

NUMBERS

Written by

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INT. SCHOOL SCIENCE CLASSROOM - DAY

Electrical equipment of all sizes and shapes, cover every shelf, every table and most of the floor space too.

There's oscilloscopes, microphones, satellite dishes and things with dark green screens that no one even remembers how to use.

In the middle of this sprawling mess sit four teens, huddled round a large analog HAM Radio array.

BENJY, who would be the least geeky of the four if not for the Harry Potter glasses, 'ahems'.

BENJY

'Kay, order, order.

He waits for the non-existent hubbub to subside.

BENJY (cont'd)

Meeting twenty six of the Fessenden High Midnight Radio Society is in session.

SNOWY, not his real name but a reference to his white blonde hair, giggles.

BENJY (cont'd)

What's funny?

SNOWY

Well, every week, same intro and there's just us and well it's a bit formal, a bit much, maybe.

Benjy glowers at Snowy.

STEPHEN, glasses wonky, hair both greasy and wonky, acne raging, tries to defuse the imminent argument.

STEPHEN

I can totally see why Snowy thinks that, but I also totally get why Benjy likes to start our meetings like that, get ready for the Midnight broadcast and all --

ZACH, name too cool for a nerd, and to be fair he's the one that could break free with a little effort with his wardrobe, enters the fray.

ZACH
Jesus H on a unicycle, pick a side
for once Stevo.

STEPHEN
No, it's just, well --

HILARY, face buried in a fur lined brown hoodie, interrupts
the petty squabble.

HILARY
I decoded the numbers.

Everyone stops, looks at Hilary.

ZACH
Did she really speak?

She blushes.

STEPHEN
Decoded the what?

SNOWY
Yeah, spill it.

Hilary leans in, conspiratorial.

She switches the radio array on and sweeps the dial looking
for something.

ZACH
Oh, the suspense.

Hilary twiddles the knobs a little until...

RADIO
Seventy eight, twenty nine, three,
eleven...

BENJY
A numbers station?

She nods.

STEPHEN
A what?

SNOWY
The theory goes that it is a Russian
spy system and the numbers are a code
that agents get their orders from.

HILARY
It's not, it's much worse than that.

ZACH
Two sentences in a day, is someone recording this?

Hilary ignores him as the Radio continues to churn out apparently random numbers in the background.

HILARY
It isn't Russian, or spies at all, the numbers aren't numbers.

ZACH
They sure sound like them...

RADIO
Sixteen, four, ninety-nine...

ZACH
See!

HILARY
No I mean, we are hearing numbers, the broadcast is the numbers but every other property of the sound fluctuates with each number --

BENJY
In patterns?

Hilary nods.

The radio has fallen silent, but no one notices.

SNOWY
Like there's a hidden meaning that isn't the spy number shit?

HILARY
Exactly.

STEPHEN
So we need to figure --

HILARY
I did it, I figured it.

She grabs her laptop from her bag, opens it up.

HILARY (cont'd)
Once I knew something was under the
numbers I ran it through every
analysis software I could find.

ZACH
And?

HILARY
It's a chant.

She smiles at the boys.

SNOWY
A chant, is that it?

BENJY
What sort of chant?

HILARY
A Gregorian chant.

She taps some keys on her laptop and the sound of monotonous
Latin chanting fills the air.

BENJY
That doesn't sound quite right.

HILARY
That's because its backwards.

ZACH
Like satanic backwards.

Hilary nods, stops the playback on her laptop.

A burst of loud STATIC from the radio makes them all jump.

STEPHEN
But what does it mean.

HILARY
I don't --

RADIO
It means I have created a resonating
and spiraling curse.

The entire group turn their attention to the radio.

ZACH
Fuck.

STEPHEN

It didn't just answer, did it?

Hilary nods.

RADIO

I did, yes.

Around the room, every other piece of electrical equipment turns on, one by one, in a circular sweep that appears to be surrounding the radio club.

SNOWY

I don't like this.

ZACH

I hear that.

HILARY

What do you mean a resonating and spiraling curse?

RADIO

Astute question. I have been chanting my curse for nearly a hundred years, each year it gets more powerful and it spirals throughout the day until midnight when it is at the peak of its malevolence.

All the electrical equipment in the room is now on, a sickly glow encircling them.

HILARY

What does it do though?

The radio laughs, dark and perverse.

RADIO

It infects humanity, creates and amplifies hatred, kills indiscriminately.

STEPHEN

I don't believe you.

RADIO

COVID, me. Imminent third world war in Ukraine, me. Trump, me. Truss getting voted in and then resigning, me. And that's just the recent ones.

ZACH

Kpop?

Stephen elbows him.

BENJY

Why though?

RADIO

I oppose god, it is my purpose, I
need no more reason than that.

The electrical equipment starts a low soft chant, nothing
hidden behind numbers now.

The noise resonates into the room.

ZACH

What's happening now?

RADIO

Can't you guess?

HILARY

A chant just for us?

RADIO

You really are the smart one.

Hilary blushes, despite the circumstances.

RADIO (cont'd)

This will just be a short curse, not
long till midnight and I can't have
you revealing my purpose now can I?

ZACH

Fuck this bullshit.

He heads for the door, which is inexplicably locked.

RADIO

Sorry.

Zach picks up a chair and hurls it at the door, nothing.

STEPHEN

That's school property!

SNOWY

Really, now!

HILARY

Guys, we've got to stop the curse!

BENJY

Plugs!

They all spring into action, yanking plugs from the myriad of extension cables that litter the floor.

The volume of the chanting goes up not down.

RADIO

You really think it would be that easy?

ZACH

Was kinda hoping so. Smash em!

They set about the electronics with anything they can lay their hands on. Glass and plastic flying everywhere.

But still the volume of chanting goes up.

BENJY

(shouting to be heard)

Now what?

One by one they shrug, despondency on their faces.

Except Hilary, she's deep in concentration.

RADIO

Don't worry it'll all be over soon, just a few seconds to the witching hour.

Hilary grabs her laptop again.

HILARY

Fuck that.

ZACH

What you got Hils?

She taps some keys, scowls at the screen, taps some more.

The boys cover their ears as the demonic curse climbs to a crescendo.

HILARY

Try this!

She hits the ENTER key with a dramatic stab.

LAPTOP

Eight, thirty six, eleven.

SNOWY

What's this?

HILARY

The chant, played forwards, in numbers.

ZACH

His evil shit totally reversed?

Hilary nods.

RADIO

Oh, so smart, but far too late.

BENJY

Faster Hilary!

Hilary raises a quizzical eyebrow.

BENJY (cont'd)

Increase the playback speed.

Realisation dawns.

She taps a couple of keys.

LAPTOP

11, 3, 22, 7, 87, 101...

The numbers come thick and fast.

Radio SQUEALS in pain.

RADIO

No!

She hits more keys.

LAPTOP

1204734590i3973466403963431...

The electronics around them pulse, energy crackling.

The sound battle peaks with an explosion, then another...

One by one the electronics burst into flames.

The chanting stops.

STEPHEN

Holy shit!

ZACH

Exactly that.

RADIO

Bravo.

SNOWY

Ha, we beat you.

Radio laughs, genuinely amused.

RADIO

I am eternal, and the airwaves are forever open. Perhaps you will hear me again... soon.

And with that the Radio goes silent, turns off.

STEPHEN

Wow, just really, wow.

ZACH

No one is gonna believe this shit.

SNOWY

We need to make them believe!

BENJY

No, we don't, we need to fight back.

STEPHEN

But how, what do we know?

Benjy looks to Hilary, new leader of the Fessenden High Midnight Radio Society.

HILARY

We set up our own numbers stations, run the chant against the curse.

SNOWY

That'll work?

HILARY

Let's find out.

FADE OUT

THE END