

Phone Dude
(aka In the Cloud)
By
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FADE IN ON:

INT. SCIENCE LAB - DAY

Blinking lights and Kubrick-style furnishings. An NSA logo dominates one wall.

ALAN SIMMONS (30s, geek-handsome) types on a keyboard. Polishes his glasses with his white lab coat - squints.

GENERAL PERKINS BUTLER (50s) stands guard at the door. Someone knocks: a Shave-and-a-Haircut rhythm. Butler salutes, opens wide.

LILA (30s, gorgeous - 2021 meets '40s glam) rushes in. Darting over to Alan, she grabs his collar, coos.

BUTLER

(barks)

Simmons, this is an engineering demo, not a Holiday Special on the Lifetime Channel. Visitors break protocol - keep it short!

ALAN

C'mon General, be a sport. You kiss your wife before going to work?

BUTLER

I've been married thirty years. You're the scientist. So do the math.

ALAN

Well, when Lila and I tie the knot, we intend to keep the romance warm!

LILA

Alan, this is so exciting! I couldn't wait. All your dedicated work - complete!

ALAN

Honeybuns, "optimistic" looks beautiful on you.

(playfully tweaks her nose)

Just like absolutely everything else...

LILA

Oh, Darling, you're not only smart. You're so, so sweet!

ALAN

But let's not jump the gun. This is just one dry run. My Gamma-Bluetooth project may not yield results for years!

LILA

But if it does - oh, the wonders! Having the magical ability to broadcast one's thoughts over Wi-Fi!

ALAN

Not magical, honey. Scientific. And once we tweak the algorithms, 5G.

LILA

Pinch me, baby. It's all such a technological dream!

She bear-hugs Alan, nearly knocks him off his feet.

LILA

Admit it, General Butler! My man here is a genius. Thomas Edison can't hold a lightbulb to him!

ALAN

(coughs)

Honey, Alexander Graham Bell might be a better analogy...

Alan picks up a HEADSET bristling with LEDS. An output wire dangles off the back. He slips it on - a snug fit.

Lila kisses her sweetheart passionately. Between Alan's glasses and helmet, it takes time for lips to find flesh.

LILA

Duckie Darling, after today's grand experiment succeeds...

(winks)

As I know it will, you'll finally have the alone time to read those superhero comic books you love so much.

(beat)

Speaking of "love" - enough time for US to "experiment" with each other, too. And money from a promotion, for that honeymoon we've planned for years!

ALAN

Fingers crossed. Bermuda, here we come!

Off balance due to the headset's weight, Alan wobbles across the room to a gadget which resembles an OLD STYLE TRANSISTOR RADIO.

Butler rolls his eyes. Grunts.

BUTLER
Gonna make a historical speech,
Poindexter?

LILA
(pouts)
Duckie's name is Alan, thank-you-very-much.

BUTLER
Or just countdown formal, three to one?

ALAN
For posterity - if you please!
(intones solemnly)
That's one small step for Alan, one giant leap for communication-kind! Everyone, hold your collective breath. Bombs - I mean Bells - away!

Alan plugs the headset jack into the device. At first: NOTHING. He and Butler exchange disappointed looks.

BUTLER
A billion bucks of R&D, for this?

Then: CRACKLE. POOF! The transistor sparks. Alan's helmet catches fire. Lila screams as he convulses, then drops.

Lila and Butler run over. Butler fumbles for a pulse.

LILA
Oh no! Is he-

BUTLER
Toots, I'm no medical doctor, but it appears your fiancée is toast.

Butler stares at Alan's smoking body.

BUTLER
Literally.

LILA
No!!!!

She lunges for Alan. Butler holds her back. Suddenly: Alan's VOICE echoes eerily from the transistor.

ALAN (O.S.)

What happened? I can't see. Is anyone there? Hello?

Lila gasps.

LATER

The transistor sits on a table, Lila and Butler on opposite ends. They stare at the contraption, stunned. Sometimes at each other, too.

BUTLER

The engineer boys I've pow-wowed on this are absolutely gob-smack stumped. They theorize the charge which was supposed to broadcast your thoughts INTO the device reversed in polarity... some sorta cosmic random flux. That somehow sucked your entire consciousness into your little Radio Shack doo-dad there.

Alan's plaintive voice echoes from the gadget's speakers.

ALAN (O.S.)

Then reverse it back. Get me outta here!

BUTLER

That's just it. We can't. The helmet fried.

Butler glances woefully across the room.

BUTLER

And it's just as well you don't have eyes. 'Cause your whole body sure as hell did, too.

ALAN (O.S.)

So I'm stuck in here *forever*?

BUTLER

In the cloud? I guess so. Or whatever you Silicon Valley cowboys call it now.

ALAN (O.S.)

Well... that puts a serious crimp in my life plans.

Lila leans over the speaker. Mascara streams down her cheeks, defiance in her eyes.

LILA

OUR plans. But hang in there, Sweet-ums!
I won't let them hold you captive.
Somehow, somehow we'll make this work!

Strange electronic SHUFFLING echoes from the speakers.
Static. EM feedback? Alan's voice cracks.

ALAN (O.S.)

I wouldn't quite say *captive*. In some
weird way I feel... free!

BUTLER

"Free?" For national security's sake,
tell 'ole Butler more.

ALAN (O.S.)

It's like: I no longer have a body, so
I'm everywhere at once! And when I focus
carefully, I can hear every single
telephone call in the world. Any nation,
cell or landline - crystal clear.
Screamed or whispered. Every word!

Butler's eyes flicker with renewed interest.

BUTLER

(soft)

Kid, concentrate. Can you access computer
data, too?

More electronic shuffling. Alan tests his powers out.

ALAN (O.S.)

That'd rock, wouldn't it? But...

(shuffling, tries it out)

No. It's easy-peasy surfing into hardware
through modems, but once I hit the
circuit board itself? I'm screwed. It
sounds all gibberish to me. Guess I don't
speak binary too good.

Butler's face falls.

BUTLER

Oh.

ALAN (O.S.)

But hey - gimme any name in the whole
wide world, and I can tell you instantly
who they're chatting with. Now that I've
merged with the phone system...

BUTLER

(mutters)

What exactly does that make you: a
"Superhero Cell Soldier"? "Atom Alan?"
"Phone Dude"?

ALAN (O.S.)

There's no secret mere mortals can hide
from me!

Butler sighs, stands up. Disappointed, he ambles towards
the door. Lila reaches for him.

LILA

General? Don't go!

ALAN (O.S.)

He's leaving us? Butler, why?

BUTLER

Eavesdropping's a cute magic trick, don't
get me wrong. But NSA can *already* listen
to every Tom, Dick, Harry and Gretchen on
our own. The surveillance game's second
nature to us now. Which makes you... a
redundant waste of resources.

(beat)

I'll go let down HQ. But don't go getting
your transistors in a panic, Son. I'm
sure they'll find someplace to warehouse
you, safe and sound.

Butler leaves - the click of the door perfect punctuation
to that news. Alan yells after him.

ALAN (O.S.)

You're gonna stick me in a closet? Damn
you and HQ to hell. I gave the agency the
best years of my life!

Lila stares at the gadget. Speechless.

ALAN (O.S.)

Lila? It's so dark, Darling. And I'm so
lonely. Speak to me... please?

Lila tries to pat the box reassuringly. Can't bring
herself to touch the thing.

LILA

Don't worry... uh, baby. I'm right here.

ALAN (O.S.)

Whew, what a relief! Whatever happens, I have you.

LILA

But Alan, you've been "transistorized"
What in heavens are we gonna do?

ALAN (O.S.)

Well, that's the million - or billion -
dollar question, right? Whatever we cook
up, I guess we're gonna have to put
Bahamas on hold. For now, let's focus on
the bright side. This means we can be
together - always!

LILA

How?

ALAN (O.S.)

I'll be in your phone and at your side!
If you remember to keep it charged, of
course.

Doubt darkens Lila's face. The depth of this shit-show's
sunk in now.

LILA

Pookie, that sounds smashing. In theory.
But-

She glances across the room.

LILA

Your body is - uh - real messed up. When
Butler called it "toast", he was being
kind.

Alan's voice grows frantic.

ALAN (O.S.)

Who needs a body, baby? There's always
phone sex, right?

LILA

As an appetizer. But the main course? No!
Years of teasing's just... too long!

ALAN (O.S.)

Years? Expand your horizons and think of
the big picture, Lila! If I'm part of the
phone Matrix now, that means I'm eternal.
We'll have each other forever!

LILA

You'll be eternal, Alan. I won't.

(sobs)

I'll age into a wrinkled prune. Without anyone to hold me while I'm young!

ALAN (O.S.)

But I'll be with you always. Isn't that what marriage vows are for?

LILA

Whispering sweet NOTHINGs in my ear until I have a stroke at eighty? That's not fair!

ALAN (O.S.)

You said you loved me for my mind! Newsflash, *Darling*, that part of me's still around!

Lila jumps to her feet.

LILA

I... just can't marry a disembodied voice! If that's what you've become, I'm so, so sorry but you're on your own!

She races from the room, slams the door. Leaving Alan and the box alone. Awwwwwwkward.

ALAN (O.S.)

So much for "love transcending the physical".

He digitally pouts - hopes Lila might return. No dice.

ALAN (O.S.)

What a fate. Neither deaf nor dumb, but blind. Is *anyone* in this room? Or should I just go surf the circuits now, and find some lonely hearts chat room?

No response. Alan sighs.

ALAN (O.S.)

Superhero? More like Super-bust. For a special power, this really sucks...

FINAL FADE OUT: