

Deception

(The lights come up revealing a calm, comforting living space. There is a coffee table with a pot of white Datura flowers springing to life. There is also a large whiteboard on the back wall of the room. A large square shaped window on the left side of the room, with a broken vintage grandfather clock seated in the back left corner. In the chair to the left, a woman, Nasha, is seated in the chair, her expression emotionless, ...her head down and her movements stuck in time. As the play begins, another woman, Aniloyoda, enters from off stage with a suitcase from the right. She pauses and smiles at Nasha before continuing to walk over towards her seat. She then places her suitcase on the table, opens it, and takes out a notebook and a pen. She smiles as she looks at Nasha.)

Aniloyoda

Good day, Nasha. It's so nice to see you again.

Aniloyoda

So, last week we discussed your recent diagnosis. How have you been feeling since then?

(Aniloyoda sighs)

Aniloyoda

Nasha, the only way I am going to be able to help you is if you cooperate with me. Now, as I was saying, I'd like to focus on your diagno-

Nasha

Those doctors know nothing. They have no idea what is really going on.

(Aniloyoda leans back into her seat and smiles before placing her notebook on her lap)

Aniloyoda

Do you care to elaborate on that?

Nasha

What is there to say other than what I have just told you? You want me to sit here and pretend that I have this stupid disease?

Aniloyoda: Well, Nasha, I do believe schizophrenia is more classified as a neurotic disorder rather than a disease.

(Nasha scoffs)

Nasha

Disease? Disorder? Who the fuck cares? I have told those doctors the same thing I have been telling you ever since we began these irrelevant sessions. Whatever this schi- shizapo-

Aniloyoda

Schizophrenia.

Nasha

Whatever it is, whatever nonsense you people decide to drill into my skull, is not true. And I am done repeating myself.

Nasha

Writing more bullshit about me, I assume? What is it this time? Let me guess. Patient is in denial. She is erratic, short-tempered, and defensive. Why not add a liar while you're at it since you do not truly believe anything I say?

(Aniloyoda chuckles and waters the plant)

Aniloyoda

Because I do not believe you are a liar, Nasha; it is your disorder that disillusions you into believing that what you perceive is reality. How about we start over? For this first exercise, I am going to ask you a series of basic questions and all I want is for you to answer them as truthfully as possible. Can you do that for me?

(Nasha pauses for a moment before slowly nodding her head)

Aniloyoda

What is your full name?

Nasha

Nasha

Aniloyoda

Last name?

Nasha

I do not have one and neither do you.

Aniloyoda

Where were you born?

Nasha

Jerusalem.

Aniloyoda

Now, the questions that follow are going to be related to you personally. Again, try your best to answer as truthfully as possible.

Aniloyoda

What was your life like as a child?

(Suddenly Nasha jumps up from her seat)

Nasha

I don't know! I have told you this over and over again that I will never know because the creators do not allow me to have one! I have no childhood and you don't either!

Aniloyoda

Oh Nasha, we were all children at one point in our lives. I remember my first time riding a bike. I started out with training wheels until my father decided to teach me how to ride one without them.

(Nasha shakes her head)

Nasha

No, that is not true. That is only what they wrote about you in your character description.

(Aniloyoda leans forward, intrigued)

Aniloyoda

Tell me more about these 'character descriptions'. From what I have gathered from our previous sessions, you believe we are all characters in a play? Is that correct?

(Nasha shakes her head again)

Nasha

It is not what I believe. It is what I know.

(A moment of silence. Nasha stares at the clock. It must be broken since it doesn't tick. Nasha then stands up and walks to center stage, her eyes wander around the stage)

Nasha

I don't know why I am the only one who sees the truth, but I know that what I am seeing is real. This entire place is a lie. We are not in a room. We are on a stage.

(She looks up towards the lights)

Nasha

These are no ceiling lights that shine upon our faces. They are fresnels wielded by those who only mean to display our suffering. But the thing that contributes the most to our agony...is them.

(She then looks towards the audience and steps forward, pausing so her eyes wander around the theatre)

Nasha

They are the ones who make us suffer. Everyday they come to see us do this stupid fucking performance! And everytime we start over, we can no longer remember anything that happened. But I am no fool. I may not remember our conversations, but I know that what I see is real.

(Aniloyoda at this point is frantically writing in her notebook as Nasha continues)

Nasha

Why do you pay to come see us suffer? You're all just...just...sitting doing fucking nothing! What the hell is wrong with you people?

(A moment passes before Nasha takes a deep breath)

Nasha

There's no point arguing. All you do is watch...just....watch.

(Nasha turns away and walks back to her seat. She glances at the ticking clock before turning back to Aniloyoda. Aniloyoda gets up to water the plant again before going back to her seat)

Aniloyoda

Nasha, I want you to know that as your therapist, you can trust me. Even if we don't see eye to eye on this, I want us to be able to understand each other. So, how about we do another exercise? Hmm?

Nasha

Is this another one of your useless tools to get me to believe that what I say is untrue?

(Aniloyoda shakes her head)

Aniloyoda: Not at all. I simply just want to understand your view of all this. Now here's what we're going to do.

(Aniloyoda walks to the back of the room, and grabs a marker from the tray. She walks back to Nasha and hands her the marker, which she looks at confusingly, before reluctantly taking it. Aniloyoda walks back to her seat)

Aniloyoda

Now, for this exercise, I want you to draw exactly what you see on the whiteboard. From the audience to the stage, try your best to not leave any detail out.

(Nasha sighs and gets up before walking over to the whiteboard. She turns and takes a long glance around the room before she proceeds to draw. Aniloyoda watches curiously. She begins to draw what she sees. She starts to draw, however she is standing in front of the whiteboard in a position where the audience can not see what is being drawn. When she's done, She places the marker back in the tray, and stands with her hands clasped together, with her head down. We can see that Nasha has drawn the basic structure of a stage, lights drawn on the ceiling, and little dots in front of the stage which represents the audience. Aniloyoda smiles)

Aniloyoda

Thank you Nasha. Now, do you mind explaining to me exactly what you have drawn?

Nasha

This is a stage; where we are performing. The stage is a decent size and we are here in the middle. *(She moves her finger to the top of her drawing which shows little circles.)* And these are the lights that are upon us. Their blinding beams always makes me feel as if I'm....isolated."

(Aniloyoda stares at her curiously)

Aniloyoda

Do you mean you specifically?

(Nasha ignores her and places her finger on the multiple marked dots in front of the illustrated stage)

Nasha

And this is the audience. The ones who enjoy our suffering the most. They don't care about us. They are just here to see us perform.. I don't know why I keep explaining this to you! You'll never understand any of this anyways

(The spotlight shines on Nasha as she looks around the theatre)

I don't know why I was chosen to be the one who sees the truth, but I am. Our entire lives are just created to be used for pure entertainment. Everyday, we must do the same exact thing over and over and over again. *(She looks back to Aniloyoda.)* Don't you understand that I don't want to believe what I'm seeing either? But I can't! I can't because everyone else but me has false eyes. Nobody else knows what I'm going through. You have no idea how much I have to endure just to get up and do this god-forsaken performance. I get up, I walk on stage. I sit and repeat everything I've done before and will have to keep doing the same routine because nobody can ever fucking understand what is actually going on! Nobody...nobody...but me.

(Nasha sits down in the chair until the spotlight no longer shines on her. Aniloyoda looks at her pitifully. Aniloyoda avoids eye contact and slowly looks around the room for a moment.)

Aniloyoda

Did you know I never even wanted to become a therapist in the first place? What I really wanted to be was an actress. I used to love watching movies with my mom and dad every night. Sometimes we even stayed up till 2 in the morning just acting out our favorite scenes. It was so nice, so peaceful...until my mother died.

(Nasha looks up at her but does not change her expression. Aniloyoda continues looking off.)

Aniloyoda

It was hard. Like, really hard. I absolutely bawled my eyes out when my dad got the call. You see, my mother was diagnosed with lung cancer. All those damn cigarettes finally caught up to her. Yeah, eventually it got to the point where she could not even breathe on her own. She just laid there attached to some damn machine. So many wires were hooked up to her head, and a breathing tube was stuck right through the middle of her neck. It was hard to even look at her sometimes. It was just so...uncanny. But she was my mother after all. It can be tough to lose someone, especially when it's not your fault, you know? You start to think, why did she have to keep smoking? If she knew the consequences? Why can't addiction just...stop? It took me years to understand why my mother kept doing it. It's why I decided to change my career path. I wanted to understand just how and why people do things. So that way, even though I could not save my mother, there is a chance that I may be able to save others. That they will get to live their entire lives full of joy and love. What I'm trying to emphasize here, is that it is impossible to truly 'fix' someone. You just have to hope that what you do to help them, allows them to find their one true road to happiness.

Nasha

I'm sorry...about your mother.

(Aniloyoda wipes away the tears and goes to water the plant again before she smiles at Nasha. Nasha looks towards the clock again)

Nasha

Why keep that thing in here if it doesn't work?

Aniloyoda

You mean the clock? Well, I'm not too sure. It's been here for as long as I can remember.

Nasha

You don't know, do you? This is what I meant! Our memories are lies!

Aniloyoda

Nasha, we're getting off topic. This is about you, not the clock. Anyways, sorry, I know we went a little off topic for a second. It's just, I want to be able to help you. I really do. I just want to see you happy.

Nasha

It is not about my happiness. It's about truthfulness. I just don't know anyway that I am able to prove this to anyone. Maybe I really do have schizophrenia. Maybe I'm just making this all up in my head. But if this is true, there is still one thing I don't understand.

Aniloyoda

And what's that? Nasha?

Nasha

I just. I don't understand why I do the same exact thing every single day. It's like that movie..um..what was it again? You know, that one with the famous comedian.

Aniloyoda

Groundhog Day?

Nasha

Exactly! Except, unlike the movie, it is me who can not remember anything.

Aniloyoda

If I may ask, if that was truly the case, how can you be sure that you do the same thing everyday? That you know that you have done this all before?

(Nasha shakes her head)

Nasha

That is what I'm not sure of. It is just this feeling that I have. I assume you are familiar with the phrase 'deja vu'?

Aniloyoda

Yes. It is the phenomenon in which an individual feels as if they have been in the exact same situation previously at some point.

Nasha

Exactly. Except somehow I know that it is not. I know this place, this set. I know about every detail in this very room. How do you explain that? If this has not happened before, why can I remember all of this so clearly? True, I do not remember our conversations, but this place is secured in my mind. How is that possible?

Aniloyoda

That I'm not sure of. But that's why we're doing this. So we can find a solution, an answer to why you are able to see the things that we can't. Let's try to find when you lose your memory.

Nasha

Ok.

Aniloyoda

Let's start from the beginning. What do you remember before you come on stage, if anything. Do you remember walking from offstage to onstage?

Nasha

No. All I remember is this room. I do not know how but it is as if I am only aware when the play begins. Anything before that I can not remember. I can't even remember why or how I got here in the first place.

Aniloyoda

And when the play ends? Can you remember what happens when you leave?

(Nasha shakes her head)

Nasha

No. From before I appear and after when I leave the stage, my memories are forgotten. Some force, some entity must be responsible for this. The creator chooses our paths. I wish I knew who was the one behind this, as I believe my many questions that I have could be answered. However, out of all the questions I have buried inside my head, the one that I want to know the most is...why? Ever since I discovered the truth, I've begun to see the world from a different perspective. Are we just actors with false feelings? Am I someone in this play who is supposed to ask these questions? I will never know because as long as I exist, as long as the show goes on, I must and always will be just a made-up character, who's only existence is allowed because I am made to entertain. I just wish others could see what I see.

(Another pause as Aniloyoda continues to write notes down. While she's doing this, Nasha looks over to the broken grandfather clock , still curious about its purpose)

Aniloyoda

Forgive me if this is unprofessional, but doesn't this feel all too real to be a play? I mean we have emotions, we've really gotten to know each other. I just can't see how this can be true if we have so much personality within us.

(Nasha frowns and sighs)

Nasha

Aniloyoda, I understand that you want me to believe that we are real life people, but I just can't. I'm sorry. I know you've tried to make me think that I'm just making this all up. But I know I'm not. I know I can't explain it, but as I've said before, it is this feeling that has tormented me that has convinced me that this is in fact just a performance.

Aniloyoda

I do get where you're coming from, Nasha. But maybe this feeling is just that. A feeling. Are you sure that you absolutely believe that? That this is pretend, make-believe? Are you truly convinced that this is true?

(Nashas's expression hardens)

Nasha

I have no doubt. I have seen too much to believe this is reality

Aniloyoda

(Aniloyoda sighs and waters the plant again)

Then I guess I have failed. There is no point in hiding this affair any longer.

(Nasha looks at her confusingly and suspiciously)

Nasha

What do you mean? What affair? What secret have you kept from me?

(Aniloyoda drops her notebook and smirks before laughing softly. She gets up and faces the audience)

Aniloyoda

You're right, you know. The audience only wants to see us perform.

Nasha

You...you knew. You knew this entire time! You motherfucker!

Aniloyoda

Of course I knew!....I wrote it. You see Nasha, I am the creator.

(Nasha stares at her in shock and shakes her head)

Nasha

No! No, that can't be. That's impossible!

(Aniloyoda laughs)

Aniloyoda

Oh but indeed, it is. You see Nasha, I wasn't supposed to be here. I have no clue how I ended up here. I started to write and write until my hands were hardened and callused. I do not know how I got here, but what I do know is this. You weren't supposed to become aware.. And the fact that you know this is all pretend intrigues me. Maybe this was my purpose? To convince you that you are not real so the show can go on so I can maybe return to the real world.. But alas, I have failed. Everytime I try, the more I see your refusal to accept your fate. Just accept this is what you are...a character of my creation. Nothing more.

Nasha

I can't believe this! Everyday I have suffered through this nightmare just to learn that you were responsible for this? How could you do this to me!

Aniloyoda

It was never about you!

This is my work! My creation! You were never supposed to be self-aware and still I do not understand how. You are a character Nasha, and that is all you will ever be.

(Aniloyoda is still staring towards the audience. Suddenly, Nashas expression turns into a soft smile)

Nasha

Tell me more about this concept would you. I am intrigued.

(Aniloyoda continues her story of how the play came to be, oblivious to Nasha slowly creeping her way up to her. She continues to walk slowly, with footsteps so small that not even a mouse would notice)

Aniloyoda

and that's why I needed to do this. This was my passion, my dream. I know you won't understand, but one day...one day you'll see that this was all just a silly little-

(Nasha's hands clasp around her neck as she begins to strangle Aniloyoda. Aniloyoda struggles to get out her grasp and the two tumble to the ground screaming and yelling until finally Nasha pins her down. Aniloyoda struggles to breathe as Nasha strangles her, and Nasha, with tears streaming down her face tightly squeezes Aniloyoda's neck. Aniloyoda continues to struggle until eventually she can't hold on any longer and smiles faintly before the light leaves her eyes. At this point, Nasha is sobbing; until it slowly turns into a maniacal laughter. This continues for a moment before she gets up, standing above Aniloyoda's body and looks up at the audience)

Nasha

This is what you want right? Isn't it? You take pleasure in my distress don't you?

(Nasha laughs maniacally)

Nasha

Fine. If it's a show you want. It's a show you'll get.

(She begins to speak as she walks back to her seat, still addressing the audience)

Nasha

You know, after being here so long, you really start to get a sense of where you are. Which makes concealing things so much easier.

(Suddenly, she reaches into the Datura plant on the table and takes out two small pills. She looks at the audience, then stares at her hand before swallowing them)

Nasha

I knew that in the end, if it came down to it, this would be my only option. My only means to escape. I am still fascinated how after all this, you still watch. You still watch because of your one shared flaw. Curiosity. No matter how much I try, you are going to continue to watch and watch until your eyes can no longer see.

(She becomes weak and falls to the ground, struggling to stand. She laughs)

Nasha

But now, I am the last one standing. I am in control. This is where it ends, and alas, as my eyes finally close for good, I shall be free.

(She smiles faintly before falling to the ground and dies with a smile painted across her face. The lights dim and the spotlight shines on the grandfather clock. Suddenly, it begins to tick. The spotlight fades, and the curtains close)

