

"Connectivity"

By

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FADE IN:

INT. STUDY ROOM - NIGHT

A stressed college student, CARTER (18), leans against the desk in an intense stare-off with his/her computer, which rests on the table. There is an obvious tension in the air: Carter is agonizing over a yet-unknown issue.

CARTER  
Eeeeeaahh, I don't know. I don't  
know what to do.

Carter resumes the staring contest with the computer.

CARTER (CONT'D)  
(grabs computer)  
Screw it. Hey Iris, open bookmark  
"Collegiate Enrollment Status".

Carter furiously pounds on the keys, stress-level mounting.

CARTER (CONT'D)  
Username is carterrae, password  
is...password is  
(beat)  
What the hell is my password?  
(thinking aloud)  
N.O.O.D.L.E.S.1.3.!. .

The password is incorrect.

CARTER (CONT'D)  
Uppercase N.O.O.D.L.E.S.  
1.3.!. . .thank God.  
(beat)  
Carter Rae, College Drop-Out.  
Jeez.

He/She gets up from the chair and paces.

CARTER (CONT'D)  
(rambling)  
You're already two assignments  
down in English; you've missed the  
past three classes in History, and  
(MORE)

CARTER (CONT'D)  
you can't even speak Spanish  
anymore. What the hell are you  
doing in that class, you're the  
dumbest one there. If you're  
struggling this much in a  
200-level class you'll never be  
able to handle a 400-level class  
let alone graduate school. You've  
got no hope at graduation let  
alone graduate school and your  
career plans are nonexistent.

Carter sits back down, trying to convince him/herself.

CARTER (CONT'D)  
You'll never catch up. Dropping  
out is the only option. I'll work  
minimum wage for the rest of my  
life.

That does it. Carter grabs the computer, but-

CARTER (CONT'D)  
NO CONNECTION?! The cutoff's in 6  
minutes, I don't have time for  
this - *Jesus Christ!*

Carter fiddles on the computer frustratedly.

CARTER (CONT'D)  
I'm just gonna reboot the damn  
thing, I don't have time to pray  
to the internet gods. Twenty  
thousand dollar education. How  
hard is it to give us some WiFi  
that won't give up All. The. Time.

Unknown to Carter, IRIS (20s) enters and sits on the table.  
She is head-to-toe chromatic silver, with an air of  
artificial intelligence. Friendly, but without emotion.

IRIS  
Experts agree that the unstable  
internet comes not from the  
strength of connection itself;  
(MORE)

IRIS (CONT'D)  
rather, from the number of users  
attempting to engage with the  
network during high-traffic hours.

CARTER  
(unphased)  
Iris, the Unhelpful Internet Elf.

IRIS  
I.R.I.S., the Internet Research  
Intelligence System.

CARTER  
A figment of my imagination.

IRIS  
Yes, although one could argue the  
term hallucination is more  
accurate.

CARTER  
You wanna tell me when the  
internet's gonna be back up?

IRIS  
Analyzing previous incidents and  
combining all knowledge available,  
I would estimate a restored  
connection within the next five  
minutes.

Carter closes the laptop. He/She faces Iris.

CARTER  
What are you doing here Iris?

IRIS  
My primary functions are to assist  
in the never-ending quest for  
knowledge by providing information  
per your requests.

CARTER  
(rolling eyes)  
Iris.

IRIS

I'm here to answer your questions.

They sit a beat in silence, Carter exhibiting signs of exhausted frustration.

IRIS (CONT'D)

I find it difficult to provide you with answers if you do not first initiate contact with an inquiry.

CARTER

(glaring at Iris)

Am I doing the right thing?

IRIS

How do you mean?

CARTER

Should I drop out? Am I going to be okay if I drop out? Or, should I just stick it out and try to finish?

IRIS

What seems to be holding you back from academic success in your current situation?

CARTER

I'm weeks behind in all my classes with no hope for catching up; I've got zero prospects for a career after school; I'm not cut out for school.

IRIS

A quick search of my database finds the following possible solutions. First, you can contact your professors and ask for additional help on catching back up. Second, a preliminary search finds a plethora of careers that are attainable without a college

(MORE)

IRIS (CONT'D)

degree. Third, there is no data to suggest that you are not capable of graduating from a university.

CARTER

No data to suggest?!

IRIS

No, I found no-

CARTER

Okay, okay, what do you call high school then? I had to take summer school twice because I couldn't finish classes during the year! I, I- I've been through the fucking ringer. Don't tell me there's no evidence that I'm not cut out for this; you've got it twisted. There's nothing here to tell me that I can do it.

IRIS

Did you consider the other possible solutions I presented?

CARTER

Yeah. Not so helpful.

Iris gestures for Carter to explain.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Those careers you talk about? Yeah, they have a lot more schooling than you're letting on.

IRIS

Careers in real estate, dental hygiene, or nursing typically do not require a post-secondary education.

CARTER

They still require school.

(MORE)

CARTER (CONT'D)

Licensing exams, AA degrees - and let's not forget that I throw up at the sight of needles, hmm?

IRIS

Have you considered reaching out to your professors for help?

CARTER

It's not going to help; I'm too far behind.

IRIS

Professors commonly make exceptions and specialized plans for those with specialized needs.

CARTER

I don't have specialized needs, I'm ill. I'm ill and it's not going to get better. It's going to be here forever and it's always going to get in the way. I don't deserve special treatment; I don't deserve professors going out of the way to accommodate me and my fucked up brain.

Carter gets up, unable to look at Iris any longer. The two hold a quiet tension for several moments.

IRIS

Since my solutions are not producing the desired effect, I am going to attempt a different tactic. What would you like me to tell you?

CARTER

It's okay to drop out. It's okay to drop out and give up and work at a coffee shop the rest of my life. It's okay to admit that I can't do this and I am never going to do this and that I am not

(MORE)

CARTER (CONT'D)

enough. I don't have to keep living in this manic depressive state because I don't want to let my family down. I don't have to keep working up the courage to get on a Zoom call for a class I know I could never possibly pass. I don't have to tell myself to clean the room because it's just going to get dirty in a few days because all I do is sit inside and try to hold it together when my mind is in a paper shredder and I can't tape the pieces back together to make it whole. (beat) I want you to tell me that I am broken but that's okay and that I can finally give in and get some rest.

IRIS

(commanding stare)

You are at liberty to give in at any moment you would like with no fear of repercussion from your loved ones because they see that you tried. All they want is for you to be happy; logically speaking, if school makes you unhappy then they would be more than willing to facilitate a lifestyle switch. You don't need to ask for permission to quit. You have earned that right yourself.

Iris gets up and is about to leave when she has one more thought to share.

IRIS

Analytically-speaking, you are the worst assessor of your own needs. There is no one more deserving or less deserving of help. There is only you and your individual path.



Carter is lost in thought and Iris leaves unnoticed. Carter reopens the laptop. This is not a moment of triumph, but of a resigned, last-ditch effort.

CARTER

Hey Iris, open bookmark "Dr.  
Winters Appointment Scheduling"

FADE OUT:  
THE END

Iris reaction:  
221

Inserts:  
271-275