



today is my birthday

by

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

CAST [5+]

EMILY – a temp

[All other roles should be doubled
as much as possible]

POSSIBLE DOUBLINGS

MOM – Emily’s Mother

MRS. KOBAYASHI – Receptionist

ALYSSA – Bill Tapia’s manager

JOYCE – Public radio hostess

MRS. ASUNCION – Landon’s mother and editor for newspaper

DAD – Emily’s Father

BILL TAPIA – 103-year-old ukulele player, world’s oldest performing musician

KURT – Artistic Director of Hawai’i Repertory Theatre

RICHARD – Emily’s Boss

SEBASTIAN – Emily’s ex-boyfriend

KEONI/JONATHAN/FRANKLIN – Emily’s on-Air love interest

DJ LOKI – FM DJ

GRANDPA Z – Caricature grandpa performed by DJ Loki

DR. JOHANNNES CONNECTION – German Radio Shrink performed by DJ Loki

LANDON – Emily’s high school friend

AMAZINGPRESENCE83 – A phone helpline volunteer

HARUMI – Emily’s exboyfriend

HALIMA – Emily’s best friend

DJ SOLANGE – FM DJ

GODDESS SWEET LEILANI – ADVICE Guru performed by DJ Solange

HOSTESS - Works at Doraku Restaurant

GENERIC FEMALE VOICE

#

This is a play that entirely takes place on the telephone, live radio, voice message, and intercom. No characters are in the same physical location as Emily.

Doubling is highly encouraged as much as possible.

Today Is My Birthday was developed at Sundance Theater Lab, New York Theater Workshop, American Conservatory Theater, and New York Stage & Film with the Lark. In 2017, *Today Is My Birthday* won the Venturous Theater Award for best New Play, The Kilroy’s List, and received a Susan Smith Blackburn nomination.

1. #

[Telephone ring]

EMILY

Hello?

KURT

Hey, Emily.

EMILY

Hey Kurt! We're still on for lunch? Noon right?

KURT

Shit.

EMILY

It's okay.

KURT

Sorreeee. So I got a question for you.

EMILY

Shoot.

KURT

So Honolulu Repertory Theater gets free advertising from a radio station. But they need actors to call in and respond to various scenarios.

EMILY

So there are fake people who call in?

KURT

Oh yeah. No actual people call radio stations.

EMILY

That's so disappointing.

KURT

If you're in, I'll email you the scenario and they'll call you tomorrow morning. It's basic improv.

EMILY

Kurt. I'm not an actor.

KURT

Andrea dropped out and I'm stuck.

EMILY

Can't you do it? Or find an actual actor?

KURT

They need a woman. I'm in a bind. It'll be fun!

EMILY

It's just, I've never acted before. And public speaking...

KURT

Don't worry about it. It was a long shot. Hold on—Hi. Flat white. Extra hot.. Skim milk.

EMILY

You know what, I'm in. What the hell.

KURT

Really?

EMILY

Why, are you surprised I'm doing it?

KURT

Kinda. Thanks!

[Click.]

2. #

[Telephone rings.]

MOM

Chang Residence. You've reached Grace.

EMILY

That's how you answer the phone now?

MOM

Who is this???

EMILY

Your daughter.

MOM

Mimi??

EMILY

Mom, you just called me.

MOM

Did you get the article I sent you?

EMILY

Hold on.

[Letter opening.]

MOM

Why do I mail you these things if you don't read them?

EMILY

[reading]

30 is NOT the new 20: Top psychologist says 20-somethings are damaging future career and relationships by treating the decade as 'downtime' before real life begins.

MOM

Go on.

EMILY

This idea causes 20-somethings to become passive, believing they have plenty of time to build their careers and find love later in life.

MOM

Thanks mom.

EMILY
Thanks mom.

MOM
I mail you these clippings to inspire you. So you don't rest on your laurels.

EMILY
What laurels?

MOM
Exactly.
Now honey. Did any of the magazines or newspapers respond to your articles?

EMILY
Well. You know sometimes it takes a few pitches to get people interested.

MOM
I thought you were going to do that blob you wanted to make.

EMILY
It's called a blog. It's not ready.

MOM
How will it ever be ready if you—

EMILY
MOM. If you want, you can listen to Z 101.3 tomorrow morning. I'll be on the radio.

MOM
You're doing a piece for the radio!?!

EMILY
Sort of. On Z 101.3, you can nominate a hot guy at your job to be the Office Stud of the Week. I'm pretending to be a woman named Iris. I hear his voice and fall in love with him. And I call the radio station to see if he wants to hook up.

MOM
I don't understand.

EMILY
It's acting.

MOM
It's demeaning to ask out a boy on the radio.

EMILY
I'm Meg Ryan in *Sleepless in Seattle*.

MOM

You should call your father.

EMILY

About this?

MOM

Do you need a reason to call your father?

EMILY

Is something wrong?

MOM

Call your father sweetie. Don't make me ask you again.

[Click.]

3. #

[Telephone rings.

Mrs. Kobayashi is sharpening pencils.]

MRS. KOBAYASHI

CDF Solutions. How may I direct your call?

EMILY

Hello Mrs. Kobayashi, this is Emily.

MRS. KOBAYASHI

And how may I help you, Emily?

EMILY

No. Oh. I work there?

MRS. KOBAYASHI

I'm so sorry. How is it that we haven't met?

EMILY

I'm replacing Trisha on her maternity leave.

MRS. KOBAYASHI

[less sweet]

You're the temp.

EMILY

Yes. I was just calling to let Richard know that I might be fifteen minutes late.

MRS. KOBAYASHI

I will put a note on *Mr. Hall's* desk. Shall I indicate a reason why you will be late?

EMILY

It's just that, I'm going to be interviewed on the radio. And it's not safe to talk and drive on the phone. It's illegal? So I'll be getting a late start.

MRS. KOBAYASHI

What station? I have a radio right here on my desk, we can tune in.

EMILY

I rather not say, if you don't mind. It's nothing bad. You'll let Richard—Mr. Hall, I mean, you'll let him know?

MRS. KOBAYASHI

Mmhmm.

EMILY

Thanks.

You're there really early. I was just going to transfer to his voicemail.

MRS. KOBAYASHI

I'm always here early. Would you *prefer* me to transfer you to his voicemail?

EMILY

No, a note's fine.

Well. Uh. I'll be on Z 101.3 at 8:30. But I'll be answering under the name Iris.

If you want to listen in. . .

MRS. KOBAYASHI

That's okay, Emily. We will see you later.

[Click.]

4. #

[Telephone rings.]

HALIMA

Hey girl.

EMILY

Hey Halima.

HALIMA

I missed it, didn't I?

EMILY

No, I'm going on in thirty minutes! I'm just calling because I'm nervous. I'm not like, a *performer*, you know?

HALIMA

You'll be great. This is so great you are doing this.

It's great.

Is it good to be back in Hawaii?

EMILY

Not really. I have too much proximity to my upbringing.

HALIMA

New York misses you.

EMILY

I miss New York.

HALIMA

But not Sebastian?

EMILY

Hell no.

HALIMA

Good.

EMILY

Does he know I moved?

HALIMA

He's not my friend.

EMILY

But he's your Facebook friend.

HALIMA

I unfriended him when you two broke up.

EMILY

Halima, why would you do that? How am I going to / know-?

HALIMA

I'm a mother of two, I can't stalk your ex-boyfriends for you.

EMILY

Singular. Not plural.

HALIMA

Oh, well then.

EMILY

How are the kids?

HALIMA

Baby is good.

EMILY

What's wrong with Layla?

HALIMA

She's sleepwalking. Last night she took out all her toys.

When I asked her about it this morning, she didn't remember a thing.

EMILY

That's pretty common, right?

HALIMA

I'm afraid it's genetic. So I started doing research.

EMILY

Do you or Peter sleepwalk?

HALIMA

I never told you about my sister?

EMILY

You have a sister?

HALIMA

My identical twin. She used to sleepwalk all the time.
When she was four, she sleepwalked off a balcony in Cairo.

EMILY

Oh my god. Did she?

HALIMA

She died.

EMILY

I am so—

HALIMA

And once while sound asleep, I walked to my car, started the engine and drove off.
I woke up on the side of the road. I was dreaming about my sister. She was pressing
down on my eyelids with her tiny thumbs. In my dream, she was still a little girl,
even though if she survived, she'd be a woman. She would look exactly like me.

EMILY

Oh God. That must—

HALIMA

Now my daughter's four-years-old.
Do you think my sister is trying to take her away from me?

EMILY

... No?

Jesus Christ Halima.

I think she should see a sleep specialist.

And maybe you might consider seeing a therapist—

HALIMA

Therapy is a sign of weakness.

EMILY

That's not true. I think it would be good to talk to someone.

I mean, you're my best friend

[Baby begins to cry]

and you've never even mentioned your twin.

HALIMA

My children are my therapy. Don't worry about me.

EMILY

Yeah but.

This is all really terrible. What are you going to do about it?

HALIMA

Do about it? [Baby cries louder.] Hold on.

[Halima begins to coo and sing to her baby.]

EMILY

Can you sleep in the same bed as Layla?

HALIMA

[In between coos.]

Peter won't allow it. He thinks I'm mollycoddling her. British men.

[Crying and cooing.]

I gotta feed Baby. Send me a link though, I'll try to listen to your radio thing.

EMILY

I'm not sure if they record the show. Can't you listen while your feeding?

[Sharp wail of Baby.]

HALIMA

I gotta-I gotta-I gotta.

EMILY

No, don't worry about it. It's not [important...]

[Sound of fumbling hanging up.]

5. #

[Telephone rings.]

EMILY

Hello?

DJ LOKI

Whatupwhatupwhatup. This is DJ Loki from Z 101.3 Hot Spot.

Do I have Emily on the line?

EMILY

Yes?

DJ LOKI

You got the scenario? We need you to be sexy, alluring, really-hot-sounding, looking for a hook up. Iris just heard us award Office Stud of the week to Keoni.

Just based on his voice on the air, you think he's aaaaaaawesome. You are calling because you've decided, what the heck, I should call and see if there's a chance. It's a shot in the dark but if you don't call now, you'll die without knowing if he was your loooooovvvee connection.

DJ SOLANGE

Heeeey. DJ Solange here. You got that Emily? Or should I say, Iris? Just remember, you're a confident woman, killer bod, killer personality, and you are looking for an awwweeeeeeesome guy and is Keooooooni interested? Got it?

EMILY

[Clears throat repeatedly]

DJ SOLANGE

Still on the line?

EMILY

I'm here.

DJ SOLANGE

Okay. Here we go.

DJ LOKI

You're going to hear two clicks then we're live.

[Two faint sounds of something.]

EMILY

[dead air]...Heeyyy. [throat clearing]

Hi I'm Iris—

DJ SOLANGE

—Don't say your name first. Nobody does that.

EMILY

We're not on the air?—

[Z 101.3 intro blares]

DJ LOKI

This is Z 101.3, Hot Spot with DJ Loki—

DJ SOLANGE

And DJ Solange on your FM morning drive.

You just heard from Keoni, the Office Stud of the Week.

[Office Stud of the Week sound cue]

DJ LOKI

Smoking!

DJ SOLANGE

Would you do him?

DJ LOKI

Sweetheart, Loki don't swing that way. But if I was a chick, FOGETTABOUT it.

DJ SOLANGE

How about you, Grandpa Z?

[GRANDPA Z is played by DJ LOKI, with a ridiculous old person voice.]

GRANDPA Z

He sounds like a Sex Machine. SMACK DAT MONKEY!!!!!!!!!!

[Smack Dat Monkey sound cue]

DJ SOLANGE

Hold on, Grandpa Z, I think you have some competition.

EMILY

...Hey. I was just calling to see if Keoni was um. Single?

DJ SOLANGE

Oh sister, we haven't even asked him yet. But didn't he sound hot or what?

GRANDPA Z
Smoking hot!

DJ SOLANGE
Hold up Grandpa Z, DJ Solange might want to keep Keoni for herself.

DJ LOKI
Allll right!!!

DJ SOLANGE
Tell us about yourself. We're going to see if we can make a Z 101.3
Looooove connection.

[Musical underscore begins.]

EMILY
I'm...I'm a desirable woman and a fitness enthusiast!!! I've never done this before,
but after hearing Keoni's voice on your show, I just got a feeling about him.
So I thought, what the heck, I'd call to see if I have a chance.
I'm 29—24-years-old, green eyes, extremely lithe.

[Record scratch, music out.]

DJ LOKI
Oh ho ho. Lithe? You sound aaaaaaaweeeesome.

GRANDPA Z
SUUUUUUUUPPERAAAAWWWEEEEESOME.

DJ SOLANGE
Calm down boys, she's calling about Keoni, remember?

DJ LOKI
Ohhhhhh yeeeeeahhh.

[Restart underscore.]

EMILY
Basically I can get anyone I want, being a beautiful, desirable woman, but there's an
emptiness inside of me. An emptiness that I don't know how to fill. I feel like a
mollusk clinging to a rock, not moving, waiting for an octopus to pry me open.

[A brief moment of dead air]

DJ LOKI
Alllll riggghtttt. Sounds like we got a girl who knows how to paaartee.

GRANDPA Z

She should go out with GRANDPA Z. Want me take you out Grandpa style?

[Horny Grandpa Z sound cue]

EMILY

No?

DJ SOLANGE

Hooaaahhhh!!!! She showed you, Grandpa Z. What's your name, honey?

EMILY

My name is um. Iris.

DJ SOLANGE

So Um Iris. What would you say if Z 101.3 Hot Spot—

DJ LOKI

With DJ Loki—

DJ SOLANGE

—AND DJ So-lange, could get Keeeeeeooooonni on the tele-phon-eee?

EMILY

Oh! Really?

That would be—uh. . .

[Dead air.]

DJ LOKI

That would be aaaawwwesssoome. Wouldn't it, Iris?

EMILY

Oh yeah!

DJ SOLANGE

Hahaha. Isn't she grreeeeaat? Now, let's see if we can connect these two love birds. If you think Iris and Keoni have a loooooooveee connection, hit us up on Twitter or Facebook!

[Dialing. Telephone rings]

KEONI

Sup.

GRANDPA Z

HAH! Listen to this guy. Sup. So manly.

DJ LOKI

Okay, Keoni, our Office Stud of the WEEK.

[Office Stud of the Week Sound Cue]

DJ LOKI

I got my home-girl Iris on the line. 24-years-old. *Lithe*, that means she keeps it tight, yo, and she has something she'd like to ask YOU.

KEONI

Sure.

EMILY

Hey. Keoni. Do you want to go out sometime?

KEONI

Sure.

[Deafening sound of bells, whistles hoots.]

DJ LOKI

DA BRADDAH said YES. Z 101.3, keeping da spot HOT for yoooooooouuuuuu.

[Cue intro to a contemporary Jawaiian song. Maybe by Natural Vibrations. Music fades.]

EMILY

Hello?

DJ Loki?

DJ Solange?

Keoni?

Grandpa Z?

6. #

[Telephone rings.]

EMILY

CDF Solutions, this is Emily.

RICHARD

Emily. Richard. Quick question for ya about Bullet 26C, in Section 17 Chapter 5 of the Robertson Geo Displacement Drilling Fluid Plan.

EMILY

Should I come by your office?

RICHARD

No can do, about to go in a meeting. You got it in front of you?

[Sound of massive paper shuffling.]

EMILY

Err.

RICHARD

I can wait. [Microsecond later.] Do you have it?

EMILY

Section....Bullet 26.....C? Yep.

RICHARD

You've rewritten some of the language on Displacement Boring. Quote: Upon reaching the desired depth, a plugged hollow-stem, continuous-flight auger is drilled into the ground. The rate of auger penetration during the pile installation has an impact on the pile performance. During auger penetration, the rate of penetration should be such that there is minimal release of lateral stress due to soil removal. During auger penetration there is always some lateral displacement, end quote.

EMILY

Was that not...

RICHARD

The original section was three times this length.

EMILY

I thought it was unnecessarily circuitous. I combined the sections about auger penetration, and moved that section about the um...lateral feed of soil with the auger...um...

RICHARD
The auger tip!

EMILY
...into Section 28B. Doesn't it read better?

RICHARD
You need to stop taking creative liberties.

EMILY
Richard. This is a construction overview plan for a build site.
Shouldn't it be clear and direct?

RICHARD
Sometimes these things are in for a reason. For legal reasons.
I know you're a "professional" writer and that this is really boring—

EMILY
NO. This is fascinating, important work and I am so....
Being a professional writer means I need to be adaptive. I just had a misguided. . .

RICHARD
Notion?

EMILY
A misguided notion about what you wanted. Richard. I'm so sorry about this.

RICHARD
You keep at it.

EMILY
So I know Trisha is coming back soon, and I was wondering if we could schedule a meeting about—

RICHARD
There's my 1:00. See you. Great work, Emily.
Oh hey. Keiko told me you were late because you were on the radio?
Super cool.

[Click.]

7. #

[Telephone rings.]

EMILY

This is Emily. You know what to do.

[BEEP]

MOM

Hey sweetie, so Auntie Feng Feng and I tried to listen to your radio article.

But it was just this Mexican radio station. I listened all morning.

So if you were on, I couldn't understand what you were saying.

It was 100.3, wasn't it? Did you call your father?

Love you.

This is your mother.

[Click.]

8. #

[Telephone rings.]

HALIMA

Mom?

EMILY

Hey Halima. It's Emily.

HALIMA

Fantastic, I thought you were my mother-in-law. Hey, I never got your link.

EMILY

They don't archive the show.

HALIMA

Oh dang.

EMILY

But I'll be on again tomorrow morning for the aftermath of "The Date with Keoni."

HALIMA

Wow. You're really making a thing out of—DO NOT PUT THAT IN YOUR MOUTH. I don't care. I don't care. NO. No. NO. Because Mommy said so.

EMILY

Is everything going okay with Layla? And the sleepwalking?

HALIMA

I don't know yet.

EMILY

I know I've been caught up with myself over the last couple months...with the breakup and the move, and. But if you want to talk about that or your dead twin. I really miss you.

HALIMA

I miss you too. So anyway, I think Peter's been reading my diary.

EMILY

That's. Ew. How do you know?

HALIMA

He had a funny look on his face when I came in the other night. And then he made me watch *Nell*, and then asked me if it reminded me of anything.

EMILY
Nell?

HALIMA
I wrote about my sister after talking to you. And Nell's sister died too.
They had that twin language—*tay ina*

EMILY AND HALIMA
tay ina win
Chicka, chicka, chickabee.

EMILY
Holy shit.
I had forgotten about that.

HALIMA
I think maybe he's been reading it for a long time.

EMILY
So...how do you feel about that?

[Thud. Sharp wailing of Layla.]

HALIMA
Oh that fuck—dging coffee table. Sweetie, come here.

[Crying and cooing.]

HALIMA
Honey, I gotta-gotta-gotta— I'll try to catch part two?

EMILY
It's okay. It's not [Click.] [important].

9. #

[Telephone rings.]

DAD

Chang residence, you've got Abraham.

EMILY

Mom got you to answer the phone like that too?

DAD

Mimi?

EMILY

Mom wanted me to call you?

DAD

She didn't tell you?

EMILY

No, are you okay? Are you sick?

DAD

No. no. Goodness.

EMILY

I was worried about you.

DAD

No, I'm fine.

Your mother and I are getting divorced.

EMILY

What?

Divorced?

DAD

Well.

EMILY

Dad. Seriously? Where is this coming from?

You've been married for 41 years.

DAD

We're both 63. It's our last shot of being with other people.

EMILY

Do you want to be with other people?

DAD

That's not what I meant.

EMILY

I can't even. Not even a trial separation?

Dad, this is terrible.

DAD

Well, I don't know sweetie. We gave it a good run. And you're all grown up. We didn't think it would affect you that much.

EMILY

I moved back home.

DAD

But not to be with us, right? Your mother always complains that we never see you. Anyhoo, you want us to be happy, don't you?

EMILY

Will you be happy if you get a divorce?

DAD

...I'll have more time to work on projects.

EMILY

Projects?

DAD

I was listening to a program on NPR, and a composer noticed that the hum of his copier, telephone, and radiator each had a tone. And together they formed a chord that he'd hear continuously throughout the day that affected his mood. A major chord is happy, a minor cord is sad. So, I've been feeling a little sad lately—

EMILY

Because you're getting a divorce?

DAD

So I got out my little pitch pipe. [Plays a sound from a pitch pipe].

EMILY

Dad!

DAD

And the wind from the window, my computer, and my printer make a C, E-flat, and G-flat chord. It's a diminished triad, the outer 5th of which is a tri-tone, i.e. Satan's music. So when I get my new apartment, I'm going to shop around for appliances that harmonize.

EMILY

You're moving out?

DAD

Your mother has more stuff.

EMILY

Was this your decision or mom's?

DAD

You know your mother.

EMILY

So she's the one that wants the divorce?

DAD

That's not what I said.

EMILY

Isn't it?

DAD

Mm.

EMILY

Then why did she make me call you?

DAD

Beats me, hon.

EMILY

I have to go.

[Click.]

10. #

[Telephone rings.]

MOM

[sweet as pie]

Aloha, you've reached the voicemail of Grace Chang. I'm so sorry I'm not here to pick up the phone right now, but please leave a detailed message and I'll get right back to you as soon as possible. A hui ho! Have yourself a beautiful day now!

[BEEP]

EMILY

Mooooooooom. What are you doing to dad? God damn it Mom. Why didn't you tell me? This is so fucked up. Are you fucking other men? What the hell? AAAARUGHHHHHH. FUUUUUUCCCCCKKKKKKKK YOOOOUUUU.

[BEEP.]

GENERIC FEMALE VOICE

If you're satisfied with your message, press 1. To erase your message, press.

[Beep.]

GENERIC FEMALE VOICE

Message sent. To mark this message as urgent press

Invalid option. To mark this message with regular--
[sound of Emily pressing buttons.]
Thank you.

EMILY

WHAT! I hit erase. Oh God.
Oh god. Oh [pressing buttons] my god

Fuckkkk. Fuck. Fuck.
Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

[A moment.]

EMILY

Fuck.

[Click.]

11. #

[Saccharine Hawaiian instrumental music underscores the commercial.]

DJ SOLANGE

Honolulu Repertory Theater is now selling tickets to their annual Kala Gala following their acclaimed production of Edward Sakamoto's *The Taste of Kona Coffee*. Visit Honolulu Repertory Theater dot org to bring quality local theater to your community.

[Music out. Z 101.3 Hot Spot Intro blares.]

DJ LOKI

Z 101.3 Hotspot back at ya we're back with the Office Stud of Last Week, Keoooooni [Office Stud of the Week Sound Cue] to hear about his date with the lovely IRIS. So you two lovebirds, how'd it go?

EMILY

...Good.

GRANDPA Z

She look good enough for Grandpa Z?

KEONI

She's stunning. Great smile. Beautiful eyes—

EMILY

—I'm a yoga instructor!

DJ SOLANGE

And how about him?

EMILY

He's 6'2. Sandy hair. Green-gray eyes. Held all the doors for me.

DJ LOKI

Where'd you go on this date?

KEONI

I took her to a restaurant.

EMILY

On a pier!

GRANDPA Z

Oh ho ho. Sounds expensive.

[Ca-Ching sound cue.]

KEONI
She's worth it.

DJ SOLANGE
Aww. How sweet.

KEONI
Then we went dancing. She's a great dancer.

EMILY
We danced the merengue!!!

[A strain from DeBarge's *Rhythm of the Night* blasts.]

GRANDPA Z
Did you show her your moves on and off the dance floor?

[Horny grandpa sound cue.]

KEONI
A gentleman never tells.

DJ SOLANGE
So sweet. Are you going to ask Miss Iris out on date number two?

KEONI
Iris? What do you say?

EMILY
I'd love to!!!

[Resounding bells, whistles, foghorn. Arooogah.]

DJ SOLANGE
There you have it. Post suggestions on Facebook or Twitter for where Keoni should take Iris on their SECOND date. And Happy Birthday to Jayden J. Here's a song for you from your honey-girl Charlene brought to you by Z 101.3 Hotspot.

["Island Style" by John Cruz plays.]

12. #

[Telephone rings.]

SEBASTIAN-VOICE RECORDING

Hey this is Sebastian. You know what to do.

[Beep.]

[*Nell* plays faintly in the background. Emily has one too many glasses of wine.]

EMILY

Hey Sebastian. It's Emily. I was just calling to see how you are. I've started acting. On the radio? It feels kind of natural for me, actually. Because most of the time, I can't stand myself at all. Like, not the sound of my voice or my thoughts, or the cadence of my steps. I don't mean that in a self-deprecating way. I just.

GENERIC FEMALE VOICE

If you're satisfied with your message, press 1.

[Beep.]

Message erased. If you would like to record a new—

[Beep.]

EMILY

—When you broke up with me via text message, I was crossing Houston Street and got hit by a car. Not like, terribly so, but you know, it happened. So I ran into the subway before the driver could get out. And I started crying. Just really hard. Not from you breaking up with me but from the shock of being hit by a car. Sitting across from me was an old, steely-looking man. I want to say he was a priest but he probably wasn't, since it was 2 in the morning. Just before he got off the train, he took me by the shoulders, looked into my eyes and said, "Don't cry on the subway. You hear? Don't cry on the subway."

I think he's my guardian angel.

GENERIC FEMALE VOICE

If you're satisfied with your message, press 1.

[Beep.]

Message erased. If you would like—

[Beep.]

EMILY

I just wanted you to know, I've met a wonderful man. His name is Keoni. So you can stop worrying about me, because I don't worry about you. But if something's wrong, you can always let me know. I'm here for you.

[Beep.]

GENERIC FEMALE VOICE

Message sent.

13. #

[Telephone rings.]

KURT
Yellow.

EMILY
Hey Kurt. It's Emily.

KURT
Hey, how did the radio thing turn out?

EMILY
Pretty good, I think.

KURT
Thanks so much for doing it. Free airtime, you know.
We're trying to get people—Danielle, I asked for skim—to buy tickets to our gala.

EMILY
Right, I don't care. I was just wondering if you knew the other actor?
His pseudonym was Keoni.

KURT
It's Kai. Right?

EMILY
I'm asking you.

KURT
Kai. Pretty sure.

EMILY
Do you have his phone number?

KURT
Why do you need it?

EMILY
Are you seriously giving me a hard time about this?

[Text sound.]

KURT
Just texted it to you.

EMILY
Thanks.

KURT
Sure thing. Wanna come to the Kala Gala?

EMILY
I guess.

KURT
You want one ticket or two?

EMILY
One. No. Two. Two.

[Click.]

14. #

[Telephone rings.]

GENERIC FEMALE VOICE

You have reached 808-348-1299. Please leave a message.

[Beep.]

EMILY

Hi Kai. This—FUCK.

[Beep.]

GENERIC FEMALE VOICE

If you're satisfied with your—

[Beep.]

EMILY

Hey Kai. Emily, here. You might. Uh. You might know me as *Iris*. I was your uh scene partner on the radio a few days ago. Anyhoo. I'm new in town, well, I grew up here but I'm back! and uh...I thought it would be nice to meet other people in the uh *acting* community. So let me know if you want to grab a coffee. Or a drink. Or some dinner, or something. Hahaha. Okay! Byee. You take care!

[Fumbling. Beep.]

#

[Telephone rings.]

GENERIC FEMALE VOICE

You have reached 808-348-1299. Please leave a message.

[Beep.]

EMILY

Hey...fake Keoni. This is fake Iris. Emily. This is Emily. I called a few days ago. I was just giving you a call to make sure I got the right number. Never know with these generic voice messages....ha ha ha! Also, I wanted to let you know that Kurt gave me your number, that's how I got it. Not from the radio station. He figured it would be a good idea for us to meet, because we're both actors, so I was following up with that. Okay! You take care. Bye!—Oh also, I have tickets to the HRT Gala. So if you want to come with, ha ha ha! that'd be super great! Ha ha ha ha ha! Okay. Bye!!!

[Click.]

15. #

[Telephone rings.]

[Emily and Landon at their respective desks.]

LANDON

New Pacific Design, Landon.

EMILY

Hey, Landon.

LANDON

Yo.

[Text sounds]

LANDON

I just texted you two layouts for a children's clothing website.
Which version is cuter? Rabbits or ducks?

EMILY

Rabbits make me think of Easter but ducks are terrifying.

LANDON

Right, you have that weird bird thing.

EMILY

It's the flapping, and beaks, and the talons—

LANDON

Maybe I should change it to bears. Bears are cute right? I mean, they only maul.

EMILY

And at any moment they could peck out your eyes or—

LANDON

We're switching gears.
How are you adjusting back to our fair island?

EMILY

Better. I'm totally over Sebastian.

LANDON

Mhmm. You writing?

EMILY

You sound like my mother. I tried. No one responded to my queries.

LANDON

Every article you've written is "New York-centric."
Write something local, shop it around. Have you called my mother?

[Call waiting sound.]

EMILY

Hold on.

[Call waiting sound.]

LANDON

Yep.

[Call waiting sound.]

EMILY

Never mind, it's my mother, sending to voicemail. What was I...Oh right—
I have two tickets to this Gala, it's kind of this fancy dress up thing.

LANDON

Like a gala. You need a date.

EMILY

Ye-ah.

LANDON

You're asking me right? Because I am bone-tired of setting up straight people.

EMILY

Yes. However. There is a guy I'm hoping will be there.
We're both in the theater community and this is a theater gala.

LANDON

Nice.

Wait, since when did you do theater?

EMILY

The radio thing!

LANDON

That's not theater.

EMILY

It's for HRT. Do you remember Kurt? He's the artistic director.
He was a senior when we were sophomores?

LANDON

That D-bag? Didn't you give him a blowie spring break freshman year in his Dad's PT Cruiser?

EMILY

Your memory is extraordinarily...

LANDON

Didn't he marry that psychopathic pediatric surgeon?

EMILY

Snežana's not crazy, she's just....She's really pretty.

LANDON

Better be, with a name like that.

EMILY

She's from Belarus.

LANDON

Bella-rude.

LANDON

Anyway. This guy I'm hoping to.

LANDON

To fuck.

EMILY

Eeeuehhh....I don't really know what he looks like or anything about him except his name and his voice—

LANDON

You want me to make him jealous?

EMILY

I just want to meet him. Jealous/ might be...

LANDON

I'm in!

[Click.]

16. #

[Telephone rings.]

EMILY

This is Emily. You know what to do.

[Beep.]

MOM

EMILY ROBERTA LIEN-HUA HAILI'ŌPUA CHANG. Call me back right now.

[Beat]. I assume you've talked to your father.

This is your mother.

[Beep.]

GENERIC FEMALE VOICE

Message erased.

17. #

[Telephone rings.]

EMILY

This is Emily. You know what to do.

[Beep.]

LANDON

[whispering]

Hey girl. I'm having a minor but impactful crisis right now.

I'm really-really-really super sorry but I can't come to your gala tonight. Sorry!

But let's hang out soon, okay?

[Beep.]

GENERIC FEMALE VOICE

Message erased.

18. #

[Telephone rings.]

DAD

Chang residence. You've got Abraham.

EMILY

Dad. It's Emily.

DAD

Oh hello. [Off] It's Mimi. Emily. EMILY. OUR DAUGHTER.

EMILY

Is mom there?

DAD

[Off] Did you want to talk to Mimi?

Your mother wants to know if you have anything to say to her.

EMILY

Nope. I was calling for you.

DAD

Oh how nice. [OFF] Check the junk drawer.

Well, didn't I put some on the refrigerator? The sushi magnet?

EMILY

The Kala Gala is tonight at the Hanohano Room.

[Emily peppers "dad's" periodically through the next monolog]

DAD

[OFF] If we were all out, I could've bought more at the post office, I was there two days ago. No. That wasn't a criticism— [beat] Well, I know that doesn't help you— I'm just saying I'm pretty sure there are stamps in the house but I could have also bought more. I know that doesn't help you now, that's not what I'm saying. That's not what I'm saying. [beat] I'm not being argumentative. I'm just saying. That's not what I'm saying. If you needed stamps. [beat-defeated] I guess I could have—Did you check inside the turtle?

EMILY

DAD.

DAD

[To Emily] Your mother wants to mail you something.

EMILY
Please God. Not another article.

DAD
[Off] Is it an article?

EMILY
Don't ask her!

DAD
It's an article and a check. She says none of those magazines have hired you, so you need money.

EMILY
CDF Solutions is going to bring me on as a long-term contractor.

DAD
[off] Mimi says don't mail the check! They like her at that place.

EMILY
Also, I'm trying to think of a local human-interest story to write. Any ideas?

DAD
Mmm. Well, Bill Tapia is about to turn a hundred-and-four.

EMILY
Who?

DAD
He's the world's oldest performing musician. Ukulele player.
Maybe you could talk to him.

EMILY
Do you know how to reach him?

DAD
[wistful]
I think Patsy does. [OFF]
We're just talking about an idea for a story.

EMILY
DAD. I was just calling you because Landon cancelled for this gala tonight and I was wondering if you wanted to be my date. You could dust off the old suit.

DAD
I don't think I could fit into any of my old suits.
[OFF] I don't understand what you want me to ask her. I'm not being hostile!

EMILY

. . .Some of the members of the Philharmonic will be there.
Maybe we can slip them a Hamilton and ask them to play some Mendelssohn.

DAD

Is Roger Takeda still on contrabass clarinet?

EMILY

Maybe he'd be there.

DAD

I don't know if he'd remember me.

EMILY

He invites you to his holiday party every year. How about I get off work early
and we buy you a new aloha shirt? It'll be really great.

DAD

I don't think I can.

EMILY

It'd be good for you to get out of the house.

DAD

Well...if you want to see a movie sometime, that might be nice.

[Click. Dad hangs up.]

EMILY

I don't want to go alone.

19. #

[Telephone rings.]

EMILY

This is Emily, you know what to do.

[Beep.]

[The haunting music of a string quartet. It goes on for a while.]

DAD

Hey sweetie. As you might have guessed,
that's Mendelssohn String Quartet No 6 in F minor, Op. 80, 3rd movement with
Itzhak Perlman and Max Bruch with the Concertgebouw Orchestra, 1977 recording.

Your pops is having an adagio night in.

I hope you are having a wonderful evening.

I'm sure you look beautiful.

[Beat]

This is your father.

[Beep.]

GENERIC FEMALE VOICE

Message saved.

20. #

[Door Buzzes. An inebriated Emily answers. Intercom feedback.]

EMILY
Hell-o?

[Kurt and Emily have a conversation through Intercom.]

KURT
I just wanted to make sure you got in okay.

EMILY
I'm sorry for all the things I said at your fête.

KURT
Gala.

EMILY
Did I win anything?

KURT
You won dinner for two at Doraku at the Silent Auction.

EMILY
Oooooohhhh.

KURT
Maybe you should throw up.

EMILY
Maybe *you* should throw up.

KURT
Jesus Christ Emily.

EMILY
How come Snezzlasagna doesn't like me?

KURT
Snežana likes you fine.

EMILY
I mean she hates all women, mostly equally, but she 'specially hates ME.

KURT
That's unfair.

[EMILY
Does she know?

KURT
Does she know what?

EMILY
We have a *history*

KURT
Yeah. She's knows everyone I've ever slept with.

EMILY
Ah. Okay. But what about the *minor* bases?

KURT
She knows. She doesn't care. No one cares. It was ages ago.
Why are we discussing my wife?]

EMILY
You told her that I had been trying to call Kai?

KURT
I thought it was sweet. Life imitating art, or something.

EMILY
WHAT?

KURT
Do you need help? I wanted to make sure you weren't passed out in your hallway.
Buzz me in.

EMILY
I can't let you see me like this.

KURT
I just saw you—

EMILY
Snezz-your wife said Kai thought the voicemails were weird. And that he didn't even
do the radio show. Kai's friend did the last few gigs. She used the word gig.
Was this a paid opportunity? KURT.

KURT
Nuuh—you waved the fee in exchange for free advertising for HRT.
Did you ask for his friend's name?

EMILY

I was too embarrassed. I came across like a stalker!

KURT

How many times did you call him?

EMILY

That's not the point.

KURT

I'm going. Snežana's waiting in the car. Drink a glass of water.

EMILY

You drink a glass of water.

KURT

Bye Emily.

EMILY

KURT. Are you there???? KUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUURRRRRRTTTT.

KURT

[slightly out of breath]

What's wrong?

EMILY

I wanna go back on the radio.

KURT

You do?

EMILY

Why for you sound so surprised?

KURT

The Z 101.3 people said you sounded a little hesitant.

EMILY

I was acting like a shy woman about to asked the guy out. Hello!

KURT

I thought the scenario called for confident and sexy.

EMILY

I embody those qualities!!! [to herself] I embody those qualities...

KURT

Do you really want to do this?

EMILY

I WANNA BE A STAR.

Did you even hear me on the radio? It aired two weeks in a row.

KURT

Missed it. Sorreee.

EMILY

I was luminous.

KURT

I'm going, okay?

EMILY

I'm going to be super embarrassed about this in like. Ten hours.

KURT

Take care Emily. If you still want to do the radio thing, text me in the morning.

I guess.

[Intercom feedback.]

21.#

[Telephone rings.]

EMILY

This is Emily. You know what to do.

HALIMA

Hey girl.

So Peter's definitely been reading my diary.

To test things out I wrote, "Sex with my husband has become a task."

Then today I found a smudge.

A red, sticky smudge from his jam hands right below the word "task."

The bastard was reading my personal private thoughts over jam and toast while I was taking Layla to preschool.

I'm thinking about writing some false entries, just to mess with him.

What do you think?

Love you.

22. #

[Z 101.3 intro blares.]

DJ LOKI

Oh Yeah! This is Z 101.3 hotspot with DJ Looooookiiiiii

DJ SOLANGE

And DJ Soooooaaaaange. Today we are back on our Hump Day Wednesday with our loooove expert, Dr. Johannes Connection, for the Love Connection.

[DJ Loki speaks with a Ludwig Von Drake-the Disney Duck with a German Accent.]

[Dr. Johannes Connection Intro.]

DR. JOHANNES CONNECTION

Guten Tag. So glad to be back, my esteemed colleagues.

GRANDPA Z

Yeah, yeah Dr. Fancy Pants!

DJ LOKI

Our first caller is Kahikina, a young woman from Kaaawa [Ka-a-a-va] who's having a pretty tricky time with her hubby.

["It's Tricky" from Run DMC sound cue.]

[Melodramatic instrumentals underscore Emily's speech.

Emily speaks like she is reading from a script, but she gains momentum.]

EMILY

We've been married for five years, and it's been total bliss.

But ever since I gave birth to the twins, he's been coming home later and later.

Finally, I followed him one night and discovered he's been driving to my mother's house. Through the window, I saw them kissing passionately.

Dr. Connection, what should I do?

Could my **Husband** be having an affair with my **Mother**?????????

[Record scratch.]

DR. JOHANNES CONNECTION

This is very distressing, very distressing indeed.

Your husband probably does love you but is feeling his sexual needs unmet.

He still imagines a future with you, which is why he is turning to your mother.

EMILY

But what did I do to drive him into her arms?!!?!?!?

DJ LOKI

Dr. Connection, how can Z 101.3 Hotspot with DJ Loki

DJ SOLANGE
And DJ Solange

DJ LOKI
Help this poor woman?

DR. JOHANNES CONNECTION
We must call your husband.

ALL
GASP.

EMILY
No! I can't face him.

GRANDPA Z
DO IT!!!!

DJ LOKI
And for our Z 101.3 listeners out there, Tweet or Facebook suggestions
if you think Kahikina from Kaaawa should give her husband a second chance or

[Hasta la vista sound cue]

DJ LOKI AND SOLANGE
KICK HIM TO THE CURB!

[Kicking husband to the curb sound cue part 1 & part 2.]

GRANDPA Z
Yea! Dump the Chump! Want me take you out grandpa style?

[Horny grandpa sound cue]

DJ LOKI
Okaaaaay here goes nothing, right Kahikina?

EMILY
Um. Right!

[Phone rings]

KEONI
Hello?

DJ SOLANGE
Is this Jonathan [Beep]?

KEONI
Yes?

DJ SOLANGE
This is DJ Sooooooaaaaange from Z 101.3 Hotspot, and you're on the air.

KEONI
Can I help you?

[CukooCukoo]

DR. JOHANNES CONNECTION
This is Dr. Johannes Connection, MD, and I'm here with your wife, Kahikina

EMILY
Hi Jonathan.

KEONI
Kini?!?!? Oh my God. What are you doing on this show?!?!?!?!?!?

DJ SOLANGE
She has a question she'd like to ask you.

EMILY
[Sotto voice]
Do you remember me?

KEONI
...um. You're my wife?

DJ SOLANGE
And she's calling to ask you.

EMILY
Right. Uh. Why do you drive to my mother's house after work?

KEONI
This is going to hurt...I'm in love with your mother. I didn't know how to tell you!?!

EMILY
How could you do this to me. . . . ??!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?

KEONI
This is terrible. I'm sick. I love you both so much. I can't decide.

DJ SOLANGE

You must **choose**. What do you think, Doc?

DR. JOHANNES CONNECTION

I recommend you spend time apart, clear your heads. Jonathan, I think—

EMILY

We should get dinner.

DR. JOHANNES CONNECTION & KEONI & SOLANGE

What?

EMILY

Face to face. In real life.

GRANDPA Z

IS this real life?

EMILY

Shut up Grandpa Z. 8pm. This Friday. Doraku. Okay?

DJ SOLANGE

Girl, he's hooking up with your mama.

EMILY

What do you say?

KEONI

Uh, yeah. Okay. Cool.

[Click. Z101.3 Outro.]

23. #

[Telephone rings. Sounds of a construction site.]

RICHARD

Richard.

EMILY

Hey! Richard! This is Emily.

RICHARD

Who?

EMILY

Emily? I'm the Assistant Technical writer for um. You?

RICHARD

Oh right. Sorry. It's noisy over here.

EMILY

You're not in the office?

RICHARD

I got the calls transferred to my cell.

EMILY

Well, it's my last day, um. Officially. I was hoping we could sit down and talk about—

RICHARD

No can do. I'm on site. It is cra-zee over here. I'm back Monday.

EMILY

I could come in on Monday.

RICHARD

I wouldn't want to make you do that. Look, if you really want to meet, we'll be done here around 7:30. I'll text you a restaurant near the site at 8. I'll be starving, but yeah, we can talk then.

EMILY

Thanks Richard. I really appreciate this. Oh wait. I kind of have plans at 8...

RICHARD

That's my window.

EMILY

Uh. Yeah. Okay. I'll see you at 8.

[Click.]

24.#

[Telephone rings. Restaurant ambience.]

HOSTESS

Thank you for calling Doraku, how may I help you this evening?

EMILY

I have a reservation tonight under the name Emily Chang. I can't make it.

HOSTESS

I can go ahead and cancel that for you.

EMILY

There's someone I'm supposed to meet there.

I don't have his name or his phone number or anything. He's an actor.

[A pause.]

HOSTESS

...What would you like me to do?

EMILY

I guess if a man comes and asks for a reservation under the name Iris or Emily or uh Kahikina?, can you tell him—

HOSTESS

May I put you on hold?—

[Jazzy instrumental version Israel Kamakawiwo'ole's "Hawaiian Suppah Man" plays. Emily sighs. Click.]

25.#

[Telephone rings.]

HALIMA

Hi you've reached Halima. [sound of children laughing].
Please leave a message and I'll call you back when I can!

[Beep.]

EMILY

Halima, that's really shitty of Peter but I think you need to—

[call waiting sound.]

Shit-Oh My God-Sebastian is calling me-What do I do? Okay.
I'm answering.

[A deep breath. She pick ups call waiting.]

EMILY

Heya...

[Sounds of bar music, loud and distorted chatter.]

EMILY

Sebastian? Sebastian, is that you? I can't hear you.

DID YOU BUTT DIAL ME?

SEBASTIAN

[Indistinct talking and laughter]

WOMAN

[Indistinct talking and a lot of laughter]

EMILY

Are you on a date? You son of a—

WOMAN

[Laughter]

[Emily listens in on the conversation.

The muffled conversation continues back and forth for longer than it should, before she hangs up. Click.]

26.#

[Telephone rings.]

EMILY

CDF Solutions. This is Emily.

RICHARD

Hi. Emily? . . .Keiko just emailed me that she saw you come in?

EMILY

Monday bright and early. Did you need to see me in your office?

RICHARD

I'm back on site. Are you sharing a desk with Trisha?

EMILY

Not yet. When she gets here, maybe we should debrief, and figure out where to set up my new office.

RICHARD

Here's the thing...

EMILY

Are you kidding me?

RICHARD

Look, I'll tell it to you straight. There isn't money in the budget for three technical writers. It's been a learning curve, but you've done some great work here, and I can write you a positive letter of recommendation.

EMILY

I thought you said I had a great future ahead of me.

RICHARD

You do. Not in technical writing but...in the kind of writing you like to do. . .

EMILY

Journalism! I have a Masters Degree from Columbia. I cannot believe you are doing this to me.

RICHARD

I can't believe you're doing this to me. You're making me feel like a real scumbag.

EMILY

Me??? You were interested in my feedback on revamping the High Water Requirements in the Reverse Circulation Rotary Drilling Section!
I asked if I could come in to show you on Monday, you said yes.

RICHARD

I don't recall saying that.

EMILY

That's what you said.

RICHARD

I was dehydrated and exhausted and drunk.

EMILY

Are you pretending you don't remember what happened?

RICHARD

I remember you putting your hand on my arm. I remember you asking for the second round of drinks. You asking where we were going next.

EMILY

Oh my God oh my God. You totally used me.

RICHARD

I am not a predator! [whispering] I am sorry if I gave you false hope about your position here. But why would I get involved with a co-worker???
I thought we were getting together because your time at CDF Solutions ended and we have a great connection. I had a really nice time. Didn't you?

EMILY

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

RICHARD

Wait.

Did you...did you go out with me because you thought you could keep your job?

EMILY

...

RICHARD

[with an odd compassion]
That's really sad, Emily.

EMILY

Yeah well. Great talk. I'm glad you can keep the moral high ground here, Boss.
I'll be heading out now. Do I need to fill anything out?

RICHARD
Check in with Keiko.
Emily, can we—

[Click.]

27. #

[Telephone rings]

DAD

Sinclair Library, Special Music Collections, Mr. Chang speaking.

EMILY

[tearful but sort-of-covering it up]

Hi dad...

DAD

Mimi? Are you okay sweetie?

EMILY

I don't know.

DAD

What do you mean?

EMILY

Nothing. I'm fine. I'm stuck in traffic.

DAD

Why are you driving in the middle of the afternoon. Aren't you at work?

EMILY

What are you listening to?

DAD

Can you hear it?

EMILY

No. But you're always listening to something.

DAD

Charles Ives. One of the fathers of American Modernist Composition.

EMILY

Cool.

[Emily sniffs.]

DAD

Are you getting sick?

EMILY

No...

DAD

You shouldn't talk on the phone while driving.
Your mother said Auntie Feng Feng got a ticket just last—

EMILY

You're on speaker. What's his music like? Would I like it?

DAD

Ives was really into mistakes.

EMILY

Maybe I would like him.

DAD

He'd listen to ragtime bands, and the musicians would be drunk and play the wrong notes, and he would notate it. He was inspired by Fourth of July parades, where you could hear several marching bands playing different songs at once. He would notate the jumble of songs all together and that would be his composition. It's counterpoint, in a sense. I'll turn it up. Can you hear it?

[The opening dissonance of Charles Ives "Central Park in the Dark."]

DAD

This is "Central Park in the Dark." Ives evokes the sensation of being in the center of the city at night. It's made out of fragments of a ragtime song mixed with a Church hymn and then a marching band number. He put them all together and made something new out of it. And then, you know that song from the frog in Looney Tunes? "Hello my baby, hello my honey?"

EMILY

Yeah.

DAD

That's in there too.

EMILY

Doesn't it sound terrible?

DAD

Some people think so.
It can be beautiful and emotional,
but also cacophonous.

He called it The Grind.

And it keeps on going,
growing more
and more complex
until it becomes
unintelligible.

[They listen to Charles Ives. Music fades up.]



28. #

[Telephone rings.]

EMILY

This is Emily. You know what to do.

[BEEP]

HALIMA

The kids are asleep! Why aren't you picking up?

I wrote a false entry in my diary.

Something cruel. Something that would cut.

Then I couldn't stop. Entry after entry of lurid, preposterous infidelities.

Layla was conceived by a San Francisco beatnik bum.

Baby was conceived in the bathroom of a dive bar on St. Mark's.

The thing is, deep down, if he loved me, if he truly knew me,
he'd know they are absurd lies.

But instead he shouts, he weeps that I am unfaithful.

The children are bastards. And he's a cuckold.

"That is ridiculous, you are the only man I have been with for the last ten years.

What could I have done that would make you think such a terrible thing?"

And my husband,

the father of my children,

looks at me with so much love and pain behind his eyes,

that I almost forget that

I DESPISE HIM.

He has raped my thoughts and invaded the most personal aspect of me.

Also, Sebastian? What the hell?

Next time that filthy mick calls, Do Not Pick Up.

Don't give away your power, girl. You know better.

[Click.]

29. #

[Telephone rings.]

HOSTESS

Doraku, how may I help you?

EMILY

Hi. This is a long shot, but I cancelled a reservation a few—

HOSTESS

Emily Chang?

EMILY

...yes?

HOSTESS

Franklin left his number for you. He wanted yours but I couldn't give it out.

EMILY

Franklin?

What does he look like? Is he cute?

HOSTESS

Yeah. I mean. Yeah. About 5'7. Brown hair, brown eyes, medium build.

EMILY

Was that 5'7 including his shoes, or like not factoring in his shoes.

I'm just confirming he's not like 5'5 right?

HOSTESS

Do you want his number or not? Because I have tables to seat.

EMILY

Yes ma'am.

[Click.]

30. #

[Telephone rings.]

FRANKLIN

Hello?

EMILY

Hi. This is Emily. We were supposed to meet at—

FRANKLIN

Well hello there.

EMILY

I'm sorry about that. I had a work thing and no way to contact you.

FRANKLIN

I've never been stood up before.

It was a pretty anti-climactic finish to that on-air pick up.

EMILY

It wasn't a pick up.

FRANKLIN

No? Not even for the Z101.3 Office Stud of the Week?

EMILY

Well, the last time you were [German accent] my husband having und affair with my mother.

FRANKLIN

How do they come up with this stuff?

EMILY

I have no idea. So. I don't know anything about you. Tell me something.

FRANKLIN

Something. Haha. No. What do you want to know?

EMILY

What do you do?

FRANKLIN

I'm a landscape architect. My buddy Kai had a bad case of strep throat and as a joke, I took over this gig for him.

EMILY

So you're not an actor?

FRANKLIN

Nope—Did you just exhale a sigh of relief?

EMILY

It's just that I'm really interested in landscape architecture.

FRANKLIN

Right. I take it you're not an actor either.

EMILY

Actors are the worst. I'm a journalist. I just moved back here from New York City.

FRANKLIN

Where do you work?

EMILY

I. Well, uh.

I'm uh in the middle of—

Actually, I've been thinking about creating a digital magazine of art and criticism.

FRANKLIN

Like a blog.

EMILY

Like a digital magazine.

FRANKLIN

That's awesome. You heard about the sudden demise of *The Honolulu Weekly*.

EMILY

And with no alternative independent newspaper, there needs to be a new outlet to inspire local residents to question ourselves.

To question everything and stop being passive observers.

FRANKLIN

You sound like a grant application.

EMILY

Shut up.

FRANKLIN

It's sexy as hell.

EMILY

Oh.

FRANKLIN

So.

EMILY
So.

FRANKLIN
Would you like to try this whole “meeting in real life” thing again?

EMILY
Did you want to go to Doraku?

FRANKLIN
Well, actually I was thinking of La Mariana.

EMILY
Isn't that the restaurant on the pier?

FRANKLIN
Yup.

EMILY
That sounds. Yeah.

[Click.]

31. #

[Telephone rings.]

DAD

Hello?

EMILY

Dad.

DAD

Mimi?

EMILY

I'm at the store. Could you measure the living room wall?

DAD

Oh I. Well. Hold on. My new piezoelectric actuator just arrived!
I'm bending voltage into sound!

EMILY

Dad.

DAD

What are you buying?

EMILY

Bookshelves. I thought now that you're moving in, I'd get some bookshelves that could fit all your books and records.

DAD

I was going to leave most of that at the house.

EMILY

Don't you want to have access?

DAD

Well sure, sweetie. Just get whatever you think is best.

EMILY

Dad, I'm really excited about getting this apartment with you dad, it's going to really help me get back on my feet.

DAD

I'm glad, sweetie.

EMILY

I had a good interview with Bill Tapia. He's really charming.

DAD

Oh good.

EMILY

I'm going to be home late tonight. Did you eat dinner?

DAD

I had some crackers. That really filled me up.

EMILY

What about the chili I made?

DAD

I had some for lunch but I didn't feel like eating it cold again.

EMILY

Heat it up.

DAD

There's no microwave.

EMILY

Heat it up on the stove.

DAD

Your mother said we could buy a microwave.

EMILY

I don't want a microwave.

DAD

I thought you didn't want me to use the stove.

EMILY

I want you to use the stove. I just don't want to die in a fiery gas explosion. Can't you just remember to turn to burner off all the way?

DAD

Your mother kept a note up to remind me.

EMILY

Can't you write a note for yourself?

DAD

I'll buy more sandwiches.

EMILY

Dad, you're driving me crazy.

DAD

That's not a very nice thing to say. I'm not even hungry.

EMILY

I don't understand why you can't just—

DAD

Mm.

[Click. Dad hangs up.]

EMILY

Did you just hang up on me?

32.#

[Telephone rings.]

EMILY

Hello?

FRANKLIN

I'm driving away from you.

EMILY

I wanted you to come in.

FRANKLIN

What!

You could have asked me up. "For coffee."

EMILY

You could have pretended you needed to use my bathroom. But you didn't.

FRANKLIN

I thought you'd say no. Because you're a lady.

EMILY

I would have said no. Because that's how much of a lady I am.

FRANKLIN

Is it too early to ask how the real date compares to the fantasy?

EMILY

The food was awful. But the view.

FRANKLIN

Can't beat a view of the water. Although, I'm sorry, I didn't realize. You're really afraid of birds.

EMILY

I—

I can't remember the last time I watched the sunset over the ocean.

FRANKLIN

Can you believe that happens every single day?

EMILY

Well. Yes. But not that it's always that beautiful.

FRANKLIN

We should watch another one sometime.

EMILY

That's a little cheesy, isn't it?

FRANKLIN

You make me cheesy. You're a good dancer.

EMILY

I am NOT a good dancer.

FRANKLIN

You know how to move those hips.

EMILY

Well, they're wide enough.

FRANKLIN

I like your curves.

EMILY

My mother says I've got an hourglass figure/
but most of the sand is at the bottom.

FRANKLIN

You do./
Oh. That's not very nice.

EMILY

That's my mother....

FRANKLIN

I think you're a delicious, sensuous woman.

EMILY

Listen to you.

FRANKLIN

I can't believe you're interested in me.
When I realized you were the actress on the radio, I couldn't believe my luck.

EMILY

What?

FRANKLIN

Ah. I'm losing my cool. I never thought Emily Chang would be interested in me.

EMILY

...We've met before?

FRANKLIN

You don't remember me?

EMILY

I'm sorry. You look a little familiar. But how do I know you?

FRANKLIN

We went to Kaimuki together.

EMILY

Frankie Anbe?

FRANKLIN

You wouldn't give me the time of day in high school.

EMILY

That's because you were horrible to me in junior high.
You were horrible.

FRANKLIN

Ahh. That was a long/ time ago.

EMILY

You'd sneak up behind me and throw garbage into my backpack—Chicken bones and once Cherry Jell-O that melted all over my algebra textbook. I had to buy a new one.

FRANKLIN

Ye-ah...

EMILY

You and your friends called Landon a fag and when I told you to shut up you shoved me into the dirt.

FRANKLIN

I think I just lightly pushed you and you fell back into the dirt.

EMILY

Is that all you have to say for yourself?

FRANKLIN

I'm sorry?

EMILY

Okay....?

FRANKLIN

I was a raging barrel of hormones at that time. I'm sorry I was awful to you. I liked you back then. I've always liked you. You had a nice time tonight, with me. Right? I mean, you said you think I'm sexy.

EMILY

That was before I knew you were my junior high nemesis.

FRANKLIN

I wanted to apologize to you and Landon at the reunion. But when I saw you with your boyfriend, it felt so juvenile so I left. Can't we...move on? Can't you know me as I am now?

EMILY

I'm sorry, Frankie. I'm sure you're a perfectly decent human adult. But any sexual attraction I might have had for you just drained out.

FRANKLIN

Maybe if we saw each other again...

EMILY

Why didn't you bring it up sooner? We grew up together, for God's sake.

FRANKLIN

I thought it was something we weren't going to talk about. You really didn't know it was me? I mean, I know I lost the weight.

EMILY

God. What a disappointment.

FRANKLIN

Now, hold on. Let me at least—

[Click. Emily hangs up the phone.]

33. #

[Phone rings]

MRS. ASUNCION

Hello?

EMILY

Good afternoon, my name is Emily, and I'm calling on behalf of the Honolulu Repertory Theater to see if you would be interested in purchasing a subscription package. A subscription package offers the lowest—

MRS. ASUNCION

Emily Chang?

EMILY

Wha-what?

MRS. ASUNCION

Ehh. Dis is Aleta Asuncion. Landon's maddah?

EMILY

Oh! Hi Mrs. Asuncion.

MRS. ASUNCION

Landon wen tell me you was back in town.
You working for HRT now?

EMILY

Only part time while I look for a new gig.

MRS. ASUNCION

I've been meaning for call you.
Landon wen give me your article about da ethics of photography.

EMILY

Yes, Jean Baudrillard believed reality does not exist, there are only pictures.

MRS. ASUNCION

Mm. Yes. Very disturbing.

EMILY

Thank you so much.

MRS. ASUNCION

Eh, you get any ideas for one story for *Da Star-Advertiser*?

EMILY

Oh! I'm almost finished working on an article about Bill Tapia.

MRS. ASUNCION

Dat's perfect. He going have one concert at da Waikiki Shell for his 104th.

EMILY

I have tickets.

MRS. ASUNCION

I think can fit dis into next week's Friday Arts section.

We going do one big spread with lots of photos of Bill, past and present, okay?

EMILY

Mrs. Asuncion that would be amazing.

MRS. ASUNCION

Wat's your email, I going send you one work-for-hire agreement.

EMILY

It's Emily Chang-ety Chang 99 at gmail dot com.

MRS. ASUNCION

Ey, I wen run into your maddah at da Kapiolani Farmer's Market.

Poor ting her. How she holding up?

EMILY

Uh great. She's doing great—Mrs. Asuncion, I really appreciate this.

MRS. ASUNCION

Eh. You know Emily, you shoula wen send me da article directly.

Why you no write me when you get into town?

EMILY

I know Landon mentioned it but I didn't want to play that card....

MRS. ASUNCION

Emily. You need for play all da cards in your hand. Always.

EMILY

Right. No. Absolutely. You're right. Thank you.

MRS. ASUNCION

My pleasure. Take care Emily.

EMILY

Oh wait. Uh. Did you want to buy a subscription?

MRS. ASUNCION
Absolutely not.

EMILY
Okay great! No problem! Take care! Thank you again!

[Click.]

34. #

[Telephone rings.]

HALIMA

Hi you've reached Halima. [sound of children laughing].

Please leave a message and I'll call you back when I can!

[Beep.]

EMILY

Halima.

Those fake journal entries are harsh and kind of dangerous.

I think you are destroying a pretty decent marriage.

If you want to divorce him, okay.

But do you need to torture him?

I know I'm raw about this whole topic anyway.

But...

You have kids, and I don't know.

I'm starting to think there aren't a lot of great guys out there,
and maybe Peter is one of them?

Just a thought. Love you.

[Beep.]

35. #

[Sounds of typing. Tape rewinding. Tape plays. Sounds of typing.]

EMILY

Okay Bill. Are you ready for my next question?

[Emily winces at the sound of her own voice.]

BILL

You go ahead honey.

EMILY

How does it feel to be the world's oldest entertainer?

BILL

Who's old?

EMILY

I heard you taught Clark Gable, Rita Hayworth, and Shirley Temple how to play the ukulele.

BILL

Oh yeah. Shirley was da best student.

EMILY

Who else did you play with?

BILL

Oh just about everybody. Bing Crosby and Louie Armstrong.
One night Elvis Presley, and den King Bennie Nawahi.—

[Emily pauses. She rewinds the tape. She types.]

BILL

—Presley, and den King Bennie Nawahi. He was da real king. You know him?

EMILY

I'm afraid I don't.

[Sound of swallowing.]

EMILY

You alright?

BILL

I'm just grand honey. I have trouble swallowing pills. I broke mah arm.

EMILY
Are you okay?

BILL
You better believe! I practice every day. A little here n dere. You play?

EMILY
I'm afraid I don't. But my father knows everything about music.

BILL
But not how to play? Ah. Dat's no good. Everybody should play something.
I learned to play when I was 7-years-old till now. Dat's one long time!

EMILY
That really is.

BILL
How old you?

EMILY
I'm 29.

BILL
Oh too bad baby. You too old for me. You gotta find another fella.

EMILY
I'm working on that.

BILL
My wife Barbie, she understood music was my life and she'd come on tour
and she'd sing "To You My Sweetheart Aloha."
I had a good wife.
She kept me off da dope and da booze. She was all I needed.
I was married for 72 years. You'd think dat's enough.
But I still talk to her everyday.
I say.
Chee. Barbie. You was one very, very good cook and a nice person and I love you.
When I wen check on you when you was sick. I said,
"It's me, Tappy, it's time to take you pills."
But you no say nothing.
I said, "Chee baby why you smiling?"
And that's wen I knew, you was gone.
...
Who am I talking to?
Who are you?

EMILY

Bill, remember, it's Emily.

ALYSSA

Sorry Emily, Bill's a little tired. Can you come back another time?

EMILY

Sure. I'm sorry Alyssa. I hope I didn't—

ALYSSA

It's fine. He just needs to—

[Emily stops the recording.]

36.#

[Telephone rings.]

LANDON

It's Landon, bitch.

[Beep.]

BILL TAPIA

[singing]

AND I'LL PRAY FOR THAT DAY WHEN

WE TWO WILL MEET AGAIN,

UNTIL THEN, SWEETHEART, ALOHA

'TIL THEN, SWEETHEART, ALOHA

EMILY

Isn't Bill amazing? You're going to love this article.

By the way, I went on a date with Fatty Frankie Anbe.

Can you believe it?

[Click.]

37. #

[Telephone rings.]

MRS. ASUNCION

Emily. So great work on da article.

EMILY

Thanks! Did you get my new lede? I interviewed some of Bill's musician friends. I even got Jake Shimabukuro to—

MRS. ASUNCION

You wen see today's papah?

EMILY

No. Not yet.

MRS. ASUNCION

Here's da ting. Bill Tapia died.

EMILY

Oh no. His birthday concert is Sunday.

MRS. ASUNCION

I know. It's cancelled now, of course. Dey already ran with da obit they had on file. So Pomai no like run annada piece on him, yeah.

EMILY

Why didn't they talk to me? I was the last person to interview him. Didn't they know I was in the middle of revising the article?

MRS. ASUNCION

Obits move fast.
Feel free to pitch dis to annada magazine. It's a good piece.

EMILY

Yeah. Thanks.

MRS. ASUNCION

My maddah wen take me to see Bill play in da 60's at da Royal Hawaiian. He wen put da uke behind his head. Wow. He was someting. Plenny handsome too. I know you disappointed. But send me mo' ideas soon, okay?

EMILY

Oh sure. Yeah.

[Click.]

38. #

[Telephone rings.]

LANDON

New Pacific Design—

EMILY

Landon. It's Emily. I just got off the phone with your mom.

LANDON

I heard.

EMILY

Because he's dead, no one cares about him anymore. Now he's joined the ranks of Buddy Holly and Mozart and other artists way more famous than him. It's bullshit.

LANDON

I'm sorry.

EMILY

I have a Master's degree from Columbia. I have a strong portfolio. Why is it so difficult to get a job here? I mean, it's not like this town is teeming with serious journalists.

LANDON

That's what you think?

EMILY

What? You know I'm right.

LANDON

My mother was a substitute English teacher for 20 years before she worked for *The Star Advertiser*. That doesn't mean she's not a great editor.

EMILY

God Landon, I'm just venting.

LANDON

No. This is clearly what you believe.

EMILY

Your mom is great, but let's face it. Hawaii isn't on the same level as New York.

LANDON

Hawai'i may not be New York, but there are interesting and exciting things happening here.

EMILY

I guess everything's relative.

LANDON

When we were growing up, I watched everybody go away to fancy mainland colleges, while I stayed behind. If you're shiny and ambitious, you leave.

EMILY

I came back.

LANDON

And now we're supposed to be grateful that you're back slumming it island-style?

EMILY

I worked hard to get off this rock. Why are you overreacting?

LANDON

Listening to you makes me question my accomplishments because they didn't happen in New York. Nothing's good enough for you here.

EMILY

None of this is a criticism of you.

LANDON

I should get back to work.

[Click.]

39. #

[Telephone rings.]

HALMIA

Hey Island Girl.

EMILY

Hey City Girl.

So how's the gate working?

HALIMA

The gate keeps Layla from leaving her room when she sleepwalks, so that's a relief. It's weird though, I mean, it's a dog gate.

EMILY

As long as it gives you peace of mind.

How's therapy going?

HALIMA

The same.

Well. Peter went off on one of his rants.

EMILY

The "children are bastards" rant?

HALIMA

And then in the middle of it, he stopped. He started smiling and laughing. He thanked the therapist. And in the car he said,

"You knew.

You've never cheated on me a day in your life.

You knew I had been reading it and you created this elaborate fiction to punish me.

I love you so much. I'm such an idiot."

EMILY

Thank God it's finally over. What did you say?

HALIMA

I turned to him, without skipping a beat and I said,

"Hold on. You've been reading my diary?

How dare you? How dare you invade my personal thoughts?

"You...you didn't make it up? You didn't know I was reading your journal?"

"How could I?"

And then he dropped me off at the house and drove off. I haven't seen him since.

EMILY
Halima. My dearest friend.
You are turning into the craziest bitch I know.

HALIMA
I knew I shouldn't talk to you about this.

EMILY
What does that mean?

HALIMA
You couldn't understand.

EMILY
Do you think you're better than me?
Because you're married and produced offspring?

HALIMA
Your life experience is different than my life experience.

EMILY
I cannot believe you just said that to me.

HALIMA
I'm just saying. You couldn't begin to understand what it's like to be with someone for ten years, and then feel betrayed—

EMILY
I am in the *middle* of my parent's divorce.

HALIMA
—They probably stayed together for your sake.
I bet you haven't even talked to your mom about her side of it.

EMILY
I don't need to.

HALIMA
I'm glad you aren't taking sides.

[Sound of a door slam.]

EMILY
What was that?

HALIMA
[whispering]
I have to go.

EMILY
What? I'm not done being mad at you.

HALIMA
He's home.

EMILY
Are you going to be okay? What's going on? He's not going to.
Peter's not a violent guy. Is he?

HALIMA
Gotta go-bye.

[Click.]

40. #

[Phone ring.]

HALIMA

Hi you've reached Halima. [Sound of children laughing]. Please leave a message and I'll call you back when I can!

[Beep. Sound of fumbled hang up.]

41. #

[Phone ring.]

HALIMA

Hi you've reached Halima. [sound of children laughing]. Please leave a message and I'll call you back when I can!

[Beep.]

EMILY

Halima, are you okay? Call me back.

[Click.]

42. #

[Phone ring.]

SEBASTIAN

Hey...

EMILY

Hi Sebastian.

SEBASTIAN

Emily. What's. What's going on?

EMILY

Are you still friends with Peter?

SEBASTIAN

Peter...Wallace? Why?

EMILY

I'm worried about him and Halima. They've been having some marital problems, and she's not answering her phone. I know you guys play squash sometimes.

SEBASTIAN

I used to.

EMILY

Can you call him? See what's going on?

SEBASTIAN

I could. . .

EMILY

But you won't.

SEBASTIAN

I don't feel comfortable doing that.

EMILY

Ask Peter to lunch. Tell him you need his advice.

SEBASTIAN

Why don't you call her mother? Or her friends?

EMILY

This is a delicate situation.

SEBASTIAN

I don't know what you want me to do.

EMILY

I JUST TOLD YOU WHAT I WANT YOU TO DO.

SEBASTIAN

Whoa.

EMILY

I need to know if she's okay.

SEBASTIAN

This is their personal, private life. It's none of my business. And frankly, it's none of yours. Halima is a strong woman. Pete's a good guy. And the bottom line is, they are both grown ups. Maybe you should put your energy towards letting things go.

EMILY

Ex-cuse me?

SEBASTIAN

You're probably worked up about nothing.

EMILY

Letting go of what exactly?

SEBASTIAN

I didn't have to answer the phone when you called.

EMILY

I took the photo you are using on your current OkCupid profile. You laughing in the god damn rowboat in Central Park framed by stupid-fucking cherry blossoms.

SEBASTIAN

So what? It's the most flattering picture I had on hand.
Why did you look up my—

EMILY

Do you know how inappropriate that is?
You are smiling and gazing lovingly at ME
in that picture and you're using it to ensnare
other women. Oh. And then you butt dialed
me on your DATE.

SEBASTIAN

Ensnare?

SEBASTIAN

...What did you hear?

EMILY

Why? Did you get lucky?

SEBASTIAN

How can you even ask me that?

Yes. I was on a date and it's none of your fucking business.

[Beat]

Aw. Jesus. Don't cry.

EMILY

Just because I didn't say anything doesn't mean I'm crying, asshole.

SEBASTIAN

I know you.

EMILY

You used to know me.

SEBASTIAN

I know you.

And you're the one calling me in the middle of the night, talking about how you met some great guy. This Keoni dude. How do you think that makes me feel?

EMILY

I got hit by a car!

SEBASTIAN

What?

EMILY

Never mind—

How could you break up with me via text message?

SEBASTIAN

You were the one moving your stuff out of the apartment.

EMILY

I needed space. I didn't want to break up.

SEBASTIAN

That's not what it looked like. I thought we could have moved past it.

Lots of couples have miscarriages—

EMILY

I don't want to talk about that. And it wasn't even a fucking—
Never mind. Fuck. Fuck you.

SEBASTIAN

Maybe I overreacted.
Things felt so broken and I felt so guilty for what you were going through.
It's not that I don't love you.

EMILY

You're speaking in the present tense.

SEBASTIAN

Force of habit.

EMILY

Ah.

...

I should go. Will you call Peter?

SEBASTIAN

I'm not wild about that idea. Let me think about it.

EMILY

Thanks for nothing.

SEBASTIAN

What did you just say?

EMILY

I need you to do this for me.

SEBASTIAN

I already told you. I'll think about it.

[Click.]

43. #

[Sad wallowing music in background.]

[Phone dialing.]

[8 Cups of Tea Intro.

Recorded message.]

WOMAN'S VOICE

Romantic Breakups are tough. 8 Cups of Tea Listeners value the opportunity to journey with you toward a mended heart. Chatting with your Listener is simple, like drinking Tea with a Trusted Friend. Press One to Connect with a Listener for 18 and over. Press Two, if you are a Teen.

[BEEP]

AMAZINGPRESENCE83

Hello. This is AmazingPresence83. I'm so glad you found me. How can I help you reach contentment?

EMILY

You probably can't.

AMAZINGPRESENCE83

I can listen.

EMILY

Thank you.

AMAZINGPRESENCE83

What do you want to talk about?

EMILY

I just talked to my ex. And I'm sad. There's no one I can talk to right now.

AMAZINGPRESENCE83

What is your good name?

EMILY

Iris.

AMAZINGPRESENCE83

Iris, are you having suicidal thoughts, Iris?

EMILY

Just regular sad.

AMAZINGPRESENCE83

Happiness is a choice, not an achievement.
Nothing will make you happy until you decide to be happy.

EMILY

Are you reading that off of a poster?

AMAZINGPRESENCE83

(Gentle laughter.) It might seem like an oversimplification.
But that is only because it's true. Would you like to talk about your ex?

EMILY

No.

AMAZINGPRESENCE83

So tell me something good.

EMILY

I don't know. I used to know an amazing old man, a musician. He just died.
Today would have been his 104th birthday.

AMAZINGPRESENCE83

Mm. I'm so sorry for your loss.

EMILY

His claim to fame was that he was living history. But now I can't get my article
published because no one cares about him anymore.

AMAZINGPRESENCE83

You care.

EMILY

Yeah...well.

AMAZINGPRESENCE83

Iris, you have a very sympathetic voice.

EMILY

Thank you.

AMAZINGPRESENCE83

It makes me feel less sad listening to it.

EMILY

Thank you.
Are you sad too?

AMAZINGPRESENCE83

I'm very sad.

EMILY

I'm sorry.

AMAZINGPRESENCE83

May I ask you just one question?

EMILY

Uh. Okay.

AMAZINGPRESENCE83

Can you describe what you are wearing on your feet?

EMILY

I'm uh. I'm wearing socks?

AMAZINGPRESENCE83

Are your toenails painted?

EMILY

Pink?

AMAZINGPRESENCE83

That's nice. Could I ask you to take your socks off?

EMILY

Are you for real?

AmazingPresence83

HAVE YOU TAKEN YOUR SOCKS OFF FOR ME?

EMILY

What kind of help line is this?

[AmazingPresence83 emits a low moan.

Click.]

44. #

[Phone ring.]

HALIMA

Hi you've reached Halima. [sound of children laughing]. Please leave a message and I'll call you back when I can!

[BEEP]

EMILY

Halima, if you don't let me know how you are doing I'm calling the police.

[Click.]

#

[Phone ring.]

HALIMA

Hi you've reached Halima. [sound of children laughing]. Please leave a message and I'll call you back when I can!

[Beep]

EMILY

Halima—

[Call waiting sound].

HALIMA

(Whispering)

Hey, you just called?

EMILY

Halima, are you okay? Tell me you're you okay?

HALIMA

(Whispering)

Hey, it's a really bad time, can I call you back?

EMILY

What's wrong?

HALIMA

I'm fine. My book club is about to start.

EMILY

You fucking bitch. You scared the shit out of me.

HALIMA

Sorry. I've been really busy. I'll—

[Click. Emily hangs up.]

45. #
[Phone Rings.]

DAD
[whispering]
Hello.

EMILY
Dad.

DAD
[whispering]. Mimi?

EMILY
Yes. I just got home, the house is disgusting. Where are you?

[The Consolidated Theaters Hawaii trailer plays in the background.]

DAD
[whispering]
They're showing *As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty* on the big screen here for the first time.

EMILY
You went out?

DAD
I'm out with Patsy.

EMILY
I can't hear you.

DAD
Hold on I'm. [shuffling. Muffled conversation with Patsy.
Normal voice]
Hi can you hear me?

EMILY
Yes.

DAD
I'm out with Patsy.

EMILY
Who?

DAD

She's the digital archivist.

EMILY

The one with the earrings?

DAD

Yes, she makes her own earrings.

EMILY

They're very unique. Isn't she widowed?

DAD

Freddy died six years ago. Wow. Time flies.

EMILY

Are you on a date? I think it's a little soon for that.

DAD

If an intelligent, stylish, and attractive colleague wants to take me to the cinema, I don't think it's the end of the world, do you?

EMILY

She's not stylish.

DAD

Be kind.

EMILY

So. I bought a whiteboard with a list of twenty weekly tasks.

DAD

Can we discuss this later?

EMILY

I'm sorry. But I can't see the dining room table and it's grossing me out.

DAD

You know, I'm happy to support you but I am paying the entire rent.

EMILY

I am grateful. Extremely grateful. But this is about respecting your living environment. Mom got tired of taking care of you and it'd be good for you to learn—

DAD

You think I need this from you? I get it from your mother and now from you? I was really looking forward to this film. And now I'm all stressed out.

EMILY

Dad. I was just trying to teach you...

DAD

You don't need to teach me anything.

Worry about your own problems and stop trying to fix mine.

[Click.]

46. #

[Telephone rings.]

HARUMI

Hello?

EMILY

Hey Harumi.

HARUMI

Hi! Who is this?

EMILY

It's Emily. Chang.

HARUMI

Whoa.

EMILY

Is this too random?

HARUMI

It's okay. How are you? How's New York?

EMILY

Well. I'm back home actually.

HARUMI

Really? You?

EMILY

Yeah...for now.

Do you ever come back?

HARUMI

Nah. My parents moved when they retired.

EMILY

That's too bad.

HARUMI

I miss Hawai'i. I went to Kaua'i for my honeymoon though.

EMILY

Oh. Congratulations.

Who's the lucky lady?

HARUMI
JiYun. She's an anesthesiologist.

EMILY
Wow. She's the one...

HARUMI
Yeah. After you.

EMILY
That's so Great!
And you've achieved the fantasy of every Asian mother by marrying a doctor.

HARUMI
True.

EMILY
Anyway. I was calling because I'm starting up an online publication.

HARUMI
Nice! Although I don't know if you want my advice.
Hypernia Magazine's on an indefinite hiatus.

EMILY
Oh no!

HARUMI
Too much work. Didn't have your drive.

EMILY
Mmm.

HARUMI
I'm at the *Chronicle*. I dig it.

[Text sound.]

HARUMI
Sorry to be abrupt, but I have to pick up my daughter.
But email me your questions and I'll try to help.

EMILY
A daughter!

HARUMI
Can you believe it? Hazel is 21 months.

EMILY
Whoa! That is SUCH a good age.

HARUMI
It really is, you know?

EMILY
Well, I won't keep you.

...

HARUMI
You okay?

EMILY
Yeah. Of course!
I found this shoebox full of all the letters you wrote me.

HARUMI
Oh wow.

EMILY
I'm looking at a photo of you with floppy 90's Hugh Grant hair.

HARUMI
I bet I had a lot more of it.

EMILY
You don't have hair?

HARUMI
I mean. I have some hair.

EMILY
Do you ever look at my letters?

HARUMI
When you broke up with me, I threw them out.

EMILY
You threw out all of my letters?

HARUMI
Yeah. In my defense, you had just broken my heart.

EMILY

I'm sorry.

I just.

I know this is weird.

When we were together, you always seemed so content.

But. I.

Can you help me understand what made you so sure about me back then?

How were you able to make that kind of decision so early?

HARUMI

I was young. I mean. I was wrong.

EMILY

...

What if you weren't...wrong.

What if it was just me?

HARUMI

I couldn't say.

EMILY

How did you do it?

HARUMI

Do what?

EMILY

Your life?

HARUMI

I don't know what kind of advice you're looking for,
but I don't think I can give it to you.

EMILY

I shouldn't have called. I'm sorry.

HARUMI

I'm glad to hear from you. And about what you're creating in Hawaii.

EMILY

Actually, I was thinking of moving to San Francisco.

It's too hard to make anything here. Nobody gets what I'm trying to do.

HARUMI

Really?

EMILY

Living here is so different than coming back for a visit.

HARUMI

I can imagine. Well. San Francisco would love to have you.

EMILY

Rent's pretty crazy huh?

HARUMI

Oh my God. You are not good at picking affordable cities.

EMILY

I'm not good at picking anything.

HARUMI

Hey. Easy now. You're talking about my friend.

EMILY

Am I your friend?

HARUMI

Of course.

[Different ringing sound.]

EMILY

Oh shit. Sorry I Facetimed you with my big fat cheek. Hi.

HARUMI

Hi stranger.

EMILY

You did lose some hair.

HARUMI

You should see my dad gut.

EMILY

Show me—Oh come on, that's barely a tummy.

HARUMI

I really do have to go, but if you end up moving here, let me know, okay?
I think you'll do well wherever you end up living.

EMILY

Thank you, Harumi. Really.

HARUMI
Anytime.

[Click.]

47. #

[The end of a song. Z 101.3 late night intro.
Emily is packing a suitcase.]

DJ SOLANGE

This is DJ Solange filling in for DJ 2-Finga-Poi bringing you Z 101.3 Late Night Advice Hour with Goddess Sweet Leilani.

GODDESS SWEET LEILANI

Namaste. And we're back with Franklin who is trying to win back his lady-love whom he bullied in high school.

FRANKLIN

Junior High.

EMILY

[Listening to radio]
What?

DJ SOLANGE

We've asked our Z 101.3 listeners to weigh-in. And here's what Twitter user @Jadedheart808 had to say.

@JADEDHEART808

U decided 2 be the bully, now U have 2 face the consequences.
A boy was mean to me in the 9th grade, & now that I'm in the 11th,
I let him know he'll never have a chance with me.
If U want the butterfly then be nice to the caterpillar.
#onlyinHawaii #ZHotspot #butterfly.

FRANKLIN

I've changed. Doesn't anyone out there believe a person can change?

GODDESS SWEET LEILANI

And the people have spoken. So sorry Franklin. Better luck next time.

[Goddess Sweet Leilani Rejection sound cue.]

GODDESS SWEET LEILANI

Our next caller is from—

48. #

[A 90's hit plays. Telephone rings.]

DJ SOLANGE

[Normal person voice]

Hello?

EMILY

Hi, I'm trying to reach Goddess Sweet Leilani.

DJ SOLANGE

That program ended. It's 90 songs from the 90's till 2.

EMILY

Do you know if that guy that called in, Franklin. Was he an actor or not?

DJ SOLANGE

Why would he be an actor?

EMILY

Oh come on. I've called in as a performer with you guys before.

DJ SOLANGE

Jesus it's you.

EMILY

Can I go on the air? I just want to say something to him.

I did a number on that guy.

DJ SOLANGE

What would you say to him on the radio you couldn't say in person?

EMILY

Aren't you negating the transformative power of your own medium?

I just want to get on for one second.

DJ SOLANGE

Our producer really doesn't want to use you anymore. He sent an email.

EMILY

Could I dedicate a song to him from his friend, Emily?

DJ SOLANGE

I guess. It needs to be from the 90's.

EMILY

Let me think about it.

49. #

[Telephone rings.]

EMILY

This is Emily. You know what to do.

[Beep.]

MOM

Emily. Your father says you're moving to San Francisco? Do you have a new job?

Congratulations!

If you don't have a new job, you need at least six months of living expenses saved before you move to a new place.

Please don't leave without saying goodbye.

That's not what we do, Emily.

Okay?

This is your mother.

[Click.]

50. #

[Telephone rings.]

LANDON

This better be good.

EMILY

Landon please. Please don't be mad at me right now. I'm walking over a highway overpass on Sand Island and I'm really scared.

LANDON

What are you doing there?

EMILY

I was drinking and I hit a telephone pole.

LANDON

What the fuck! You could have killed someone.

EMILY

I know. God. I know.

LANDON

That's really fucked up Emily.

EMILY

I know. It's been a horrific night.

Oh man. [lowers voice.] Up ahead there's a bunch of really sketchy looking dudes.

LANDON

Why don't you wait in your car?

EMILY

I can't be in my car or I'll get a DUI. I have to sort it out in the morning.

LANDON

Can't you get someplace else?

EMILY

There's nothing around here. It's all industrial.

But if I can get to the other side of the overpass there's La Mariana, that restaurant by the pier?

I thought at least I could wait there till I called a cab...or you can get me.

LANDON

Keep talking to me. Keep walking.—[Off] You need to leave

—I'll start driving towards you.

EMILY

Shit. Come quick.

If something happens, I'm on Sand Island Access Road.
Just passing this auto recycling center.

LANDON

Jesus, Emily. Are you trying to get murdered?

EMILY

I'm going to get rape-murdered. Oh my God.

LANDON

Calm down.

EMILY

My suitcases are in the trunk. And my laptop.
But I didn't want to carry them down the street.

LANDON

Suitcases?

EMILY

I booked a flight to San Francisco.

LANDON

What the fuck? You were gonna ghost?

EMILY

I need a new city.

LANDON

So you drove yourself drunk to the airport?

EMILY

My flight was delayed. So I went to the airport bar. And then my flight was cancelled.
So I got my car back from Tanya's, and drove back, because I wanted to sleep in my
own bed. I was supposed to fly out again tomorrow.

LANDON

And now?

EMILY

As soon as I sort out my car, I'm out of here.

LANDON

Girl. You're bell-jaring.

EMILY

I'm starting fresh.

LANDON
Nuh-uh.

EMILY
Are you close?

LANDON
I wasn't alone when you called.

EMILY
Oh. Did I.

LANDON
He was leaving.
This married guy I've been seeing brought his baby over.

EMILY
He brought his baby to a hookup?

LANDON
In a fucking baby Björn. When I asked him about it, he said, "don't worry. She won't wake up." He was supposedly driving her around the neighborhood so she'd stop crying and fall asleep, but he came over to see me instead.

EMILY
So you asked him to leave?

LANDON
I mean. The baby was asleep.

EMILY
His poor wife. Can you imagine?

LANDON
Judge me all you want.

EMILY
At least you didn't fool around with your boss.

LANDON
I do have standards.

EMILY
You should know that I didn't come back here to boost myself up because I think I'm better than everyone.
I came here because I failed in every single way.

LANDON
It's painful how negative you are about Hawai'i when I know you love it.

EMILY

I love aspects of Hawai'i. But not myself in it.

LANDON

Not to go all mystical *kapuna* on you.

But it's like *nānā i ke kumu*. Look to your source. Let it energize you.

EMILY

You know that's not going to work.

LANDON

Why not?

EMILY

Can I tell you something?

If you promise not to feel bad for me?

LANDON

Go ahead girl.

EMILY

Well...

I haven't told anyone this before.

When I was with Sebastian, we got pregnant.

It was ectopic, where the egg attaches outside of the uterus.

It's extremely dangerous and there's only a miniscule chance that I'd be able to carry it to term.

I knew I was being crazy and so unbelievably stupid,

but

I couldn't bring myself to take the medication to terminate,

because of that tiny,

sliver of hope.

So there was this life,

growing in the wrong part of my body.

Killing me.

LANDON

Jesus.

EMILY

I didn't tell a soul and went on like everything was normal.
I watched Sebastian child-proof our tiny apartment
and read up about newborns. And I didn't say a thing.
Then I had an abdominal rupture, and I got rushed to the hospital.
I lost the baby.
And now it's pretty unlikely that I can ever get pregnant again.

LANDON

Emily. I'm so-- [sorry.]

EMILY

I just want to do something that matters, you know?
When I was little, my dad used to read me this book that in retrospect,
really fucked me up. *Miss Rumphius*? It's about this girl who's told that when she
grows up, she must do something to make the world more beautiful.
What can any of us do to truly make the world more beautiful?
Shit.
Hold on. There's a sketchy car flashing its lights at me.

LANDON

That's your white knight in a used Kia Optima.
I'm here!
We're getting some mother-fucking loco moco and macadamia nut pancakes.
You'll feel better, you fucking lush.

EMILY

Thank you.

51. #

MOM

Chang residence, you've reached Grace.

EMILY

Is it still the Chang residence if you are living by yourself?

MOM

It's debatable. Could that be my daughter?

EMILY

Hi mom.

Did you get the article I sent you?

MOM

I don't much care about the plight of downtown graffiti "artists," but I thought it was well-written. And I loved the article about Bill.

EMILY

Thanks.

MOM

So are you and Landon writing *every* article in the magazine?

EMILY

Come on, we have to start somewhere.

MOM

You don't need to assume everything I say as sarcastic. Have you talked to your father?

EMILY

He's been spending time with the Digital Archivist, Patsy.

MOM

The one with the creative earrings?

EMILY

Doesn't that bother you?

MOM

Should it?

EMILY

It bothers me. Are you still going through with the divorce?

MOM

I'm doing really well right now. I started taking a Zumba class with Aunty Feng Feng.

EMILY

Don't you miss dad?

MOM

I talk to your father every day.

I think he's still hurt that you moved out.

EMILY

I don't know how you did it, mom.

What if he ends up with that Patsy woman?

MOM

It's possible. Men tend to remarry more than women.

EMILY

That's so messed up. Because men are supposedly better looking when they're older?

MOM

There was an article I was thinking about sending you but decided against it.

It was career advice from the director Stanley Kubrick.

You know he directed *The Shining* and *2001/A Space Odyssey*.

EMILY

I know who Stanley Kubrick is.

MOM

Kubrick talked about how his wife supported him and maintained the household, and basically took care of him in all kinds of ways throughout his career. But for the female artists he knows, they get caught up by taking care of their children and husbands, and marriage becomes detrimental to their careers.

So his advice for men is: "get married."

And his advice to women is: "Don't get married. Stay single and stop taking care of men."

EMILY

This is your advice to me?

MOM

This is my advice to myself.

Are we going to talk about why you left?

EMILY

...

MOM

Are we going to talk about why you came back?

EMILY

...

MOM

Well.

It's nice to have you home.

Thanks mom.

EMILY

Thanks mom.

What are you doing right now?

MOM

Nothing.

EMILY

Wanna get dim sum?

MOM

Not really. Come with me to Macy's, I have to do returns.

EMILY

...yeah, okay.

52. #

[Public radio intro music.]

JOYCE

Aloha kakahiaka. This is Joyce Young for *Island Chat* for Hawai'i Public Radio 88.1 FM. My guest today is Emily Chang, founder of *The Outpost*, a digital magazine of art and criticism. The theme in this issue is magical thinking in various forms, and features articles by local and national writers. How are you today, Emily?

EMILY

Really well. Thank you Joyce.

JOYCE

You sound very calm. Do you have prior experience on the radio?

EMILY

Actually...yes.

JOYCE

So I love the magazine and it's been having a huge impact. *Wired Magazine* names *The Outpost* one of the best new independent magazines you've never heard of. In this piece called "The Plight of the Alone," you've written, can you please read this wonderful passage for our listeners?

EMILY

Oh. Okay. "We need each other now more than ever. In a world where communication is effortlessly impersonal, an insistence on independence can be dangerous. Our essential needs haven't altered over time—there's no app to erase our need to breathe, sleep, and eat. But overlaying our needs is a map of desire. All of us are alone, but we need to appreciate our dependence. We are made up of thousands of others."

JOYCE

Mmm. At the end of the day, whether you're an extrovert, or an introvert, like me, surprise! all humans experience loneliness. And what do you need most?

EMILY

What or who?

JOYCE

You tell me.

[End of play.]