

# **TORRENT**

## **By Laura Henry**

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## TORRENT

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**CAST: One Female**

***(TORRENT, a quiet girl who doesn't usually talk very much, places a call to the local telephone company late at night. Instead of getting a human, she gets voice mail. SHE begins to leave a message, but the more SHE speaks, the more SHE has to say. The voice mail doesn't shut her off, so TORRENT keeps talking and talking.)***

***(On telephone) Hello? (SHE realizes that this is not a person, but a complex voice mail system.) Oh. (SHE listens a minute and presses some buttons.) Hello? (SHE listens to the automated message and begins to talk.)*** I have kind of a weird problem, and I don't know how to explain it to voice mail. I mean I really need to explain it to a person, so if you could just call me back...I just called because...how do I say this? ...I mean I haven't gotten a phone call in a month now and I just wanted to know if there was something wrong with the phone... Wait a second—make this simple. I'm supposed to start with my name, right? My name is Torrent. No, wait, don't you people go by numbers? I guess you would call me 212... Forget it. I mean it's ok. I'll call back tomorrow. ***(SHE begins to hang up the phone, then changes her mind.)*** A whole month without a phone call. I just got to thinking, maybe the phone wasn't working or something, you know? But I'm sure you're busy. I'll just call back tomorrow...Is this thing still recording?

I thought they were timed. Isn't this supposed to disconnect after about thirty seconds or so? I mean, I'm not disconnected or anything... am I?

Hello? Machine, are you there? ...I'm calling from New York. It's raining here. Raining cats and dogs. Always wondered why they called it cats and dogs. Don't you? I mean, who knows? Anything is possible. When I was about seven, I remember it raining ice cubes in the middle of June. Really, it did. I remember it. And I know that you're going to try to tell me that it was hail that I saw that day, but it wasn't. It was raining fresh-from-the-freezer-little-plastic-tray cubes of ICE.

***(SHE listens for a moment. There is no response on the other end)*** You are the first person who ever listened to that story without stopping me in the middle of it and telling me that I'm obviously not

remembering things right. I'm serious. Nobody believes that story, but it's true. You are the first person - You are not a person. You are a machine and you are still on. Wow, how weird. An ordinary machine would have turned itself off by now, but you are obviously not an ordinary machine. Maybe you are like some weird kind of person machine. Maybe little people live inside of all the machines but we are so big we don't notice them or something. Maybe we think we are rewinding tapes, but really we're just pushing a button and a little person who we can't even see relays the message.

Whoa, I'm going crazy now. Thinking that machines have people inside them. How stupid can you get? ***(SHE contemplates this for a moment.)***

Would you like to know about me? ...Sure you do. I mean you're not saying no, right? You haven't hung up yet. I don't hear a dial tone.

Not many people know about me. Let's face it; I haven't gotten a call in over a month. Not one phone call. Why am I paying good money for a phone service that I never use? It's a waste to pay for a service that you never use. And it's not my fault. I would use it if it actually worked. I mean I'm here, just sitting by the phone waiting for it to ring. I'm holding up my end of the bargain, but I can't use the service by myself. It takes two to talk. Right? ***(SHE thinks about that for a second, but keeps on going.)***

I try to always make it home by seven. I'm waiting for the Gallup poll people to call. Somewhere I read that they always call during dinner or early on Saturday morning. Well, I'm here every Saturday and every night at seven o'clock, but do they call me? Nooooo. Typical. I don't know why. I always vote. I heard that the Gallup people survey you right after you finish voting, but the Gallup people are never at my voting booth. I want to tell them what I think. Those numbers they put on television? My vote's not in there. Hey. If you talk to them and they ask for the number of your friends and neighbors, feel free to give them mine. I know we're not friends or anything. You're a machine! But if someone answers this machine and they get a call from the Gallup people, well, just let me know. A whole month. At this point, you might as well give my number out to the people who sell vacations in swamps. NOBODY calls me.

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