

LIA

The following program contains explicit language and just complete hopelessness. Why even pretend? Your children will face the greatest economic collapse in recorded history, and will be forced to abandon even the most basic pacifying luxuries. They will be forced to confront the ills of the world head-on, with nowhere to hide, and still they will factionalize and fight each other over nothing. May we all be innocent again someday.

LIA

You've never oppressed anyone. Somewhere out there, racists are marching for extermination, but not you. You've never done that. You would never do that. You can't imagine anyone does that. Incomprehensible. You're not racist, but these reports are probably exaggerated to sell more newspapers. It's a dying industry. In your experience, whenever there are two strong opinions, the truth is usually in the middle somewhere. What do the Nazis have to say? See, they say they're not racist. It's all just one big misunderstanding, you're sure. It's no big deal, just Tales of Insecurity.

LIA

Hi. Welcome to Tales of Insecurity, post modern existential horror for your daily commute. Are you stuck in traffic now? I'm glad I can keep you company in these dark times. You have to stay awake, even though you're not doing anything. You have to concentrate on the road. If you allow more than a car's length in front of you, someone will fill that gap and you won't get to move, nor will the miles of cars behind you. They will be trapped on this stretch of highway forever and it will be your fault. None of them will ever see their families again, just your taillights. So, stay

focused. Do you even remember where you were going? Is it morning or evening? Which way is east or west? Which way does the sun rise or set? Does the earth spin clockwise or counterclockwise? It must be clockwise, right? That's how sundials work. So the sun must rise from the left side, which is east. But then, it seems that left should have more positive associations than right. Sunrise is birth and sunset is death, so if the sun rises in the east, left-handed people should be the norm, and right-handedness should be scary and weird from that medieval superstitious perspective that Western culture comes from, so it must be west. You could just look this stuff up on your phone, but you're driving. And whatever we came up with must be right. We figured it out with logic, which is more reliable than Wikipedia, as long as we didn't make any mistakes.

LIA

Thank you joining me today. I'm LiA Lindsaychen. I looked it up for you. It rises in the east and sets in the west, which means that west is right and east is left, which means south is up and north is down, so you've been holding the map wrongside-up this whole time. The printers messed up too. Everyone is wrong everywhere about everything forever.;98k Who made these decisions? Why weren't you consulted? Who voted for this?

LIA

It's fun to take the alternate perspective sometimes. Just let me play the devil's advocate here, what if your immortal soul isn't as important as making your friends second guess their perspective on diversity? Let me play the devil's advocate here, what if your researched and well-developed opinions aren't as nuanced as my

immediate knee-jerk reaction? Let me play the devil's advocate here, what if might does make right? I think I know how to prove it does.

LIA

So America has this thing called the Bill of Rights. Mostly, the document places limits on the things the government can do its citizenry. The first amendment says the government can't make laws about religion or take away your ability to protest. The third says they can't make you host soldiers in your house if you don't want to, unless there's a war going on. Four through eight are largely about law enforcement and court proceedings, and nine and ten are meta amendments, about making new rules. Most of these are fine. The second amendment is the one that we keep getting tripped up on. The idea of it is that the government can't make you give up your weaponry, just in case you need to overthrow the government sometime. I'll go ahead and read it to you.

JAMES MADISON

A well-regulated militia being necessary for the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.

LIA

It's an if-then statement. If a militia is required for civil liberty, people should have access to guns. It doesn't have anything to do with protecting your home from intruders or target shooting with your buds. If you need to sing on key, you should have access to autotune. Captain Crunch being necessary for the security of a balanced breakfast, the right of the people to experience a rush of flavor with several essential vitamins shall not be infringed.

LIA

Anyway, there's an inherent victimhood in the rhetoric that comes from second amendment advocates. Guns keep us safe from government, not that anyone's planning on fighting the US Military anytime soon, but as soon as they take that one right away, they can take away the rest without any fear of resistance. Once you outlaw guns, only the outlaws will have guns.

LIA

Personally, I'm less afraid of outlaws with guns than I am of people in charge. Worse, people in charge with guns, who think they have some kind of crusade or moral imperative. If you're able to be a part of the ruling class and also think of yourself as an oppressed minority, there's not going to be much negotiating with you. You don't understand desperation, but you think you do. You don't understand what it is like to be fundamentally rejected by society. You don't understand depression.

MANNY

How can depression be debilitating? I had depression once, but I got over it using sheer willpower.

LIA

If you have willpower, you don't have depression. You were sad. You hate being told you don't understand things, but you also feel no need to learn.

MANNY

No one helped me when I lost my job. Everything I've ever gotten, I earned on my own.

LIA

You don't understand isolation. You don't understand what it means to be denied a platform. You don't understand what it means to be misunderstood, not even in the

fundamental way that none of us
ever knows each other.

MANNY

You liberals are so fragile. So
sensitive. No backbone.

LIA

Not a liberal. Liberal means
compromise. My backbone, however,
weak as it is, is mine. I am not
using any cultural baggage as an
exoskeleton.

MANNY

That's pretty big talk. Why don't
you try arguing with a real person?
Why are you taking cheap shots at a
caricature who just says whatever
you already have an answer for? Are
you afraid to engage in a real
debate?

LIA

Yes, I am. Not because you're
right, but because it won't do
anything. I'm not going to change
your mind. All a debate would do is
reinforce for you the version of me
that you have imaginary debates
with.

LIYA

And simply put, if you own a gun in
America and you're white, you are a
racist, end of story.

MANNY

I'll have you know, I have all
kinds of black friends. They even
let me use the N-word sometimes.
That's respect is what that is.

LIYA

Wow, that argument really put me in
my place. You really are arguing
from the moral high ground.

MANNY

Absolutely. Now get off my
property, you fucking weirdo.

LIYA

You can call me a tranny if you

want. We're cool like that.

MANNY

Thanks, I hate having any limitations on my free speech.

LIA

The first amendment only protects you from government censure. It doesn't mean anyone has to listen to you.

MANNY

Bet you wish it did, though. Bet you wish people had to listen to you.

LIA

It'd be nice if I felt like someone could hear me. I don't want to compel anyone's behavior, though. I just wish I could reach the people for whom my voice would make sense.

MANNY

Sounds like an echo chamber to me. You just want to talk to the people who already agree with you. What's the point of that?

LIA

You only think like that because you belong to a culture already. You can't escape validation.

MANNY

You just love playing the victim card, don't you?

LIA

The precious victim card. The one advantage held by members of oppressed groups. But how effective is it? Today's topic is about the way people who aren't used to being left out deal with potential threats to their hegemony.

MANNY

Bullshit, elitist, 40 dollar, meaningless, no-nothing words. Just fucking say what you mean.

LIA

Ain't no way I'm elitist. I ain't
no upper crust. I ain't even
stuffed crust, that's too fancy.
What do you want on your Tombstone?
Anything's fine with me. I'm not
particular. I'm just a mealy-
mouthed overladen maiden mumbling
out mild-mannered Tales of
Insecurity.

ANNOUNCER

Look out, here they come! The
Rocket Bees!

THEME SONG

Here in outer space
You can spread your wings
You can fight for truth and
Kill for peace
Here in outer space
There's no god or king
There's no order
But the Rocket Bees
They're a cosmic force
And they know their place
It is right here at
The very top
They fight for the glory
Of the whole bee race
And they just might never stop

Pollack does the buzzing
And Rothko bathes in honey
De Kooning makes ballistics
And Kahlo does the gunning
They're here to fight for justice
And they do it really well
if you try to stand against them
Have a lovely day in hell
They'll gouge your eyes with
stingers
grind your bones into a paste
You'll soon regret your pointless
life
you useless sack of waste
Don't try to resist
I really must insist
Or else you'll find your face

Is an impression of a fist

They're a cosmic force
And they're super strong
They'd destroy you with a angry
glance
They're strong and they're proud
And their guns are super loud
They communicate their rage in
dance

ANNOUNCER

Somewhere in the Epsilon Sector, in
orbit around the blood moon of
Carcass, Dr. Scalaris compiles what
could be a breakthrough in her plot
of galactic conquest.

FLY

Yes, yes, I think I've done it.

GOLDBLUM

What have you done, doctor?

FLY

As you can see, the subjects who in
this last experiment were given the
latest concentration of my serum
saw their performance increase
nearly tenfold.

GOLDBLUM

Yes, of course, Dr. Scalaris, but
what does it mean?

FLY

It means we're on the right track.
We're finally getting somewhere.

GOLDBLUM

That's fantastic news.

FLY

With the added vitality provided by
this serum, we should be able to
take back what's rightfully ours.

GOLDBLUM

Oh, that's such a relief. We should
celebrate.

FLY

It's too soon to relax, my enthusiastic colleague. Science doesn't happen all at once. We have to repeat this experiment enough times and with a large enough sample size that we can be certain the results were not a fluke.

GOLDBLUM

Of course we're not done. But come on, Doctor, you've definitely deserve a break.

FLY

Alright, alright. One drink.

ANNOUNCER

But their nefarious celebration is cut short, by: the Rocket Bees!

FLY

Oh no.

POLLACK

Hey, nice research, shit-muncher. You do this yourself, or did you download it from somewhere?

KAHLO

Wow, you really earned your PhD, didn't you?

DE KOONING

Whatever.

ROTHKO

KaPow! Take that!

FLY

Please, I'm begging you, don't make too much of a mess.

KAHLO

Gee, I don't know, did that sound like begging to you, De Kooning?

DE KOONING

No, Kahlo, it didn't. It sounded like a threat.

POLLACK

Somebody's getting a little big for her panties, isn't she?

ROTHKO

Bam!

FLY

Ow, that really hurt.

POLLACK

Oh, did it? Hey Rothko, she says that hurt.

ROTHKO

Oh no, that's too bad, how about this one?

FLY

Damn you, Rocket Bees!

ROTHKO

Whoa ho. Damn us, did you hear that, Pollack?

POLLACK

It sounded like she said damn us.

KAHLO

Pretty mean. That hurt my feelings.

GOLDBLUM

Can you all just leave us alone?

KAHLO

Whoa ho, who's your little friend here, doctor?

FLY

Please, leave him out of this. He's just a drone.

DE KOONING

So you won't mind if we rough him up a little?

FLY

Please, you don't have to do this.

POLLACK

Whoa there, whoa there. Did you hear that, De Kooning?

DE KOONING

Hear what?

POLLACK

We don't have to do this.

DE KOONING

Oh. Oh right. That's funny.

POLLACK

You do know that we've been commissioned by the Intergalactic Peace Agency to maintain absolute celestial harmony.

KAHLO

You think we want to be here? You think we like doing this to you?

ROTHKO

Kabang!

KAHLO

You think we're some kind of weirdos? Like we get off somehow teaching you scavengers a lesson?

POLLACK

You're lucky you're important for the ecosystem, or else we'd just wipe you out entirely.

DE KOONING

If it was up to us, we'd do a little more than swat you around a little.

ROTHKO

You fuckers need some extermination.

POLLACK

Damn right, Rothko. Damn right.

KAHLO

But not today.

DE KOONING

Not today.

FLY

Thank you.

POLLACK

You hear that, Kahlo? We broke her spirit?

KAHLO

Righteous.

ROTHKO

Listen, you. You don't give up hope until we tell you to, you hear me?

FLY

Yes.

DE KOONING

Great. Well, job well done, girls. Let's get out of here before we catch something.

POLLACK

Bye.

FLY

Ow.

KAHLO

Bye.

FLY

Ow.

DE KOONING

Bye.

FLY

Ow!

ROTHKO

Bye.

FLY

Ow!

GOLDBLUM

Are they gone?

FLY

I think so. I hope so.

GOLDBLUM

How much damage did they do?

FLY

Enough. But I think we can salvage some of it.

GOLDBLUM

Oh, Dr. Scalaria, they're firing at us!

FLY

What? Why would they do that?

GOLDBLUM

Direct hit! Our equilibrium thruster is damaged.

FLY

Can we fix it?

GOLDBLUM

Seems unlikely.

FLY

So we're just going to keep spinning?

GOLDBLUM

Sorry, doctor.

FLY

We were on the verge of a breakthrough.

GOLDBLUM

I know.

FLY

I should have sent my serum back home as soon as I was even halfway sure about it.

GOLDBLUM

You did everything you could.

FLY

Do our communications still work?

GOLDBLUM

Yes, doctor.

FLY

Then put me through to mission control. I should report what happened.

GOLDBLUM

Right away.

MISSION CONTROL

Scalaria, is that you? You look like hell.

FLY

Sorry, yeah. We had a setback today.

MISSION CONTROL

Well, no worries. I was just about to call you actually. We're calling off the mission.

FLY

Oh, really? Did someone find a cure? It wasn't Dr. Gauromydas, was it?

MISSION CONTROL

No, we're all still dying down here. But we signed a treaty.

FLY

Oh yeah?

MISSION CONTROL

We are on the verge of economic collapse, you know, what with the plague and the blight that are ripping the foundations of our society apart from the seams.

FLY

Yes, of course.

MISSION CONTROL

But the bees promised to rebuild our infrastructure as long as we adopt their systems and provide unskilled labor for their manufacturing and service industries. And all our non-essential research has to stop.

FLY

But my research is essential.

MISSION CONTROL

I'm sorry, Dr. Scalaria, but my hands are tied.

FLY

And my wings are clipped. Stripped from my body, and you're saying we work for them now?

MISSION CONTROL

You are to surrender your ship to

us immediately.

FLY

We can't, the ship's broken.

MISSION CONTROL

Then you will no longer receive support or supplies from our end. You're on your own now. I know it's not the answer you wanted to hear, but that's all I got.

FLY

This is unacceptable.

MISSION CONTROL

Also, you will be labeled an enemy of the state, and if you make any attempt to land on our soil again, you will be primed for extermination.

FLY

Fine. I'll figure something out.

MISSION CONTROL

You are not to figure anything out. Armed guards are on their way now to escort you out of the galaxy.

FLY

Why don't they just bring me back to our planet?

MISSION CONTROL

Because you destroyed government property. Mission control out!

GOLDBLUM

What are we going to do, Dr. Scalaria?

FLY

How much serum do we have left?

GOLDBLUM

Just whatever's on the floor.

FLY

See what you can pull together. Salvage as much as you can. It's our only hope.

GOLDBLUM

Sure. What are you going to do?

FLY

If I add this catalyst, the serum will not only restore vitality, it will increase our strength to superhuman levels! We will have the proportional strength of an ant!

GOLDBLUM

Alright! They won't know what hit them.

FLY

We won't go down without a fight.

GOLDBLUM

It looks like the Rocket Bees are nearly here.

FLY

Hurry! Get me that serum!

GOLDBLUM

Yes, yes. Is this enough?

FLY

It'll do. Just need to put it in here, and inject it here, and yes.

ROTHKO

Did you miss us?

POLLACK

Sorry to drop in again, but we heard you don't have any social cache anymore.

KAHLO

We're here to pick up the pieces.

DE KOONING

Of your broken life.

POLLACK

And absolutely crush them.

FLY

This is your last chance to back away. Leave me alone, or you will be destroyed.

KAHLO

Ooh, big scary fly. Are you going to hurt us? Are you going to kiss us to death?

ROTHKO

You don't even have wings, shit-for-brains.

DE KOONING

Wait, what's happening?

POLLACK

She's growing.

ROTHKO

Oh damn, she's a monster!

DE KOONING

And now she's super strong, too!

POLLACK

Got it. She's down.

DE KOONING

Whew, that was a close one. I thought we were in for a real battle there.

KAHLO

Not to worry. The good guys always win.

ROTHKO

I'm a little freaked out now.

KAHLO

Don't worry, Rothko. Let's go get a drink.

POLLACK

We definitely earned it today. God damn vermin is what they are.
(Spits)

DE KOONING

Yahoo!

GOLDBERG

Dr. Scalaris, are you alright?
Doctor, can you hear me? I'm sorry,
I wanted to help, but I got scared.
Doctor, can you hear me? Doctor?

LIA

Welcome back to Tales of Insecurity. The bees were police. America. Right. Colonialism. So. This is the listener mail section. I'm not going to bother reading the messages to you. I can't read them again. I can summarize. First message: call your mother. I can't tell you why, but you should call her. Please, call her. Sorry, I can't do that. It's a lot easier for me to worry about the worst case scenarios than to endure either overt transmisia or worse, the misguided acceptance full of concessions. I have to preserve the little stability I have. So yes, the worst case scenario, my mother probably has cancer again and maybe her organs are just dissolved in a big puddle, maybe my brother fell off a building. Maybe my dad started drinking again, now that he hangs out with all the alcoholics all the time. A message from my mother. Just the cancer, stage 4, Hop Hop Donut Lifts, and her bones are brittle like crackers. What a relief. Could have been worse. Thank you for the message, it's really helpful. It'd be really nice if I could call, but I can't. Oh well. Not until I feel safe. Am I horrible and selfish, not conceding to my father's horrible cowardly selfishness? My mother seems to think so. The first communication we've had since last year, she reveals all the ways her body is falling apart that mine will too if by some fluke I live long enough and all I can reply is I'm so sorry to hear that, but please don't talk to me about gender, please have a little mercy, I'm suffering here. I just found out my mother has stage four breast cancer. Stage 4. Fight! And now she's trying to call me her son, gross, but oh, she's understanding too. A little

anecdote about how when they tell church people about me, they're not surprised, I always knew there was something wrong with him. See, I accept you better than anyone I know.

KATHRYN

Your father is upset that you don't try to reach out to him, your father wants to meet you halfway, the least you could do is meet him 95 percent of the way, compromise, let him call into question your entire personality and place zero value on your knowledge or experience and certainly not your feelings and just feel nothing when you talk to him, it's what I've always done. How indulgent of you to fall into an emotional turmoil anytime you think about him. The least you could do is accept the part where I tell you I accept you and ignore the litany of things I say that show the exact opposite, I'm suffering, I am in so much pain, so let me call you male, let me call you my son, can't you at least do that much? I mean, maybe you liked Lisa Frank, but you never seemed girly to me, though I guess you were girlier than I was. It's not like there was any social pressure to conform to a cisgendered persona, certainly not in East Tennessee. Sarcasm is really unappealing, why can't you just say what you mean? Do you really think it's in good taste to reveal this personal health information on your admittedly limited, but still public platform? This isn't even your mother's voice, what are you doing? What do you think you're doing. Do you feel alright about any of this? Airing your dirty laundry? Do you feel like you have any kind of moral high ground here? It definitely seems like you think you do, and I'm just wondering where you got that impression.

LIA

I'm really mad at my mother's friend for not just saying, Your mother has cancer. Four little words would have saved me at least some worry. How hard would that have been? I am at capacity for worry. It is much easier to deal with cancer than the host of possibilities. Why would she wrap up this update in newspaper, like some kind of horrible Christmas present? I'm mad at everything right now. I'm mad at everyone. Is that allowed? Can I do that? How dare you listen to me? Can't you tell this is personal? Since you're here, I'll tell you, I'm actually excited for my mother's cancer on some level, now maybe my family can work through a little of their deeply baked-in ableism and learn how to talk to a disabled person. I'm still so upset at how they snubbed my sweetie after she endured so much to try to meet them. They ignored or dismissed everything she said like she wasn't speaking English, like she was born someplace more magical and exotic than Maryland.

KEN

What's that? You say feel like people are staring at you, mouth agape, everywhere you go around here, just because you're non-white and in a wheelchair? Nah, you don't feel like that. Let me tell you, I went to Japan once and everybody was looking at me like I was from a foreign country.

LIA

I'm hoping this experience gives all of them some perspective, but I'm not holding my breath. I have asthma. I always feel like I'm on the brink of death now. Always gasping and flapping about like a caught fish that no one's had the mercy to gut. I faint to maintain equilibrium. Oh and look at this, we got another message here from my

sweetie's geneticist. Looks like my darling angel snowflake has an extremely rare genetic mutation connected with muscle weakness and sudden heart failure. Woo-hoo, she could die at any second. We could all die at any second. How should we celebrate? Maybe we should fundamentally question each other's identities and pretend we know about things we've never thought about. Does that sound fun? I think it sounds like a hoot.

LIA

My mother was just starting to live for the first time in her life. She was pursuing interests. She was finally starting to apply her gargantuan intelligence to some purpose meaningful to herself. She had meaning. She wanted things. She felt active and spry. I worry she will return to the sad and defeated woman who raised me without affection or touch. I hope she knows those things now, well enough that she can use them even in times of suffering. She was becoming a person, and was punished in a way that seems very familiar. Do you know what I'm talking about, Dad? Of course you don't. It's not something you've experienced, how could you possibly understand except by listening to the things I am saying to you? You're disabled, too, you know. You should know better. Maybe that's your biggest disability. I should be more sensitive to your inability to grasp basic concepts. Anyway, let's celebrate. All of us could die at any moment. Isn't it nice that nothing lasts forever?

BRANDON

Good morning, starchild.

AMANDA

What's going on? Breakfast in bed?
What did I do to deserve this?

RACHEL

It's your birthday, silly.

BRANDON

Happy sweet sixteen! Did you forget?

AMANDA

No, I'm just surprised is all. I really didn't expect all this.

RACHEL

This is the best time of your life. You have to savor it.

BRANDON

We're really proud of you, dear. You're a good kid.

AMANDA

Aw, thanks, Dad.

BRANDON

As kids go.

RACHEL

Darling.

BRANDON

Sorry.

RACHEL

I know you told us not to, but we're going to throw a party for you later today.

BRANDON

We rented out the abandoned fairgrounds.

AMANDA

Oh, you two. You're the best parents ever.

BRANDON

No.

AMANDA

No, I mean it. I feel so lucky to have you two as my adopted parents.

RACHEL

And we're really glad we bought you.

BRANDON

And we love you just as much as though you were carrying our genetic material, giving us a shot at immortality, which was cruelly denied us by our own biology.

AMANDA

Thanks.

RACHEL

Yeah, don't mention it.

BRANDON

Please, don't mention it.

RACHEL

There is one little hitch with the party today. The weather might not cooperate.

AMANDA

Oh, is it going to rain?

RACHEL

It might be a little locusty.

BRANDON

Every 17 years, they say.

RACHEL

This is actually a rare event where the 17 year locusts, the 7 year locusts, and the 70 year locusts are all out at the same time.

AMANDA

I see.

RACHEL

But don't worry, honey! We're going to make the best of it.

BRANDON

Just leave everything to us.

AMANDA

Thank you. I really appreciate it.

RACHEL

It's our pleasure. It's not every day our baby girl has her sweet sixteen.

Door closes.

BRANDON

So have you heard back from the caterers?

RACHEL

They say they can't do it.

BRANDON

Why not?

RACHEL

They say that everyone wants to be with their families. They gave us back our deposit, at least.

BRANDON

Well that's something. Do we at least have the cake?

RACHEL

Yeah, that's no problem. And you know our Amanda. She'll be grateful for whatever she has.

BRANDON

All the more reason why she deserves the best.

RACHEL

Do you want some of this breakfast?

BRANDON

Sure. Turn on the news.

KRANKHEIT

Reports linger about the president's misappropriation of funds, though some critics speculate that this scandal is merely a distraction from all of the other scandals. Because aggressive drilling initiatives have poisoned the world's reserves of clean drinking water, the Oval Office is facing immense pressure from environmentalist groups.

BRANDON

Damn hippies.

RACHEL

Darling, did you forget to take the

trash out last night?

BRANDON

Oh god, it completely slipped my mind.

RACHEL

That's okay. It isn't the end of the world.

KRANKHEIT

A cloud of poisonous gas has enveloped the midwest, turning all who inhale its toxic fumes into shriveled husks of bone and sinew. One observer called the scene a living nightmare the likes of which would sicken Lovecraft himself.

BRANDON

Like I care what's happening in the midwest.

RACHEL

Slow news day, I guess.

BRANDON

The news media, I just hate it. They're so focused on ratings that they never get to anything anybody cares about.

RACHEL

Somehow, that's true.

KRANKHEIT

And now, the weather.

WALTERS

Thanks, Thomas. Going to be heavy drought this weekend, as the comet looming overhead has thrown off the tides and the polarity of the earth, making water too heavy to accumulate into clouds. And since the global effort to destroy the comet with a combined arsenal of nuclear weapons from every capable country except the United States, heavy fallout has mixed with the comet's dust and debris, and it is expected that most vegetation on the surface of the earth will soon wither and die, so better invest

in suntan lotion! It's going to be sunny for a while, and your favorite shade tree won't be much help. Back to you, Thomas.

BRANDON

Did we get lemonade, dear?

RACHEL

Yep, several pitchers' worth.

BRANDON

Great. They're saying it's going to be hot today, so those kids are going to need some lemonade.

RACHEL

Yes, I heard.

BRANDON

Did we get the RSVPs? How many are we expecting?

RACHEL

Looks like about twenty people.

BRANDON

Oh, that's not enough. Our baby girl deserves everybody in the whole world.

RACHEL

Yes, exactly.

BRANDON

I guess it'll have to do.

Amanda enters.

RACHEL

How was your breakfast, sleepyhead?

AMANDA

Oh, great, thank you.

BRANDON

Is there anything you want to do today, now that you're all grown up?

AMANDA

No, really, I don't want to make too big a deal out of it. I had to be born sometime, right?

RACHEL

Aw, no honey. You don't know how special this is. You'll look back on today the rest of your life.

KRANKHEIT

...should continue to function for at least several days. And here to discuss the next possible dominant species on the planet is biology expert David Attenborough.

AMANDA

Can we turn off the news? I've got on a lot on my mind right now.

BRANDON

Oh, sure hon. Problems at school?

AMANDA

No, it's nothing. Don't worry about it.

RACHEL

Now darling, you know that we're here for you no matter what. There's nothing you can't tell us.

AMANDA

Okay. Thank you.

RACHEL

So what is it?

AMANDA

Okay, well. You know Yvette, my lab partner? We were talking the other day, and she told me that maybe she likes me?

BRANDON

Oh. Well how do you feel about that?

AMANDA

I don't know. She's nice and all, but I'm not sure how I feel. She's one of my best friends! I'm afraid that if I reject her, everything's going to get weird.

RACHEL

Oh honey, I know that whatever you do, you'll do it with compassion

and understanding. If Yvette really cares about you, she'll abide by whatever you choose for your own life.

AMANDA
Aw, thanks, Mom.

RACHEL
Your dad and I are very proud of you.

AMANDA
Thank you.

RACHEL
Now, have a good day at school!

AMANDA
Thanks, Mom. You're the best.

Amanda leaves. The sound of locusts slowly increases.

RACHEL
So, our daughter's a lesbian now.

BRANDON
Oh well.

RACHEL
Good thing she's not really ours so there's not very much at stake.

BRANDON
She and her eventual wife can adopt, just like we did.

RACHEL
I guess so. It still seems a shame.

BRANDON
Oh well. We could always adopt again.

RACHEL
As many times as it takes, I guess.

BRANDON
You still want to do this party?

RACHEL
She did say it wasn't super important to her.

BRANDON

It is really hot today.

RACHEL

Do you think she'll be disappointed?

BRANDON

No, I mean, the caterers cancelled. It's not our fault.

RACHEL

She's not going to blame us. You know our Amanda. She's so patient. She doesn't expect anything.

BRANDON

The younger generation, they're so smart, so mature, so much more interested in things than we ever were.

RACHEL

It's really comforting to know the future's in their hands.

BRANDON

But we did pretty good, too, didn't we? After all, we raised them.

RACHEL

We did, didn't we?

BRANDON

I love you, honey.

RACHEL

And I love you.

BRANDON

Darling.

LIA

Welcome back to Tales of Insecurity. I'm LiA Lindsaychen. Congratulations, it's me. You found me, America's best-kept secret. You can hear my voice, and that's really special. I don't have any corporation behind me, or much of any support at all. I'm proud of this. I am shouting at god, who's

hard of hearing, and somewhere else entirely.

GOD

What? Did you need something?

LIA

Oh hi, sorry to bother you. I know you're on a busy schedule.

GOD

Nah, not really. What's up?

LIA

Oh well, I don't know. I've got a lot of questions.

GOD

Sure.

LIA

I don't know. I guess I don't feel very comfortable doing this bit, not because it's blasphemous, but because it's really hack. Ooh, talking to god, real original.

GOD

Do you think calling attention to the obviousness of it is less obvious?

LIA

No. I'm sorry. I don't know where I'm going with this. I accidentally let my insurance run out and I couldn't get my adderol, so I'm kind of having trouble making anything this week. It's much more of a struggle.

GOD

That's fine.

LIA

Thanks.

GOD

What do you want me to say? What do you expect me to do?

LIA

I don't know. What can you do?

GOD

Anything I want to.

LIA

And what do you want to do?

GOD

Not really anything.

LIA

Is that fair?

GOD

Nah.

LIA

So, my whole life is falling apart.
Can you do anything about that?

GOD

Of course I could. Most of your problems could be solved in a second. All I'd have to do is get the right person to notice you and then everything would take care of itself. Your mother would still be dying, but you'd be able to talk to her again, and you could take care of your partner and break her and her twin free of the abusive influence of their family. You'd have a career! You'd have a role in society! You'd probably make the world a better place.

LIA

That's really nice of you to say.
Do you really think I could make a difference?

GOD

Of course, with the right platform.

LIA

So can you help me out?

GOD

Nah.

LIA

Why not?

GOD

It's not really how I do things.

LIA

Alright.

GOD

Sorry. Not sorry.

LIA

Sure.

GOD

I actually really like the authenticity of your whole deal. What if you got popular? I think it would be a disaster. Did you ever see Viva Variety?

LIA

The mid-nineties Comedy Central Variety Show with Thomas Lennon, Kerri Kenney, and Michael Ian Black?

GOD

Yeah, that one. I really liked the first two seasons, but then the show went to Vegas and they lost the whole low-budget vibe, and it really didn't work. It was only good when they could pretend to be obscure.

LIA

Did you like The State?

GOD

It was alright. Big Stella fan. For sketch comedy, though, nothing beats The Dana Carvey Show for me.

LIA

Alright, great.

GOD

See, like my favorite thing is when people try to resist the powerful influences of their time and place and despite their authenticity, talent, moral imperative, they still can't do anything. That's my favorite story.

LIA

Just like how you, an all powerful diety with perfect knowledge, still

could not make a functional earth,
no matter how hard you try.

GOD

Exactly. It's compelling, isn't it?

LIA

It does have something to it.

GOD

Well obviously.

LIA

Well, thanks for visiting my humble
little show.

GOD

Oh, of course. If I thought there
was any chance someone would listen
to it, I wouldn't do it. But this
is safe.

LIA

I don't know how that's supposed to
make me feel.

GOD

It's not supposed to do anything.
Anyway, toodles.

LIA

Oh, okay, bye.

GOD

Sure.

LIA

Alright so. There is no hope at
all. You know, my father was a
pastor. Every Sunday, he talked
about the bible for twenty minutes.
A few people heard the words he
said. The sermons aren't really
that essential to the whole
enterprise, really. He was good at
making them, especially after years
and years of doing it. But most of
the job is comforting the dying,
the weak, the shut-ins, and now the
addicts. You'd think that 30 years
of that would make a person more
spiritually attuned. You'd think
that after comforting so many
people, you'd learn to process

things. You'd be unfazed by mortality and anything to do with it. But I've met so many pastors. They're all empty husks. They've had the life drained out of them. They've never lived, they don't know who they are, and they don't really want to find out. They're cowards, all cowards, who once felt called to follow a path and it led them into the heart of darkness and Mr. Kurtz, he dead.

LIA

Anyway, looks like I'm giving sermons now. About life and truth and the human spirit. Sorry. I didn't want to. This is a path to destruction. But at least it's mine. And it's good to know that it will never lead anywhere. I will never be to blame.

LIA

So our topic today is the Victims in Charge. See, nobody wants to be the oppressor. No one sees themselves as a villain, especially villains. Some of the heroes do. Some of them worry about the consequences of their actions, but not the ones who actually cause consequences. They find some way to justify themselves, and even further, to make themselves good and pure and right in some way. Wealthy autocrats are job creators. They make the economy run. Racists and sexists and other bigots somehow believe that they're doing something that makes the world better, and even more, that somehow the people they're determined to destroy are the powerful ones, the gatekeepers, the threshold guardians.

LIA

It's really gross. I don't have a solution for it. Don't be terrible I guess. You may have more power than you realize. I really need more adderol. Do I have another thing? Oh good. Thanks.

INT. MIA'S APARTMENT

NATALIE

So this is your new apartment?

MIA

Yeah, I just moved in a few days ago.

NATALIE

It's nice, very spacious. I love the kitchen.

MIA

Yeah, isn't it great? And it's pretty cheap too.

NATALIE

So what's wrong with it?

MIA

I really don't know. Nothing as far as I can tell. I think it's just rent control.

NATALIE

Is that how that works?

MIA

I really don't know. I just saw the place and they told me the price and I jumped on it.

NATALIE

Let me know if you get bedbugs or something.

GLADYS

Knock, knock! Sorry to barge in. I hope I'm not interrupting anything.

MIA

Oh, no. Not at all. Natalie, this is Gladys. She's the landlady.

GLADYS

No, no, don't call me the landlady. That sounds so hierarchical. Really, Harold and I just own the property and allow other people to

live on it. Whatever that makes us.

NATALIE

Nice to meet you. I'm Natalie.

GLADYS

Yes, a pleasure. Are you Mia's lesbian lover?

NATALIE

Oh. Well. Um. We've been dating a few weeks.

GLADYS

I'm sorry, did I overstep my bounds? Forgive me, I just think you all are so adorable. I really wish the GBLT movement had been a little stronger when I was younger. Would have saved me a lot of trouble.

NATALIE

Oh. Sure.

GLADYS

I just wanted to bring you all a little gift basket, all the things you need to make a good home. I think these are the things girls your age are into.

MIA

Thank you, Mrs. Furrows.

GLADYS

Please, just Gladys.

MIA

Thank you, Gladys.

NATALIE

Yes, it was a pleasure to meet you.

GLADYS

Alright, let me get out of your hair now. I'm sure you girls have other things you want to do than talk to an old lady like me.

MIA

Thank you. I really appreciate it.

GLADYS

Of course, dear. We feel lucky to have you.

NATALIE

She's a live one, isn't she?

MIA

I hope I have that much energy when I'm her age.

NATALIE

I hope I'm dead.

MIA

Natalie!

NATALIE

Just, I've never seen anyone so miserable.

MIA

Did she seem miserable to you?

NATALIE

Yes?

MIA

No, no. She was being nice.

NATALIE

Sure. Sorry. Forget I said anything. What's in the basket?

MIA

Let's see. There's some kitchen supplies. A set of wooden spoons, a whisk. Some towels. Saran Wrap.

NATALIE

So, kitchen stuff. That's nice.

MIA

Also, a vibrator, some dental dams. Handcuffs. And I think that's a butt plug? I'm not sure.

NATALIE

What, let me see. Yeah, that's a butt plug.

MIA

Huh.

NATALIE

Kind of makes you wonder what the
whisk is for.

MIA

A little.

NATALIE

Was it my imagination, or did she
call it the GBLT movement?

MIA

She definitely did that.

NATALIE

I don't know about you, but I could
go for a gay BLT right now.

MIA

Sounds good, there's a really good
deli about a block away.

NATALIE

Oh nice.

INT. DELI

MIA

I mean, I think she meant well.
Don't hold it against her.

NATALIE

So did you tell her you were gay or
what?

MIA

She asked if I had a boyfriend, and
I told her no. Then she was all,
how can such a beautiful thing like
you not have all the boys she wants
and so I told her about you.

NATALIE

Is she allowed to ask those
questions?

MIA

It's not like a job interview.

NATALIE

Is it not?

MIA

So you don't like her, that's okay.
I'm sure we won't have to interact
with her if you don't want to.

NATALIE

I'm sure it will be fine.

MIA

Let's just drop it.

NATALIE

Great.

MIA

Great.

NATALIE

Do you want me to show you how the
butt plug works?

MIA

Shh. We're in public!

NATALIE

You're such a baby.

MIA

I am not!

NATALIE

So are you going to see my play?

MIA

Oh is that still happening?

NATALIE

Yeah, we have the theater reserved.
It's this weekend. It's going to be
great.

MIA

It's just, you don't seem to be as
invested in it as I'd expect.

NATALIE

This is my passion project. This is
my whole life. You don't care at
all, do you?

HAROLD

Oh, hello, Mia.

MIA

Oh, hi, Mr. Farrows.

HAROLD

So good to see you.

MIA

Yes, a pleasure. This is my girlfriend, Natalie.

HAROLD

And a pleasure to meet you as well.

NATALIE

Uh-huh.

MIA

She's a little stressed out. Long week at work.

HAROLD

Oh, what do you do?

NATALIE

Nothing.

MIA

She's a server and bartender, and she's also directing a play.

HAROLD

That doesn't sound like nothing. You sound very busy indeed!

NATALIE

Yeah, well. I don't know. I'm not quite where I want to be in my life.

HAROLD

Well stick with Mia. It sounds like she's got her act together.

NATALIE

Alright. Thank you.

HAROLD

Did Gladys give you our package?

MIA

Yes, she did.

HAROLD

Very good. You girls have a good

time. I can tell I'm a little in the way.

MIA
No, no, not at all.

HAROLD
I should go.

MIA
If you need to.

HAROLD
Yes, I should. We'll see you around.

MIA
Very good.

MIA
So how's your sandwich?

NATALIE
My play's going to be great.

MIA
I know. I'm sorry.

NATALIE
Do you want to talk about it, or would you rather talk to weird old men?

MIA
You know, you have to be nice.

NATALIE
No, you don't.

MIA
You do. It'll be easier to live there if they like me.

NATALIE
You're so spineless.

MIA
I'm not.

NATALIE
I know you grew up in an abusive family, so you don't see these things, but you're trying to get their approval, and it's gross.

MIA

Please, just drop it.

NATALIE

Okay. Sorry. It's good.

MIA

What is?

NATALIE

My sandwich. It's a good reuben.

MIA

Oh, I'm glad to hear it.

NATALIE

Sure.

INT. MIA'S APARTMENT

GLADYS

Knock, knock! Dearie, are you home?

MIA

What, hi. Yes, I'm here.

GLADYS

Forgive me for intruding, but I just wanted to apologize about earlier.

MIA

What do you mean?

GLADYS

Oh, I was just thinking about it, and I know I made a bad impression on your little friend.

MIA

My girlfriend, yes.

GLADYS

Yes, your lesbian friend.

MIA

Don't worry about her. She's got kind of a chip on her shoulder.

GLADYS

Well Harold tells me you two were having a little tiff earlier, and I just hope that we're not

responsible.

MIA

No, no. It's nothing. Don't even worry.

GLADYS

Are you sure? Harold! She says it was nothing!

HAROLD

Really? She seemed pretty upset to me.

GLADYS

You should do something nice for her, make her feel valued.

MIA

Do you think so?

HAROLD

Yeah, you know, she felt like you weren't taking her seriously.

MIA

Did you really get all that just from talking to us for a minute?

HAROLD

It's obvious.

MIA

I mean, we haven't been together very long. We might not stay together. We may not be compatible.

GLADYS

Nonsense, dear. You're going to marry that girl, mark my words. A woman knows these things.

MIA

I'm a woman, too, you know.

GLADYS

Yes, of course you are, dear.

MIA

Thank you for the advice, though. I do appreciate it.

GLADYS

You don't have to be so dismissive.

MIA

No, I'm not.

HAROLD

Please, you've said enough.

MIA

I'm so sorry. I really didn't mean to sound like I wasn't interested in what you had to say.

GLADYS

And you never even thanked us for the gift basket.

MIA

Oh yes, it was really thoughtful, thank you.

GLADYS

It doesn't mean anything now.

MIA

It just seemed awkward to talk about?

GLADYS

Please, I'm sure you girls haven't done anything we haven't. No need to be embarrassed.

MIA

I'm sorry.

HAROLD

It's okay. We forgive you.

MIA

Thank you.

GLADYS

We should go.

HAROLD

But our door's always open if you need to talk about anything.

MIA

Thank you. That's very good to know.

GLADYS

Alright, well, take care of yourself dear.

MIA
Thank you. You too.

INT. MIA'S APARTMENT

Mia is on the phone with Natalie.

NATALIE
I can't believe you missed my play.

MIA
What, is it over already?

NATALIE
Everyone missed my play.

MIA
I'm so sorry. You didn't tell me exactly when it was. I was all stressed out from work and things. I was probably just taking a bath.

NATALIE
I hope it was relaxing.

MIA
Yeah, it was alright.

NATALIE
You're like the most selfish person alive.

MIA
I'm so sorry.

NATALIE
Do you want me to yell at you? Is this your thing?

MIA
No, not at all. Stop it.

NATALIE
You're impossible.

MIA
Please don't yell at me.

NATALIE
Alright. I'm sorry. I'm upset! I worked hard on this and it all feels like it was for nothing.

MIA

That's rough. When's the next performance?

NATALIE

There's not a next performance. That was it.

MIA

Oh.

NATALIE

Would it matter? Would you remember?

MIA

How many times do you want me to say I'm sorry?

NATALIE

Just once, if you meant it.

Natalie hangs up.

MIA

Hello? Natalie?

HAROLD

Is everything alright in there?

MIA

Yes, everything's fine.

GLADYS

You don't have to lie to us, dear.

MIA

No, it's just. Natalie's really mad at me because I forgot about her play.

HAROLD

If it was really important to her, she wouldn't have let you forget.

MIA

Do you think so?

HAROLD

Of course.

GLADYS

She was probably hoping you wouldn't be there. She was probably

ashamed of it.

MIA
I don't know.

HAROLD
We talked to your mother and she said the same thing.

MIA
Yeah?

GLADYS
You should really call her more. She's worried sick about you.

MIA
I don't know. She doesn't approve of my lifestyle.

GLADYS
Oh no, dear, we told her all about it. We taught her about bondage and all your little toys.

MIA
What?

HAROLD
And she understands everything now. It's all going to be fine.

MIA
Really?

GLADYS
Absolutely. And we went ahead and enrolled you in the local community college, so you can get a second degree in whatever you want.

MIA
Really, you did that for me?

HAROLD
Of course. If you're staying under our roof, we're going to take care of you.

GLADYS
As long as you're grateful.

MIA
Thank you. That's really generous.

HAROLD

And if it doesn't work out with you
and Natalie, we have a few more
prospects for you.

GLADYS

Even more if you want to switch
teams.

MIA

Gosh, I don't know what to say.

HAROLD

Just say thank you.

GLADYS

And I'm sorry.

MIA

Thank you. I'm sorry.

GLADYS

Very good. Now kneel.

MIA

I'm so sorry.

HAROLD

You're welcome.

MIA

Thank you. Thank you so much.

GLADYS

Don't mention it.

MIA

I'm sorry.

HAROLD

Just don't let it happen again.

Hey, glad you got my message
Sorry that it took so long
You see, there was a little hold up
I had to write it out in song
But I'm not a great musician
I've never picked up a guitar

And really, I can't even stand them
Drive them over with my car
But I have so much to tell you
Wish that I could just relax
But you know, I can't just make a song up
Out of feelings that I lack

So I'll pretend that I'm the victim
That you owe me more than I owe you
You did real good, you sure can pick em
Sometimes we get what we choose

Now I know that I'm not blameless
I've got all the burden I can bear
And you know there's no way I'm shameless
And I can't pretend that I don't care
But can't none of us admit we blew it
Can't none of us be forced to change
This is who I've always been, I knew it
Pointless, worthless, hopeless, strange
I'm sorry that I can't be near you
Sorry that I can't do more
I'm filled with love that I can't show you
Don't know what I waiting for

LIA

Whew, thank you everyone! Thank
you, wow, what a crowd. Love that
energy. Wow!

LIA

So good evening, all! I'm LiA
Lindsaychen, thank you for coming

out tonight. I hope you all brought your guns. Everyone else did, so if it comes down to a shootout, you're out of luck. Better be on your best behavior.

LIA

So I don't know where you stand, politically, but I guessing that if you even acknowledge me as a person, you're probably pretty far left. So, thank you for that. I appreciate it. So those of you on the right, you probably feel like you're an oppressed minority here now. Sorry about that. I know it's an uncomfortable feeling, and I know you're evaluating what you'll do if a fight breaks out. You have a strategy. Get on a table and swing for the fences. Don't worry, I don't want to single you out, and I'm not planning on inciting any riots. I don't like crowds. Does anyone like crowds? It seems like you must, otherwise how would there be crowds?

LIA

I don't think people like crowds. That's too incomprehensible. But people do like complaining, and crowds are a great thing to complain about. It's a real subtle way to brag about how special you are. "I just want to be left alone!" makes you sound like you're too popular. I know I'm interested in you now. Wow, you must be interesting if you don't want to be around people. I'm not accepting any new friends at the moment, but I'll let you know when there's an opening.

LIA

So how many of you out there have friend? Okay, a few of you, neat. So when you're with your friends, what is it that you do? You catch each other up, right? Here's what's been going on since the last time I saw you. I'm just guessing, of course. This is what I do with my

friends. I ask them how they've been and they complain a little at me, and then they ask me and I complain a little back. Sometimes I want to talk about some good news, but that seems antisocial to me. I don't want to upstage anyone, and a good conversation needs drama, you know? This guy cut me off, and I was a victim. I was the underdog. It was me against the world.

LIA

You realize, this story of adversity is fundamental to having an identity. Your consciousness means more to you than anyone else's, because it has to. It's the only one you have. But this narrative, this fundamental part of being alive, is also the same story that mass shooters tell themselves. All these people have it coming. There's more of them than there are of me, and they all hate me. Ever since I started shooting them, they only hate me more.

LIA

A lot of people like to blame mental illness for these acts of senseless violence, it's even in the phrase senseless violence, but I would like to posit that maybe it's exactly the opposite. To be alive is to tell this story of importance, and whatever happens to a mind to make it think shooting up a school or a church or a mall is a good idea is living up exactly to the ideals around them. They might be the most sane, the most standard in their way. They're certainly not special.

LIA

Now son, it's a tough world out there. If you want to survive, you've got to be just a little bit tougher than all the others. You've got to be willing to take risks. You need to be confident in yourself, and whatever anyone says, always know that I love you no

matter what. Don't let anyone stand in your way.

LIA

Please don't think I'm trying to justify mass shootings. That is not my agenda here. Please. Don't hurt me. I want nothing to do with guns, all I'm saying is that you can't really blame teenagers for feeling like underdogs. For feeling powerless, and desperate to do something about their situation. You feel that way too, and you're not a teenager anymore. You're a grownup, and you still feel powerless. You've developed enough of a sense of yourself and the people around you that you wouldn't open fire on strangers, at least most of you, but that spark, that dark, wounded place, you know it. You've been there. You've been in a place where you don't care about consequences, you just want to have an effect on the world around you.

LIA

I'm not going to shoot anyone. Please. That's not. I'm not a danger to myself or others. That's what I'm saying. I'm mentally ill. I don't follow the same logic as society at large. My story is a little bit different. I don't want to assert myself above anyone. Mostly, I want to stay hidden, but I want to make something that has an effect on people. You should not be afraid of me shooting anyone. I suppose I could still make a bomb, but that's so passé. So 1995. Please, I'm not a hack.

LIA

So these teenagers, these homicidal youth, I'm not saying they're the real victims. No, their victims are. That's pretty clear. What I am saying, is they're doing exactly what you're telling them. It's not the influence of video games and Batman, who doesn't kill, bad example, but it doesn't matter. You

tell them they need to be strong. You give them access to guns. They do what strong people do. They pretend they're the victim of a world-wide conspiracy against them. That's what sane people do. If they can make it past twenty-two, they might own Coca-cola someday. They will corner the market. Or if you prefer, you could stop making all your conversation by complaining. You could act out a different story. And also, get rid of all the guns. That would help, too.

LIA

Alright, thank you everyone. Good night! I love you. I want you to feel loved. Please, direct your aggression somewhere else! Please! Thank you! Okay! Great! Mwah, you're beautiful. Okay, thank you. Goodnight!