3. … To Bits

CW: this episode contains discussion of mental health, gaslighting, ableism, manipulation, psychiatric malpractice, and acephobia. This episode's transcript link is in the description below. Listener discretion is advised.

(*sound of a recording device clicking on)*

Dr Daman:
Hello, Jared. It's so good to finally have you back here. We were starting to get quite worried about you.

Jared:
(clearly uncomfortable)
Yeah, uh, sorry about... *Ghosting* y'all, I guess, I was just… really goin' through it.

Daman:
(*sounds of her writing something down)* I can imagine. It isn't like you to not show up for work, *or* for your appointments, you've always been *so* good at that… Should we discuss what you were 'going through'?

Jared:
Well, uh, just… a lot of introspection, mostly. A real lack of- (*shifts in their seat*)

Daman:
Feet on the floor.

Jared:
(*Jared shifts again and speaks much more meekly)* Sorry…

Daman:
(*smiling, but with a subtle annoyance)* It's fine, our bodies often curl in on itself when we're talking about something uncomfortable. So, as you were saying.

Jared:
Right… uhm, I, well… where was I?

Daman:
Introspection. *Lacking*.

Jared:
Oh, yeah. Just, a real lack of… *self*, I guess? I've always felt a lil' bit *different* from other folks, y'know? I struggle to connect with people in my daily life, my brain's all over the place all the

time, I don't feel fulfilled at work- I just feel really… *lost* right now. It's like there's something *wrong* with me and I can't figure out *what*-

Daman:

Many people feel disconnected from those around them. These are very common traits in depression and anxiety, which we have already discussed. Considering our work here at The Enclosure, you're not the only one here who feels that way. Now, what exactly has you feeling unfulfilled about your work here? We'll start there.

Jared:

(gives a sigh) I *like* the idea of researching the local supernatural entities and occurrences, but it sometimes feels like I'm *hunting* them.

Daman:

(a hollow chuckle) It's called 'ghost-hunting' for a reason, Jared.

Jared:

Well, I don't… I don't really *like* it. Besides, I'm a *cryptozoologist* by trade. Not a *ghost-hunter.* I like *learning* about them, but… I just…

Daman:

(mildly annoyed) You just…?

Jared:

I dunno, sorry. I've just been feeling really unsure about… all this.

Daman:

All of what?

(*a beat of silence as Jared thinks)*

Jared:

I don't… really have the words right now.

Daman:

Well, we'll come back to that when you find them. If it's important, you'll figure it out.

(*a pause in conversation as Dr. Daman writes something down)*

Daman:

Are you still journaling? That should help you.

Jared:

(*sounding uncomfortable)* Mhm… yeah, a bit. I'm trying new methods. Talking stuff out helps, but… well, I also like writing now and then.

Daman:
(*apathetic)* Glad you're trying new things, branching out helps.

Jared:
Yeah…

Daman:
(*sighs annoyedly)* what's on your mind, Jared?

Jared:
I'm just… I'm *tired.*

Daman:
(*writing note as she mutters to herself)*
You and me, both.

Jared:
… are… are *you* okay?

Daman:
(*pauses in surprise)* Yes, I'm *fine*. Now let's not deflect the conversation, we're here to help *you*.

Jared:
Sorry. I didn't mean to- you seem annoyed. I just wanted to ask…

Daman:
My job is to ask the questions, your job is to work on *yourself*. Speaking of, how has the new dosage been working for you?

Jared:
(*with audio distortion)* Fine…

(*the sound of a device clicking before it switches to another recording)*

Daman:
Subject has become more restless, both mentally and physically. Behaving a bit more *cautiously* than before the sudden 'vacation'. We've also been receiving less audio documentation from them, so we'll need to look into getting access to their physical journal… without disrupting that damn dog. Again. (*sighs with annoyance)* We'll see what the medication adjustment does to help.

(*the sound of a device clicking before it switches to another recording)*

Zimmer:

(*audible smile)* And how are you doing with your new little group of friends?

Jared:

(*sighs)* Good. Holly gave me this haircut recently. Darius and I are planning on a picnic when we both have a day off work…

Zimmer:

Ah, *that* explains the different hairstyle!

Jared:

Yeah… (*awkward, but sincere)* uh, by the way, your- your hair looks nice grown out.

Zimmer:

(somewhat surprised, still with a smile) Why thank you! A hair change is needed now and then, it's quite refreshing.

Jared:

Yeah, Holly mentioned stuff like that. A sorta "control of yourself", or something like that.

Zimmer:

Holly seems insightful.

Jared:

I think so. They give me a lot to think about whenever we hang out. I like that about them.

Zimmer:

Is there anything in *particular* that they've had you thinking about recently?

Jared:

Hmm… well, they've been talking about being autistic, which has been nice to learn about. They've also just brought up some different shows I should try out, and leant me some graphic novels… I like seeing the art along with the words.

Zimmer:

(*thoughtful)* Interesting… Do the pictures help you process the words?

Jared:

Uh, I guess? I haven't really thought about it. I just… *like* it.

Zimmer:

Well, I'm glad you're taking up new hobbies. And what about these *dates* with Darius?

Jared:

Oh, well, (*an uncertain smile in their voice)* it's usually something simple. He likes to teach me how to cook, we go on walks or watch movies together- normal couple stuff, I guess?

Zimmer:

(*speaking while she flips through papers)* Now, a while ago you mentioned to me about not understanding *attraction* to people. Do you still think this?

Jared:

Oh… you- uh, yeah? Well, not quite. Like- (*gets caught off)*

Zimmer:

And yet, you're dating Darius. Does he know?

Jared:

… I think so? We agreed that our relationship is made of whatever we want it to be.

Zimmer:

I only ask since you mentioned 'normal couple stuff'. But, if you don't feel attracted to Darius, then what makes your relationship anything different from, let's say, a best friend?

(*silence as Jared sits in shock)*

Jared:

I… uh, well, he- he asked if we wanted to be boyfriends, and… I said yes?

Zimmer:

Yes, but *why*?

Jared:

… why did I say *yes*?

Zimmer:

Yes.

(*another beat of silence)*

Jared:

Well… because I like spending time with him. He makes me happy. I don't have memories of any romantic relationships, so I decided I'd… I dunno, give it a shot? See if I liked it? And so far, it's been really nice. He makes me laugh, he's thoughtful and caring. And whenever we, like,

kiss and cuddle or whatever, it's *nice.* Even if he and I feel differently about things, we both *like* it.

Zimmer:
And you're *sure* you're not attracted to him? (*feigning sympathy)* You know it's *fine* if you are, Jared.

Jared:
I know it's fine. But, I just… I don't typically feel a *desire* for stuff like that. This isn't something I sought out, it kinda just *happened.* Physical affection isn't something I desire in a way that feels *romantic,* it's just something I like with folks I trust. It's… it's nice to feel loved, and I know he shows love through physical affection, so to me it means a lot. It's the *intention*. His romantic feelings make me feel good, and considering that he means *so much* to me, it all just feels right… y'know? He keeps telling me he's happy with me, so… (*trails off in an insecure tone)*

(*sounds of Zimmer writing something down)*

Zimmer:
Well, I think you might be overthinking this a bit. (*saccharine tone)* But if all this makes you feel better, then who am I to tell you how to identify?

(*another pause as Jared struggles to regulate his breathing)*

Zimmer:
(*more curious than concern)* What's on your mind, Jared?

Jared:
I'm… I'm sorry, I'm getting a bad headache…

Zimmer:
Would you like some water?

Jared:
(*audio begins to distort)* I'm feeling- I'm feeling nauseous, I should head home before it gets too bad.

Zimmer:
(*sighs)* If we *must*. Drive safely and feel better soon. We'll continue next week. Take care, Jared.

Jared:
(audio distortion intensifies)
You too.

(*the sound of a device clicking before it switches to another recording)*

Zimmer:

Subject is further exploring some essence of *identity*, which is *fascinating* to consider. Is this a way of assimilating with the people around them? Diving so deep into the communities in town, to the point of believing to actually *really* be part of them. This is *very* promising… I'll have to sit with Angela and Gia about their recent observations on the matter. (*a proud chuckle)*

I'm proud of our achievements so far. I'm interested to see how the subject behaves next week.

(*the sound of a device clicking off)*

End Credits:

This episode of "Jar of Rebuke" was written by Casper Oliver.
Assistant writers are Jenny O'Sullivan and Miche Ward.
Voices were provided by (in order of appearance): Nessa R, Miche Ward, Casper Oliver, and Pixel Tomlen.

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