



## Marconi & Me by Zoë Comyns



RTÉ Drama On One, IRELAND

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RADIO DRAMA CATEGORY

**Marconi & Me**

Country: IRELAND

Category: Drama

Company: New Normal Culture & RTÉ Drama On One

Author: Zoë Comyns

Producers: Zoë Comyns (New Normal Culture) & Kevin Brew (RTÉ)

Directors: Zoë Comyns, Kevin Brew

Sound engineers: Damian Chennells, Brendan Rehill, Brendan Jenkinson

Other key staff: Zoë Comyns and José Miguel Jiménez (Performers), Kevin Reynolds (Series Producer, RTÉ Drama On One)

Language: English

Length: 44:07

**SUMMARY**

A podcast producer finds a set of code books. They are the Marconi International Code books (1919). They contain 500 pages of 5-letter codes and their translations. The main character starts to read the codes obsessively and twist them into her own life story. In themselves the codes form extraordinarily poetic lists. The innovative drama charts a crumbling relationship from its origins, via a history of sound, telegraphy and communication, Marconi's telegraphic work in Ireland and a flight into family madness.

## **Marconi & Me by Zoë Comyns**

### **Characters:**

HER: - 30s.

HIM: - Spanish Early 30s.

Expert 1 - Male

Expert 2 - Male

Expert 3 – Female

Expert 4 - Male

Expert 5 - Female

Expert 6 – Male

**Marconi & Me by Zoë Comyns**

HER: Hi I'm doing this podcast about sound and Marconi. Could you give me a call back so -

HER: Hi, I'd love to have a chat with you about these books that I found. I'd love to know more about them. They're called the Marconi International Codebooks -

HER: ... and I'm doing some research. The project's about communication -

HER: You know, my boyfriend and I just found these codebooks in a shop. They're all kind of Morse Code phrases -

HER: I'm just getting a little bit intrigued by them because they're quite poetic so if you could give me a shout back I'd appreciate it, thanks a million -

HER: ...lists like phrases, like a conversation between two people so I'd just love to know -

HER: I'm just wondering about hearing sounds and in the ether.. It's just a, it's a funny story actually -

HER: .. about Marconi's belief that sounds never dies, that the sounds are all out there still -

HER: I know it's a slightly mad idea but I'd love it if you could just give me a call back?

HER:

Imagine silence, because that's all you can do. It doesn't exist. There's always sound, energy making tiny journeys from a maker to a mind.

HIM/HER (in Spanish/English):

19038 **UVAPY Silence.** Silence Silencio

HER: Sound is not a dimension. It's just a mechanical wave. It needs something to move through, a physical thing. Sound displaces the air. It cannot be the space itself.

HER: When I told you that, I could see you thought me suitably scientific and I thought you the finely shaped form of a new beginning.

HER/HIM

06543 **EZAKO** frequency (ies) fréquence (s) frecuencia (s)

06547 **EZACU** Frequently frecuentemente, souvent freceuentemente, a menudo.

HER : Even when, just after we met, I was down with a cold and you came often with soup and paracetamol and then with plans. You stayed for reasons. And none of them *sound*.

HER: Episode Idea: Podcast series of personal stories told through anecdotes and reflections.

HER:

Anecdote:

My sister killed my mother because her teeth were playing Greensleeves. It was probably to be expected as she hates that song. But even when she was lying there dead on the bed my sister said that the music kept playing until my mother's mouth ran dry.

Moment of Reflection:

They say madness runs in a family. So, I act as normal as possible and probably come across a little dull in company. I don't want to be considered *out there*. Just steady, controlled, to stay in *here*. I keep the messages to a minimum. Or at least I should have. In fact, there's no word in my book for mad, lunatic, strange or crazy. Just plain, straight thinking words.

HER: Note for Episode One of Communication: I've just opened the Marconi books and this is on the first page.

*“In the event of your receiving a message containing a mutilated code-word taken from the supplement then a reference to this index will assist you to rectify and decode the mutilated word.”*

HER: All truth needs a code to unravel it. Our own code starts without verbal communication. No mutilated words. No real words at all. You're Spanish and I'm Irish. You don't know my backstory, I keep that coded for a long time.

HER: Unpicking the obvious I can reach as far back as the walks we took together just after we met when we bought the words that would deliver us to the end. We walked right across town, one of many trips to explore the city's limits. The apartment complexes, stop lights, churches, crossings, traffic lurching its way across town. We passed thousands of people those days but what any of them looked like, any single one, I forget.

HER: We find the books browsing in *Rugs to Rhinos* on Harold's Cross Road. We pay €60 for each copy and we're delighted with each other. They span both our worlds of **data and audio** and connect us. You a computer programmer, me a radio producer.

HER: MARCONI: INTERNATIONAL CODE Volumes I and II.

HER: They ... they could be our own codes.

HIM: We. Don't. Need. Words.

HER: Just looks, gestures...

HIM: That's powerful enough.

HER: We agree. But buy the books anyway. And then of course later words are needed. Eventually they come. In wicked torrents.

HER: You have a misty quality to you that seems to resist language and talking. It took you many years to learn English properly.

HER: Programming languages are far more complex than English and you learned *those* quickly.

HER: Eventually you find your voice and it is fluent, and argumentative.

HIM: There is no ambiguity in computer languages but all conversation is open to interpretation. And all humans are more complex than machines. Are you coming to bed...?

HER:

HER: I just have one more recording to edit.

And besides you say, that if you'd learned quicker our arguments would also have come quickly and with too much candour.

Could it be that simple, that what we don't know doesn't hurt us?

HER: We each had one book. There should have been loads of volumes but only two were for sale. We found the codes a fun way to talk to each other.

Voice message: I'm just trying to find out about Marconi books from 1919. Could you give me a shout back?

EXPERT 1: The Marconi code books contain over five-hundred pages of five-digit codes and their translations in nine languages. The books were used by operators all over the world, to relay business deals, order supplies, to track ships and so on. They were written by James Cruickshank Henderson Macbeth for the Marconi Company. The books use something called a checksum. You can send any two characters in the wrong order and the codeword will still get there.

HER: You are excited to hear this and tell me all about these error detection messages. I'm unsure I get how they work, but put it down to my lack of technical ability and your poor language skills.

In the instructions, they cite 'EHMIT' as an example, with columns for its number, code letters, English, French and Spanish translations, each letter EHMIT to be sent by Morse code across the wires:

**05126 EHMIT** Owing to the failure of.      en raison de la faillite.      debido a la quiebra de.

The first entry in the index is:

**00000 ABABA**    A or An.

The first proper word:

**00002 ABALC**    Abandon (s)

And it goes on to give variations on this:

00003 **ABAND** abandon all claims.

00004 **ABAPE** abandon negotiations.

00005 **ABARF** abandon proceedings.

00006 **ABASG** if they abandon.

00007 **ABATI** abandoned.

00008 **ABAWK** they have abandoned.

00009 **ABAZL** they have abandoned all claims.

00010 **ABBEA** they have abandoned the proceedings.

00011 **ABBIB** abandoning.

00012 **ABBOC** abandonment.

And so it continues to the next word:

00013 **ABBUD** **Abate (s).**

HER : We both pretend to hate our smart phones even though we have them. We prize our own antiquated code that connects us as we transcribe or send photos of the pages, using it when we can to fit our moods.

HER: You know what I'm trying to do here so, could you give me some sort of philosophical observation on the dawn of telegraphy or codes. That'd be brilliant.

EXPERT 2: Yeah sure. In the early days, it felt like messages just pulsed out into the ether. They broke up or dematerialised, and were transmitted over time and space. This seemed like proof that there were different planes of consciousness and international communication seemed like magic.



HER:

In our first flush we text each other the codes at night.

## GIRAC

In turn we scroll the pages for the meaning.

**GIRAC**      How are we to?

We translate and read into each phrase our physical yearnings and so return a code or many from the lists:

HIM:	<b>GIPYB</b>	<b>How</b>
HER:	<b>GIRAC</b>	how are we to?
HIM:	<b>GIRED</b>	how are you to?
HER:	<b>GIRHE</b>	how can they?
HIM:	<b>GIRIF</b>	how can we?
HER:	<b>GIROG</b>	how can you?
HIM:	<b>GITID</b>	how large?
HER :	<b>GITME</b>	how long?
HIM:	<b>GIUOF</b>	how many?
HER :	<b>GIURG</b>	how much?
HIM:	<b>GIUTI</b>	how often?
HER :/HIM:	<b>GIUYK</b>	how shall we?

HER: The coy nature of these phrases give form to confession contracted for trade. Shorthand snaps for more detailed expressions, elegantly made then exchanged.

HER: We share walks and books and bed. And I withhold entire family histories. I think of my sister, crouched under her blanket at the window in hospital, in crumpled silhouette.

HER: You work in logistics. Labelling and shipping masses of widgets across the world. You're in charge of Systems designed to manage large volumes of critical data. High levels of transactions. Security. Complex Systems. Big machines talk to big machines.

HIM: 03305            **CEXOT Data.**            Les données.            Los datos.

HER: So this is Just for the top of the programme - Would you mind, could you just introduce Marconi for me?

EXPERT 3: No problem - Guglielmo Marconi was one of the great pioneers of long distance radio transmission and the originator of the code books. He's considered the father of modern radio. When he started out, his business plan was to provide long distance mobile communication on a global scale. But he also became a little obsessed with sound.

HER: With all genius there's in it rooted a little madness, no? He became convinced that sound never dies. Sound, it was thought, just becomes too quiet for our human ears to detect. It decays.

HER: I remember an old vedic mantra that a presenter whispered into my ear once: '*the world is sound*'. We were at a drinks night out and it almost worked until I remembered his wife and three children. His middle-aged breath decayed upon my cheek and I found a new drinking buddy for the night.

EXPERT 3: So in theory, if the myth holds, in Marconi's mind, if he could build the right listening device, then any sound could be recovered. Any conversation or any concert. He wanted to know what music the orchestra was playing as the Titanic went down. In fact he was supposed to be on it but he changed his plans.

EXPERT 1: Just as well perhaps, as the Marconi telegraphers on board failed to relay a message about icebergs. And so they would have witnessed first hand the consequences of failed communication, and on the other hand, irony.

EXPERT 3: Perhaps, he later thought, if he could find the pocket of the world where it was stored, he could listen as far back as Jesus's Sermon on the Mount!

Who could take a census of the sounds that have sounded? Even a fixed mind would find too many footsteps marching hands clapping thighs slapping knees knocking ps and qs dropping. Surely they cannot be found again and heard in resolution?

HER:

HER: My sister says they can be heard again, or still. The Earth rotates like a record player. Radio waves ricochet off satellites. *Greensleeves* on the radio. Beamed out and back again. Bouncing off the metal of my mother's mouth. Spirit voices or decaying sounds. Who knows the truth.

HER: I'm in bed with my laptop on my knee. I read how telegraphers were required to hold silence for three minutes at fifteen and forty-five of the hour. The ships out at sea with the weakest signal were then able to cut through with a distress signal. I read about Anna Nevins in the Waldorf Astoria telegraphic station in 1909 who used to send coded messages to her lover on the steamship *Oceana*, a thousand miles away.

I think of you on a ship far away. It's far more romantic than the thought of you in your hotel away on business again, eating room service again, tired from, tired from, tired ...

HER: Most of my radio work these days is in podcasting. My latest series is a science one; on microorganisms. Micology. It becomes pretty clear very quickly that I could become a Fungi-Freak.

Lesson 1: Fungi are fungi and mushrooms are edible fungi.

Back to codes. I'm pulled between these programmes.

HER: It's known, I read, that women and men's codes are also distinguishable. Operators in the early 1900s could tell, long distance, the unnamable peculiarity of a woman's dots and dashes. Nearly all women, it says, have a habit of rattling off a lot of meaningless dots and dashes before they say anything. Can that really be true?

HER: I look back at the last code I sent you:

03658 **CUNEK**            desire (s).

03659 **CUNIL** desired.

03660 **CUNYM**    desirous.

To the point I think.

Your reply:

HIM: 04893 **EFSYP Explicit.**

04893 **EFTER** please be more explicit.

HER: I smile and flick through the book to find a response. It's tricky though with 20th century commercial terms, not 21st century sexting. Subtlety is the only option:

18631 **UPFOB** when shall we?

HIM: 21386 **XOTUG To-morrow.**

HER: We meet in town. There's not a lot of talking as your English is still poor. There are wild hand gestures though, and a lot of physical contact.

HIM: Let's go home and undress.

HER: You grab me by the waist and lead me. On the bus we can't keep our hands off each other. In bed we grip each other's smooth shoulders, make obscene love and create a cave around us. Time is slow and everything seems significant.

HER: When we move in we have a suitcase each.

HER: Our flat for the first few weeks contains nothing else of note but our code books so you would find it difficult to pin down who might live here and who we as people are.

HER: We have nothing!

Him: We have enough.

HER: In the beginning I can't see you objectively. You are foreign and therefore mysterious. You are strong and therefore desirable. Then when we've been together for a long time, my life set on top of yours and yours set on mine, I'm even less objective.

HER: The first present you give me is a necklace with the letters **YJYVS** on it. I check the book.

HER:

22425 **YJYVS Us.**

HER: I fiddle with it constantly. People ask me what it means but I say they're just random letters.

HER: 02413 BEGYD **private code**

HER: We enjoy the mystery. We read our own truth into the phrases. But then the low voice of context is heard again.

HER: A radio friend asks me over for a listening session with a few others. It's like a book club but we all suggest pieces to listen to together.

HER: We talk about interview techniques. We discuss the Full-Schwartz. In the radio community we are all enthralled by the authenticity of this method.

EXPERT 4: Stephen Schwartz was a radio producer who came up with this technique. You lie the interviewee down and ask them to close their eyes. You want them to talk in the present tense so it sounds like it's all happening right now.

HER: It's a walk-through that explores the territory between what is yours to tell, and what is mine to request or want to know, the lacuna, the space, the past, the trace, what we allow to rest in our memory, the sounds, the smell, the pictures of that moment. Capture it. Be in it.

HER: My sister and I used walk-throughs of our family home. It calms her. We start when she's nine and I'm seven. If she was losing it a bit, even then I'd know. We'd sit on the floor, back against the front door as we mentally 'walk' through the house naming as many objects as possible in each room as we pass through.

HER: Later, when I visit her in hospital she's convinced she remembers every detail of her life. She can walk through it from the age of four. To me this seems like torture. She describes sounds she hears, music, conversation, whole lives appearing from a void to join her.

HER: She heard my mother's mouth making sounds where there should have been silence. My sister had only screamed at her but it was enough to give Mum such a fright her heart gave out. By the time my sister's scream reached me in the kitchen, Mum was dead.

HER: Nobody asked how it happened just when it happened. We told them that but never why.

19038 UVAPY **Silence.** Silence Silencio

HER: I delve deeper into madness and sound. Peaceful minds tormented. I try to map my research on to what I know about my sister.

**MUSIC: Shostakovich String Quartet No. 8 in C Minor (II)**

EXPERT 2: When Shostakovich turned his head to its side, he was subject to a flow of melodies. Was this a piece of shrapnel in his head? The onslaught of sound like air raids, hammering.

EXPERT 3: The Writer Virginia Woolf walking the path to mental breakdown heard sounds the sparrows outside, singing in Greek.

HER: And then I wonder as I'm telling you many, many months in if it all ever really happened at all as I've aimed to forget. But you know that you never really can forget, because it never really can be forgotten, especially the tumbling scream of it all. I wonder if you will think I'm crazy too but you think I'm just self-destructive which is a different thing entirely. By telling you, is the sound dispersed even further or does it just have one more object to bounce off?

HER: I look up how sound reflects and start to love the terms *Parabola* and *Ellipse*.

I think the way we talk is like an ellipse, a whispering gallery where you stand on one side and I on the other and we can still hear each other clearly even in a room full of people.

Years in I get frustrated with you for not speaking enough, then you're speaking too softly in a crowd. No one can hear you. I say it kindly at first and then with increasing anger.

Speak up. Speak up! You must speak up or people won't understand your accent. By the time we've come to the end we're shouting across the distance and I can hear you fine.

I know I'm easily:

01642      **ATASO**      **bored.**      taladrado, perforado, aburrido.

HER: but don't you find fighting...

HER/HIM:

01643      **ATAWP**      **boring.**      taladrando, perforando, aburriendo.

HER: I win an award for my Fungi podcast. I get wildly drunk on champagne at the ceremony and giddily dance all night.

I meet the middle-aged but attractive presenter in a lift on the way to the rooms and inexplicably hold his hand and fall from grace as my body and lips answer his demands.

19038 **UVAPY** **Silence.**

HER: We never say it out loud.

HER: 21315 **XOHYT** **Time.** Tiempo (s), época (s), vez(s)

HIM: 21316 **XOHZU** time is the essence of the contract El tiempo es lo esencial del contrato

HER: A year of time and I am pregnant and we are ecstatic. I start eating folic acid by the scoop-ful. I research all about babies. I'm asked can I do a podcast on the stages of pregnancy. From first scan to the first cry. I go through all the classic episodes of morning sickness, measuring the baby by comparison to foodstuffs: peanut, avocado, butternut squash. Playing classical music to the bump. I get asked to do all sorts of yoga workshops as the podcast is becoming very popular.

At twenty-nine weeks another scan. I'm recording at it. So now my audio edit allows me to hear back how I reacted to the news being sounded out.

Possible Colpocephaly...

I edit out that bit and put in a voiceover instead to explain what happened. My editor doesn't want to put people off listening. My producer head wants to tell him that this is radio gold. The mother-me wants to vomit up my heart and not feel a thing.

We speak very little at home. I sit in bed for days charting my horror:

HER/HIM:

**ELWAY** feeling has not improved.

**EMFAO** what is the present  
feeling in regard to?

**EJYLA** **Fault(s).**

<b>EJYMB</b>	fault arising from.
<b>EJYRC</b>	fault attached to.
<b>EJYVD</b>	fault has been found with.
<b>EJYZE</b>	fault has been remedied.
<b>EJZUF</b>	fault has developed in.
<b>EKALG</b>	fault in.
<b>EKAMI</b>	fault is.
<b>EKANK</b>	fault is serious.
<b>EKAOL</b>	fault is not serious.
<b>EKASA</b>	fault of.
<b>EKBAD</b>	because of the fault.
<b>EKBIE</b>	can any fault be attached to?
<b>EKBOF</b>	chief fault is.
<b>EKBUG</b>	could find no fault with.
<b>EKCHI</b>	great fault has been found with.
<b>EKDAK</b>	has the fault been corrected.



**EKDEL** it was our fault.

**EKDRA** it was not our fault.

**EKDYB** it was their fault.

HER: The what-ifs begin - Do I deserve this for my wrong doing? This is karma, and true to form it's a bitch. I try to stay perfectly still so as to make the baby well again.

I cast my mind back to my sister the first time I saw her in hospital, and wonder if my daughter is a sliver away from that.

#### 01582 ASNOC Blame

HER: Pregnancy Season 1 is almost finished and I head into Season 2 of Fungi and a new show: Season 1 of Communication.

I'm scouring the web for stories. I hear one science story about the World Wide Wood and it blows my mind. Fungi rule the world and there's no mistake.

EXPERT 5: Ok if you can imagine - it's like a social network for trees. A mother tree can recognise its own child or if it's a stranger. There are brain-like functions that occur with trees. Chemical and electrical signals carry messages like nerves. Through their roots. But these roots only stretch so far. So if they need to get a message to the other side of the forest they send a message through the fungal filament network underground. So trees care for each other because one tree is not a forest. And the more shocking element is they also have characters!

HER: Can there be good trees and bad trees? If two trees fight in a forest?

HER: The tree gives the fungi sugars they require to survive and the fungi carry messages across the forest.

HER: The shrooms are in cahoots Sis, the shrooms are in cahoots.

HER: Sitting in that room with my sister, her belief engines on overdrive citing ominous patterns of people from the bus drivers to the beggars working together. Chemical and

electrical signals carrying messages to and from like nerves. The flush under her skin, the pulse, the journey from mind to muscle.

Voice Memo: Episode idea for Communication and conspiracy -The West Ford experiment of the 1950s, they flung all the copper wires into space - or the ionosphere - and the copper wires would orbit the earth and bounce back sounds - maybe find someone to tell me more about that. .

EXPERT 1: It was a back-up plan in case the Soviets sabotaged existing means of communication. Half a billion needles crowning the earth. They're still there, an imperfect circle haloing the globe, ready to send us back the sounds cast out there.

HER : My boyfriend and I have the baby. We're upgraded to partners. The baby is mostly fine and will be fine. A misdiagnosis or a moment of given grace. We don't ask. We take what is given. My feelings on karma don't change though and I fear the future.

HER: Later we have two babies. We are all the trees and the fungi. We are in a trading system with each other. We feed the babies who wriggle around the carpet. We feed them sugar and they communicate for us to the rest of the world in howls and screams as to how we feel.

HER: In the king-sized bed where we all sleep, entangled roots and threads of limbs. The tubular mouths in the dark grind sugar lumps. If a tree falls in the forest will the fungus just crunch it up and give it to the new tree? If a tree falls in the forest and no one hears it is there just:

19038            **UVAPY**            **Silence.**            Silence            Silencio

HER: And when the thread unravels and the arguments escalate we each have our suspicions. We parse back and forth for days.

**You.**

you must. you

must be. you

must have. you

must not. you

must not be.

you should. you

should be. you

should not. you

should not be.

you were.

you were

not.

you will. you

will be. you

will not. you

will not be.

you would.

you would be.

you would not.

you would not

be. can you?

can you not?

did you? did

you not? have

you? have you

been? have

you not? have

you not been?

if you have. if

you have

been. if you

have not. if

you will. if you

will be. if you

will not. if you

will not be. if

you would. if

you would be.

unless you are.

unless you

have.

were you? were

you not? will

you? will you be?

will you have?

will you not? will

you not be? will

you not have?

would you?

would you be?

would you not?

would you not be?

HER: You're away again. A flurry of texts between us about your tricky clients, meetings to turn the project around, how the kids are doing, how I'm doing. Fine I say, babysitter booked.

The ellipsis pulses on screen.

I imagine your thumb hovering, tracing the letters on the phone, considering.

Then the dots disappear.

I text: "It's just a listening session."

19038 **UVAPY Silence.** Silencio

HER: I prise open the now torn pages of my volume. Our movements checked by each other. We bend and flex as our lines of communication waver - they hinge then *turn*.

21762	<b>YCJIC</b>	<b>Turn (s).</b>
21763	<b>YCJUE</b>	turn for the better.
21766	<b>YCKAF</b>	turn off the market.
21767	YCKEG	turn off.
21768	YCKEG	turn on.
21769	YCKOK	if it turns.
21770	YCKUL	if it turns out that.
		if it turns out
21771	YCLEC	well.

HER: I send a photo of the list, wishing you luck in the meeting.

HIM: I don't carry it with me when I travel! Look, I have to focus on this now. Talk later.

HER: I switch off my phone and run my finger further down the page.

21796 **YCPET** turning point.

HER: I've another programme to make - on Marconi's Irish Connection. It gives me license to surf the web, do obscure research and sink into myself for a few weeks. Plus, a chance to get out of town. Crookhaven's the most southerly point on the mainland in Ireland and it's where Marconi set up his first telegraphic station so that's the destination.

We rally and you decide to go on the trip to West Cork with me. The children are left with friends.

HER: I sleep through most of the drive. We arrive in the village and stop at '*Nottages* pub.' It's closed. I'm disappointed as 'Daddy' Nottage was a Marconi signaller. He came to work for Marconi and stayed on and opened a pub.

HER: Marconi's staff said that in Crookhaven 'the end of everywhere' had been reached.

HER: We head for the signal tower on Brow Head two miles outside the village. We pass a field of sheep surrounded by an electric fence.

I dare you to hold onto the wire. But you won't. Don't be chicken I say but you won't. I do and the jump startles me even though I expect it.

HER: The tower is pretty well preserved but the ruins of the telegraphic station are strewn around the head, the base of the aerial just about visible. Nothing to suggest its crucial role in radio communication.

I hold my microphone up to capture some atmosphere but it's too windy for a good recording. I pull you in beside me, our backs to the wind to shield the microphone, our heads locked against each others for warmth. You're patient for a few minutes but then you speak into the mic so close your stubble rubs off the windshield.

HIM: Are you done now?

HER: Back at the B&B I want to look up Nottage and see what kept him here after the telegraph station closed. Also I spotted a house for sale nearby.

HER: I ask you to imagine what it would be like if we just upped-sticks and moved here.

HIM: What would we do?

HER: Just...imagine a freer life.

HIM: Free from what?

HER: I drop the subject.

HER: **Notes for voiceover:** Marconi went from Crookhaven when his work was done. He was not a man for sticking around the place. The station itself closed during the Civil War.

*Communication definitely in the condition of being terminated.*

HER: You head for the kids and I'll follow in a couple of days after more recordings. We hug goodbye and you get on the bus.

I lie alone in the B&B the first morning. I make myself work and record my next phone interview with a scientist from Oxford who debunks the probability of recovering voices as Marconi imagined.

EXPERT 6 : Electronic Voice Phenomena are the products of hope and expectation. They're spiritualist sticky tape. They postpone reconciliation to beyond the grave. They can only result in the revival of grief, not scientific progress.

HER: He talks to me of sounds from space, sound and decay, sound and the body, sound and the mind, sound and communication, sound conspiracies, sound as a cure.

We drift back into less scientific territory.

HER: What about the electrical conductivity of the human body? Acting as an antenna?

EXPERT 6: Perhaps a filling in a tooth reacting with saliva could become a semiconductor, could detect a radio signal. Trapped broadcasts and messages. It's rare but it's possible.

HER: I wonder what my sister would think of this. The body as a pathway for energy. Electricity or sounds just passing through.

EXPERT 6: There was an example last year of a ghost station playing wartime Édith Piaf broadcasts.

HER: Thoughts: My mother's bridgework never played Piaf's songs or she may be alive today. My sister loves her music.

HER: I've read that in tests of those who hear imaginary voices, the same part of the brain lights up as when people actually hear real voices.

EXPERT 6: Yes it's true but sometimes those voices aren't imaginary – it's just that not everyone can hear them.

HER: Even those produced long ago? Bouncing off the halo? Being recovered later through a worried mouth full of teeth gaping like piano keys?

HER : The scientist finishes our call with an anecdote about the end of Morse code for use in distress signals at sea in 1997 with the last tapped out message:

EXPERT 6: Calling all. This is our last cry before our eternal silence.

HER: 19038 **UVAPY Silence.** Silence Silencio

HER : Old signals fade and disperse, beyond the reach of dials, static moments left, headaches scowl and pinch, the crackle of blistered tablet packets. Through the nights I work and reach for the space between, hoping to recover enough to go home.

### **Recover (s).**

do not expect to

recover expect to

recover impossible to

recover is it possible to

recover? must recover

possible to recover

they cannot recover

they hope to recover

try to recover

unless they recover



unless we recover

unless you recover

we cannot recover

we hope to recover

recoverable

recovered

everything

recovered has not

been recovered

nothing recovered

recovering steadily

recovering recover

(ies) good

prospects of

recovery no

prospects of

recovery

HER : Circled by the looping dawns, I sit here, talking to tape. Now and again small sounds fall to the floor and I let them drop, hoping to hide them for the present. The radio alarm starts to beep in dots and dashes and gives way to the voice of the morning news.

