

LIA

The following program contains explicit language and tries too hard to be something more than it is. You don't have to know your limitations to be limited by them, but maybe you could save yourself some embarrassment. May we all be innocent again someday.

LIA

You've made your share of mistakes. You've acknowledged and atoned for them, and made a commitment to change. You're not afraid of commitment, not anymore. That's a mistake you've already made, and you're committed to not making that mistake again. You created other problems by following rules too strongly. You were too indulgent, and you're not going to make that mistake anymore, and then you were too austere, and you didn't even get anything out of it. What were you thinking? Stop trying to justify your indulgence and stop trying to justify your shame. You messed up again. Oh well. You'll get it next time, on Tales of Insecurity.

LIA

Hi, welcome to season two of Tales of Insecurity. New and improved, I'm sure. It's a brave new world here, with such people in it. I missed you on my hiatus, I really did. You may not understand this, but when I don't talk to you, I don't say anything at all. Silence is so valuable, and I'd hate to spoil it. That's why my show is so filled with apologies, because I know every moment that you hear my voice, that's a moment of tranquility you could have had. It's gone now. Please remember to breathe, even when there's something else going on. You're good at multitasking, I know, but still, all these processes, your breathing, your heartbeat, maintaining your body temperature,

holding together the complicated fabric of language and sorting meanings with phonemes in the complicated matrix that stores your thoughts in intricate latticework. This all takes so much energy, and still you manage to do most of it seemingly automatically. You remember your name, and recognize it without even thinking about it. You can tell the people you've already met from strangers. You hold all these memories, and though you're not flooded with all of them at once, you keep a rigorous index running all the time just in case new information can slide in with the old. Your past and your present are connected in some way or another, but you shouldn't dwell too much in it. Something in you has to choose which components matter, a part of you whose only job is to keep the past in mind, in case anything from it comes up again.

LIA

Welcome back to Tales of Insecurity. This is a brand new season, entirely separate from the old one. Season 1 of Tales of Insecurity was so focused on my own personal miseries, and while the intimacy of that confessional format may have a certain appeal, we're going to be somewhat more dispassionate in the future, so that we may explore broader, more important topics. I am a messenger here, a humble vassal, and it is not my place to give commentary against the will of my master. And who is it that I am serving? No mortal, obviously, as I serve no function to greater society, and eagerly surrender my physical form at every opportunity. Not to any spiritual essence either, as I hold to the essential principle that an unquestioned, unverified faith is an insult to any of the entities such a path is meant to venerate. This laborious diction and

byzantine sentence structure proves I have no allegiance to aesthetics, but even though I may not fully understand my true philosophical intent, I still withhold that my objective transcends the small scope of my own life. This show is made for a greater purpose than humiliating myself for your entertainment. I don't enter into it at all. I'm actually trying to get away from it.

LIA

I've always had a terrible memory, but also an amazing memory, depending on some factor I've never quite pinned down. The whole of my life before my 2010 concussion consists of about 20 moments in no particular order. That first-person experiential sort of information, full of nuance and qualia, is one I don't have access to as much as others seem to. While it's not entirely possible to verify exactly what someone else is feeling, especially if what you're trying to verify is how their experience is different from yours, it seems like I must be deficient in some fundamental way that isn't standardized. Assuming the autism spectrum has multiple dimensions, there must be a whole range of neurodivergence, with an assumed standard taken as a compromise of sorts.

LIA

I would assume one of the axes is sensitivity. People with autism might be either way too responsive to emotional stimuli or entirely deadened to regular feelings, whereas a neurotypical person would have "appropriate" responses to external factors. A neurotypical person would also know what it means to have an appropriate response, while those on a different axis of spectrum may either not be aware that the projection of their feelings has a

social role or way too great an appreciation of that fact, where they're keenly aware how their reactions could be interpreted or misinterpreted by the people around them.

LIA

I'm not sure where I'm going with this. There's another axis on the spectrum that has something to do with order and routine. On one end, there's the child who watches the same movie on repeat and only eats chicken nuggets, and at the other side, there's someone who has no preferences at all, no preconceived notions for how anything is supposed to be. In the middle is someone who thinks everyone should be just like they are and have all the same assumptions about humanity, who finds this entire line of thinking confusing and overwrought and pointless. This is standard. The way you feel now is just normal. Boredom is how you're supposed to feel.

LIA

Hi! Welcome to season 2 of Tales of Insecurity. While I'm proud of everything we accomplished in season 1, I feel we still have a lot of work to do in getting this material to its target audience. To that end, I've hired a social media consultant who's going to help us reorganize a bit.

KATHRYN

This sort of behind the scenes commentary might have a certain appeal to those who care about the craft of what you're doing, but you're rapidly alienating the rest of your audience. You should try sticking to quick, understandable features with easily digestible themes.

LIA

Oh okay. That's a good point. I do tend to meander, but one of my

ongoing conceits is revealing the ways life contradicts our understanding, and redefining the process of storytelling to better reflect what it's like to experience a life that wasn't created. And meandering is a part of that.

KATHRYN

Gobbledygook. You've got to make clear salient points that can be expressed in concise soundbites about topics appealing to regular people.

LIA

So how do we do that?

KATHRYN

Your segments are too long. You dance around whatever point you're trying to make far longer than you need to. There's no reason you should have any section of your show any longer than about ten minutes. If possible, you should keep them under five. You seem to think that people are listening to your show with greater care than you created it.

LIA

I see.

KATHRYN

And why don't you repeat segments more? You need to establish characters if you have any hope of making something lasting, something that captures the listeners' imaginations and keeps them tuning in for more. Serialized entertainment is very now.

LIA

So I need to make things shorter

KATHRYN

Uh-huh.

LIA

and make them longer.

KATHRYN

It's a change in format. Don't think of it in terms of length. You've got to make your points more efficiently, and learn to use the same format in multiple ways.

LIA

Okay, I guess that's good advice. It could save me some time too, having a cast of characters I can draw from instead of having to invent whole new worlds all the time.

KATHRYN

And you might find it beneficial to stray more from the traditional radio format you're so into. The millennial tastemakers who determine your fate only respond to media that is many levels past ironic, and anything that comes off as artificial without being aware of its own artificiality will make them turn away immediately.

LIA

I think I'm pretty self-aware.

KATHRYN

Hmm. I wonder.

LIA

Maybe not perfectly, but mostly, yes, I think I have a pretty good idea how I come off when I'm speaking. I understand the implications of the things I'm saying and the milieu into which I'm saying them.

KATHRYN

"Milieu." It's fine if you think that, as long as you incorporate your obliviousness into the dialogue.

LIA

The dialogue?

KATHRYN

"The dialogue?" Can you not understand even the simplest terms?

LIA
Which dialogue?

KATHRYN
It's one of those jargony terms you use. Don't pretend you don't understand.

LIA
Sorry. It just sounds worse when you say it.

KATHRYN
You're just not used to hearing other people talk as laboriously as you do.

LIA
Okay. That's fine.

KATHRYN
My apologies if these realizations are uncomfortable for you.

LIA
It's absolutely A OK.

KATHRYN
So what is your plan? Do you have a plan?

LIA
Yes.

KATHRYN
Yes, what?

LIA
Yes, I have a plan.

KATHRYN
What is your plan?

LIA
I'm going to do the things you suggested. Thank you for your advice.

KATHRYN
It doesn't do any good to say you're going to do something. Start small.

LIA

Okay. I'll bring back some old segments and develop them into short pithy skits that don't outstay their welcome.

KATHRYN

Very good. Now was that so hard?

LIA

Absolutely! Absolutely everything. Waking up before noon is hard. Waking up at all. Brushing your teeth. Remembering to eat food. Everything is hard.

KATHRYN

Well. Congratulations.

LIA

Thanks.

NANCY

Honey, are you ready for work?

MANNY

No, not yet. You've got to wake me up first, you know.

NANCY

Of course dear. I'm doing that now, but I'm not being entirely direct in my approach.

MANNY

I can't understand anything you're talking about.

NANCY

That's okay, honey, now let me get help you with your shirt.

MANNY

Hurry up, I'm going to be late.

NANCY

I'm so sorry. I'm trying my best. I thought about waking you up early.

MANNY

But it's a good thing you didn't.

NANCY

Yes.

MANNY

I would have divorced you for sure.

NANCY

And that would be disastrous for me because I'm entirely financially dependent on you.

MANNY

Yep, I'm basically your dad except it's socially acceptable that I have sex with you.

NANCY

Social acceptability is really important. Left foot. Thank you.

MANNY

You've got the easy end of the deal, though. What do you even do every day when I'm at work?

NANCY

Honey. That's one of those questions you're not supposed to ask me.

MANNY

Don't I have a right to know? We don't have any kids, so I can't even imagine how you occupy your time.

NANCY

You have no idea. Right foot.

MANNY

Whatever it is you do, I know that I would manage fine without you. You on the other hand, I'm sure you'd starve to death without me.

NANCY

I'm sure you're right, honey. Now which tie do you want today, the stripes or the fish?

MANNY

Stripes please. The fish is rather infantilizing, don't you think?

NANCY

I don't know. I think they're cute.

MANNY

Honey, I've got an important meeting today. The shareholders aren't going to want to make a deal with tessellated cartoon animals in their face.

NANCY

I understand. You're a big important executive, aren't you?

MANNY

I am!

NANCY

They'll be very impressed with you. You'll do great.

MANNY

That's it, let's get a divorce.

NANCY

Fine, okay. We'll get a divorce then, see how well you do without me.

MANNY

I will! You see how you do too!

NANCY

Fine!

MANNY

Fine!

NANCY

I hope you have a great rest of your life!

MANNY

I'm sure I will!

NANCY

Great!

MANNY

Double great!

NANCY

Fine!

NANCY

So should I leave or what? How are we doing this?

MANNY

It doesn't matter to me. Do whatever you want, woman. You're not my problem anymore.

NANCY

Oh right, we have no responsibility to each other.

MANNY

Are you still talking? All I hear are shrill bird noises.

NANCY

Is there a musk ox in here?

MANNY

Alright well, I'm headed to work. Go ahead and do whatever you want to do. You don't belong to anyone anymore.

NANCY

Okay, bye!

MANNY

Alright. Goodbye forever.

NANCY

Phew, I guess I'm a ruined woman now.

BRANDON

Hey, sorry to bother you Nancy, but Manny told me you two were getting a divorce.

NANCY

Yes, that's true.

BRANDON

Yeah, well, I just wanted to come over and make sure you were doing okay.

NANCY

I'm absolutely fine.

BRANDON

Great!

NANCY

It was a long time coming.

BRANDON

I know, I know. So, you wanna get married?

NANCY

Might as well.

BRANDON

Great. I've had such a hard time since Marcy left. The house has been in complete disarray. I keep having to buy new dishes and you know how much I hate shopping.

NANCY

Oh well, that's fine. I love shopping!

BRANDON

That's great. And maybe you can do the laundry too.

NANCY

Of course. And what have you been eating?

BRANDON

Just cheetos and chips!

NANCY

How did that require so many dishes?

BRANDON

You don't need to bother yourself worrying about all that. You just take care of the dishes and the laundry and the cooking and maybe pop out a few kids for us, and I'll make sure we have enough money that you can put up with my carelessness.

NANCY

Alright. Sure. I guess that's fine. After all, procreation is the entire reason we put up with each other, so if we don't have

children, why even bother with the constructs of gender and sexuality?

BRANDON

But luckily, since gender defines every aspect of our personalities, it doesn't matter whom we pair ourselves with.

NANCY

As long as your genitals fit in mine.

BRANDON

Aw, I love you, Nancy.

NANCY

And I love you, Brett.

BRANDON

Brandon.

NANCY

Brandon. Of course. I love you, Brandon.

BRANDON

For now.

NANCY

For now.

LIA

This week's episode of Tales of Insecurity is brought to you by WordPress.

WordPress theme song

LIA

WordPress is the DNA of the internet. Over 30% of all websites, personal and professional alike, are constructed on their framework, and their numbers are only growing. With a user-friendly interface and world-class support, WordPress is the best choice for your website, whatever you have to offer, whether it's a podcast about the nuanced ways you've found to milk your depression or a blog about the dogs

whose ears you've scratched today, WordPress has a layout for you. And better still, you can start your fully-featured blog absolutely free! So get started today on WordPress.com.

LIA

I'm sorry for the long hiatus. When I realized that death wasn't really an option, I realized that I had to start thinking about the future in practical terms, which means that I can't depend simply on making the best podcast on the internet and hoping that resulted in revenue somehow so I could pay off my litany of debts and not go to prison for credit card fraud. I had to serve an organization that has found a way to better capture the public imagination and serve a greater good and monetize public consciousness in an effective and socially conscious way. So I took some time off to assemble an application for Automattic, the parent company for WordPress, and I'm still in that application process, but let me tell you: I'm really excited about WordPress. It's an amazing company and whether I become a part of their organization or not, their user friendly interface has made a great home for Tales of Insecurity, and will continue to for years to come.

WordPress Theme Song

LIA

Anyway, all I'm saying is thank you for your patience, and I'm sorry I've been preoccupied. I've been applying to work for WordPress in a customer service position. This may come as a surprise to listeners of season one, but I'm a very social person really. I take a lot of pride in helping others, and my low self-esteem translates well into a subservient role. Other people's needs will always come before my own, and my social anxiety means

that I am always double-checking everything and making sure I don't do anything to draw too much unwanted attention to myself. And since I'm not too attached to my current personality, I'm entirely willing to alter it to accommodate whatever function is most suitable for me.

LIA

Thank you. Thank you for listening to Tales of Insecurity. So what is a personality? Do you have one? How much of it are you willing to sacrifice for the sake of social ease? Some element of you bends to peer pressure. Not that your inherent self is necessarily anti-social, but there certainly some adjustments you make

LIA

Last time I did the Cis Het Whites, I don't know if you remember, it got really obscene and gross and I really regretted it. This time though, I kind of stopped it before it went anywhere at all, though I guess that was the point of it, that having an idea of standard within a society means that there's no room for personal growth once that standard is achieved.

KATHRYN

You don't need to explain what the point is. It's insulting to your audience.

LIA

Oh, well I don't want to insult anyone.

KATHRYN

Apologize to them.

LIA

What?

KATHRYN

I said, apologize to your audience.

Apologize for treating them like children.

LIA

I don't mind apologizing, but I don't think I treat them like children. As I recall, I actively discourage children from listening to this show every episode. But I am sorry for insulting anyone's intelligence. It wasn't my intention

KATHRYN

But it was your fault...

LIA

But it was my fault and I'm sorry.

KATHRYN

And you're going to do better in the future.

LIA

Yes, and I'm not going to let it happen again.

LIA

Today's episode is about starting over. It's something we do every now and then when we realize our lives are in a rut and decide that there's no way we can repair it by continuing forward, so we have to give ourselves a new context to adjust to.

LIA

Sometimes you look around the house and you see all the clutter you've accumulated over the years, and you just want to burn everything down. None of these things mean anything to you and they're not worth anything and all they do is take away your peace of mind by erasing any sense of privacy you might have had. You could live in a tent, you think, you could get in your car and drive and just be wherever you are and everything would be better, just because it would be different, and all these things just keep you in place. Things you can't even use

until you have an apartment with more room, or a house, or an underground bunker, hollowed out somewhere no one would ever find you.

LIA

Where is that place, though? Where are you going to go? The economy is global now. Everything is connected. Anywhere you go, people speak the language. They can access your credit if they really want to. They can discover your secret identity by cross-referencing IP addresses and once they know your sordid history, they can sneer at you behind your back and tell everyone they know how duplicitous you are.

LIA

Is there a possibility of landing off the grid? If you have your own property already, you might have a chance, if you can find ways to barter with neighbors for vegetables you grow and fabric you weave. Though, even so, you'll still need to pay the property taxes somehow. You could set yourself up on someone else's property and provide enough for them that they provide for you in return, but the unfortunate truth is there's no way to be independent, to drop out of the system. Even if you're a self-made millionaire, that money came from somewhere. Many other people gave it to you, in exchange for something, presumably. You're not allowed to drop out of society, but it's a lovely fantasy. A fairy tale, but what a happy ending. Here on the new, improved, Tales of Insecurity.

BIRDMOM

Alright kids, it's time for dinner!

EDNA

Sure thanks.

LOUISE

We're really hungry.

CUCKOO

Yeah, absolutely, I want to eat a whole lot!

BIRDMOM

It's okay kids, don't fight. There should be enough for everyone!

EDNA

Yeah. There should be.

BIRDMOM

Now now. Your sister is growing faster than you are and she simply needs more food. Look how big and strong she is. She's nearly as big as me!

LOUISE

Yeah. She's big all right.

CUCKOO

You trying to say something?

LOUISE

I might be.

BIRDMOM

Girls, stop it. If this isn't enough, I can make more. Don't squabble!

CUCKOO

Sorry Mom.

BIRDMOM

Now I'm going to leave this here. I'm going to leave it to you three to divide it up in the most fair way.

(subtle vomiting sounds)

BIRDMOM

Excuse me. Alright! Enjoy. I guess I'll go get some more.

CUCKOO

Thanks, Mom!

BIRDMOM

Alright. I'll be right back!

EDNA

Alright Mom. We'll be here.

LOUISE

So.

EDNA

How are we going to divide everything up?

LOUISE

Well, Clara here is never going to be satisfied, so I think you and me should just split this portion and let her take the rest.

CUCKOO

Hey! I don't like that solution!

EDNA

No, Louise, I think it's a pretty good point. That way mom will get a little bit of a break when she comes back.

LOUISE

Yeah, Edna, that's a very good point. Our mom works very hard for us and deserves a rest. She'll get a longer break if we eat now and you eat when she comes back.

CUCKOO

But I'm so hungry.

LOUISE

I know you are.

CUCKOO

So much hungrier than you two.

EDNA

That's not necessarily true. We're smaller, so we need to eat smaller meals, more frequently.

CUCKOO

You don't even know real hunger.

LOUISE

That might be true. How could we know? But we're as hungry as we can imagine.

EDNA

I'm just going to go ahead and get started.

LOUISE

I'm feeling a bit peckish myself.

CUCKOO

No. I'm hungry too! Let me have some.

LOUISE

Didn't you hear our explanation? I thought we explained it very clearly.

EDNA

No, Clara. No!

CLARA

I'm sorry.

EDNA

You have to be a little more direct with her sometimes. She's kind of on the spectrum, you know.

CLARA

What does that mean?

LOUISE

Oh god. Why'd you have to bring that up.

EDNA

Sorry.

LOUISE

You know the story of the ugly duckling? How it was big and awkward and misshapen growing up, but then matured into a beautiful swan?

CLARA

Yeah, but we're not ducks.

LOUISE

That's right. We're not ducks. But

all of us can see there's something different about you.

EDNA

And maybe, when we grow up, you'll turn into something we can't even imagine.

CLARA

Like what?

LOUISE

What would you like to be?

CLARA

Can I just be, like mom?

EDNA

Oh.

LOUISE

No, sorry. You'll never be able to get married and have children.

EDNA

Don't be silly.

LOUISE

You should get interested in science, maybe.

EDNA

Maybe you're a prodigy at something. Try some music, sing a song.

(Clara starts to sing)

EDNA

Maybe when your voice changes.

LOUISE

The point is, we all have different strengths, and you shouldn't try to be like anyone.

EDNA

Because you never will.

LOUISE

You fucking weirdo.

CLARA

I can't tell if you're being

supportive or what are you being.

EDNA

That's because you can't read facial expressions or vocal intonations.

LOUISE

Because you're on the spectrum.

EDNA

Off the spectrum.

CLARA

I'm just hungry.

LOUISE

Why can't you ask for food like a normal person?

EDNA

Whiny little bitch.

CLARA

Stop it! Stop it! Stop it!

EDNA

Hey, get off me!

LOUISE

What are you doing? Hey quit that!

CLARA

Sorry! Sorry. Sorry, sorry, sorry.

EDNA

Did you just try to murder me?

CLARA

I'm sorry.

EDNA

You did, didn't you? That was a murder attempt. But you didn't think it through.

LOUISE

Just let it go.

EDNA

Our sister just tried to murder me, and I'm supposed to let it go?

LOUISE

She didn't try very hard.

BIRDMOM

Okay girls, I'm back, I hope this is enough for a little while because I am not going out again tonight.

LOUISE

Thanks, Mom, you're the best!

EDNA

You're so good to us, someday, we're going to make you proud, aren't we Clara?

CLARA

Yes, Mom. I love you.

BIRDMOM

It's so good to see you three getting along.

EDNA

Yes, indeed. Isn't it?

ANNOUNCER

Look out, evildoers! It's the Rocket Bees!

ANNOUNCER

In the far reaches of space, in the distant corners of the galaxy, the nefarious Dr. Scarlaris's research carries on, even in her absence.

GOLDBLUM

Alright, that should do it.

FLY

Oh, hello.

GOLDBLUM

Dr. Scarlaris! You're alive!

FLY

Yeah? I don't remember a thing.

GOLDBLUM

Of course, that will be a side effect of the whole process.

FLY

What process?

GOLDBLUM

The cloning process. You were murdered in a tragic accident, but your mind is the greatest I've ever known, and I've been trying to carry out your research without you, as best as I could.

FLY

Thank you.

GOLDBLUM

Of course, it's nothing compared to your work, but I resurrected you. Are you proud of me?

FLY

Sure.

GOLDBLUM

Aw, I've waited so long to hear you say that. I'm so happy!

FLY

Okay.

GOLDBLUM

So, almost everything you did was destroyed but I managed to cobble together a few formulas and enough materials to put together a few versions of you.

FLY

A few versions?

GOLDBLUM

The others haven't woken up yet. But a whole army of you, imagine!

FLY

What am I imagining?

GOLDBLUM

A whole army! Of you!

FLY

Am I some kind of soldier?

GOLDBLUM

No! No. You're a scientist. A great scientist. A bio-engineer.

FLY

Oh okay, great.

GOLDBLUM

So, most of your memories are lost, I know, but I've prepared a whole regimen of study to get you back on your feet in no time.

FLY

Oh.

GOLDBLUM

I'm so glad to see you.

FLY

Great!

GOLDBLUM

I'm going to check on the other samples, why don't you get started learning. Our whole planet depends on your amazing brain!

FLY

Right. Got it. I just need to read all these boring scientific texts.

GOLDBERG

And memorize them. And develop them.

FLY

Alright.

POLLACK

Hold it right there!

GOLDBLUM

Oh no, not now.

ROTHKO

It's got to be now.

KAHLO

Forgive us for dropping in unannounced.

DE KOONING

Where are our manners?

KAHLO

We were just in the neighborhood
and noticed signs of life.

POLLACK

And thought we needed to do
something about it.

FLY

Hello there, who are you?

ROTHKO

Hey, I know you.

POLLACK

We killed you.

KAHLO

Are you sure it was her? All these
flies are expendable.

POLLACK

No, I remember distinctly.

FLY

I'm sorry, I don't remember much of
anything. Are we enemies?

DE KOONING

No, I wouldn't say enemies.

KAHLO

We hold you accountable.

FLY

Oh, that sounds useful.

POLLACK

Yeah, we provide an important
service. I'm glad you have a more
open mind this time around than
last time we met.

GOLDBLUM

Okay, you all have got to go. We've
got important work to take care of.

ROTHKO

Relax, we just got here.

GOLDBLUM

I know my rights, and you can't just barge in here uninvited.

POLLACK

Since when

DE KOONING

do you

KAHLO

have rights?

POLLACK

As I recall, your government disowned you

KAHLO

when ours took over your planet.

DE KOONING

You were engaged in immoral research

POLLACK

Playing god

ROTHKO

and it looks like nothing's changed.

DE KOONING

What do we have here?

GOLDBLUM

No, don't go in there!

KAHLO

A whole room of abominations.

GOLDBLUM

Please, just leave us in peace.

ROTHKO

Alright, alright. Don't get your flypaper in a bunch.

DE KOONING

We'll just be taking these for safekeeping.

POLLACK

And hey, Dr. Scalaris, you seem like a reasonable gal. Want to come

with us?

KAHLO

We can get you much nicer facilities than these.

POLLACK

All this broken glass everywhere.

FLY

I don't see any broken glass.

KAHLO

Rothko, if you would.

ROTHKO

My pleasure.

(CRASHING SOUND EFFECTS)

POLLACK

How about now?

FLY

Oh, there it is.

POLLACK

So you can stay in these dingy, mismanaged quarters, toiling in obscurity

KAHLO

Or you can come with us.

GOLDBLUM

She's not interested.

POLLACK

Let her speak for herself.

ROTHKO

Or do flies not have feminism yet?

GOLDBLUM

I'm sorry doctor.

FLY

This is all very sudden. Gee, I don't know.

KAHLO

We need a decision.

FLY

Okay. Yes.

GOLDBLUM

What, no.

FLY

I'm sorry, I know you nursed me back to health and brought me back to life and everything, but I just can't turn down an opportunity like this.

GOLDBLUM

I literally resurrected you from the dead.

KAHLO

Which is illegal.

FLY

Sorry, that's illegal. I need to be on the side of good. This is a chance for me to get a fresh start.

GOLDBLUM

What? No. We need you free our people from slavery. We need your help.

ROTHKO

You heard the lady. Now leave her alone. She's on the side of truth and justice now.

ANNOUNCER

But can the evil doctor truly reform? Is she truly reformed, or is she hiding a devious plot? Does anything even matter? Find out next time on Rocket Bees!

LIA

Alright. That was Rocket Bees. They represent the tyranny of systemic oppression, but I guess everything does.

LIA

So. Here's a new segment for season 2 of Tales of Insecurity. As I mentioned earlier, I'm making an

effort to reform myself, to become my best self and all those things people say. To that end, I want to make amends with everything, leave no regrets behind. To that end, I'm going to start giving meaningful, heartfelt apologies to people from my past.

(THEME SONG TO APOLOGIES)

LIA

I already apologize a lot, but the thing about apologies is they don't mean anything, most of the time. Most apologies roughly translate to "please don't be mad at me," and I cannot express strongly enough how ready I am to accept responsibility for the harm I've caused the person I'm addressing today. And I think she's forgiven me much more than I deserve, but these apologies are not going to be about forgiveness.

LIA

So okay, I used to be kind of awkward, kind of a social outcast, especially in college. This may come as something of a surprise given how sociable and well-adjusted I've become, but back then, I was something of an eccentric. Not that I really understand what that means, but I didn't really have a group or a coalition or anything. I was too dorky for the sex-positive hippie crowd and the nerds never got my jokes. But this person reached out to me and asked me to play Timothy Leary in a semi-improvised serial she was making about Brian Wilson and Charles Manson. It was a little part in the overall story, a throwaway scene with a joke character who serves as a mentor of sorts to young songwriter Charles Manson. But it brought me out of my shell a little bit, just for a moment. And it was popular enough that the character came back, an obsessive weirdo scrutinizing canned vegetables in a supermarket.

The play was fine. Semi-improv is nice, because it's coherent. This isn't about the play at all; it's about why you should never reach out to lonely people.

LIA

See, when Alyse reached out to me and cast me in her show, it brought me out of a dark place. A dark place that I was terrified to go back to, and when you're in that position, you fight as hard as you can not to go back. You grow obsessive. Maybe. Maybe you don't. You shouldn't. If you're noticing yourself becoming obsessive, please reconsider your actions and the effect they could have on others. Think about the story you're enacting, and the story you want to be a part of. Obsession over a specific person is a trope in mediocre romantic comedies and in horror movies. Don't be Billy Crystal. Don't be Sandra Bullock or Meg Ryan or Jason Voorhees or that guy in Breakfast at Tiffany's. Not Mickey Rooney, but don't be him either. Don't be Audrey Hepburn for that matter. Just stay away from Breakfast at Tiffany's in general. She's so bohemian she can't even come up with a name for her cat. Tibbles would be better than no name at all. A different name every day would get the point across, or if she refused to call it anything, but calling it "Cat," just awful. The sunglasses are nice, but don't throw your life away.

LIA

My point is, and I fear too many of my apologies will be about this, just because someone is nice to you, even if they actually do care about you and not just vice-versa, they have no responsibility to you. This is true of celebrities and politicians, but it's even more true of the people around you. You don't intend to get obsessive, I'm sure. And you think you might

perceive something staring back at you, but even if you do, it means nothing more than whatever it is, and you can't force it into anything more. If you're young, you might not know this. You might need to be told explicitly. If you know a young person, tell them. This is important for young people to know.

LIA

God, I can't even imagine loneliness anymore. I haven't been lonely in such a long time, but I do remember that it does things to you. It warps your brain. You invent people to talk to, you have all these conversations just to keep yourself occupied. You act out little plays all the time to convince yourself of things, because as a person, you do have some social need that if unfulfilled can swallow you up and destroy you.

LIA

I don't do that anymore. I've started over.

KATHRYN

Sure you have.

LIA

But at the same time, when you're lonely and alone, you don't have a context for what you're supposed to be doing. If you're trying to be male and hetero, there are certain cultural assumptions you might have gathered about the way you're supposed to behave. Somewhere, there's this pervasive notion that men are supposed to be relentless and persistent in their pursuit of a partner, and that women are resistant at first and wear down over time. Isn't that awful? The idea of wearing someone down? But when you don't fit into society, you tell yourself that the reason you don't fit in is because society is wrong, and you don't really want to engage with the ways things are,

but if you must than you must. You might pretend to have a sexuality, even, because people are looking for a partner with a sexuality. You make all these concessions to and adjustments based on a strange and cynical notion of what you're supposed to be, and until you're confident enough as a person to know that every person who talks to you won't be the last, you can be as awful as you know how in your efforts to manipulate reality to some detestable double-standard.

LIA

What was I saying? Oh right, so. After that show was over and I was back to my quiet lonely life, I wanted to spend time with the object of this apology, but I didn't know how to go about that, because of course I didn't. What do people do? So I just crept around for a long time. When summer hit, I chose to wait until next year, though I even went so far as to call her on the phone at times, eventually too much. I wrote a series of letters and tore up the most revealing one, figuring it would be a good sign if she went through the trouble of putting it back together.

LIA

She started dating someone that summer, and I didn't take that news well. Someone wanted a costume back from a play I'd been in that summer, and I sent an unjustifiably angry email back. I should probably apologize to them too. Some other time. And her friend reached out to me and we started dating and I was terrible to her and I need to apologize for that too. God, I don't enough know where to start anymore. How did we get even get this far?

LIA

Maybe this isn't the best idea for a segment. All I'm doing is

dredging up old pains I'd completely forgotten. I don't need any more self-loathing.

LIA

Anyway, I'm sorry for being an obsessive weirdo and I'll apologize for this to everyone forever. The good news is I'm not an obsessive weirdo anymore.

LIA

Oh god, I just remembered when I visited her and her boyfriend at the time in their studio apartment in New York. Oh god, I'm so sorry. What was I thinking, I'm so sorry. Let's move on.

LIA

At the beginning of the next evening, when it was clear the princess was not yet dying, her servant Marelia spoke.

MARELIA

Are you saying that I, a commoner born from nothing, taught every lesson I know from abuse and derision, could take your place on the throne?

PRINCESS

You have every qualification that I have, and you have the advantage of health. Your common birth is an asset. You have lived. What wisdom could I impart to my people, having been so isolated all my life?

MARELIA

Whatever I have learned makes no difference. Have you heard the story of the commoner princess who ruled the kingdom of Korwania?

PRINCESS

I have not. Please tell me.

MARELIA

Okay, so. Once upon a time, there was a beautiful princess who lived

in a beautiful castle with her
beautiful prince.

PRINCE

Hey, darling, have you seen my good
cufflinks? I can only find one.

CINDERELLA

No, I'm sorry. When did you last
see them?

PRINCE

Pretty recently. We had that gala.
I wore them then.

CINDERELLA

I'm very sorry. I can't be expected
to keep up with all your
accessories. Surely you have other
cufflinks?

MARELIA

The princess said.

PRINCE

Excuse me, missy. Don't you take
that tone with me. I have every
intention of finding my cufflinks
and no others will do. You're in no
position to criticize my decisions,
do you understand?

CINDERELLA

Yes, m'lord.

PRINCE

Can't you curtsy any lower than
that?

CINDERELLA

I think so.

PRINCE

Well let's see it then.

CINDERELLA

Oh, sure.

PRINCE

We should see if we can get you
enrolled in a private charm school.
Don't you think that'd be nice? Get
you some proper manners?

CINDERELLA

I suppose.

PRINCE

Don't worry, we'll make sure it's kept quiet. We wouldn't want to embarrass you.

CINDERELLA

Thank you.

PRINCE

Or the monarchy.

CINDERELLA

Naturally.

PRINCE

I know you haven't learned the finer points of eloquence or elocution but you can speak in more than just monosyllabic grunts, can't you?

CINDERELLA

Forgive me.

PRINCE

Alright, alright. Settle down. We'll get you some lessons. And I don't want to hear any complaints out of you. Remember, you'd be nothing without me.

CINDERELLA

Yes, sir.

MARELIA

And the prince went off to conduct affairs of state, while the princess stayed in her room, folding the linens.

SERVANT

Excuse me, princess, why ya doin that fer?

CINDERELLA

Oh, hi Gretchen. I didn't have anything else to do so

SERVANT

So yer tryin a put me out a job then are ya? ya think you can do

wat I do do ya, well I'd like to see ya try. bet you never scrubbed a floor in yer life.

CINDERELLA

How dare you speak to me like that? I am the princess you know, and someday I will be the queen.

SERVANT

Nah, you may be the princess, but you ain't never be the queen, you will. No, you're no better than me, and you're not even folding that right. The prince likes them a certain way.

CINDERELLA

I'm sure he has more important matters to attend to.

SERVANT

You don't fool me none. You don't fool me at all.

MARELIA

And the princess looked at the her laundry, and she realized it was wrong. She deferred to Gretchen, who cleaned the room efficiently and silently, but gave sideways glances that said at the same time, "Why aren't you helping me?" and "Sit down sit down, or are you not the princess?"

MARELIA

She wasn't sure. She didn't want to leave her room, though, for fear of running into the other hoity-toity palace staff, who were worse than Gretchen, truth be told. And Gretchen was efficient. She was done with her task in no time at all, and before long the princess was alone again, so she could cry.

FAIRY GODMOTHER

Dear Eloise, why do you cry?

CINDERELLA

Oh hi, it's you again.

FAIRY GODMOTHER

Yes my dear, it is I, your fairy godmother. Why do you weep so?

CINDERELLA

Oh, it's nothing.

FAIRY GODMOTHER

There must be a reason. You wouldn't just cry over nothing.

CINDERELLA

No, you're right, I just don't feel right complaining about it.

FAIRY GODMOTHER

My dear, you have no need to keep secrets from me.

CINDERELLA

Sorry, it's just kind of embarrassing. It's just you know, no one takes me seriously as a princess.

FAIRY GODMOTHER

And why should they, dear? What did you do to earn the throne, other than dropping a shoe?

CINDERELLA

Yeah, but what did any of them do, either? They were born into it, and if anything, I deserve the karma from my childhood of hard labor and abuse.

FAIRY GODMOTHER

What makes you think you're entitled to rewards just for suffering? Do you think your misfortune was so much greater than everyone else's that you deserve dominion over them? Do you really believe that your willingness to accept and adapt to miserable conditions makes you a better ruler than someone who was able by their own cleverness and aptitude to repair rather than endure their situation?

CINDERELLA

I never had that option. It wasn't

that simple.

FAIRY GODMOTHER

What was keeping you in the home of your abusive family? Why didn't you leave? Did you think they were dependent on you? Were you acting responsibly? Or did it just never occur to you to leave?

CINDERELLA

I don't know.

MARELIA

The princess said. Her fairy godmother listed other scenarios, other possibilities, every possibility, and in turn to each one, the princess replied:

CINDERELLA

I don't know.

MARELIA

But she was too low class to speak in aphorisms, with wit or letters. She could never match anyone's expectations, even their disappointment. She wondered if she'd go back to her step-family's house someday. She wondered if she missed them.

LIA

And Marelia stopped her story, for the princess had gone to sleep, and was snoring with greater vigor than she ever showed while awake. She was happy the princess was not dead, for now.

KATHRYN

Hi there, thank you. This is a new segment we're introducing. A sort of advice column. If you have any questions, please address them to talesofinsecurity@gmail.com or on twitter @nohoperadio.

LIA

Yes, we don't get much mail

KATHRYN

And it occurred to me that it was because no one needs to communicate with someone who's completely wasted her life. They need input from a successful person, someone who has a position in society, who isn't completely extraneous to every situation.

LIA

So Kathryn was gracious enough to suggest this. I guess she's just giving me advice today since

KATHRYN

No one else is listening.

LIA

Right. Um so. Was that apology okay? I feel kind of like it went wrong.

KATHRYN

If your purpose was a sincere apology to the person in question, you would probably do better not to humiliate her in this public forum, such as it is.

LIA

Do you think it was humiliating to her? I was trying to be self effacing.

KATHRYN

LiA, my dear idiot, it's embarrassing merely to be associated with you. I only do it under the guise of a non de plume. Every time you share an embarrassing memory, you incriminate everyone involved. They knew you. They couldn't shake you. Even the people who listen to your pontifications and explanations are implicated in your crimes against decency. If they don't reject you, they must accept you, and that's the worst of all.

LIA

Yeah, that's true.

KATHRYN

And I understand why you wouldn't want to mention anyone by name, but an apology that lacks the inherent personal touch is absolutely pointless and a waste of everyone's time.

LIA

Alright, thanks. So. In addition to advice, Kathryn will also be providing us with a review of something. It could be a book or a movie, a TV show, an album. Anything. What are you reviewing this week, Kathryn?

KATHRYN

Reincarnation.

LIA

Alright. A review of reincarnation. A view of the afterlife where your soul is transplanted into a new self. Take it away, Kathryn.

KATHRYN

Yes. Ahem. The soul itself being rather a dubious concept, an outdated theory developed in a time before machinery, the notion of a spirit that can be lifted out of one structure into another seems not only outdated, but whimsical. Childish. The extrapolation of a naive and superstitious view of consciousness coupled with a rudimentary preintuition of the laws of matter conservation.

KATHRYN

On this view, the soul is separate from memory, from consciousness, but not from life. When you're born, you're given a soul from a repository of discarded ones, kept in a basin somewhere in the sky. They mix together but retain their form, like sponges, and they patiently queue up in their funnels for another opportunity to try their hand again at life.

KATHRYN

Within this system, there's a placement mechanism that judges some essence of you according to how well you performed in your previous life. Depending on your success, you will be separated into a hierarchy of animals and human classes. If you did well in your previous life, you'll start your next at a reduced difficulty, with greater advantages. If instead, you squandered what potential you had, you will be given less, and given the odds, you will squander that, and you'll continue descend every iteration into further hardships of lower economic statuses and forms of life until you've become a creature so pathetic that failure is the very standard to which you're upheld.

KATHRYN

Such a system might seem to justify racism, but in deeming it so, I am justifying my own as I condemn it, and so I feel that I cannot argue against it without revealing the prejudices of my own imperialist western background. Thus, I refuse to engage in this criticism any further. All I wanted to do was point out the inherent self-defeatism in the concept of karma, and perhaps acknowledge the problematic notion of a hierarchy in the spiritual realm. Thank you.

LIA

Alright, thank you, Kathryn. I guess I expected a little more depth, but I appreciate the effort.

KATHRYN

I told you, we have to keep these segments short. Pithy.

LIA

Yeah, but they need something to them, too.

KATHRYN

Do you have something you'd like to

add?

LIA

I don't know. Not really.

KATHRYN

I should think that you'd have a lot to say on the subject.

LIA

Not really.

KATHRYN

I suppose if there weren't the karma system in place, then there'd be nothing stopping those of you who'd burned all their bridges and squandered their opportunities from just offing themselves and starting over, perhaps that would be the most logical choice in most scenarios, as soon as you saw the odds were not in your favor this lifetime. Indeed, as soon as you came to the realization that your life was not in the upper echelon of lives, that you were not meant to be the sort that held any sort of destiny, you could cut your losses then and there, and we'd all be better off.

LIA

Because we don't have any advice for Kathryn to answer today, we're just going to do the regular listener mail section.

KATHRYN

And still, every time, you resort to the same habits. Self-loathing, depression, and suicide, life after life.

LIA

There's one from Alyse, who listens to the show, telling me she's waiting for it to come back. Well here it is. That was easy. Hope it was worth the wait! I'm sorry I had to stay away so long. I put so much work into my WordPress application. It's really the only way forward I can see right now. It's the rare

sort of customer service job where you don't actually have to talk to people. Everything is done in text, and my asthmatic self needs something like that. Also the company seems to really promote holistic growth and being a complete person and always seeking something more, which is great for me, having gained all this customer service experience, and not really wanting to work in customer service very much longer. I love helping people, don't get me wrong, I just have other interests, you know. I want to be able to do more.

LIA

Oh and there's a message from Automattic.

LIA

Hi Leah,
Thanks for taking the time to interview for the HE position. We recognize our hiring flow is unique and don't ask people to undertake it lightly. After carefully reviewing your application and our interview, we have decided to move forward with other candidates. Due to the volume of applications we receive, we're unable to respond to requests for additional feedback. I wish you the best of luck going forward in your job search. Best, etc.

KATHRYN

Predictable.

LIA

Do you think? I honestly didn't see it coming.

KATHRYN

It's exactly the way these things always go. You weren't really qualified for it anyway.

LIA

But I was. I am.

KATHRYN

Obviously not.

LIA

You know what? You're cancelled. Your negativity is not welcome here anymore. This is a new season of Tales of Insecurity. We are forward-looking. You're predictable. You're obvious.

KATHRYN

They probably noticed your emotional instability. Or they didn't want to hire someone who hosts a podcast titled "Tales of Insecurity" for their Happiness Engineer position.

LIA

All the more reason I'm qualified. I can create happiness out of nothing. And I'm not concerned with my own.

KATHRYN

You don't have to prove anything to me. I know you're just going through the whole denial, bargaining, anger, depression, acceptance thing.

LIA

Let's please just cut to something relaxing. Something else. A nature documentary, anything.

ATTENBOROUGH

Even as the North American Cuckoo reaches adolescence, it struggles to leave the nest of its adoptive mother, even as it dwarfs her in size.

BIRDMOM

It's okay, honey. We all learn to fly at our own pace.

CLARA

We don't even fit in the nest together anymore. I'm a laughingstock.

BIRDMOM

It's alright, honey. I can support you as long as you need me to.

CLARA

Thanks, Mom. You're so good to me. I hope I can be as good a mom as you someday.

BIRDMOM

I'm sure you will, buttercup.

CLARA

Will you show me how to build a nest? Will you show me how to do all those other things you have to do? I can't even imagine them.

BIRDMOM

Aw, sweetie. No one needs to show you. When the time comes, instinct will just take over and you'll know what to do. Just like learning to fly. When the time comes, you'll just know what to do.

ATTENBOROUGH

The mother doesn't seem to notice her alien daughter's dysmorphia, nor her slow development to that of her sisters. Indeed, her sisters should consider themselves lucky that they were born in the first place, and that they survived childhood.

LOUISE

Things are good, things are good. We just built our nest. It's really nice! You should see it. Reggie is a really good provider. Unlike Dad.

BIRDMOM

Don't even talk about your father.

LOUISE

Sorry. I didn't know him. It's not my area of expertise. But he could have made some things easier for us.

BIRDMOM

He did what he had to do. Instinct drives our actions, you know.

Sometimes it feels like we make choices, but it's just the imperative of nature guiding us. Something compelled him to move on, and who's to say it won't happen to your Reggie, too?

LOUISE

No, he's not like that. We're going to mate for life.

BIRDMOM

It's a nice thought. But don't forget, there are all kind of other men out there, and some might have brighter feathers and louder songs.

LOUISE

Mom!

BIRDMOM

I'm just saying. Don't stop looking. When you stop looking, you've given up.

LOUISE

I'm not giving up. I'm settling down.

BIRDMOM

Oh honey, someday you've got to learn to relax.

LOUISE

Have you talked to Edna lately?

BIRDMOM

Not really. She seems to have a lot going on.

LOUISE

Well, she's not going to drop by when Clara's around, and since Clara's always around.

BIRDMOM

Now don't you start on that.

LOUISE

Please, I don't want to get involved. But if you want to have a relationship with Edna, you're going to have to make a choice at some point.

BIRDMOM

What is it between those two anyway?

LOUISE

Some silly thing from when we were too young to remember. I doubt they even remember. I don't.

ATTENBOROUGH

The overgrown fledgling enjoys her privacy, and practices her flight muscles on her own, when her mother isn't around. But she isn't ready to assert her independence just yet.

CARRIE

Hey you. Whatcha doin' up there?

CLARA

Oh, you know. Nothing, just stretching.

CARRIE

You don't mind if I watch, do you? Sorry, that sounds awful. That just sounds so awkward.

CLARA

What's so awkward about it?

CARRIE

Nothing, nothing. Hi. I'm sorry, I'm Carrie.

CLARA

Oh. Hi.

CARRIE

What's your name?

CLARA

Oh right. Sorry. I'm Clara. I'm not really very social yet. I haven't even left the nest.

CARRIE

Oh is that right? I kind of thought you already had a nest of your own. I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to--

CLARA

No, it's okay. Both my sisters left

a long time ago. I should have left
a long time ago.

CARRIE

What's stopping you?

CLARA

I don't know. I don't know where
I'm supposed to go. Other people
seem to have role models, but I've
never seen anyone like myself. What
am I supposed to base my life on?

CARRIE

Well, maybe you didn't notice, but
we kind of look alike. And while I
wouldn't say I've got everything
figured out, you know, I'm living.

CLARA

Yeah, that's true.

CARRIE

Please, don't think I'm putting any
pressure on you or anything. I'm
just saying, I abandoned my family
and my home and left everything
behind and you can do.

CLARA

Can you really do that?

CARRIE

Oh yeah. I do it all the time. So
you've really never left the nest
you were born in?

CLARA

Here I am.

CARRIE

That's really wild. You see
everyone else going all over the
place from that vantage point,
almost nothing stays in place
except you. You're truly
exceptional, you are.

CLARA

Is that how you see it? I feel like
kind of a disappointment.

CARRIE

Who could you possibly disappoint?

CLARA

My mother, my sisters.

CARRIE

You have siblings?

CLARA

Yeah. Most starlings do, I think.

CARRIE

You are something else. I bet your mom used to tell you about the Ugly Duckling, didn't she, when you were growing up, right? Like an inspirational tale for you.

CLARA

Yeah. Yeah, she did. But I always thought it was silly because

CARRIE

We're not ducks! Exactly. Also, the other thing about the story, the other ducks, the real ducks, that looked just like their parents when they grew up, just like they were supposed to.

CLARA

I'm sorry, I don't want to talk about that.

CARRIE

I was about to say something profound.

CLARA

Can you just, take me away?

ATTENBOROUGH

The cuckoo reaches sexual maturity quite suddenly, though purely on its own terms. Each individual is solitary, and often quite shy, sometimes darting away when receiving a response to its distinctive call. They do not form close partnerships, and seem to have a short memory for relationships and surroundings.

CARRIE

So, there are a few of us, we meet up back here sometimes for board

games and refreshments. I don't know if you like any board games.

COOPER

Hey Carrie, I brought some of those berries you said you liked! You liked those berries last time, remember?

CARRIE

Oh, thanks, Cooper! He tried really hard. A lot of these guys try really hard. It's just so hard to meet people you know?

CLARA

I guess.

CARRIE

What did you say your name was again? I'm so sorry.

CLARA

It doesn't matter.

CARRIE

It does so! Oh hey, Captain!

CAPTAIN

Hey, first mate!

(Elaborate bird dance)

CLARA

Who was that?

CARRIE

Oh no one. Just a friend.

CLARA

Wow, you're really popular here.

CARRIE

No, I'm just not here very often, you know, so it seems more special. I know you don't get out very often.

CLARA

Ever.

CARRIE

I know you don't get out ever but people appreciate it if you leave

them along a while.

CLARA

How long?

CARRIE

As long as you want! Start a whole second life! What did you say your name was? Doesn't matter, make a new one, find a new husband, a new wife, lay an egg or two, it doesn't matter, none of it matters!

CLARA

I do have things I want to do.

CARRIE

And that matters even less! No one will let you do it. I'm sorry, you're just not what we're looking for, you're not a duck, and you have no swan experience.

CLARA

I'm not a duck or a swan. I'm a starling.

CARRIE

No one's going to let you be a starling either. And you know what, you're not even a very good cuckoo.

CHRIS

Carrie, I haven't seen you in ages! How've you been?

CARRIE

Chris, shake those tailfeathers for me, that's the stuff. Whew usually I'm into the shy brown birds but sometimes I need me some color.

CLARA

Hey. Hey!

ATTENBOROUGH

The fledgling's mother is both worried and relieved when she finds the nest unoccupied. Could her child have been taken by a predator? Her size would have been a deterrent for most creatures, but if she had fallen, a large mammal might have scooped her up. She

decides to wait in the nest.

EDNA

Hey Mom. Is it just you?

BIRDMOM

Yes, I came home and your sister was gone. No idea where she could have gone. It seems strange for her to have developed a sense of independence all of a sudden.

EDNA

Yeah I don't know. She always seemed independent to me.

BIRDMOM

It's good to see you. I'd make you something, but it's already digested and you don't.

EDNA

I don't need my food regurgitated anymore.

BIRDMOM

You're all grown up.

EDNA

I just laid some eggs of my own.

BIRDMOM

That's so fast, congratulations.

EDNA

Sure. I don't really want them.

BIRDMOM

What do you mean?

EDNA

I actually wanted to talk to Clara. She always wanted to be a mom, you know. And I don't, and since she just sits in a nest all day, I thought maybe--

BIRDMOM

Is that what you think being a mom is, sitting in a nest all day?

EDNA

I mean, kind of. Until they're born.

BIRDMOM

What's the matter with you?

EDNA

Maybe this is just my destiny.
Maybe this is just the way I'm
supposed to be. My instincts.
Nature is telling me to be your
shitty ungrateful daughter.

BIRDMOM

You're not done yet. You're still
growing. You can still be anything.

CHRIS

So Carrie tells me you didn't kill
you siblings.

COOPER

Whoa really, you had siblings?

CAPTAIN

What, a cuckoo with siblings? I've
never heard of such a thing.

CLARA

Yeah, I have two sisters. I love
them very much.

COOPER

And she loves them!

CHRIS

Truly unbelievable.

CARRIE

Look at you. I told you you were
special.

CAPTAIN

In light of recent events, I have
decided to crown this young bird
our queen, to rule over the rest of
us as she pleases. Long may she
reign!

(Applause)

CLARA

Sorry, do I need to make a speech
or something?

CARRIE

Whatever you want to do, your

highness.

CLARA

I see.

CAPTAIN

We're just waiting for your command.

CLARA

Sorry, this is all so sudden, I'm just not sure what to do.

CAPTAIN

Hey, remember when I was in charge? We should do that again.

COOPER

Over my dead body.

CAPTAIN

I'll kill you like my unborn brothers and sisters.

ATTENBOROUGH

The rival males attack over the potential to mate.

CLARA

Wait, what?

ATTENBOROUGH

This could be their only chance this year to copulate with interested females before they all turn and go their separate ways.

CLARA

Hold on, please stop.

CARRIE

They're not going to listen to you, honey. This is the danger when you personify animals. There's less pretense of a consent culture. It's better with birds than most. At least with some birds.

CLARA

I don't like it.

CARRIE

But you're the queen. That's what it means. Don't worry. You'll never

see any of us again, if that's a consolation.

CLARA

Edna, hi, I finally found you. I was looking all over.

EDNA

Oh wow. It's so good to see you. It's been so long. How have you been? Look at you, out and about.

CLARA

Yeah, I'm a new person now, I guess.

EDNA

So what have you been up to? Do you have a family? Are you doing anything?

CLARA

No, I'm just. Enjoying being single. For a while. I see you're settling down though.

EDNA

You could say that. I'm not sure I'm ready for them to be honest, but here we are. Do you want to warm them up a minute?

CLARA

Gosh, do you think that would be okay? You're not afraid I'm going to squash them are you?

EDNA

Don't be silly. Go on.

CLARA

I'm not as clumsy as I used to be.

EDNA

I know, I'm sorry.

CLARA

They seem healthy. You're going to be a good mom, I know it. You always held me to a higher standard than I was capable of, and it kept me terrified of leaving the nest or doing anything at all or of being seen by anyone.

EDNA

But?

CLARA

Yeah.

EDNA

But it all worked out okay. You turned out a nice person.

CLARA

Unwanted, unemployable, not even a good example of whatever I am.

EDNA

I'm sorry, are you trying to start a fight? I'm really too tired.

CLARA

No, sorry. I'm sorry. I should go. I just wanted to stop by. Thank you for letting me warm your eggs.

EDNA

No problem.

CLARA

Goodbye forever.

ATTENBOROUGH

And the cuckoo lays its eggs in the nest of an unsuspecting surrogate, who will raise and care for the parasite with greater care than her own flesh and blood. The mother of these stray eggs will never see her children, will perpetually live in hiding, for nobody wants her for anything but her body, which she hates, and no one has any need for her thickly piled, thinly veiled allegory.

LEAH

Jesus.

What am I doing?

What am I even doing?

I've tried way too hard to make a new
start so now that I'm here ungluing
apart I'm not ready

To go back to the same

I'm not able

To stake out my claim

And live to the standards that denied
me a share in the first place why
would I go there where

The damp and mildew make do for a spa
and the culture that's booming shouts
sis boom and bah

I'm not ready

I don't want it

As much as I don't want to give up
and I don't know how

No wealth or glory money-maker, sex
or hunger under-taker

Fuel of base desire fear or power
drive me to be anything else than
this

And though I hate to be a burden

Would sooner pull the curtain than

Be the the subject of anyone's duress

There's no other light around me

and I won't let the fates confound me

I'm going to work for WordPress

(WordPress WordPress WordPress)

I am going to work for WordPress

Whatever else went wrong before

I'll fix it, thank you, even more

Here's another issue we might
anticipate

That I've already solved

Have I got the job?

Alright. Stay calm. I've rewritten
elements of the original website's
CSS

To better incorporate framework built
since HTML5, to coordinate

These changes, I've developed several
pages, each of which is user-friendly

Clearly-worded, (okay, steady)

And while I do not like to criticize

I don't know if you realize just how

Out of date some of your
documentation still is and was and
well

I'd love to help you fix your files

But I've been out of the game a while

No, I'm just teasing, give me trial

I'll turn you into Leahphiles

I am gonna work for WordPress

(WordPress WordPress WordPress)

You will see me work for WordPress

"Thank you so much, but I'm afraid
we're just not interested at the
moment"

Have an interest-free loan

I'm out here on my own

"Your passion really comes through,
and I'd really like to offer you
something, but I'll need to discuss
it with the rest of the hiring team."

I'm sorry if I seem a little
obsessive

It's just excitement, I'm
enthusiastic, like a pup

The character I play is a manic
depressive

but in real life, I can mostly choose
when I'm up

I just need a chance to prove myself

I'm full of surprises, with no veneer

Just let me into a trial, and I'll
make you smile

I'm a true happiness engineer

I'm going to work for WordPress

(You can definitely afford her)

I am going to work for wordpress

(get a good restraining order)

I am going to work for wordpress

(Probably not)

I have to work for wordpress

LEAH

Hi. So. I've been away a little
while. I mentioned that. I was
trying to get my life started
again, in the conventional ways,
not that my health is getting any
better, but I saw a neurologist. He
said everything was fine. I saw a
cardiologist. He said everything
was fine. My asthma isn't
detectable. By all accounts, I'm
fine. Maybe I'm just a malingerer.
Maybe it's just anxiety. My

psychiatrist says my anxiety is fine. It seems like whatever's wrong with me, it's undetectable, so I might as well be fine. I'm trying to proceed as though I am fine.

LEAH

And so, in the time I've been away from you, whoever you are out there, whether I know you or not, I've been trying to function in the conventional ways. No job yet, obviously, so I don't have that tangible credit of my contribution to society, and I still can't make myself answer the phone, even to my thousands of missed calls. And now that I feel I've gotten close to a job that almost fits me, things have changed a little. Yes, I would take a writing or art commission, but I'm not going to be anyone's receptionist or server anymore. I was a few opinions and a few weeks of diligent effort from having the rare sort of customer service job where you don't have to speak. Everything is in text. And for a recluse like me, who can't answer the phone, that's so important. I'm trans. Do you understand that? Do you understand how much it levels the playing field for me not to have to see people or use my voice? It's a basic accessibility issue, at a certain point.

LEAH

I'm sorry, this closing monologue is supposed to be comedy. I forgot my format. Honestly, I don't know if you got the joke, but I hate stand up comedy. I hate jokes. That's the whole point of this closing monologue, maybe. I don't know, I don't want to come from a place of hate. I want to come from a place of joy. So I'm not going to think of it as bad stand-up today, but just, talking, unloading. Let me tell you something. Things are going to be different. I'm going to change everything.

LEAH

A few years ago, when I finally made the choice to start taking hormones and commit to a gender, this one, female, and a name, this one, Leah, I did see it as a new start. Not that I thought everything would magically be different overnight, but I assumed that now, since I was a person who was able to make decisions, who was able to assert herself in ways that other people are too timid to even think of, perhaps I would grow more confident in other ways as well. I would be able to assert myself, to boldly proclaim: that's the one I want. That thing. Whatever it is. That ice cream flavor. That feeling. That color next to another similar one.

LEAH

As it happens, I can say more confidently that I don't really want things, and I have very few opinions, except opinions are boring and talking is terrible and I hate the sound of my own voice more than any other sound on earth and still I won't stop talking.

LEAH

And here I am. Starting over again. Just me and my sweetie, and their twin, both sick and disable, and me their ostensibly healthy caretaker, but some days I can't move. Maybe it's just sympathy. I care a lot, and when the people around you can't breathe, who are you to take in all that air for free, who are you to take anything for granted?

LEAH

Don't worry. I don't have a point. I'm not tying any of this together to a climax. I'm not accelerating to a grand yelly bit here like a sermon or Aaron Sorkin's greatest hits. I'm starting over.

LEAH

Hello. Thank you for taking the

time to read my application. Though I have no prior experience, I'm extremely excited to become your pet. You can take me for walks if you need the exercise, but I'm totally housetrained and independent. As far as criticism goes, I take it well, almost too well, better than praise, which always sounds fake to me, and which I like to take first opportunity to disprove. Now excuse me while I shit on the floor.

LEAH

Sorry. I do have experience. I wish I didn't have experience. What I would give to lose experience, but I have the right experience, and I need this job. I'm going to get this job, and I'm sorry Alyse, I thought I was done with obsession past rejection, but I'm going to work for Automattic. I'm afraid I'm going to work too hard again. I'm going to do more than a reasonable person would, I'm afraid. I'm sorry, WordPress. You don't deserve all the attention I'm going to give you soon. I just can't take a hint.