huh...I'm a pastor and a chaplain even my chaplaincy has helped me become a leader so this whole time God has been preparing me to be the pastor of the church the whole time he has prepared me.

DR. MELISSA (Maria)

I think it changed the whole course of my life as sad as it was it made me stronger and work harder than I ever thought I could. It made me realize that Long island would always be my home.

T (Michelle)

I'll put on a Youtube video or I'll focus on work with some music in the background and I just drown out all the thoughts that are in my head and try to focus on one thing at a time instead of letting all of these what if's and these thoughts crowd in on me.

ANONYMOUS (Margaret)

I don't think isolating people isn't okay...

ADAM (Lauren)

Uh it's better now. I have an apartment in the city with a couple of guys, they're really cool. I just got a job scooping gelato. I'm still seeing a therapist. I really want a cat. It's going well I think.

HENRY (Kevin)

Be nice to people. [sigh] No. Be kind to them. You never know when they're going through something — you never know when you'd be going through the same thing. "The small things count the most." It's just that easy.

ANONYMOUS (Margaret)

I guess that's it.

PART 2:

Family Matters

Writing Team:
Nicholas Rodrigo
Michael Redina
Scot Lawson
Jonathan Chean

Actors:
JOEY (Jonathan)
HOCKEY PLAYER (Scot)
K (Minju)
ELDERLY MAN (Tina)
CAT LOVER (Justice)
HOMEBODY (Jacky)

JOEY: (Jonathan)

I have an older brother who is one year older than me and a younger brother who is ten years younger than me so like it's quite an age gap.

HOCKEY PLAYER: (Scot)

I wouldn't say that I am a homebody but I have a big family bro. 2 sisters, 3 brothers and then me. All my friends growing up when we were little were each other. We did everything together so leaving home at 14 to go to play hockey was definitely nerve racking.

CAT LOVER: (Justice)

I lived in a house in Smithtown, it was a blue house and... I still live in that house, I had eight cats and still have 8 cats, so not much has changed from me as a child, this is the difference though, I had my mom, dad, brother and I in the blue house, but now my mom doesn't live with us, that was a big change for me

ELDERLY MAN: (Tina)

My older son moved out before we had decided to move, so right now he's living with a bunch of his friends in a bigger apartment in Brooklyn. So my other son looked for a place for the rest of us to live, yea but in Queens, and that's how we came to live here.

HOMEBODY: (Jacky)

(looks up) Something that defined who I am? My family. Everything I do and know (Crosses arms) right now is all because of my family. (Rotating hand gestures) The things I know that is wrong and right are all because I had my family teach it to me as I grew up

JOEY: (Jonathan)

And.. I've felt close to them both and I felt connected to them both and in different ways respectively. We grew up together like that's my older brother we've been together since day one.

HOCKEY PLAYER: (Scot)

I went from Florida to New York, and not even the good part of New York, middle of nowhere, small town New York. It was a big change for me and there was definitely an adjustment period.

JOEY: (Jonathan)

We've been through uhhh we've been through some things that our younger brother doesn't even know about and it just fosters a different connection with him.

ELDERLY MAN: (Tina)

We loved to travel and take pictures but we can't now well at least me and my wife can't. Traveling, especially long-distance traveling, hits hard on an older body. There's also been some problems with my wife's right leg and she's even struggling to walk so we had to move. She can't take the stairs every day.

K: (Minju)

One of my friends. He had a family thing.. You know, his dad? [pause] He would not appreciate him and not take care of the family.

CAT LOVER: (Justice)

They're married but... They're not like divorced but they are separated

I think, not full divorce but a separation

K: (Minju)

He has younger brothers-like, he is the first born in the house. His parents were immigrants, so they couldn't speak English?

So he would do *all* the translating for his dad, but he would *never* say thank you.

HOCKEY PLAYER: (Scot)

Well my dad, the guy will fucking talk to anybody he can. He's a great guy and all but fuck can he talk. So when I first got there I was meeting everyone I possibly could and that was all thanks to my dad.

CAT LOVER: (Justice)

I definitely talked to my dad more because I live with him, I come home from work and I talk to him, tell him about my day,

HOCKEY PLAYER: (Scot)

But once he and my family left I was kind of all alone and that is when it finally hit me.

HOMEBOY: (Jacky)

When I experienced American cultures, I realized that some of the things my parents taught me weren't really right. I doubted some of the things taught to me when I was growing up. I'm still thankful for my parents but sometimes I would go to video games just to be alone and play with friends.

K: (Minju)

He ran out of the house. But whenever he went back home? His dad would say that he is wasteful. But he's spending his *own money*, right? What the heck? He *cannot* talk to his parents anymore now.

ELDERLY MAN: (Tina)

We don't drive but my wife's cousin who lives close by often gives us a ride to places we need to go to if it's too far. Umm my son has his bike and that's his source of transportation. I usually see him go out with his girlfriend and a couple of friends, though he never tells me where he's going whenever I ask. So it used to be me, my wife, my son, and his girlfriend living here but they just moved out recently um out of New York city, just somewhere and now it's just us two.

JOEY: (Jonathan)

And my younger brother, we, we as in me and my older brother actually took care of him since we were um children ourselves and it was difficult since we were literally teaching a little boy how to become a man and we aren't even men ourself.

HOMEBOY: (Jacky)

I just stayed home like every other day. I'd play video games and talk with friends over the internet. But after awhile, it gets boring, you know. I knew that I couldn't go outside. I didn't want anyone at home to be sick. So I had to suppress my urges and stay home for the most part. Family over everything right?

K: (Minju)

During quarantine, he started to smoke weed. He was so stressed being in his house. His dad found out, and then he beat him up and he ran away.

CAT LOVER: (Justice)

With my mom I see her every Wednesday for pasta and meatballs, were italics... I mean Italians and we do this every Wednesday, I rarely see her maybe once or twice a week sometimes not at all, but I am definitely closer to my dad

K: (Minju)

After he was caught doing weed, he would ask "where are you?" "who are you hanging out with?" like, all the time. His dad would call him and be like "Are you smoking?" "Are you smoking?" "Are you smoking?" He doesn't trust him at anything. At all.

ELDERLY MAN: (Tina)

Hearing loss really makes me feel detached and lonely umm I don't like how I can't communicate easily with other people like how I used to but it's something I can't control. I feel bad when I see people's faces and reactions when they talk to me because they seem awkward but I hope people understand that being deaf or partially deaf is not as easy as they might think.

K: (Minju)

Deep down he still respects him as his dad, so he just got out of the house. I think it's so sad with family problems, they put on so much effect on you, you cannot have control on the problem.

JOEY: (Jonathan)

So when I came to Stonybrook and I was dorming and stuff it was a big change in our family dynamic as well cus a whole person, me, was gone from the house um so they had to adjust themselves.

And now they have their own relationship with themselves whereas in the past I was kinda the middle man. You know middle child, middle child syndrome sort of thing but I was the middle man and I tried to find peace, my dad included.

ELDERLY MAN: (Tina)

I like to play Mahjong it's like this Chinese game that you usually play with three other people. I didn't know how to play but my wife taught me a couple of years ago. So we would invite a couple of friends over to play and when they do come over they usually bring some groceries or supplies that we may need. They are much younger than us, probably a little older than my son but we get along very well.

HOMEBOY: (Jacky)

But we used not even eat together at the same table. We just ate our own meals at different times. When Covid started, I started to eat with my parents. We were talking again about news which we almost never talked about when we ate, we were able to discuss things. I was able to get college advice from my parents and family. I was able to connect with family after such a long time.

K: (Minju)

His breaking point was the bleach incident. So his dad wanted him to buy bleach for him, but he didn't get it on time that he wanted. So when he did get it later, he just opened it and just sprayed it to his face.

CAT LOVER: (Justice)

My parents were separated, last July 3rd 2020, I hate that I know the date.

K: (Minju)

Like, who would do that to his own son? Anyways, my friend asked his dad why did he do that, and he replied as "oh its safe. You can literally spray it in my mouth." *[waves hand in the air as if not understanding]*

CAT LOVER: (Justice)

They told me and my mom moved...I went to a wedding recently and saw my friend's parents slow dancing and I thought why don't mine do that

HOCKEY PLAYER: (Scot)

There were some holidays throughout the school year where we didn't really have a long enough break to go home y'know? So that first year was tough not spending holidays like Thanksgiving and Easter with them, they were all together and even with our extended family but I was over 1,000 miles away from home.

JOEY: (Jonathan)

I wasn't able to be home and be at school at the same time even though a lot of people were. Like for instance I saw a lot of people on zoom doing laundry or eating dinner with their family during a lecture but like that wouldn't be me because I'd be doing my own thing until I was done and I was ready to come upstairs. And actually get some food or spend time with them and that sort of thing.

HOMEBOY: (Jacky)

I did spend more time with my parents and family. But it was just like every other day. I played video games, ate and went to sleep. But you know, family's family.

HOCKEY PLAYER: (Scot)

I would not change anything about my time or my decision about leaving home. I have made friends that will last a lifetime at that school, friends that I would have never met if it wasn't for that school.

ELDERLY MAN: (Tina)

Then we would sit down and talk. Well it's mostly my wife and them talking and I'm just there listening because I can't really keep up with the conversation. I can hear them and I can lip read but I have trouble processing everything they say because they speak so fast. It was maybe ummm [*thinks*] one in every fifteen lines that I made a comment or asked a question. It was still fun though, I really enjoyed having them over.

CAT LOVER: (Justice)

I have a lot more to do at my house, feed the cats, make dinner, do housework like chores and stuff, like I have to help out my dad more because mom's not around.

JOEY: (Jonathan)

I learned that building community and residential life style was very important to me because like I was the first in my family to go out and go to college and leave the house.

CAT LOVER: (Justice)

I have all these responsibilities that my parents used to split, my brother doesn't even do stuff it's really just me and dad I can't just leave it all for my dad to do

JOEY: (Jonathan)

Live in a dorm, meet people, develop connections so while I was gone from my family, I expanded my circle and made new connections.

ELDERLY MAN: (Tina)

These are the people that I actually love and connect with, besides my wife. They still talk to me even though they know it is much harder to. I even feel closer to them than I do to my children because my children don't tell me anything and rarely come back to visit. It's like they feel awkward speaking to their partially deaf father.

K: (Minju)

He ran away. I just felt really sad. I really didn't know him that well at that time, but I always thought of him as being the happy one. It's actually really sad to think about how so many people look happy, then again, maybe they're not. You know, with whether relationships, family, friends.. You know the bleach incident? I was listening him out, and *[pause]* he said "Oh, I never asked to be born." *[holds up both hands on top of eyes as if about to cry]*

ELDERLY MAN: (Tina)

I've been sleeping pretty early like 9 or 10 these days and would naturally wake up at 6 and one of the first things I would do is to go outside and smoke for a good 15 minutes. I know it's not good for me but it's hard to pull someone away from something they're addicted to. So I would just stand outside and just greet people that pass by. I would do that a few times a day. It's something simple that I really enjoy doing and I don't even know why.

HOCKEY PLAYER: (Scot)

I was fucking miserable during my freshman year during the holidays. So when sophomore year came around and everyone was getting ready to leave I was getting ready to do nothing for the next few days but then you came up to me asking if I wanted to come to your house for thanksgiving since I wasn't going home. We went back to "Lawng Island" and I had one of the best thanksgivings of my life there.

CAT LOVER: (Justice)

My dad would let me do what I want, I just feel obligated to help him it's really more so on me, it's something I need to work on, finding that balance, maybe it's because the split happened recently I don't know

K: (Minju)

When my friend told me about that, I was really sad, since I can't actually relate to what my friends are going through, my family, they treat me very well overall.

CAT LOVER: (Justice)

My dad would let me do what I want, I just feel obligated to help him it's really more so on me, it's something I need to work on, finding that balance, maybe it's because the split happened recently I don't know

ELDERLY MAN: (Tina)

I feel bad when I see people's faces and reactions when they talk to me because they seem awkward but I hope people understand that being deaf or partially deaf is not as easy as they might think.

K: (Minju)

But I think now he is better since he doesn't have dark thoughts now. *[pause]* He tried once you know. *[pause]* But you know.. yeah..

PART 3

Navigating Difficult Relationships

Writing Team

Kevin

Margaret

Michelle

Yi

Justice

Interviews/Cast List:

T: Michelle

Alice: Margaret

Johnny: Wontack

Christina: Mimi

CHRISTINA (Mimi)

My leg injury has been eye opening to me, um, in some very positive ways, but also some very negative ones. Um the positive ones are the ones I try to really focus on. Because it'll let you know the people in your life who are true, are definitely true.

T (Michelle)

My dad. He would say, "Who's going to love someone with a big, ugly scar on their arm?"

ALICE (Margaret)

My stepmom, she uh, she told me to stop throwing tantrums when I was going to the hospital, she told me I just wanted a vacation.

JOHNNY (Wontack)

I knew people in boot camp were cold hearted, relentless, unforgiving, but I thought there would be a sense of comradeship...Then I had to make up my mind thinking that at this place, I should survive alone.

In a battalion, we were assigned a number instead of a name. [laughing]Still remember mine, it was 139. Like a barcode, we were called by number and when we forget our own number, the officers would rage at us.

CHRISTINA (Mimi)

Honestly, they've been kind of heartbreaking, they've just been very disappointing in the ways that you just have some people in your life that you always do for them and you don't even think about it, but then when you need something that... that's a little bit extra than the ordinary, you just you can't count on them.

T (Michelle)

My classmates weren't...as happy as I thought they would be when they saw me? They were more...staring? And gawking at me, like I was an anomaly or something?

ALICE (Margaret)

The friends I had were always far away. Once I hit middle school I talked to the same one person everyday. I just thought no one cared about me.

CHRISTINA (Mimi)

Um so it's been eye opening to see that when you need help, where you need to ask for it from certain people—that you still might not get it.

ALICE (Margaret)

I think more needs to go into being in a mental hospital. For me, the first time I went it was my first attempt and right after I knew I messed up. They didn't treat you like human beings, (nods) you know just take your meds and shut up you're crazy. Nobody was helping me, they just called me crazy and told me I could go home.

JOHNNY (Wontack)

I started saying hi to everyone around me, introducing about myself and my background. Expecting for a reply, what came back was a shout from the officer saying [speak loudly] “no chit-chats” and only “talk when I was commanded to talk”. I felt like a dog in a cage that is completely isolated from the world.

T (Michelle)

They started laughing and they would make comments like, “Oh I don’t want to be friends with someone with a gross scar or I don’t want to be friends with somebody who’s broken.”

ALICE (Margaret)

The word isolation? (pauses) That’s being completely alone. I was put in that room for a couple of days because they thought I was a danger to myself. It was a padded room and I just sat there for 72 hours.

CHRISTINA (Mimi)

My mom, I mean she's always been a tricky person, my mom, but like before my surgery, She was here 2-3 times a week, I was always, you know, like she's not the most financially stable person, so I was helping her out in that way.

Um... and she just stopped coming around and I would ask her for help and it's as though that she's just been in denial of what I've been going through and I just did not... I don't know, she still makes excuses. They're not real and I'm not gonna... I'm not gonna fight with her.

T (Michelle)

Whenever I go to these classes and I sit there and all I hear is gibberish. I just sit there and feel that imposter syndrome moment where I feel that I really don’t belong here or in this school. I don’t belong in this course, I’m just taking up somebody else’s spot. I get nauseous thinking about it, I get headaches thinking about it...I just start worrying and worrying.

ALICE (Margaret)

They put the angry kids and the depressed kids together and they would mess with each other. Yeah they put us in groups. One girl unit was like the more depressed, self harm, eating disorder side and then the other side was more... anger issues. And some people have been abused before, so that part was bad. People would fight and trigger each other. I remember these two girls fighting.

JOHNNY (Wontack)

At night times, when everyone in the camp is asleep, I was able to hear North Korean propaganda radio, and it was shit scary. What if North Korean troop invades our bootcamp while I am a sleep? What if I encounter a North Korean soldier during night time shifts guarding the main gate?

CHRISTINA (Mimi)

So, I had a great babysitter, who like really would do anything, it's like sometimes you feel desperate, you know um and then for the lack of the other people who you think should be

helping out a little bit more, it makes you feel a little bit more desperate? At times I felt bad because I felt like oh my gosh, I must be asking too much of this person.

T (Michelle)

My parents also emphasized education a lot. I also attended one of the top schools in my area. In that school, it's either you were the smartest kid or you were at the bottom of the barrel. There was no in-between.

So...with that in mind, it made it so that my worth was solely on my intelligence and...I took a path where I wasn't playing to my strengths. The anxiety of not doing well and disappointing my family and my friends, anybody that I cared about...it weighs down on you.

JOHNNY (Wontack)

I spent my first night out of 645 days in the camp with tears. I was left alone with almost 1,000 other strangers who are in the same situation as me, [point eyes out] and in their eyes, I felt a sense of grief and isolation. We weren't told about the news in the society, we didn't get to call our families or lovers unless we out perform during the bootcamp.

CHRISTINA (Mimi)

Yeah, um sometimes it has, I'm not going to lie to you. Sometimes it has, and during those times I feel really down. I definitely will um-- I feel like I get very hard on myself. It's like-- because you do-- you miss that part of you.

JOHNNY (Wontack)

In my second week, was a training session for firing a rifle. I wore my helmet tight because I heard that there are crazy people sometimes who would just shoot the officer and commit suicide because of the stress that one gets from bootcamp.

ALICE (Margaret)

My dad wasn't around but my mom was always there. It was hard to leave my mom. I didn't want to upset my mom so sometimes I didn't call her. I live with my dad now. I got used to it. My dad...I hate that house though. I'm trying to get out of that house, it's toxic.

CHRISTINA (Mimi)

I think, um, I thought I'd be playing outside at least at the end of the summer, maybe going to some barbecues. Um, I had tried to plan a little vacation for my kids to go to LEGOLAND that we didn't get to do.

So, it's been a little bit tricky to not be able to do those things, especially for being an active person and for being an active mom, it's a, I guess it's made me feel like, like I'm in a transition, you know, just like maybe with my age with my body and what it's doing...

T (Michelle)

My ex, Mark, used to comment on my body a lot...my body would get chubbier. he would comment on it and say, "Why are you getting chubbier? Where is all this chubs coming from?"

So...that obviously developed an insecurity in me. If the person I really loved thought of me like this, then what about the people that I also care for? Do they see me the same way as him?

I wasn't good enough to be friends with them anymore because of this. That...I pulled away from myself instead. They didn't isolate me, but I more so... isolated myself because of the anxious and intruding thoughts.

ALICE (Margaret)

When you are in there, you kinda become a family. I would've never found out my friend passed away if I didn't keep in touch with other people from the hospital. We weren't allowed to exchange numbers but we found a way. I also remembered people's names and found them after... I asked everyone their name. Some of them I'm still trying to find.

JOHNNY (Wontack)

Prior to joining the army, when I was scared or in the need of help, wasn't because it was related with my life. It was trivial things like when I got a bad score in tests from SBU, when I broke up with girlfriend, when my friends were acting cold. Then, after experiencing new things in army, the definition of fear completely changed for me.

CHRISTINA (Mimi)

Um I'm definitely a "take care of" person, you know, and... and I don't shy away from... from challenges or from like, I don't drop anybody or anything, like even if I don't know you all that well, I will definitely go the distance with you and whatever it is that you might need. Um I don't, it's very, in some ways it's a little bit selfish, I guess.

T (Michelle)

Um...as of right now I'm in a really good relationship. Um...from my past relationships, I've been pretty traumatized by them so obviously...You wouldn't want to traumatize a person who you really care about. So...within the first year of the relationship, I was very cautious and anxious about...treating my partner as if...as if they were somebody else.

My true fear was isolating him from his peers and from his friends because I just couldn't get over my insecurities and my anxieties telling me that something is going to happen.

ALICE (Margaret)

Yeah I miss them a lot but I know I can't really go back there. I would have to go back to the adult section. That's a part of the reason I wanted to get better because I didn't want to be an adult there. I guess that fear made me realize I needed to get my shit in check. It's okay to be struggling and have bad feelings. You can't let the feelings take over your life, I let them take over my life.

JOHNNY (Wontack)

Most of the times we had to wear a back-pack that weighs about 40 kilos and walk for 20 or more kilometers while holding a rifle. From the first or two kilometers or so, around 10% of the troops fail to continue due to their physical ability.

Whenever I encountered this type of situation, I didn't hesitate for a second, but I helped them deload their weights from the sack. Then I knew, the people who were struggling were the people who were in needs of connection, help, and care.

CHRISTINA (Mimi)

So the emotional reward and the connections that you do make with people, that's what I always found to be more fulfilling for me in my career and it's just exciting to be able to just kind of see people from a different angle that they've been categorized into.

Where I work there were many, many people that... that it did not happen for. But when it does... It's just, it's really exciting and their lives are different. Their Children's lives are different. It's like you helped to break some cycles that lasted generations of their families. Yeah, it's pretty cool actually.

T (Michelle)

So...as time went on, I learned to open up more about it to my boyfriend and talk to him about it more. I still have anxiety about these things, but it's more so that, "Oh, he's not responding, is he dead? Did he get hit by a train? I hope not, please respond to me," instead of, "Oh, he's not responding, he's cheating on me." It's not an immediate response anymore, which is good. I still do have anxiety about isolating him, but it is getting better because I do talk to him about it.

ALICE (Margaret)

I made a lot of good friends there. like forming connections with people from the hospital it made me realize I wasn't alone. Other people go through this. Someone's trauma isn't comparable to other's, everyone deals with things differently. That saying "birds of a feather flock together" makes a lot of sense with people who have mental health issues.

JOHNNY (Wontack)

This troop I helped was a late-comer, who joined army after 5 months than I did. He started bursting out in tears crying.

He told me that he felt so lonely and hard to try things that he never did, and since everyone is higher rank than him, he had no one to stay connected to, and rely to. Then when I reached my hands to help, he was very touched and thankful.

Because I was connected then, with a bunch of strong, and warm hearted people, I also redefined the term "connection". For me it was like a person who would die for me, and who I would die for; like a family.

PART 4:

Advice

Writing team: Michael Mezhiritskiy, Wontack Oh, Sangwon Lee, Jake Peralta, Selene Negrón

Cast :

Narrator (Michael Mezhiritskiy)

Anonymous (Selene)

Alan (Jake)

Johnny (Wontack)

Hanhee (Sangwon)

Dominick (Michael Redina)

Vinny (Justice Seda)

NARRATOR (Michael Mezhiritskiy)

Advice.

NARRATOR (Michael)

Alan, Director of the Staller Center.

Alan (Jake)

We did the show and we all knew because the president told me to cancel the show because we were just realizing stuff was going on but nobody realized what it was yet. And I said, I can't cancel it. " I found out there was a football game The same night and I asked, "are you going to cancel the game?" And he said "no" and I said "well you're not canceling me either."

So she finishes, then the NBA goes down, Broadway shuts down, the Met opera goes down, that was it, everything closed. I didn't know how long it was going to be. I said to my artist friends "we gotta do something" . We did some virtual things together, I thought it would be a few months. What did we all know??? The film festival, which was always live. We usually brought filmmakers out, but we decided to do it virtually."

Narrator (Michael)

Vinny, a passionate musician.

Vinny (Justice)

I don't get to play music live with my friends. I have rarely seen my friends in two years. umm it's been pretty bad.

Super super ups and downs, almost manic state but when it's a manic down I try and uhh just go for a run or something and if it's like a super up then i'm writing songs and talking to my friends via facetime.

Narrator (Michael)

Hanhee, a recent high school graduate.

Hanhee(Sangwon)

The day the university acceptance announcement came out, I was more nervous than ever. The result was a failure. At that moment, I felt like the world was going to collapse.

Narrator (Michael)

Johnny, a soldier from South Korea.

Johnny (Wontack)

In a battalion, we were assigned a number instead of a name. [*laughing*] Still remember mine, it was 139. Like a barcode, we were called by number and when we forgot our own number, the officers would rage at us. Then, I thought "wow this isn't a great place to find a friend". After a long 6 weeks of training bootcamp, I was moved to other battalion in 5th division to spend my remaining twenty months in the army. When I walked into my dorm, 5 peers welcomed me and gave me a warm hug.

Hanhee(Sangwon)

At that time, an old man bought me a drink at the mart and gave it to me. I stopped crying and had a brief conversation with an old man. I explained my current situation. But I don't know why, but I could feel comfort in my heart. Old man listened to what I was saying and sympathized with me[*tap my shoulder*]. Some of the stories he told me came to mind. He said that you are young and have lots of time.

Narrator (Michael)

Dominick, young man in his 20s.

Dominick(Michael Redina 1st interview)

When you live under the same fuckin' roof as them your whole life, you tend to get sick of their mannerisms and parts of their personality. But when you are separated; you are so familiar with it that it almost feels like something is missing.

Johnny (Wontack)

They were just like me, separated from the family, from the lovers, and sent to mysterious place in upper South Korea near the border line of North Korea. At night times, when everyone in the camp is asleep, I was able to hear North Korean propaganda radio, and it was shit scary. I had billions of thoughts running inside my head, and the biggest trigger was what ifs. What if North Korean troop invades our bootcamp while I am asleep? What if I encounter a North Korean

soldier during night time shifts guarding the main gate? and thousands of what ifs just mentally attacked me hard.

Dominick (Michael Redina 1st interview)

It's like philosophy where you make friends with these people, you simply enjoy each other's company and one day you simply don't talk again because of whatever reason. If they go to chase some goal or aspiration, or if they simply just hate me the next day and never talk to me again; it's nothing personal.

Narrator (Michael)

Anonymous, a female college athlete.

Anonymous (Selene's 1st Interview)

Like I told you before, out of my older siblings I was definitely the most adventurous as I'd like to call it. I placed my parents in some situations that produced some gray hairs on my mother's head, and may have been responsible for my father's complete loss of hair...

Like I actually had to discipline myself at some point to wake up and sit in front of my laptop and actually attend. It's so bad I know... Sometimes I just listen to my 8am professor while I was laying down in bed with my camera off and the volume all the way down so I can knock back out. Stop judging haha... I passed, didn't i?!

Dominick (Michael 1st interview)

Well yea, it's a bit different for me, like I said; if I ever felt extremely isolated, I could just drive [*hand motion pointing at two different locations on the table*] an hour, hour and a half and be home. Versus, ya know, someone from bumfuck Montana or something who is hours away will have a much different experience.

Anonymous (Selene's first interview)

I honestly think that people who judge others that have contemplated suicide never really felt true despair or hopelessness themselves. In that case they're extremely lucky, and though I very much am against people taking their own life, I totally understand why a person can do such a thing.

Hanhee (Sangwon)

I was able to feel a lot in the isolated situation. If I isolate myself even more in an isolated situation, there would be no good results.

Anonymous (Selene's 1st Interview)

Life be out here doing its thing... and for the longest time, most of the answers to my deepest prayers have been "Trust Me." Trusting God is still a work in progress sister girl so keep me in your prayers girl But I am limited. I'm flawed, I have dysfunctions. I'm a beautiful combination of sweet and sour, and all of those colors with all their crazy, beautiful, ugly tones is what makes the masterpiece that is me.

Alan (Jake)

Look, you've gone through something none of us have ever experienced. I'm 61 years old, I never experienced something like this in my life before. This is new territory, so advice is tough to give about how to respond to this because I never thought it would be like this. Like for example, when 911 hit, Broadway closed for 3 to 4 days. With the actor strike, Broadway closed for a month and I thought about it and I questioned myself how did Broadway close for almost 17 months? You've just experienced something that I hope you never have to experience in your life again. Don't forget it, don't forget what happened during this time, think about, think about where you are. It's hard to do, but I tried doing it too.

Vinny (Justice)

absolutely the people you surround yourself with is everything, no matter if its professional or social, it's everything.

I could have the worst day or I could be super drunk or fucked up, mind you I don't do this. I use it as an example, I could be not even here mentally but when we first go on and we get the intro music, where its like oh shit lets go, then nothing else is around us, nothing else matters.

Dominick (Michael Redina 1st interview)

I'm going to be busy no matter what, I have a very dedicated work ethic. I don't really need too much interaction with people, other than those I work with. Plus I can always talk to you, or any of you guys. Now to the point where it is a problem? [pause] I mean, no, [shakes head] my work is my primary focus so naturally it will get in the fuckin' way, um, but it's a matter of what's important at that time.

Hanhee(Sangwon)

But I know if there's no mental connection how are you going to connect with someone? You need to be connected mentally.

I feel like love is supposed to make you feel warm, like you are getting a hug. Love is comforting. There is a difference between the love that you are supposed to receive the love that you choose to have or for the person who chooses to love me. Friendships are a choice.

Dominick (Michael Redina 1st interview)

And it might seem depressing but to me it really isn't; again, just another part of life.

Like I said before about how I tend to try and butt heads with people, If you don't moderate yourself when doing that, It can end up with more consequences in person. If you butt heads with someone online, you can simply just say "fuck off" and never talk to them again. But in person, if you upset them, or if you say one thing to someone, and then they go off and tell random people you never met in your life's story, it can get really complicated. Work politics can really muddy a potential relationship, so I tend to be a bit more distant with people I meet in real life than I do in person. For those I meet in person, I see it as business, then fun; versus online where it is more fun, then business. Yea- business being; of course, whatever it is they want to vent or talk about that day that irked them.

Alan (Jake)

We have just lived through a really crazy time and we're coming out the other side of it, it seems like we are. I'm a very positive person, I hope you got this over the past hour or so. I would say stay positive, if you love the arts, pursue it. If it's not being used for a career, pursue it as a hobby or part of your life. Don't let anyone intimidate you, if you got something you're really passionate about, do it. Open for opportunities and trust yourself. No one knows you better than you do. No one knows what's in your heart more than you do.

Hanhee(Sangwon)

Isolation is an opportunity to challenge myself. If I overcome those feelings, I will be able to grow even more.

Anonymous (Selene's 1st Interview)

But I really appreciated the glimpse of joy life threw my way when life got hard. It was like nugget boosters that kept me going. I remembered one birthday. I cried my whole day because I just wasn't happy with where I was in life. The next day I had planned to just sleep the whole day after work and I happened to get invited to a barbecue. I went and immediately thought i was going to leave right away, but i gave it time... too much time girl cause i happened to stay til midnight! I had a great time, you see? Nugget boosters.

Hanhee(Sangwon)

When you fail, you have to overcome it without getting frustrated and you can become a better person.

Dominick(Michael Redina 2nd interview)

Ya know? You think everything will work out, and then randomly it becomes 1-2 months. You see what I'm getting at? It's random, and out of control, that's the point I'm trying to make. So for me, I have these two months to have this time with someone, ive known purely online and then [*snaps fingers*] she is gone, but instead of dying, she just returns to being text messages and a voice. Not that I didn't feel more than that, but it is two totally different worlds. And you begin to miss and want more of what you had, but you can't; it's impossible. And being me, who is still so young at the time, didn't really know how to process all of it, so it felt a bit lonely after the visit. So uh, yea that's that.

Johnny (Wontack)

When my physical and mental ability was getting better day by day, I was easily able to help my peers during hard training times. Most of the time we had to wear a back-pack that weighs about 40 kilos and walk for 20 or more kilometers while holding a rifle. From the first or two kilometers or so, around 10% of the troops fail to continue due to their physical ability. Whenever I encountered this type of situation, I didn't hesitate for a second, but I helped them deload their weights from the sack. Then I knew, the people who were struggling were the people who were in need of connection, help, and care.

Anonymous (Selene):

Like It's so cool when a friend happens to invite you out, and people you just met that day end up singing for you. Man, I get so shy... but there's nothing like having the best fun doing the most simplest things! Though some hardly knew my name while singing, it only made it funnier and felt so good to be seen, appreciated and loved.

Hanhee(Sangwon)

I think it can really take a toll on someone. I think you need connections. It is really hard to be all by yourself.

Dominick(Michael Redina 2nd interview)

Advice for someone? Well I always go by a saying, that ‘the pain of discipline is better than the pain of regret, but life isn’t just pain so work hard but care less’. You like that one? Yea its neat. But really, don’t worry or stress about what ifs; especially if you will probably never see that person again. If I don’t hit it off with someone and realize it won’t work out because, I don’t know, maybe they were a dickhead? Honestly, once we walk away, they could drop dead for all I care.

Anonymous (Selene):

I hope this little ramble helps y'all to know that if he’s God enough to create the earth, fill it with life and set things in perfect motion, it’s worth stretching an attempt at trusting that he can carry the weight of our lives too.

PART 5:

LANGUAGE & ETHNICITY

Writing Team: Tyler, Mariacristina, Monica, and Lauren

CAST:

Catalina (Mariacristina)

Isabelle (Monica)

Grandmother (Nicholas)

May (Yi)

Ted (Jacky)

Roman (Tina)

Jay (Tyler)

NARRATOR (Kevin)

(All characters, except NARRATOR (Kevin), with heads down)

NARRATOR (Kevin):

Introductions: Isabelle, a student

(Isabelle looks up)

ISABELLE (Monica):

(Isabelle rubs her chin for a moment)

Um, where do I begin? I guess I can start from where I am from? I'm Nigerian so of course I am from Nigeria, came here when I was... 9 or 10. I'll say 9 just to be safe. I don't remember much from then."

NARRATOR (Kevin):

Catalina, a mother

(Catalina looks up)

Catalina (Mariacristina):

Hmm the most at home was back home in Florida, I didn't realize it until I went back to visit after living here for a year. You know I grew up there and all my family and friends are there and it's just so different from New York. People are so much nicer there when I moved here, I was like why is everyone so pissed off?

NARRATOR (Kevin): A Grandmother

(Grandmother looks up)

Grandmother (Nicholas):

Very nervous, we were very nervous, first time on a plane, all of us. Very nervous. My brother was the one who got us over here. He married an American citizen, so he bring us here.

NARRATOR (Kevin):

May, a newcomer

(May looks up)

May (Yi):

Well, it is harder, I always feel lonely, maybe because I am an immigrant, um, I did not speak English very well, you know, because I just came here, US. (I crossed my fingers). I still remembered that first time people asked me, "Hi May, how are you," I just said, "I'm fine, thank you. And you." I breathe isolation.

NARRATOR (Kevin): Roman, a High School Teacher

(Roman looks up)

Roman (Tina):

I actually didn't start teaching till I was 30, which was about nine years after I had graduated college because I didn't exactly know what I wanted to do. Ummm but if I would go back right now and do something else *[thinks]* I think one thing that I would possibly consider and get into would have been either civil engineering, or something along the engineering lines.

NARRATOR (Kevin):

Jay, a student

(Jay looks up)

Jay (Tyler):

It is a bit of a weird thing. I was born in the United States but everybody around here says that I'm Indian. When I go to India with my family people say that I am American. It's kind of like being in limbo culturally.

NARRATOR (Kevin):

Ted, a politician

Ted (Jacky)

I was in the state assembly in Albany

NARRATOR (Kevin):

Moment: Verbal racism.

Ted (Jacky)

“Back then, it's more prominent. Now but back then, Asian Americans weren't well known in the Political arena. We had a few especially local New York Politicians, you won't be surprised to know that....”

Catalina (Mariacristina):

“I never experienced racism until I moved here, everyone in South Florida was Spanish or mixed ethnicities so I didn't feel like I stood out. Here I always feel like people are looking at me weird, like I STAND OUT.”

Isabelle (Monica):

“I didn't really feel black till I came to America, like in Nigeria pretty much everyone is the same. It's only till I came to America did my skin color became a issue, like almost my whole identity.”

Ted (Jacky):

I remember when I was in the state assembly in Albany, when I was in the Assembly chambers and a fellow politician despise me being fully dressed and everything. They just came up to me and said “Wow you speak English well” and Im like “Really dude?” I cant help you there.” That was the kind of impression people were getting. So stereotypes were a problem.”

Catalina (Mariacristina):

Like even with Benjamin you know people ask me all the time when I'm in the store or something “oh my god he is so cute, whose kid is it?” like what? you think I just have a random person's kid? He's my kidlike what the fuck this is my child, that just pissed me off and it still does. I even notice at the park when Brian goes, he says all these parents come up to him and want their kids to play and talk to him and that never happens when I go...

Isabelle (Monica):

Like I was in Florida, and I accidentally bump into this lady and she like tried to spit on me and called me a dirty n-word.

Catalina (Mariacristina):

And like I guess when we had that tropical storm was the very first time, I noticed like wow people are racist here! I was leaving the house and we finally had power, so I was so I was going to the store and one of my neighbors was waving me down from my car so I rolled down the window and she asked me...

Isabelle (Monica):

And another thing, they were so mean when I first came here. It's not like today where it's more mixed and diverse. And no one was in the Wakanda hype train or whatever you called it. I got called names like African booty scratcher or asked if I hunt lions, like what does that even mean? Like "do you hunt the giant rats you live with" "Sorry, that was mean, but you know what I mean"

Catalina (Mariacristina):

...I rolled down the window and she asked me, "do you guys have power back?" And I said yes, she got all pissed, acting like I stole her power. Like it was my fault, lady what? that's not how it works. And then she goes "you better watch your back I have cop friends that can send you back to where you came from" and I was just like what the fuck! First of all bitches I have a blue passport so no one will be "sending me anywhere" and I was just so disgusted like I hated that Benjamin had to see that and I know he's little and doesn't understand but still I don't want him to have to see someone talk to his mother like that. it was just so gross.

Isabelle (Monica):

I was like that's pretty extreme, and you try not to let it get to you, but you know for someone to react to you like that over something so minor does change your worldview"

NARRATOR (Kevin):

Moment: Asian Hate

Roman (Tina):

So, there were times last year during remote learning where I had students, like Asian students, coming up to me during my office hours not for math, but for, you know, their personal concerns.

May (Yi):

(Sigh) I lived in Brooklyn, so I must take a subway to work. So one day I took a mark and went into the subway, a person looked at me and then he cover his face immediately because I am an Asian.

Ted (Jacky):

It just became more prominent that Asian Americans were seen as serious Political contenders. It was for a long time Asian Americans didn't vote. So that was one of the problems. Stereotypes and what not was always a problem.

Roman (Tina):

It's probably everywhere, you know, the violence and discrimination linked to the pandemic and the increase in anti-Asian hate crimes, after, you know, some person ratchets this whole thing up by speaking of the virus in, you know, racially charged terms.

May (Yi):

I kept walking to try to find a seat, but everyone glanced at me and then they took a mark and put their bag on the seat. You know like.....I gave you covid now because I am next to you or in front of you. So I stood on the corner and people keep social distance to me, I can feel the isolation and discrimination. You know... so I don't want to go outside anymore."

Roman (Tina):

I was also right across the street at the time that this guy, probably in his 20s, slapped this Asian lady across the face and left her unconscious.

Ted (Jacky):

I mean we saw after COVID and anti-asian semeance that Asian Americans are stepping up to the plate. We're finding our voice. It became very necessary for us to survive. Its gotten a lot better.

NARRATOR (Kevin):

Moment: Barriers

May (Yi):

My accent is weird like a monkey speaks English. Um (sigh) I was scared to speak English; I don't want people to ask me anything. Um like Another time is when I went to a restaurant to order some food.

Jay (Tyler):

My parents immigrated here from India in the 90's. They had my brother, and then they had me some years later. All of this movement was largely my parents following the opportunities that they had for work and wherever that took us that was ultimately where we moved.

May (Yi)

I said: "I want to this, um this." "No, no, no this." "It's this." "No, no, no, this." Also, when my coworkers made a joke, my voice like (Wow, Whoo-hoo). It sounds like I got you, yeah it is funny, but I don't know. (Sigh) I have no friend; I don't know who I can talk. I'm tired. Every day I just go home, go to school, and go to my workplace. No social life, no friends. Yeah, how hardship life, right!

Jay (Tyler):

They were illegal for a while and they had to stress over citizenship stuff but after that was ironed out it mostly came down to work. Of course there were other factors at play sometimes but it was almost always just work you know?

Grandmother (Nicholas):

It was hard to talk because I didn't know the language. I didn't go to school, I work a lot, no time for school, no time for learning English. I know what I know, and if I didn't know, I change subject or just be quiet.

Jay (Tyler):

If I had to link them all together I would say that cricket had done a good job sticking with me throughout everything. Yeah, like the sport. I only recently started playing like three years ago or so but I began watching it on TV when my family would take me to India because there was nothing else I could watch.

Grandmother (Nicholas):

It was hard making friends because English did make it hard to talk to people. I spoke what I knew but that was it. I only get along with my neighbors, who also had broken English, like Joanne, and Residi.

Jay (Tyler):

Oh, um so the major broadcasts are basically all in Hindi which I can only understand a little. There are tons of subcultures and villages in different parts of India with their own languages so it makes it kind of difficult. So people from my family in India might know Hindi but they speak Gujarati which is what I can speak but even then I'm not fluent.

Grandmother (Nicholas):

I wish, even today I wish, I wish I speak and write English more. Very hard to talk to other people. And you, and Matty, and Katerina, I wish they could understand me more, but they don't speak Portuguese, so they no understand me. You know Portuguese, you understand, right? I wish I speak more English so they understand me more.

NARRATOR (Kevin):

Moment: Growing from these experiences

Ted (Jacky):

The isolated eventually become a group. It became a very interesting dynamic with the Asian American officials and non- uhhhh now what we called the... you know.... The people of color caucasus and state assembly, African American and Asian American caucus were actually the same and we worked together. You prove them wrong, you know you worked, worked on bills and other things

Grandmother (Nicholas):

Portugal's nice but I like it much more here, nicer life. And my family, you are here so I like it here more.

May (Yi):

Ok, that's fine. I went a language school to learn how to pronunciation. I made a friend in there. So we were hanging out like dining, shopping, and learning. Like that, I felt maybe I'm not lonely anymore.

Ted (Jacky):

Even Though we always have this fear that we don't wanna be the Asian American politician. There's things we care about. Like Lunar New Year. I was one of the people who worked very hard to make Lunar New Year a school holiday. So my kids have Lunar New Year off these days, I just want to look at them and go “ You're welcome”.

Jay (Tyler):

It just all kind of came together like the end of a film you know?

Isabelle (Monica):

“But overall, I like this country, I know the sacrifices my parents made to get me and my siblings here. Bigger opportunities then back home you know. I'm just trying to make sure it doesn't all go to waste lol”

Catalina (Maria):

I am for sure more empathetic and sympathetic, and especially with mental health stuff after I went through that I can understand people more and feel their pain. Before being a mom I didn't have that.. It's a weird thing you'll get it one day.