

INTERCONNECTED**"The Midnight Caller"**

An astronaut thousands of miles from home sends out a distress signal to reconnect to base. Jess, a disillusioned office worker picks up the call and the pair find comfort and hope in their shared isolation.

Written by

Millie Mussett

INT. OFFICES - DAY

Year 2100, a beige office aligned with desks at the top of a sky scraper.

The room is filled with office workers staring blankly at their screens and typing away in silence. JESS is sat at her desk typing a line of code, she presses the coffee button and a cup rises out of her desk. She blows on the steam and takes a sip.

A clock at the top of the room shows 17:00, a BELL RINGS.

BOSS

(voiceover)

Thank you for your contribution,
you are a prized worker and we
couldn't fight this crisis without
you.

In unison the workers turn off their monitors and rise out of their seats. A video of the BOSS appears.

BOSS (CONT'D)

Today's worker of the day who wrote
out an astonishing 1,000,000 lines
of code is worker 5698.

The team applause in a robotic unison still with a blank look on their faces.

BOSS (CONT'D)

Transport running, clock out.

A well-oiled machine, the group simultaneously press their watches and disappear.

CUT TO:

INT. JESS' FLAT - EARLY EVENING

An open planned sparse room with a window looking down on the city. Objects in the room clearly show only Jess lives there; 1 hat and coat hang by the door.

Jess lays out her plate and cutlery on a single table. The table looks out onto the distant city lights. There is a deaf silence as Jess prepares the table for dinner. She opens a cupboard and takes out a bag from a line of "meal for 1" packets. She warms up the bag in a machine and then serves it onto her plate.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jess sits in silence as she eats her bland meal.

CUT TO:

INT. JESS' FLAT - NIGHT

Jess is on her laptop at the dining table. She's flicking through emails. A notification pops up - *Mum's birthday*.

Jess looks at the notification and hovers her cursor over the banner. She lets out a sigh and drags the notification off the screen.

A BUZZER DINGS, Jess looks at her watch it reads 12am.

Jess gets up from the table and puts her hand out to shut the laptop screen.

Suddenly the laptop RINGS and an unknown number pops up on the screen. The ringing catches her off guard and she jumps.

Jess stares at the number puzzled. She presses the ignore button and turns away from the laptop.

The laptop RINGS again and the same unknown number pops up on the screen. Jess returns to the laptop and hovers her cursor over the ignore button again. She looks out onto the bustling but far away city. Jess looks back to her laptop screen and answers the call.

The video call opens on a black screen.

ALICE

(voice cuts in and out)

He-llo? Hell-o?

JESS

Hello?

ALICE

Can you see me?

JESS

Ey? See what?

The black screen blurs into focus, revealing ALICE, wearing all blue, her hair tied back in a messy plait staring back at Jess.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE

Ah, there you are, can see you now.

JESS

Excuse me? Who the hell are you?

ALICE

(laughing)

Oh my god, I can't believe this actually worked. I can't tell you how glad I am to see you!

JESS

Is this a joke.

ALICE

I didn't think the long-wave dipolar transmission would be strong enough, I've been trying to get through to mission control for weeks. It seems that rebooting comms via the A51 transmitter is what did it. Fascinating.

JESS

Rebooting the what?

ALICE

Sorry to burst in on you like this. What time is it over there? Is it night, what year is it? Were you in the middle of dinner? How rude of me, I do apologise, manners have never been my forte.

JESS

Manners, transmitter, year? Who are you? If you're selling something, I'm not interested. I've already dropped a worker number since they introduced the new quadratic code. I've missed out on this year's bonus.

ALICE

Quadratic code? Hang on, this must be the year 2100?

JESS

Are you kidding?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE

Is it? It is isn't it! Brilliant oh
that's brilliant, I could kiss you!
Got a name?

JESS

My worker number is 769-

ALICE

(cutting in)

No no, I don't want your worker
number, what's your name? Your real
name? I'm Alice, you know like the
book.

Jess looks blankly at the screen.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Lewis Carroll?

Jess looks blankly at the screen.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Don't you lot read books anymore?

JESS

Not since the de-forestation crisis
of 2090, paper is a banned mat-

Snapping herself out of her point

JESS (CONT'D)

(to herself)

What am I saying.

(to Alice)

I'm sorry but I have no idea who
you are or how you got my number
and frankly well... I'm just not
use to this.

ALICE

To what?

JESS

To... to speaking. To speaking to
an actual person.

SILENCE

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE

What's your name?

JESS

Jess.

ALICE

Well Jess from the year 2100, looks like it's your lucky day.

JESS

Right...

ALICE

Got any family Jess, friends?

JESS

Um, we don't really do that anymore.

ALICE

What about a mum, you must have a mum?

JESS

Obviously, but we don't keep in contact. I was moved into the system when I was 2. I still have her contact details but we don't really talk.

ALICE

2! That's very young, I'm sorry to hear that. Mums are good, you should call her.

SILENCE

JESS

So why did you call me and where are you exactly?

ALICE

That's a good question Jess. I've been stuck in orbit very far from home. Had to use an escape pod, my ship was hijacked by bandits and I've been adrift ever since.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE (CONT'D)

Lost track of what solar system I was in. After weeks of sending out distress signals I quit trying to contact base and started trying random co-ordinates just to see what would happen. Trial and error ya know. You were the first to pick up.

JESS

This is mad.

ALICE

Tell me about it! It's nice to hear a voice though.

JESS

Yeah... it is.

PAUSE

JESS (CONT'D)

So, what are you going to do now?

ALICE

Another very good question Jess. If I'm honest with you I hadn't planned that far ahead.

Jess laughs.

ALICE (CONT'D)

(smiling)

Hmm, maybe if I just...

Alice presses several buttons above her head and cranks a few valves.

ALICE (CONT'D)

(while working)

Now I've been able to successfully make radio contact I should be able to re-channel the frequency to mission control.

Alice continues to fiddle with the buttons over her head

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE (CONT'D)

Sorry, I'm being rude again, won't be a mo. Why don't you tell me more about yourself, what's life like in 2100 Jess?

JESS

Um...there isn't really much to tell.

ALICE

Nonsense! You were saying about being taken away from your mum and that horrible system.

JESS

Oh yeah, well there's nothing special about that. With global warming on the rise and humanity at the point of no return the government introduced new extreme measures. Families were limited to a single child rule. The kids people do have are put straight into work forces to combat the climate crisis. The plan was to make the world a more efficient and controlled place. My work focuses on writing code that reads the temperature of the ice caps. But it's got to the point where we're not allowed any freedoms, transport is monitored, you're only allowed to teleport twice a day, once to clock into work and the other to clock out. We have Sundays off but that's also travel restricted so we can't visit family.

PAUSE

JESS (CONT'D)

It's like everyone's soul has been drained, people walk around like broken robots.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE

Sounds like you lot need to come together. You shouldn't have to face times like this alone.

PAUSE

ALICE (CONT'D)

Jess, you are a smart woman who is being very brave. Your parents would be proud.

JESS

(smiling)

Thanks.

ALICE

Ah ha! That should do it!

JESS

What's happened?

ALICE

I've made contact with mission control and sent them my whereabouts. They're flying over a rescue ship as we speak, it arrives in moments.

JESS

(looks down, disappointed)

Oh, that's... that's great.

Alice looks back at Jess and can see she's upset.

ALICE

Can I ask you one final thing Jess?

Jess looks up at Alice, tears in her eyes.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Call your mum.

Jess smiles back at Alice

ALICE (CONT'D)

Over and out comrade!

The line goes dead. Jess, closes the lid and flops back in her seat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jess's WATCH BEEPS, she rips it off her wrist and throws it across the floor.

Jess takes a moment to collect herself. She leans forward and reopens her laptop, the screen is hidden from view.

She types something and the DIAL TONE RINGS.

JESS'S MUM

Hello?

JESS

Mum? Is that you?

-END-