

DOWN TO EARTH

Written by

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INT. FOOD JOINT - DAWN

Two people are sat opposite each other on a canteen-style table and chairs. The place is deserted, messy.

MALO (MALE, EARLY 20s, BOOKISH) is tucking into a chicken box with greasy fingers and a saucy mouth.

ELLIE (FEMALE, 20s, BLUE HAIR) is typing on her laptop, engrossed, papers scattered everywhere.

MALO

It is way too early to be meeting here. Why so early, Ellie? Jed hasn't even finished mopping the filth from last night away yet...

ELLIE

Stop whinging. You literally live above us.

MALO

My chicken's not even hot!

ELLIE

Look. And give us some.

She slides a CLASSIFIED FILE across the table, exchanging it for the grimy chicken box.

MALO

You're such a square, always printing everything out.

He picks up the paper and starts reading.

ELLIE

You're a square. And watch your greasy paws, this is classified stuff. I worked hard to get this info, you know. Out of this world. Like you wouldn't believe.

She slides the chicken back, but it goes unnoticed as Malo reads on...

MALO

What the... Oh my god, El. Is this it?

ELLIE

This is it. Our chance to shine. Tomorrow morning. Well, today morning, actually.

MALO  
Shit. Our first podcast! Shit. I  
better go get some sleep...

He gets up, stuffs chicken in his gob.

MALO (CONT'D)  
Mmm, this is hot now?!

ELLIE  
It starts at ten sharp -- don't be  
late.

MALO  
I won't be late!

Malo makes a swift, haphazard exit.

ELLIE  
He'll be late.

TITLE PAGE: "DOWN TO EARTH"

Over the titles, Ellie's voice is heard through a phone  
crackle:

ELLIE (CONT'D)  
Malo, I bloody told you not to  
sleep in again. Every single time.  
Okay, call me when your sorry arse  
wakes up. And don't forget the  
briefcase -- it makes you look  
important...

Her voice crossfades with a STRANGE ALIEN TONE -- a crescendo  
into bright white silence...

EXT. KENSINGTON PAVEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Malo -- now sporting SLICKED-BACK HAIR, GLASSES, and a TOO-  
BIG SUIT -- is pacing about the pavement, clutching onto a  
briefcase, on a fairly bustling street.

His phone's pressed to his ear as he checks his watch,  
fumbling and frantic.

MALO  
El, ca--can you hear me now? Ellie?

He WAVES his phone over his head and stills on the spot.

MALO (CONT'D)  
Are you absolutely sure it said  
fifty-one, not fifty? It's just  
that across the road looks much  
nice than this shit--

A MAN (30s, TALL, SMART-CASUAL ATTIRE) exits the door at  
Number 51, accidentally barging right into Malo.

MALO (CONT'D)  
--Hi!

Man gives him an odd, piercing look, then walks away.

MALO (CONT'D)  
Rude.

(back to call)  
Well, I'm trying fifty instead --  
partly because I think you're  
wrong, and, er, partly because I  
don't want it to be fifty-one...

ELLIE (O.S.)  
(ranting)  
Malo, you are the stupidest man  
I've ever laid eyes on! The meeting  
is absolutely and unequivocally at  
number fifty freaking one, you  
utter fuc--

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Malo PACES down an endless, soulless, Travelodge-y corridor,  
phone still glued to his ear. It's generic, tattered, easily  
get-lost-in-able.

He reaches something of a crossroads, sighs.

ELLIE (O.S.)  
Told you it was fifty-one.

Malo looks to his left and -- relief!! -- he's finally found  
Ellie. Or rather, she found him...

She dumps a load of rudimentary camera equipment at him,  
folds her arms and shakes her head.

MALO  
Why are you wearing the same suit  
as me?

ELLIE

Come on, we haven't got time. We're already beyond late.

MALO

Why are you wearing the same suit as me?

ELLIE

Because it's a better look on me, okay?! You're not the only one who wants to make a good impression.

MALO

But you're supposed to be my intern-

ELLIE

So? You're just an intern too, intern, so shut up.

MALO

I--you shut up.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

They're lost.

MALO

Thought you said you'd found the room.

ELLIE

I have... had. Did. Whatever. It's round here somewhere.

MALO

Sure, yeah. Of course it is.

ELLIE

I think it's that one.

Malo opens a door and see the rear end of an unsuspecting, rather large NAKED MAN. He slams it shut and gives Ellie a look of contempt. She shrugs.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Oops.

They keep walking.

MALO

"Become a civil servant!" they said. "Enjoy fast-track training opportunities!" they said. Stable career prospects...

But they didn't tell me about all this glitz and glamour.

ELLIE

You're not a civil servant -- you're a civil servant's bitch.

MALO

Oh yeah? Then what does that make you?

ELLIE

...Shut up. Wait, this looks famil--

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Still lost. They've managed to accost a member of HOTEL STAFF...

HOTEL STAFF

So you want to take a right here, then it should be the fifth door down--

MALO

Christ, we just came from -- I mean, thank you.

They pace.

MALO (CONT'D)

(to Ellie)

This is like being trapped in the world's shittiest civil servant Mind Palace.

ELLIE

Maybe it's by design.

MALO

You reckon?

ELLIE

Yeah. Like, a system designed to infuriate? A test, maybe?

(MORE)

ELLIE (CONT'D)

First they don't tell us about the meeting, then they have the meeting in such a hard-to-find location that we could never've found it, even if we had been invited.

MALO

Yeah, probably. Oh look. Here.

There's a door with an A4 'Meeting 51' sign, written in Comic Sans.

ELLIE

This is it! Wait...

Ellie adjusts Malo's hideous tie and crumpled suit.

MALO

Oh, stop fussing.

ELLIE

Shut up. We need to make a good impression.

MALO

They're not even expecting us.  
...How's my hair, though?

She takes out a pocket comb and fixes the mess.

ELLIE

Fine. How's mine?

MALO

Blue.

ELLIE

Oh just -- bloody get in --

-- She shoves him through the door, into the --

INT. TOP SECRET MEETING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is in stark contrast to the corridors and echoes a Whitehall meeting room -- albeit a cut-rate, Travelodged version:

Red walls, dark wooden furniture, bookshelves all around. A central 8-seated table. Vapid, soulless, and... EMPTY?!

There's just one CLEANER (a skinny, sickly-pale man) present, busying about with a loud industrial Henry Hoover.

MALO  
(Glances around)  
Woah...

ELLIE  
Did we miss it? Shit, did we  
miss it?

ELLIE (CONT'D)  
You, there -- did we miss it?

The Cleaner pointedly ignores them.

MALO  
Excuse me, you there, young Cleaner-  
person. Did we miss it?

CLEANER  
(finally looks up at them)  
Miss what?

ELLIE  
The -- the bloody top secret  
meeting supposedly in here --

MALO  
--That we clearly have clearance  
for, obviously--

ELLIE  
--Yes, obviously.

They both glare at him, expectantly. He remains nonplussed.

CLEANER  
I just clean the floors, wipe the  
tables. And know nothing.

Ellie scoffs, starts to scope the room as Malo sidles up to  
the Cleaner. He tries -- and fails -- to be commanding...

MALO  
Now, you listen here, matey. We  
might look a little inexperienced  
but we--we're definitely supposed  
to be where this meeting is at. Was  
at. I mean...

Meanwhile, Ellie is still snooping around in the background.  
She looks down to one of the chairs.

MALO (CONT'D)  
What I mean is...

ELLIE (O.S.)  
Mal...



MALO  
Can you tell us what happened in  
here? So we can turn it into some  
excellent podcasting content?

ELLIE  
MAL.

MALO  
But we--

ELLIE  
(to Cleaner)  
--Got confused. Okay thanks bye!

She ushers Malo out the elbow.

ELLIE (CONT'D)  
(whisper)  
I found something...  
  
(she pats her pocket)  
Let's get to a secure location.

MALO  
Certainly...

QUICK CUT TO:

INT. TAXI - CONTINUOUS

Same expressions, but facing straight on now. In a cramped  
taxi, London streets in the background.

A beat. Malo is clearly dying to say something. Ellie is not  
biting.

MALO  
Oh come on, El, you're killing me  
here--

ELLIE  
Shhhhhhhh will you! You think this  
is secure?

MALO  
What, him? He clearly couldn't give  
two shits.

They both look towards the back of a disinterested CABBIE's  
head, who probably couldn't care less.

ELLIE  
Fine. But shush, will you?

MALO  
Okay, I'll shush. I'll be--

ELLIE Be cool. MALO (CONT'D) Cool, yeah. I can be cool.

Ellie finally takes a USB stick out hear pocket, wiggling it around.

ELLIE (CONT'D)  
This must've fallen onto one of the chairs.

MALO  
(gasps, whispers)  
Intel?

ELLIE  
(examines the stick)  
No, Dell, I think it is.

MALO  
Oh--

ELLIE  
(hushed whisper)  
Of course it's bloody intel!

The Cabbie moves his head as he turns an especially sharp corner... Drop the USB trying to get it into the laptop.

MALO  
Maybe we should pause... until we find a more secure location.

Ellis gives a long suffering sigh.

CUT TO:

INT. FOOD JOINT - CONTINUOUS

Busy this time. They're sat back at the same table, but next to each other now. They finally have the device connected -- through another wire and adaptor to fit the MacBook.

It's LOADING...

MALO  
I mean, who uses old USB sticks in this day and age?  
(MORE)

MALO (CONT'D)

Positively ancient. Don't they know about the Cloud?

ELLIE

I think the point is to avoid the Cloud. Remember the GDPR training?

The Laptop screen FILLS with multiple windows -- information about alien sightings and possible communications. The FRONT WINDOW on the screen gives the following details:

"POSSIBLE EXTRATERRESTRIAL COMMUNICATION EVENT -- ENCRYPTED FILE"

MALO

Holy. Shit.

ELLIE

See? This is why I print everything out...

MALO

(looks around)

Shall we, uh, find a more secure location?

ELLIE

Your flat?

MALO

(checks his watch)

Flatmate will be banging her boyfriend around this time. Rather loudly. Your flat?

ELLIE

Uh...

INT. ELLIE'S FLAT - LATER/EVENING

It gives a whiff of 'crazed detective trying to solve a conspiracy', but other than that is a typical studio space.

Malo, takeaway boxes in-hand, looks at all the energy/climate change paraphernalia on the walls, red string, the lot...

MALO

Whoa... You're really into all this saving the planet business, aren't you?

ELLIE

And you're not?

MALO

I am, of course I am. But like, I don't want it all over my kitchen table and walls, you know?

Ellie pulls down a few pieces of paper and stuffs them away.

ELLIE

Well, I haven't exactly got much to work with here, in my tiny studio broom cupboard, thank you very much.

She sits at the kitchen table and opens the laptop up again.

MALO

Least you don't live with, like, five other people. Who like to shag non-stop. Broken Britain, let me tell you.

ELLIE

Are you going to help me crack this, or are you going to keep complaining about your sex fiend flatmates?

Malo leans over her and squints.

MALO

I can't see a thing in these -- let me Clark Kent it up...

He takes off his glasses and gives a toothy smile.

ELLIE

Who?

MALO

Clark Kent. Literally Superman disguised? The world's best and greatest alien? Are you well, El?

ELLIE

No, I know. Yeah, of course. Superman. I just forgot. Long day.

Malo gets distracted, looks at pictures on Ellie's fridge.

MALO

Hey, I saw this guy earlier!

ELLIE  
(swipes it away)  
Must've been a doppelgänger. Now  
stop messing and put that Computer  
Science degree to good use.

They both plonk down at the table...

QUICK CUTS/MONTAGE:

Various stages of the pair trying to access the ENCRYPTED  
FILE -- with little to no success -- but having fun along the  
way...

They finally high five in victory -- they cracked it!

Malo has crashed on the sofa. Ellie pulls a blanket over him.  
Studies him sleeping for a beat, fairy lights twinkling  
behind him.

Alien music builds again to...

INT. ELLIE'S FLAT - MORNING

The cold light of morning -- Ellie SHAKES Malo awake --

ELLIE  
Quick -- we're late!!

Malo SPRINGS UP, disheveled, and dives into his shoes.

MALO  
Taxi?

ELLIE  
On it...

INT. TAXI - CONTINUOUS

Another cramped taxi, the pair of them looking a mess and  
bristling with anticipation for the encounter.

MALO  
I hope we're not too late...

EXT. FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Empty again. The Cleaner is there again, with a rake this  
time, who notices them gives a cursory glance of disdain.

Someone else is dismantling a white gazebo. Bits of tape scattered about. Everyone important obviously gone.

MALO

...I think we're too late.

ELLIE

I mean, it hardly seems the setting for an alien invasion.

MALO

Shit. I can't believe we missed it.

MAN (O.S.)

Missed what?

The same MAN from Number 51 -- and Ellie's photo -- is there.

MAN (CONT'D)

They didn't show anyway. Did they, El?

ELLIE

How would I know? I was with him!

MAN

Yeah, that's the problem. That's always the problem.

Man rolls his eyes and walks off. Malo looks too gutted to realise who the guy was and quiz Ellie about it...

MALO

I thought this was our big break, y'know? Fame and fortune, and all that other stuff that makes a person happy. Shit.

ELLIE

I know. But, like... Maybe it doesn't matter?

MALO

Yeah. Yeah, who gives a crap anyway. We're just interns, right? Sod it. And sod the aliens, too -- I reckon it was all a load of bollocks anyways. Another hoax.

## I/E. FIELD/FLASHBACKS - CONTINUOUS

ELLIE

What if...

(hesitates)

What if it wasn't a hoax, though?

What if they were already here?

MALO

What? You mean like, "The aliens  
are among us"?! 

ELLIE

Yeah. What if they're among us  
and... they want to help.

MALO

Why would they want to help us?

ELLIE

Because of all the, y'know,  
helpless...ness. All the chaos  
humans bring to each other.What if these other beings had  
something really good that could  
help them, but they weren't sure if  
it might make things worse instead?What if they wanted to be sure that  
humanity's actually worth saving?

Malo looks deep in thought.

MALO

Then why not just ask us?

ELLIE

What if they are trying to ask, but  
the particular chosen human is so  
dense and moronic that he doesn't  
even realise it?

MALO

That must be one stupid human.

ELLIE

You're telling me.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Okay. What if they caught wind of  
the humans catching wind of them,  
and intercepted the wind-catching  
via infiltration across the nation?

MALO

Is this about climate change again?

ELLIE

No it--I mean, it kind of is about that, but that's not what I mean.

MALO

Then what the hell do you mean?

ELLIE

I mean... What if someone was sent to scout out a species destroying itself but... kind of liked them anyway. Wanted to help them. Save them. Earth. Humanity.

(a beat)

Do you think it's worth saving?

MALO

Of course it's worth bloody saving! What a stupid question. We live, we breathe, we fucking stink. We are useless and brilliant and never fucking learn -- yet somehow we evolve. We hate and we love. We have opposable thumbs and infinite cat videos and...

Malo finally pieces everything together --

QUICK CUTS/MONTAGE/FLASHBACKS:

Back in the meeting room, Ellie doesn't 'find' the USB -- it was hidden up her sleeve... ("Our chance to shine...")

When Malo was sound asleep on the sofa, Ellie was levitating, hovering and sleeping herself. ("Who is Clark Kent?")

When they met, there's light coming from their handshake -- from Ellie. ("Out of this world...")

She'd lit up the chicken box while he was engrossed in the CLASSIFIED file ("Mmm, this is hot now?!")

She pulls the photo of MAN from the fridge (he's another alien...)

("Stupidest man", "Stupid human!", climate change research)

Etc.



-- and he is stunned.

MALO (CONT'D)  
I think I've figured it out.

Ellie looks both worried and relieved...

MALO (CONT'D)  
I'm the stupid human, aren't I?

ELLIE  
Well, you've always been stupid,  
far as I can tell.  
(beat)  
Can I share something with you?

MALO  
Beam me up, Scotty...

ELLIE  
I can't do that.

MALO  
Ah, so you do know Star Trek, then.

ELLIE  
Every universe knows Star Trek.

MALO  
Fair enough. But if you can't beam  
me up, what can you do?

ELLIE  
If you shut up for just a second, I  
can fucking show you...

She grabs his hands -- gives him light, understanding. After  
a while, she lets go and he looks stunned again.

MALO  
Why me?

ELLIE  
Why not you?

They share an awkward smile.

MALO  
Uh. Are we gonna save the planet?

ELLIE  
I might save the planet, and you  
can be my intern. In the meantime,  
do you fancy some wings?

MALO  
You can give us wings?

ELLIE  
No, you dick. I mean some chicken wings.

MALO  
Oh. Go on, then.

EXT. FOOD JOINT - LATER

Through the shop's glass front, Malo and Ellie are sat in the same seats as earlier, enjoying their hard-earned food. Jed is mopping again in the background.

The camera zooms out -- up up and away -- as they continue talking about everything and nothing, just like before...

MALO (V.O.)  
Do you reckon we're gonna get sick eating all this fast food?

ELLIE (V.O.)  
Well, you might. I'm a higher being, so I'm alright.

MALO  
Don't get too cocky -- aliens can't be tested yet in their fried chicken eating expertise, surely? And are you really like four foot nothing and green?

ELLIE  
Do you ever shut up, though?

MALO  
Who is that guy on your fridge, by the way? How many of you are there? Shit. I've got so many questions --

ELLIE  
Too many, really.

MALO  
Yeah, alright. Hey, this tastes good. It's a bit cold, though...

ELLIE

I am not your personal fucking microwave. You can eat it cold.

MALO

Fine. But, like, are we going to save the planet? World peace, and all that? Fame and fortune and--

ELLIE

Probably not. We can try, though? Are you up for it?

MALO

You've mind-probed me, El. Need I say more?

(beat)

I really could do with some hotter wings, though...

ELLIE

Fine! Pass them here...

FADE OUT.