

Denise

INT. THE CIRCLE - DAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Mae sits in a leather chair. In one corner is Dan, who sits at his desk, and opposite Mae is:

JOSIAH (Late-20s) and DENISE (30s), both smiling, level-eyed sincerity, simple button-down shirts, TABLETS in their laps.

DENISE

This is just a regular check-in HR does with newcomers. But we're especially glad to see you, Mae.

→ Start

JOSIAH

You're such an enigma.

MAE
↓

I am?

DENISE

It's been years since someone so shrouded in mystery started here.

Mae looks curiously at Denise.

DENISE (CONT'D)

Everyone really likes you.

JOSIAH

You're a super-cool member of the team. Everyone thinks so.

DENISE

Your work's been exemplary. Strong ratings for your first month.

(beat)

Are you satisfied with your performance?

MAE

(thinks about it)

I know I can do better.

DENISE

Good. But it's not all about work.

JOSIAH

We consider you a full, knowable person of unlimited potential. And a crucial member of the community.

MAE

Thank you.

↓

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The Circle

DENISE

But you've had a blip or two when it comes to meshing with the community. Like your absence at several weekend and evening events - which are of course optional.

MAE

I...I'm sorry?

Denise and Josiah smile.

DENISE

Let's start with this weekend. You left campus at 5:42 p.m. on Friday, and got back 8:46 a.m. Monday.

MAE

Was there work on the weekend?

DENISE

No, no, no. There wasn't, you know, mandatory work here on the weekend.

(beat)

But there were thousands of people here, participating in a hundred different activities.

JOSIAH

(leans forward)

This is when someone like you -- with a low Participation Rank -- might be able to improve that. Yours dropped two-thousand points.

(off his tablet)

Not to get all number geeky, but you were at 8,625 on Friday and by late Sunday you were at 10,288.

MAE

My dad was sick. I went home to help out.

JOSIAH

I'm sorry to hear that. Was this related to his MS?

Mae is taken by surprise -- is this really their business?

MAE

...Yes.

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DENISE

We didn't know anything about this episode. Did you reach out to any Circlers during this crisis?

Mae shakes her head "no".

DENISE (CONT'D)

Mae, there are four groups here for staffers dealing with MS, two of them for children of MS patients. Have you sought out a group?

MAE

No, not yet. I was upset and worried. I wasn't very present.

They eye her. She eyes them. Lots of eyeing.

DENISE

Your dad recover okay?

MAE

He did. It was a false alarm.

DENISE

(smiles)

Fantastic. Can you talk about what you did the rest of the weekend?

MAE

Nothing, really. I just drove back and...well, I kayaked in the bay.

Josiah and Denise register dual looks of surprise.

JOSIAH

You kayaked? With who?

MAE

Nobody. Just alone.

JOSIAH

(strangely hurt)

But...I kayak too.

Denise types something on her tablet.

DENISE

Nothing on your profile about kayaking. No smiles, no ratings, no posts.

(MORE)

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DENISE (CONT'D)
I'm no psychologist, but this behavior sometimes stems from low self-worth. Don't you think what you have to say is important?

Mae hesitates, then says:

MAE
Sometimes.

Denise and Josiah exchange a glance.

JOSIAH
Your opinions are important, Mae. You want to be heard, don't you?

Mae looks at their expectant faces, and then silently nods.

DENISE (O.S.)
We'd love it if you could participate in a special program. Does that sound appealing?

→end

INT. THE CIRCLE - CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AREA - MAE'S DESK - DAY

Mae wears tiny HEADPHONES and a MICROPHONE on a half-thin arm. (NOTE: Mae always wears these headphones at her desk now.)

A new screen -- her FIFTH SCREEN -- sits on Mae's desk.

A bell RINGS and Mae nods. And then, from her earpiece, comes a MALE NEWSCASTER VOICE that asks:

VOICE FROM EARPIECE
For vacations, do you want relaxation, like a beach, or adventure, like white-water rafting?

MAE
Adventure.

A tiny bell RINGS.

VOICE FROM EARPIECE
Thank you. What sort of adventure?

MAE
White-water rafting.

Another RING. Mae nods.

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