

A Firework Unexploded

By

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A blanket laid out in the middle of a field. Perhaps we see other blankets spread on the stage. The only people we see are NED and GINA. Lights flash onto the stage, accompanied by explosions. There are fireworks going on. We don't need to see the actual fireworks-- representative lights and sound will work perfectly. NED is looking at them in awe. GINA is less impressed.

NED

This is nothing- when the grand finale comes, you're gonna see why this is the best firework display in the history of firework displays!

GINA

Cool.

They watch.

NED

You ever wonder how they do that, Gina? Like how they just shoot up and... *(Makes a "boom" gesture)*

GINA

Not really. I just like watching them.

NED

It's a really cool process, actually. There's this container called a shell that-

GINA

Ned. Can I just... watch them?

Pause. Fireworks.

NED

Yeah... yeah sure. Sorry.

They watch the fireworks. Then:

NED

You know they used to deliver mail by rocket?

GINA

Huh.

(CONTINUED)

NED

Yeah- A bunch of Germans came up with the idea to deliver mail to certain places by way of rocket back in the 1800s. We obviously don't use this system today, because we have much more reliable ways of delivering the mail, but...

GINA

Uh huh.

NED

They even have rocket mail stamps. My dad actually has a Canadian one. They made a bunch of Canadian rocket mail stamps in the thirties, but no one built a rocket to deliver the mail with, so they were pretty much useless.

GINA

Cool.

NED

It's called Astrophilately.

GINA

...what is?

NED

Rocket stamps.

GINA

OK...

NED

A category of philately, to be more specific.

GINA

I have no idea what the fuck that is.

NED

It's when you collect stamps.

GINA

Oh.

NED

My dad's part of this society of people who collect stamps. I've been to a few meetings. It's pretty cool actually. I should take you sometime.

GINA

I don't know anything about stamps.

NED

I know, but I could always tell you about them so you're not completely lost.

GINA

What if I don't really care?

NED

...that's OK too.

GINA

...like...I don't care about stamps. Or fireworks. I mean I like watching fireworks, but it never really occurred to me to ask how they work.

NED

I was gonna tell you a few seconds ago. Basically-

GINA

Ned. Please. I just want to watch the rest of the fireworks.

NED

OK.

They watch the fireworks.

NED

...but like, you never think about how they work?

GINA

I think about other things.

NED

Like what?

GINA

Like...

Pause.

My family's dog ran away during the fireworks in my town when I was twelve.

NED

Oh my God! I'm so sorry!

GINA

Oh I didn't give a shit about that dog. I wanted a cat, but my sister wanted a dog, and she always won because she was an honors Brat, so...

NED

Oh.

GINA

That's what I usually think about when I see fireworks.

NED
Memories, basically.

GINA
Yeah... does that make me self-absorbed?

NED
A little.

GINA
Sorry...

NED
It's OK. I'm having a good time. I really am.

GINA
Good.

NED
What about you?

GINA
Yeah.

NED
You want some more soda, or...?

GINA
No thanks. One's enough for me.

NED
You can have the rest of mine. I don't really want it.

GINA
I'm good.

NED
No really, I don't want to waste it-

GINA
Thanks, I don't want it.

NED
You sure?

GINA
JESUS FUCKING CHRIST I SAID NO! CAN'T YOU TAKE NO FOR A
FUCKING ANSWER FOR ONCE!?

A firework EXPLODES. A few more
explode at a lower volume. NED and
GINA are silent for a few moments.
NED takes his drink and spills it
into the grass.

NED

I just wanted to ask.

GINA

You always ask things like a thousand times and I have to say no a thousand times.

NED

I'm sorry.

GINA

Like can't you get a fucking clue for once!?

NED

Gina, we've been over this- You have to hammer things into my head.

GINA

That's exactly what I've been doing! I tell you to let me just enjoy the fireworks, but you just talk and talk about nothing, and never shut up!

NED

You think that's what I talk about.

GINA

Yes! That or things I don't give a shit about. You never know when to stop, and I wish you would just let me enjoy things without you having to comment on them.

Pause. Fireworks.

NED

Can I ask you something?

GINA

What?

NED

Why are you with me? You always yell at me and tell me to shut up, and I ALWAYS feel like I'm doing the wrong thing around you. Why are you even my girlfriend?

GINA

You really want to know?

NED

Yeah. I do.

GINA

Like seriously?

NED

Yes!

GINA

Because... I think you're really sexy.

NED

...oh? Tell me more.

GINA

There's nothing else to say, really. I just think you're really attractive.

NED

Why?

GINA

I don't know. I just do.

NED

What is it about me you're attracted to? Specifically?

GINA

I don't know. I just want to watch the fireworks.

NED

Please, Gina. Tell me.

Pause. GINA prepares.

GINA

I... I don't know how to describe it. It's not anything specific. I mean your eyes are pretty, and your hair is nice. But like... I see you, and I'm automatically just... pulled to you. It's like, you welcome me, and not think anything of it. And I love that.

Pause. Fireworks.

But when I'm with you too long, I start to get agitated, and annoyed, and feel like I don't know anything, because you always talk about things I either don't know anything about, or don't care about. And you talk about things so passionately that it makes me feel like shit that I don't feel the same way. But... you make me believe that it's still possible to be excited about things. I wasn't even excited to see the fireworks tonight, because you talked them up like they were the second coming of Christ or something, and I'm just like, 'Why should someone be so excited about fireworks when they happen every year?' You know? I just wish I could... feel things like you do. Like, get excited about things. But I just...

(CONTINUED)

A moment. Their eyes catch each other. NED touches GINA's heart. She lets him.

NED
Your heart's pounding like crazy.

GINA
Really? I don't feel it...

NED brings GINA's hands to his heart.

NED
Do you feel that?

GINA
It feels like techno music.

NED
Only for you.

NED strokes GINA's face. He takes her face, and kisses her. They continue kissing. The kiss ends.

NED
How did you feel about that?

GINA
...I don't know.

NED
Well did it feel good, did it feel bad, or...

GINA
It didn't feel like either.

NED
Oh...

GINA
I mean I definitely didn't want you to stop...

NED
But did you want me to keep going, or...?

Silence. More fireworks. NED and GINA watch.

GINA
I guess I'm scared.

NED

Of what?

GINA

Of... this is gonna sound stupid. I fear that you're going to turn annoying again. Like, that you'll start talking and never shut up about things I don't care about.

NED

Are you intimidated because I can talk about more things than you?

GINA

...I am, actually. Because you can go for hours about so many things, but what can I talk about?

NED

You can talk about a lot of things

GINA

Like what?

NED

Like your memories. Your family. How you wanted a cat.

GINA

But like, that's not important to anyone.

NED

It is to me.

GINA

Well you like me. It has to be important to you. But who else would it matter to? There isn't exactly a Gina Fan Club that sits around and talks about Gina every Thursday night at eight.

NED

There doesn't have to be.

GINA

But like... I want to feel important, but I don't, and...

NED

...I want you to feel important to me. And I want to feel important to you.

GINA

...but you don't. You aren't. You're not important to me. And I wish you were, but...

(CONTINUED)

...I wish I was too.

NED

A moment. Silence. The fireworks continue. They segue into the grand finale.

It's the grand finale.

GINA

Cool.

Pause. NED and GINA watch the grand finale.

GINA

It sucks.

NED

No! The Grand Finale never sucks! I will *not* allow you to say that!

GINA

Not that. Just... how there's so much beauty, and life in front of me, but I don't take interest in any of it.

NED

There's a lot you can do about that. You can read, you can research- Seriously, you should Google something you want to know more about every day.

GINA

What if there aren't enough things I'm interested in?

NED

Then you stop being a self-pitying whiner and *find* something.

Pause. The Grand finale continues. GINA looks at NED.

GINA

Ned?

NED

Yeah?

Pause. The two look at each other. The Grand Finale rages on, then ends.

GINA

I guess I'm gonna go home now.

(CONTINUED)

Cool. NED

GINA starts to walk away. Then:

Thanks for... everything. GINA

Yeah. NED

Pause. Something wants to be said, but GINA exits before it can be said. NED stays on the blanket. He then folds it up and walks towards the audience. Finding a captive audience in them, he speaks.

NED
You ever wonder how they do that? How they just shoot up in the air and... (*Makes a 'boom' gesture*)

Well there's this container called a shell that contains the bursting charge, which is the charge at the center of the shell, and the stars, which form the shapes that fireworks explode in. At the bottom of this container is a little bit of string called a fuse, which gives the shell enough time to get to the right altitude before exploding. Now the shell is launched from a mortar, which is a steel pipe with a lifting charge of black powder which, when lit, explodes into the pipe. This launches the shell, and also lights its fuse. The flame on the fuse gets closer and closer to the shell until it reaches it, and then it explodes! And all of the stars, which have now been ignited, are thrown all over, creating this colorful, massive shower of sparkles in the sky...

That's how it's supposed to work, at least. Sometimes the fuse could fail to be lit, and the firework wouldn't get to explode.

But for every fuse that isn't lit... there's one that's being ignited, and is showering the sky with sparkles and beauty.

A firework explodes. We see the light shine in NED's face.

END OF PLAY