Path Robert

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Paths

Robert Alexander Santana

CHARACTERS
Lala, a fifteen year old girl.
Javi, a fourteen year old boy.

SETTING
A clearing in the woods of Hispaniola Island, just a few hours before night fall.

SCENE 1
Lala and Javi rest before trying to leave the mountain.

Lala: Every second, a door closes somewhere in the world. Something or someone is separated from another space, another person, another situation, or reality becomes inaccessible by a threshold.
Javi: Would you dare to say every second?
Lala: Do you realize how many doors are in the world?
Javi: Closing?
Lala: How many doors are closing or not closing in the world?
Javi: I only know the doors that I have entered and left.
Lala: A lot of doors close smoothly, suddenly, by accident, mechanically, without intention.
Javi: How many?
Lala: I do not know. We should keep walking.
Javi: If you could walk without being heard, if indeed you became just a little story of my life after that storm, then I could accept that I don’t exist, that I came to this forest a few hours ago and I got dragged away, deep in the woods, without complaint. I’m sure the others already noticed that I am not there.
Lala: People quickly accept that someone is absent and resume their lives. Or maybe, they think you walked away for a moment to be with yourself.
Javi: Let us pause for a few minutes. I need to rest. My back hurts.
Lala: It’s strange that we haven’t found our way.
Javi [Pulls out his cell and raises his hand, searching for a signal]: This thing is not working.
Lala: Are you sure?
Javi: Not one signal bar. I know I shouldn’t have turned away from the others. You said it was supposed to be easy, that we would find the blue waterfall and I would return before dinner.
Lala: Yes, that I promised you. But we can’t find the right path to reach the waterfall. Trust me, I’ll get you out of here.
Javi: This phone is the only thing that can help.
Lala: Really? Right now I just see it as useful as a brick. We have to find a way to guide us.
Javi [Looking at his cell]: Oh no! This is serious, very serious.
Lala: What?
Javi: I’m running out of battery.
Lala: Forget about it and help me rebuild the events that led us here. I found you. I told you about the waterfall and we walked for about fifteen minutes.
Javi: I can’t believe that you can track the time in that way. I wear my headphones and there is no force that can get me out of that world. The time just flies away.
Lala (Something catches her attention on the stage. She looks to her left): Look at these beautiful flowers.
Javi: I’ll take some.
Lala: I don’t think so. I believe you shouldn’t touch them.
Javi: What? It’s okay if I take a flower. It’s just one.
Lala: I have the impression that you could alter the normal course of things.
Javi: What do you mean?
Lala: I think they’re in a specific arrangement, a kind of randomness, but not the concept that we have about it. In any case, this would be the randomness of nature that is always the most accurate.
Javi: Accurate? What do you mean? It’s just a flower and it will stay so even if I take it. Just as the forest remains forest with more or less trees.
Lala: You have no respect for anything.
Javi: Well, for some reason we are superior. That justifies our desire to change things, to improve.
Lala: I do not think so.
Javi: Well, I do.
Lala: We can’t think that nature did her part to create us and now cast us aside and let us live without her. We need her.
Javi: I see where you’re going. Believe me or don’t, but there are millions out there who will continue doing whatever they want.
Lala: Listen. (Pause.) This quiet, here, around us, this silence that covers us. Isn’t it wonderful?
Javi: Silence leads to boredom.
Lala: Keep listening and pay attention to what is missing.
Javi (He pauses and tries to listen with his mouth open): I can’t hear anything.
Lala: Exactly. You don’t hear anything. You don’t hear the alert on your phone screaming that you have a new message or email. Isn’t it wonderful?
Javi: It’s not.
Lala: Whether you stay here or go back and be absorbed in the screen that illuminates your face for hours, you are alone. You’re like an ant trapped in a raindrop. From your little liquid cell, you can see others, but only that. You resign yourself to meet death calmly.
Javi: That’s not me. How can I be an ant? What do you mean?
Lala: That’s stupid.
Javi: What is stupid?
Lala: Not to understand that real life is something else.
Javi: Real life?
Lala: Yes, what happens outside. What happens when you interact with your peers.
Javi: It is, I know that. But reality comes to me and I want to avoid it. It is curious what happened to me the other day. I was listening to music on my iPod while waiting for the metro. It was seven in the morning and as usual, many people were waiting on the platform. One woman in particular stood beside me. She looked sad. She caught my attention, and since I enjoy the habit of wanting to look people in the face, we made eye contact. Then she started talking. Her lips moved incessantly and she gesticulated nervously. A train stopped in front of us and we got in. She sat next to me and kept talking. I stared at her blank lips, which trembled more and more. As she spoke, I moved my head affirmatively each time she made a pause. She was crying, but I noticed that she was trying to control larger tears and struggled to not collapse. A few minutes later the metro stopped and the doors opened. She took my hand firmly and I could read in her face an expression of thanks. She left the train and stood in the middle of the station. I kept looking at her until the doors closed again. The car pulled away slowly, leaving the scene.
Lala: Can you tell me what the woman told you?
Javi: I don’t know.
Lala: Don’t know?
Javi: No. I never turned down the volume, so I did not hear anything.
Lala: I can’t believe you.
Javi: You have to understand. I was afraid she was contagious. Sadness is spread from person to person like a virus.
Lala: Indifference is the only dangerous contagion in dealing with others. I could say that others are more alive than you.
Javi: Are you going to stick with that? [He gives a small whimper.] Coño! It hurts! My back! [He takes off his backpack with the help of Lala.]
Lala: Rest here for a while before continuing. What’s in this bag that makes it so heavy?
Javi: Nothing. [Grabs the backpack from Lala’s hands.]
Lala: All I know is that if we do not hurry, the night will fall soon.
Javi: Now that I think about it, I never understood your effort to defend nature. Explain it to me.
Lala: I know it and that’s enough.
Javi: You should share it with me. Explain to me why you defend something that does nothing for you other than obstruct your way. You know how I got here?
Lala: I know as much as you know.
Javi: Really?
Lala: Almost as little as you.
Javi: What is that little part that you know that I don’t?
Lala: The affront against nature is costly. Like that one small town by the foot of the mountains.
Javi: I know what you mean and I don’t want to talk about it.
Lala: You should remember. You know how it happened. I guess something remains, some trace, a toy, a dish sunk into the mud.
Javi: Forget it. Do not mention it anymore.
Lala: But it’s about me, it’s about us. At least you survived.
Javi: I also fought for the others. I threw my hands in the air, in the water, looking for another hand that would hold mine, looking for your hands, but the force of the water was stronger.
Lala: But the force of water was greater than our will. Why build a village where a river once passed? Everyone knows that rivers always recover their paths. That night, for some reason, Grandma didn’t want to go to sleep. Something kept her awake: a relentless throb that only caused a predicted misfortune. She stood in the doorway watching a steady rain that had begun earlier. The wind snatched the door from her hands and slammed it. The sky rumbled every second. Who could foresee what happened that night? When all of us reconciled to sleep, we heard a terrible sound as if the earth had split.
Javi: After a few seconds we saw no glimmer of light for the thunder.
Lala: There was no thunder. The explosion we heard was because the White River was dammed with enormous rocks and the growing rainfalls overflowed it. All the energy restrained for hours was
released in a few seconds. A large water snake approached blindly toward our town. Minutes later, everything was ruined. Everything was water and we struggled to survive, to grab something and not be swept away.

**Javi:** Nature was cruel with us.

**Lala:** Would you dare judge her?

**Javi:** She gives us misfortunes. She gives us misfortunes. Sowing the stories of regular people, who, if they survive, are heroes or are pitied.

**Lala:** She only recovered what belonged to her.

**Javi:** A stone is inanimate. A stone thrown ferociously to another person is no longer inanimate; the anger becomes solid, anger flying, anger breaking skulls. Nature used stones and the river to show us her anger.

**Lala:** You’re alive.

**Javi:** If you could walk without being heard, I wouldn’t dare to say that you’re here. Days later, the town was invaded by volunteers, a multitude of good souls hungry for victims. I looked for you in every rubble pile.

**Lala:** You breathe.

**Javi:** Everyone asked me if I needed anything. I repeated the same thing until my lips became numb: My sister, I miss her a lot, please find her.

**Lala:** Keep moving forward.

**Javi:** I can’t explain how I survived and what strength keeps me alive. I can’t stop thinking about you.

**Lala:** The most important thing is to get out of here now. A door is almost closed at this time.

**Javi:** I’m cold. We should make a little campfire.

**Lala:** We must keep moving.

**Javi:** You’re my only connection to what I really am. Oh sister! I am lonely without you.

**Lala:** I would be ashamed to admit that I don’t even know what’s keeping you here. You should go toward them.

**Javi:** I’m tired, but I’m starting to see things more clearly.

**Lala:** Otherwise, you may get lost forever.
Javi: We went to the mountain. I was supposed to stay together with the others, but I walked away for a moment. A few steps later, I saw you in a clearing of the mountain. Five years have passed, but I could recognize you in a second. I said your name and you turned to smile at me.

Lala: I approached you and asked if you wanted to see the blue waterfall.

Javi: You approached me and asked me if I wanted to see the most beautiful waterfall of this mountain. So I said yes, and I followed you with enthusiasm. I was happy and I couldn’t tell you how glad I was to see you again.

Lala: But we did not see the waterfall.

Javi: That was your excuse for bringing me here.

Lala: Know why you’re here?

Javi: I know. I guess I’m here because I need to change.

Lala: You are here because you have to change, to start looking at your environment. Recognize that while you are in your universe, everything around you is changing. If you really have changed, you must return.

Javi: Would you come with me?

Lala: I can’t leave here.

Javi: Come, I’ll take you to the city. We’ll be always together.

Lala: I must stay here to take care of this.

Javi: All this can take care of itself. I’d be lost without you. I’m cold now and it will come with me: the always present cold.

Lala: The image that you belong to, as a whole, should be a kind of fire in which heat finds you whenever you’re cold.

Javi: How much time do I have here, really?

Lala: Three days. They have started to look for you. If you follow the path of cayenas you will get to a small town. They know that a guy is missing, so you will be immediately recognized. (Javi puts his backpack on the floor and rests his head on it. Lala, on her knees, touches his head.) But you do not need to run. Soon, it will not even be important how or where I am, and I know I’ll find you again in the middle of the night. You will kiss my knees until I fall asleep and I’ll take care of your dreams, as I did that night.
(Javi closes his eyes. Lala sits next to him.) And then you’ll do for me everything you once did, crossing fences, visiting thousands of doors to fall again, and at times, foolishly crying. No one asked you to weep.

(Lights fade to black as Lala caresses Javi’s head. Both fall asleep.)

END