

GHOST DIALLED

written by RhysDS

based on the novel by Damian Lopez

10 February 2025

INT. HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Start on the 'broadcast' that global comms are down. Julian sits at his desk, head in his hands, staring at the clusterfuck of error messages on his screens.

The lights flicker. A breeze knocks over a photo of his grandmother despite none of the windows being open.

Impossibly, Julian's phone starts ringing. He Googles "Is the internet working again?". But it doesn't work. He picks up his phone. Silence.

JULIAN

Um... hello?

The voice that answers him is that of a young woman, but when she talks she sounds distant and archaic.

BETTY (O.S.)

Ahoy-hoy! To whom do I have the pleasure of speaking?

JULIAN

This is Julian Barleycroft.

BETTY

You don't have a relative by the name of John, do you?

JULIAN

Well, none living.

BETTY (O.S.)

In that case it's a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Julian. You have reached the landline of the Davis household, and you are speaking to Betty. To what do I owe the pleasure of your call, Julian?

JULIAN

You called me.

BETTY (O.S.)

I can assure you I did not.

JULIAN

I thought the phones were all down.

BETTY (O.S.)

Hmm. Well if that's the case I should hardly imagine that we would be communicating in the manner which we currently are. Isn't that so?

JULIAN

What?

BETTY (O.S.)

On the other hand, if you are being transparent with me, it would seem we are experiencing what Alexander Bell himself might refer to as a 'phantom call'. Don't you agree, Jules?

JULIAN

You know, my grandmother used to call me Jules. No one else.

BETTY (O.S.)

My grandmother insists that to call me anything other than Elizabeth is improper. Sometimes I ask myself if the older generation isn't simply willfully difficult!

JULIAN

You know, you talk a little like my grandmother.

BETTY (O.S.)

I'm sure YOUR grandmother is a woman of excellent taste, and not at all like my own.

Julian picks up the photo frame of his grandmother, and asks himself...

JULIAN

(to self)

Elizabeth Davis?

BETTY (O.S.)

Are you there, Jules?

JULIAN

Yes, err... tell me: can you remind me of today's date? I've been working around the clock and lost track of time.

BETTY (O.S.)

Why, it's Wednesday February 10th Nineteen Sixty Five.

Julian, finally clocking it, chokes back a tear.

JULAIN

Umm... I don't suppose you've got time for a chat, Betty?

BETTY (O.S.)

I suppose I will have to prepare the table for dinner any minute, but I have until then.

JULIAN

Would-- Would you tell me about your day?

BETTY (O.S.)

My day? I'm afraid recently I've been living a rather idle life.

JULIAN

Doesn't matter. Even the boring bits. Do you have a brother?

BETTY (O.S.)

Why, yes. Micky introduced me to one of his friends today. A uppity young man by the name of John Barleycroft.

JULIAN

I bet he's not so bad, really. Despite the bravado, I'm sure he has a certain twinkle in his eye.

BETTY (O.S.)

(laughing)

Jules, despite having only begun to make your acquaintance it feels as though you know me better than some of my oldest friends!

Julian laughs too, letting his tears fall freely down his cheeks.

JULIAN

Maybe I'm biased because we share a surname...

FADE OUT.