

Liars & Leeches

Episode 2- "The Way Things Used To Be"

Created by Hemlock Creek Productions

Story by Marisa Ewing

Written by KJ Scott

THEME MUSIC BEGINS

NARRATOR

Liars & Leeches: Episode 2- "The
Way Things Used To Be"

THEME MUSIC CONTINUES

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

"Liars & Leeches" is a horror audio
drama intended for mature audiences
only. It contains sensitive topics,
including discussions of gun
violence, as well as depictions of
domestic violence, stalking, and
murder. More specific details about
each episode are listed in the show
notes. Listener discretion is
advised.

THEME MUSIC ENDS

S1- EXT. TRAIN STATION

SFX: Interior of a car while driving

NARRATOR

It was overcast as Tonya drove
Natalie to the train station.
Natalie had commandeered the aux
cord and had put on a playlist she
and Tonya had made together. Tonya
could tell Natalie was still
worried about her. It was clear
from the set of her shoulders and
the way she fiddled with her coffee
cup.

TONYA

(trying to distract
Natalie)

So there's this deli in town that's
supposed to have really good
sandwiches.

NATALIE

Really? This far out from the city?

TONYA

Good deli can be anywhere. In upstate New York, in New Jersey, even on the west coast.

NATALIE

(gasping)

They're gonna revoke your New Yorker card for saying that.

TONYA

(a hint of her old, funny self)

Oh no! Not my New Yorker card! Then I'd have to leave you behind and go to L.A.

NATALIE

(laughing)

You would hate Los Angeles. Think of the traffic!

TONYA

Think of the fact I wouldn't freeze my ass off in winter.

BOTH

(laughing)

NARRATOR

For a moment, things felt almost normal. The pair of them were laughing, and Tonya could pretend that she was driving Natalie back to the train station after a weekend trip, one where they got drunk and made new memories. The reality of her situation lingered in the back of her mind, but she tried to ignore it, even if she knew that couldn't last.

(pause)

They pulled into the station's parking lot, and Tonya felt a pang of sadness. When Natalie was around, things felt better. But she couldn't ask her to stay any longer, not without feeling guilty for imposing, and she knew Natalie had a life to get back to. Natalie shouldn't have to put everything on pause for her friend, no matter how close they were.

SFX: Distant noises from the train station

TONYA

Text me when you're back at your apartment.

NATALIE

(fondly)

Yes mom.

(pause)

You sure you're okay? I can stick around an extra night.

TONYA

(trying to sound okay)

I'm good. Besides, I'm sure you have some hot date or something this weekend.

NATALIE

(after a moment)

We've been friends for ten years, Tonya. I can tell when you're not being entirely honest with me.

TONYA

(sighing)

Nat, I just need some time. Please.

NATALIE

Okay.

(beat)

You know, I remember when Haley broke up with me and it just... it was bad. It was really bad. But every day you made sure I was okay, even when I just wanted to shut the world out. I know this isn't the same. But if you need *anything*, call me, and I'll literally get them to turn the damn train around, because that's what you would have done for me.

TONYA

And I have no doubt you could convince them to do that.

NATALIE

(laughing)

Why don't you try that deli today? Get yourself some lunch, actually eat out for a change... it'd do you some good.

TONYA
(genuinely)
Yeah ok, I will. I've been craving
a decent sandwich for the past
couple weeks.

NATALIE
Good.

Soft piano music plays

NARRATOR
Natalie then did something a little
more sentimental than Tonya was
used to. She reached out and
covered Tonya's hand with her own,
giving it a squeeze.

NATALIE
It'll be okay. I promise. And until
then, you'll always have me.

TONYA
I know. I know. I love you.

NATALIE
Love you too.

SFX: Car door opening, noises from the station

NARRATOR
Tonya walked Natalie to the
station. She knew it was almost too
much, but she wanted to make sure
Natalie got on the train safely.
She'd always been a mom friend -
big on hydrating, going to bed
early, and texting when you made it
to your destination. After Tami and
Jim's deaths, she felt even more
protective of those she loved.
Natalie shooed her away before the
train arrived though, promising she
could make it on board just fine.

SFX: Tonya walking, a train passing, distant thunder, and an
eerie drone

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
As Tonya walked back to her car,
the hairs on the back of her neck
stood up.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

She had the eerie feeling that she was being watched, just like she had at the market the day before. At first, Tonya tried to ignore the feeling, but she couldn't stop herself from glancing around nervously.

SFX: Dramatic whooshing noise, baby crying and dog barking

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

That's when she saw The Man from the grocery store. He was dressed in the same hooded coat, hands in his pockets, and he was watching her. The station wasn't busy and no one seemed to pay him any mind.

SFX: Crow cawing

TONYA

(to herself, terrified)

Jesus

SFX: Drone begins

NARRATOR

It had to be a different man, Tonya told herself. Some other guy in a similar jacket, who just happened to have the same creepy demeanor. There was no way she was being stalked by someone. All things considered, it was only natural to see danger around every corner. Whoever this man is, he wasn't the same man as before. He couldn't be.

SFX: Heartbeats, and droning sound effect

Tonya got into her car, telling herself to focus. She thought about the meal she'd order at the deli and the TV show she'd put on while she finished unpacking. Her day would proceed as normal, and this would just be a strange moment she'd forget about by tomorrow. But as she started to pull out of the parking lot, Tonya noticed The Man watching her car intensely as she drove past. As she looked back in her rearview mirror, she could've sworn he raised a hand to wave.

TONYA
(to herself)
What the fuck?

SFX: Drone builds in intensity

NARRATOR
As Tonya approached the deli, her thoughts turned from her order to the strange man. No matter how much she tried to tell herself that it wasn't the same man from yesterday, the fact he'd waved at her frightened her. It was as if he knew her and wanted her to know that. If only she'd been able to see his hand more clearly- she might have been able to see the same tattoo as yesterday. Her palms began to sweat as she gripped the wheel tightly. What if he was following her now, waiting to appear again? The idea of going to the deli - a public place - where he might turn up again suddenly seemed too overwhelming. The deli came up on Tonya's right, but she passed it, heading straight for home.

SFX: Drone fades out, noises of trains passing

TONYA
(nervous)
It's okay. You're okay. You're okay.

S2- INT. TONYA'S HOME

NARRATOR
A couple weeks had passed, and Tonya had barely left the house. She hadn't seen The Man since the day she dropped Natalie off at the station, and she wanted to keep it that way. With Natalie's help, she had found a therapist who was willing to do video conferences, which meant she could remain in the comfort and safety of her own house as she processed her grief.

TONYA

Thanks for being so accommodating,
Dr. Keller

THERESA

(warmly, through the
computer)

Of course, and please, Theresa is
fine. We can't do good work unless
you're comfortable, both with me
and with your surroundings.

TONYA

(joking)

Also it means I can wear pajama
pants to our sessions.

THERESA

(laughing)

Yes, that too. Like I said,
comfort.

(after a pause)

I want to start easy today. We
don't want to jump right into the
deep end, unless you want to. Is
that okay?

TONYA

Yes! Oh, sure, definitely.

THERESA

I'd like to learn a bit more about
you and your family. What is your
relationship with your parents
like?

TONYA

(slightly startled, as if
not expecting this
question)

Oh, we're close. Always have been.
My dad and I especially. Not that
my mom and I don't love each other,
we absolutely do, I love her, but
my dad and I have always shared one
of those really close daddy-
daughter bonds, you know?

THERESA

Yeah, I do, and that's wonderful.

TONYA

Yeah. We were always one of those Hallmark families - matching pajamas on Christmas, matching t-shirts on family trips, a really active family group chat. And now...(sighs) now it feels like that was a million years ago.

THERESA

Yes I...I understand. A sudden loss like this can cause changes in relationships with other family members. Well, how do you feel when you talk with your parents now?

TONYA

I miss the way things used to be. We used to send messages to each other every day- jokes, memes, news you know? Just checking in. But now it's like every time we talk there's just...pieces missing.

THERESA

Yes Tonya, I...I am sorry for your loss. I really am. It sounds like you were very close with Tami and Jim.

TONYA

How long is this session?

(she laughs a little)

Tami was my hero. Ever since I was little, she was always there for me. There was no sibling rivalry or anything. I mean, we fought, I mean sure we fought, but in the end we'd always be there for each other. And uh, even though she was eight years older than me, she never made me feel left out or excluded. It was like we spoke the same language, kinda. We always knew what the other meant or what we needed to hear.

(pause)

I uh, remember when I was in eighth grade, and we had our winter formal dance. There was a boy, Jackson, who I thought was the cutest, so I asked him to go to the dance with me. But he turned me down. And I went home sobbing.

(MORE)

TONYA (CONT'D)
Tami was home for her college's
winter break and she heard me...

FADE TO:

S3- INT. TONYA'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM

YOUNG TONYA
(crying loudly)

SFX: Tami knocking, door opening

TAMI
Hey, what's going on?

YOUNG TONYA
Go away!

TAMI
No. Not gonna happen. Not until you
tell me what happened and why I can
hear you crying from downstairs.

YOUNG TONYA
(still crying)
I'll tell Mom!

TAMI
And then she's gonna ask you what's
wrong, so you're going to have to
tell her.
(sighs)
C'mon, I promise I'll keep it a
secret.

YOUNG TONYA
(between sobs)
It was Jackson!! I asked him to the
winter formal and he said no and
then he said I was stupid 'cause
boys are supposed to ask girls, not
the other way around, and (sobs)
and all his stupid friends started
laughing at me!

TAMI
(as she crosses the room
and sits down on Tonya's
bed)
Oh, sweetheart...

YOUNG TONYA

And...and it's not fair! I didn't know it was wrong to ask the boy out.

TAMI

(stern)

No. You didn't do anything wrong, I promise you. He's just a dumbass kid who doesn't know what he's missing, 'cause you're the best person I know.

(as Tonya continues sobbing)

Did you know I asked Jim out?

YOUNG TONYA

Really?

TAMI

Yeah. We had the same Intro to American Lit class and he was so cute. He was the only guy with a decent take on Toni Morrison, so one day after class I asked if he wanted to get a cup of coffee. So you see? Boys are dumb at this age. Jackson doesn't realize he's missing out on dating the coolest, most confident, strongest young woman in your entire grade. But one day, you'll find someone who will want you to ask them out. And that person will see how special you really are.

YOUNG TONYA

(sniffling)

You're sure?

TAMI

I would never lie to you. Promise. Now, if you swear you won't tell Mom, I think I can sneak you a couple cookies from downstairs. How's that sound?

YOUNG TONYA

You're the best.

(sniffling)

Thanks for listening. And for the cookies.

TAMI
(jokingly)
Mhmm. But if you rat me out, no
more cookies and the advice will
cost you. Got it?

YOUNG TONYA
(giggling)
Got it.

TAMI
Good. Now, chocolate chip or
gingerbread?

FADE TO:

S4- INT. TONYA'S HOME

Melancholy Music

THERESA
Mmm. She sounds like a really
special person.

TONYA
Yeah, she is.
(beat)
Was.

THERESA
(sadly)
Mmm.

TONYA
And Jim... my God. Jim was a dork.
Seriously. But he could always make
me laugh. I don't think any other
boy could've been a bigger hit with
my parents when she first brought
him home. He bought my parents
flowers, for crying out loud. And
he was the kind of guy who'd cry at
cute animal videos, then send them
to the family with some sappy
caption. He adored Tami. Just
absolutely adored her. And he
treated me like a sister. It was
never like he put up with me.
Instead, he just wanted to hang
out, just the three of us, all the
time.

THERESA

(with genuine empathy)

Mm. It sounds like they cared so deeply for you.

TONYA

Yeah.

THERESA

(after a beat)

How have you been coping since they passed?

TONYA

That's a hard question to answer.

THERESA

How so?

TONYA

I mean, no one prepares you for this kind of news. You know logically that no one is promised any amount of time but...but when it happens? A-and when it happens like this?

(she sighs)

I don't know. My friends would say I haven't been coping at all. And they're right too. (sighs) It's just hard to admit it.

THERESA

(gently)

Admitting it is the first step to actually starting to heal. That's what I'm here for, to help walk you through it. Are you taking care of yourself?

TONYA

If by that you mean showering, eating, sleeping, then yes. Mostly. I haven't slept super well since the news.

THERESA

That's completely understandable.

TONYA

I just feel like I'm not my old self. I used to... well, I wouldn't go out or party all the time but I loved being around people.

(MORE)

TONYA (CONT'D)

Now I hate leaving the house. I work from home - I haven't been to the office since I got the call - and every time I go out I feel like something bad is about to happen or...like someone is watching me.

THERESA

Yes that also makes sense. After a tragedy like this, you're bound to have a sense of anxiety about being in public spaces. It's a response to the trauma you've been through, and is entirely, completely, 100% normal.

TONYA

(nervously)

Yeah.

THERESA

Is there something else you wanted to talk about?

Melancholy music stops, ominous drone plays

TONYA

I thought I saw someone watching me. A couple weeks back, I was at the store and I swore I saw this man watching me from one of the aisles. When I was about to leave, he started walking towards me really fast and I just ran. The next day, as I was dropping my friend off at the train station, I saw someone who looked just like him. And it... it kind of looked like he waved at me as I passed. I just feel like every time I go out, he's going to be there, watching me. And I know he's dangerous.

THERESA

(with genuine concern)

Oh no, that doesn't sound good at all. Has he threatened you? Either verbally or physically?

TONYA

No. It's like a...a sixth sense - I just know he's here to hurt me.

THERESA

(after a pause,
considering the
situation)

Oh, ok. Was the first time you saw
him, the time at the store, one of
your first times out of the house
in a while?

TONYA

Yeah, but...well, I...(she trails
off)

THERESA

(when Tonya doesn't
finish, keeping her voice
gentle)

Mm. You've been through something
incredibly traumatizing. A sense of
unease or anxiety about going out,
or feeling like you're in danger,
it's to be expected. But constant
anxiety can wear you down over
time. It prevents you from being
able to fully live and love your
life.

TONYA

(trying to believe her)
Yeah, you're right.

THERESA

This is something we can discuss
going forward in our sessions.
Together, we can work with your
anxiety so that you're better able
to return to your life and process
your grief. It's going to be hard
work, but I know that with the
right treatment you'll be able to
not necessarily go back to normal,
but to find some sense of inner
peace and healing. Does that sound
like a plan?

TONYA

It does. I'd, um, I'd really like
to get back to myself. Or at least
some version of myself.

SFX: Melancholy drone

NARRATOR

The session continued without a hitch. Tonya liked her therapist, but something kept nagging at the back of her mind. Maybe The Man was just that-your average, run of the mill man, and she was projecting her anxiety on to him.

SFX: Drone becomes more ominous

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

But then again, something in Tonya's gut told her that this man was dangerous. Tonya wasn't sure what to believe, which only made her more uneasy.

CUT TO:

S5-INT. TONYA'S HOME - LATER

SFX: Rain, sounds of Tonya cooking

NARRATOR

After therapy, Tonya felt particularly raw. She busied herself with making dinner, trying to focus on the positives of the day. She had a good session with her therapist, and even if she was still worried about The Man, she could forget about him for one night.

SFX: Phone ringing

Tonya had just settled down with her food when her phone rang. She half dreaded answering it, but she knew ignoring her loved ones wouldn't help her move forward. So she steeled herself, picked up the phone, and made sure she sounded as ok as possible when she answered.

TONYA

Hey, Dad.

FRANK

Hi sweetheart. God, it's good to hear your voice. I've missed you.

TONYA

I miss you too. Is something up?

FRANK

I wanted to call to let you know we're having a barbecue this coming Saturday. I was wondering if you wanted to come. Just like old times.

NARRATOR

The Wright family dinners - barbecues in the summer and indoor events in the winter - had been a monthly event. Friends and family would drive in from the tri-state area for a Saturday filled with good food and laughter. Natalie would usually wind up being Tonya's plus one, as Natalie swore that Tonya's dad made the best ribs she'd ever had. Usually, this was the highlight of Tonya's month, but they hadn't held one of these events since Tami and Jim died.

FRANK

A bunch of folks have been asking about you. You know, we had a lot of folks in the neighborhood looking out for us, but you, you're on your own up in that big house. You don't know your neighbors.

TONYA

(a little defensive)

I have Natalie. And the rest of my friends.

FRANK

Don't get me wrong, I love Natalie. I think she's good for you. But all your friends live in the city. Please. It'll do me some good to know you're okay.

TONYA

I'm fine. Seriously. I even started seeing a therapist. We had our first session today.

FRANK

You're seeing a therapist?

TONYA

Yeah, I thought it would be good for me.

FRANK

You know, you can always sell that place. If you're gonna work remotely, why not do it from back home? You know your mother would love to have you around for a while.

TONYA

No. No, it's not that bad. I'm fine on my own.

Reflective music

FRANK

At least come by this weekend. Even for a couple hours. Bring Natalie - she does wonders for my self esteem. Though I gotta say, the amount of food she's able to put away on a given day...

TONYA

It's her special talent. She's got to store up energy for all that snark.

FRANK

(laughing)

See, that sounds like my baby girl.

TONYA

(clearly smiling)

She's still here. Promise.

FRANK

So I'll see you Saturday?

TONYA

(after a moment's hesitation)

Sure. Hey, uh, I gotta go - dinner's getting cold.

FRANK

You go eat. I'll see you then. Love you.

TONYA

Love you too.

NARRATOR

As she hung up the phone, Tonya allowed herself to smile. A sense of ease washed over her. She thought about how close her parents were to the city, and a bold idea took shape in her mind. She quickly texted Natalie to let her know about her plan.

TONYA

(reading the text out loud as she types)

Hey, so my dad is having a barbecue next Saturday. I was thinking, what if I came into the office Friday and then crashed at your place, then we both head over Saturday afternoon? Don't feel obligated, but Dad asked about you specifically.

NARRATOR

As the text was sent, Tonya sank back in her seat, feeling a sense of relief. It seemed as though the world was opening back up to her, and she knew Tami and Jim would be proud of her for putting herself out there again. It would be hard, being at the barbecue without them, but it was something that she had to process to get to her new normal. Eventually, it would be easier for her to attend family events, even if there would always be some sadness. Her anxiety was still present, a buzz in the back of her mind, but for now she was able to keep it in check. She knew the people who'd be at the party. No one there would hurt her, and surely The Man - if he were really was following - wouldn't be there. Tonya would be fine. Everything would be ok, she told herself, as if she could make it true through will alone.

OUTRO MUSIC PLAYS

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Liars & Leeches: Episode 2- "The Way Things Used To Be" starring Ryan Reid as The Narrator, Kendell Byrd as Tonya, Newton "Newt" Schottelkotte as Natalie, Ja'Air Bush as Theresa Keller, Nhea Durousseau as Tami, and Gerald Hill as Frank.

"Liars & Leeches" was produced by Hemlock Creek Productions. The story was created by Marisa Ewing and the script written by KJ Scott, with script editing provided by Meg Williams. Dialogue editing, mixing and mastering was done by Marisa Ewing, sound design by Melissa Pons, and music written by Nico Vettese of "We Talk of Dreams." Additional recording assistance provided by Jordan Alexander and Trey Baker of Music City Studios. To learn more about the show, cast, and crew, visit www.hemlockcreekprod.com. That's Hemlock Creek P-R-O-D.com.

Thank you for listening. We will return, next week.