

Title: ***Offline Connections***

MARK'S FLAT - NIGHT

Mark (early 30s, average build, casual) lounges on his sofa. The TV is on in the background, but his eyes are glued to his phone. He's on his usual dating app. As he has been doing over the last few weeks, he finds Emily's profile and starts messaging her.

TEXT CONVERSATION (ON SCREEN)

Mark: "So what's your favourite book? I need recommendations!"

Emily: "Oh, where do I start? A mix of fiction, philosophy, and random history!"

Mark: "Sounds like my kind of reading. 😊"

Emily: "We could debate books for hours..."

Mark: "How about we meet up and have that debate?!"

Emily: "I can't at the moment, sorry. Too many commitments..."

MARK'S FLAT - AN HOUR LATER

Mark lounges back, sipping his coffee. He's trying to read a report for work, but he's distracted and his eyes keep flicking to his phone. A breaking news alert flashes on the TV screen: *Nationwide internet outage*.

Mark blinks, confused. He checks his phone. Nothing. He checks his router. Nada. He shrugs, dismisses it, and heads to the kitchen.

Suddenly, his phone buzzes. He picks it up.

TEXT MESSAGE

Emily: "Hey, weird question... are you experiencing an internet outage too?"

Mark raises an eyebrow. He hadn't even realized she had his number. He vaguely recalled exchanging numbers once, but she had never used it—until now.

TEXT MESSAGE

Mark: "Yeah, looks like it's down everywhere. I guess I'll survive without memes for a night."

TEXT MESSAGE

Emily: "Maybe it's a sign. Want to meet up? In person?"

Mark sits up straight, surprised.

TEXT MESSAGE

Mark: "Really? I thought you didn't want to meet yet?"

TEXT MESSAGE

Emily: "Perhaps I've been overthinking it. But with the internet down, it feels like a nudge from the universe. What do you think?"

Mark stares at the screen. Then, his fingers hover over the keyboard.

TEXT MESSAGE

Mark: "When and where?"

DOWNTOWN BAR - NIGHT

Mark walks into a dimly lit bar. Music is playing quietly in the background. He looks nervous, checking the door every time it opens. He orders a drink, glancing at his phone for any new messages. Nothing. He waits.

He doesn't spot two women (Bella and Olivia, both 30's, gossipy) sitting and talking in a partitioned area of the bar. But they see him and recognise him instantly.

The door swings open. Mark freezes as **LAUREN** (early 40s, confident but with a hint of discomfort) walks in. She looks familiar, but something's off. Same wavy brown hair, sharp blue eyes—but the confidence in her posture, the way she carries herself, seems different.

Mark watches her approach, his heart sinking as the realization dawns.

MARK

(slowly)

"Lauren."

LAUREN

(smiling, but tight-lipped)

"Mark. It's good to finally meet you."

Mark's gaze hardens. He sits, still stunned.

MARK

(under his breath)

"I knew it."

LAUREN

(raising an eyebrow)

"You recognize me."

MARK

(quietly)

"Why are you on a dating app?"

LAUREN

(sighing, avoiding his gaze)

"I think you already know the answer to that."

Mark leans in, angry.

MARK

"Your husband. Daniel. What's going on here?"

Lauren pauses, glancing around, lowering her voice.

LAUREN

(softly)

"I wasn't planning to meet you. I just... needed an escape. A break from everything."

Mark shakes his head in disbelief.

MARK

"So you're pretending to be someone else?"

Lauren reaches for his hand. Mark recoils, his face a mix of confusion and anger.

LAUREN

"I didn't lie, I just withheld things. But with the internet down... I thought maybe it's time to stop hiding."

Mark recoils further, disgusted.

MARK

"Stop hiding? You're married! Does Daniel know you're here?"

LAUREN

(smirking bitterly)

"Of course not. It's complicated."

Mark stands abruptly, pushing his chair back. He's furious now, words tumbling out.

MARK

"So you think I'll just pretend this didn't happen? That I'll keep this secret?"

Lauren looks at him, studying his face.

LAUREN

"Maybe. Depends on you."

Mark's eyes narrow, his stomach twisting.

MARK

(icy)

"I'm done. This isn't happening."

He turns and walks toward the door. Lauren's voice stops him.

LAUREN

"One more thing."

Mark hesitates but doesn't turn around.

LAUREN

"You'll keep this between us, won't you?" Her tone is light, but her eyes are cold, calculating.

Mark doesn't respond. He walks out, the weight of the conversation crushing him. Lauren leaves some time after him.

BELLA

"Did you see them? Mark and Lauren?"

OLIVIA

"Yes. Looked like some kind of date to me! But you know she's married....I always thought she had wandering eyes though, ever since she seemed over friendly to a boyfriend of mine at a barbeque a couple of years ago."

MARK'S STREET - NIGHT

Mark walks quickly, trying to shake off the unease. As he passes Lauren's house, he sees Daniel through the window, completely unaware, laughing at something on TV.

Mark's phone buzzes. He stops, checking it.

TEXT MESSAGE

Lauren: "Goodnight, Mark. Let's keep this between us."

Mark looks at the message for a long moment, then, with a tense breath, deletes it without responding. He pockets the phone and keeps walking, the night air colder now.

TWO DAYS LATER, AT A BUS STOP

As Olivia is waiting for a bus, Daniel appears.

DANIEL

"Hi, how are you?"

OLIVIA

"Oh hi, Daniel!. Not bad thanks, off to work"

(She hesitates. Her bus is coming)

"I wanted to mention..."

Her voice trails off, and she suddenly feels very nervous. She quickly regains her composure.

"...er, the internet. When do you think it'll be back up?"

DANIEL

"No idea, I hope it's soon though. It's causing all sorts of problems."

OLIVIA

(with a knowing half smile)

"That's for sure."

FADE OUT. THE END.