4-18-2018

Episode 02: Fragmented Reality

Colleen Hehir

University of Dayton

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1. Papers SHUFFLING. Allison is FIDGETING in her seat.

HEARING MODERATOR
Please state your name for the record.

ALLISON
I’m Allison.

HEARING MODERATOR
Please state your full name for the record.

ALLISON
Oh, uh… Jennings. I’m Allison Jennings.

HEARING MODERATOR
Alright, and please tell us your academic year and your major.

ALLISON
I’m a junior and, umm, I recently switched my major to English.

HEARING MODERATOR
What was your previous major?

ALLISON
Women’s Studies.

HEARING MODERATOR
Those are pretty different areas of study. What made you make the switch from Women’s Studies to English?

ALLISON
I just… wasn’t enjoying the work anymore. I wasn’t thriving in the classes or the environment.
HEARING MODERATOR
Thank you, Ms. Jennings. I see you brought your therapist with you as well. We would like your name on the record as well.

DR. SEIDEL
I’m Dr. Marie Seidel and I’m Allison’s therapist. I’ve been a social worker here on campus for five years now.

HEARING MODERATOR
Thank you, doctor. Allison, we’re going to get started now. Did you know the victim at all?

ALLISON
Well, I didn’t know him all that well. Definitely didn’t know him personally. I don’t know much about him at all, really... Sorry.

HEARING MODERATOR
Ok, thank you. Did you know anything about him? Maybe see him around campus?

2. FLASHBACK - OUTDOOR NOISES.

MAGGIE
Allie! Wait up! Hey, girl.

ALLISON
Hey, Mags. What’s up?

MAGGIE
Not much. Glad to finally be out of that classroom. It’s so stuffy in there with the professor’s awful cologne.

ALLISON
I know, right? Every time I walk in I get a headache. Why does he need to use so much? Someone should tell him it’s repelling women instead of enticing them.
Allison and Maggie laugh.

MAGGIE
So, how’d you do on that sociology exam? I think I bombed it. Dr. Bridges can be so mean with those trick questions. Ugh!

ALLISON
I think it was ok. You’re right though, and he’s a pretty tough grader too. Hopefully I did alright, my GPA can’t handle another bad grade.

MAGGIE
Same here.

ALLISON
Yeah, this has definitely not been my best semester.

MAGGIE
Me too, it’s been a rough one. But, hey, at least it’s nice out, don’t you think? We finally got a warm day. Hopefully it stays this way for spring break.

ALLISON
I hope so too. Have you figured out your plans for break yet?

MAGGIE
Nope, not yet, but hopefully I’ll be going to visit my sister in Nashville.

JACK
(Yells from the distance)
Hey Maggie, lookin’ good today!

MAGGIE
Hey, Jack! Thanks, you too! Are you going out tonight? I’ve heard of a few addresses. It’s supposed to be a good night to go out.
JACK
I dunno, I don’t think I can make it. Sorry to disappoint, ladies, but I have a prior engagement tonight.

MAGGIE
(Laughs)
Oh yeah, we’re definitely disappointed over here.

JACK
You know you’ll miss me, Maggie. You always do. I’ll see you later, have a beer for me tonight.

MAGGIE
Bye, Jack.

PAUSE.

MAGGIE (CON’D)
Anyways, about spring break, my plans aren’t set in stone because my sister hasn’t gotten back to me yet if I can visit her. She’s so annoying with things like this. She takes forever to get back to me. Whatever. How about you? Any plans? ... Allie? ... Are you ok?

ALLISON
What? Oh yeah, I don’t have any plans yet. I’m not sure if I’m going home.

MAGGIE
No, are you ok? You look a little pale, are you feeling alright?

ALLISON
Oh, yeah, I’m fine.

MAGGIE
Are you sure? You’re not lookin’ so hot right now, what’s up?
ALLISON
I guess I just started thinking about that test again... I’m beginning to think I didn’t do so hot. I... I’ll be fine.

MAGGIE
Alright... If you say so. I gotta run, but hey, if the test is bothering you that much, you can always go talk to the professor. I’ll see you at home later. Let me know if you need anything.

ALLISON
Yeah... I’ll see you around.

MAGGIE
Have a good class!

ALLISON
Yeah, you too.

END FLASHBACK.

3. Bell RINGS. Students SHUFFLE in their seats.

PROFESSOR
Hello class, I hope everyone had a good summer break. It’s great to see some familiar faces. I’m going to call roll to make sure everyone is in the right place. John Alveri. Jessica Campo. Hugh Denizen. Jack Malvolio. Ian Gail. Mallory Hennessy. Allison Jennings. Allison, are you feeling alright? You look a bit sickly, you didn’t a moment ago when we spoke before class.

ALLISON
I’m not feeling great right now actually; would it be alright if I went to the health center?
PROFESSOR
Yes, of course, go right ahead. Would you like an escort in case you get light-headed?

JACK
I can take her to the health center. I wouldn’t mind.

ALLISON
No. No... That’s ok, really, I feel okay enough to get there on my own. I wouldn’t want to drag anyone away from class. Especially not on the first day of the semester. I’ll take myself there. I’m ok.

PROFESSOR
Are you sure sweetheart? It’s really alright. We’re not doing much today except for ice breakers and going over the syllabus. I’m sure someone wouldn’t mind walking with you.

ROY
Ice breakers? Everyone here already knows me. I can walk you Allison, no problem!

ALLISON
(Sighs)
Alright, let’s go Roy.

PROFESSOR
Thank you for being a... gentleman, Roy. Allison, Feel better, sweetheart. I’ll email you two a copy of the syllabus.

ALLISON
Thank you, Professor.

Door CLOSES. FOOTSTEPS.
ALLISON (CON’D)
You really didn’t need to walk with me, Roy. I think I’ll get there just fine. Thanks though. I guess I’m glad it’s you and not anyone else. Thanks for coming with me.

ROY
Hey, no problem. I love ice breakers but sometimes you just run out of fun facts to tell the class after three years of college.

ALLISON
Tell me about it. I find myself telling less and less fun facts every year. (Mockingly) Hi, I’m Allison and I buy the textbooks for class but rarely read them! Blah, blah, blah...

ROY
Haha! Exactly. Everyone’s fun facts are hardly ever fun. More like exhausting facts if you ask me. Hey, you really were looking pretty green back there, but you look better now though. Everything alright?

ALLISON
Yeah, I’m alright. I dunno, I just got really anxious out of nowhere. Maybe it’s the stress of starting a new semester, being more than halfway through college. Ya know, it’s tough.

ROY
Yeah, I feel that, but, hey, we’re halfway there and then we can get into full on adulting! And that’s pretty cool, right?

ALLISON
Yeah, I guess you’re right.

4. Cafeteria background MUSIC.
CASHIER
Just a coffee and a muffin then?
Four dollars and 35 cents please.

ALLISON
Alright, one second, my wallet is
lost in my backpack somewhere. I’m
sorry.

CASHIER
That’s alright. Take your time.

JACK
Don’t worry. I’ll take care of it.

ALLISON
(Digging in her backpack)
Oh, thank you! That’s so sweet. Oh,
hi, Jack. Thanks.

JACK
No problem, you know I got you if
you ever need.

ALLISON
(Awkwardly)
Thanks again, but I probably don’t
need the coffee actually. You know,
gotta get some sleep tonight. And I
already ate breakfast, so I don’t
need the muffin. So, uhh, thanks,
but you don’t need to pay for that.

JACK
Oh, uhh, alright then. I’ll see you
in class then? Talk to you soon.

ALLISON
Mhmm, sure, bye.

END FLASHBACK.

5. FOOTSTEPS. Hearing Moderator FADES IN.

HEARING MODERATOR
Ms. Jennings? Ms. Jennings?
Allison.
ALLISON
What? Oh, I’m sorry. I’ve had a few classes with him, saw him at a party every once in a while, saw him around campus here and there, and we had mutual friends, but that was about it. I didn’t really know him other than that, sorry.

HEARING MODERATOR
So, you didn’t spend any time with him?

ALLISON
No, like I said, I just see him around campus a lot. (Saddened, awkward, shy) Saw... I saw him around campus...

HEARING MODERATOR
Alright. So, would you say that going to parties on campus is typical for you? As it was for the victim? We’re trying to get a feel for who the victim regularly would have interacted with.

6. FLASHBACK.

CHARLOTTE
Are you sure you want to go through with this? We don’t have to if you’re not comfortable. And we can come home any time you want. It’s totally up to you.

ALLISON
Yes, I’m sure, I need to. Plus, Will, he said he needs me there. I really need to have a talk with that kid, figure out what’s going on with him. Anyway, I think I’ll be ok, I just need to get it over with-
SOFI
Hey, Allison! Haven’t seen you in a while, are you going out tonight? I know you haven’t been out in a long time, but you picked the right night to come out. I heard Will is having a rager! I’m pumped, so many people are going to be there. Will hasn’t thrown one of his parties in a while.

ALLISON
Hey, Sofi. Yeah, I was just going to say, I haven’t been out in a long time, I needed to get out. Tonight will definitely be interesting. You’re having the pregame, right? That’s going to be fun.

SOFI
Yeah, you know it, lady! It’s gonna be lit. I actually have some things to get ready in a bit if you guys will be around to help out? We can, ya know, pregame the pregame!

CHARLOTTE
Well, if you’re ready then I’m ready, Al.

ALLISON
Ready as I’ll ever be. What can we do to help?

SOFI
Other than being your regular selves, you two beauties, you all can you grab some of the booze from the back of Roy’s car downstairs. Then when you’re back up we can make the jungle juice, get the pong tables, and then we’ll hang up the few decorations I got because, hello, what’s a party without decorations?
ALLISON
That we can do. Thanks for throwing the pregame, Sof.

SOFI
Girl, you know I can’t resist a good time. But you should really be thanking Roy. He’s the one that volunteered me for the job, and I use the term volunteered very loosely. He’s just lucky I’ll never turn down a chance to throw an awesome party. Well, pre-party party.

The three girls LAUGH.

CHARLOTTE
Well, we’ll be right back then and then we’ll help set everything else up. Come on Al, let’s go get the liquid courage. You’re going to need it anyways.

ALLISON
Right behind you, Charlotte.

END FLASHBACK.

7. Papers SHUFFLING.

ALLISON
I don’t really go out. I like to focus on school. The party scene isn’t really for me.

HEARING MODERATOR
So, why was this time different? What made you go out the night of the incident?

ALLISON
It was Will’s party. He asked me to come, to be there for him. He’s my best friend, so I wanted to be with him.
HEARING MODERATOR
Right, thank you Ms. Jennings. Moving on. Allison, how would you describe your mental state prior to the incident?

DR. SIEDEL
I don’t see how this is relevant to the hearing or the incident.

8. FLASHBACK – PARTY MUSIC.

MAGGIE
Ooh, Allison’s getting some action tonight, huh? Finally! Hey! Get silly for syllabus week, Allie!!

THE FRIEND
Are you sure? She doesn’t look so hot. She may need to go home. I’ll be right back.

FOOTSTEPS.

THE FRIEND
Hey, Allison, Are you alright? Do you need some help getting home tonight?

JACK
We’re good, thanks. I’ll make sure she gets home.

THE FRIEND
Hey man, just trying to make sure Allison is cool. You good, Allie?

JACK
(Fiercely)
Dude, I said we’re good. I’ll get her home. We’re fine, she just needs to get to bed.

THE FRIEND
Alright... Sorry, man. Just get her home safely.
9. STUMBLING SOUNDS OF 2 people WALKING. Door opens

    ALLISON
    (Semi-consciously mumbling)
    No... No, I don’t wanna. I want to sleep.

    JACK
    (Low, gruffly, voice semi-disguised)
    Shut up, just go to sleep.

    ALLISON
    I don’t feel good. I don’t...

    JACK
    Just be quiet, c’mon, Allison.

Door closes. Fades into next scene.

10. FOOTSTEPS.

    ALLISON
    It’s fine, I’m fine, everything is okay. I just need to relax and calm down. Dammit, calm down, Allie!

PAUSE.

    ALLISON (CON’D)
    (Whispers)
    Just wanna feel better.

Pill bottle lid POPS.

    ALLISON
    The doctor wouldn’t have given me these if he didn’t want me to use them.

PAUSE.

    ALLISON (CON’D)
    Just one more and I’ll feel better, right? They’re not kicking in, so... a few more? Yeah...
Pill bottle SHAKES. Pills POURED.

ALLISON
It’s been almost a year. I should be okay by now. I WILL be okay. I need to be...

Door OPENS. Pill bottle SHAKES. Pills POURED.

CHARLOTTE
(Whispered)
Allie?

Allison SHOUTS. Pills and pill bottle FALLS ON FLOOR.

CHARLOTTE
(Loudly)
Allison? What’s going on? Are you alright?

SOFT TEARS from Allison.

ALLISON
I, uhh... I don’t really want to talk about it.

CHARLOTTE
You don’t have to talk about it, please just tell me if you’re alright. Is everything okay?

ALLISON
I’m fine. What’s up?

SHUFFLING.

CHARLOTTE
We had that meeting for women’s studies earlier. When you didn’t show up I wanted to stop by to see what was up, if you were alright.

ALLISON
Oh, right, I dropped women’s studies. Could’ve sworn I told you that.
CHARLOTTE
Uhh, no, I didn’t know that. Why did you drop it? Dr. Keller loves you, you’re her favorite student, the best in the class.

ALLISON
Not really. My grades have been crap lately. You knew that.

CHARLOTTE
Al, you’re in your room or the library with your nose in the books 24/7. You hardly come out anymore because you’re studying so much. Your grades can’t possibly be in the tubes bad enough for you to change majors. What did you switch to anyways?

ALLISON
English.

CHARLOTTE
Allison Marie Jennings, you have got to be kidding me. That is so not who you are. I thought you hate writing about books and whatever. Please tell me you’re joking?

ALLISON
(Mumbling)
I dunno, maybe I like reading and writing now.

CHARLOTTE
(Quietly to herself) What alternate universe did I just step into? (To Allison) Well, if you dropped the class I guess I’ll let the others in the group know you’re out and we’ll split up your portion of the project. Are you sure you’re alright?
ALLISON
Yeah, I guess so. I guess I’ve just been having a tough time lately.

CHARLOTTE
With What? What’s been bothering you?

ALLISON
I dunno, I just haven’t really been myself for a while now. I feel like everything’s been pressing in on me more and more. (Quietly) I can’t handle it anymore.

CHARLOTTE
What do you mean you can’t handle it?

ALLISON
I hardly want to do anything anymore. I got these pills, Dr. Seidel had me see a psychiatrist and she gave them to me and they help, but sometimes it’s not enough, ya know?

CHARLOTTE
Allison, can I see those?

Pill bottle RATTLES.

CHARLOTTE (CON’D)
Diazepam, Valium… Allie, why did she give you these? Why were you taking so many? (Quietly) Oh my god, Allison, you weren’t trying to… (Pause for dramatic effect) Were you?

ALLISON
No, I don’t know Charlotte. (Quietly) I don’t know much of anything anymore...

END FLASHBACK.

11. Dr. Seidel FADES IN.
DR. SEIDEL
Honestly, I don’t see how Ms. Jennings’ mental health before the boy was found dead could possibly be relevant to this hearing.

ALLISON
(quietly)
It’s alright Dr. Seidel. I can answer him. I was totally fine. Things were great.

THE END.