

CONNECTED, CONNECTION.

A Short Film, Written by

Edward Whelan

Production Script. (01/09/20 - 07/09/20)

PROLOGUE

Titles on black:

There are no means of phone communication or access to the internet.

*'I feel like we are two souls,
on separate boats,
pushed by a strong current,
linked together with a rope,
no knife is sharp enough to cut.'*

*- A poem based on 'An Independent Organ'
by Haruki Murakami*

FADE IN:

1 INT. SAM'S HOUSE (HALLWAY) - EVENING 1

A KEY ON A HALL TABLE.

There's rustling - someone readying themselves in the background. Packing a bag, putting on shoes...

It sounds like there's no rush but there's a tension brewing.

AN ENVELOPE IS PLACED NEXT TO THE KEY.

The rustling stops.

TO THE WIDE.

SAM looks down at the table. He is early twenties, attractive, intelligent, but sensitive and perceivably insecure.

Beat. 2. 3. 4...

Sam grabs the key.

2 EXT. SAM'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 2

Sam opens the front door and steps into the street.

He looks right. Then left.

Then turns to the door. He shuts it, feeling the door latch.

Clunk.

Satisfied the door is secure, he pulls the key to his chest, inspects it and loads it into the lock.

An affirmed twist: *crrr*. The pins drop and rotate as hoped.

The key works.

3 INT. SAM'S HOUSE (HALLWAY) - CONTINUOUS 3

Sam places the key back on the table.

And then a second key, identical in complexion. Strange. *Why the test?*

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

The answer: Sam slides an envelope beside the key and primes a pen.

He writes, 'Emily (x)'.

Then drops the key into the envelope and licks it shut.

Inspecting the envelope, Sam is happy with his work.

Beat.

Is this the right time? He second-guesses.

4 **EXT. STATION PLATFORM - LATER**

4

A WIDE FROM ACROSS THE PLATFORM. THE SUN IS LOW IN THE SKY.

Sam steps onto the station platform.

TO THE MEDIUM. THE ORANGE GLOW OF THE SKY CONTOURS SAM'S SILHOUETTE.

It's early evening, but quiet on the platform.

In the background, the board reads, 19:37:37

19:37:38

19:37:39

The train to Edinburgh is at 19:42.

5 **INT. TRAIN - LATER**

5

Sam sits at a table on the train. The landscape blurs by.

His leg taps with a steady nervousness. His rucksack, on the seat next to him, is zipped open - some clothes chucked inside - with the envelope at the top.

Sam gazes out the window, excitedly nervous.

6 **EXT. EMILY'S HOUSE - LATER**

6

Sam knocks on a house door.

Beat. A clumsy crash from inside.

EMILY opens the door, smiles warmly and lets him in.

(CONTINUED)

Develop and shoot options for how this could go. Kiss/ no kiss // warm/ cold.

Emily, like Sam, is bright, well-educated and progressing in her professional career. Her relationship with Sam is not her first and, though she is loving toward him, she is somewhat *distantly* affectionate. It's hard to tell if this distance comes from an insecure or mature place. Perhaps both.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Sam is cooking dinner tonight. He's currently in the prep phase: cutting, dicing, and organising his ingredients.

Sam labours at a kitchen counter while Emily sits at a table, flicking through work on her laptop.

SAM

Have you heard they cancelled Glastonbury today?

EMILY

(somewhat surprised)

Oh.

SAM

I kinda think it's (a bit) premature.

EMILY

(I don't.) ~~They should hold off on big events like that.~~ No one really knows how the next few months will look like.

SAM

I mean, it could only be weeks.

EMILY

Maybe.

Dicing, chopping, sorting...

Waiting for the right moment to ask.

THE ENVELOPE IS IN HIS RUCKSACK ON THE KITCHEN FLOOR. THERE'S AN SD CARD NEXT TO IT.

The envelope, like an invitation, tempts delivery.

Beat.

(CONTINUED)

Emily, sensing she was curt earlier, speaks up.

EMILY (CONT'D)
I picked up the Garem Masala for
you.

Sam turns.

EMILY (CONT'D)
It's in the cupboard there.

Emily points up to a cupboard for Sam.

He shifts across and takes it out.

SAM
Thanks.

Emily returns to her work and sips gently on a red wine, testing its flavour. It's a strong complement for the curry, she's chosen something strong bodied and warm - perfect for a March evening.

Having validated the quality of the wine, Emily turns to Sam.

EMILY
Did you get today's card?

SAM
Oh yeah. Yeah. (Sorry.)

Sam reaches down to his rucksack and grabs the SD card.

The envelope stares at him.

He steps over to Emily and hands it to her.

SAM (CONT'D)
I already took off the packaging.

Emily smiles and takes the card.

She loads it into the drive of her laptop. Sam leans closely over her.

The pair scan the screen as Emily sorts through her work to get the card.

Sam sips the wine while Emily loads the content.

SAM (CONT'D)
(a satisfying)
Hm.

Good wine. A characteristically excellent choice.

EMILY
(A reaction line?)

Beat.

SAM
By the way, there's something I
need to ask you about later.

A self-laid trap so as to commit to ask.

Emily turns to Sam, suspecting he's building confidence to ask something. She feels a warmth from his effort and expresses pleasure in feeling that.

Eyes back to the laptop.

EMILY
Oh. This is new.

Emily hovers over a video clip. And double clicks.

It's an announcement from the Prime Minister.

SAM AND EMILY REACT TO THE VIDEO FROM ONE LONG DOLLY. LIT BY
PRIMARILY BY THE BLUE LIGHT OF THE LAPTOP.

Boris Johnson's lockdown speech 23/03/2020 starts playing...

PM (V.O.)
*"Good Evening,
The coronavirus is the biggest
threat this country has faced for
decades and this country is not
alone.*

Sam leans in closer, cosying up to Emily like a shield.

PM (V.O.)
*All over the world we are seeing
the devastating impact of this
invisible killer...*

IN SAM'S RUCKSACK, THE ENVELOPE SITS.

Sam glances over, re-evaluating whether to still ask.

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED: (3)

PM (V.O.)
That is why people will only be
allowed to leave their home for the
following very limited purposes.

CUT TO:

8 INT. EMILY'S HOUSE (BEDROOM) - LATER 8

Emily and Sam are in bed. He holds her tight in his arms
while she sleeps deeply.

Sam ruminates. The news and the uncertainty about whether to
ask Emily weigh on his mind.

FADE OUT.

8A NEWS REELS 8A

A string of news broadcasts roll by.

The Italian PM, the Spanish PM, the German Chancellor....

Until finally.

PM
You should not be meeting friends.
If your friends ask you to meet,
you should say No.

BLACK.

END OF ACT 1.

ACT 2.

9

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE (BEDROOM) - MORNING

9

THE WIDE FACES AWAY FROM THE DOOR: SAM GETS DRESSED.

SAM'S RUCKSACK HAS BEEN EMPTIED OF THE CLOTHES. THERE'S ONLY THE ENVELOPE IN THE BOTTOM.

Slam.

TO THE WIDE FACING THE DOOR.

Emily enters fresh from a shower in her towel.

Sam sits on the edge of the bed in the middle of getting dressed. He watches Emily move around the space, readying herself. He examines her, suspecting he might not see her for a while.

He puts his arm out toward her, inviting her over. Emily notices and accepts.

Sam looks up at Emily, holding her hips.

The pair are close, but there's something unspoken between them. A tension with unclear implications.

Emily pulls back.

EMILY

What'd you want to talk about last night?

Shit. That thing.

SAM

Oh... Nothing. (I've forgotten.)

EMILY

Ok. Well. (Erm). If you remember, you know where I am.

(beat)

Well. I mean I know you can't come here now. But you know what I mean. I can help.

10

EXT. EMILY'S HOUSE - LATER

10

Sam is packed up and on his way home.

Emily opens the door for him.

Sam steps out. This is a hard moment. It feels like a breakup, but neither party wants or is ready for it. They are powerless, it feels, in this unexpected parting.

Yet, they have different interpretations of what the future may be like.

EMILY

Hey.

Trying to soothe Sam.

EMILY (CONT'D)

The videos only take a few days in the post - it'll be like a long conversation. It'll be better than when people only had letters.

Emily tries a light spin on the matter.

Sam nods. Words seem difficult.

SAM

True.

(beat)

How long do you think it'll be?

Emily analyses Sam and attempts to further assure him.

EMILY

Hmmm.

(beat)

(I think) we'll see each other on my birthday at the latest. The 16th June isn't so far off. ~~We'll meet where we always do and it'll be ok.~~

Sam takes this.

SAM

Ok. Yeah. I suppose that's not so bad.

Beat.

EMILY

And you'll video?

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

Sam smiles. Emily reciprocates, glad her words are working.

SAM
Yes, absolutely.

Sam takes a step back and tugs on his backpack strap. *Could he ask her now?*

Beat.

It's strangely awkward as they part.

Sam turns and exits.

11 INT. TRAIN - SAME DAY 11

A mirror of the night before. Sam sits as the world blurs by. Regret, not anticipation, fills him.

12 INT. SAM'S HOUSE (HALLWAY) - SAME DAY 12

Clunk.

Sam enters his house, deflated.

ONE LONG SHOULDER-RIG SHOT.

Sam moves around the house with a low energy. He opens curtains, picks up bits of rubbish. What does one do now? How does *he* fill his days?

He takes off his rucksack and sits on the bottom step. The bag stares back at him and so too the front door and the letterbox: his gateway to Emily.

His eyes drift toward the doormat, noticing - for the first time - it's emptiness. No letter. No news. *No connection.*

This will be the link of his relationship to her. A shadow of what it ought to be.

This hits deeply.

Beat.

No. He won't let melancholy consume him.

He stands. *He's going to do something to make this better.*

13 INT. SAM'S HOUSE (BEDROOM) - MONTAGE A (DAY)

13

Scenes 13 and 14 are montaged in a split frame. This allows the audience to see how both characters build their camera setup without repetition.

Sam enters. He pulls open his bedside drawer and pulls out a camera.

From under his bed, he draws a tripod.

He assembles the tripod and binds it to the camera. Then he mounts a microphone.

Looks sturdy. Now pick a filming location... Sam scans the room, assessing the light, imagining himself on camera.

He picks a spot and starts framing up the shot.

As he gets more comfortable with the reality this setup, his energy rises mildly. Perhaps this will work. *Perhaps.*

Sam makes some last minute adjustments to the space. Lowering the blind and clearing his floor.

Then he sits down in front of the camera.

Sam inhales and reaches forward, pressing record.

SAM

Hey.

Meanwhile...

14 INT. EMILY'S HOUSE (BEDROOM) - MONTAGE A (SAME DAY)

14

Emily, more excited about the prospect of videoing herself - glad that it's even possible - starts a similar routine.

Unlike Sam, her setup is less formal, less interrogatorish.

She elects to put up some fairy lights and place her camera on a chair, with some books to add some additional elevation.

With a zing of excitement due the prospect of having control over presenting herself to her partner - able to omit her, at times, indelicate wording - she sits down in front of the lens.

The split frame ends here. Over the next two scenes, we cut between Emily and Sam as they record their first video.

15 INT. EMILY'S HOUSE (BEDROOM) - MONTAGE B (SAME DAY)

15

But then, it hits Emily.

Beat.

Perhaps this won't work.

Maybe it really won't. And this doubt strikes deep.

But, she deflects these thoughts and won't be deflated just yet.

And smile.

EMILY

Hey. So, our first video letter.
Hmmm, well this is strange. How's
it going? Hopefully I'm not too
awkward.

She is not. Emily is a natural on camera.

EMILY (CONT'D)

~~Work called today, they seem pretty
happy for me to work any time of
day as long as I finish my weekly
tasks.~~

(beat)

So I got thinking: why don't I take
some more time out at lunch to
improve my cooking. (Especially
because) I can't get takeaways now.
I've got all your spices you
brought - and I think I have enough
food here for a month now I won't
be having you over.

(beat)

It'll be good for me to cook for us
sometime. I even thought it could
be fun if you told me which dish
you're most precious about and I
can learn to cook it - maybe better
than you.

There's no reaction to her challenge, so she attempts to
instil energy.

EMILY (CONT'D)

How does that sound?

Emily shuffles on the spot and smiles.

(CONTINUED)

EMILY (CONT'D)

I love you and speak soon.

Emily reaches around and stops recording.

Phew. Like a shock of energy exits her, she deflates in place. The suspension of time and place has gone, the tension of looking stupid, feeling stupid, has vanished. It's just her, alone in the room with her camera. The hollowness of this process seeps in.

Meanwhile...

INT. SAM'S HOUSE (BEDROOM) - MONTAGE B (DAY)

Continuing from where Sam started, sat in front of camera:

SAM

How's... erm... it going? I hope
you're taking - or planning to take
- some time off.

Sam is far less comfortable presenting. The first part of his video is filled with ums and ahs. But he grows into the part.

SAM (CONT'D)

I wrote down some things so I
wouldn't forget.

Sam glances down to a notepad with some scribbles on.

SAM (CONT'D)

I've started running. I want to
build up my distance to a 10k. I've
always wanted to do a charity run,
so I think I've got something good
to work towards. I've found a
beautiful route without any cars
along a reservoir. I sometimes see
people out for walks. It's nice to
see new faces. I usually nod at
them, which is my daily dose of
interaction - also I can tell, even
from a momentary glance, they can
see how tired I am. Is looking
exhausted at a slow pace better
than stopping?

(beat)

I dunno. It's nice to get some air
and clear my head.

Beat.

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED:

Next bullet point.

SAM (CONT'D)

I haven't had many new clients and work's been slow, but I think it's ok. Just sticking to a routine, making new dishes and putting some time into reading. I've been reading *Brideshead Revisited*, maybe it's a little much and weighs on me in the evenings. But that makes things feel a little real, I guess. Actually some real human depth to my days.

(beat)

I hope you're finding fun ways to fill you're time. I love you and see you soon.

Sam reaches forward and stops recording. He takes some joy knowing it's done. A slight smile brews.

17 **EXT. EMILY'S HOUSE - DAY**

17

Emily leaves her house.

Slam.

She shuts the door behind her. A letter in hand. She walks off to a post box.

18 **EXT. TOWN STREET A - SAME DAY**

18

Emily walks through town. It's strange. Eerie.

She looks right. Then left. And crosses a road.

18A **EXT. TOWN STREET B - SAME DAY**

18A

Emily's on the way to the post box.

She walks with a patience, certain of the success of her communication plan with Sam and happy with her first video. Perhaps she takes a moment to have a smoke or window-shop.

These slower moments let it all set in. Her confidence starts to ebb. She's slowly realising her time alone doesn't feel like it used to.

18B **INT. SAM'S HOUSE (HALLWAY) - SAME DAY** 18B

Sam's going upstairs with laundry in hand. He turns at the base and puts one foot on the lower step.

He stops.

Beat.

He hasn't checked the post today. He turns to the mat and assesses it: nothing.

Like awaiting a text that never comes, he hurts from expectation; it's a slight - but troublesomely deep - pain.

19 **EXT. TOWN STREET C - SAME DAY** 19

Emily arrives at a post box. She checks the letter, ensuring the right name is on it and inserts it.

20 **EXT. RURAL LANDSCAPE - DAY** 20

Sam runs up a hill, *exhausted*.

He reaches the top and stops. Collecting his breath, he takes in his surroundings.

Slowly, but inevitably, Sam is adjusting to his new life. *Maybe life alone for a bit isn't so bad.* Certainly the endorphins are helping.

Beat.

HARD CUT TO
BLACK.

21 **INT. SAM'S HOUSE (LOUNGE) - DAY** 21

A clack from the letter box.

Sam, sat in the lounge, heads to the door. He picks up the letter.

Beat.

He rips it open.

24 CONTINUED:

Her stomach.

She bolts off.

25 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE (LANDING) - LATER**

25

Emily is sick in the bathroom.

26 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE (BEDROOM) - LATER**

26

EMILY LIES IN BED, ALONE.

She feels Sam's absence.

27 **INT. SAM'S HOUSE (BEDROOM) - EVENING**

27

Sam sits by a window, ruminating on her message. He has a pen and notepad in his lap.

No words come to him. A blank page.

He shelves it for the evening, replying seems too difficult right now.

28 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE (BEDROOM) - DAY**

28

Emily's asleep. Her room is quiet, resting.

Beat.

She launches out of bed and runs out.

29 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE (BATHROOM) - LATER**

29

Emily pulls her head from the toilet basin. She feels awful.

30 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE (KITCHEN) - DAY**

30

Raggedly dressed and raggedly feeling, Emily kneels on the floor of the kitchen.

Food is laid out before her.

She scans the food and checks the dates. It all seems ok.

Though she puts aside the meats and the fish.

31 **EXT. EMILY'S HOUSE (BACK GARDEN) - LATER** 31

Emily throws a bag of trash in the bin. Her cooking days are over. Perhaps the balance of their personalities needed no adjustment.

32 **INT. SAM'S HOUSE (LANDING INTO BEDROOM) - MONTAGE D (DAY)** 32

Sam's finally penned something to say to Emily.

He exits the landing and enters his bedroom. Then takes his place in front of the camera.

And hit's record.

This speech plays as a voice-over to the scenes that follow. It will be indicated when the voice-over will end.

SAM

Hey Emily. Sorry it's been a while.

(beat)

Your videos have made me realise I need to up my video production. A lot. ~~Those fairy lights are seriously aesthetic.~~ I'll try and work on something prettier for next time.

(beat)

I'm glad to hear work is going well and that they're not being too possessive over you. We all gotta breath sometimes. I'm slightly worried you've started cooking, though. That's actually my thing. I'm not sure what I'm meant to do if you steal that (aha). You have an annoying tendency to shine.

The stammer returns again. The pressure of the live performance becomes conscious.

SAM (CONT'D)

Anyway. Enough about you. I guess you want to know how I'm doing? I carried on with running. It's still rough but it gets me going and keeps me sharp. I'm also still petrified of how terrible I look in front of walkers - and that about defines my level of real human interaction for the day.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SAM (CONT'D)

I've had some clients approach me, though consulting over video letters is really strange. I can't tell how well I'm doing - but I think improving through our little practices.

Sam's gaining confidence and some optimism about this.

SAM (CONT'D)

Between working, I've been tidying the house ahead of, well, that thing I wanted to ask you about.

(beat)

Umm.

(beat)

I stopped picking up the daily cards, the news was getting me down and I'm not always sure what to believe anymore. ~~If you can, I'd recommend tuning out from it.~~

(beat)

I've missed you, but yeah, the words haven't been coming that easily this time. I've watched your last message - a few times actually - it was just what I needed. You remind me to be patient. I love you.

Sam ends the video. *This may need to be longer.*

This time, Sam sits there, deflated.

His notes in hand. It reads at the bottom, "Ask her directly!" With an aggressive underline.

Sam closes his pad. He reaches around and clicks the SD card to eject it.

While Sam spoke, the following happened:

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - MONTAGE D (NIGHT)

Emily lies in bed, feeling terrible. Why is she this unwell?

Her abdomen aches.

She wants some conciliation. Someone to fall back on. To tell her it'll be ok. This longing only graduates as the days of sickness roll by.

34 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE (KITCHEN) - MONTAGE D (NIGHT OR DAY)** 34

Pshhhhhh

The kitchen tap runs. And runs.

Emily rocks herself over the sink. Something's wrong.

She plods over to the sofa, moves her laptop, and lies down, curling herself up, rolling into something smaller, not just literally.

Beat.

And another.

She curls further.

Reflective pause.

35 **EXT. TOWN STREET C - MONTAGE D** 35

Emily exits a chemists, a bag in hand.

36 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE (LANDING) - MONTAGE D** 36

From outside the toilet we hear her.

37 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE (BATHROOM) - CONTINUOUS** 37

Emily's sat on the toilet, the lid now closed, taking in what's happened.

THE CAMERA SLOWLY DRIFTS DOWN TO HER HANDS.

She's holding a pregnancy test. It's negative. (Or a Covid test - if two female leads).

Emily's relieved but it's not clear-cut. The worry of pregnancy, the longing for assurance, the scar of uncertainty has made its mark, irreversibly.

If schedule permits it, it would be ideal to have more scenes of Sam and Emily going about their respective activities.

FADE TO:

38

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE (BEDROOM) - MONTAGE E (LATER)

38

Emily enters her bedroom with a weight on her shoulders.

With an envelope in-hand, she approaches her laptop and unpacks it.

She loads the SD into her laptop and starts the transfer.

The wait is too long. *Argh*. She feels empty.

She sees Sam's last message but can't bring herself to open it.

The transfer's complete. She approaches the camera, nervously, loading the card into it.

Deep breath.

Her eyes still welled from earlier.

EMILY

Hey. Sorry it's been a while.

(beat)

Thank you for your message. It was lovely to hear about all the things you've been doing. It all sounds ~~really~~ great. I'm glad-

Emily stops like a projector out of film, then stares into the lens and stops the recording.

Beat.

She resets herself, then the camera.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Hey. Thank you for your message. It was lovely to hear about all the things you've been doing. I'm... I'm not doing ok. I'm glad you've found yourself-

(extended pause)

I... erm... just did this test, it's ok, I'm ok, but well I don't know. Something isn't right. I'm not eating badly, I'm not pregnant, but I'm sick. I can't stop throwing up. I need to know it'll be ok. I'm scared. Really. This, this

(clearly about the videoing)

Isn't real.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED:

EMILY (CONT'D)
This isn't feeling you.
(beat)
This isn't close.

Monologue needs work with casted actress.

Silence.

Emily sits.

And ruminates.

Thinking deeply.

Feeling completely.

And wanting it to be ok.

...

Beat.

She reaches forward in a moment of impetuosity and ejects the SD card. She snaps it in half.

And instantly regrets doing so.

Damn.

Me.

I need him.

39 **EXT. RURAL LANDSCAPE - MONTAGE E (DAY)**

39

Sam runs up the same hill and takes a moment ingesting the landscape.

He can't go on waiting on her like this. The dependency is killing him. Perhaps some independence isn't a bad thing.

40 **INT. SAM'S HOUSE - DAY**

40

Sam enters his house, exhausted from the run. We track him wonder into the house. A man without a woman.

He sits on the bottom step, untying his laces. His eyes wonder toward the mat: there's nothing there, again.

He flicks his shoes off and goes away for a moment.

2. 3. 4...

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED:

He comes back with the original key envelope and puts it on the side. Then looks down to the empty mat.

Without a hesitation, he reaches down and adjusts it. The mat was slightly out of place.

Good. He's ready for when a message or the time comes. Until then, he *can* get through it.

41 INT. EMILY'S HOUSE (BEDROOM) - DAY

41

Emily assesses her mistake. Sam's message gone, permanently erased by transitory rage.

The emotion of her message clouded her memory - she's forgot the backup.

She sits, regretful and young, no longer mature and focused.

A pensive beat.

Her eyes wonder to the laptop.

2. 3. 4...

The back-up!

Emily scrambles over and unlocks it.

The video is still there. *Phew.*

She hits play. *Sam's voice: 'Hey...*

Comfort delivered and felt.

END OF ACT 2.

43 CONTINUED:

BACK TO THE WIDE.

Beat.

The moment holds, beautifully. The pair more balanced.

On the sky, the following title fades in, gracefully:

Connected, Connection.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT 3.