

The Liar Paradox

by
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The Liar Paradox

dramatis personae:

Mark – 21 years old. A pragmatist. Female-to-male trans in the early stages of transitioning.

Jordan – 21 years old. Mark's twin sister. An exhibitionist and a philosopher.

Violet – 21 years old. Mark and Jordan's childhood friend. Loyal but uncompromising.

Gavin – early-30s. A professor. Lover of Ancient Greeks and off-limits women.

Tony – mid-40s. Mark and Jordan's father. Has the soul of a poet.

Mark should be played by a FTM or cis-female actor. Although the characters' ethnicities aren't specified, I strongly encourage diverse casting.

settings:

The play takes place in Chicago on New Year's Eve and the days immediately following (and a few weeks before). Additional settings include:

a young woman's bedroom

a hospital

a lecture hall

a bar

the environment:

This play should feel a little bit like a bottle of champagne the moment you open it. The contents are under a lot of pressure and moving very quickly. Settings should be suggestive rather than literal renderings. Scenes should transition as fluidly as possible. All spaces should feel liminal. The videoscape should feel noirish, as should the monologues.

a note on formatting:

An em dash means a character cuts another off, or cuts herself off. An ellipsis indicates trailing off. Slashes designate overlapping. When a sentence ends with no punctuation, the character stops mid-thought

Unless explicitly called for, there are no pauses in this play.

The translation of Rilke is my own, based on literal translation provided by the very generous Sophie Michel.

1.

in the darkness, b-roll footage:

*two little girls playing with their mother's makeup
the film feels vintage but also home video-esque*

*the film cuts to two glammed-out women driving
big sunglasses, and scarves wrapped around their heads
like in a film noir.*

*they are laughing, drinking
one of them pulls out an iPhone*

*the camera gets shaky, cuts out
and back in to a rapid-fire montage. Everything is hyper-real:
a champagne bottle popping, fireworks exploding
bubbles underwater, roaring fire*

*the film goes black
we hear a sickening crash*

silence

*onstage, a silhouette of a young woman in a cocktail dress
she has a glass of something*

JORDAN

It felt like fireworks.
Like champagne bubbles rushing through the bottleneck
towards the air's unbearable heaviness.
It felt like an eternity and a heartbeat at once.
It felt like, so cool.
It's like, you know, when you're riding the train
and on the next track a train
roars past in the opposite direction
and you catch a glimpse of someone in that other train
Someone you knew. Someone you loved. Someone you lost.
You lock eyes and they start to say something
to tell you your own secrets
and suddenly the train's passed
and you're just looking at your own reflection.

It felt like that.

the sound of a train rushing by

2.

*Jordan's bedroom.
It looks like a hurricane tore through it.
Books and papers intermingle with lingerie and dirty clothes.*

*MARK sits on the edge of the bed.
His discomfort is palpable.
He wears a suit that's far too big for his tiny frame.
JORDAN sets down her drink and strips off her dress.
She tries on a different one.
Throughout the scene she's distracted,
engrossed in her preparation*

JORDAN

Do you see my?
Oh never mind.
What do you think about this dress?
Too boring?

MARK

It's fine.

JORDAN

That means it's terrible.

MARK

They all look good. Just pick one and—

JORDAN

It makes me look like a rhinoceros going through menopause.

*She peels it off.
In her bra and underwear,
starts looking for something on the floor.
MARK averts his eyes.*

JORDAN (cont'd)

Fuck. I dropped an earring somewhere.

MARK

Can you put something

JORDAN

Am I making you uncomfortable?

MARK

Not you per se so much as/ you crawling around in your—

JORDAN

I am. You're so uncomfortable right now.

MARK

No I'm not.

*JORDAN pulls up her bra
she stands in front of MARK's face*

JORDAN

What about now?

MARK

Yes. Oh god.
Now I am 100% uncomfortable.
Please for fuck's sake pull your bra down Jordan.
I'm your brother.
I don't want to see that.

She pulls her bra back down and resumes her search

JORDAN

Chill out.
You've seen me naked literally a thousand times.

MARK

It's different now.

JORDAN

I guess it is.

She refills her drink.

MARK

Are you coming to the party?
I can't deal with our high school crowd without you.
I have no idea what to tell them. Please, Jorie.

JORDAN

Later. The guy I'm seeing is coming over in a bit.

MARK

Mr. Mysterious.

JORDAN

He doesn't have a mysterious bone in his body.

MARK

Bring him with you.

JORDAN

It's not his scene.

MARK

So you're really going throw me to the wolves alone.

JORDAN

I'd invite you to stay and meet him but Violet said you were having drinks before the party tonight.

MARK

You and Violet were talking about me?

JORDAN

She wanted advice.
This dress is better.

MARK

What did you tell her?

JORDAN

About the dress?

MARK

About me.

JORDAN

Oh. What do you think about it?

MARK

It's a little short.

JORDAN

When did you become such a prude?

MARK

She broke up with me last week.

JORDAN

She said you haven't touched her since you've been home for winter break.

MARK

It's complicated.

JORDAN

This is definitely less menopausal rhino.

MARK

Glad I could help.

JORDAN

Listen, if you don't want to go to the party then don't.
But you can't keep stringing Violet along.

MARK

I'm not stringing her along.

JORDAN

What *are* you doing?

pause

She said you were sleeping with someone else.

MARK

That's not true.
It was a one-night stand.
This cute girl from my fluid dynamics class
who'd been hitting on me all semester.
I was drunk. I called Violet the next morning.
I feel terrible about it.

JORDAN

Maybe this isn't a good time for you to be seeing someone.
You should take the time to figure out who you are first.

MARK

I don't want to hurt her.
I love her.

JORDAN

Then stop screwing around.

MARK

Thanks.

JORDAN

Is it weird for you how similar Violet and I look?
There must be a complex for that—
not Oedipal, that's when you want to bang your mom.

MARK

Gross. First of all, no,
I never think about that—

JORDAN

Never?

MARK

Never.
Second of all, I don't know,
I'm not the philosophy major.

JORDAN

They don't cover that in fluid dynamics?
Or did you sleep through that lecture.

MARK

At least I'm going to be employed when I graduate.

JORDAN

Doing something boring.
Philosophers didn't invent complexes.
Ow. Fuck.

she hops on one foot and holds the other

I think I just found my earring.
Complexes were invented by *tragedy*. And Freud.

MARK

Fuck Freud.

JORDAN

He would like that. He was into sexual deviance.
Is my other shoe over there?

MARK

This one?

JORDAN

No, the one with the
Wait it might be under this pile
You know what your problem is?

MARK

My twin sister is a certifiable nutcase?

You're too literal.
You have no sense of romance.

JORDAN

I have a great sense of romance.

MARK

Hey Mark, seriously though?

JORDAN

What?

MARK

You need to tell Dad.

JORDAN

I will.

MARK

When? You haven't even seen him since you got home.

JORDAN

Soon.

MARK

Promise? He's really upset. He thinks you hate him.
/Can you zip me?

JORDAN

The world goes round and round and nothing ever changes.

MARK

You of all people know that's not true.

JORDAN

she turns around and studies him.

I miss my sister.
I miss the girl I used to share secrets with.

beat

You still have me.
You can tell me anything.

MARK

You want to know a secret?

JORDAN

MARK
Yes. I miss feeling close to you.
Tell me something about your boyfriend.

JORDAN
Let me retie your tie.

MARK
It's fine.

JORDAN
It's lopsided.
This suit looks really cute on you.

MARK
Cute isn't really the look I was going for.

JORDAN
Handsome, then.
beat
I let him take pictures of me.

MARK
What kind of pictures?

JORDAN starts applying makeup

JORDAN
If you have to ask I'm not going to tell you anything else.

MARK
How well do you even know this guy?

JORDAN
Well enough.

MARK
I feel like I should have some purview
over guys you let take nudie pics of you.

JORDAN
When you call them nudie pics
you make it sound so pervy.

MARK

Because it is.

JORDAN

It was kind of sweet, actually.

MARK

You still haven't told me how you met him.

JORDAN

In my seminar on Ancient Greek philosophy.

MARK

I don't like him already.

JORDAN

Relax. It's not a big deal. It was just fun.
C'mon. It's New Years Eve.
We're supposed to be having fun.
Making revolutions.

MARK

Well now I feel better.

JORDAN

Let me tell you a riddle.

MARK

I hate riddles.

JORDAN

Everything I say is a lie.

MARK

I don't get it.

JORDAN

It's a paradox.

MARK

Okay?

JORDAN

If that statement is true, then everything I say isn't a lie.
If it's a lie, then something I've said is true.

MARK

So did he take the pictures or not?

What do you think? JORDAN

You're just fucking with me.
You would never be that stupid. MARK

I need another drink. JORDAN

Bottle's empty. MARK

I'll go get something else. JORDAN

Actually, I should go. I have to pick Violet up. MARK

The party will be fine.
I'll be there as soon as I can. JORDAN

I can't talk to you right now. MARK

You don't have the right to be mad at me
for what I do with my own body. JORDAN

You know Jordan, for a philosopher,
sometimes you just don't fucking think. MARK

Stop trying to make the people around you miserable
just because you don't know who you are anymore. JORDAN

I promise you, I'm not the one of us who doesn't know who I am. MARK

That's right. You're an asshole. JORDAN

Some things never change. Happy fucking New Year. MARK

the sound of fire