

Connectivity

by Nancy Beverly

CONNECTIVITY

CAST LIST

ARNIE - 40's - a left-brain computer tech guy who prides himself on problem-solving... unless it comes to matters of the heart...

ANNABELLE - 30's -- a set decorator filled with passion for all things creative... and she has some control issues...

PENINA - 50's -- a nurse in a hospital on a tiny South Pacific island... she's businesslike but compassionate... and she's worn down...

SET REQUIREMENTS

A beach... a hospital with a room, a nurses' station, and a hallway.

SCENE 1 - BEACH - DAY

Day 1, LIGHTS UP: ARNIE, early 40's, sits on a log typing on a small laptop at a beach. We can hear the OCEAN WAVES. It's humid out, he pulls his collar away to get some air inside his shirt, he swats at bugs. He struggles with what he's writing. He pauses a lot. He rubs his forehead. Meanwhile, the enchanting sunset casts an orange glow on him.

After several moments, ANNABELLE, 30's, enters from behind him, with a camera around her neck and a small backpack on her shoulder. As soon as she sees the orange light, her eyes go wide and she drops her bag.

ANNABELLE

Wow!!!

Arnie is startled, looks irritated.
Annabelle snaps pictures.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

God, the views here! Every time I turn a corner! And now the rain clouds and the sunset...

She snaps away.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

Love it, love it, love it! I've taken like 500 shots on this trip! ... God, orange, and pink, and magenta, and -- I'm out of words...

(a few beats)

And lavender! At the tips of the clouds!

ARNIE

I thought you were out of words.

ANNABELLE

... I dug a little deeper.

He goes back to his typing. She takes another picture or two... and then eventually watches him.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

... Every few seconds, the colors change.

He refuses to look up. After a few beats:

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

Y'know, if you're going to ignore the sunset, you could've written whatever it is you're writing back in town.

ARNIE

I came out here for the peace and quiet.

Ouch. Okay then. She takes a few more shots... and then:

ANNABELLE

When you go back home -- and I'm assuming this isn't your home -- what are you going to remember most about your trip here?

ARNIE

You.

ANNABELLE

I'm flattered.

(then)

No, really. You look... miserable. Why come to paradise and be miserable?

ARNIE

It's not paradise. It's fruit bats and rain and mosquitoes and mud and iffy toilets and bumpy roads and terrible internet service that I came here with my company to fix -- and we couldn't because our balloon crashed with the solar-powered satellite and so the entire island is mad at us and my entire company is mad at ME. That's what I'll remember.

ANNABELLE

... I'm sorry the balloon crashed.

She then looks out at the sunset. He goes back to tapping on his computer. After a few beats:

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

I'll remember how friendly everyone here was. Offering me free slices of mango at the roadside stands, asking me to join them for dinner when we'd just met on the porch of the restaurant...

(then)

I've always wanted to ride in a hot air balloon.

ARNIE

They weren't those kind of balloons.

ANNABELLE

I know. I was just making conversation.

(MORE)

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

(then)

Why did the balloon crash? A run-in with a bird?

ARNIE

It was eleven miles high, the local birds aren't at that altitude.

ANNABELLE

Oh.

(then, referring to
the sunset)

Ten seconds and it'll be gone.

ARNIE

And in ten seconds you'll be gone?

ANNABELLE

... Okay, you and the fruit bats can have at it.

She huffily picks up her backpack, puts it over her shoulder, marches out. The orange light fades on Arnie. Seconds pass as he simmers. After a bit, we hear the "fwoop fwoop" of the fruit bats overhead.

And then several feet down the road from here comes the SCREECH of TIRES ON PAVEMENT, a WOMAN'S SCREAM, and then a CRASH. Arnie turns quickly to look that direction.

ARNIE

Shit.

LIGHTS OUT. ISLAND MUSIC is heard between each scene change, which can aid in denoting a short or longer passage of time, plus give an "island" feel to the settings.

SCENE 2 - NURSES' STATION - LATER

LIGHTS UP: a tiny island's tiny hospital's waiting area with a nurses' station.

Eventually Arnie enters, looking dazed and even more stressed. He's holding both his and Annabelle's backpacks.

Arnie looks around as if he can figure this out but of course he can't.

Finally, he flags a passing NURSE, late 40's/early 50's, business-like demeanor, who has a lot on her mind:

ARNIE

Excuse me, do you know where the woman is who was hit by a truck?

NURSE

Room 150. Are you her husband?

ARNIE

No, I called the ambulance.

NURSE

Does she have anyone else with her?

ARNIE

I have no idea.

NURSE

Can you find out?

ARNIE

I... she... I just want to give this to her. That's all.

He holds Annabelle's backpack out. The nurse has already hurried to her desk.

NURSE

And can you find some I.D. for her?

Arnie wants to protest but the Nurse is typing at her computer.

He pulls stuff out of the backpack, including a completely smashed cell phone. Yikes.

He rummages some more, pulls out random things, finds a passport.

ARNIE

'Annabelle Fleming.'

The nurse holds out her hand, Arnie is annoyed again, he takes it over to her.

NURSE

Any other pertinent information?

He wants to throw the backpack at her. Instead, he digs inside it some more and finally comes to a postcard.

He reads it. He's a little embarrassed to have done so.

NURSE (CONT'D)

What did you find?

ARNIE

A postcard. To a Jason Fleming. In San Diego.

NURSE

Can you research the name on-line?

ARNIE

... Isn't that your job?

The Nurse holds out her hand for the postcard. Arnie gives it to her. And then the Nurse sets it aside. Arnie glares at her.

NURSE

When I have time. I have a new patient.

Arnie takes the postcard back, sits in the waiting area, opens his laptop from his own backpack and turns it on.

ARNIE

Rrrr....

NURSE

Mhm. Slow connection.

Arnie is embarrassed. He finally gets connected, does some searches on-line. After a bit:

ARNIE

There is no Jason Fleming in San Diego.

NURSE

If she's conscious, you could ask her who Jason is.

Arnie stares at her.

ARNIE

I don't really know her. I have a report that's due tomorrow and then I have a flight out of here, so I have a lot on my plate right now.

NURSE

And I have a patient that was bit by a shark.

ARNIE

... What was it, room 150?

The Nurse nods. Arnie then grabs both his and Annabelle's backpacks and exits. The Nurse heads down the other hallway.

SCENE 3 - ANNABELLE'S ROOM

Annabelle's room is revealed, she is in her hospital bed. Her eyes are closed.

After a few moments, Arnie enters with massive trepidation. He tiptoes over to her. He clears his throat, she does not open her eyes. He sighs, he waits, he looks around. Finally he leaves her backpack on a chair and starts to go.

Then he gets an idea, goes to the backpack, pulls out the postcard and places it on the nightstand where she can see it. Then he turns to go again ... and she moans loudly. He whips around.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

... Annabelle?

She opens her eyes.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Annabelle? I'm Arnie. From the beach? Couple of hours ago? We were on the beach together?

No recognition.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

You were hit by a truck.

No response.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Could you nod or blink if you can hear me?

She blinks.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Great! Okay, the hospital wants to contact your family back in --

(grabs postcard)

San Diego. Are you from San Diego?

She blinks.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Great! Can you tell me Jason's phone number?

No response.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Does Jason have a phone -- everyone has a phone, right?

No response.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Can you really hear me? Shit, maybe those were random blinks. How about if I read the postcard, maybe that'll jog your memory?

No response.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

'Jason, The trip has been great, will bring back pictures of howler monkeys and fruit bats for you. Love you more than fireworks on the 4th of July. Annabelle.'

And sure enough, Annabelle stirs, she clears her throat.

ANNABELLE

Water.

ARNIE

Water. Right. Yes.

Arnie resigns himself to being water boy. He sees the styrofoam cup with a straw in it and takes it to Annabelle. She can't even remotely hold it or tip her head up.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Hospital beds tilt up... Or I could do a pillow thing... God, I really shouldn't be monkeying around with...
(marches to the door:)

Could we get a professional in here?!

Several beats go by, the cavalry does not arrive... so Arnie mans up and gets the styromfoam cup. Then he has an idea: he puts a finger on top of the straw to capture water inside it without it flowing out. Then he very carefully takes it to Annabelle's lips... sets it there...

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Open...

Annabelle opens her lips a tad, he releases a tiny bit of water. She swallows. Success.

He exhales in great relief.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Look, the hospital needs to know a family member they can notify. Can you give me someone's name?

Her eyes are open but she doesn't respond.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Annabelle, you need to let someone know your situation. Frankly, I'm not sure this place could handle a paper cut. So Jason, can we get in touch with him?

ANNABELLE

... He's my younger brother.

(then)

He has autism.

ARNIE

Oh.

(then)

... Parents?

ANNABELLE

Dead.

ARNIE

... Anyone with you on this trip?

ANNABELLE

No.

ARNIE

How about close friends back home I could call?

No response.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

... Okay, we'll circle back to that in a bit.

ANNABELLE

Nose. Itch.

He stares. Uh oh.

ARNIE

Ahhhh....

ANNABELLE

Help.

ARNIE

What have we got... We need a back-scratcher you could angle up, or even a long stick...

He looks around for something and as he does, she sneezes -- LOUDLY.

ANNABELLE

AH-CHOOOOO!!

Then she MOANS IN PAIN and starts crying.

ARNIE

Shit, shit, shit.

ANNABELLE

Ahhhhh...

ARNIE

(calling out the door)

WE NEED SOME HELP IN HERE!

The Nurse comes running in.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

She's in a lot of pain. Can you do something??

NURSE

She's already on pain meds... Let me increase the dosage...

The Nurse adjusts the I.V. drip.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Here you go, dear one. That should help.

Annabelle calms down. The nurse turns to Arnie.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Any family members?

ARNIE

One brother, he may not be able to do anything. What's the next step?

NURSE

Pray that she heals.

The Nurse leaves. Arnie hangs his head.

LIGHTS FADE.

SCENE 4 - NURSE'S STATION - THE NEXT DAY

LIGHTS UP.

The Nurse is at her computer. Arnie enters with his luggage and laptop.

ARNIE

Hi. What if we transfer Annabelle to a bigger island with a bigger hospital where they have more staff?

She just stares at him.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Her injuries seem pretty serious.

NURSE

We have a good staff here. But if you want to do that, you'll need a private plane because a commercial one would never let her fly.

ARNIE

... Ah, okay.

He pulls out his phone, searches for a number on-line... that takes awhile.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Rrrr....

The nurse nods, "Mmmhm," he gets the number, dials.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Hi, you offer chartered planes...? Great. How much to fly from Aitutaki to San Diego?

(a huge amount)

Wow. How about part way there, like Hawaii?

(still expensive)

Ah, okay. Thanks.

He hangs up. The nurse looks at him.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

... I'll need to contact some of her friends to pull this off.

NURSE

Very good, keep me informed.

She goes back to typing.

ARNIE

Uh, how's she doing?

NURSE

Stable.

ARNIE

Stable? That's great.

She stares at him as if he's nuts.

NURSE

She has many broken ribs, a broken leg, lacerations,
and internal bleeding...

ARNIE

(reality sinks in)

Oh.

The Nurse starts typing again, has her
own slow internet moment.

NURSE

Ahhh...

ARNIE

... We're still working on the balloon project for the
internet satellites. It's gonna be great.

NURSE

Ohhh, you're part of the balloon thing.

ARNIE

Yes.

NURSE

Your crashed balloon is the talk of the island.

ARNIE

Well, it's a work in progress.

NURSE

It's a big mess.

ARNIE

No, your current system is a mess, we were a solution.

The Nurse rolls her eyes, and then sighs
in frustration at her computer. Arnie
wishes he could help but he's got that
plane to catch, so he exits.

SCENE 5 - ANNABELLE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Arnie enters. Annabelle's eyes are shut.
Arnie stands there for a bit, not sure
what to do. Finally he clears his throat
quietly, and her eyes pop open. She
looks at him, brow furrows, she's groggy
from pain meds.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Arnie. From the beach.

ANNABELLE

... Water.

Arnie, with confidence in his straw technique, quickly gets the styrofoam cup and drops water into her mouth -- she drinks quite a bit. After she's done, he puts the cup down with great satisfaction.

She blinks and blinks and actually recognizes him this visit.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

Arnie. The asshole from the beach.

And now he's the elephant in the room. She decides to ignore him and instead tries to raise her arms to reach her plate of food but they go only so far.

Arnie isn't sure what to do, so finally he goes to the door and calls out.

ARNIE

Hello? We need some help with feeding. Anyone?

Aaaannnd... no one comes. Moments pass as Arnie watches Annabelle struggle. Finally he reaches for a spoon from the tray... but she waves him off. He watches her struggle some more until finally:

ANNABELLE

... I'll just wait for the nurse.

ARNIE

Fine.

(then)

Okay, the way I see it, there are just a couple of options. One is, a friend comes here to take charge and make sure you get good care, such as it is, and the other would be, you fly to a bigger city with a bigger hospital.

(then)

Any thoughts?

She has no idea what to say.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Would your brother be able to navigate airports and fly across the Pacific?

Shakes her head no.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Friends who might be able to...?

ANNABELLE

They're all starving artists. We work in theater and galleries in San Diego.

ARNIE

What do you do there? Act?

ANNABELLE

I find props and do set decoration. Took me forever to save up for this trip.

ARNIE

Ah.

Reality keeps sinking in.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Then our best bet is to get you on a plane.

ANNABELLE

They'll let me do that?

ARNIE

Well, we're looking into it. Your phone was completely smashed, do you have anyone's phone number memorized?

She shakes her head no.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Where does someone work, I could look up their company.

She ponders this.

ANNABELLE

Everyone's a freelancer. Well, Natalie also works at Starbucks.

ARNIE

... There's like eight million of them.

ANNABELLE

... Trevor works at the Old Globe Theater in San Diego.

ARNIE

Perfect.

He gets out his phone and starts to search for the number, holds his phone this way and that to get a connection.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Rrrr....

(MORE)

ARNIE (CONT'D)

(finally gets
reception, finds the
number, dials)

Okay, what's Trevor's last name?

ANNABELLE

McKinney.

ARNIE

... Hi, could I speak to Trevor McKinney?

(waits)

Trevor? Hi, my name is Arnie Dalton. You don't know me. I'm with your friend Annabelle on the island of Aitutaki. She's had an accident and would like to talk to you.

Arnie hands her the phone... she can't exactly hold it, so he gingerly holds it to her ear.

ANNABELLE

Hi, Trev... A truck hit me... No... Not too good... I don't know... I don't know...

Arnie can tell this isn't going well.
He takes the phone from her ear and speaks into it.

ARNIE

Hi, Trevor, Arnie again.

(steps out into the
hallway)

... Yeah, broken ribs, broken leg. We're trying to come up with a plan... No, I just met her, so I'm calling her friends... What about a Go Fund Me Campaign to get a private plane so she can get back home..? Yeah, she said all of her friends were freelancers, but if enough of you pooled resources.... Trevor, she really needs your help and I'm a complete stranger... Okay, fingers crossed. I'll get some details from you later... Okay. Talk later.

He hangs up, exits.

SCENE 6 - NURSES' STATION - CONTINUOUS

Arnie enters, the Nurse looks up at him for some news.

ARNIE

She has no family or friends who can come and watch over her so raising money for a private plane is gonna be our best bet.

NURSE

Very good.

(then)

I probably should tell you she'll need a doctor with her on that plane if she leaves any time soon.

ARNIE

Oh.

The Nurse types at her computer and is frustrated again.

NURSE

Ahhhh!

ARNIE

What operating system do you have?

She gestures, "Who knows?" Arnie comes around to the aging computer, takes the mouse and checks something.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Windows 95?! You're in the horse and buggy era.

The Nurse looks ashamed.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

You know, if you had a newer operating system and a newer computer, that would help. It's not all about the balloon.

NURSE

How do we get a new system?

ARNIE

Welllll, I could scope some things out for you...

NURSE

Really?

(then)

But just so you know, we have no budget for such things.

ARNIE

... Maybee my company could spring for...

NURSE

Have they ever done something like this?

ARNIE

We're all about systems.

NURSE

And free computers?

ARNIE

Not exactly.

NURSE

Ah.

ARNIE

But I'll ask.

NURSE

And I will not hold my breath.

ARNIE

My company, we, we're bigger than a balloon.

NURSE

Mm.

That does it. Arnie grabs his phone and goes off to the side, dials a number.

ARNIE

... Could I speak to Derrick, it's Arnie... Hi, Derrick... No, I'm still on the island... I, uh, didn't want to fly back with the team, I, uh, needed to think through the new specs for the booster rockets and air flow panels, there was a little miscalculation...

(quickly off of that topic)

Look, I'm at the local hospital... No, I'm not in the hospital, a-a friend, an acquaintance is, and they're using Windows 95... No, not on her, their computers. A solar balloon satellite is the least of their worries. Could we do something?... Look, our name is shit here on the island, and if we want to renew the satellite contract for another go at this, helping out the hospital would go a long way towards... I know it's not our responsibility... Derrick, it's a hospital. There are sick and injured -- yes, I know you know what a hospital is. Look, it takes them forever to boot up and then it's like someone poured syrup into the whole thing... Well, I was gonna fly back later today but I thought if we could spring for some new computers and software -- Derrick, if we wait 'til I get back, this won't happen. And then we'll be the company that failed them twice... Okay... Okay... Bye.

He hangs up...and slowly goes back to the nurses' station. He realizes she may have heard what he said.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

He's thinking it over.

She nods cynically, "Yeah, right."

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Well, I could talk to your I.T. Department and start a wish list.

The Nurse rolls her eyes.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Now what?

NURSE

It's one fellow. Part-time. And he's gone to the Philippines because his father passed away.

ARNIE

O-kaaay, uhhh...

(grabs a note pad and
pen from his backpack)

How many employees do you have?

NURSE

(counting in her head)

Mm, ten total and the nurses share computers...

ARNIE

Ten, that's nothing, and I'll push for everyone having their own.

NURSE

Thank you. But we can share. Really.

ARNIE

Not needed. May I sit at your computer for a few minutes?

NURSE

Of course.

She stands, he sits at her desk. He clicks here and there and with each investigation he is even more dismayed.

ARNIE

Jeeze... oh, boy... man...

He looks at her, she at him, they connect. He stands, gets his phone, dials a number.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Hi, could I have the travel department...

He exits, she looks a tiny bit hopeful.

LIGHTS FADE.

SCENE 7 - ANNABELLE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Arnie enters.

ARNIE

Good morning.

ANNABELLE

You're still here?

ARNIE

I'm doing some computer stuff.

ANNABELLE

Isn't that what you do for a living?

ARNIE

Here. At the hospital.

ANNABELLE

Oh.

ARNIE

So I'm heading out, just wanted to let you know the Go Fund Me page is live.

ANNABELLE

Oh, okay. Thank you. Um, you really didn't have to do that.

ARNIE

Do you want me to take it down?

ANNABELLE

No, no, that's okay.

ARNIE

Did you have a better plan?

Silence, she does not.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Well, I need to check on the server before I lea --

ANNABELLE

(overlapping)

-- Oh, I remembered someone's phone number -- Jackie's.

ARNIE

Great!

(gets out his phone,
dials)

Okay, I've dialed the international code...

He hands her the phone, she finishes the number, awkwardly holds it to her ear. He backs away.

ANNABELLE

... Jackie, Annabelle... Yeah, yeah. So Trevor called...? Yeah, it's been tough... Ohhhh...

(to Arnie)

Jackie saw the Go Fund Me thing.

Arnie smiles, gives a thumbs up, figures he can leave for a few moments.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

(to Jackie)

... Yeah, everything hurts, even when I breathe. I'll be in rehab for months. And my phone's broken, there's nothing to read, I don't have anyone to talk to.

Ouch. Arnie stops at the door, hearing that.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

...No, I'm not telling Kirk, I don't want to get into a shouting match - he'll think I shouldn't have come to such a remote place by myself and all I did was walk to my rental car and a truck didn't see me... Oh, can you go over to my neighbor across from my front door, Brenda, she's feeding my cat Bubbles, ask if she can keep doing it, oh, and call Carleton Commercials - I'm supposed to do a gig for them next week - I don't want to lose them for future jobs, just tell them I had a plane delay or something. This whole thing is gonna cost me a fortune. Thanks... Okay...okay. Love you, bye.

She ends the call. Arnie comes back over for his phone, decides to step up...

ARNIE

Uh, do you want me to turn in your rental car?

ANNABELLE

You really don't have to. I have it til the end of the week.

ARNIE

And then...?

She realizes she has few options but doesn't want him to help...

ARNIE (CONT'D)

... Well, need anything else?

ANNABELLE

Actually, my feet are stiff. Maybe the nurse...?

ARNIE

Sure.

(goes to the door)

We need some help in here.

(a few beats)

HELLO? NEED SOME HELP?

Nothin'.

ANNABELLE

Ahhh, they're cramping...

ARNIE

Uh....

Forced into action, he lifts up the sheet and blanket and looks at her feet.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Which...?

ANNABELLE

Both.

He awkwardly stretches her feet.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

Stop.

He does.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

Have you ever massaged anyone's feet before?

He's embarrassed.

ARNIE

Maybe not.

ANNABELLE

Give me your hand.

She holds her hand out. He gingerly put his hand in hers. She massages it gently but firmly. It's amazing for him. After a few beats:

ARNIE

Oh. Got it.

He goes back to her feet and then does the same technique for her.