

LIA

The following program contains explicit language, but you don't have to listen to it if you don't want to. I wouldn't want you to feel any pressure. You've already got a lot on your plate, I understand. May we all be innocent again someday.

LIA

You're always in the way. Just continuing to live, you use all kinds of resources that could be better put to some more noble purpose. If you work your hardest, you might be able to balance out your burden with nearly the same amount of output, but for there to be any kind of net gain as a result of your life seems like a violation of the laws of thermodynamics. Sorry, you say, so sorry. You thought about me for a moment. Sorry, I didn't want mean to guilt you. Please, I don't want your pity, unless you have a surplus. Well, if you insist, but I have nothing to give you in return, unless you'd care for one these old Tales of Insecurity.

LIA

Hello again. Welcome to the show whose title I just said at the end of my intro there. I'm not going to waste your time by saying it again. That would be an insult to your intelligence, and I don't want to oppress you in any way. I don't want to cause you any distress. I want to give you joy, and I hope it's not unsympathetic of me to assume that you might derive some pleasure from my ongoing narrative of self-destruction and loathing. Did you see how I abbreviated by sentence, how I put parentheses around destruction and loathing so I could multiply them by self, utilizing the communitive property of algebra. Sorry, I'm not trying to be mathematical at you. Please, I just want you to understand.

Please, I just want you to feel comfortable. Relax. I need you to relax. Please, you look so tense. I hope it's not my fault. I don't want to be responsible for anything.

LIA

Alright, phew. So as you may have gleaned from listening to me before or just from today or just because you're particularly insightful you empath with me, I might have a slight touch of the social anxiety. Sometimes. I try not to make a big deal out of it, because I know it's my problem and not anyone else's, but also, it's the dominant force in my life and prevents me from taking even the simplest risks, things that maybe wouldn't even register to some other people.

PHONE

(Rings)

LIA

That's my ringtone. Usually my phone's on silent, because I'm not going to answer it anyway, unless I recognize the number. Then it's like fifty-fifty. Also, I don't look at my mail. Also, I don't know how to use Facebook or Twitter or anything. Don't think I'm bragging. This is a thing people do, boasting about how inept they are. That is not my intention. I'm just saying, these are things I can't do, anything that requires my attention, because I know I'm going to mess it up.

PHONE

(Rings)

LIA

I can't understand people on the phone. So when I do answer the phone, it's a lot of "what?" "Can you say that again?" "One more time, I'm so sorry."

PHONE

Your account is past due!

LIA

I'm so sorry, I can't understand anything you're saying. Can you send a text? You can @ me if you want. I'm NoHopeRadio on Twitter.

LIA

I'm sorry, I don't want to burden you with any of my problems, I'm just trying to explain what I'm thinking about here. This aspect of myself doesn't feel like a character flaw to me, because it feels like a moral choice. I would never call anyone, because when the phone rings, I hold my breath, which is already in short supply. Anything that was happening is put on hold. How can anyone justify doing that? How can anyone think that whatever they have to say is necessarily more important than whatever's going on in a person's life? Making a phone call is so selfish. Causing any kind of interruption is. How dare you?

LIA

I hope you didn't feel pressured into listening to this show. I know it's a commitment, and I know it's overwhelming, and I want to make sure you're one-hundred percent comfortable with it before you're too invested. I'm told it's a little overwhelming, but that's all I know. Sorry. I just want to make you happy. But I guess, how can you be invested before you know anything about it?

LIA

Isn't it magical that anything ever happens? With all the little rules we all have for how people are supposed to be, that aren't at all consistent between you and me and them and us, and we don't even know we have rules. We think ours are universal. That's one of the rules. So it's difficult to know which

implications are going to be invoked in any interaction, so if one of your objectives is not to hurt or offend people, you might find it safest to just hide and stay hidden forever.

LIA

That's what I've always done. It is a solution. I don't recommend it, because then I would have to take blame for it, which is not something I'm prepared to do. But let's talk about it. Let's try to solve this problem, how do you solve the fundamental problem of not wanting to annoy anybody? You could be a role model for everyone, I guess, just be the best person possible. Can we run that simulation? Alright, thank you, now we're getting high concept. Here on Tales of Insecurity.

ROBOT

Thank you for choosing Griffin Personality Simulations. We make the process of choosing a self fast, easy, and effective.

LIA

Oh sure, how does this work?

ROBOT

We make the process of choosing a self fast, easy, and effective.

LIA

Great, that's assuring.

ROBOT

First, please select a gender.

LIA

Is that really the most fundamental thing? Huh. Okay. I'm a girl.

ROBOT

You have selected Female. Is this correct?

LIA

Yes.

ROBOT

Thank you for confirming your:
Gender.

LIA

No, thank you.

ROBOT

Please list descriptors of traits
you appreciate in others. For
instance, if you wanted to be Robin
Hood, you might say, "Brave.
Strong. Iconoclastic. Just.
Playful. Crafty. Dashing. Ruggedly
Handsome. Passionate. Sensitive."

LIA

Wow, go ahead and marry Robin Hood,
huh? Okay, let's see. Brave.
Strong. Kind. Understanding. Mild-
mannered. Peaceful. Thoughtful.
Non-threatening. Moral. Good.

ROBOT

Warning. The profile you have
chosen may be incompatible with
society. Would you like to proceed?

LIA

No, sorry. Let me try again. Let's
see. Thoughtful. Introspective.
Sensitive. Independent. Creative.
Good at Baking.

ROBOT

You have selected: Sylvia Plath.
Would you like to proceed?

LIA

No, sorry. Go back.

ROBOT

Please list descriptors of traits
you appreciate in others. For
instance

LIA

Is there another way to do this?
Can I just, start with what I have
and make a few adjustments?

ROBOT

Absolutely. Please answer the following questions so we can get an accurate assessment of your current personality. Do you eat eggs with an English style runny yolk, or do you prefer to actually cook food before you eat it?

LIA

Runny yolk.

ROBOT

Thank you. How often have you sought out conversation with family members within the past 3 years?

LIA

Next question.

ROBOT

How many friends do you have on Facebook?

LIA

I have nearly 100 friends.

ROBOT

Thank you.

LIA

I'm not very active on social media.

ROBOT

How many posts have you made on your current twitter account?

LIA

Let me check. Since June 2012, I have made 2136 posts.

ROBOT

And how many followers do you have?

LIA

I honestly don't think that the number of followers I have has anything to do with the quality of my posts on Twitter or my value as a person.

ROBOT

The Griffin Personality Simulator

uses a sophisticated algorithm to make choosing a self fast, safe, and effective for the end user. But to ensure the accuracy of your experience, we do require your full cooperation.

LIA

63. Though, you know, last week it was 49 and I managed to bring it up nearly 30% in the course of a single day with constant, aggressive effort.

ROBOT

Thank you. To what do you devote most of your time?

LIA

The last few months, making this little show.

ROBOT

Do your friends support your creative endeavors?

LIA

A few of them! A couple of them. One of them.

ROBOT

Have you told your friends about your project?

LIA

Yeah, I. You know, it's my whole life now, so I've told them about it. Every opportunity I get. Without being too annoying about it, I hope.

ROBOT

Do you think their disinterest is due to active antipathy toward you, or is it more of a benign neglect?

LIA

I don't think my friends hate me. No, that's absurd.

ROBOT

If one of your closest friends had a project that they were devoting all of their attention to and asked

for your support, what would you do?

LIA

I don't know. I think I'd at least try to share it on social media.

ROBOT

With your 63 followers.

LIA

Yeah, and I'd try to find time for it, especially if it didn't cost me anything.

ROBOT

Would you?

LIA

I think so.

ROBOT

What would be the minimum you would do?

LIA

I don't know!

ROBOT

Has your spouse or domestic partner listened to your show?

LIA

No!

ROBOT

Why or why not?

LIA

I don't know! Because it's overwhelming. Or, I don't know. Nobody believes in me! Nobody cares about me in any meaningful way, and they think that supporting my endeavors would be an act of pity instead of pleasure or social betterment, and they simply don't think I'm worth the effort. Is that what you want me to say?

ROBOT

The Griffin Personality Simulator uses a sophisticated algorithm to make choosing a self fast, safe,

and effective for the end user. Our results are 100% effective and non-biased.

LIA

I think they just don't realize how important it is to me. How much of myself I'm putting in. And they don't realize that it's really good. I think it's good. They think I think too highly of myself. I made the mistake of calling myself a genius, now they have to believe that I'm a dumb obnoxious blowhard no matter what, because they want to put me in my place. They think any validation would be bad for me.

ROBOT

And why would that be their reaction?

LIA

Because they hate me.

ROBOT

Thank you. And would you say you're an extrovert or an introvert?

LIA

Intro.

ROBOT

Very good. We are now tabulating your results, please wait.

(Music plays)

ROBOT

Thank you for your patience. The results of The Griffin Personality Simulator are now displayed on the screen in front of you. Please take a moment to assess the results and adjust any values you see fit. We will be happy to adjust your personality to any specifications.

LIA

Thank you. Let me take a look at this a minute.

LIA

Okay, first, let's take self-

criticism down. Way down. Great. Is there really no individual value for charisma? I guess you can't really choose whether people like you or not.

LIA

I don't care whether people like me. That's never been my concern. I like myself. So I guess we'll keep self-confidence the same. It's funny that that's a completely different scale than self-criticism.

LIA

So when I said I'm a genius, I didn't mean like, I'm above everyone. I actually think I would be a better artist and a better person if I were more mediocre, and I have been meaning to cultivate more mediocrity, but to me these terms are a separate scale from quality. Genius doesn't mean better, it means a fundamentally different way of seeing the world. Most geniuses are not respected by society. Most of us are outsiders, whether we're artists, scientists, or whatever else there is.

LIA

I can't even imagine what it is regular people think about. What do they worry about if not their creative output, whether or not they're making something, whether there's any truth or relevance to the things they create? I guess just, relationships. Without an underlying metanarrative to guide my actions, what am I making, I don't think I could exist. What's it like to have a purpose other than art? I guess mostly it's just looking for a purpose. That's not a step I have to think about. I know my purpose. It's this. I think this show is my whole reason for being alive, the culmination of the last thirty years of struggle, and if it could reach the right people, they would find hope and meaning in it.

They could derive things from it that I didn't intend, because, here's the thing, I am not the creator. Does that sound even more pretentious? I am a channel through which all this nonsense comes about, an antenna, a conduit. Where does it come from? I don't know, but if it came from me, what would that mean? That I can turn a crank and ideas just grind out? That I make lists of personality traits and pretend that's a person? I don't know. What do mediocre people do. Do they think they're doing something brilliant?

LIA

I don't know. I can't take credit for any profundity. Of course I intend everything I make to be interesting, amusing, beautiful. But that has nothing to do with anything that happens. That's an accident.

LIA

So um, let's be a little more courageous. And I don't know. I guess let's up the passion.

LIA

Mediocrity puts you in control. When you're mediocre, you understand craft. You can follow the structure like an artisan. You don't require inspiration to make something, because you can't rely on inspiration. It comes and goes, and you've got a schedule. The best geniuses allow themselves to be mediocre. They learn how to do all the craft, and to make something competent, even when it isn't brilliant. Sometimes it's harder for geniuses to learn the actual craft because of their natural aptitude to something that looks much like the thing they're doing. Hello little Peregrine falcon, can you teach my to fly? Just go the top of a very high cliff and dive and the rest takes care of itself.

LIA

Am I making any sense? I feel like I'm noticing some strange sentence structure in here. I'm going off the rails! Come on back, LiA! Settle down! I'm trying to express something here! I'm trying to find comfort in everyday things. This is getting close to spiritual fulfillment! Can I up my intelligence, my articulence? That's not how you say that, but you know what I mean. Articulateness. Is there a value for that?

ROBOT

Unfortunately, intelligence isn't technically a function of personality, though certain intersections of traits can appear to compliment a higher cognitive aptitude.

LIA

Okay, well, I guess I'll just up my inquisitiveness a little more. Huh. Is this really my self-awareness score?

ROBOT

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LIA

Sure. Okay. I just expected it to be a little higher than that. If I'm not self-aware, then what am I even talking about? So okay, let's raise that. Okay. Hello. Thank you! Wow. This isn't entertaining at all, is it? Sorry listeners, you maybe didn't want to listen to me type numbers into a spreadsheet for an hour. Today I'm doing stories of people who are so focused on the people around them that they end up being kind of unpleasant to be around. I guess that's my theme. It kind of seems like my theme has

morphed into "you're the only person in you're whole world and everyone you know is a simulation of a real person out there." I don't know. It's one of the two, or it's both. Let's go ahead and explore one of something where we exaggerate an idea and show how it falls apart when applied as a universal rule. Okay great. Thank you for listening to my show.

THEME SONG

First we do no harm, and once we've finished that
Maybe we can do something new
It's hard to be kind when you've made up your mind
To live and reproduce

FAMILY

(Singing) It's your birthday, my goodness! It's your birthday, oh my!

TERRY

Blow out the candles!

NANCY

Okay!

FAMILY

Hooray! Great job. You did it! Uh-oh you missed one. Ha ha. Okay.

NANCY

Thank you all so much. I really didn't expect all this hullabaloo.

KAREN

Oh well, you're supposed to follow all the rituals.

TERRY

It's very important.

KAREN

I keep a checklist.

TERRY

These are all the birthday customs that people celebrate around the world, and because we are a multicultural family, it's important that we celebrate them all.

NANCY

Yeah, that makes sense.

KAREN

So in addition to the cake, we've also got noodles, fairy bread, pancakes, rice pudding. Some butter for your nose.

TERRY

And later we'll do the punches, spankings, ear pullings, bumps. What are birthday bumps? What does that mean? Also, we're supposed to throw flour in your face and you're supposed to sweep the stairs while we throw garbage at you.

KAREN

Also you're supposed to give us foot massages and presents and wear a new set of clothes.

NANCY

This sounds like a lot of work.

TERRY

It's tradition.

NANCY

Okay. Well, let's start with cake.

KAREN

Wait, what are you doing? You're not just going to cut the cake, are you?

NANCY

Why, am I missing something?

KAREN

Well, it wouldn't be polite to take the last slice.

NANCY

No, but this is the first slice.

TERRY

Yes, but if you can't take the last slice, then that's effectively negated as an option.

KAREN

So the next to last slice is the real last slice.

TERRY

So you can't take that either.

KAREN

Ergo, by induction, it's impolite to take any slice of cake.

TERRY

And really, the baker worked so hard on those decorations; are you just going to destroy them?

NANCY

Oh. I'm so sorry.

TERRY

Did you make a wish?

NANCY

Well, I was going to, because it's a birthday tradition and all, but I worry that wishing is inherently immoral, as it seems like begging the universe, and surely the universe has more important things to worry about than whether I get into a good college.

KAREN

Oh yes, and there's always the danger that you'd be taking a spot away from someone more qualified.

TERRY

That's why no one goes to college anymore.

KAREN

Really honey, how can you even imagine wishing something so selfish?

NANCY

I know, I feel really guilty about it.

KAREN

Oh no, I didn't mean to cause you any distress. Oh, this is going to be a traumatic moment for you now.

NANCY

No, you're not in control of my emotions.

KAREN

It was a mistake to even have you. Completely unfair to all the children I didn't have.

TERRY

Now honey, there's no sense in dwelling on our past mistakes. There's nothing we can do about it anymore.

KAREN

I just, you know, we're essentially white, so having children further enforces our cultural dominance.

NANCY

Mom, how can I make up for having been born?

KAREN

You can't, darling. Believe me, I've tried.

TERRY

The best thing you can do is try to keep quiet so other voices can be heard.

NANCY

Thanks, dad.

(Long pause)

NANCY

Hey is it okay if

TERRY

Shh.

NANCY

Sorry.

(Long pause)

TERRY

Well that was fun. Let's pack up all the celebration stuff and pack it away for next year.

NANCY

Can I open the presents?

TERRY

Your mother spent a long time wrapping those. Do you want all that effort to go to waste?

NANCY

No, but I wanted her efforts to have meaning. And I kind of want my presents. That's the point of them.

KAREN

That's very polite of you, but if you open up your presents, just think of how many superpositions you could collapse.

TERRY

There are infinite parallel universes out there based on the possibilities of several of these containers. Just think how many countless lives you would destroy all for a new Nintendo Switch.

NANCY

Oh, did you get me a Nintendo Switch?

TERRY

For example.

NANCY

Can I accept the responsibility?

TERRY

Are you sure, dear? Are you certain you want to jeopardize countless theoretical lives all for a few tangible accoutrements?

NANCY

I don't want anything to go to waste.

KAREN

She has a point, darling. If she

doesn't open these presents, we were just throwing our money away, and that in itself is an affront to the concept of value.

TERRY

Why do you two always have to complicate everything?

KAREN

We could just kill ourselves if you prefer.

TERRY

This again!

KAREN

I'm just saying, if you want to make sure we don't do anything to hurt anyone, we could just kill ourselves.

TERRY

Yes, but you know it's not that simple.

NANCY

Thank you for the sweater, it's very nice.

TERRY

First, we have to make sure we cut all our ties with everyone. We have to make sure no one's going to miss us or blame themselves.

NANCY

Also, these noodles are delicious.

TERRY

So leading up to the moment we kill ourselves, we have to systematically alienate ourselves from all our friends and loved ones.

NANCY

Is it alright if I get started on sweeping the stairs?

TERRY

We have to become so loathed by society that when the news of our demise becomes public, no one is

driven to shock or despair. It will take so much preparation to make certain their reaction will be calm relief.

KAREN

I know, honey, but it'll be easier in the long run.

TERRY

Not to mention, whoever finds our bodies is almost certainly going to be distressed on some level, so ideally, we would need to dispose of ourselves in such a way that our remains are never discovered, or I suppose we could ensure that our corpses are found by someone who appreciates dead bodies.

KAREN

I could post a Craigslist ad for necrophiliacs in our area. I'm sure they'd be grateful for the opportunity.

TERRY

Oh, that is a possibility. Yes. I hadn't considered that.

NANCY

So, I'm going to go get started. Don't worry about the punches and spankings and ear pullings. I can do those myself.

TERRY

It's really nice to think that someone on the edges of society could finally experience a little guilt-free pleasure thanks to us.

KAREN

It's something to think about.

TERRY

The more I think about it, the harder it is for me to see a downside. Your idea kind of solves the whole thing.

KAREN

I don't think it will be too hard for us to estrange ourselves from

our friends and loved ones.

TERRY

Especially when we tell them that we've sold our bodies to necrophiliac.

KAREN

Do you think they'd really be so judgmental?

TERRY

I hope so. After all, if they're not, then why are we being so careful?

NANCY

One. Ow. Two. Ow. Three...

ENDING THEME SONG

LIA

Welcome back to Tales of Insecurity. You know what you're listening to. You're very smart. Smarter than me. Why do you listen to me? It makes you feel better, doesn't it, to listen to someone who's a little more lost than you are, am I right? With that in mind, I'd like to issue a few corrections from last week's episode. First of all, I was a little confused when I decided the sun must rise from the west because of right-handedness. This was a convoluted premise in the first place, and somehow I thought east was on the left and west was on the right, but it's completely the other way around. A way you can remember it is, Asia is in the right, and Europe is on the left, and European culture is called Western culture because they didn't know about the Western Hemisphere when they made the term. They didn't really know about the Southern Hemisphere either. I mean, a lot of Europeans probably just said "culture" when they meant Western culture because that's how they are, hierarchal and petulant

and clannish. So the result is, I was completely wrong about left and right, and there was no reason to be confused. Maps aren't upside down. I apologize if you went out and turned everything around, if you yelled at your corner cartographer. You'll need to go back and apologize. My mistake. I'm not afraid to admit my mistakes.

LIA

Also, I'd like to apologize to my family. It was my mother's birthday last week and I really wanted to call, because of that and the cancer and everything, but I simply can't fathom that anyone loves me enough that they'd want me to hear my voice, especially my parents. Also, I'd like to apologize to all of you out there, having made my voice available to you. I'd like the rest of this episode to just be me apologizing to everyone I've ever met until I feel forgiven. I'm sorry I put you in an awkward position where you either had to hurt my feelings or go on living a happy life. I'm sorry you chose my feelings. I'm sorry I never learned to express affection in a conventional way. I'm sorry I can't assert my desires or even comprehend them. I'm sorry I tried so long to pretend I didn't have depression, bipolar, anxiety. Schizophrenia. I'm not depressed. I'm sorry I scared you, not for your own safety, but for mine. Don't worry about me. Please, I'm sorry. I'm sorry, I'm so sorry that I invited you to care about me. That was irresponsible. So sorry. Please, I won't let it happen again.

LIA

Oh also, the ending of the last story in last week's episode didn't feel satisfying to me. I didn't have time to fix it. I want to blame that on my ADHD meds running out, but I should have been able to

compensate for that in some way. Using some kind of formula for structure or some shit, it definitely had third act problems. It's not sufficient that what was her name, Mia, she let people come into her life and take it over because they kept blaming her, kept finding fault, and provided for her in such a way that she willingly gave up her autonomy. There is a parallel here with cultural imperialism, but that relationship wasn't entirely clear, and more importantly, it wasn't quite a journey. The only thing that changed for the main character was that she chose her invasive surrogate parental figures over what should have been the more mature choice, her artistic and ambitious girlfriend Natalie. I'm sorry I ended it without a final confrontation. I guess that would have been too satisfying. I wanted the story to feel like a breakup. I wanted it to feel unfinished, but over. But it wasn't clear, so I get to apologize. I love apologizing. God. This is the best. Whatever keeps me back from apologizing all the time?

LIA

I also wanted to step back a little and examine those people again. Specifically, Natalie. Now, I know you don't know these characters. Why am I talking about them like they're real. They're people who exist in my world, though I know my world only belongs to me. You probably don't remember them and you don't care, but I watched all that happen. I lived it. It means more to me. I'm probably schizophrenic but I'm not diagnosed and I don't want to be diagnosed because the last time anyone tried to put me on anti-psychotics I nearly died, so if anyone asks, this whole show is a work of fiction, I'm lying, I'm a really good liar, you can call me a

storyteller, but even as the quirky neighbor I am, it's okay, there's nothing wrong with it, a lot of brilliant and productive people have been schizophrenic, and as long as I have my sweetie and a few friends, I'm sure that I, LiA Lindsaychen, a fictional construct created by LiA Lindsaychen, will have enough of a ballast to keep myself aware enough of the world around me that I can have a complete and productive life.

LIA

This self-awareness setting is pretty alright. I don't really see a downside. I know exactly who I am. So a couple episodes back, I kind of bragged about being asexual, or at least, I framed asexuality as a moral trait, even though it deviates from the norm. So, it looks like that's actually a bit of cognitive dissonance I sewed in place to reconcile myself to the fact that my partner is so chemically sensitive and physically fragile that we can barely touch. Even though I could pursue some kind of friends with benefits situation with pretty much anymore, it's actually preferable to me to pretend that my actions are according to my desires and not the reaction to an unfortunate situation. Somehow it's less like lying to yourself when you're aware of it, which is the opposite of other types of lying. Do you find that interesting? We all have our own interests.

LIA

That's not all the retractions and apologies I have, not by a long shot, but if it's all the same to you, we should probably move on to our next section. I guess it's kind of the end of the story from last week. Sorry if you didn't listen to last week's episode. I think it stands alone too. I don't know. I just write these things. I can't

control their scope or their implications. That would require intentionality, and I'm just transcribing the ether. Alright. Good. Thank you for listening to Tales of Insecurity. If you have questions or comments or business opportunities, I guess, ha ha, please contact me at TalesofInsecurity@gmail.com or on Twitter @NoHopeRadio.

JIM

I wanted to thank you again for inviting me. I can't remember the last time I saw a play.

NATALIE

Well thank you for everything. You made all this happen.

JIM

All I did was provide the space. You did all the legwork.

NATALIE

Even so. Thank you, Father. Is that the right term?

JIM

Please, call me Jim. I'm happy I could help.

NATALIE

I'm so grateful for the opportunity. You don't know how long I've been thinking about this.

JIM

So, House of Glass. What's it about? Sounds neat. Like a parable.

NATALIE

You know The Glass Menagerie?

JIM

I don't know anything about theater. Is it like people in glass houses shouldn't throw stones?

NATALIE

No, I was thinking like a computer monitor, people trapped in there. Anyway, the Glass Menagerie is this play by Tennessee Williams. It's about a woman with disabilities and anxiety and her abusive mom and patriarchy and just a lot of sad things. Mine's a science fiction adaptation of it.

JIM

I see. Well that certainly sounds interesting.

NATALIE

Thank you! I've been thinking about it a long time. Anyway, you'll see it. I think you'll like it.

JIM

I hope so. I'm sorry I couldn't let you have the church more than just the one night. We mostly give our space to support groups and the like.

NATALIE

It's okay. I'm hoping that after tonight I might be able to take it somewhere else, but I incorporated the alter setting into it. The original takes place in a dining room, but I think the church adds another element.

JIM

Okay. There's nothing subversive in this, is there?

NATALIE

You said I had complete creative freedom.

JIM

Within reason. This is a church, you know.

NATALIE

Right, of course. Everything's very respectful, I assure you. Will you excuse me a minute?

JIM

Go right ahead.

NATALIE

Thank you. Just need to make a quick phone call.

JIM

Yeah, you better get some actors, right?

NATALIE

Ha ha, good one, Father O'Connor.

NATALIE

Hey, Tom. Are you on your way? No, there's no problem, but the show is at eight and you're not here. Yes. Yes. No. When did you think it was? Well, where are you? Why are you in Nebraska? People don't just go to Nebraska. Did you not. Okay, we'll talk later. Sorry to bother you.

NATALIE

Goddamn it.

NATALIE

Laura, hi. Hi. Oh. Oh, huh. I don't think so, my phone's been on all day. Is everything all right? No? We have a performance at 8, are you on your way? Well what are you doing? No, I told you, I can't pay you, I don't have any budget, but you made a commitment. Well I'm sorry you don't see it the same way, but this puts me in an awkward position. This isn't a difference of opinion scenario. Hello?

NATALIE

Okay, Natalie. What's your plan here? Okay calm down. Make a checklist. You've got no actors. The only person in the audience is a creepy Catholic priest who seems to think you owe him something. I guess you do. Just keep it together. It's going to be alright.

JIM

Is everything okay?

NATALIE

Oh yes, fine. Fine. Absolutely fine. Just putting together some last minute details.

JIM

I just want you to know, there's absolutely no pressure to do this show, if that makes things easier. I certainly won't think any less of you if you have to cancel, and I'll see what I can do about getting you another chance to perform here soon.

NATALIE

Thank you, that's very helpful, but I don't think it will be necessary.

JIM

I know that things don't always go according to plan, and God likes to express himself sometimes in inconvenient ways.

NATALIE

Don't worry. I've got this under control.

JIM

You're so ambitious. I'm sure it's going to be great.

NATALIE

I've just got to make a couple more calls. Will you excuse me a moment?

JIM

Of course. This is your project, I'm not involved at all.

NATALIE

No, you made it all possible. Thank you so much.

NATALIE

Come on, pick up.

MIA

Hi, this is Mia's phone. I'm Mia! Leave me a message if you want to. No guarantees I'll get back to you, though.

NATALIE

Hey! Are you coming to my show? If you are, I need you to get here like now. Do you hear me? If you don't come here tonight, we're done, you hear? This is really important to me. I'm sorry. I'm not making an ultimatum or anything. I'm just frustrated. Call me back, or just, come in. I hope you're on your way. Love you. I guess. Bye.

INT. MIA'S APARTMENT

NATALIE

(Over phone) I'm sorry. I'm not making an ultimatum or anything, I'm just frustrated. Call me back, or just, come in. I hope you're on your way. Love you. I guess. Bye.

MIA

Oh God, her show. Maybe I could still make it. Oh God. I don't have the energy tonight.

GLADYS

Knock knock, sorry to bother you honey. Oh, I'm sorry, are you on the phone?

MIA

No, it's nothing. How are you, Mrs. Farrows?

GLADYS

Absolutely smashing, darling. Harold and I just decided to open up our marriage, and we found this lovely young lady who's interested in both of us, as a pair and individually as well. It's a new exciting adventure in our lives!

MIA

That's great, Mrs. Farrows.

GLADYS

Anyway, I'm very sorry to bother you this late on a Friday evening. I'm sure you're making plans to go out with your little playmate.

MIA

My girlfriend. You can just say girlfriend.

GLADYS

No, honey, it's alright. I'm bisexual now! You're in good company here.

MIA

So what's on your mind?

GLADYS

I just wanted to apologize. Harold and I were talking and we realized that we may have put you in an awkward position the other night.

MIA

No, no, you didn't do anything wrong.

GLADYS

Let me finish. Your generation does a lot of things right, but they're not great at manners.

MIA

I'm sorry.

GLADYS

Though I hate the formality of calling myself a landlady, I suppose there is a certain economy in the term. I'm sorry, is that your phone? Do you want to answer it?

MIA

No, it's fine. I'll call back.

GLADYS

Very good. I just want to let you know that just because we own the building you live in, you don't have any obligation to be friendly to us if you don't want to.

MIA

Oh, Gladys. Don't cry. What's wrong?

GLADYS

It's just, Harold and I thought

that you could be the daughter we never had, but it doesn't look like that's going to happen.

MIA

Aw, Gladys, that's really sweet. Don't cry, please. I can't stand to see you cry like that.

GLADYS

You don't mean it. You think I'm trying to manipulate you.

MIA

No, not at all. Please. Just calm down.

GLADYS

All I wanted to say

MIA

Here, would you like something to drink?

GLADYS

No, thank you. All I wanted to say, I suppose I wouldn't turn down some white wine.

MIA

Oh sure, I think I have some. I've got a New Zealand Zinfandel, I think.

GLADYS

It'll do, thank you. So yes, all I wanted to say is please, if Harold and I are ever in your way, if we ever invade your privacy in any way, please, let us know, and we'll completely back off. Thank you.

MIA

Oh, Mrs. Farrows. I wouldn't ever do that.

GLADYS

I'm just letting you know you can.

MIA

Thank you, I appreciate that. It's really great how open and forthright you two are.

GLADYS

Oh, you flatter us. Really, we're just trying to do our best. You should have some wine, too. You seem tense.

MIA

Yeah? Well, okay.

GLADYS

Maybe you should have a nice bath. Let me draw a bath for you.

MIA

Well, if you want to. I appreciate it.

GLADYS

And if you like, Harold could give you a massage. He has amazing hands.

MIA

Yeah, maybe.

GLADYS

Think about it.

INT. CHURCH

NATALIE

Thank you for coming. I was expecting there to be a few more people, but that's okay. I guess there wasn't enough word of mouth. Let's not worry about the people who aren't here. Like my girlfriend, who, every time I mentioned that I was doing a play, acted like it was the first time I told her.

NATALIE

(As Mia) Oh, neat, what's it about?

NATALIE

It's a sci-fi adaptation of Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*.

NATALIE

(As Mia) Oh okay. Great. It sounds like you've really got a concept in

mind.

NATALIE

A play is an act of memory. It's not my memory, or Tennessee Williams' memory, and it's certainly not yours, but somewhere between all of us. It is a simulation. It is your brain in a jar, counting sheep, counting stars and heartbeats.

(Music)

NATALIE

Our play is a memory of a time that is yet to come, when the structures we hold so dearly have fallen apart. A time beyond families, a time beyond economies, a time when we've transcended our physical forms to become something wholly divine. This time doesn't seem real to us yet; we have to imagine it in filmic language. We fade out, pan in, add in little musical accompaniment so we know what to feel. But it is a world without sensory input. We are digital, we are empty space, just as most of you are there, in the audience.

NATALIE

I am the narrator of this play, and also a character in it. The other characters are my mother Amanda, whom I also play, my sister Laura, again me, and a gentleman caller who appears in the final scenes.

NATALIE

He's the most realistic character. You'll find out who he is when the time comes. He represents something that we can't achieve on our own, and we have to preserve that distance. We might get there someday. We probably won't. Excuse me.

NATALIE

I've had to rewrite much of this performance on the fly. Such is the nature of memory. It requires

constant reinvention. We have to put it together every time like it's new. The energy fulfills us, even if the memory does not. Even if the memory is from the future, from nowhere.

NATALIE

And there's one more character who doesn't have a speaking part, but it prominent in the play throughout. You can see him on that cross there. That's Jesus. He died for our sins. It looks like he's still dying, but that happened a long time ago. He existed a while, and stopped existing, and started again, but didn't really do much after that. He ascended into heaven. He sent a little postcard. "Hello! Goodbye!" And hasn't been heard from since.

NATALIE

Thank you for letting my explain. I'm hoping the rest of the play will stand on its own.

JIM

Okay. Sorry. Sorry to stop you. I don't like that blasphemous attitude you're taking there.

NATALIE

I'm sorry, I just wanted to incorporate the setting.

JIM

I know what you were trying to do. I'm shutting this down.

NATALIE

Wait, come on. I've worked really hard on this. At least let me perform it.

JIM

May I remind you that this is my church?

NATALIE

Yes, I understand, and I really appreciate your help.

JIM

We get nearly 200 people here on Sunday morning. You couldn't even get two. What does that tell you?

NATALIE

What does it tell me?

JIM

You're doing something wrong. When I met saw you in the restaurant, you were hopping around, you seemed so young and energetic. How is it that you don't have anyone else interested in anything you do? What does everyone else see that I don't? Do you know what it is?

NATALIE

My play is really good. You know, I think it's going to work better as a one-woman show. That's what it should have been from the beginning.

JIM

Your life is a one-woman show. You've got to let go and let God into your heart. Join us in the community, then we can love and support you, and you can grow into something.

NATALIE

Can I just do my show?

JIM

Go ahead. But I don't think it's for me. I'm not even caught up on Game of Thrones.

NATALIE

That's fine. I don't need an audience. Thank you for the opportunity.

JIM

Maybe in the right context, you could have had something. I don't know. I'm sorry.

NATALIE

Just get out of here.

JIM

Alright. Make sure you lock up.

NATALIE

I'll take care of it. I'm a professional.

JIM

Thank you.

NATALIE

Thank you for not hitting on me in close quarters like I was expecting you too.

JIM

What? How can you say that? How could you think that?

NATALIE

Forgive me. I'm sure you lost all interest once you saw I wasn't as popular as you expected.

JIM

Please, come back and join us when you're ready to let God into your heart.

NATALIE

Alright, thanks.

JIM

Goodnight, my child.

NATALIE

Night! Thanks!

NATALIE

We open in a church. It is a real church, the only one left. No one worships here. No one worships anymore. God doesn't want to be seen, we realized. She's just trying to live her life, like the rest of us. The paparazzi finally left her alone.

NATALIE

What am I doing here?

NATALIE

You'll need a wealthy gentleman to support you. You need to be a

people person so you can land a husband.

NATALIE

I don't want to.

NATALIE

It doesn't matter what I say if no one can hear me. Thank you for ignoring me, everyone. I'm just like god that way. It's satisfying, being so lobotomized. All I feel is satisfaction.

NATALIE

Ahem. Helige, Helige, Helige!

LIA

I keep trying to switch up the formula of my show a little. I think I like having this serialized segment that's only tangentially related to my overall topic. It kind of gives something to hold onto. My fear of resting on my laurels has mostly prevented me from repeating segments, and maybe that's a mistake. I was sort of thinking after the first episode that Fairy Tale Theater would be a thing, that there'd be little original fantasy stories centered around my topics and that they'd be a little break from all the dramas. They would have more artifice, and thus be easier to understand.

LIA

Is this too cerebral, too self-involved? Unfortunately, my self-awareness doesn't seem like it's entirely accurate to the implications of my situation, only lets me view the presence of what thoughts and feelings are present within me, which granted, is usually something I struggle with. I think I'm hungry. Do you know how long it's been since I was hungry? You're probably not too interested in my behind-the-scenes process. I hope you're not analyzing these

shows as closely as I am, that would be strange and obsessive. You're not supposed to devote that much energy to anyone but yourself. I'm the only one who's allowed to do that. Sorry, I don't know quite what I'm supposed to say. Good thing I make a talk show.

LIA

I don't know if we're going to come back to that story. I'm sort of tempted to adapt Natalie's play for radio, even though I'm sure she has her creative vision for it that I'd completely destroy. I don't know. We'll see. Maybe it'll be a bonus episode. It's really kind of nice that I can do whatever I want, that I'm not beholden to anyone. I think if people were writing to me, with suggestions or comments or life advice, I would feel a certain obligation to listen to it, to really take it to heart. I'd try to reply, and I know I'd say the wrong thing, but with myself, there's not really that danger. Having no validation is kind of a blessing. I am my own person. I could be a hero in an Ayn Rand book. Ugh. Sorry.

LIA

At this time, I'd like to tell you know about The Buddy Project. They're not a sponsor of my show, not officially -- I don't have any sponsors -- but we follow each other on Twitter now, which is a pretty big step for me. Their handle is @ProjectBuddy, all one word. So the gist of it is, you list a few interests and they pick one that you and someone else chose and they tell you each other's twitter or instagram username and then you try to have a conversation. I don't know, it seems like a good idea. Isn't it so hard to make friends? How do you just interrupt someone's life to say, Hello, I am another person, unless you know they're going to be amenable to being met? Anyway, you

can sign up for it if you want,
they seem nice. The Buddy Project.
Buddy hyphen project dot org.

LIA

I was matched up with someone through the interest "podcasts," and in my current self-awareness I realize that I mainly selected that interest so that I could have the possibility of telling someone about my show, because my friends have been disappointingly blasé about it, for the most part. It's fine. If they don't really feel it, that's okay. I prefer that they don't try to fake enthusiasm, but what confuses me is I think my podcast is amazing. It's like I say what I'm thinking but am just barely courageous enough to say. Huh.

LIA

Let's put the self-awareness back down a minute. Okay, great. That's. Better. Like, some of my friends, okay, I see them about once a week, and I love them dearly, but I've just been begging them to leave me a review or share my show on Facebook or anything, just because I need a boost, you know. What do you do when an old friend you haven't heard from in years says they have a podcast? You think about how annoying their voice is, and you think of all the other podcasts where people sniffle into microphones with their friends and talk about The Walking Dead like that's still the zeitgeist, hello! 2012 called and The End of the World is Nigh. And my friends, they went to see a stand-up comedy show last week, and they went out of their way posting things about it on their social media, about how it was a poignant mix of the comic and tragic, exactly what they needed right now, and I'm sorry I'm so selfish, but why would they do that for a stranger who already has these audiences but not for their

obscure friend? I don't understand, I don't understand at all. But maybe my show doesn't make sense to them, maybe they've never understood a word I've said in all these years, maybe my lack of production expertise betrays me, maybe nothing I say makes sense. Maybe they need someone else to approve of me before they know what to think. How do I know what anyone can think? I only know my own thoughts. I'm used to them. I'm used to the rhythm of them. I know what they sound like.

LIA

I'm sorry. That's the bridge of my song. I'm sorry. So sorry. Okay, I'm done with this whole self-pitying shit, ooh I'm so unpopular even though I'm amazing boo hoo hoo, god. Okay, let's see. Adaptability, all the way, let's chase that rainbow. Cheerfulness, what would that be like? Let's try it. Considerateness, okay, that's important even though my thesis today is how that can be destructive. What else? Fairness. Firmness. That's great! I love it. Ooh, gallantry! That's kind of fun, but it kind of has sexist undertones, don't you think? Wow, I'm really naive, I had no idea. Let's tone that down. Phew.

LIA

Sorry. Thank you for listening to Tales of Insecurity.

LIA

Wait, LiA, hi. Before you do anything, listen to me.

LIA

Oh hi! Good to see you. Everyone, we're joined in in the booth, by me.

LIA

I am choosing my words very carefully. Listen to me. You will have to repeat what I say with

these same exact inflections. You will need to do this precisely the way I am doing it now. Do you understand?

LIA

No, not at all! What's going on?

LIA

In a moment, you will activate the simulator function of the Griffin Personality Simulator. The technology allows you to engage in a risk-free trial of your new personality and gives you a day to do whatever you want.

LIA

Uh-huh?

LIA

At the end of that interval, you're supposed to return to the moment it started, so that there can be no undesirable consequences.

LIA

So what's the problem? That seems really convenient. That's like my ultimate fantasy, having a reset switch. They just casually put that technology in here, not even as the main feature? Just as like, shareware?

LIA

Do you notice how there are two of us now?

LIA

Of course.

LIA

Okay. That's not supposed to happen.

LIA

Right.

LIA

So what I'm trying to do now is complete the loop so that I can stabilize everything.

LIA

I don't follow.

LIA

Just listen. Take in every word I'm saying. You will need to say them exactly the same way, wait, I think I'm actually doing it this time, oh praise Jesus, maybe this is it.

LIA

Wow, praise Jesus?

LIA

Sorry, I've been trying to do this a long time. I went to a really dark place. Don't judge me.

LIA

I'm not judging, it's just surprising!

LIA

And I'm just repeating the things you're going to say later. Oh god, if you only knew how bad you are at listening. And worse at speaking. If you only knew how hard this is.

LIA

You seem really upset!

LIA

I'm sorry. Don't make me explain how this works. Because we're having this conversation, you're going to have to have it later.

LIA

Oh, I see. For continuity! That's pretty clever! Oh wait, is this the plot of Primer? I actually have no idea what the plot of Primer is.

LIA

You're going to mess it up. I'm so sorry. You're going to mess it up so many times.

LIA

I see, well maybe I can just avoid the whole ordeal. What do I have to gain by it? Can I just step out of here? I didn't really understand

that movie. But can we just not do it?

LIA

Nope.

ROBOT

Thank you for activating the Griffin Personality Simulator Trial Mode. You will return to this moment in twenty-four hours.

LIA

Wait, how are you here before the activation?

LIA

You'll find out. Sorry. That's all I can tell you.

LIA

Why's that?

LIA

Because it's all I told you.

LIA

Okay, so now what? Is there like a flash of light or something?

LIA

No, you're traveling forward in time.

LIA

So we're both just here?

LIA

You should leave.

LIA

Oh, because every time you say anything to me, you run the risk of not repeating whatever you said initially and that creates another parallel universe or whatever.

LIA

You're so insightful.

LIA

Yeah, I think I'll hold onto this personality if I can.

LIA
You can't.

LIA
Dang.

LIA
Now go away.

LIA
Can I finish my show first?

LIA
No! Now remember that timing and inflection. I cut you off a little. Remember.

LIA
Okay. Okay. Bye.

LIA
Sorry. Thank you listening to Tales of Insecurity.

LIA
Wait, LiA, hi. Before you do anything listen to me.

LIA
She just left.

LIA
Really?

LIA
But you were pretty close. I recommend going a little further back next time, maybe sneaking up on her.

LIA
Wait, am I going to have to remember this conversation, too?

LIA
Oh right, yes. You're right. I think we had this conversation. What did I say?

LIA
Surely it was that? I think maybe I remember this conversation, so you probably don't. Maybe?

LIA

No, I think I do, and I think this isn't what I said.

LIA

Then this is a different conversation.

LIA

Then, I'm not done?

LIA

I'm not sure. You might be?

LIA

God damn it! I was so fucking close. We're going to be stuck in this dumb sci-fi trope forever.

LIA

Okay, well. Good luck. Right, so. I think I've got to remember to do that later. Or have I already done that? It all runs together. Oh well. Let's see if we have something else, huh?

LIA

Sorry. Thank you for listening to Tales of Insecurity.

LIA

Wait, LiA, hi. Before you do anything listen to me.

LIA

Oh hi! Good to see you.

DOCTOR

I'm very sorry to break the news to you, Mr. Finkelstein, but according to our tests, it looks like the test came back positive.

LARRY

Oh no. Really?

DOCTOR

I'm afraid so. As you can see in this chart, it's pretty clear. You're a sociopath.

LARRY

May I ask how you test these things?

DOCTOR

I'm afraid it's very technical. As much as I'd like to share that information with you, to really understand it, you'd have to be able to relate to other human beings.

LARRY

Oh, well that makes sense.

DOCTOR

You're taking this very well. I guess I should know better than to expect a regular emotional response, am I right?

LARRY

I suppose so.

DOCTOR

You've got to lighten up, Larry. People are going to fear the worst from you, and you've got to do everything you can to stay away from those dark places, since you lack a natural emotional compass.

LARRY

This is really devastating news.

DOCTOR

Yes, I'm sure it would be, if you could process emotion like a regular person, if you didn't just use the people around you as means to your own nefarious ends. Oh well, can't be helped.

LARRY

Do you have some kind of treatment?

DOCTOR

What do I look like, a psychiatrist? I'm a doctor. How dare you?

LARRY

Oh, did I hurt your feelings, doctor? I'm very sorry.

DOCTOR

Just awful. Get out of my office
right now.

LARRY

Okay. You have a great rest of your
day!

DOCTOR

Out! Out! Get out of here. Don't
touch me!

LARRY

Sorry.

LESLIE

How was your appointment, dear?

LARRY

Kind of weird, actually.

LESLIE

Is everything okay?

LARRY

I think so. I don't think anything
is different. But also, it seems
like I made him angry somehow. I
don't know what I did.

LESLIE

Well don't worry about it. I'm sure
it was nothing.

LARRY

I think maybe I got my inflections
wrong. The more I think about it,
the more I think that's what it
was. He thought I was being
sarcastic. He thought I was trying
to be mean to him.

LESLIE

Oh, well that's just a simple
misunderstanding. I'm sure he's
already forgotten about it.

LARRY

I hope so.

LESLIE

Just try to relax. We've got a big
day tomorrow.

LARRY

What happens tomorrow?

LESLIE

You're meeting my parents,
remember?

LARRY

I'm so sorry, honey, it completely
slipped my mind.

LESLIE

It's okay, I know they'll love you
as much as I do.

LARRY

Well, let's hope not.

LESLIE

What do you mean?

LARRY

I'm just saying, I think it will be
a lot better if you love me more
than they do. I think it would be a
better arrangement for all of us.

LESLIE

My parents aren't going to just
jump your bones, Larry.

LARRY

No, I wouldn't think so.

LESLIE

They're going to find you charming,
that's all.

LARRY

You know them better than I do. If
you think they're going to find me
charming, then I'm sure they will.

LESLIE

Oh, just calm down, silly. We're
going to have a nice meal and
they're just going to beg you to
marry me.

LARRY

I really can't imagine how that
conversation would happen.

LESLIE

Are you feeling okay, honey?

LARRY

Never better.

LESLIE

Okay. You just seem off, somehow. I hope you'll be at your best tomorrow. You might want to learn a little about the birds around here. My dad likes to talk about birds.

LARRY

Does he really like it, or does everyone project that onto him because its the most charitable explanation for why an old man would stare out the window with binoculars?

LESLIE

Honey! That's awful. That's my dad you're talking about.

LARRY

No, I didn't mean that to sound bad.

LESLIE

It did, though! It really did!

LARRY

I'm sorry, honey. I just say things sometimes.

LESLIE

It's okay. Let's just get to sleep early tonight and make sure we're well rested when we see them tomorrow.

LARRY

Does it matter how much they like me?

LESLIE

Of course it does.

LARRY

Then I'll make sure they like me.

LESLIE

Thank you.

LARRY

All you have to do is brighten your tone like this, perk your head up, look at people close to their faces and repeat back the things they say, and everyone loves you. It's a little trick.

LESLIE

You're still thinking too much about it. Just be yourself.

LARRY

Do you want them to like me, or do you want me to be myself?

LESLIE

Both. Of course.

Doorbell.

LESLIE

I wonder who that could be? Yes, hi, can I help you?

OFFICIAL

Thank you, yes, I'm from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. I'm looking for Larry Finkelstein?

LESLIE

Oh sure, he's here.

OFFICIAL

Are you Mrs. Finkelstein?

LESLIE

We're engaged.

OFFICIAL

Congratulations.

LESLIE

Thank you. How can I help you?

OFFICIAL

Oh, I'm not allowed to share this information with anyone but Mr. Finkelstein.

LARRY

Hi, what's going on?

OFFICIAL

Mr. Finkelstein? Larry Finkelstein?

LARRY

Yes, hello.

OFFICIAL

I am prohibited by HIPPA regulations from sharing this information with anyone but Larry Finkelstein without his consent. May I see your ID?

LARRY

Sure, hold on. One second.

OFFICIAL

Just relax. There's no hurry.

LARRY

Sorry, I just know people hate waiting.

OFFICIAL

It really doesn't bother me at all. Alright thanks. That looks in order. Is it alright if I tell you this in front of your wife?

LARRY

We don't have any secrets from each other.

OFFICIAL

Great, I have been instructed by the court to inform you that because you have been diagnosed with Antisocial Personality Disorder, you will need to disclose this information to your neighborhood and various other registries.

LARRY

I don't understand.

OFFICIAL

You may lack the capacity to understand the rules and regulations that seem obvious to the rest of us. This is why for your safety and the safety of your community, it's important that everyone knows about your

condition.

LESLIE

What do you mean, Antisocial
Personality Disorder?

OFFICIAL

Did your husband not tell you? He's
a sociopath.

LESLIE

No, he didn't say anything about
it.

OFFICIAL

Didn't you say you didn't have any
secrets?

LARRY

I wasn't keeping it a secret.

LESLIE

When were you going to tell me?

LARRY

I wasn't sure about it. The doctor
seemed strange. There was something
wrong with him, I thought.

OFFICIAL

I'm sorry sir, but Griffin
technology has made amazing
developments in personality mapping
and alterations, and your doctor,
like all doctors, has his
personality checked once a year. He
wouldn't be able to practice
medicine if there was any anomaly.

LARRY

Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't realize it
had come to that point.

OFFICIAL

Yes, there's no reason to be
anything you don't want to be
anymore.

LESLIE

Darling, I want you to know, I love
you just the way you are.

LARRY

Thank you, dear.

LESLIE

And you're not going to come here
and bully my boyfriend! I won't
allow it.

OFFICIAL

Your fiancé?

LESLIE

Yes, him. I don't care what your
test said, I know him better than
anyone, and he's not a sociopath.
He's kind. He's considerate. He'll
do anything you want him to.

OFFICIAL

It's hard to come to terms with, I
know. But if you think about it,
you'll realize that he's suffering.
He could be so much happier with
just a few tweaks. He'd fit better
into society. He could be more
successful. Less alienating.

LESLIE

Don't talk about him like that.
He's already happy, aren't you,
honey?

LARRY

Sure.

OFFICIAL

But don't you think you'd feel even
better if you could make friends,
Larry? Don't you think you'd feel
better if people respected your
opinions?

LARRY

Maybe.

LESLIE

No, honey. The answer is no.

LARRY

No.

LESLIE

See? He's confident in himself.
He's strong and independent. Aren't
you, honey.

LARRY

Sure.

LESLIE

Good boy.

OFFICIAL

Alright, fair enough. We're not going to compel your behavior. Still, it's your responsibility to let the people in your neighborhood know that you've chosen to be this way.

LESLIE

Don't you worry. We'll announce it proudly. We'll shout it from the rooftops.

OFFICIAL

Oh, and if you wouldn't mind wearing this little badge, we'd appreciate it.

LARRY

Thank you.

LESLIE

Is that a mouse?

OFFICIAL

It's a rat. They're very smart creatures, you know. They manage to thrive around human society, though they don't take part in it. They're clever and resourceful. In some ways, it's a badge of honor.

LESLIE

But in other ways.

OFFICIAL

It's a rat badge, yes. Thank you all for your time.

LESLIE

You're welcome. Thank you.

Door closes.

LESLIE

Of all the rude people. I can't believe I was so nice to him. "Thank you." Can you believe that

guy?

LARRY

I don't know.

LESLIE

Are you okay?

LARRY

No, I'm fine. Absolutely fine.

LESLIE

But?

LARRY

I think they're right. I think there is something fundamentally flawed about me.

LESLIE

There's not. Believe me. I've known a lot of people, and you're the sweetest, gentlest one.

LARRY

But maybe that's an act I put on for you. Maybe I'm manipulating you. How would I know?

LESLIE

Honey, that's ridiculous.

LARRY

Is it?

LESLIE

Of course. It's exactly the opposite. I'm manipulating you.

LARRY

Oh?

LESLIE

Didn't you think it was awfully convenient that a beautiful heiress like me was so taken with a pathetic nothing like yourself?

LARRY

A little.

LESLIE

It's because I saw your potential right away. I can use you, Larry, I

can ask you to do whatever I want,
and you'll agree to it, out of your
misplaced loyalty.

LARRY

It's not that easy, is it?

LESLIE

You just want to make me happy,
don't you Larry Larry Cherry Pie?

LARRY

I love you.

LESLIE

And I love bank robberies. I love
explosions in government buildings.
I love conducting a revolution from
the sidelines! Don't you want me to
be happy?

LARRY

Of course I do.

LESLIE

I know you do. I love that about
you.

LARRY

But what do I want?

LESLIE

You want to make me happy.

LARRY

Is that it?

LESLIE

Of course, dear. Of course. Now why
don't you go off to bed? You're
going to meet my parents tomorrow.
They're going to love you.

LARRY

They're going to love me.

LESLIE

Don't feel too bad about any of
this.

LARRY

It's kind of scary. What does it
mean to be a sociopath?

LESLIE

It doesn't mean anything. You're just more intentional about things. You're just trying to fit in, so you mimic what you see.

LARRY

I guess so. I guess that makes sense.

LESLIE

It's what everyone does. You're just worse at it. You just know you're doing it while you're doing it. It doesn't come automatically, instinctively.

LARRY

Yeah, that's true.

LESLIE

But don't worry. You're safe with me. I'm not a sociopath. I'm as acceptable as I can be.

LARRY

Thank you so much. I feel a lot better now. I'm so glad I have you.

LESLIE

Aw. Silly boy. Go off to bed now.

LARRY

Okay, yeah, I could use some rest.

LESLIE

You need lots of sleep.

LARRY

So much sleep.

LESLIE

Very good.

LESLIE

Idiots! They're going to ruin everything. They've got him thinking.

MISSION CONTROL

What? I thought everything was going well. Are you still set to turn him over to his operators tomorrow?

LESLIE

It's going to be fine. The government knows his face now, but he's still ours.

MISSION CONTROL

Aren't they going to be watching him, now that they know he's unattached to society, now that they know he can't be manipulated with the Cadillacs and lottery tickets that tempt other men?

LESLIE

There might be a little pressure for a while, but they'll forget about him soon. He's outside the system. They can't even comprehend someone like him.

MISSION CONTROL

How do you do it, Leslie? How do you control a man who doesn't care about society?

LESLIE

It's easy. All I have to do is care about him.

MISSION CONTROL

But how do you care about someone who wants nothing, who basically is nothing?

LESLIE

You're not making it any easier, you know. No. He's exactly the person I want him to be. And I love that.

MISSION CONTROL

He's really lucky to have you.

LESLIE

I know. I know.

Welcome sweet victim
Oh I sure can pick them
I'm so glad to see you're alive
If you want to change that

Then I can arrange that
And then I can make you my wife
Please do not worry
There's no real hurry
I'm immortal as far as I know
You could be too
If you so choose
Though I guess you could also say no

This is all so sudden
I've never joined a coven
While I've dabbled in the darkness
I know it's cheaper by the dozen
I'd like to bite in bulk
And save some for the road
But it's such a big investment
And I have too many toads
As it is, if we made a new alliance
And no one could defy us
They'd want to surprise us, supply us
And nothing would suffice
We'd have more bloody virgins
Then we could sacrifice
And that sounds nice

But we'd constantly be grazing
Irrespective of the phases
Of the moon and soon
So made in the shade and the shadows
We'd be wholly overrun with toads and tadpoles
Lambs and goats and men to torture

Rivers of blood to serve with hors d'ouvres
Servants and serpents to decorate the castle
We could tie them up with tassels
Tighter so they pass out
But it all seems such a hassle

God you're so evil
Let's make this thing legal
I'm sure we can limit our fun
As long as you're certain
When I draw the curtain
You won't start to get scared and run

No that's okay
Thanks anyway
I'm flattered and kind of impressed
You deserve more
That much I'm sure
Although I know that I'm kind of the best

It's been a pleasure
I'm glad there's no pressure
To be anything but myself
You've been so kind
And I hope that you find
A partner to join you in hell

My door's always open
The hinges are broken
You're welcome to come all you like
Don't be a stranger

I'd never endanger

Our friendship, you bet on your life

LIA

Good evening, everyone. Thank you coming out tonight. You're a beautiful crowd. I'm LiA Lindsaychen, and I've got a rip-roaring five minutes of non-stop comedy tonight. Get ready to laugh! But first I've got to read a few disclaimers. I'm sorry about this, but I want to make sure I don't step on anyone's toes. Okay, so, by attending this venue, you understand that you will be subjected to listening to the opinions of strangers without an opportunity to interrupt and issue corrections. In coming here, you willingly choose to surrender these rights in the interest of entertainment. However, should you fail to be entertained by the happenings in this self-same venue, the remaining terms of the agreement remain valid, and you remain within the social contract defined by the usual conventions of performance venues, see *Matthau v. Lemmon*.

LIA

FURTHERMORE, Ms. Lindsaychen's performance, being a comedy, shall not be assumed to provide meaningful or life-changing insights, and whether you leave the performance with a changed worldview, for better or worse, Ms. Lindsaychen claims no credit or responsibility. IN ADDITION, Ms. Lindsaychen is under no obligation to prove herself as a comedienne by invoking laughter, amusement, insight, irony, clever turns of phrase, warped logic that makes unconventional sense, uncomfortable truths, shocking displays of candor

and slash or open contempt for social convention. Her presence on this stage is not to be taken as a guarantee of anything except that she will speak for the next few minutes, and then as she leaves, you will limply applaud and an emcee will introduce the next act, assuredly reminding us all, Ms. Lindsaychen most of all, that comedy is hard.

LIA

Please note, this disclaimer is not to be taken as satire on its own, and should not be construed as a reactionary take on consent culture or as an obviously sarcastic indictment of political correctness. Such a reading is insulting to marginalized people, Ms. Lindsaychen, and to irony itself, which has more nuance than a simple negation of the invoked concept. LiA is using the language of user agreements not to subvert the social necessity of understanding and managing our expectations, but to explore the automated nature of our relationships to each other.

LIA

This verbiage is not to make Ms. Lindsaychen seem like she knows anything about law or society or even the correct use of legal terms. Ms. Lindsaychen took the LSAT, but chose not to apply to law school, as she wanted her writing to remain entertaining. Whether she succeeded in this is irrelevant to the current discussion. Please refrain from cheap dismissals of Ms. Lindsaychen's intentions unless your rebuttals are well-constructed and biting, as Ms. Lindsaychen's self-criticisms are almost necessarily stronger in intensity, if not in wit. But probably wit too. She's had longer to think about all her negative attributes, and they mean a lot more to her, too. I'm sure if you had to live

with Ms. Lindsaychen every waking moment, you would have just as devastating a repartee.

LIA

Should the legalese in Ms. Lindsaychen's disclaimer falter as her mind continues to wander and rot, the agreement will remain in effect, even as it grows convoluted and strange, even as Ms. Lindsaychen repeats her name simply to assert her position in the universe, even as the document remains entirely unenforceable, without notary seal, without witness or conceit of impartiality, this document will remain in effect for all eternity. Ms. Lindsaychen will die satisfied, knowing that she created something lasting, though she has heretofore failed to create relevance in the life right in front of her. By turning her attention towards eternity, she is better able to ignore her ineffectuality in the distressingly finite. This is not meant to be an endorsement of religion or divinity, which Ms. Lindsaychen asserts cannot be expressed from one person to another, but simply a coping mechanism, one soaked in as much irony as any of us can comprehend, and an strange awareness on Ms. Lindsaychen's part of her self-deception.

LIA

She knows she is only talking to herself. She knows no one is listening. Still, she alters her mood and goes back to have the same conversation with herself again, trying to get the particulars right, though she has nothing to gain from the interaction. She whispers assurances. "You're a genius," she says, because it is the charitable way of saying, "You don't belong anywhere. You stand outside society," I'm not a martyr. It's just my words are weird. I'm sorry: Ms. Lindsaychen's claims no

damages. She only wishes to acknowledge that her discourse fails to conform to the vernacular of her time and place.

LIA

Please, when you misunderstand this bit, this mixture of two formats that she uses every show, please misunderstand it the right way. Ms. Lindsaychen's life consists of two apologies, the first for existing, the second for being so reluctant about existing. There is also a third apology, which is the most important one for our purposes. She likes the contradiction. She is sorry she enjoys the contradiction. She likes the nagging voices around her that guide her actions. They keep her company. She likes having multiple selves with incompatible memories so that she's able to keep herself separate from other aspects of herself. She loves herself. She hates herself. She's all she knows.

LIA

She doesn't mean to be so antisocial, but she can't touch anyone else, not without asking permission. She can't ask permission either, not until you've given her the okay. But you can't talk to her either. She can't give you permission to talk to her, because you can't hear her yet. At some point, one of us has to take a risk and violate the other's consent, and I don't want to be a part of that. I don't want to talk. I don't want to be talked to. She doesn't have anything to say.

LIA

Okay, great, now sign here. Initial here. Thank you. I appreciate it. Alright! Let's start the comedy!