



IT'S ALL
CONNECTED

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Introduction

"It's All Connected" is a narrative piece originally developed for Creative Concepts module's final coursework, where I had the opportunity to explore emotional storytelling, character dynamics and conceptual thinking through written work. This short story had allowed me to experiment with atmosphere, dialogue and tension while shaping a narrative that reflects themes of trust, comparison and personal growth.

Following the completion of the original coursework, I revisited this story and came to a realisation that its emotional arc felt incomplete due to the word limit constraints of the module. The restricted length prevented certain character motivations, themes and narrative developments from being explored in depth. As I returned to this piece with a fresh perspective, I saw the opportunity to expand on its underlying message and give the characters the space they deserved.

Thus, this continuation will highlight the conceptual intentions of the story while demonstrating my growth in narrative structure and creative direction beyond the initial assignment.

It's All Connected

Part I – Disconnected

Aries stared at his phone for what felt like the hundredth time of the day.

“Aries, just give up. Your manager’s not going to reply. Let’s go for a drink instead.” Kyro called out, already heading towards his car.

Kyro had been his childhood friend since preschool, as someone who is confident and charismatic, Aries often depended on him. However, Kyro was well aware that Aries struggled with having low self-esteem and tended to follow whatever advice he gave.

As they got into Kyro’s car, Aries finally voiced what was weighing on him.

“If my manager doesn’t respond anytime soon, I might lose this job. I need it... Ariel’s college fees aren’t going to pay for themselves. You understand, right? You’re her boyfriend.”

Kyro shrugged. “Relax. I’ve got stocks helping with her expenses. You could try investing too, it’s easy money, there’s barely any risk.”

Aries sighed. “I’m not ready for that. My job pays well. I just need to endure it a bit more.”

The rest of the ride passed in silence, broken only by Kyro’s blasting music.

When they arrived at the club, two girls waved excitedly at Kyro.

“You didn’t mention anyone else was coming, who are they?” Aries asked.

“Just friends, they’re Odelia and Edith.”

Aries watched quietly as both girls hugged Kyro, who wrapped his arms around them as they headed inside. They settled into a VIP sofa booth Kyro had booked earlier.

“Let’s play Dare or Drink,” Kyro announced. “Forget about work. You’re here to have fun.”

A server approached. “Cognac and tequila shots for you, sir?”

Aries glanced at Kyro – young, wealthy, respected and driving a Rolls Royce at 24. Aries wondered what it felt like to live that kind of lifestyle.

As the game started, Aries noticed the way Odelia and Edith exchanged glances with Kyro. Something felt off.

Then, Edith smirked. “Kyro, I dare you to make out with me.”

Aries froze as Kyro leaned in without hesitation.

“Kyro! Ariel loves you. How could you do this?” Aries shouted at the top of his lungs.

Kyro waved him off. “It’s just a game; you got to chill man.”

Aries shook his head in utter disbelief. “This isn’t just a game. It’s a dealbreaker. We’ve been friends for 20 years... I can’t watch you do this.”

He walked out, heart pounding, fury and disappointment tightening his chest.

In his daze, he collided with a passerby.

“I’m so sorry – I wasn’t watching where I was going.” Aries mumbled.

The stranger studied him. “You look troubled. If you need someone to talk to, I’m here.”

“I don’t want to burden you with my thoughts...” Aries muttered.

“I’m Enzo, a psychologist.” The man said gently, handing over his name card. “Call me if you need someone to listen.”

Later that night, unable to sleep, Aries finally caved in and dialled Enzo’s number.

They spoke for a long time, just before ending the call, Enzo said, “Chose your friends wisely. Comparison is the thief of joy. Take things at your own pace.”

As Aries was about to set his phone aside, one last message came through.

'It's all connected.'

Part II – Tangled

Aries woke up to a heavy silence the next morning, but the chaos from the night before refused to leave his mind. Every detail replayed itself – Kyro’s arms around Odelia and Edith, the looks they exchanged with one another, the dare, the kiss, the betrayal. His chest tightened with each time the memory resurfaced.

He sat on the edge of his bed, head in his hands, wrestling with thoughts he couldn’t escape. *Should he tell Ariel the truth? Or stay silent?*

Kyro was his childhood friend – practically family at this point. But Ariel was his younger sister, someone he had promised to protect ever since she left home for college. That promise weighed on him every single day, and yet, so did the fear of destroying the fragile balance between all of them.

Loyalty to Kyro. Responsibilities for Ariel. Fear of causing more harm.

No matter which path he chose, someone he loved dearly would get hurt.

Unable to decide, he did what he felt was the safest – he avoided everyone altogether. Especially Ariel.

Days passed. His silence only grew heavier.

By the end of the week, Aries’ phone was flooded with messages from Ariel.

‘Did I do something wrong?’

‘Why aren’t you picking up my calls?’

‘Are you alright? Did something happen to you? Please talk to me...’

Her last message stopped him cold.

‘Ries, are you avoiding me?’

Aries’ heart twisted in knots. He knew she didn’t deserve any of this. But every time he tried to type a reply, guilt suffocated him. He didn’t know how to tell her the truth, especially not when he could barely face it all himself.

Feeling lost, Aries reached out to the only person who had offered clarity the night everything fell apart – Enzo.

To his surprise, Enzo immediately invited him to his clinic for a proper session.

Inside the quiet room, Aries poured out everything – the guilt, the fear, the confusion.

When he finally paused, breathing heavily, Enzo leaned forward ever so slightly.

“Aries,” he asked gently, “who are you really trying to protect? More importantly, at what cost to yourself?”

That simple question hit Aries harder than he expected.

For once, he didn’t have an answer at all.

He rode home with trembling hands, the handlebars slick with sweat. His emotions swirled violently – guilt, pressure, helplessness – until the ride became a blur. When he finally reached his apartment block, he sat on his bike for a long moment, trying to steady his breathing.

That was when his phone lit up.

A message from Ariel.

Aries’ stomach dropped when he opened it.

It was a screenshot of an Instagram story.

Odelia had tagged Kyro, posting a picture of all of them at Crimson Vault – Kyro in the middle, the girls pressed against him, bottles of alcohol on the table, his arms around them.

Ariel’s message followed.

'Is this AI generated? Or did something happen that night?'

His heart shattered into a million pieces. He called Ariel immediately, voice shaking as he asked her to come over.

Half an hour later, she arrived at his apartment. He finally told her the truth – every painful detail, every moment he wished he could unsee.

Ariel's lips quivered. She cried silently. Aries held her in guilt as her world crumbled down.

Later that night, she didn't wish to return to the studio apartment she shared with Kyro. Kyro noticed.

Despite being fully aware of what he did exactly a week ago, Kyro panicked. He called her repeatedly, but she didn't pick up. His desperation grew into anger, which turned towards the one person he believed would ruin his life.

At the break of dawn, just as Aries began drifting into an exhausted sleep, the front door slammed open.

Kyro barged into Aries' apartment; face twisted in fury.

"You betrayed me!" he shouted. "I trusted you, how could you stab me in the back!"

Aries stumbled to his feet, startled and drained out.

"What are you on about? I didn't betray you. You did this all to yourself."

Kyro's voice cracked, realising Ariel was in the room.

"You had no rights to tell her!"

Aries stared back, heart aching with every breath he took.
“You’re the one who had no rights to hurt her.”

Silence hung between them for a moment – heavy, bitter, irreversible.

Concurrently, Ariel woke up to all that noise.

Part III – Connected

Ariel pulled the duvet off herself and stepped out quietly, positioning herself between Kyro and her brother, Aries. Her hands trembled. Kyro's harsh tone towards Aries had shaken her more deeply than she wanted to admit, yet she forced herself to stay composed.

After all, this was the same man she once believed she would spend her future with – her older brother's childhood friend who had once been gentle, attentive and generous. He used to surprise her with bouquets of roses in her favourite shades of pink, taking care of her needs without being asked, and easing the weight she carried ever since she and Aries lost their parents during her freshman year. For a long time, Kyro and Aries were the only family she had left.

But somewhere along the way, Kyro had learned to twist that dependency into control. Now he stood before her, gaslighting her, "AI edits are everywhere online nowadays, don't you dare to believe such a random post," in attempt to make her doubt what she saw.

Ariel couldn't believe her ears. *Did Kyro urged me to trust him again, just to minimise his actions?*

Aries, usually avoidant, finally stepped up to protect her. He didn't want to escalate the situation, but even in his restraint, Ariel felt the line had been crossed. The disappointment in her chest was painfully sharp. How could Kyro speak to her as if she was still the naïve teenager she once used to be, who couldn't separate truth from lies?

Ariel sighed. "Kyro, please just leave me alone. I have nothing left to say to you."

That moment became the breaking point.

Kyro refused to accept accountability for the incident. His emotions spiralled quickly, from anger, to fear then desperation. He blamed everyone but himself, Aries, Ariel, Odelia and even Edith.

In that unravelling, Ariel saw with clarity, exactly who he had become.

Kyro stomped out with a delusional warning, "Ariel, you'll regret choosing your brother over me!" His voice echoing through the thin walls of the apartment.

The door slammed shut.

Ariel collapsed to the floor in a daze.

Everything hit her all at once – the betrayal, the shock and the grief for a relationship she thought she knew. She had sensed for months that something was off with Kyro, but she had never imagined that Kyro would cheat, much less betray her with people she trusted. *So much for a relationship I cherished.*

Aries knelt beside her, guilt flooding his expression, tears reflecting the sunrise.

“I’m so sorry.” Aries apologised repeatedly. “I should have told you sooner, so you would not have reached this point of breaking down....”

They talked for hours about trust, family, and the fear of disappointing each other. Ariel finally admitted how she had accepted their parents’ death long ago, but losing Kyro felt like reliving a similar kind of abandonment.

“He gave me a promise ring... It’s a symbol of the future I thought we would share after I graduate next year. I guess that’s why I really wanted to believe that he wouldn’t hurt me...”

Aries responded, his voice was soft, “It’s alright if you decide to leave Kyro. I can support you by myself. I promise I won’t let you go through anything alone ever again.”

Aries knew that she barely had time for part-time work with her load of college projects.

Their conversations slowly faded off into a quiet mutual understanding.

A few hours later, Aries prepared breakfast for Ariel. Soon enough, Ariel woke up to the gentle, savoury-sweet aroma of breakfast drifting through the apartment, warm enough to pull her back into the world with a fragile sense of comfort – reminding her that she wasn’t alone.

Following the trail of the aroma into the kitchen, Ariel found Aries hunched slightly over the stove, guilt lingering in the quiet slope of his shoulders.

“Ries, you saved me from that mess. You didn’t ruin anything. Even without the truth... I would have broken up with Kyro. He crossed my boundaries. You know I’ll never tolerate cheating.”

“I hope you’ll feel better soon; I’m always here for you.”

A week passed.

Aries returned to therapy with Enzo, and for the first time, he opened up completely.

He finally confessed the truth beneath his lifelong insecurities, how it was like growing up in Kyro's shadows, always a step behind as Kyro flaunted success with ease. He admitted how inferior he felt, struggling to find footing in adulthood while Kyro bought a Rolls Royce at their age, and how he had been indirectly pushed to take up a personal loan for a motorbike just to manage his odd-hour shifts at work.

Comparison had shaped his entire self-worth, so much that his fear of conflict made him avoidant to the point of having emotional paralysis.

Enzo helped him to recognise something he had never realised.

"Hey, Kyro was never the standard you needed to live up to. He was simply the symbol of who you thought you were supposed to be, not who you truly were."

In the meantime, Kyro spiralled.

At first, he tried to court Ariel back through grand efforts that exceeded his past gestures. But when she ignored him for her own peace of mind, he turned vindictive. He began posting cryptic Instagram stories, publicly accusing Ariel of cheating on him with his friends, Aelius and Edric.

Rumours spread quickly, soon enough to reach Ariel on campus. Exhausted from the whispers, she asked Aries for a ride back to the studio apartment she once shared with Kyro. Worried about her safety, Aries wanted to accompany her upstairs, but she insisted on a final private conversation.

"I'll be waiting for you here, if anything happens, call me."

Kyro was thrilled when the door unlocked, convinced that Ariel had come to forgive him. She had no idea he had blocked her from seeing the smear he posted online.

Judging from Ariel's expression, Kyro immediately pushed the blame onto Aelius and Edric.

"Look. Aelius had invited the girls and ordered the drinks. I only accompanied Odelia and Edith, so I don't appear to be rude."

Ariel could clearly hear the cracks in his excuses, Aelius had always been Kyro's scapegoat whenever things get out of hand.

Being sceptical, Ariel continued, "So why have you been distant these past few months if you didn't know the girls?"

Edric became Kyro's second shield.

"You know, Edric, my business partner. He needed business advice and emotional support for his relationship issues." Kyro responded in attempt to justify his late nights out and suspicious behaviour.

"Fine. Since you're not willing to have a real conversation, I'm packing my things." Ariel said, gathering her belongings. "I'm done trying."

When Ariel lugged her belongings to Aries, she looked defeated. As she put her helmet on, Aries gently suggested, "I don't know what Kyro said to you but if you want to confirm the truth, maybe you could reach out to his friends."

Ariel agreed and moved back in with Aries.

Returning home with exhaustion settling into her bones, Ariel slumped onto the couch, barely able to hold herself upright. Her hands trembling slightly as she unlocked her phone, scrolling through Instagram with a mix of dread and determination.

Aelius and Edric.

Her heart pounding as she prepared to reach out, not to stir trouble, but for the truth she knew she needed to hear from each of them directly.

In separate messages, both men unintentionally exposed Kyro's lies.

Aelius, confused, admitted,

'I didn't invite anyone that night. First time meeting those girls.'

His honesty confirmed that he barely knew Kyro, Odelia and Edith. The story Kyro fed Ariel was completely fabricated.

Edric played the more crucial role.

'I've been home taking care of my wife and my newborn daughter for a month.'

'Barely had any time to go out.'

That's when everything clicked.

Aries realised how Kyro had been using Edric's name for years to inflate his credibility.

At the same time, Ariel saw how deeply Kyro's manipulation ran, not only towards her, but towards her brother as well.

The pieces came together like a missing puzzle piece, and with them came a final, painful clarity.

Kyro wasn't who they thought he was.

He was a liar, manipulator, and a man who never truly cared for their well-being.

Ariel wasn't the only one left sorting through the aftermath.

That night, Aries lay in bed wide awake, thoughts circling the work conflict he had been avoiding for weeks.

The weight of everything pushed him to finally confront his manager the next day, and to his relief, the conversation unfolded with unexpected honesty. They talked through the misunderstandings, acknowledged the tension and then eventually reached a mutual compromise.

His manager, seeing the effort Aries had consistently been putting in despite his struggles, reassessed his attitude towards the job and even offered him a salary increment.

For the first time in a long while, Aries felt seen.

As the days passed, that single moment of clarity became the catalyst for him to slowly rebuild his self-worth, piece by piece. He had rediscovered old hobbies – cooking and journaling – and slowly felt himself becoming whole again.

It had been some time since everything collapsed, long enough for the raw grief to settle into a quieter, aching acceptance.

For Ariel, the healing was particularly painful. Losing Kyro felt like she had lost stability, routine and a future she believed in. But as time passes, she learned to live without his texts, how to fall asleep without his voice and presence, and how to navigate her days without the illusion of comfort he once provided. Independence didn't come easily, but she claimed it slowly, rebuilding herself in the spaces he used to occupy.

As for Aries, the silence Kyro left behind felt different from Ariel's perspective, but no less heavy. Being Aries' only friend who stayed growing up, and the person he once thought he could trust for life, losing him wasn't simple for Aries, even after everything. Some nights, Aries found himself remembering their childhood, the memories now bittersweet and tangled with betrayal.

In that emptiness, he recognised something grounding.

Ariel was the one who had never left his side and neither did he leave hers. In the end, all they truly had was each other, two siblings who survived loss, heartbreak, and years of quiet struggles.

Somehow, that was enough. Maybe for the first time, it was more than enough.

Their days finally felt steady, quiet and peaceful, untouched by Kyro's chaos.

Which was why, on an ordinary evening, when they least expected it, the past resurfaced quietly, just as Kyro appeared outside the siblings' apartment. This time, he didn't barge in. He rang the doorbell and waited.

When Aries opened the door, Kyro looked calmer – not reformed, not broken.

“Aries... Why did you turn Ariel against me?”

Aries stood his ground, steady and unshaken.

“I didn't. Your actions and attitude did.”

In that moment, Kyro finally understood.

He had lost everything, not because anyone betrayed him, but because he refused to take responsibility.

He left in silence. 20 years of friendship ended without a fight.

Later that evening, Aries rode home from his last therapy session. At a quiet intersection, he reread Enzo's final message.

For years, he believed his entire life revolves around keeping up with expectations, with Kyro and standards that were never truly his.

But now, standing in the soft glow of the evening night, he felt something he was familiarising himself with.

Peace.

Every painful event – losing his parents, depending on Kyro, loving and losing, protecting Ariel, meeting Enzo – led him to where he is now. To clarity. To healing. To finding himself again.

Enzo's words echoed gently.

'It's all connected.'

Aries understood.

Sometimes the connections you lose are the ones that finally set you free.

Epilogue – After the Connection

Time moved gently in the weeks that followed. Aries and Ariel settled into a new rhythm. One built on quiet routines and steady healing. They cooked dinners together more often, fell into natural conversations after long days and supported each other's schedules in ways that they never had the chance to before. With the chaos of Kyro finally out of their lives, both siblings learned what healthier boundaries looked like with themselves.

Aries continued journaling, filling page after page with reflections, small victories and memories he wanted to keep. Therapy soon became unnecessary as he found emotional stability on his own terms.

Ariel, on the other hand, poured herself into her final semester of college. Without Kyro's presence shaping her every decision, she took her time rediscovering who she really was, not as part of a new relationship, but simply just as herself.

Seasons shifted.

Ariel graduated and Aries attended the ceremony with an unmistakable pride. In that moment, both siblings shared an unspoken thought. If their parents were still alive, they would have been incredibly proud of her too.

Not long after, Aries received a formal recognition at work, earning a promotion to senior manager. It was proof to himself that he no longer needed Kyro as a benchmark, nor anyone to validate his growth.

The siblings planned a small celebratory trip, something they had always been talking about but never had the time nor emotional space to do. As Ariel packed her belongings, she stumbled across something she had forgotten entirely; the old promise ring Kyro once gave her. She picked it up and recognised the weight it used to carry. But this time, there was no sting behind it. No tears, no trembling hands, only acceptance.

She placed the ring back into a small box, closed it gently and dropped it into the bin.

Aries stood at her doorway, witnessing the quiet moment. He didn't say anything. He knew he didn't need to either. The simple act was enough for him to understand that his sister had finally healed from everything.

When night falls, after Ariel had gone to bed, Aries stood by the window for a quiet moment before reaching for his journal. The sky had deepened into a rich shade of indigo, scattered with faint stars struggling to be seen through the glow of city lights. Below, the streets moved in a slow and muted rhythm, headlights drifting past like distant fireflies, the hum of traffic softened into a gentle background pulse. A cool night breeze slipped through the slightly opened window, brushing against his skin and carrying the calm he had spent months searching for.

With that stillness settling around him, Aries finally sat down and wrote,

'Some connections break. Some connections heal.'

'But all of them lead us somewhere.'

THE END.