

IS ANYONE WATCHING THIS?

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Cast of Characters

- GABBY: Teenager. Woman. Holds herself with the confidence of the young and conventionally attractive.
- APP: Voice of a meditation app. Genderless. Shouldn't be seen. Soothing until it isn't.

Setting:

The finest backyard in California that subscriber money can buy.

Time:

Modern day, starts in the late morning.

[GABBY enters her backyard area, in a swimsuit, bringing her towel, phone, and sunglasses. She has a pool in her backyard, probably a really nice one. We don't even need to see the pool, really. Just the noise or reflection of it or the general idea that a pool is nearby is sufficient.

She looks over her shoulder back into her house - no one there. She looks around the perimeter of her backyard, as if looking for people in the bushes. She looks off in the distance toward a driveway or front walk area. Nothing, no one. Okay. She turns her attention to her phone, makes fairly quick work of scrolling through it. She looks puzzled but not deeply so.

She sighs, puts her hair up, and props her phone up at a good angle away from her on a seat or something. Checks the lighting, checks her swimsuit - all good. This is all business. Then she does some sort of little TikTok dance, clearly already rehearsed, but maybe she has to run it a couple times to get it right, adjust a couple small moves. She checks the video, then posts it.

She stares at her phone for a moment after posting it. Already, her face changes - something is wrong. She looks around again, goes inside her house:]

GABBY:

Mom?

[No response. She checks her phone again. Still no notifications.

She rolls her eyes, maybe laughs, maybe it's a little forced. She goes back over to her house, looks through the door. She opens it again:]

GABBY:

Dad? Hello? Dad?

[No one is there.]

GABBY [*muttering to herself*]:

Whatever. Fucking bye.

[*She sits down in the sun, scrolls through her phone. Soon, she gets up and walks around with her phone above her head toward the sky, trying to get a new signal.*]

GABBY [*muttering all the while*]:

Fucking fuck app. Stupid dumb T-mobile dumb stupid fuck.

[*Fine. Whatever. Selfie time.*]

[*She entertains herself doing this for a while. She posts something, feeling confident.*]

[*After not more than a couple minutes:*]

What is wrong with this fucking signal?!

[*She goes back toward the house, calling for her parents:*]

GABBY [*off*]:

MOM. DAD. MARIANNE. DAVID.

[*She is quiet for just long enough that we realize all that's surrounding her house is dead silence, save for the pool.*]

[*She puts a hoodie or cardigan or something over her swimsuit. Now frantic, she dials a number on her phone. It goes to voicemail:*]

GABBY:

Hey. Are you still coming over today? I just wanted to make sure. This is weird and like supes paranoid, but like, I don't like, see any... CARS around? Or like hear them? or like. Whatever? Do you know what I'm talking about? Did you get some sort, is there some kind of ALERT or something? I didn't get anything but also by the way my phone is being like BEYOND weird, it won't post anything right. Because I'm not getting any notifications. On like anything. I posted a- well I'll tell you when you get here. If you're still coming over today. Let me

know if you're not, or if there is something weird... going on around. here. today.

[She hangs up. Remembers something:]

Oh shit the fritos

[Calls again. It goes to voicemail again.]

Hi sorry me again can you bring those like frito things I liked from trader joe's thank you okay byeeee

[She hangs up, looks around, looks around her yard again, plays with her hoodie all the while. No one is around. Definitely. Nervously, she puts a strand of hair in her mouth and chews it, but before she can get a couple chews deep, she realizes what she's doing and stops quickly.]

She sits around the pool area, trying to keep nice and calm and occupied.

It's going okay.

She sets down the towel or goes to some patio furniture and tries to get some sun.

Checks her phone.

No notifications. Oh no. She pops right back up and scrolls through her phone with frantic speed. She dials a number again.]

Mom? Did you and dad like. Go somewhere? Did you take the dog? Is Cooper with you because I don't see him anywhere and like...

But no doors were open anything this morning or, like, are you guys home right now?

I don't see anyone in the house am I like losing my mind? Okay bye

[She hangs up. Scrolls through some apps again.]

ZERO views?? What the fucking—

[Before she really starts to lose it, she stops herself. She takes a moment to fix her hair, maybe checking her reflection in her

phone. She takes another deep breath and pastes on a fake smile.

As the Instagram live or whatever it is goes on, she probably gets a little more relaxed and comfortable, gets up and starts milling around again.]

Hey guys, it's Gabby, I didn't really plan on doing a live but the weirdest thing is happening and I was like, I need to let everyone know, because it's kind of a fun and suspenseful story right now, but I don't think it's really going to make a good video that I go back and edit later on.

There is like *nobody* in my house. My parents are completely gone. They took the dog. And I called my sister twice but she didn't even pick up. Either this is a super effing weird prank or like every single person on planet earth has. Like. Evaporated. Or maybe there will be a surprise party? But my birthday was two months ago. So I'm not sure like what they're up to. I guess it could be for hitting 100 mil the other day. Oh! right! So that's the other thing. None of my notifications are going through. On any of my apps. Both Insta and Tiktok are telling me no one has watched my videos or liked anything all day.

[realization]

I'm sure this is gonna get me so much hate, like everyone is gonna say Ohmygod Gabby, maybe your posts just weren't that good today, which like, okay, fine, maybe you're right, but still... like...

Zero notifications?

Is anyone else getting this?

Let me knowwww. Okay, well, once Taylor shows up we'll do a spa day vlog like I promised yesterday. Love you all. Byyyeee

[She stops the video and puts her phone down. It didn't really make her feel better. She gets up and looks around the edges of the yard again, down toward the driveway. Nothing and nobody.

In fact, now she goes even further just to be sure, looking all the way down the road.

When she comes back into view, she dials a number again. This time we can faintly hear it going straight to voicemail instead of ringing.]

GABBY:

WHAT THE—

[She senses herself getting very freaked out. She goes back to her towel and takes a seat, sitting straight up. She turns on an app and then places her phone a few feet away. She closes her eyes and listens.]

APP [recording]:

Thank you for using MindSet Meditation App Premium. Your choice to use our premium plan means you will be able to experience our holistic meditation routines ad-free.

GABBY [mouthing to herself']:

Wholistic?

APP:

First, please choose a category that will best help your current self realign—

[She leans over and slams a couple buttons, cutting off the recording.]

APP:

Alright, let's get started.

You've chosen our Set Panic Free Exercise Guide.

GABBY [to herself]:

Duh I know what I chose

APP:

You should not feel any pressure to complete each step of the guide in any sort of time limit. Once we give you an instruction, the app will wait to move on to the next step until you hold and release the Move On button.

GABBY:

I know shut up

APP:

Let's get started.

GABBY:

Thank gawd

APP:

First, focus on naming five different things you can see. Try not to spend any time choosing certain items, or finding patterns. Don't worry about what you think you're *supposed* to see. Just pick five items you can see.

GABBY:

Items?

APP:

Okay. I will wait for you before we move on. Take your time.

[Gabby manages to name these things without getting up.]

GABBY:

Towel. Pool. Um. House. Ummm. Cloud.

[Surprised at how hard this is, she gets up with her phone, looking around. She looks down the empty road again. She is trying so very hard not to worry. She goes back to her phone.]

And um. Phone.

[She presses on the app.]

APP:

You're doing great.

GABBY:

Yeah

APP:

We're going to move on to step 2.

GABBY:

Party

APP:

Next, you're going to find four items you can feel. Looking around yourself, feel four different items. It might work better to ground yourself if you can find four items with different textures, but again, there is no right or wrong way to engage with your senses.

Alright, I'll wait for you.

[Showing a bit of frustration, she gets up to feel things.]

GABBY:

Towel again. Wait is that... um never mind um... ground.

Leaves.

Cloth.

My hair.

[She feels her hair. Hmm, something's not right. She tugs on her hair a bit, maybe ties it up or reties it or lets it down, shakes it out. The adjusting is working better at keeping her calm than the app is. She spends some time doing this.]

She goes over to her phone and taps the button with her toe.]

APP:

Keep up the great work.

GABBY:

Hell yeah

APP:

And remember, you're not on any time constraint with this.

GABBY:

Whatevs

APP:

Now, you're going to find three things you can hear. Remember, this can be anything - think of it is an opportunity to tune into those noises you're so used to ignoring.

I'll wait right here for you.

[Um.

She can't hear anything.

This uncomfortable realization might take her a while.

At some point, she goes to the phone and with renewed frantic speed, scrolls through it.

She touches up her hair a little bit before doing another live video.]

GABBY:

Hey guys, me again, obviously, I was just wondering if—oh damn the bags under my eyes are huge oh no—anyway, is anyone else having this weird no notification thing? I even uninstalled the app and reinstalled it but I'm not getting any notifications. I would ask my sister but she's sending me to voicemail because haha, I don't know, I guess she just hates me that much

And yeah it's even telling me that like, nobody is watching this video right now

Which is weird because like

I mean I know, please don't tell me I'm self centered or whatever, I'm not trying to say like Oh, why isn't the entire world watching my Instagram live,

But I do just think it's weird because I have--

But um yeah

Also here's the other thing is I'm not seeing any other new videos from anyone??

Or new Instagram posts?

Or.

Anything.

Is there something wrong with the internet?

Well, anyway, please let me know if anyone else watching these is having problems with the internet. Once your internet gets back, then, I guess.

Love you byyyyyyeeee

[She puts her phone down and sort of curls up on the ground. She's not really panicking right now but she does look rather puzzled. She looks up toward the sky, as if the answer might be up there, but this is brief. She goes back to her phone.]

APP:

Did you find three things you can hear?

GABBY:

No

[Presses button]

APP:

Wonderful! Next, we're going to find two things you can smell.

[She makes a face at this one. She gets up and sniffs her hair, then goes back downstage to the edge of her property, where she goes to sniff a plant.]

She gets distracted looking over the side somewhere.

She runs to her phone. She stumbles to start another video, almost not remembering to fix her hair.]

GABBY:

Guys, listen to me. Something is seriously wrong. I went to my neighbors' house just to see if they were there or knew if my parents were around or something and their front door is like WIDE OPEN and I looked inside, but I mean I didn't like LOOK

inside, I didn't go all the way up, I just looked from where I was in front of it. And there were lights on and the curtain just like waving over this open window

And I called out "HELLO? MR. AND MRS. PONTELLIER? ARE YOU THERE?"

And they said NOTHING and guys by the way they're like ALWAYS home

I'm serious, I mean whenever me and Taylor play our music above like two decibels, the guy texts our parents and asks us to Please Get A Handle On The Noise Level.

and they would never like
leave their door open.

I didn't look at any more houses on the street because I feel like I should... stay here? And ...

...

Why isn't anyone watching this?

Oh fuck haha am I on private

[Scrolls through her phone]

Haha delete delete delete

I must be on like

Major private mode or

[Horrifying realization]

No. I'm not.

[She goes to the upstage edge of the yard]

HELLO?

IS ANYONE OUT THERE?

IS ANYONE HOME?

CAN ANYONE HEAR ME?

LIKE

HELLO???

[Near tears, she chews her hair. She turns back to her phone.]

APP:

Did you find two things you can smell?

GABBY:

Uh huh

APP:

You're doing beautifully.

[She whines]

APP:

We're almost done. We have just one more observation we'd like you to make. What is one thing you can taste?

[Chews her hair]

Great job! You've completed the Set Panic Free Exercise Guide. How are you feeling?

GABBY *[punching the button]*:

Shitty!

APP:

I'm sorry to hear that. If you're interested in a soothing meditation brought to you by mother nature herself, we have a new Ocean Meditation Ritual for our NaturePlus Members. By upgrading your membership to just—

[She stops the app and dials a number.

We faintly hear it go straight to voicemail.

She dials another number, which we also hear go straight to voicemail.

A third time.

She runs back toward the house, leans into the door:]

GABBY:

THIS IS NOT FUNNY

THIS IS AN ENTIRELY MESSED UP THING TO DO TO SOMEONE WITH SOCIAL ANXIETY

I'M DEAD SERIOUS THIS IS SO FUCKED UP

THIS IS LIKE

NOT HOW YOU TREAT YOUR FAMILY!

[She goes inside and comes back out after a brief moment with some water and a little pill. She takes a little pill.]

She goes to the towel on the ground and half sits, half melts onto it, covering her head. She checks her phone. Nothing. She sighs dramatically. She turns on some music, something extremely low and soothing.

Time passes.

She sits up, checks her phone. Nothing good.

She dials a number that goes straight to voicemail.

She starts dialing a bunch of numbers. They all either ring perpetually or go straight to voicemail. She looks around the yard as she does this, searching for someone, anyone.

This is exhausting.

An alarm goes off on her phone. She heaves a sigh, then sets up her phone somewhere where she can film herself. She fixes her hair, takes a deep breath, and then records a TikTok dance. She posts it.

There's a noise, a clunk-clunk noise from elsewhere in the yard. She stumbles, running to see what it is.

It's just something in the mechanics of the pool. She's disappointed, but takes a moment to stare at the pool.

A bit more time passes.

After this quiet time, she goes back to her phone to check it. She grabs her hair in frustration and pulls on it, making pained animal noises. She stops after a few seconds and holds her phone out to record this:]

GABBY:

You know what I decided? Everyone can say I'm so self-centered, the most selfish person on earth, Oh she thinks the world revolves around her, I don't know, I don't care. But I really do think someone is trying to pull some sort of prank on me. And I don't care if you hate me or whatever but the TRUTH of the matter is that I have over one hundred million followers on TikTok and I'm NOT banned and I'm NOT posting privately so the fact that I have no notifications means something is wrong. That's just like. A fact. You might not like it but it's true. And once my notifications start again, I'm sure this is going to get a million people telling me that I only think people are pretending to have gone away because I think I'm the only person in the world that matters, but here's the thing

In that case you're bothering to watch this far along in the video to know that I think that way. Even though you apparently can't stand me. People keep commenting that no one cares but that's obviously not true because you commented at all

So like I don't know

I don't know where that came from

I don't know where everyone is

I don't know what's going on.

[She stops the video and wanders around the yard, begins playing some sort of goofy pop song on her phone. She bops around. Eventually she starts to really enjoy herself and get into it. After the first song is done, she senses she looks embarrassing right now, so she takes another look around into the house and the perimeter of the yard, but truly, no one is there. So when the next song comes on, she really cuts loose, flipping her hair around, dancing like no one is watching.]

She goes back inside, comes out with a sandwich or snack, eats it sitting poolside, maybe lies down, luxuriating in the sun and enjoying this bit of alone time to be messy and not-cute.

It doesn't last long though, because at some point she feels the need to take a selfie with her food.

This sets her back into reality a bit. She tries to enjoy whatever song is playing now, but can't seem to get back into dancing.

She dials a number. Straight to voicemail.

She scrolls through her phone. Does that thing again where she holds it up to the sky to try to get a better signal.

Googles this:]

GABBY:

Internet... outage... California...

[Nothing. She shakes her head, looks around.

She decides to find something to climb on to get higher up - a ledge, a piece of patio furniture, a hedge, whatever. Maybe she tries multiple things. The point is, soon she slips and falls. She's not actually injured, but a little hurt and very spooked. Her breathing comes very fast now.

She dials numbers on her phone frantically.]

GABBY:

Please pick up like someone pick up like anyone pick up PLEASE
PICK UP PLEASE

[To her house:]

If anyone is home please come out of hiding because I don't feel like I'm in a great headspace right now

[To the next door neighbors:]

IF ANYONE IN YOUR HOUSE IS HOME PLEASE COME TALK TO ME I DON'T
KNOW WHERE MY FAMILY IS

[She goes offstage. We can still hear her.]

IS ANYONE HOME? IS ANYONE AROUND? I DON'T KNOW WHERE MY PARENTS
ARE! I DON'T FEEL GOOD! I NEED HELP!

*[When she appears back on stage, she marches
over to her towel, forces herself to take
some deep breaths. She opens up her
meditation app and skips through it:]*

APP:

Thank you for using MindSet Meditation App Premium. Your--
First, please choose a-

GABBY:

No where's--more panic stuff--please more panic stuff WHERE'S THE
PANIC STUFF-- okay FINE!

APP:

Alright, let's get started.

You Chose Acute Anxiety Super Release.

*[The voice changes just a bit - a different
style of automation. Maybe quieter or
closer, or just a different voice actor.]*

You have had an increased amount of activity on MindSet today.
We'd like to check in before moving on. This will only take a
minute.

Are you safe where you are right now? Hold and release the
button for three seconds to move forward.

*[She's a little puzzled by this. Obviously
it's an unfamiliar part of the app.]*

Are you there?

If you don't hold and release the button for three seconds to
move on, this app will automatically alert local authorities.

GABBY *[pressing the app]*:

Ohhhh damn oh shit fine

APP:

We're glad to hear you feel safe.

Before we start our exercises, it's important to remember a few things:

First, that this is not forever.

GABBY:

Yes.

APP:

Second, that there is no right or wrong way to feel, and your feelings are valid.

GABBY:

So true bestie

APP:

Remember to take these exercises at the pace that feels right for you. Not a minute sooner. You have time, and if you need to leave, we will be right here waiting. "No need to hurry. No need to sparkle. No need to be anybody but oneself." - Virginia Woolf.

GABBY:

Whom?

APP:

The first thing we're going to try is envisioning our happy place. This could be anywhere that's safe to you. Remember, it doesn't have to be somewhere that people expect you to pick, and it doesn't have to be somewhere you've been led to believe is typically relaxing. This is all about your personal journey.

GABBY:

Um

APP:

Have you picked that relaxing place yet?

GABBY:

No

APP:

Great.

GABBY:

Wait stop

[During this next section, she should be trying and failing to turn the app off, making little noises of frustration, cursing, trying to figure out why it won't work.]

APP:

Close your eyes. Begin to visualize your calm space. Let the vision fully take hold – what do you see in this space? What do you hear? If you were to reach out, what would you feel? This may take some time, and that's alright. We're not here to rush you.

Think about your calm space in terms of how it interacts with you.

What is it about this place that's so calming?

What about it could you bring to parts of your life that you find stressful?

Are there others with you or are you alone?

Are you alone?

[The repetition takes her out.]

Are you alone?

[There might also be a bit of an unpleasant click, as if the app has gotten stuck on some sort of loop.]

Are you alone?

[As she answers it, she is frantically tapping and scrolling and sliding her fingers, trying to get it to stop looping.]

GABBY:

Shut up

APP:

Are you alone?

GABBY:

SHUT your mouth!

APP:

Are you alone?

GABBY:

YES SHUT UP

APP:

Are you alone?

[She gets it to stop, puts her phone down roughly, pulling at her hair, maybe pulling some of it out, having a whole little fit, rolling around on the towel, curling up, shouting or crying or whatever works,

She only stops to run into what she thinks is a private corner, but we can see her take another pill.

She stands up and slowly approaches her phone like it might attack her. When she checks the screen, all seems well. She gathers herself up, fixing her hair, fixing the towel, doing whatever she needs. She records this:]

GABBY:

Hi everyone. If you're watching this, it means I posted it later, because this is not an Instagram live. I'm just recording this so I can put it together into a vlog for my YouTube channel later. I'm recording this because I think, like I HONESTLY think, that I might be losing my mind. I don't know when it got this bad. I don't know, maybe my anxiety has been this bad for a while and I just lost track of it. Maybe that's part of it, the not realizing. Anyway, I'm saying this because I think I'm hallucinating. And not just a little bit, but full blown living in a hallucination. I'm living in a world that's not real. The world I'm living in has no one in it. Everyone is gone but me. I

don't know what happened. And I mean that like both ways. I don't know what happened in this fake world I'm living in that made everyone disappear, and I don't know what happened in the real world that's making me think this. I think if I record this as it happens, it might help me figure out what's going on. Somehow. Maybe not now. But maybe later I'll want to look back on it and see what happened. And maybe later it will make sense.

I really hope later it makes sense.

I know people make fun of me because I'm only internet famous, and I'm only internet famous for pretty much just recording whatever I'm doing already. But maybe that's why I'm famous and why people like to watch it. In some way, later, it will all make sense.

Also-also...

*[She has seen something in the distance.
Smoke.]*

Someone's out there SOMEONE'S OUT THERE! They came back for me! I'm not alone! I'll be right back!!

[She puts her phone down and runs off stage.

The pool makes its usual clunking noise.

A bit of time passes.

Gabby returns. Not frantic. Not crazed. Just blank.

She picks up her phone. It's still recording.]

GABBY:

Hey it was um

It was

It was just a fire.

Like a car fire. A car was on fire down the street. I don't know why, I think maybe... someone left it on too long. They turned it on and then they...

[She turns the recording off. She chews on her hair, not even trying to stop this or

cover it up anymore. She plops down onto the ground.

After a quiet moment, she goes back to her phone.]

APP:

Thank you for using MindSet Meditation App Premium. Your choice to use our premium plan means you will be able to experience our wholistic meditation routines ad-free.

First, please choose a category that will best help your current self realign with peace.

If you want to access a NaturePlus meditation, you'll have to upgrade your current plan.

[She keeps pressing a few buttons.]

Thank you for upgrading!

You have chosen our Ocean Meditation.

First, we'd like you to make yourself comfortable, as we may be here for a while. We suggest lying down on something soft, or sitting in a chair with as much support as possible.

Relax your body as you begin to visualize a nearby beach.

Can you hear the waves in the distance, softly coming towards the shore, reaching their crest, and retracting back into the luminous ocean beyond?

As each wave comes in, you're going to release tension from a new part of your body.

Start with your head. As the waves come in, release the muscle in your face. Let your forehead relax. Let your jaw hang open if that feels right. Let the sound of the waves wash over from the top of your scalp down through your chin.

[At some point, Gabby gets up during this, looking at the pool, as if noticing it for the first time. Then she wanders the perimeter of the backyard and a bit towards the other houses she went toward earlier, loosely looking for other people but not committing to the idea that she might see anyone.]

If you feel a tightness in your neck, tilt it slowly from side to side.

Where are your shoulders right now? Do you have the tendency to bring your shoulders up when you feel stress? Make sure to give yourself space between your shoulders and ears. Use the sound of the waves to help guide you toward releasing all the tension in your neck, all the way from the top of your neck to the bottom, allowing the waves to guide you to your back.

Visualize the tension leaving your back, one vertebra at a time.

Take a deep breath. Allow that soothing ocean air to enter your body and fill your diaphragm. Take that breath all the way in. Hold it for just a second. And release.

On your next deep breath, visualize that lovely air coming into your body, and filling it all the way from top to bottom. Breathe in, allow it to reach all the way down to your toes, and breathe out. Breathe in, feel it in your fingertips, and let it out. Breathe in, allow your body to completely fill with ocean air, and release.

Once you feel soothed, imagine you open your eyes, and see the ocean before you.

You're sitting on the beach, smooth white sand underneath you, blue waves before you. As you see the waves come toward you and slide back, they seem to be getting closer.

As the waves crash, they inch up on the beach.

The waves can touch your toes.

As you push yourself up, you can see how far the ocean goes -
It goes on forever.

You stand on your tip toes, and it's all you can see. The deep blue expanse of the world is glistening, endless.

Maybe the water is surrounding your feet. Maybe it's gone back out to where it came from, maybe it's getting further away.

Step toward the water if it's retreating from you.

What would happen if you just followed the waves?

What would happen if you allowed yourself to be one with the ocean?

[At this point, Gabby has come back to her phone. She ends the meditation on the app. She dials a number. We can hear it say it's out of service. She chews and pulls at her hair.]

She dials another number that rings and rings, no one ever picking it up.

She puts her phone down. The next things she says are distinctly not to her phone. She is not recording it. We can faintly hear it still dialing someone, ringing endlessly.]

If anyone is out there, I guess I just want to know why?

I don't mean that in the deep way, not Why Are We Here, and not even Why Did You All Go Away, but really just, Why Am I The Only One Now? There are people who will call that self-centered and egotistical, and they're right. But why me? Why is it me now? Why was it ever me?

Why did I get one hundred million followers?

Is that the same reason that it's only me now?

If you're out there, if you're watching this...

[She waits for someone to let her know.]

The ringing on the phone stops suddenly. She takes this in, realizing there is no answer from anyone and she is truly alone.

She walks up to the edge of the pool.

Then takes a step inside of it.

Then keeps walking.

She walks until she is fully submerged in the pool.

She does not come back up.

Time passes.

Her phone rings.

End of play.]