

# ***Protective Shield***

*by*

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Cast of Characters

RITA:

Teen

PARLA:

Teen

Place

Golden Field

Time

Daytime

Setting: Field. Day. Sunset.

At Rise: Rita and Parla talk in the middle of a golden field.

RITA: I don't know, I never got along with my brother. He's always trying to wage battle for family attention. Always has to be the golden child. So, I stopped looking for it.

PARLA: I see how your Mom is with him.

RITA: Everybody, it's everybody, it's not just my Mom. He's always performing the lead in school plays, lead of his music band, doing this or doing that...he's an overachiever.

PARLA: What do you want to do?

RITA: With what? In my life?

PARLA: Yeah, what's going on with you?

RITA: Not so sure...I just don't know anymore...

PARLA: Come on, Rita. Why you always trying to be so mysterious? Aren't I your best friend?

RITA: It's hard for me, I guess.

PARLA: What is?

RITA: Everything...I keep things in. Things. Emotions. My emotions...I know that's probably not a good thing. Life has made me that way, I guess. I have a tendency to show no emotion when I am feeling emotion.

I just have a hard time opening up to someone. I get closed off. I feel that by being emotional in front of someone, kind of makes me very vulnerable and weak and I have a hard time with that. You know, being in that state of vulnerability, it's not a place where I like to be because I feel like I'm not in control. When I'm not in control, I get anxiety.

Whenever I truly loved anybody and opened myself up to them, they have always stabbed me in the back. I have a hard time with that; trusting people. It can be anyone...friends, family, boyfriend...you. I'm not sure if I truly trust anyone in my life. It's sort of a protective shield I've put up and it only gets stronger with time.

I do desire to be more vulnerable but at the same time I desire to stay protected. I feel torn. Every time I do take a risk, I get hurt. Not sure if I should keep taking those risks.

PARLA: You're not the only one who deals with problems at home, Rita. There's things I don't talk about either. For one, I can't stand my father. Everything he is, everything he stands for.

PARLA (cont'd): It's murder being around him when he's not drunk. When he's drinking, he's happy and its only for about ten minutes that I feel like I know him and actually like him...usually, by the third beer going into the fourth beer is where there's a window of truth.

Something. Better than nothing, right?

RITA: Your pop is always hitting the bottle?

PARLA: When he's not hitting my Mom...

RITA: Sorry.

PARLA: Yeah...we should get out of here, get out of this town for a while.

RITA: I just had a dream about that last night...that I was somewhere far from here. Well, maybe we should but how? We're both broke.

PARLA: Everyone thinks they need money to escape but it's just an old tale that keeps you trapped in place forever, something you just don't ever stop believing in , till it eats you up inside and by then, it's too late to do anything or go anywhere. I know we don't need money to get out of here.

RITA: Where would we go?

PARLA: I'll grab one of my Dad's maps and we can chart our course. We'll go on a little adventure. I need to feel something, Rita, before this town swallows me up. If I don't see something new soon...

RITA: Do you really think we can do something like that and I mean for how long? For a week?

PARLA: I've been secretly imagining this since forever.

RITA: Aren't you afraid of coming back, I mean with your Dad and all?

PARLA: I ain't afraid of him. Not as much as he'd like me to be.

RITA: But, I worry about you.

PARLA: Oh, shut it. There isn't nothing my Daddy can dish out that I can't take.

RITA: I'm not convinced.

*Parla holds out her wrist.*

PARLA: See this scar on my wrist? My own Father gave me that.

*Beat.*

RITA: When do you want to leave?

PARLA: Tomorrow.

RITA: Tomorrow?

PARLA: Rita, what's the hesitation?

RITA: I, I'm just trying to swallow the whole idea.

PARLA: You gonna choke?

RITA: No, no. I'm in. I need change, even if it's for a few days, clear my mind for a moment. So what time tomorrow?

PARLA: I'll be at yours at 4a.m., bright and early. We'll leave at daybreak.

RITA: Okay, alright. What should I pack?

PARLA: Just bring clothes, a few dollars, sandwiches. I'll take care of the rest.

RITA: What rest? How do you have all this prepared?

PARLA: Cause my shit is already packed, Rita. I was going alone...

RITA: Alone?

PARLA: I was leaving. I wasn't even going to tell you...

RITA: What were you thinking? You were gonna leave me behind?

PARLA: I got flashlights, lighters, dry food, sleeping gear, the map, hiking knife and I been watching all types of survival shows.

RITA: I thought this was a few days?

PARLA: ...You can never be too prepared.

Pause.

I'll tell you what...I love you and I don't want you to get hurt by this, but, I'm going all the way. Just listen, before you get all hyped up. I'm, I need to leave for good but I can't do this if you don't take those first few steps with me. What I'm sayin' is that I won't have the courage to get far enough to where there's no turning back.

PARLA (cont'd): You, you can turn back, but I have to keep going. Understand? I don't know where exactly I'm headed but any direction away from this town is the right direction for me.

RITA: But what about me?

PARLA: You will come back here and live your life. I'll be in touch with you, so don't worry.

RITA: This is bullshit, you're bullshit.

PARLA: Why you sayin' that?

RITA: I can't survive this place without you.

PARLA: Yes, you can. Your life is much better than mine will ever be if I stay.

RITA: Why are you doing this to me?

PARLA: I'm not doing anything to you---

RITA: Yes, you are, you're leaving!

PARLA: Don't hold me back! This shit has taken me a lot of planning. You have no idea what I've been through to get to this point. I should have told you sooner but---I knew you'd react this way. I can't have any doubt going ahead. I can't have any ties holding me back.

RITA: I'll go.

PARLA: Go...where?

RITA: With you.

PARLA: There's no way.

RITA: If I can't stop you, you can't stop me.

PARLA: Why you acting crazy? This isn't a game, this is serious life, Rita.

RITA: There ain't nobody as serious than me right here this moment and that's including you!

PARLA: Damn it! I should never have told you. Damn it!

RITA: If we're in this together then I got to get moving. I got a lot of packing to do, the essentials, besides you'll need me.

PARLA: I don't...yeah, I know. But if anything were to happen to you, something bad, I don't think I'll be able to handle it.

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RITA: We got each other, don't we? We protect each other. No regrets.

PARLA: No regrets.

RITA: That's right.

END OF PLAY