

65 BONUS POINTS!!

100 YEARS

By

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28 Plays Later

Day 4

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ACT I

SCENE 1

IN BLACK.

A soothing, god-affected voice speaks in the blackness.

WIKIPEDIA: In the beginning, there were simply phone lines. Sound, but no sight. Song, but no dance. Words, but no intimacy. But one day in the latter half of the 1920s, AT&T's Bell Labs said:

BELL appears on screen. Dressed like a dapper snob from the 20s. In B&W if possible (look into OBS for effects).

BELL: Let there be videotelephony!

WIKIPEDIA: And there was. But the universe wasn't ready for videotelephony because the existing telephony infrastructure was insufficient to carry both video and sound signals.

BELL flickers and blinks out.

WIKIPEDIA: Although they tried, no one successfully paired audio and video signals until the first human occupied space craft left the ground.

NASA appears on screen.

NASA: But utilizing UHF and VHF radio-frequency video links was inefficient and required equipment far beyond that which the average citizen could afford, and so it became the purview of astronauts and scientists.

CNN appears on screen.

CNN: Until the news media came along and developed mobile units that could beam live camera feeds back to the studio. But still, the technology was beyond a normal human's budget.

WIKIPEDIA: In the 1970's however AT&T struck again with their Picturephone service.

BELL appears again, dressed in 70 garb, and in color.

WIKIPEDIA: But it's lack of availability and high cost kept it from catching on.

BELL looks sad, and slowly (like really slowly) begins to fade out.

WIKIPEDIA: In the 80's and 90's several companies began to develop video conferencing systems that lead to standardization only after years of expensive proprietary equipment, software, and networks were installed.

WIKIPEDIA: But that standardization led to advancements in video compression necessitated by the sheer amount of data that was being pushed for every single call. And finally, in the 90s, Internet based video communication became efficient enough to actually be useful.

CU-SEEME appears, dressed typically 90s. At this point, just before disappearing, BELL should start to fade back in.

WIKIPEDIA: With the introduction of Cornell University's CU-SeeMe software, actual computer based video chat became something that was accessible to anyone.

CU-SEEME: Anyone with a computer, QuickCam, and an internet connection, that is.

WIKIPEDIA: Fair enough.

CU-SEEME: And once I started it, so many others followed.

Each new product appears before introducing itself.

ICQ: ICQ (that's me) was next!

CNN: Uhhh... ICQ never had video.

NASA: No, but it did lay the groundwork for group chats, file exchanging, and actually being able to search for other users.

WIKIPEDIA: So even though it doesn't belong here, it still had a huge impact on what came next.

ZEUS: That would be me, Zeus. In 2001, I enabled the world's first telesurgery to take place. They called it "Operation Lindbergh."

CU-SEEME: Why "Operation Lindbergh?"

CNN: It was a trans-Atlantic procedure with doctors in New York operating on a patient in France.

WIKIPEDIA: By 2003, all major instant messaging clients supported video calling.

AOL: AOL Instant Messenger.

YAHOO: Yahoo Chat!

MSN: MSN Messenger, too!

WIKIPEDIA: And then came...

ALL: Skype.

SKYPE appears, looking smarmy.

SKYPE: I introduced the first 25 person video call. For free.

WIKIPEDIA: And true video conferences were born. After Skype came a number of high end competitors, once again reaching

for that "You can't afford this, you're poor. It's not for you" demographic.

NASA: KMV Technologies' Lifesize

YAHOO: Cisco's CallManager

BELL: And Hewlett-Packard's Halo Telepresence.

CNN: You're still here? Wow.

WIKIPEDIA: Behave. From there, the focus shifted-- you know, when I first read this I thought it said shafted, but it's shifted. The focus shifted to the high end telepresence users for almost three-quarters of a decade.

NASA: No, I think shafted was right.

WIKIPEDIA: Finally, 2010 rolled around, and so did

APPLE: Apple Facetime, and something called Viber.

WIKIPEDIA: And although it would take a few years to bear fruit, several other products were launched and companies were founded over the next few years.

MSN: Zoom, 2011.

ZEUS: Slack, 2013.

AOL: Amazon Alexa, 2014.

CU-SEEME: And then, in 2015...

GOOGLE: GOOGLE HANGOUT! WOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!

CU-SEEME: I was going to say Periscope.

YAHOO: Or WeChat.

WIKIPEDIA: By 2018, most interaction platforms supported some sort of group video chat. Which was really just in time for everything that happened in early 2020. One hundred years after the first Videotelephony call, video chat became as ubiquitous as the telephone.

BELL: BOO YEAH! I WIN!

EVERYONE rolls their eyes, and they pop off screen in a random pattern, leaving BELL all alone.

BELL: I started it. It was me.

Pause.

BELL: You're welcome.

BELL blinks out.

THE END.