

VOICEOVER (Jordana Williams): Please note that while God of Obsidian contains no physical violence or sexual assault, it does depict a psychologically abusive gaslighting relationship. Listeners should proceed at their own discretion. And if you're experiencing domestic violence or questioning unhealthy aspects of your relationship, we encourage you to call 1-800-799-SAFE. That's 1-800-799-7233. Or go to thehotline.org.

[A transition of two repeating chimes.]

ALICE (Rebecca Comtois) (voiceover): God, I feel weird being inside in summertime. Like, shitty, or wasteful. Like there's all this... life that I'm squandering. Like the sun's saying, "Come on, dude, I won't be here forever!"

[The door opens, and Alice steps onto dirt. Insects buzz and birds call in the trees.]

ALICE (voiceover): But then I go outside and it's like... what am I supposed to do now? Like all these vines all of a sudden, growing around the bridge. Part of me's like, "Swing on the vines, be alive!" But of course I can't swing on the vines, a vine can't actually support a person, it would snap, and I'd go straight into...

[A pause in which there is the sound of running water.]

ALICE (voiceover): I hope Nathan comes home soon.

[The soundscape of birds fades into an indoor environment.]

NATHAN (Mac Rogers): So I'm just estimating, I'm just thinking out loud, if you don't need anything for the mortgage, utilities—and there's enough food in the fridge, right?

ALICE: Yeah, definitely, the food situation is—

NATHAN: I think I got all the stuff on your list.

ALICE: You definitely did, I just—

NATHAN: 'Cause if there's stuff you want here that you haven't told me about, just tell me—

ALICE: I don't think there's—why wouldn't I tell you if there's something—

NATHAN: Well for example, I noticed that you didn't put any cookies on the list, and I was just thinking that if you want cookies, you should write that down and I'll add it to the order.

ALICE: I mean...

NATHAN: It's fine for you to want cookies.

ALICE: No, just... I almost hate to... like anything I add, that's a thing the delivery guys have to get across the bridge.

NATHAN: That's their job.

ALICE: Especially in the middle part where it's...

NATHAN: I mean it's lovely that you're worried, it shows what a good heart you have, but in their heads, they're just thinking, "I'm glad I have a job."

ALICE: Well... I don't think I need any cookies right now.

NATHAN: Okay, fine. So, uh, 300?

ALICE: Three hundred what?

NATHAN: Dollars. Why don't I transfer you 300 dollars, and let's see how far that gets you.

ALICE: Three hundred, you think?

NATHAN: It seems like it should get you pretty far, since I'm already covering the mortgage and food and utilities. I was actually thinking we should talk about clothes too.

ALICE: Clothes?

NATHAN: 'Cause we can order those too. I love how you can order everything now.

ALICE: Well... with clothes... usually you need to...

NATHAN: If they don't fit, you send them back and order a different size. This is really such a great time to be alive.

ALICE: It's just... it seems like it would skip some steps... if I went to the store and tried them on.

NATHAN: Right but there'd be no way for me to know in advance how much money to give you. The great thing about online—

ALICE: Well that's like another way to skip steps, like, if we...

[She takes a sip and puts her glass down.]

NATHAN: Yes?

ALICE: ...had like a joint account... that we could both access.

NATHAN: Well we don't have to figure this all out today.

ALICE: Right, I'm just saying—

NATHAN: It's a good idea, I'm not saying it's not, I'm just saying we don't have to fix every single thing today.

ALICE: No, you're right.

NATHAN: This doesn't have to be the very final conversation where we...

ALICE: No, of course, and I'm not—

NATHAN: Like figure out All the Things.

ALICE: I totally agree, and if 300 doesn't... we'll, we'll, we'll talk some more.

[Her chair squeaks as she gets up. She refills her glass as Nathan talks.]

NATHAN: Perfect. [He taps his phone.] Aaaaannd... 300. Instantaneous, I love that. (calling to Alice in the other room) Oh, there was only one other...

ALICE (from the other room): What?

NATHAN: It was something on our calendar...

[Alice comes back into the room.]

ALICE: Our calendar?

NATHAN: A couple months off. I just noticed it 'cause you don't put that much stuff on the calendar, so...

ALICE: Oh wait, do you mean—

NATHAN: It's just that it says "Shey and Connie" and nothing else, so—

ALICE: Sorry, sorry, that wasn't even like a locked-in event, that's something I put there to remind myself to ask you about.

NATHAN: Okay—sure—I hear that—it's just a calendar's not typically for reminders of hypothetical things, so—

ALICE: Yeah, I just put it to remind myself to talk to you.

NATHAN: Something about Shey and Connie?

ALICE: Well I was talking to Shey, we were just like texting and then we sort of switched into a phone call—

NATHAN: Okay well that just surprises me because I thought things were a little on the...

ALICE: Oh they were! They were, but we talked, and I think it was good to talk—like how sometimes when you hear someone’s voice it reminds you that they’re not, y’know, your enemy?

NATHAN: Sure.

ALICE: And she basically said—without me bringing anything up—she basically said all of the things I could have wished for her to say.

NATHAN: How do you mean?

ALICE: She was basically like, “Yes, absolutely, I see where you’re coming from, I can see how you must’ve felt all this time, and Connie sees it too, and we weren’t thinking, and we’re sorry, but we’re aware of it now, and you’re important to us, and can we make it up to you?”

NATHAN: (skeptical) She really said all that?

ALICE: Yeah, she really... do you not think she...?

NATHAN: It just seems—no, if she said all that I’m glad. It just seems too perfect.

ALICE: Well, I’m condensing it, it’s not verbatim, that was spread like over half an hour.

NATHAN: Sure.

ALICE: And it really meant a lot to me.

NATHAN: Sure, I’m just not making the connection between that and this calendar event , so...

ALICE: They want to take us out. To dinner. At a place, and I am blanking on the name...

NATHAN: Both of us?

ALICE: Of course. Shit, I cannot think of the na—whatever, the point is it books up fast, so they went ahead and grabbed an evening—

NATHAN: Wait, they've already booked a...?

ALICE: I mean they knew it wasn't definite, they knew I'd need to talk to you first, but they figured they should go ahead and grab the day, 'cause they could give it up if it didn't work out, but like... I really hope it can work out, 'cause I think it would be really... good. So...?

NATHAN: Okay.

ALICE: It's cool? I can tell them yes?

NATHAN: Yeah.

ALICE: Ah, you're the coolest. You're the super-coolest.

NATHAN: So. Want me to find us something to watch on the...

ALICE: Let's walk in the woods. Why don't we ever walk in the woods?

NATHAN: Because... those woods are... are you serious?

ALICE: I mean, I was a Girl Scout, how bad—

NATHAN: You were a Girl Scout.

ALICE: What?

NATHAN: (suddenly interrogational) Did you bring hiking boots?

ALICE: When I moved in?

NATHAN: Did you bring any sprays? Or like what kind of equipment do you have?

ALICE: I'm not sure... what I have. Did my stuff...?

NATHAN: I mean we can go, we can definitely go, as long as you think you're...

ALICE: I'm...

NATHAN: You know. Ready for it. [Beat.] Or we can cuddle up and watch something. I'm good for either one.

ALICE: I-I... I could cuddle up and watch something.

NATHAN: Cool. Lemme see what's in the queue.

[A brief chime transition.]

ALICE (voiceover): I never lived in a place with enough room to put a whole season's worth of clothes away before. Whatever clothes I had, I just sort of had to keep them in one spot. But Nathan's got all these rooms. More than we can use. So I can put all my clothes I'm not using in a box, and Nathan just... stashes them somewhere. Which is awesome. Except that it's so fucking sad. When I put those clothes on again, I'll be almost a year older. Oh, check it out: (she knocks on the trunk twice, then in a mock-dramatic voice:) The Trunk That Must Never be Opened. It's his last girlfriend. I mean, right? She's all like... (makes choking dead sound, then laughs nervously). I'm just being stupid.

[Alice walks into the room. Nathan is typing on his laptop.]

ALICE: Are you...?

NATHAN: What.

ALICE: We talked about leaving at 6:30, so...

NATHAN: Yeah.

ALICE: Which is in... [Beat.] I just know Shey n' Connie made a reservation so...

NATHAN: I'm sorry, are you just not seeing it?

ALICE: Seeing what?

NATHAN: How you're being right now.

ALICE: You mean stressed, or...?

NATHAN: How you're not being honest with yourself.

ALICE: I'm... what? About what?

NATHAN: No, you know what, you do see it. I can tell from your face. You're just denying it.

ALICE: Okay I don't know what we're talking about, but maybe we can talk about it on the way?

NATHAN: You wanna talk about it on the way.

ALICE: Just so... they made a reservation, this place isn't easy to—

NATHAN: Think about what that means. That you want to talk about it on the way.

ALICE: I... think means that I wanna get there on time, what do you—

NATHAN: See this is how people don't change. This is how people acquiesce. I tell you that Shey and Connie limit you, that they take you for granted, that they exploit you, that they're cavalier with your time and energy, and your response is to say, "Okay, why don't I address the problem on my way to being exploited some more."

ALICE: (angrily) You said you wanted to go, you s—(she takes a breath to calm down) we scheduled this—

NATHAN: This is how we spend our lives: doing the same thing over and over while talking about how we're going to change—

ALICE
I really don't think—

NATHAN: —until we've done the same thing for so many days that there's not enough time left to change.

ALICE: Look... I think if you put on some shoes... like even if you don't shower...

NATHAN: Alice.

ALICE: I don't think they limit me. I disagree with you about that.

NATHAN: It's amazing—can you hear how you sound?

ALICE: (becoming upset) I've known them for a lot of years, and I really don't think that they...

NATHAN: Listen to yourself, listen to how you sound.

ALICE: ...that they... exploit me, or...

NATHAN: Anyone—it wouldn't have to be some genius—anyone in the world listening to you right now could tell: you don't believe a word you're saying.

ALICE: I've known Shey and Connie for like close to 10 years.

NATHAN: Ten years of what? What have they been doing that whole time?

ALICE: (pleading) Can we please just get in the car, we can talk this all out in the car—

NATHAN: You said it yourself: you were the court jester to their relationship.

ALICE: I said it felt like that a couple of times, I didn't say it was like an ongoing—

NATHAN: How they kissed and touched in front of you, but who was there to kiss and touch you?

ALICE: That was just a couple of times—we've been friends for 10 years!

NATHAN: That's me. That was me. I'm the one who didn't look past you. I'm the one who said, "She's special, she's worthy of love, she deserves love." Did they do that?

ALICE: Well but they... w-what?

NATHAN: Did Shey and Connie do that?

ALICE: Can we please just get in the car?

NATHAN: It's all right.

ALICE: They made a reservation...

NATHAN: It really is all right.

ALICE: It's so hard to get, the wait is like months...

NATHAN: That's their problem. That's not on you, that's a situation they created.

ALICE: I really just feel like...

NATHAN: My priority is you.

ALICE: I mean... do you not wanna go, or...?

NATHAN: This isn't about me. This is about you breaking out of a cycle.

ALICE: Look, I know that I...

NATHAN: This is about you taking control of your life.

ALICE: I know I... give a lot of energy to other people, I can own up to that, but...

NATHAN: Don't "but"! Don't "but" yourself, this is you making progress right now.

ALICE: I can't just call them after they made all these plans...

NATHAN: But the very fact that you're saying that means you're picturing it. You're picturing calling them, you're planning what you might say, how you might say it.

ALICE: How can I call them like an hour before?

NATHAN: That's what they're counting on. That's their tactic. Guilt. Obligation, like you owe them something, like you owe anything to anyone other than yourself.

ALICE: I mean... if we don't leave in the next—

NATHAN: Alice—Alice—Alice. Look at yourself. See yourself, right now. What are you doing?

ALICE: What do you... I'm... I'm holding my phone, is that...

NATHAN: You're holding your phone. Why would you be holding your phone right now if you hadn't already decided on some level that you were going to call them up and cancel?

ALICE: To... check the time.

NATHAN: You could ask me the time, you could look at the clock on the stove or the cable, that's not why! You know why you're holding your phone. And you're almost ready to say it. [Beat.] I heard a story once about a Man. And every night the Man had his Friend over for dinner. And every night the Man ate chicken and green beans, and his Friend ate a year of the Man's life. The Man's loved ones said, "He eats a year of your life every night! Why do you keep inviting him over?" And the Man would always reply, "I have to. He's my Friend."

[Beat.]

ALICE: They'll be... furious.

NATHAN: Then they're not really your friends.

ALICE: They'll be crushed.

NATHAN: If they're crushed because you're doing what you need to do for you, they're not really your friends.

ALICE: I've canceled with them so many times. They'll stop asking.

NATHAN: Then they were never really your friends. If the whole thing depends on you jumping whenever they call, then they're not really your friends.

ALICE: You really think?

NATHAN: I don't think anything. There's only one expert on your life and that's you. I'm just a guy who loves you.

ALICE: Sometimes I feel like... I can't see, like... nothing's permanent.

NATHAN: (his tone softens) I'm permanent. You don't have to worry about me. Worry about you. Take care of you.

[Alice taps a few buttons on her phone. Faintly another voice picks up: "Hello?"]

ALICE: (into phone) Connie.

[Brief chime transition into a quiet outdoor landscape. As he talks, Nathan shovels snow.]

NATHAN (voiceover): It always ices on the bridge in winter-time. More than on the street, even. There's probably some scientific reason for that, I just don't know what it is. Or maybe it's an enchantment. That would be fine, too. The point is, I know how to cross it even when it's this icy. That's practice, that's the result of years of practice. Now I don't even have to think about it. It's hard for her, but it's easy for me. Which, again, is fine. As long as one of us can cross the bridge the other one can just enjoy looking at the icicles. They really are something. There's always a few minutes every year where I don't want spring to come because I don't to have to watch them drip away.

[A brief chime transition. The bridge creaks with Alice's movements.]

ALICE: Hey—hey—you're home!

NATHAN (from a distance): Babe, what are you doing on the bridge?

ALICE: I used to be better at this, I don't...

NATHAN (from a distance): That's okay, you don't have to be—wait right there, I'll—

ALICE: No! No, I wanna come to you.

NATHAN: You're right at the worst part—if you just stay still, I'll—

ALICE: No I can do this. I can do this. Please let me do this.

NATHAN: Okay, I'll, I'll wait, I guess.

[Alice takes a few more creaking steps.]

NATHAN: I saw them today.

ALICE: (shaken) They and Connie?

NATHAN: Are you sure you don't need me to—?

ALICE: Like... you just saw them?

NATHAN: On my way home. It's fine.

ALICE: It's fine, like... they understand?

NATHAN: Like closure, like—

ALICE: Closure.

NATHAN: I'm actually starting to get—

ALICE: (starting to panic) You said closure?

NATHAN: Can I please come to you and help you?

ALICE: No, I can—(inhales sharply) I got this.

NATHAN: Just stay where you are. Just hold on the rail. Right next to you.

[The bridge creaks. It continues creaking under their conversation.]

ALICE: Were they mad?

NATHAN: Try to stay still.

ALICE: (on the verge of tears) Do they hate me?

NATHAN: Of course not.

ALICE: So what does closure mean? What's closure?

NATHAN: Okay... uh, you know how sometimes relationships—and friendships, too—how sometimes they end really badly—

ALICE: Oh God—

NATHAN: With a lot of bad feelings?

ALICE: Is that what happened?

NATHAN: But you know how other times—

ALICE: Is that what they said?

NATHAN: How other times they just end naturally, where nobody has any bad feelings and everyone just kind of smiles and waves goodbye and just kind of accepts that they've come to the end of a chapter?

ALICE: I-I think so. I think I've...

NATHAN: You must've had this happen in your life.

ALICE: I think I...?

NATHAN: I'm sure you have. Everyone does.

ALICE: I don't know what's happening.

NATHAN: Okay, that's fine—

ALICE: I don't know what's happening!

NATHAN: Okay but I do know what's happening so I'll just tell you, right? Problem solved.

ALICE: (becoming upset) Please just tell me what they said!

NATHAN: They said—

ALICE: No no no wait.

NATHAN: Wait?

ALICE: Don't tell me.

NATHAN: You don't want to...?

ALICE: I don't think I can... stand it.

NATHAN: Okay. It's really not so bad, but okay.

ALICE: Tell me what they said.

NATHAN: Are you sure?

ALICE: I'm...

NATHAN: This is your choice, you're the one making decisions right now.

ALICE: Just tell me... what they said... but tell it to me... as nicely as you can.

NATHAN: Okay, baby.

ALICE: Don't make it all... tell it to me as nicely as you can.

NATHAN: Okay but we should get off the bridge so—

ALICE: No. Tell me right here.

NATHAN: Well, as you know, you've missed several...

ALICE: God!

NATHAN: Planned events of different kinds...

ALICE: I was taking some time for myself!

NATHAN: I know you were.

ALICE: I feel like I'm allowed to—

NATHAN: Of course you are.

ALICE: I just needed to take some time to...

NATHAN: To fall in love.

ALICE: (faltering) To... to fall in love.

NATHAN: Everybody deserves that. That's a human right.

ALICE: Tell me the rest.

NATHAN: Well, they said, obviously I won't be able to repeat verbatim—

ALICE: Just tell me the rest!

NATHAN: Well, they said that after this last event you missed, the weekend thing, the Jersey—

ALICE: Oh, fuck!

NATHAN: That, you know, they got the message.

ALICE: The message?

NATHAN: That you—and they—Shey and Connie—have... come to the end of a chapter.

ALICE: They said that.

NATHAN: But it's how they said it.

ALICE: They said that?

NATHAN: With like these gentle smiles. With like these gentle eyes. With like this wisdom, they're so wise, Shey and Connie, they're so effortlessly wise.

ALICE: They really are.

NATHAN: They said that—and again, paraphrasing—they said that you and they had a wonderful friendship for a period of time, and it was the right friendship for that period of time, what you both needed, what you all needed—but now that time is over. It's the end of a chapter.

ALICE: They said that?

NATHAN: But please understand—

ALICE: They said it's over?

NATHAN: But with such kindness, please understand, so much kindness. Like a gentle goodbye. Like a gentle wave goodbye.

ALICE: (becoming more upset) I wasted all this time.

NATHAN: No.

ALICE: I wasted all these chances.

NATHAN: No!

ALICE: I keep looking out the window and seeing the sun going down, and I think—

NATHAN: That's not how they see it.

ALICE: (almost in tears) What did I do with this whole day? Where did it go?

NATHAN: You're upsetting yourself for no reason at all. And you're doing it right at the most dangerous part of the bridge.

ALICE: I let all this time...

NATHAN: Does this make sense to you? To make yourself unhappy when there's absolutely no reason? Does that seem wise?

ALICE: (quietly) I guess... I guess not.

NATHAN: You know not. You know it's not.

ALICE: I just keep seeing the sun go—

NATHAN: Everything's beginning for you. You're beginning. Right? Hey: right?

ALICE: I guess that's right.

NATHAN: Don't guess, no one ever got anywhere by guessing, know.

ALICE: (takes a breath) I know it's right.

NATHAN: You know it's right.

ALICE: I know it's right.

NATHAN: (his tone softens) That's my girl. That's the Alice I know.

ALICE: It really is...

NATHAN: What?

ALICE: Shey and Connie, when you think about it...

NATHAN: Yes?

ALICE: It's like the end of a chapter.

NATHAN: It's like the end of a chapter.

ALICE: Like, it's stupid to be sad.

NATHAN: It's more than stupid, it's nonsensical. 'Cause think about it: what happens after the end of a chapter? What happens when you turn the page?

ALICE: There's a new chapter.

NATHAN: There's a new chapter. And you know what it says?

ALICE: What?

NATHAN: "Alice and Nathan." "The Story of Alice and Nathan."

ALICE: I love you so much.

[They kiss.]

NATHAN: Now let's get you off this bridge.

ALICE: Let me go first.

NATHAN: Are you sure?

ALICE: Let me go first. I wanna show you I can do it.

NATHAN: Okay. Are you definitely sure?

ALICE: I want you to be proud of me.

NATHAN: But you don't have to earn that. I'm proud of you anyway.

[Chime music begins playing under credits.]

VOICEOVER: *God of Obsidian* by Mac Rogers. Directed by Jordana Williams and featuring Rebecca Comtois and Mac Rogers. Sound design by Bart Fasbender. Produced by Sean Williams. *God of Obsidian* is brought to you by Gideon Media and was recorded in its entirety in Astoria, New York. *God of Obsidian* is dedicated in loving memory to George Comtois.