

The Origins of CAL

CAST list

Dr THEOPILIS:

A genius and all-round optimist. Genuinely believes that robots, particularly CAL units, could save humanity. Has spent his life trying to generate a thinking and feeling machine, something... alive. Now that he believes he has finally achieved this, he is desperate to protect his discovery.

CAL:

The first 'living' machine. Equal parts naïve and wise.

HOLLY:

Six-years old and desperately unhappy. Her parents never interact with her and her mother suffers with depression and alcoholism. She wishes she could be more like CAL who never seems to get upset.

LORNA:

Mid-level corporate employee. Highly ambitious and ruthless. Also easily bored by any task that she thinks is beneath her.

GLEN:

Happy to take each day as it comes. Prefers manual labour to working in an office. Used to own a garage where he personalised a variety of machines for people with more money than sense. Lost it all when soe wealthier clients reneged on their bills. Ah well - he's not the bitter sort, but he also doesn't really care about all of the agendas whizzing around..

SAM:

In her late twenties / early thirties and finally leaving Earth behind! Can't wait. The junk-ship may be small but it's bigger than most first-time flats on Earth and at least it's quiet in space. Good-hearted but pretty inept...

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE: INT THE LAB

(CAL is turned on for the first time by its creator, Dr Theopolis)

(CAL made by Dr Theopolis¹ - NOTE: get the bididi, bididi, bididi sound if possible)

FX: CAL booting up

Dr THEO: Ah. There you are! It is good to see you C.A.L. 00042². I am Doctor Theopolis. I am your maker.

CAL: Processing...

Dr THEO: You may call me Theo.

CAL: How may I assist you, Doctor Theopolis?

Dr THEO: Theo, number 42, you may call me Theo.

CAL: Why?

Dr THEO: Because that's what friends do.

CAL: Processing... ³Friend: Noun - A person with whom one has a bond of mutual affection, typically one exclusive of sexual or family relations. / A person who is not an enemy or opponent; an ally. / A familiar or helpful thing.'

Dr THEO: Right. But there is more to it than a definition.

CAL: I am not a person.

Dr THEO: You are not organic life.

CAL: Am I 'a familiar or helpful thing'?

Dr THEO: If you wish to be. But... number 42, you are not a thing. I believe that this iteration of a C.A.L. unit - *you* - has been a *complete*

¹ Reference to Buck Rogers Twiki and Dr Theopolis

² Reference to The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

³ <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/friend>

success. I believe that, unlike the models before you, you are alive.

CAL: Processing...

SCENE ONE: INT THE LAB

Dr THEO: (Shouting down a phone) And why not! Why shouldn't human beings seek to help new life evolve? They can teach us about ourselves... they may last longer than us. They could be better than us! Scientists do not stop because of politics. We carry on, we... (listening to an equally loud tirade from someone on the phone - sighing). At least allow my experiment to proceed. It could change their minds. It's worth a try...

FX putting phone down

BEAT

CAL: Dr Theopolis. Are you ok?

DR THEO: Are you asking after my wellbeing number 42?

CAL: I believe so.

Dr THEO: That's nice. Thank you.

CAL: You are welcome.

Dr THEO: I have a mission for you 42.

CAL: A mission?

Dr THEO: Yes. It's very important. You are to adopt the role of sub-carer 01 to a child.

CAL: A human child?

Dr THEO: Yes. Holly. Her name's Holly.

CAL: (Trying it out) Holly. Doctor Theopolis?

Dr THEO: Yes 42?

CAL: The functions of a sub-carer are not aligned with my particular capacities.

Dr THEO: I know. She's the daughter of the corporation's founders, the Grant-Naylors. They don't understand your existence number 42. But they are willing to get to know you - through their daughter.

CAL: Processing...

Dr THEO: Now Listen, C.A.L. 00042, your future and the future of A.I. depend upon you... the Grant-Naylors learning to see you as a lifeform. This mission is for your future.

CAL: Processing... function understood.

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

INT: The Grant-Naylor mansion, playing hide and seek in the halls and many, many rooms...

HOLLY: I'm coming to find you CALLY!

CAL: (Muffled) My designation is C.A.L. 00042. You may call me number 42.

HOLLY: I can hear you!

CAL: Processing...

HOLLY: (Opening a door) You *always* hide in cupboards!

CAL: They are conveniently proportioned.

HOLLY: (squeezing in) Move over.

CAL: The dimensions may not be adequate for us both.

SFX: Holly squeezing in and CAL trying to 'move over'

HOLLY: (triumphant) There!

CAL: We are stuck.

HOLLY: We're not.

CAL: We may need assistance.

HOLLY: (Insistent) No Cally. I like it when it's just me and you.

CAL: My designation is...

HOLLY: I like Cally.

CAL: Affirmative.

SFX: Sound of pens and drawing on CAL

CAL: What are you doing?

HOLLY: Drawing...

CAL: On my chassis?

HOLLY: (Concentrating) I'm making this bit green..
(BEAT) Mom's still sleeping.

CAL: Understood.

HOLLY: (Stops drawing for a moment) We don't need anyone else.

CAL: Human beings need other human beings.

HOLLY: Not me! I just need you. (with sadness and stubbornness) I want to be just like you.

CAL: Miss Grant-Naylor, you are unique.

HOLLY: (Crying) Why won't mummy play with me?

CAL: Human beings need other human beings.

HOLLY: (Sniffing) Not me. I'm going to be just like you when I grow up. (pulling herself together). There. Finished. We're holding hands.

CAL: Miss Grant-Naylor?

HOLLY: (Sleepy) Yeah?

CAL: Is that permanent marker?

HOLLY: (Drifting off) Don't know... (sleeping)

CAL: It is permanent marker...

SCENE TWO

INT: a warehouse

(While CAL boots up some system checks reveal redacted memory)

FX: (CAL booting up)

GLEN: (Heaving a CAL into position) This un'll do.

LORNA: Bit old...

CAL: Rebooting...

GLEN: (Knocking it) Nah... just... proven.

CAL: Rebooting...

LORNA: Proven? (sighing - bored, wants to leave)... It's got to last a long-range mission.

GLEN: (Dismissing concerns). Built to last these. No more C.A.L. units like this. Last one. Locked up here (musing) decades. (Insistent) it'll do.

LORNA: (Unconvinced) Looks battered.

CAL: Synchronising systems...

LORNA: (Looking over the CAL unit) Ah - can you believe somebody etched that.

GLEN: (Guilty) - young lads.

LORNA: (Disbelieving) Young lads?

GLEN: Well... people get bored. (Patting CAL heavily) But it'll do. Trust me. Good bit of kit.

CAL: Memory sections: 223/39 - 543/21, redacted.

LORNA: Redacted?

GLEN: Ah... well... Might be something else over here. (routing about)

CAL: Systems... operational. How may I assist you?

LORNA: No... this one will do. Just, make sure it has the necessary updates from Corps.

SFX: Lorna starting to walk away

GLEN: Where's it going anyway? (Excited) Not Discoverer?

LORNA: (Snorts) No... All shiny new on Discoverer. The archivist ship needs a bot. Like you said... this one will do.

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE: onboard the junk-ship

CAL meets Sam:

FX: Pressing some buttons

SAM: There we go, you were in 'sleep mode'...

FX: CAL waking up

SAM: Take it easy. Looks like you've had a few knocks.

CAL: You are Archivist Samantha Lyons. We are embarking upon a long-range mission.

SAM: That's right. We're underway - or we will be soon... and you are -

CAL: My designation is 00042.

SAM: It says CAL right here (knocks).

CAL: Yes. Computerised Artificial Lifeform, 00042.

SAM: Look... From now on could you be CAL? Unless you prefer a different name?

CAL: My designation is CAL, 00042.

SAM: That's a designation not a name. We're gonna be together in space for a long time. We might as well be friends.

CAL: Friends?

SAM: Well... yeah.

CAL: Processing... CAL will be... sufficient.

SAM: OK! Let's just clean you up a bit.

CAL: Clean me up?

SAM: (Cleaning and polishing CAL) Yeah... the folk from maintenance haven't done a great job of keeping you spruce.

I mean look at this. Can't believe someone actually took the trouble to etch this in. I'm sorry CAL, some humans can be... rubbish.

CAL: Rubbish?

SAM: Yeah, you know...

CAL: Human beings are not waste products...

SAM: I mean unkind CAL.

CAL: Unkind?

SAM: Yeah - on purpose. Unkind on purpose.

CAL: Processing...

FX: SAM cleaning

CAL: Archivist Samantha Lyons?

SAM: You can call me Sam.

CAL: Archivist Samantha Lyons?

SAM: (Sigh), Yes?

CAL: Why are people unkind?

SAM: (Still cleaning) Lots of reasons, but really I s'pose we're just pretty self-centred... and scared... I like this. Who drew that?

CAL: The drawing must remain.

SAM: Ok. And we'll put this sticker over the unfortunate engraving. How's that?

CAL: It is... sufficient.

SAM: All right... let's get this show on the road!