

TELEPHONE GAME

By Jenny Connell Davis

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PROMPT—Kristina Loy: Collection of telephones. Each allows you to communicate with people from a different time period.

A room with hundreds of telephones.

TWO WOMEN enter. One looks up, shocked by the magnitude of what she's seeing.

WOMAN ONE
What do you think?

WOMAN TWO
These are all yours?!?

WOMAN ONE
Not mine, exactly. I'm more like their...guardian.

WOMAN TWO
There must be hundreds --

WOMAN ONE
Thousands.

WOMAN TWO
Why would you...I mean they're beautiful, but why would anyone --

WOMAN ONE
Why would anyone need this many telephones?

Beat. Woman Two takes a telephone, holds it out to Woman One. Woman One hesitates.

WOMAN TWO
Go ahead.

Woman ONE holds the phone to her ear. A MAN (the man on the other end of the line) enters. The man speaks with a British accent.

MAN
We need supplies. Rations, medicines, bullets, anything you can get your hands on.

WOMAN ONE
Hello?

MAN

The Krauts cut the lines across Normandy – we’ve lost dozens of men – I swear to God, if the Americans don’t jump in soon, there’ll be nothing but dead bodies from here to –
The sound of cannons, bullets. The man screams in pain. The woman hangs up, shaken.

WOMAN ONE
What the hell was –

WOMAN TWO
Not “what.” “When.” 1940. Here –

She holds up another phone. Woman One hesitates.

WOMAN TWO
1914

WOMAN ONE
Did they even have phones in –

WOMAN TWO
Take it.

Woman One Takes the Phone. Another Woman (also at the other end of the line) enters.

WOMAN THREE

Honestly, darling, I don’t understand the fuss. These Europeans assassinate each other whenever they get a chance! And what’s one Duke – Oh, sorry, ARCHduke – in the grand scheme of things? And really, you would think the Austrians would be glad to be rid of him, they were so embarrassed about his marrying beneath him.

WOMAN ONE
Archduke Ferdinand?

WOMAN THREE

You can’t tell me it hasn’t made the papers back home?!? It’s all over Paris. Well, that and Tango –

Woman One hangs up the phone, spooked.

WOMAN TWO

She’s a bit of a ditz. From what I can tell, she was on a debut tour of Europe when the war broke out.

WOMAN ONE

Did she –

WOMAN TWO

I don't think she made it back.

WOMAN ONE

Celeste – how is this even -- ?

WOMAN TWO

How is it possible? I don't know. All I can tell you is that every single telephone in this room connects to someone at a different moment in history. A trench in Normandy. A tango salon in Paris. A plantation in Savannah. A village outside Hanoi. Every single one of them on the cusp of a disaster of man's own making, every one of them oblivious to the role they're about to play in history. I keep finding them, keep bringing them here, until I can find someone to tell me what any of it means, to tell me what to do –

She's been getting worked up. Woman One puts a hand on her, calms her down.

WOMAN ONE

Maybe we listen.

End of Play