

## **PART 1: RUBY & BORDERLINE**

GRACE: Ruby Frankel is someone I have always described as intense. And I think she would agree with me.

We met at a theater program when we were 15. We quickly became close friends, but after that summer, we had a falling out. It wasn't until this summer that we found our way back to each other in our shared hometown of Los Angeles. A lot had changed in the meantime.

When she was 18, Ruby was diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder. You likely don't know what that is, or you think you know, but you don't. Most personality disorders are misunderstood and misrepresented in mainstream culture. When Ruby explained to me what Borderline really is, things made a lot of sense - not just about her as a person, but about the conflicts that caused us to drift apart so many years ago.

This is Ruby's diary. It addresses her experience with Borderline, and her tumultuous relationship with self-care.

Please note that this story deals with themes of violence and self-harm.

RUBY: I woke up in this big house today. And... I feel so alone.

Hello. It is Monday, October 16th... I had a really hard week mentally. Duh duh duh... No okay.

Well, my name is Ruby. Ruby Frankel. A lot of people call me Rubes. A lot of people called me Frankel. But my name is Ruby. And I have Borderline Personality Disorder along with major depressive disorder with substance-abuse tendencies. And for a while it was suicidal tendencies also, but we've let go of that shit. That is my full diagnosis.

So, Borderline is a terrible name, may I just say. Awful, awful name. Makes it sound really fucking crazy. And a lot of people think it's like multiple personality disorder. And it's just not. And multiple personality disorder is very rare, and very parodied in pop culture. And it's definitely not that. It *is* the Girl Interrupted Disorder, but the Winona Ryder portrayal is very poor, in my opinion.

Borderline should be called Emotional Dysregulation Disorder. They're actually campaigning to change it in the DSM [Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders], because that's what it is. It's basically having the wrong amount of emotion for certain situations. And that's definitely me. And it just feels like sometimes my feelings control everything, that I'm not in control of my feelings, my feelings are in control of me. And I have inappropriate bursts of anger. And it feels very heavy a lot of the time. Sadness feels very, very heavy. It feels never-ending. The way I explain it is that when I'm really depressed -- and currently I am very, very depressed -- with Borderline, it just changes the filter, like everything just becomes darker. You can't remove yourself from your depression. You feel stuck. It feels never-ending. And it feels vast, and like you are at the whim of it.

I was diagnosed when I was 18, at Beth Israel Psych Ward in New York. I was hospitalized after a really terrible incident with my ex-girlfriend, where I hurt her and I completely dissociated. Completely. Don't remember the incident, only flashes. And I was hospitalized because I wanted to kill myself after learning what I had done. Which is the most alone I've ever felt. I think. So far.

I was so fucking relieved to be diagnosed. And I know that sounds really weird. But I had just known my entire life that there is something really wrong with me. "Wrong", of course, is a very subjective term, but mentally, I knew

that there was something else besides depression, and I had never known what it was. And I thought I was hopeless, or whatever, and I knew sort of what Borderline was when they told me. And I knew that it was on the more common side and that it wasn't a death sentence, and that there was a treatment for it. And I just felt so validated, I just felt like "oh my god" this is exactly what I have. And I understood myself in that moment, better than I had for the last 18 years.

There are nine characteristics you have to - that make up Borderline. You have to meet five to be diagnosed. I meet all nine, which means that I am on the more severe side of Borderline. So, here are the nine...

- **Frantic efforts to avoid being abandoned by friends or family, even if the abandonment is uh, not real!**
- **Unstable personal relationships that alternate between idolization, "I'm so in love", and devaluation, "I hate her". Which is sometimes known as splitting. I really think... that's the one I really relate to.**
- **Distorted and unstable self-image. Affects moods.**
- **Impulsive behaviors. Like substance abuse.**
- **Suicidal and self-harming behavior.**
- **Periods of intense depressed mood or anxiety.**
- **Chronic feelings of emptiness or boredom.**
- **Inappropriate or intense anger, followed by guilt and shame.**
- **Dissociative feelings, when you're out of your body.**
- **Stress-related paranoid thoughts, which go with the dissociation, which can lead to psychosis, which I have been in.**

The causes of Borderline are a mix between nature and nurture, definitely genetics. I have a ton of mental illness in my family, especially on my maternal side, which is the more connected? I believe? People with BPD have experienced at least one trauma in their life that has gone unvalidated. I would say my entire childhood was a lengthy trauma. But there are obviously some specific incidents. And yeah, brain function.

Um, I got a septoplasty, which everyone I'm sure is rolling their eyes like, a nose job is a nose job... Well I've always had sinus issues, really bad headaches, and cardio is very difficult for me. And I have an excess of cartilage in my nose, and it has been a week, and I get my stitches out tomorrow. And they're **so** itchy right now. And I didn't want to see anybody for the first couple of days, and I kind of don't want to see anybody now. My body feels so tired.

...

R: Okay, I'm recording this. I am on the way from the elusive Beverly Hills to the wild, wild world of Westwood to get my bandages and my stitches off after a week of being inside. Which made my brain feel really, really bad. It was a very hard week for me. So father... can you describe a positive change you have seen in me since I was like 18 to now.

D: I think that you are more worldly, I mean you've been out in the world.

R: Mentally, how have I changed?... Was I this depressed growing up?

D: Yeah... Off and on. See I don't know how depressed you are, because whether you know it or not, on many, many occasions you've said to me "This is the most depressed I've ever felt" ... So I really don't... I take it seriously, but I think...

R: I can tell you what times have **actually** been that

D: Yeah but you've said it a lot

R: Okay but the times... when I broke up... when I came back from New York, after **somehow** finishing that year, literally **somehow**

D: Freshman year

R: Yeah. Just have no idea how that happened. I came back and I sat on her couch and I looked ill. Physically. And I said "my life is over". Because I didn't believe that life could go on after that. Like I was asking her how does a person get up in the morning post-that. Because I thought my life was like logically... like not in a dramatic sad way, just it was over. There was just nothing else to... look for. I had been happy and I had lost that. And it felt like completely my fault.

D: Well it wasn't.

R: It was absolutely wasn't my complete fault. What do you think Borderline Personality Disorder is?

D: It has to do with narciss- well, from what I've observed, narcissistic tendencies, self-absorption...

R: Are you joking?

D: No, I'm not joking

R: I can't tell if you're joking

D: I'm not joking. Uncontrollable ups and downs, manic episodes -

R: Okay, I'm gonna send you... not only are you wrong,

D: I'm describing you!

R: Okay, but that's... not only are you wrong, but it's... it's completely the opposite of that...

D: Can I say something? I think you spend an inordinate amount of time analyzing yourself and what's wrong. I mean people do that, but you just spend a lot of time wrapped up in yourself. The best advice I can give you is just, try not to analyze yourself so much. No one knows why they do some of the things they do. Nobody is perfect. I think this is not helpful. For you to spend all this amount of time that you do, defining your illness, what's wrong with you... there's a lot of things right with you. There's a lot of things right with you.

GRACE: So you've met Ruby, and you've met Gordon, Ruby's dad. Gordon will be back in Part 2, where we get into some of the family dynamics that have both impacted, and been impacted by Ruby's experience with Borderline.