

Last Call

By

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CHARACTERS

Olivia: F, 30s, an astronaut, Nolan's wife
Nolan: M, 30s, a graphic designer, Olivia's husband
Computer: An operating computer system onboard the space
Station

*Note: Computer lines can be replaced with sound cues of the
technical requirements are available.*

SETTING

Earth and a space station orbiting Earth.

TIME

The near future.

AT RISE: OLIVIA is in front of the video screen in her room on the space station. She is clearly distressed, but takes a moment to bury it within herself, forcing her expression to neutral.

OLIVIA
Computer, call home.

COMPUTER
Calling home.

There is a brief pause while OLIVIA waits. Then NOLAN answers the call, rubbing his eyes and yawning. OLIVIA has woken him up.

NOLAN
Hey, babe, everything alright?

OLIVIA
Hey, yeah, sorry, did I wake you? What time is it there?

NOLAN
A little after three. What about you? Where are you?

OLIVIA
Somewhere over Europe, I think. Last I checked anyway. Is it terrible to say it like that?

NOLAN
Like what?

OLIVIA
I'm in space, getting views most people can't even imagine, and I don't even bother to look out the window anymore. I-never mind.

NOLAN
Is everything alright?

OLIVIA
Of course. Everything is fine. Just wish I was there with you instead of locked up here.

NOLAN
Can we still expect you next week? They aren't keeping you longer, are they? Is that why you called?

OLIVIA

No, they haven't extended quarantine. It—I was just thinking about you. I miss you.

NOLAN

We miss you too.

OLIVIA

How are the girls?

NOLAN

Excited to have their mama back from the moon.

OLIVIA

The moon?

NOLAN

I've tried explaining, but Martian geological survey expedition doesn't quite roll off the tongue. The rest of the crew there?

OLIVIA

Yeah, they're... they're here.

NOLAN

Well, tell Martin he still owes me that beer once you all get back. Don't want him thinking I've forgotten.

OLIVIA

I will.

NOLAN

Hey, you sure you're okay?

OLIVIA

Just tired. It's been a long trip. Tell me stories. Tell me what I missed.

NOLAN yawns.

NOLAN

What you missed? Um, let's see. Well, the girls found the hair trimmer. That was an adventure.

OLIVIA

Oh no.

NOLAN

Don't worry. I found them before they did too much damage. It was all easily fixed. Mostly.

OLIVIA

Mostly? You're not inspiring a lot of confidence here.

NOLAN

Okay—things may have looked a little funny for a couple weeks. It's all good now. We had a talk about not cutting hair without permission and I really think they took it to heart. Besides, shorter hair looks good on them. You'll see for yourself soon enough.

OLIVIA

What else?

NOLAN

Let's see. They're doing well in school. Lauren has decided she wants to start roller derby.

OLIVIA

I'm not sure who I'd be more worried about—her or the other team.

NOLAN

I've convinced her to wait until she's a little older. Though she is quite insistent that we get her roller skates for her next birthday. I told her we'd have to talk about it when—

OLIVIA

Do it. You—we should do it. Derby or not, she'll have fun with them.

NOLAN

Okay then. Roller skates it is. Sorry, my brain is still half-asleep, did I put all this in my last message?

OLIVIA

You did, but—

NOLAN

Sorry. I—

OLIVIA

No, no. Please. I like hearing it from you. Live. Like this.

NOLAN

Well, what about you? We didn't get a reply after our last message. I'm sure you've been busy with all the details of returning, but the girls are excited to hear all about your adventures.

OLIVIA

My adventures. Went to space. Saw some rocks.

NOLAN

I'm sure it was more than that.

OLIVIA

I should have stayed home.

NOLAN

You've been through a lot. Once you're back on the ground, I'm sure everything will feel better. We know how important these missions are—and how much you give to them.

OLIVIA

You been keeping in touch with the other families?

NOLAN

Oh yeah. The girls went to Aiden's birthday party. Can you believe he's already turning ten? And I still go out with the guys whenever we can all get away. We were out a couple nights ago actually. Went down to Riley's.

OLIVIA

Remember our first visit to Riley's?

NOLAN

Our first date.

OLIVIA

We were both so nervous being setup by our friends like that.

NOLAN

So we drank until we couldn't see straight.

OLIVIA

Didn't even hear last call until we realized we were the only people left.

NOLAN

Probably a good thing we didn't have that last round. We wouldn't have been able to walk out of there.

OLIVIA

We barely made it out of the parking lot as things were.

NOLAN

And whose fault was that?

OLIVIA

Yours.

The bickering is all in good fun. This is a happy memory for them.

NOLAN

Are you still going with that story?

OLIVIA

It's the truth! You were supposed to be able to drive me home at the end of the night.

NOLAN

Can you blame me? I'm on the first blind date of my life and in walks the most beautiful woman I've ever met? I had every right to be nervous. Besides, you drank just as much as I did *and* forgot your cell phone—which would have solved everything.

OLIVIA

Well, you had your phone and didn't charge it—so instead of calling for a ride, we were left standing in a parking lot in the middle of the night. I still say we could have caught the bartender.

NOLAN

He was long gone before we realized how much of a mess we were in.

OLIVIA

If that's how you want to remember it.

NOLAN

He was!

OLIVIA

Sure. You remember how long the walk home was?

NOLAN

No.

OLIVIA

No?

NOLAN

All I remember is that I couldn't stop staring at you. I knew right then that you were special. I didn't know what it meant at the time—but I knew we had a long road ahead of us.

OLIVIA

Nolan—

NOLAN

And then you tripped and fell in that giant puddle.

OLIVIA

Really? You had to bring that part up? That puddle ruined one of my best dresses.

NOLAN

You looked good in that dress. Looked pretty good soaking wet in it too.

OLIVIA

You're impossible.

NOLAN

We should go to Riley's to celebrate your return. Let you rest and get settled for a couple days, then we can see about getting someone to take the girls for the night. We can go out, drink too much, dance in the moonlight. Then maybe go to a hotel...

OLIVIA is distracted and not responding to this idea the way NOLAN expected.

NOLAN

We don't have to if you'd rather not...

OLIVIA

Huh? No, sorry, I just...

NOLAN

Are you sure everything is okay?

OLIVIA

I— *(pause.)* Sorry, I'm just tired. It's good to see you, but I should let you go.

NOLAN

I probably should get at least a couple more hours sleep before work. And you'll be back on solid ground in no time at all.

OLIVIA

I love you.

NOLAN

I love you too.

They each kiss their fingers and touch the screens.

NOLAN

See you soon.

NOLAN logs off.

OLIVIA

Goodbye.

OLIVIA stares at the screen a moment longer, letting her sadness show.

OLIVIA

Computer, record a message.

COMPUTER

Recording.

OLIVIA takes a shuddering breath. She isn't certain where to begin.

OLIVIA

Nolan, I need to begin by saying that I'm sorry. I called tonight intending to tell you the truth but when I saw your face—I just couldn't. I still haven't convinced myself this is real. Everything was on track for us to return next week when we had a malfunction. It—the life support systems are leaking into space. The backups are gone. There's nothing we can do to fix it and no time for anyone on the ground to reach us. We have, maybe fifteen minutes worth of air left up here.

It's all so stupid. We go all the way to Mars and back just for this to happen. I look out the window and I can see you. I can see the fucking lights right down there, and still—

OLIVIA (cont.)

I can see them but there's no way to get to them—to you. I won't feel your arms around me again. I won't hold our girls again. And I'm sitting here, and I'm trying to tell myself that the risk was worth it, but I can't. I just can't. I should have stayed on the ground. I should have held you all close and never let go.

I'm sorry I didn't tell you. Word will get out soon enough, but I wanted you to hear it first from me. I wish I had gotten to dance in the moonlight with you one more time. Tell the girls I love them to the moon and back. If I can't be there, it makes all this a little easier knowing that I found the best man on the planet to raise them when I'm gone.

Thank you for years of happiness. And please, believe in happiness even when I'm gone. You know what I remember most about that night at Riley's? I woke up the next morning—exhausted, hungover, still in that mud-stained dress. I looked out the window at the sun of a brand-new day—and everything about the future felt bright.

The sun will keep rising. Greet it with a smile for me. I love you all.

One more deep breath.

End recording.

END