

Disconnected

Nina Moldawsky

[nina.moldawsky@gmail.com](mailto:nina.moldawsky@gmail.com)

Disconnected

It is a dark night over an open field in Nowhereland, Kansas. Dim stars dot the sky, and everything is drenched in blue moonlight. The air rings with crickets, and a breeze shuffles the grass. To stage right, there is a small tent, lit from the inside, showing the silhouette of LIALA, a 20-somewoman. She fidgets, rubbing her arms and flipping her head back and forth as if hearing sounds. After a minute, she reaches up and flicks the light off. The tent unzips, and LIALA exits, barely visible in the blue light. She flicks on a flashlight, which traces aimlessly over the empty stage. She takes out her phone and presses it to her ear. We hear the dial tone for a moment before it connects. Two headlights light up, facing outwards. RYAN, a late 20s woman, stands in front of them, back to the audience, silhouetted by the light. She answers the phone, speaking with the smooth and gentle tone of someone never driven to anger.

LIALA

Hey Ryan?

RYAN

What's up?

LIALA

Uh, when are you coming back?

RYAN

Well, I um, I'm almost to the store, it's a little farther away than I thought, but I'm going as quick as I can.

LIALA

(shaky)

Can you... can you just give me an ETA?

RYAN

Liala? Did something happen?

LIALA

Not really, I just... well, I thought I could handle being alone out here, but as soon as you left I could hear all these *sounds*.

RYAN

What kind of sounds?

LIALA

I don't know. Snapping. Breathing. Shifting. Whistling wind. My heart was beating fast, it was uncomfortable. I just kept thinking a coyote was gonna pounce through the mesh, or a cow was gonna trample the tent with me in it.

RYAN

(laughing)

A cow?

LIALA

Don't laugh! Cows are huge.

RYAN

Cows are harmless.

LIALA

Whatever. I don't care if it was paranoia. It didn't feel good, so I left.

RYAN

Wait, you're not at the tent anymore?

LIALA

No, I walked to the road. That's why I have signal.

RYAN

Just make sure you don't lose the tent.

LIALA

How could I lose the tent? It's a tent, it's not going anywhere.

RYAN

I'm just saying, don't get lost.

LIALA

I won't. There's one dirt road and one highway. I got nowhere to go.

*A beat.*

RYAN

...I'm sorry I left you there.

LIALA

Don't apologize. I asked you to go.

RYAN  
I'm still-

LIALA  
I said don't! You apologize too much.

RYAN  
I'm s- o-okay. I wish I was there with you. You're only in town for so long and...

LIALA  
I know, but, well... we need a lighter to make a campfire.

RYAN  
Yeah.

LIALA  
Yeah.

RYAN  
Are you cold?

LIALA  
No. It's not too bad.

*They are silent for a moment.*

RYAN  
So, um, well. Is there anything you need me to do, Liala? I'm driving as fast as I can.

LIALA  
No! I don't need you to do anything. Ugh, I knew I should've..

RYAN  
Should've what?

LIALA  
Nothing!

RYAN  
Are you mad?

LIALA  
Maybe!

RYAN  
Why?

LIALA

Because you always- I don't need anything. I just...  
I just wanted to- ugh, never mind.

RYAN

What is it? Tell me.

LIALA

No, you wouldn't get it. You never do.

RYAN

You're not giving me much of a chance.

LIALA

Okay, fine! I just... I'm scared. I'm alone. I just  
want someone to talk to.

RYAN

Alright. What do you want to talk about?

LIALA

I don't know, Ryan!

RYAN

There's no need to yell.

LIALA

Why not?! Who's gonna hear me?! I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF  
GODDAMN NOWHERE ON THE SIDE OF A DIRT ROAD!

RYAN

Liala... calm down.

*No response.*

Liala?

LIALA

Why are we doing this?

RYAN

I thought... you wanted to see the meteor shower and-

LIALA

No! I know why we're camping in this stupid field I  
just meant...

RYAN

What are you saying?

LIALA

I mean, does this really feel the same anymore?

RYAN

I'm turning around.

LIALA

No, we need the lighter.

RYAN

I don't care about the lighter. You're scared and alone in the middle of rural Kansas because I left you there and now you're trying to break up with me.

LIALA

I'm not trying to break up with you!

RYAN

Then what are you saying?

LIALA

I don't... know... I don't know... I...don't know where things went wrong. You said "let's go camp under the shooting stars in a place silent and beautiful" and I said yes because that's romantic as fuck and god I wanted this to be romantic. I wanted to snuggle in our tent under your fuzzy red blanket and drink champagne straight from the bottle while the stars fell out of the sky. God, I know you brought all the fixings for chocolate covered strawberries and campfire roasted veggies and we were gonna eat and kiss the smears off each others faces and it was gonna be great because we never see each other since I moved to New York and now we can finally see each other, but you didn't have the lighter and now I'm alone in the dark and we're not together and this isn't fucking romantic, Ryan, it's not. And I'm angry, we were supposed to have a beautiful night, and I'm angry, I'm angry and irritable why, why do I always get so angry with you. So angry, and your voice never raises. Why aren't you angry with me! Be ANGRY with me I'm-

I'm awful. I hate it. I'm always at my worst with you. That's my fault, I know somehow that's my fault, because I do this. I ruin beautiful things like this. Sabotage them. I wish I could fix this, but I don't know how. Don't know if I can. I don't understand. I don't understand. I just ruin everything. I hate who I am around you, but maybe I just hate me. I hate me and you love me and that makes me angry.

RYAN

(whispering)  
That doesn't make sense.

LIALA

I know. I know it doesn't. But that's me. That's my stupid head. I'm just making up excuses because I don't love you anymore.

**The headlights go out. They are silent. A small spotlight shines downward, moths flying around inside of it. Ryan steps into the spotlight, still with back to the audience, head hung.**

RYAN

Do you mean that?

LIALA

I don't know.

*A beat.*  
...I'm sorry, Ryan.

RYAN

I'm at the store. I'll get the lighter and come back quick, okay?

LIALA

Oh, uh... o-okay.

RYAN

Do you want me to stay on the phone?

LIALA

I... I don't know.

RYAN

Alright. Well, you can hang up whenever you want.

LIALA

You don't care.

RYAN

Whatever makes you happy.

LIALA

Don't do that.

RYAN

What?

LIALA

Come on, Ryan, please...

*Liala begins to cry.*

Please just... tell me what you want. You. What do you want?

*A beat.*

RYAN

Remember that house we saw by the canyon?

LIALA

...maybe?

RYAN

It was up on this little ledge and had these huge windows the size of movie screens, overlooking all the hills and valleys and twists of the river. We joked about what kind of fancy people were staring out those windows in their overpriced bathrobes. An old white couple with botox faces and rich smiles, arms around each other. We were mocking, but secretly I imagined standing beside you, in a home we own, gazing at something beautiful.

LIALA

Ryan...

RYAN

No, listen. You asked what I want, but you know what I want. I want you. I want you to live in the same city. I want to see you more than once every couple of months. I want to wake up in the morning with you beside me, to be able to look in your eyes and catch the spark fading before I miss it, save it before it's too late. I want impossible things, Liala. I'm stuck here. I want to be unstuck. It won't happen for me.

But you. You've got a lot of life ahead of you. You're going to meet people who are kind and smart and creative and amazing in a million other ways. So in your future of a thousands faces, you might lose track of mine, and that's okay. One day I'll exist in your life as part of sigh, or an eye roll, or in the words "I tried a long distance relationship once, it didn't work." That is sufficient legacy for me. Wherever I end up, when you are wherever you are, I will smile when someone says their name is Liala. I



will remember them, greet them by name in the street, even though I suck with names. And if someone says your whole name, I will lean in close. I will smile. I will buy their drinks, ask how you are doing. At the end of it I'll say, "tell her Ryan said hi. Tell her she's not angry, and never could be." They won't do it. That will be fine.

What I want, Liala, is to forgive you, over and over again for the rest of our lives. I forgive you. I want you to forgive yourself. And I want to say thank you. Thank you for letting me matter to you, just enough, at the right time. I'll cherish that, even when the day comes that I don't matter to you at all.

*A long beat. Liala audibly wimpers.*

LIALA

Ryan, I-

RYAN

I have the lighter, I'm coming back.

LIALA

But-

RYAN

Wait for me.

**Black out.**