

Between the Shelves

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INT. LOCAL LIBRARY - DAY

Rows of tall bookshelves tower over a space once half-forgotten. Now crowded once again, people whisper, perusing the vast collection of books stacked high.

At a table near the window, CLAIRE rustles through a newspaper, a pile of books in a cart to her side. We can see on the front page of the paper the headline reads:

'INTERNET TO RETURN IN 30 DAYS!'

Across the room, JONAH drifts through the bookshelves, moving his fingers along the spines. Now and again he pulls one out to inspect, before putting it back in its place. He's restless, searching for inspiration.

CLAIRE folds the newspaper up and places it on the table. She gets up from her seat and pushes her cart into an aisle. Similarly to JONAH, she scans spines and finger brushes titles.

JONAH rounds the corner from the opposite side. They are both in their own little world as they browse the collections.

JONAH reaches for a thick book. At the same time, CLAIRE'S hand lands on it.

Their hands touch. Both freeze, awkwardly.

CLAIRE
(flustered)
Oh, sorry.

JONAH
(smiling, awkwardly)
Oh... erm...don't worry about it.
You have good taste.

He lifts his hand in surrender.

JONAH (CONT'D)
Go for it. You probably need it
more than I do.

CLAIRE hesitates, then gently pulls the book towards her chest.

CLAIRE
Thank you.

She nods with embarrassment, then hurries off with the book.

JONAH watches her go, his smiling awkwardly. He glances back to the bookshelf, and then back to her.

INT. LIBRARY - LATER

CLAIRE sits at her table reading the book that she picked out. JONAH walks past and very subtly places a small folded piece of paper next to her. CLAIRE misses this exchange, too engrossed by the book.

After a minute she notices the paper lying on the table. Looking around, she picks it up and unfolds it.

It reads, in messy handwriting:

'Enjoy the book. Chapter 3 is great!'

She looks around once again, confused. Across the room JONAH sits at another desk, pretending to read and sneaking a glance.

Their eyes meet. JONAH quickly looks away, feigning interest in his book.

CLAIRE hides a small smile, and continues to read.

INT. LIBRARY - A WEEK LATER - DAY

The library is still quietly bustling. People taking out books to read at home. Children sitting on bean bags while their parents tell them a story. A librarian moves with her trolley as she stacks the bookshelves.

CLAIRE sits in her usual place, flipping through her book. A slip of paper falls out:

'Did you enjoy Chapter 3?'

She looks up. JONAH sits a few tables away, once again pretending to read.

She tears off a corner of her notebook and scribbles something down.

She slips it back into the book. JONAH watches her do this from where he is seated. She gets up and puts the book back on the book shelf.

CUT TO

INT. LIBRARY - BOOKSHELVES - LATER

JONAH picks the book from the bookshelf. He opens it and the ripped piece of paper falls out. He picks it up and opens it.

It reads:

'I did. But Chapter 5 was better.'

He grins.

MONTAGE - SPANS MULTIPLE DAYS

CLAIRE opens the book. A note falls out:

'Describe yourself in 3 words'

She scribbles back.

JONAH receives his note from the book. It reads:

'Curious. Introverted. Hungry.
You?'

He smiles and writes one back.

'Raw sex appeal'

CLAIRE reads it and lets out an audible laugh. Looks up at JONAH sitting at his desk who smiles back and shrugs his shoulders.

Note from CLAIRE

'If you were a kitchen utensil what
would you be?'

JONAH scribbles a reply.

CLAIRE opens it:

'Spork. Very versatile and can
accommodate to the needs of all who
need me'

CUT TO:

CLAIRE browsing the library books. One gets pushed out from the other side of the shelf. She picks it but doesn't see who pushed it out.

She opens the book. Inside is a note:

'Thought you might like this one.'

CUT TO

JONAH pulls a heavy book off a high shelf. CLAIRE is watching from her table; he playfully pretends its too heavy and staggers dramatically. She stifles a laugh, looking down, shaking her head.

CUT TO

JONAH sitting next to the bookshelf scribbling down another note.

CUT TO

CLAIRE sitting down at her desk. A scrunched up ball of paper hits her in the face. She gets a shock, visibly annoyed. She looks up and sees JONAH, feigning concentration in his book.

She opens the ball to find another note:
'Coffee? Saturday? By the north window?'

A crude sketch of a coffee cup beside the question.

JONAH watches from behind his book as CLAIRE scribbles back. She stops. JONAH watches in hesitation. CLAIRE looks up at him and puts her pencil down. She raises an eyebrow. JONAH nods quickly, hopeful.

CLAIRE hesitates... then smiles and gives the tiniest nod back.

INT. LIBRARY - SATURDAY

JONAH sits at a table with two cups of coffee, fidgeting. He is snapped out of his nervous state by a LIBRARY VOLUNTEER who places a flyer on the table.

VOLUNTEER

Hi!

Jonah looks up and smiles at her.

VOLUNTEER (CONT'D)

You might be interested - the library is hosting an Internet Return Support Group. Helps people cope with... you know, the online world coming back. First meeting tomorrow evening. Only two weeks left to go!

JONAH looks at the flyer, a mix of amusement and unease on his face.

JONAH
Support group? For logging back on?

VOLUNTEER
Exactly! Some are excited, some...
not so much. Thought you might want
to come?

JONAH
Thanks... I'll think about it.

The VOLUNTEER walks off.

CLAIRE walks through the doors clutching her books to her
chest. JONAH spots her and waves. She looks over, smiles and
approaches.

She sits opposite.

CLAIRE
(gesturing at the cups)
You didn't have to.

JONAH
I wanted to.

She notices the flyer.

CLAIRE
You thinking of going?

JONAH
What? Oh, erm... maybe. I dunno...
It has only been a year... but it
might be a good idea.

CLAIRE
I liked being online. I found it...

JONAH
...easier?

CLAIRE nods.

CLAIRE
I preferred to look things up than
to have people look at me.
(pause)
So... why here? Why the library?

Beat.

JONAH trying to work out how much to tell her.

JONAH
(awkwardly)
I don't have many friends.

CLAIRE
Same. Although, it has been quite
nice not being online.

JONAH nods, scratching at the table.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
What will you do when it's back?

JONAH
I would love to be able to stay off
it. I just don't know how likely
that is.

CLAIRE
Yeah, I know what you mean. It was
really tough in the beginning but
it got easier over time. Now that
the date is imminent I feel the
itch to jump back on.

JONAH
So... two weeks?

CLAIRE
Two weeks for what?

JONAH
Two weeks. We get to know each
other. We become friends. We
disappear back online. Deal?

CLAIRE
Deal.

He smiles. She smiles back and takes a sip of her coffee.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
I don't even know your name.

JONAH
It's Jonah.

CLAIRE
Claire.

JONAH
Nice to meet you, Claire

They continue to talk and laugh as we move into:

MONTAGE - SPANS MULTIPLE DAYS

JONAH and CLAIRE walk between the shelves together. JONAH points at an old book. CLAIRE smiles, agreeing with whatever he is saying.

CUT TO

CLAIRE flips through a book. JONAH leans over to peek. She moves the page out of his eyeline, teasing.

CUT TO

JONAH brings CLAIRE her morning coffee and places it on the table before she arrives. She eventually does arrive, holds the cup up to JONAH, who is sitting at a desk, and mouths 'thank you.'

CUT TO

CLAIRE is perusing the book collection. JONAH jumps out at her. She jumps out of her skin. JONAH laughs. CLAIRE playfully hits him with a book. A LIBRARIAN turns the corner and shushes them. JONAH looks at CLAIRE with a guilty expression before the two of them start to crack up.

CUT TO

They both sit in between the bookshelves, talking. JONAH is being very animated and CLAIRE is laughing at the story he is in the middle of.

CUT TO

Sitting side by side together, books overlapping. JONAH holds out his hand and CLAIRE, without looking up, hands him his coffee cup. They have become very comfortable with each other by now.

END OF MONTAGE.

INT. LIBRARY - EVENING

The library feels quieter than usual - everyone seems more anxious as the switch on looms closer. There is an 'internet countdown board' behind the counter that reads '1 Day Until Internet Restoration'. A broadcast message, regarding the switch on plans, on a TV in the corner.

CLAIRE and JONAH sit together at their usual table.

CLAIRE
(quietly, almost hesitant)
So... tomorrow it all comes back.

JONAH glances at the internet countdown board.

JONAH
Yep. Hard to believe it's been a
year.
(pause)
Do you think we'll still see each
other?

CLAIRE
What do you mean?

JONAH
You know, when the internet comes
back, life will probably fill up
again. People disappear into their
screens. Their old routines. I'm
starting to worry that we will too.

CLAIRE looks at him. Affectionate... but with a quiet sense
of realism.

CLAIRE
We might. We might not.

CLAIRE looks down at her coffee, then back at him. She
reaches over and reassuringly grabs his hand. JONAH looks at
her. He knows what she means even if she can't find the
words. He smiles, nodding, putting his hand on hers.

They hold the moment.

Over the tannoy, the librarian announces closing time.

LIBRARIAN
We will be closing the library in
five minutes so if you could please
finish what you are reading, grab
your belongings and make your way
to the exit.

JONAH and CLAIRE start to pack up their things.

EXT. LIBRARY - EVENING

JONAH and CLAIRE leave the building, a sense of dread and
awkwardness between them.

JONAH
So what happens now?

CLAIRE
I'll Facebook you.

JONAH
(trying to hide his
disappointment)
Okay... yeah...

Without warning, she hugs him tight. It feels like a final
goodbye. She lets go. They stare each other.

CLAIRE
Well, see you.

She quickly turns to walk off. JONAH watches her leave. He
takes a chance.

JONAH
(shouting after her)
Meet me here.

CLAIRE
(turning back)
What?

JONAH
If this is something you would like
to continue, meet me here.
Tomorrow. Before the switch on. We
can enter the online world
together.

CLAIRE gives a small nod, turns and walks off.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. CITY STREETS - DUSK

The sun rises over a crisp winters morning. Crowds spill into
streets, buzzing with anticipation. Screens everywhere glow,
counting down the final minutes before the internet returns.
A RADIO ANNOUNCER plays over the top of these scenes.

RADIO ANNOUNCER
Just under one hour to go until
global networks reconnect.
(MORE)

RADIO ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
We have been advised that you can
all prepare for a safe smooth
return to online life...'

CUT TO

INT. JONAH'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Sun pours in through the window. A small, cluttered space. JONAH rolls over in his bed, slowly waking up. Realises. Jolts up grabs his phone from the bedside table. He presses the Safari app. A countdown appears -

'00:29:33...'

He jumps out of bed and dashes into the bathroom.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Everywhere, screens blink awake in a standby. JONAH pushes through the crowd. He checks his phone. The countdown scrolls across the screen: 00:13:45...

People gather in clusters looking at their phones. JONAH pushes past them, urgency written all over his face.

EXT. BUSY ROAD - MORNING

JONAH dodges traffic as he races towards the meeting point. A honking car nearly clips him. He doesn't look back.

00:08:20...

EXT. NEAR THE LIBRARY - MORNING

The crowd has thickened. The library gates are in view. People align the streets, buzzing for the switch on. JONAH scans the crowd frantically, rising on his toes, scanning faces. He heads towards the library door.

00:01:20...

INT - LIBRARY - MORNING

JONAH walks in to the desolate library. Gone are the people taking books out. Gone are the children sitting on beanbags. Everyone is preoccupied with the countdown. We can hear the bustle of everyone outside.

JONAH looks at the table. CLAIRE'S usual spot. He walks over to it. He touches it with his hand, almost as if he is living in the memory. To anyone else it probably wouldn't have been a big deal, but to him it was everything. He half smiles to himself. It was too good to be true.

Outside we can hear the crowd begin a countdown as if it was New Years Eve.

CROWD

Ten... nine... eight...

A ball of paper hits JONAH on the back. He bends down and picks it up. Unscrunching it he reads,

'Don't look it up, look at me'

Beat.

CROWD (CONT'D)

...five... four... three...

JONAH turns to look in the direction the ball was thrown from. His eyes meet their destination. Relief etches across his face. He smiles.

CROWD (CONT'D)

...two...one...

We don't see who he is looking at, but we have a very good idea who it might be.

CUT TO BLACK.