

Bug Life- Saskia Muller

HOST:

Hi, my name is Saskia Muller, and I am the human voice behind a very humanoid cicada that you're about to meet in a bit. I'm broadcasting from Toronto, Ontario. The story you are about to embark on this set in Toronto, Ontario. It is the place where I was born, I've lived all my life, and am creating from to this day. Takoronto, or Toronto, is the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples, and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. These peoples have been telling stories on this land for years and years, even doing so through colonial occupation. An occupation that is still at work today. This takes shape in many forms, some of which may look like police violence, the distribution or lack thereof of resources, or lasting effects of intergenerational trauma. I am a white settler. One who is currently working to forge more tangible connections within my community. So I can actually put word to action into faces. I've realized this year that I can say a land acknowledgement, but what am I actually doing for the people in my community, the indigenous elders in my community? And I didn't have an answer. So I'm working on that. And I encourage you to think of how you can do so as well wherever you might be, because we're here on this land together. And we all need it to live. If you are also in Toronto and you have the means, consider supporting one of the many indigenous organizations in our city. Some, in my community, are Native Women's Resource Center, Thunder Woman Healing Lodge Society, and Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Center. And please vote with a kind heart and the broader community in mind. I aim to care more for the land and all its people so that all beings on the earth can not just exist on these lands, but live. Thank you.

- 5, 4, 3, 2, and theme song in. Bum, da, da, da, dum...

- [music]

- Morning, neighbours. It is a beautiful sunshiny day, and I am your host with the most, confidante when you wantfidant, and one that is near to you, no matter how far. My name is L.L. Cicada, comin atcha with the sounds of the rays on your radio waves. Today's forecast is nice. Very warm like with a breeze that can blow you away if you are closer to the bottom of the food chain. I mean, eat a leaf or something, yeesh! Oh, hey, we've got a ladybug strolling by the studio today. What's the deal with lady bugs? Like, fart much?

- Fuck off.

- Oh, sorry. You heard that. I, I'm just trying to riff. Crap. Okay, well, is anyone even listening? I mean, I actually do hope you are. Even if I'm bad at this thing. I know my intro needs work. I don't know who L.L. Cicada is. I just thought it would grab attention. It's cool on the radio when I've heard other voices do it, but I have never gone by L L a day in my life. I was just trying something out. Hi, nice to meet you, listener, or nice for you to meet me? I'm determined to figure that out. But I know you beings are out there. Just listen.

- [door opens, sounds]

- My name is Leslie. Just Leslie. I've never cared much for the name. It always sounded grown up, and I am. Okay, well, I am. I am an adult now. But I am struggling to come to terms with that. I'm here today for those lonely folks out in the ether, and anyone else who's struggling to come to terms with the terms and conditions of their growth and being in this world. And hey, if you've gotten this far, you might as well stick with me a little longer. I also think I'm like you, in a lot of ways. Bold of me to say, I know, because I have no idea just who you are. But I imagine you as a thoughtful being. Perhaps someone who wonders why you're here, or why the fuck there is a cicada hosting a morning radio show? Me too. I am also wondering why and how I am here. Concerning, I know. You thought I was driving this proverbial bus? Nuh uh, baby, I can't drive let alone fly with wings I have but have very little desire to use. But I'll try. Not the literal driving or flying just yet. But like, the like narrative, and sort of radio show. I got tangled in the metaphor I used as I tangented... Oh, right. Yeah, who let me do this. How did I end

up here doing a whole radio show I've constructed to cope with the separation from my community for sleeping in one fine day. Yes. Yes, I will, I will get to that, because that did happen. And I am very lonely. But, but hey, it shouldn't be so bad because I'm inserting some fantastic content in this show that I've recently discovered. So I'm not really doing it alone. Right? Speaking of. First, I'm gonna throw it to a wonderful musician, Ali Berkok for some music to set the scene. Ali has created several pieces that beautifully portray just what it is to go on this journey of life. A bit of a soundtrack for all of us wondering what the fuck? Here it is.

ALI BERKOK MUSIC REEL PLAYS

HOST:

- Thank you, Ali, for the tunes and welcome back to the show. I'm Leslie, your host. Now I am what they call a periodical cicada. And I'm no scientist, I'm just a bug, but I think periodical cicada means I waited 17 years to come up and out from the universe. Well, sorry, correction my community waited 17 years. I waited 17 years and 17 minutes. Yeah, let me take you back to a few days ago. It all started under the ground.

[snoring]

[alarm clock]

[yawning]

[straw sucking sound]

- Ew. Oh no. That don't taste good. That tastes, that tastes funky. Kind of tastes like, like change. Oh.

Oh, shit shit shit shit. Hello? Hello? Hello? Oh god, okay, dammit. Wait for me!

[percussion]

[rocks moving around]

- I slept in. And the whole rude thousands of us, my friends, family, community, potential mates, emerged, up and out. They didn't sleep in. They wouldn't. Those bugs were excited about this for weeks. So I crawled up and out as fast as I could, following the trail they had carved for me, and I hollered to the others.

- Hello? Ow, geez. What is that thing? It's so bright? Oh, no, yep, no, that would be the sun. You know, I would call you an old friend, but friends don't attack each other's brains and eyeballs quite like that, do they? I can't hear them. Hello? Logan? Brandon? Monice? Cara? Anyone? I can't smell them. Dammit.

- And as the light in my eyes went from harsh, bright white to pale colour, I still couldn't see them. I popped my head through blades of grass and still, no very large herd of cicadas wandering about. So naturally, I panicked. Why? Because I slipped in. I missed it. 17 years of my life were leading up to this, and I missed it. My eyes were clear with the murkiness after being underground for 17 years, and I missed it. 17 minutes past go time. So I hustled, I moved faster than I have ever moved before in my life, which has been very leisurely up until now. I rushed up, and they were already gone. A legion of my brethren vanished into a sea of grass. So I did what anyone would do, and I threw a tantrum. Is that a stage of grief? You know, the one where you start ranting a bit? Yeah, that uh, that sounded a little something like this.

- At this rate, I could have just stayed down there and died alone because now I'm up here, and I'm going to die alone. Just, just more uncomfortable and in Technicolor, my god! Ugh, everything is so great. The one time, one time I am capable individual thought and I miss out on the one thing that is key to our survival? Strength in fucking numbers.

- Despite definite need for further tantrum I had to keep moving because, well, survival. Cicadas aren't the world's brightest creatures and where logic fails us is where our one defence shines through. Strength in numbers. You can't eat us all. And there I was, weak in numbers on account of my singularity. Alone. Alone out in the open, a small thing in a big world chock full of other creatures that would jump at the chance to take a bite of this juicy ass. My heart started to race and my brain was not catching up, but there was no time to wait. At this point, the very vibrations of my big heart and my tiny

body were propelling me forward. I crawled, looking for some sort of vantage point, desperate for a higher view, and very much trying to keep the panic away. Panic, I've learned, is not conducive to survival. If I hyperventilated I am sure I would have gone backwards at that rate, and we couldn't have that. Panic is the luxury of someone higher on the food chain. In the distance, not so far ahead, I saw a glimmer of light. I was sure I was having a heart attack. Is this *that* light? Nevertheless, I trudged towards it. It can't get much worse, so maybe a non-violent death would be a blessing. I can see the tombstone now. Here lies Leslie. She was nervous, small, and seldom quiet. Taken from us too soon, wasn't even eaten by anything specific just couldn't handle the world. But I move forward. Every step started to become more difficult until I was standing completely still and unable to move. I said I'm stuck. I keep going forward. Oh, no. Forward doesn't work. Backward doesn't work. Up. Oh shit.

- So in the weeks and months leading up to the great periodical cicada resurgence of '23, the Council of cicadas had been holding meetings, and I'd been, well, avoiding them. I think one of the things on the agenda was talking about how shortly after coming up from under the ground, we very quickly come out of our shell? This was that. So I pushed and pushed in ways I had never pushed before.

- Oh, what? Oh god.

- Okay, so imagine turning around, coming face to face with you, and blinking at yourself. But you don't blink back because this this is no reflection. You are an empty shell of who you used to be. But you're not just hollow, like you can see the light through you. No matter the logic in your brain telling you this is natural, bodies change, it's still fucking gross. You can't help but think how horribly awkward you look as you walk back and forth and side to side and, the sounds. Ugh. But you now have to leave behind the shell of your body that has grown with you for the last 17 years. How am I supposed to feel about my body now after I've seen such a drastic change? I'm bigger than I was, my skin feels different, I feel squishy and soft and all vulnerable again. And I have wings now. I'm just supposed to know how to use these things? How to drive this body? A body that's yours, but you can't quite recognize. Do you know this feeling? Oh, and to make matters worse, my crisis was interrupted by a real everything happens for a reason motherfucker.

- Oh! Hello world! Hello sky, hello trees. Hello you little bugs and vermin down there. Isn't it a beautiful day to be? Flap your wings, little ones. Flap your wings and fly.

- For the record, I fucking hate butterflies. I said it. Oh, step on me. And then out of the cocoon a beautiful butterfly. Oh, boo. It's not fair. It's not fair. Some beings' transformation from childhood to adulthood is absolutely beautiful. Or at the very least the gross stuff is conveniently hidden underground or inside a cocoon, while others go through it ugly. And publicly. Squeeze themselves out of the hardened shell that no longer fits anymore, rocking side to side and back and forth like you are a turd having a hard time being released into the ether. How am I supposed to navigate that? So I just stared. I couldn't take my eyes off of who I used to be. Before me stood a shell of someone younger, and you know what? I saw beauty I had never seen before. A copper terracotta shell, good legs, just fat enough. But why did that only occur to me after that version of me was hollowed out and gone? As I stood there looking very different. I wanted to say something. Faced with a different version of myself, all I could ask was, will your heart ever catch up to your brain? And then I had to leave myself behind. I mean, we travel in numbers so some of us will make it, and I didn't have numbers. I just had me, just one. So I said, goodbye, old friend. And went on my way further into the light. Thanks to my body past and present for carrying me to survival and holding me and facilitating my growth. Note to self. Seek stories of survival, hardship, and beauty. Speaking of survival, here's one I heard by CENSORED.

Anonymous- Tales from the Patron Service

Front Lines

Computers turned on. Ticket printer, loaded. POS machine booted up. Plexiglass barriers put into place. Windows open. And then the doors. A rush of audience members come into the theatre, ready to

experience the hottest production in town. But before they can do that, there is a team they must go through. A team of box office ticket agents and front of house guides that are the connecting link between the patron and their artistic experience. This undercover agent brings you stories from these patron service workers, and welcomes you to Tales from the Patron Service Front Lines.

Tale one: Public figure can't stand being treated like a member of the public.

I was an usher supervisor at a holiday oratory concert in downtown Toronto. It was completely sold out, not even a single spare seat in the hall. We were under strict instructions not to admit latecomers until a specific break in the performance, which in this case was about half an hour after the start time. Perhaps a bit extreme, but with unamplified singers, it would have been disruptive to hustle folks into their seats during the performance. And at any rate, latecomers could still see and hear the music from monitors outside the hall. A well-dressed man and his preteen daughter arrived at the balcony door about two minutes after the show started. I recognized the man immediately as a television journalist. I checked their tickets, which were in the middle of the front row, and apologized when I told them they couldn't enter until the break. The journalist immediately became furious and demanded to know why. I explained that the policy of the hall was to not disrupt the performance for other audience members. He wanted to know why I wouldn't let them sneak in the back. I explained there was no way we could without disrupting the other audience members' enjoyment. The more I patiently explained and apologized for the situation, the angrier and louder he got. In front of the small group of other latecomers who may have been trying to listen to the show, including his daughter, he began swearing at me and demanding answers to his questions. Like, what I would do if he physically pushed past me and forced his way in? A coworker later remarked to me that he was much cooler headed when covering dramatic and upsetting events on television than he was in such a moderately inconvenient situation for himself.

Tale two: I promise the story gets happier.

I have a professional rule and belief as an FOH worker that I will never judge a patron for walking out of a performance if the content is too heavy for them. Everyone deserves to have their mental and emotional health treated with respect. So, if a patron is finding the play too much, I respect their wishes to leave. But as much as I will always respect that right to leave, there is always a part of me that does hope they stay to see the story through. And that conflict buzzed inside me on this special opening night. It was the last play the company would have before the pandemic, and one written and directed by our own artistic director. It was a play about family, grief, mental health, and dealing with the aftermath of suicide. I often commented with the artistic director and team that their play delivers the two most devastating scenes in a row like a gut-punch combo. But on this night, that was a combo that may have been too much. Now, opening nights are always stressful with the sheer amount of VIPs and catering and long lineups to manage and help out with. I had booked myself a ticket to the show so that, as the patron service manager, I could tell my staff more about the show. As the doors closed, and the lights turned down, I was finally able to relax, as I sensed that the late call had finally passed with no interruptions, and I could finally enjoy the show. I was sitting behind the patron two rows up, and my AD was behind me. Things were going well until those two scenes. The first emotional punch landed, and I could hear the patron in front of me begin to cry as their partner put their arm around them to comfort them. They get through the first devastating scene, still in seat. Without a moment to breathe, the second scene starts. And this time I hear their sobs, and their partner say, Do you want to go? The conflict inside of me grows as I respect their right to go. But also, having already seen the show in the dress rehearsal, I am mentally screaming, No, wait, please, I promise it gets better, I promise there is a light at the end of the tunnel. I can feel a line of energy coming from me, desperately trying to reach this patron, wanting to assure them. I can also sense my AD behind me, who has picked up on the energy, and a mutual understanding develops between us. I wait with bated breath. And somehow the patron takes the emotional punch combo of the two scenes and sees the story through to the end. The play ends, and they stand with the rest for the standing ovation. On leaving the studio, my AD and I talked

about how we each clocked what was going on in that section. I still wonder how that patron was doing after the show.

Tale three: The mask call.

There is something about humanity that says, if I don't want to follow something, I will go to the ends of the earth to avoid it. I will purposely ignore all the signs, and claim ignorance to suit me in my desire to not do something. Even if it is for the health and safety of a community. The day starts out like any other for me, the patron manager and COVID-19 officer. I wake up and I check that our pre-show emails that include our masking policy are sent. I go into the venue and get set up, greet the staff and send them on their way while I go back up to the main office to get admin work done. And that is when the phone rings. I pick it up. And I am immediately struck with anger over the phone. This patron received the pre-show email and is furious over our masking policy. They go on a long rant about how I ruined their night out and that masking is useless and the pandemic is over - spoiler alert, it was not - saying the science doesn't support masking, and that they themselves are medically trained. They argue that they were not made aware of the masking policy before they received their tickets, and even before buying said tickets. Now I explained to them calmly why the policy is in place, and then I tried to get to the bottom of why they didn't know about the masking policy. I asked them, before purchasing their tickets, if they saw the link to our COVID-19 policies on our website that said to read before purchasing. They reply, Yes, but I assumed it was out of date since the pandemic is over, so I didn't check. Palm-to-head smack number one. Then I asked them, when they got their ticket confirmation email, Do you see a COVID-19 policy text at the bottom? They say, Yes, I do now, but I didn't bother checking the whole email when I got this. Head smack number two. We end up going on and on in a circle of frustration and repeated points, where I, against the burning of my soul, feign sympathy with them. And without hesitation I agree to a refund request by them. One would think that ends a conversation, but the cycle begins again, like an exercise bike, until finally, I hang up with the rage from

the other end of the line seemingly cooled, and them saying, I'm not going to show up then. I exhale one last sigh, put on my staff badge, and go downstairs.

Last tale: Wait, what's my job again?

A job in patron services is hardly a stable position. Unless you're in management, you're constantly dealing with uncertain schedules, a job that changes per show, and the same entitlement from patrons that seems universal and encouraged in customer service. So why do people do it? Simply put, they love the arts. They love having the opportunity to see the pieces that go on stage, and being able to help audiences experience that art as well. I was an usher at a well-known theatre venue in the city during a long-standing theatre festival. I worked in one of the venues that was being used, and they had this contemporary dance show that was a modern take on a classic ballet. Now, before the show, I didn't usually watch many or think of many dance pieces. I was strictly a scripted-theatre lover. Now I do my part to bring the audiences into the theatre, and I get myself set up by the door. My job, by this door, was to hand out programs and, during the show, help to escort and control latecomers and reentries. I'd sit down, keeping one eye on the stage and the other eye on people in my section. The show begins, and I still have my mind split between my duties and the show. Then the energy in the room just changes. The performance you could feel drew everyone in, including myself, as the images on stage became visceral, beautiful, intense, grotesque, horrifying, and inspiring. It just sucked my attention in. At a narrative break, I had to take a double take, wondering if someone slipped by me when I was looking, but no. Everyone in that space just had this laser focus on the stage. Something that connected the whole space together. When it was done, and I opened the doors, and had audience members thank me, it was the first time I truly felt their thanks. I may have had nothing to do with the production on stage, but I got to play even just a small part in getting people into the theatre to experience the work and share that experience with them.

The lights turn off, the flashlights and name tags are put away. The report is complete. The front of house notes email is sent, the windows close, and the doors locked. Congrats on finishing your shift as a patron services representative, learning from all these stories about the challenges, joys, tribulations and work it takes to be the bridge between audiences and art. So the next time you enter a theatre, and you collect your ticket and go to your seat, remember how you got there. And if you are one of the vital patient service workers who tirelessly work to do their part in bringing a production to the masses, we salute you. And to everyone, thank you for listening to Tales from the Patron Service Front Lines.

HOST:

Thank you, CENSORED. And welcome back to the show. We're still in flashback answering the question of why me, Leslie, the cicada, is the host of your morning talk radio, so bear with me. I continued forward to the light. Or, as I got a little closer, I saw that it wasn't so much the light as it was the sun reflecting off of something shiny, and I thought, oh my god, I love shiny, that's why I'm going in this direction. But anyway, I journeyed onwards in the hope of a higher vantage point, so as to lift me up past the long blades of grass that blocked my view. I ambled along in my brand new skin that I was still very much getting used to. I sounded so much quieter when I walked now, but I suppose we're getting adjusted to everything new now, so what's another thing, new skin, add it to the fucking list. Sorry. But the noise I lacked was replaced by another noise in the distance. Coming from the same direction as the shiny thing I was already gunning for? Now new noises often scare me. Well, most things scare me. But I don't think I had the capacity for more fear in that moment, so I barrelled on towards it. But this was a good thing, dear listener, because little did I know I was about to make the best discovery ever. As I got closer to the shiny thing, I started to see that this was some sort of box with all kinds of knobs and buttons and a great big stick reaching out of the box and up into the sky. And from inside the box are all sorts of sounds, noises, words, stories. The all-consuming silence of my isolated state with cut through. A world beyond myself. I scaled the magic metal box that I would soon know as the radio. The voices in the radio didn't necessarily talk back but they talked to me. And for now, that was enough. It

had to be. I built a home around the noise. For days I sat and soaked up the waves of sound and the stories people would tell. They said all kinds of things and wanted so much. Their stories made the overwhelming and noisy world seems so lovely, so rife with possibility. A place I might like to be? One of the many voices I heard was January Rogers, as Annette Spencer, Elder P.I.. Here she is.

January Rogers - Anette Spencer, Elder P.I.

So here I happen to be. I'm doing a stakeout. My name is Anette Spencer, Elder P.I.. I come from Eglinton First Nations. And you can hire me to investigate anything that you like. Even if there's no mystery to solve, I'll go check it out. Just let me know where to go. Right now I'm checking out the dance studio of the one and only Edna Ferris, who lives down the road from me. And she likes to teach all the little girlies their little dance steps. And in the springtime, they do their little dance recital. It's oh so cute. Heck, even my own grandkids went to go study at Edna Ferris's dance studio. And modelling agency. And travel agency. And bakery on Tuesday afternoons. I support the local businesses. Oh yes, I do. But on this day, I haven't necessarily been asked. But I haven't necessarily not been asked to do this stakeout. And to find out exactly what Edna Ferris does on her time off when she's not activating that dance studio with her little choreography. On this day, I'm happy to hang out in front of her house. I went and borrowed my daughter-in-law's minivan. Because I didn't want Edna to recognize my own car. So she may be thinking that it's my daughter-in-law who's checking out her house. And that's fine with me. I got nothing else to do anyway. Edna Ferris has been said to be frequenting the gentleman who lives across the road from her, and who, I have to say, is an ex-partner of mine. I mean, you know, yeah, we had it going on hot and heavy there back in the day. But when I left him alone, he left me alone. And that was that, and that's how it should be done. None of this back and forth fancy dancing that you young kids do today. Never mind. If you're done, you're done. Let it go. There's lots of corn in

the field. Anyway, back to Edna. I'm checking it out because rumour has it that she's been checking it out with my ex-boyfriend. So let's just see if that's true. I mean, there's really nothing at stake here. I just want to know who she's bumping boots with. You know what I mean? I've been gnawing on this bagel sandwich for about two hours now. It's disgusting. But I got the munchies. Anyways, I can see from my vantage point in Edna Ferris's parking lot that she got her living room lights on. Now, that means she's not teaching dance right now. Because she's in her living room. And I'm looking through her drapes, which she only has halfway closed. And I don't know if that's a signal for her boyfriend to come over and visit or what. But, makes it easier for me to see what's going on inside. Well, let me tell you a little background on Edna Ferris. This is my research, telling me what's going on here. Edna Ferris grew up on her parents' farm. They had chickens. They had cattle. They had a turkey or two. And one of her roosters I remember they called him Rod Stewart. And I said Edna, how come you call your rooster Rod Stewart? And she said because he got such a fluffy hair, and because he's a big old asshole. And I said, Oh, that makes a lot of sense. And I said, What are your other chickens' names? And she said, one of them is named Cher. And the other one is named Britney Spears. And I said, How come you called the chickens Cher and Britney Spears? And she said, Just because I like those gals, their clickety-click-click. I think they're cool. So I replied, Edna, are you aware that Cher is said to be a fake Indian? Did you know that? And she replied with a great big gasp, I did not know that. That's not cool. I said, That's right. Everybody thinks she's Indian, but she's supposed to be Iranian, Arabian, lesbian, something like that. I don't know. But she not Indian. So you know, we can't claim her and all her talents and billions and billions of dollars. Although she should come visit the community, you know what I'm saying? Anyways, back in our high school days, Edna Ferris and me, we was tight. We was best friends. Yes, we were. And I remember I would often visit her farm and, you know, we gals we just couldn't sit around her mama wouldn't allow that, no, oh no. She put us to work. She'd set us up under the shade of the awning of her back porch. And she'd get us shuckin peas and husking corn, getting ready for the the evening meal. And there would be Edna Ferris and I singing the songs of her favorite entertainers. Gypsies, tramps and thieves, the people of the town oh they call us—or however those

lyrics go. Now we'd switch it over to a Britney Spears song. Oh, I'm toxic. Yes, I'm toxic, toxic, toxic. However that song goes too, never one for remembering lyrics real good like that. Anyways. Anyways, we would just be helping, being real helpful and hanging out and sharing our secrets all together. I can't remember how many secrets I'm keeping for dear old Edna right now. But I'll tell you, if I get something on her, I keep this secret for her too. And if she's bumping boots with my ex-boyfriend, well good for her. Anyways. I've been checking out the tire tracks here in her driveway. She may be thinking who's that out there in my driveway. She can see little silhouettes of me going up and down the driveway with my head bent down to the ground. And all I'm doing is looking at those tire tracks. Now they could be my own tire tracks. I'm not really sure, I'm not that good at this investigation. I didn't say I was. But anyways, this is how it goes sometimes. You got to follow the signs, as my grandmama always used to tell me. And so that's what I'm trying to do right here right now. How fresh are these tracks I'm asking myself. Who drives a vehicle that has tire prints like this, which means I'm going to have to go across the road to check out what boyfriend is driving these days to see if his tire tracks match. So let me just go ahead and do that right now, because I'm tired of sitting on my behind which is feeling about as flat as the Earth as they say it is right now. So let me get out of this car. Got to put on my jacket. It's chilly tonight. And walk on over to ex-boyfriend's house. See what he's driving. And if those tire tracks match, then I think we got ourselves a little investigative excitement going on here. Although hold on. He wouldn't necessarily be driving his car across the street to good old Edna's house just for a little bump and grind. He'd probably be strolling right on over, pretend like he's going over there to grab some sugar from his friendly neighbour. And which of course he would be. That's some friendly cup of sugar he gonna be getting from Edna's house. Anyways. Maybe I'll just stay in the car and turn on the radio, see what's playing on my favourite station. Maybe it's bingo night. Ah, there we go, that's a nice track. This beautiful music gonna keep me some nice company while I get all up in Edna Ferris's buisness. Aw, yeah. That's some good blues right there. You know, they say the blues music really does come from the Haudenosaunee people, did you know that? It's a fact. I wouldn't be saying no untruths here. When you think about it, black music, native music came together way back in the day on the east

coast. And when you listen to that blues beat, that shuffle, that bumpy, shuffle beat. Ba-doom, ba-doom. Ba-doom, ba-doom. Ba-doom, ba-doom. It's the same music as our Haudenosaunee social dance songs. Did you know that? It's true. I wouldn't be saying it if it weren't true. Anyway, you go ahead and you check it out yourself. You tell me, Anette Spencer, if I'm saying something that's not true. Anyways. Back to Edna. I mean, she's a sweet woman and everything like that. She, ain't nothing wrong with her, really, you know. She dyes her hair jet black trying to hide all the grey hairs, and that's fine, I don't judge her or fault her for that. And yeah, maybe she had a little bit of work done on her wrinkles, and that's fine, I don't judge her for that. And maybe yeah, maybe she tries to bump up her behind with one of those padded underwear things and that's fine, I don't judge her for that. Because God knows that Indians got flat bumps. And that's just the way Creator made us. If she wants to go ahead and enhance that, then you know, you go girl. More power to your behind. That's what I say. So, Edna never had no children, though. So I'm wondering, how come she always is teaching children? What does she know about children that she can go ahead and teach this dance class to them? Maybe she'll try to make children with my ex-boyfriend? Well, good for her. They will make cute little Indian babies. Yes, they would. But he already got a family. And this is where in lies the problem. If he's borrowing a cup of sugar, quote unquote, from Edna, then he is doing wrong by his wife and his family. And goddammit, I'll be the one to let her know if that's the case. Because I'm Anette Spencer, Elder P.I. And I got to know all the information. Even if there's no mystery to solve, I'll get up in there. I'll make up some information, heck yeah. I'm not above that. That's part of the service I provide as an unofficial amateur private investigator. Shoot. Storytelling, it all comes down to storytelling. I'll tell you a story, heck yeah, sit down. So my ex-boyfriend who is borrowing cups of sugar from across the way on a daily basis, let me just tell you that much. His name is Bradley. Bradley and I had such fun together. We would always go to the drive-in movies. Heck, we didn't care what was playing because we wouldn't be watching it anyway, you know what I'm saying. Bradley had a nice package. Oh, yeah. I remember that much. And I remember the smell inside his car. It smelled like Old Spice cologne. Ooo, wee. Aphrodisiac for me. As soon as I got a whiff inside his car, I was revving to go, oh yeah. But we made it

to the movies, and we would always make love inside his car. And then he'd drive me back home and say good night, just like a gentleman. After we've been ripping each other's clothes off inside his vehicle. I'm sure I left my ass prints all over the backseat. And he called his car Marvin. And I'd say, Bradley, how come you call your car Marvin. And he said Anette, I call my car Marvin after Marvin Gaye, the best panty-remover singer there ever was to date. That's what Marvin is to me. And I said, I said, Bradley, that makes a lot of sense. Because that's exactly what happened inside that car. Maybe not just with me, maybe with a lot of other gals from our reservation. And that's okay with me. Do you. I'm gonna do me. And we all do each other. Oh, yeah. All my relations, as they say. Anyways, back to Bradley. He may not be happy with his wife. He may just have antsy rantsy pantsy pants, who the heck knows? Anyway, I'm pretty sure he finds it pretty convenient. Having Edna right across the road from him. But you got to make it consensual, buddy. You got to let your wife know if you've got antsy rantsy pantsy pants, and let her know you're going to be going out and getting you some, so that she can go out and get her some, because that's a way it's got to be. Fair's fair. Am I right? I know I'm right. I'm Anette Spencer, Elder P.I.. So don't be sneaking around. I'm going to find out. And if I don't find out, like I said, I'm gonna make it up. I follow the rumours. I follow my nose. And I know that my nose can always once in a while have a little nose memory of that Old Spice cologne. And to me, that's a good smell memory. What's your good smell memory? Let me know. Dial into the station. And let us know. And I'll catch you up on if I find anything else that supports the rumours of Bradley and Edna bumping boots. But in the meantime, you can just go ahead and assume that that's what's going on. Because that's how we substantiate information here on the reservation, don't you know. Happy, happy spring. Be safe. Wrap it up good. Be nice to one another, and make sure you get the okay before you slap it up, and smack it up. Bye for now.

HOST:

My mind had been abuzz with voices from all over. The warmth of these voices, near to my heart, helping it beat, or whatever. And then all of a sudden, silence again. I kept waiting for a voice. A sound,

a noise. Anything. And I waited. And waited. I started to hear the world again, all the things that could eat me. And the absence of who I have known. Now, it's, it's just me. Just Leslie. So I spiralled for a bit. But then I started talking to myself, talking in the hopes that someone, anyone will hear. So, welcome to my certainly very real radio show, dear friends. Are you listening? Because, you know, sometimes things fall apart, sometimes we fall apart, and we need each other out there. Solitude is all good and fine in the world. But us beings have the other beings we need to come back to, you know, after the solitude. You, you come home. To need each other is a good thing, a great thing, a beautiful thing. I just don't think we realize how much we need each other until, well, you're alone. Truly alone. Maybe we can be alone together. Here's Liza Paul and Colin Doyle with "FriendShit." Let's commiserate, shall we?

Liza Paul & Colin Doyle - FriendShit

- Hi, I'm Liza Paul.

- Hi there, I'm Colin Doyle.

- And this is *FriendShit*. We are a couple of people who have lived through experiences of losing friends for reasons we're not really sure about. And we decided that we wanted to make a thing about it.

- We don't know why and what happened, and so, here we are on the friend ship sorting through our friend shit. All aboard. Get, get in the emotional waters of not only us, but some invited guests as well.

- Yeah, and we're not experts. We're not here to offer a tidy resolution, we're not going to be able to tell you how to solve all your friendship problems. But we are interested in investigating how these things happen. Figuring out ways to let the hurt go. And figuring out a bunch of different perspectives from a bunch of different people about this very subject.

- Perfectly said, Liza. And you know, I'm an actor, so as an actor, I don't know a lot about a lot of things. But I can definitely tell you how I feel about it.

- Very good. That's exactly the kind of energy we need in this moment. To figure out this journey. To be on this journey, nevermind figure it out. We're just on the journey.

- Yep. All aboard. I say.

- All aboard. Aye aye. Am I mixing metaphors?

- No, no, I mentioned the friend ship. And we're on the friend ship, as we're going through friendship. I think it works perfectly.

- Yeah, me too.

- It would only be weird if I said hoot hoot, like a train. And that would be, but, we're on a boat, anyway.

- That's good. It's good. It's good that you didn't do that.

- No, certainly.

- So we're gonna start with the perspective of a small person, a young person, a person who's just at the beginning of her friendship life. Yeah, that's where we're gonna start.

- Your best friends. Why do you think that they're your best friends?

- Well, mostly why I think they're my best friends is because I've known them for a long time.

- Yeah.

- And I know a lot about them and that makes them my best friends.

- Oh, yeah. And do they know a lot about you too?

- Yeah, I tell them a lot of things that happen sometimes.

- Yeah? Like, you tell them about what happened in your day, or stuff like that?

- Yeah, I tell them things like that.

- And are you nice to your friends?

- Ah, yeah. I'm nice to a lot of my friends.

- Yeah? And are your friends nice back to you?

- Yeah.

- And have you ever had a fight with any of your friends?

- Well, other friends have fights with me sometimes.

- Oh.

- But I never start the fights.

- No, I'm like that too. At least I think I'm like that. I had, it's so wild even to say it still, had. I had a very dear friend, a friend that I called my best friend for almost 20 years. And if we had made it to 20, it would have been more than half my life that we'd been best friends. And something had shifted. I am not sure what it was. I feel like I may never really know what it was. Because even when I asked her, and I thought that we were on our way to a resolution, it didn't seem like the things we had addressed had been resolved. Which just made me wonder if the things that she told me were the problem were ever really the problem to begin with.

- So I have I think I have things around letting stuff go. I'm not good at it. That's for sure. And even worse when it comes to people being such a, I am a people pleaser. I'm terrible at breakups, like terrible. So when it became this, this friend breakup, also terrible.

- We interrupt this broadcast to bring you breaking news of a missing flavour. The beloved trio of chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry, or as you know them, Neapolitan ice cream. Strawberry has gone missing. We're going live to the carton where Vanilla and Chocolate have been left behind.

- Okay, okay, thank you, settle, settle people. Uh, settle. We called this press conference to, to shine a light, to declare that Strawberry, Strawberry ice cream of Neapolitan, has gone missing. We don't know where, we don't know why, we just, we just, we are left aghast. We don't know why she would leave us.

- Well, she was always the last one to get scooped out of the box.

- Okay, now come on chocolate. This is no time to get soft. Stay with me.

- I can't help it. Chocolate always melts before every other flavour. That's just a known fact.

- That's just a rumour stated for the tabloids. Listen, folks. We, you, the media need to help us. We are a threesome. It's always been Chocolate, Vanilla. The other one.

- Her name is Strawberry. And we miss her. Strawberry, please come home.

- Trying to be grown ups.

- Well, sometimes I need adults' help to do things.

- Yeah. Me too, Ella. Sometimes I need adults' help to do a lot of things.

- But I thought you are an adult.

- I am an adult.

- So you can just help, yourself can help you.

- Yeah, well, you know, sometimes it's not like that. The same way you have friends and you need help from them? That's true for adults too.

- It is?

- It sure is. Nobody really does everything all alone.

- Yeah, I guess that would be kinda sad if you were all alone.

- We are the kind of adults who need help from other adults.

- Definitely we were, we met each other and thought, hey, you're an adult, I'm an adult, can we help each other with our adult break ups? And we realized, no, we needed to find another adult. So we went to my friend Ray Ellen, who I've known for a very long time, and she was just coming off of a 35-year best-friendship that she was deciding to step away from. So we went on an exploration of best friend breakups through Ray Ellen's experience, and she was very, very generous to share it with us.

- We met each other at a very young age, we started to become friends probably around the age of 17. And, two young women who came out of similar families of origin, where there was dysfunction and intergenerational trauma. And meeting one another as teenagers, two unprocessed kids, basically, us being able to turn to one another at that time, and just to even be able to speak about some of what our experiences were growing up, that was very healing for her and I for a long time, for a really long time. I am hard-wired to stay in co-dependent relationships. It is in my nervous system, to stay connected. And be the, uh, the sounding board, the sort of emotional dumping pad, like I've done it since I was a child. I am no longer willing to betray myself in order to stay in relationship with another human being. Not if what the demand of the relationship is, is that I am out of alignment with my integrity, my body, my spiritual life. My inherent goodness. If being in relationship with X means I've got to give up any part of that, then I'm not going to be in that relationship.

- An exclusive interview with Strawberry ice cream to hear her side of the story, a story that sent shockwaves through freezers all over the world.

- I was never understood. I was cast aside. No one scooped me. Besides, these two, chocolat et vanille, I cannot compete. I am meant to work alone. I am a solo artist. We were together for so long. And everyone says, ah, you will be together forever. But me, I was always left behind. I realize that for me to succeed, for me to really grow as an ice cream, I would need to go out on my own. And so here today, for the first time, I reveal my new name as a solo artist in the ice cream world. They call me, crème glacée aux fraises d'été. I am blooming anew for the first time.

- Time for a question.

- Is there a difference between hanging on and not letting go? It's interesting. It's actually a very, very compelling question. Hanging on to me has a layer of unconsciousness to it. Not letting go has a level of consciousness to it. A client, I can't even remember why we were talking about this, but she was very young, and she was very wise. And she was talking about a friendship that, maybe we were working on a script or, something about friends? Or, I don't know. But she said that her father had said to her something like, if you want to work at the friendship, and you feel like there's more juice in the friendship, go to the lengths of the earth. To work it through, to talk it out, to have all of those big conversations. But he also said to her, but if you feel like the friendship or the relationship is at the end of the road, you don't have to give it that same level of energy. If it's done, it is done.

- The thing that strikes me about this, and again, it's super personal and more a commentary on where I'm at than actually what Ray Ellen is saying, but my God does it hurt my heart to imagine that this person that I loved so much, didn't feel like this friendship was worth the effort. You know, if you are, if you're setting up this scenario, where either it's worth the trouble, or it isn't, I would never have imagined that it wasn't, you know? There's no piece of me that would ever have described this thing that we had as not worth the effort, not worth the trouble, and not juicy enough to keep trying to go at it, you know? And I, it's funny, because on its surface, that's certainly what it looks like in terms of what happened with me and my friend. Like, it looks like she just didn't give a shit anymore and walked away

from it. But I still don't believe that, which makes me wonder when I think about this holding on versus not letting go like, is that also partly what's at the root of all that? You know, that I'm like, yes, yes, yes, like, I know all evidence points in this direction, but I still just don't believe it.

- Ghosting through the ages. Contrary to popular belief, ghosting is a practice that has endured throughout millennia, and is not exclusively relegated to the category of romantic relationships. It also extends to the world of friendship, as demonstrated throughout the years. For the cave man!

- [*Grunting*]

- In medieval times.

- Oh! I dispatched my parchment to Robert over a fortnight ago and I haven't heard anything back.

- You mean from your boyfriend Robert?

- No! From my friend Robert. Not all parchments are romantic. Ugh. Fucking Robert.

- The Dark Ages.

- It's so dark in here. Is anybody here?

- The 1960s.

- Hey, man. I was your friend, man.

- She's gone, man.

- Oh, that's a bummer, man. Bummer.

- The 1980s.

- Hello?

- Hi, is Robert there please?

- ... No?

- Really, because it sounded a lot like Robert answered the phone. Fucking Robert.

- And now.

- Aw, man. I got ghosted.

- A duppy shadope you mean.

- Ghosting! It's not just for the romanticals.

- No relationship is permanent. We think they are, but they are not. And that's painful, too.
- So this idea that Ray put forward, I, it seems simple enough, and at the same time, I was like, oh, I don't know if I agree, per se. Because when I get into a relationship, I never do so thinking that it has an end, or that it's not permanent. And a lot of my childhood I spent moving, from New York and to California, to Toronto, to Scarborough, and saying goodbye with that, in that way was always really, really hard too. Always. So, so yeah, am I, maybe I'm misunderstanding what she's saying. But I always go into a relationship thinking that it is going to be for a long time, i.e. maybe arguably permanent?
- Well. I don't think that that is a misunderstanding of this statement. I think that that's optimistic and beautiful. Like, what kind of sociopath gets into things waiting for them to end? Like that, I don't think, is the point either. But I think that it's fair to say that whether you are deeply in love with someone, or like have a strong familial bond with someone, it's going to end, you know, our time on earth is finite. And I think that, you know, we could argue about whether or not Ray Ellen is talking about like, that reality, or the likely reality that your friendships might not be forever. But, even though the subject of this show has a lot to do with like the end of a friendship, I also have many friendships that have not ended. So I get that feeling of like, wait, but that's not true. Like my friendship could be permanent. I think, yeah, your friendship can last as long as you're alive. But that doesn't mean that it's not going to end.
- I get you. Thank you.
- We've been following the story of the breakup between flavours in Neapolitan ice cream. Tragic ending? New beginning? Where are they now?
- We are so sorry you couldn't hear directly from our stars, Strawberry, Chocolate and Vanilla. Strawberry's career has just launched into the stratosphere. She is the face of campaigns for Prada, for Gucci, for Valentino, for Dolce and Gabbana, and she is just on fire, hashtag trending. And, our focus groups showed, nobody really liked Neapolitan anyway.
- Hehe, laughing laughing laughing laughing.
- Okay, so Chocolate and Vanilla. Their careers, you know, they were doing a lot. Started their lives in the twist cone. Twist, twist, twist, right from the truck.

- The truck? Ew! They only use cash!

- Who even uses cash? And so we started to think. Chocolate, Vanilla, Chocolate, Vanilla, the OG flavours.

- The OGs? They're just together now. The OGs, Strawberry's gone. OGs, can they get even better? OGs, I think they can. Tiffany, how can they get better?

- Let me tell you, Michael. We are going to take that Chocolate and that Vanilla, and we are going to put them in a tub.

- In a tub. Really. Tiffany, people bathe in a tub, Jesus! It's a twist in a box. A twist on a twist on a twist.

- It's a twist in a box!

- Oooh. It's a twist in a box, girl. And it's ready for your mouth. At home, in the freezer, in a box.

- Deep breath.

- This is a wild story.

- Is it?

- I'm curious. I know that you're the interviewer, but why is it wild to you?

- It's wild to me because, uh, it feels so brave.

- Mm.

- I think that's why it feels wild to me. Not because it's unbelievable, or how could anyone do such a thing. Like, I can see exactly how someone could do such a thing. But I would say that I have seen much more often how a person doesn't do such a thing. And maybe should.

- Yeah, that, this has been wild. And it's, and I was so grateful to Ray Ellen for sharing her story, and I know that there's so many stories that I hope we get to kind of continue to explore and talk with other people about, because I think we could. And to your point, I am hoping that we would, and, because I think we should.

- Yeah. Ray Ellen, what a gem. Thank you for sharing all that with us. And yeah, I think you're right Colin, I think there are lots of other wild stories like this. Sad ones, but you know, it helps to talk about it. And I, you know, we already identified that we're not therapists, we're just a couple of people, grown

people, looking to talk to other grown people, and some not so grown people, about what it means to be a friend and how friendships fall apart, and. Hey man. It's just the beginning.

- Just the beginning. Thank you to Bahia Watson, and Lucy, and programsound. Outside the March, thank you so much. Ray Ellen, our guest. We want to thank Ella, our guest. Thank you so much, Liza, it's been such a treat being here with you to work on this with you,

- Colin, what a delight. What a delight you are, how many laughs I had.

- You're only saying that because I said it first. But bless you.

- No, I'm saying it because you said it first and that's not my fault. I had to say it at some point, it was either gonna be first or second.

- Fair enough. Fair enough. And we want to say thank you to Andy Trithardt for his engineering and producing of this, and stick around for after this little credit sequence, and there's some more music to come off his upcoming album, which he's going to be releasing quite soon. Thanks so much. Stay safe, and take care of those that you love.

HOST:

So, welcome back. I'm Leslie, the cicada, your host. Fun question. Do you ever feel like there is so much you don't know, to the point where your brain just wants to explode? I suppose it makes sense, though. I've quite literally been living under a rock. Yeah, no, that rock there. Deep, deep down under that rock. Okay, I don't actually know if it was that rock. I just wanted to do the thing where you get to say the cliché, it's a cliché for a reason, because some things do actually live under rocks. But I don't know if I lived under that rock. I guess I did. Kind of? But if you veer just to the right of that rock, to that tree? I definitely lived under that tree. It's big and beautiful on this side of the earth. All leafy and green with its bubbly green leaves. But that's not even all of it. I grew up deep under that tree amongst the roots that hold it to the ground. 17 years, raised by roots, sap, and darkness. All my brood, my neighbours, my old community. They spent so much time talking about leaving. Like they were really excited. That was the thing, you know? You're down there 17 years, you're excited to get out. And I

couldn't quite find it in me to relate. I mean, I pretended, aw yeah, it sucks down here, I've so totally outgrown it. So many of my friends were so tired of home, and so excited to move on to the next one. I feel like everyone expected me to also think that it sucked. I mean, I sucked, the roots. Literally. And that was great. It was breakfast. It was lunch. It was dinner. And it never got boring. It never got boring to me. Living there. It was, I was happy. More importantly, I was safe. Yeah, it turns out I don't get bored. I just get overwhelmed. Oh, but what about the sun and other friends you can make up here? Sure. I don't know. I mean, I had me. A clear sense of me. Or at least I thought I did. I had a routine. I was held by the earth, the soil. And some days the sun is overrated. I mean, it's great and all, but I don't know. I liked it down there. I was born in the sun. Yeah, that was great. I bathed in the light for a brief moment, and then almost immediately was moved underground. And I was kicking and screaming then, but I knew I had to go, and then I got really comfortable. And now everything is so new. And fast and hard and bright and well. Well, it's different. And it's a lot. It's fast in a way that hurts my tiny brain. And as I sit on my metallic perch that overlooks a sea of green, with no others of my kind in sight. I feel the weight of distance. The reach. I feel how big this world is and how small I am in it. And I miss my friends. As I've been missing home, there's a bit I've been replaying in my head that I heard from the radio box a day or two ago. Here's two friends, Emerjade and Fatima Elie as they talk about their friendship from faraway places.

Emerjade Simms - It's Only an Ocean

- Hi, my name is Emerjade. The time here in Toronto is 10:28.
- Hi, my name is Fatima, um, the time right now in Beirut is 5:28 PM.
- I have not been outside today, but my device tells me that it's 17 and mainly sunny outside.
- Well in Beirut it is 24 with a few clouds. But it's very sunny, let me tell you that.

- Cool, glad one of us has left our house today. Ah, hello, listeners. If you didn't hear, again, my name is Emerjade. And Fatima is my best friend.

- And Emerjade's my best friend.

- Glad you feel the same way. So I guess we can just get started. So I'm going to refer to my friend as Tima, but that's not something that you will do because you don't have a relationship like that.

Boundaries.

- Exactly.

- So, Tima. What does your ideal day look like?

- Oof. My ideal day, since moving to Lebanon you mean?

- Yes.

- Okay, well. My ideal day would be walking around, taking pictures, meeting new people, sitting in a cafe. But more recently, I started working in real estate, which is very weird and strange for me. So, meeting new people about apartments and stuff like that and commercial spaces. So yeah, how about you? What's it been like?

- Missing you? Oh no, the feels. I guess my ideal day looks like waking up, showering. Then like working on my craft in whatever way it shows up that day. That could look like an audition, that could look like planning a workshop, that could look like simply freaking out. It can look like a lot of things.

- Relatable.

- But like, the freakout isn't always bad. But you know, sometimes it just happens. And I don't mind because that's the life I've crafted for myself. Um, I guess we need to backtrack and tell everyone why you and I are doing this, and why you and I are best friends.

- True. They should know something, at least.

- A little bit. It's like, who are these two people? Why do we care?

- Mood.

- First of all, mood. Um, do you want to tell them?

- Yeah, what year did we meet though? Just so—

- I think it would have been 2017?

- Yes. Because I started working there. April 2017. Correct. In a restaurant in Toronto.

- Yes.

- On College Street.

- It sure is.

- Yup. Yeah, I remember you not only because now we're besties. But I struggled so hard to try and remember your name because it's two names and one name. Like, Emerjade.

- Yeah.

- And then you broke it down. And I was like, oh, there you go.

- Did I do the ring and necklace breakdown?

- Yes. You did the ring and necklace breakdown.

- Of course I did.

- Yup.

- It's a classic.

- Exactly.

- So for visuals, I wear an emerald ring and a jade necklace. And those are the two halves of my first name. And anytime people are struggling to put them together, or remember, I'll give them a visual aid. So I'm glad it worked.

- Let me also just put in context that I'm trying to remember her name while working the line during a rush hour. It's not like I can't remember her name, like, and I was still new at the job. So I'm like trying to be a perfectionist artist in my food. So.

- Yeah.

- It's not my fault was struggling.

- And like I'm always talking to you and you still have no idea what my name is. I'm like forever picking up food from you saying hi, thanks, and then running off.

- Exactly.

- And then I remember you because you wore cherry red Docs for those first few weeks as your shoe, and I was like I have those, and that was kinda like my in of talking to you, of like I like your Doc Martens, I have the same ones.

- That's a good segue. Not good for working in a restaurant on your feet for 12 hours, let me just tell you that.

- Good to know.

- Yeah, don't do it.

- I, yeah. I don't think I, I don't think I'd survive working in Docs for at least eight hours.

- I learned the hard way.

- Yeah. You said good segue. What are you segueing to?

- Oh. What am I segueing to? Actually well like, I had a few questions, you know? Like, I know you but like, do I know you know, you know?

- I don't know. Do you know me know me?

- Okay. Well, this is what I wanted to ask you. Is this your first long-distance friendship?

- Wow, great question. Um, I want to say, no, it's definitely not my first long-distance friendship. But it's the first long-distance friendship that I feel has stayed intact, because we had established how good of friends we were before you had gone. My last, like long-distance friendships were like, my significant ones, feel like they were from high school? And, like, when we went away to university, that's when our friendships became long distance. But like, I'm gonna take a sip of water. I'm very dry.

- I feel like at that point you're not really even established as a person or an adult, so you're just growing into this thing. And we've established who we are, to a certain degree, obviously, we're always still growing, but I know who I am. And how to be as good of a friend as I want to and can be to you, so.

- Exactly.

- We know each other's love languages and have that awareness. So I feel like it's not. It's easier for us.

- Yeah. And, you know, when you graduate high school, you realize that you, you do grow up, but like, in very, it very often happens that you grow apart, because you're finding yourself as a human. And a lot of my relationships from then are not intact right now. Because I didn't know who I was, and what I wanted, and how, how I wanted to be treated, and what my needs were in those relationships. So they just kind of fizzled or ended dramatically or just ended period. And it's okay, and I know that's part of growth, but sometimes that makes me sad. So that's funny you should ask. It's something I think about, actually, a lot a lot. Because I didn't really have a lot of good, solid, deep, connected friendships throughout my childhood and throughout high school. So like being an adult and finding my way with trying to make friends has been a thing. It's been a whole thing.

- Yeah. Wow.

- Whew. We're getting deep.

- Ye haw.

- We're just along for the ride. Um, so for those who don't know you, you are a photographer.

- Mhmm, I am. I'm an analog photographer. So I was born in Canada, and lived in Lebanon as a kid for three years, and then moved back to Canada. And then around seven years ago, I moved to Toronto by myself to go to school. But it wasn't really ever about going to school, it was just about moving out of my house. And in my head, there was this like dramatic way of moving out. Where it's like, you either have to get married to move out, or go to school, because I grew up in a Muslim-Arab household. So it felt so dramatic. But now looking back, I'm sure I could have just talked to my mom and been like, I'm moving out, and left, because I was 23 at the time. So I did that whole dramatic thing. And then, yeah, I've been taking photos since I was 14 with film cameras, but I only started calling myself a photographer in 2020 when someone we used to work with called me that first, actually.

- Oh, yeah.

- Yeah. I never called myself an artist or photographer.

- Without naming names. Can you just like mouth who that person was? Oh, wait. No, shhh. I heard, I heard. No. Okay, cool.

- It's fine. You can name names, it isn't embarrassing or weird actually. I'm actually really grateful for that, that he called me that.

- Yeah. And I'm glad that you took it seriously because then when, like, I found out, I was like, oh, you take photos? So you're a photographer?

- Yeah, no, I just, I don't know. I don't know if it's like imposter syndrome, or of it's the fact that like, or it could be that, or if it's the fact that I'm from a, I'm diaspora? Who just like, comes from a diaspora household who never supported the arts? Because you know, the arts doesn't really make you money, and that's what everything's about, even though I still don't care about my photography making me money. It's not about that at the end of the day. It's how I express myself. You know?

- Totally.

- So you said 14?

- 14.

- What was your first camera?

- My first camera was a camera I bought at Value Village in Ottawa. It was like a Vivitar XV-1. And I only stopped using it in 2018 when something fell off of it and the lens got sticky. But other than that, it was the camera I was always using. And then I started just buying cameras anytime I saw them. So I have like, the randomest cameras that you can't even use, that you can't even buy film for. For example, there's a Polaroid iZone that I have. I could buy film, but it's expired and most likely won't work. There's the Kodak 110, which was like a pocket camera that was invented for house, it was like, it's like the perfect pocket camera. So it's for traveling. But the thing is, when you go to get them scanned, it's \$3 a scan for a photo, and it's 27 photos.

- Right? That adds up very quickly.

- That's a rip off. That's \$81 just for digital scans of your pictures, of, yeah, so it's not worth it. But mostly I shoot, sorry, 35 millimetre on my Canon FTB. And then I like to use other mediums like Instax. My friends, and I don't know, I don't remember if you're one of the friends that make fun of me for how

many cameras I carry around? But I typically carry around like four, three to four cameras. Yeah. So like a SLR, a point and shoot, and then an instant camera. And then plus my phone.

- Yeah. I feel like I wasn't one of the people who made fun of you. I feel like I just pointed out, I was like, oh yeah, you have a few cameras with you. Nice. I would never make fun of you.

- Yeah, my back and scoliosis do not appreciate that of me. But I appreciate that of me for my—

- Why? Because you're carrying the whole photography world on your back?

- Exactly.

- You said it, not me.

- Okay, since we talked about like the amount of cameras you usually carry around, I actually have always wanted to ask you this. Can you name all of your cameras?

- Off by heart?

- Yeah. Like do you even know how many you have right now?

- Okay, well, first of all, I did not bring all of them with me to Lebanon from Canada. There's like, at least 10 at my mom's house. Sorry, mom.

- Shout out to Nads.

- Yo, shout out Nads. I can't name them all. I could, I'm sure I can name like 10 of them. We don't need to do that.

- Okay, that's a no. We'll do it, we'll do it off camera.

- My friend is sending me one that I had gifted her and she hadn't used and I had put a roll of film in it three years ago. So she's sending it back to me because I'm actually going to use it.

- Okay, cool. With the film in it?

- Yeah. If I gift you a camera, that's a big deal.

- It is.

- And it's a Nikon.

- Okay.

- It's not some like, random point and shoot.

- Dang. And so the film has just been sitting in it for three years. That's disappointing.

- I think it's like Portra 400. So that's not a cheap roll either, you know what I'm saying?

- Not, it's not.

- It's not uh, Kodak Gold. Kodak Gold's great, immaculate. But not portrait prices. Okay. Emerjade.

- Yes. That is my name.

- I'm realizing it took me, it took someone else to call me an artist and a photographer. Did you always feel like you were an artist? Or did someone tell you you were an artist.

- Oh wow. Throwback to little baby me. I think in my heart, I always knew I was an artist somehow. But I didn't know how to express it all the time. I think I started calling myself an artist when I was in Etobicoke School of the Arts, which is where I graduated from in Toronto, for high school. But I think I had known I was an artist for real, and that like I would never be able to step away from creation when I was, I want to say, I was 10 or 11? And that started with music. People don't usually know this about me, but I started in music. I played piano and cello for a few years. And then when I realized that I couldn't keep up with music lessons, because I was so tired from my regular school, I had to drop music, and then really focus on drama. But I don't always look at that as a negative. I see it as a positive because it made a path for me to get serious about the craft that I do now. But I'll very often think, oh yeah, I really miss playing the cello. I really miss just being around stringed instruments. I miss being around instruments in general. But I know that, like I don't think, I don't think I am curious enough about that path to go back. So I let it go very openly and healthily and happily, knowing that we had a good time together.

- That's.

- Yeah. I feel, I feel fulfilled. Oh, damn. Okay, here we go, I'm saying it for real. I feel fulfilled in my purpose. So my path is clear.

- Wow. You know, I only felt like that once I moved here, to Lebanon, a year and a half ago, uh, a year and a few months ago.

- Yeah. I remember us talking about why you wanted to leave. But I know not everyone knows why that is. It's like a little bit negative, but it's also very positive.

- I want you to tell me what I said, because now I forget. I know why, but I'm like.

- You, when we had talked and you said I think I'm leaving. You said I find no inspiration here. And I'm not happy.

- That is true.

- And as soon as you said that as like, oh, she gone. There's nothing anyone can say to bring you back here.

- Literally. I, maybe I should explain the progression of how I moved here, actually. I don't think I just did.

- Please.

- Yes. So it was like, 2021. It was like April 2021 and my mom was like, hey, Fatimah, I'm going to Lebanon for a whole month in October. You want to come with me? And I'm like, what am I going to do in Lebanon for a whole month? And then I was like, okay, maybe I'll work on my first project ever. And then I'm like, okay, cool. I don't have the funds for that. So then, Emerjade, my bestie, helped me with crowdfunding. And we, I think I fundraised like 4000 Canadian, which was immaculate, it got me everything I needed. And people donated things like suitcases, you gave me a tripod, like everyone helped however they could, whether it was sharing it on Instagram, helping me get on a podcast, or giving me money or whatever. So then when I came here, I realized that every time I come here it's like, I have this like cloak of depression. I mean, I'm still a depressed person, but the cloak of depression just like leaves. Like, goes. And I'm just taking way more pictures here. I'm shooting three rolls of film in the month, or even more. Taking thousands of pictures. I'm more stimulated, I'm happier. I don't know if it has to do with the sun and the sea. Or it's like, the fact this is home. But once I got back to Canada, it was like October 31, and we went out, on Halloween, right after I landed off a plane.

- Oh yeah, that was Chloe year.

- Yes. Yes it was. We got A&W, we got dressed. I went as an incognito artist or celebrity or whatever. Very fitting, because I was exhausted. But within like arriving back to Canada, it took me five months to move.
- Yeah.
- Like, I don't think people normally do stuff like that.
- It was a very quick turnaround. I do remember that.
- Yeah. I think I was scared to tell my friends, because you know people think that's a little...
- And people really made it about them, about their feelings.
- Yeah, they really did.
- And I was like, that's an adult.
- Literally that. They were like upset with me. They were happy when I, when I, like, when something wouldn't turn out the way I wanted it to. It was very frustrating. I worked three jobs also at one point. Just so I could save enough. Here we are.
- Do you feel like you are super like, happy?
- Yeah. As happy as I can be. Like, last summer was the best, not to be dramatic, best summer of my life.
- Yay. That makes me—
- And then when I—what? It makes you...?
- It makes me cheese so hard for you.
- Yeah, you know. I get to be by the sea, sand. But, I don't know, hopefully this summer's good, too. But like, when I came back to Canada for two and a half months to visit and work that was so depressing for me. And I don't know if it's also the weather, because it was like September to November.
- Yeah.
- Not a good time.
- And I think, how many shoots did you do? Like three?
- Yeah, but I forced them.

- Yeah.

- I mean, you did one like two days before I left.

- We sure did. Honestly, my mom came into my room, which doesn't normally happen, first and foremost. But she came into my room for a few minutes, and was looking at my wardrobe, which is where I put up a lot of my pictures. And she actually saw two of your Instaxes and was like, I've never seen this before. Is that you? Wow. I was like, Tima took those, both of them. And she was like, wow. And then she left. And so for like, my Jamaican mother, who doesn't say a lot, that was a lot. I was like, okay.

- That's huge.

- Huge.

- That's huge.

- Many compliments. Many, many compliments.

- I don't need any awards. That's good enough.

- Just Faith's approval.

- Exactly. Whenever someone, whenever I show someone pictures I take and they're like, wow, you're really good. I'm like, I don't see it. Does that makes sense?

- Yeah, but then I'm like, I have literally at least minimum two photos on my wall of things that you have created. And I wouldn't put them on my wall just because.

- That is true. That is true. I don't know. I need to let go of whatever this, it's not even impostor syndrome. I'm just a humble person. I guess I'm just a humble person.

- Just so humble.

- Just like, so humble. Humble yourself. Maybe that's what it is.

- Um, this is a great segue into a question that I have. Describe one of your favourite images that you've captured in the last three months.

- Oh.

- So listener, close your eyes. And Tima's going to describe one of their favourite images from the last three months. I'll give you time. In the meantime, I can do music. Let's do Jeopardy.

- Doo, doo, doo, doo, doo, doo—

- Okay, I got it. Okay, so.

- I'm closing my eyes with you.

- So, one second first. On my way back from Canada to Lebanon my favourite camera broke. My SLR, my baby, my Canon FTB. So then I finally got it fixed. Okay? And then recently, I became a tour photographer for a Tunisian artist called Coast. So I went to Dubai with her, and I used flash for the first time ever on my SLR. So my favourite picture is a picture of her in an elevator wearing this like burgundy dress her mom made, because her mom makes dresses. She has this like short haircut, hoop earrings, this like pouty red lip. A crochet bag that I actually brought from Lebanon to Dubai for her as a gift that's made by a Syrian refugee woman here, by Numsa. Yeah, it's. And then there's like her reflection on the side in the mirror. That's my favourite image.

- Mmm. In an elevator.

- In an elevator.

- Cool. I love that.

- But yeah, I haven't been taking much photos because my cameras were like, all of a sudden, everything's breaking on me. I don't know what's happening. Too much evil eye, I think?

- Yeah, and it wasn't during retrograde either.

- Just straight up evil eye, you know?

- Yeah, nah, that's not the jam.

- But if I were to have to pick a favourite picture of you, I don't know, because, I've taken so many.

- Stop making me feel special and stuff.

- Like, that's my favorite, no, that's my favorite, no that's my favourite.

- Oh, I guess I can talk about which one is my favorite?

- Oh, which one's your favorite? That I've taken of you, you mean?

- That is a great question. Because I love so many photos that you take of me. Not just saying that. Not just boosting your ego, not just blowing smoke up your butt. I think one of my favourites is, um, the one that I said, if anybody's son sees this, they're gonna try to get me pregnant.

- Was it the latest shoot we did?

- It was the one before.

- With the red gloves that Misha made?

- Yeah, so the orange fit.

- The orange.

- So, ah, oh gosh, I'm going to do my own challenge. So I'm in a orange lingerie set. I'm an adult, relax. And I guess what we, I guess we were shooting boudoir.

- Mhm.

- So I'm on the ground, I have butterflies around me, my hair is long. And it's taken from like, the top down. So like, I'm on the floor and my head is towards you, and then my legs are away from you. And then, I think I had put my legs into like, a butterfly kind of stretch. Where my knees were just open and my feet were together. But it made my body look sickening. And I was like, oh, I will never, ever look this good again. Damn.

- Damn.

- Yeah. So I think that was one of my favourites. And I think I like had my hands behind my head. And it was just like, very provocative. And I had never seen myself in that way.

- I need to do that more. It gives me confidence also, when, some, because, I also I just want to show more boudoir.

- Yeah, I feel that.

- Yeah.

- You're good at it.

- But I do like the lifestyle stuff and the stuff of just like, the things I see every day that just are, boop, stimulate me. Also, realizing you have a style when it comes to these things, like I only like to shoot vertically, do not, horizontal. I can't do horizontal.

- Oh.

- I struggle, I struggle. I didn't call myself an artist until I just realized oh, because I don't like my images as, horizontally. I'm more vertical now. My prints now that I now sell, all my now print, newer prints are only vertical prints.

- Because I was gonna say, isn't a print on my wall literally in landscape?

- That one, that one is in landscape. But that's different. Is it the flower?

- Yeah, the flower. Okay, good to know. Do you think you will try to challenge yourself to shoot more landscape? Or you're like, I absolutely, positively will not. Because I know that this is what works for me.

- Okay, my favorite picture that I've ever taken is in landscape. And it's that picture of Iman in Baalbek, when me and her visited in 2018. And she's just like sitting there. We're at the temple of Bacchus, which is like the sun temple in Baalbek when the Romans were here, so it's just like. But the way the light is hitting her. I don't think it matters that it's. You know what I mean.

- I knew exactly which photo you were talking about. I love that one.

- It's just the way she's looking at me. I don't think it matters whether it's vertical or not.

- And there's also something really special about photographers capturing the ones that they love.

- Yeah.

- Yeah.

- That is very true.

- Because like you've been staring at your sister for forever. And so then to capture her in that way, like of course you could. No one else could capture it that way.

- Honestly, you and my three sisters are the easiest people to take pictures of. And it doesn't matter that you've done modelling before, because my other three sisters have never. It's just like, maybe it's also the fact that they're comfortable and I'm comfortable.
- It's exactly that.
- But everyone gets comfortable with me too that I take pictures of. Like I build a relationship with them.
- Maybe like further into the session, yeah.
- Yeah, that's true. That's why I, like for example, someone reached out to me to take pictures of, for their engagement.
- That's exciting.
- Because she's an analog photographer, and she can't picture her photos being taken any other way. So I'm gonna meet with her for coffee next week, and then I'm gonna build a relationship first. That's really important for me.
- Yeah. I know that, actually. I did know that. Building relationships is really important to you. Because you want your things to last.
- Exactly that.
- Okay, Chef?
- Oui.
- Yeah, yes, I refer my friend as Chef. It's a whole Chef, what do you want? I have a question about, I have a question about the potato sandwich.
- The potato. Oh, my. Bro. Emerjade?
- So these are my questions, because I thought it was one but it's actually a few. So what's on it? How is it seasoned? What kind of bread? What kind of sauce? How is the potato prepared? And why do you love it so much?
- Okay, batata sandwich. A classic Lebanese sandwich, okay? So, you've got your khubez, aka your pita bread in the Global North. Cool. Deep fried fries. Nothing crazy, just a little salt. Then a really cold coleslaw made with mayonnaise. And then ketchup. And that's it. Okay. That's it. That's literally it. You

go to all your places. So there's, I have a, I'm going to need to do a batata tour, a batata sandwich tour in Beirut, in Lebanon, because I need to find, I know my favorite sandwich. But it's \$3 in comparison to \$1 compared to other places. Because shout out inflation, I hate you inflation. But the other places go and muck around, and they put pickles in the sandwich. And they'll put toum, like the garlic sauce. And I'm like, this is not a chicken shawarma. Do not put pickles or toum, garlic sauce, in my sandwich. I won't appreciate this. So yeah, it needs to be really hot fries, really cold slaw. Ketchup for sweetness.

- Wow.

- That's it.

- So that's what you are craving all the time.

- I had one three times last week. It's my unhealthiest relationship. A lot of red flags there. But listen, sometimes you just keep going back.

- That's what therapy is for, it's fine.

- Yeah, but my batata sandwich is my therapy. You know what though. You know what's a love language? Someone knowing when you need a batata sandwich.

- That's fair.

- Yeah, I started seeing someone and they're like, you look like need a batata sandwich. And I'm like, I do. Thank you. Let's go. Two AM, batata sandwiches, let's go.

- Yes. And that's also relationship building, of like, not you knowing.

- Not you knowing already when I need my batata sandwich, I'm like—

- It's wild.

- Do you think you'd want a batata sandwich?

- Yeah, definitely.

- You need to try, when are you coming here? You need to try it.

- Here's the thing. I don't know.

- See, okay. I'm so grateful, I guess, for the fact that my parents after the war in Lebanon went to Canada. But Canada is so far from Lebanon.

- It is.

- I mean I'm glad they didn't pick Vancouver. My mom's in Ottawa, and you're in Toronto. But that being said, Europe would have been closer to here.

- It sure would have.

- But then maybe we would have not known each other.

- Not at all. That's exactly what, I say this all the time. I'm really thankful for the path that my life took because it brought me to somewhere where I like my life, at least. And I know that none of, anything that I have would have happened if I didn't make the choices that I made in my life. So I have to be like, good and happy with what happened in the past, good and bad, because I'm in my present and I'm good. So.

- That is, oof. Wow.

- Yeah.

- Damn.

- So then it makes me like appreciate all of the struggle that I went through to get to here because, we're solid.

- Well hopefully either I'll fly you out, you fly me out.

- Yeah, we gettin flew out.

- Someone flew us out, I don't know.

- I mean, if you have the funds to make a trip happen, feel free to hit up my DMs, they are open for you. Or my email, if you need to find me I'm sure it won't be that hard. Again, my name is Emerjade. If you want to fly me out to Beirut, I will not say no. Period.

- Thank you. Yeah.

- Because you've already seen here so like, it doesn't get much better.

- Come on. This is it. We're fun. We like to do things.

- Prettier.

- Yeah, we're cool.

- It's not concrete jungle wet dream tomato.

- Here? In Beirut?

- No, here it's concrete jungle wet dream tomato.

- Yeah, yeah, here it's not that. So, come through, please.

- Yo, actually I found a screenshot on my phone of something that I looked at in the past. And I just took another screenshot so I remember to look at it. Okay, this is exactly why I want to come through to Lebanon, because of this inspirational quote picture that I'm going to read out to you.

- Okay.

- Okay. It says: Remember that you are water. Cry, cleanse, flow. Let go. Remember that you are fire. Burn, tame, adapt, ignite. Remember that you are air. Observe, breathe, focus, decide. Remember that you are earth. Ground, give, build, heal. Remember that you are spirit. Connect, listen, know, be still. And usually, sun and ocean and breeze will do everything for me.

- Honestly? Honestly. Truly.

- So like I actually get jealous that you're there very often because, Toronto's not giving ocean.

- Okay, like, sometimes, you know what, I miss Toronto, okay? I start watching "Workin' Moms," I see a streetcar, I'm like, infrastructure. Love a good streetcar, love hopping the streetcar. I'm not paying TTC fares.

- Statute of limitation.

- I will play Party Next Door's "Break from Toronto" like I'm still taking a break from Toronto and it's clearly more than that now. It's more of a divorce. I'll come back eventually to live there, I think, but when I don't know, don't ask me.

- I mean, you don't have to.

- But can I live there, actually, now that I just said that out loud? No, I can't, because I need, I need to be charging from the sun.

- Yeah. Yeah.

- My freckles need to freckle.

- People who come from the sun need to go back to the sun.

- I need my fresh fruit. I'm not a banana and apple girl. Bananas are cool, but apples all the time?

Come on.

- Nah, it's not the vibe.

- I picked a fruit off a tree. I picked loquat off the tree earlier today and just ate it. Fig season is upon us.

Cherry season is upon us. It's fresh almonds season.

- Sorry, fresh what season?

- Almond. Almond.

- You better say it right for these people.

- Almond?

- Nope. Say it the right way.

- Almond?

- Uh huh, we don't pronounce the Ls here, okay?

- Yo, I'm only catching Ls clearly, that why I'm staying here.

- Like, how do you say the fish that is pink on the inside?

- Tuna.

- No, no. The other one. They swim upstream.

- Salmon.

- So how can you say salmon right but you say almond wrong?

- I don't know what to tell you. English is my second language, don't hate on me.

- Wow.

- I'm gonna use that card.

- Wow. I'm unimpressed with you.

- Yo, ESL. ESL.

- I'm dead. Like. I need to come back, that was so rude.

- Me or you? Do I ask you something?

- I gotta regroup. Yes, please.

- Okay, Emerjade. What's something you've always wanted to try out but you haven't had the time to do yet?

- Great question. Like, in general, or like in my career?

- Your career, actually.

- Something that I've always wanted to try but haven't had the courage to yet?

- Yeah.

- I'm, it's something I'm actively working on because, the OAC told me to. But writing a play and, the courage of inviting people into that process to potentially put it onto a stage. Playwriting for me, not for like, you know, the playwrights in general, but like, playwriting is kind of scary. And it's an isolating experience, and you have a lot of self doubt, because you alone are writing it, unless you obviously, like have a dramaturg. But it's intimidating. It's an intimidating process for me. And to think that, like, in a few years that, like, my random idea that I had in the shower could then be seen by a bunch of my peers and my colleagues and people I love is so scary. It's like, it actually shakes me to my core sometimes. And I think a lot of that is why I'm having trouble finishing it. It's an open tab on my computer. But um, I think like, you know, I will get it together and finish it because it has to get done, also. And it will. And it is like my thoughts are, for the most part clear on how the story goes, except for a little bit of the ending. So I just kind of have to do it. But it is, uh. Yeah, it kind of scares me. Because I haven't done it before.

- I feel like that about projects and applying for grants, even though I've now learned that if you do something it either gets rejected or accepted.

- Yeah. And to be like, so connected to your art, because like, you know, it's a part of you, to then be accepted or rejected. It makes you feel a way. Artists are very sensitive because of that.

- But, yeah, it's like, I asked for help for a project that I'm still working on and people helped me. Then recently, I reached out to Fujifilm to get a camera, and they let me borrow a camera. That's like, three or four thousand dollars.

- I'm so happy that worked out.
- I'm still confused, by the way.
- I love it. We have to talk more about that. When we're not recording.
- Someone was like, so you're gonna drop the dinosaur camera? I'm like, are you kidding me? No.
- Who said that?
- Some photographer. That I know. I'm like, no. You're just mad that you don't know how to use this dinosaur.
- Literally.
- I've been using this camera since I was, I've been using film photography since I was 14. I'm 29.
- Oh my god, we turn 30 this year.
- Yeah. Why are we talking about that? No I'm joking. I think aging has probably been the best thing ever. Now that, now, like, I think ever since I got out of a long-term relationship, growing and becoming older has been one of the best things ever.
- I feel that. Because it feels like you're settling into yourself and not so much searching for yourself.
- Yep.
- Yeah. I think that's gonna be a lot of our 30s.
- Yeah. It's making sense now.
- Yeah.
- But like you said, the path you're on is the path that you need to be on to be where you're at now. It's like, okay.
- Yeah, I'll accept this challenge, for sure.
- Yeah.
- And hopefully, I'll accept the challenge gracefully.
- I get actually asked a lot, I don't know if you know this, or if I've talked to you about this before, but every time I tell someone that I moved here from Canada, and then it's, they think it's one of the most ridiculous things they've ever heard in their whole existence and lifetime because everyone's leaving

Lebanon, because of how the economy is. And I respect that. And I understand that. But they should also be able to respect my own decision to move back to a country that's also my country.

- Yeah.

- I didn't choose to be displaced. That was just how life was.

- Okay.

- And I'm grateful for being born in Canada, and the opportunities it has given me in terms of where the passport can take me, 100%. But it's not this like, amazing thing where you have money and blah, blah, blah. That's what everyone here thinks.

- Yeah.

- Everyone here thinks, you moved, you have money. It's like, no, we're struggling. We're struggling over there.

- Yeah. Um, like, what was your childhood like in Lebanon?

- Money wise?

- Or just like, in general? Like, what's like your favorite memory of you as a kid being there?

- Going to my Teatah, who's grandma in Arabic, going to my Teatah's house in Bourj Hammoud every Saturday to eat lunch with my cousins. And I think, so by the way, I have 28 cousins on one side, because my mom has nine siblings. 28 is subtracting my sisters and I. Altogether we're 32. Grandkids.

- Okay.

- It wasn't all 32 grandkids at the table. We're all over the world. There's like my uncle in Australia, one in Germany, one in Canada. My uncle, and my aunt, sorry, in Saudi Arabia. So, but it was like, at least 15 kids running around, eating together at the table on a Saturday. That's my favorite memories.

Of growing up here.

- Sounds like a Jamaican household.

- Yeah.

- Big families.

- I don't know how my grandma, my Teatah cooked all that food.

- They're wizards.
- They do it without a cutting board.
- They are Jesus. They walk on water. They make many meals out of two loaves of bread and some fish. They make magic.
- She's over here doing warak enab. That's like, you know, those little grape leaves.
- Wow.
- How are you rolling enough grape leaves for like, 15 people, more than 15 people. We used to play on the street sometimes.
- Oh my god, playing on the street. Remember that? Ugh.
- But like, we had like, we had a street that was like, small. And we could do that. Like it's not as.
- Remember being musty, because you were outside?
- Honestly, one thing that sucked about being a kid here is that I was then responsible for all my younger cousins. Because all the older girls, like I was 10 [corrupted audio] at the time, but then anyway, as a cousin of, taking care of y'all? So then, I was next in line for that. I was crowned, you know?
- Yeah.
- So that was not the fun times.
- It allowed you to not be as much of a kid as you wanted to be.
- Yeah, because I was over here taking care of first of all my three sisters. And then like, four other cousins and you're like, oh my God, dude.
- Older sister syndrome?
- Yeah.
- I raised you.
- Exactly.
- Don't steal my shirt, I raised you.

- Iman, don't wear my white shirt. Why? You're gonna stain it. No, I'm not. Looks at all the other white t-shirts that are stained. Bro.

- Aw. Speaking of Iman, do you want to talk about what it's like to be a khalto?

- Yes, I'm a khalto, which is aunt in Arabic. And it's great, but it's really sad. She just turned two, she's a Pisces.

- And her name is?

- Jenina. She's so cool. She says habibi.

- Shout out to her.

- Yo.

- Coolest two year old.

- She loves her Teatah, like my mom, so much. She'll, Iman takes videos of Janine being like, call Teatah, call Teatah. Yeah, it's great. But it's hard, because she's not saying my name, and I'm getting pissed. But I have a hard name, like she can't say Fatima. I get it. Allat used to call me Fan-meh. She couldn't pronounce the tah, And she still calls me Fan-meh, and she's twenty. But that's I think it's just to be cute.

- Maybe someone needs to offer her a nickname that's easy to say. For now.

- True. That is true. Good call.

- Aw. So cute, though.

- Cool.

- The coolest.

- I think that's the hardest part about moving, is being far away from like, my mom and sisters. And Jenina, obviously.

- Yeah.

- But at the same time, I need my space.

- Very much that. And you were the first to leave?

- Second.

- Oh, who left first?

- Iman.

- Oh, yeah, I remember that.

- That being said I'm the first one that moved out of the house and like moved far away when I moved to Toronto in the first place.

- Yes.

- So then. And then I felt selfish the first time I moved that far away. And then I felt selfish again when I moved even further, and I'm like, I'm not being selfish. I'm allowed to be an adult and move.

- Oldest daughter syndrome.

- Yeah, literally you feel bad about everything. Because I'm responsible for like birthdays and stuff.

- Right.

- I mean, at least all of you being adults now, it can be more reciprocal. And you guys do a lot for each other now, more than you did before.

- Definitely. Maryam now takes care of birthdays, because she likes being extra. Like I was taking care of birthdays in terms of food. Maryam is now taking care of birthdays in terms of like going all out.

- Yes. I love that. Because everyone deserves to be celebrated.

- Exactly.

- But it can't just be you doing the celebrating.

- No. Like, when I just had my birthday, I feel like even my birthday, I just, when I was in Toronto I organized it myself.

- Yeah. And you were about to bring out your own cake and we were like, nuh uh, no. Never that.

- I think I did that two times in a row. Two years in a row.

- We're not doing that anymore.

- Definitely not doing that anymore.

- Dun, dun, dun. Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo ...

- Oh my lord.

- Without like, going into it, that is how I feel. I feel like it's a case of "Law and Order."

- Honestly, it is. Ugh, what are you up to today, anyways?

- Today? Oh, great question. So I need to prepare for a call back. Fingers crossed I book it, but if I don't that's okay, please feel no ways about not booking me once you listen to this team, if you don't book me, but if you do, then also, yay. I don't know which one it is, though. But yeah, I have a call back. And then I think I'm free for the evening, which will be nice. I might do, oh, I have to call my friend to see if they need help moving still. And then in the evening, I might go to the AGO. And that might be nice. Remember her? She's a cute little moment. Yeah. So tonight, recording day. There is the Toronto Kiki Ball Alliance. They're doing an event at the AGO, and I feel like I should go and hype them up. Or be present and learn. I love to be uncomfortable in situations. And my discomfort is not from like, I guess my discomfort is from ignorance, but like not the bad kind of ignorant stuff. I literally just don't know. So I need to be present to learn. And I feel like I want, I've been trying to learn more about ballroom culture, so to learn about ballroom culture, you have to be present. It's not something that can be captured on TV and through film, like people have made very valiant attempts to do so. But it simply is not good enough for what happens in person. And that's also why I love, like, theatre, because you can't, like you can manufacture moments, but you can never recreate those moments of like, sharing breath and sharing magic. It's impossible. Yeah, it's a matter of, you had to be there.

- You're radiating energy, reciprocating it and giving it back and exchanging it. You know, you got to be in there.

- Yes, it is an exchange. Just like photography. Like in photography, you're capturing a moment, but the whole experience is so like, it's a shared experience. And of course, you capture magic in a few images, but like, the whole experience is just like, gorgeous.

- You know, one thing also, like I'm realizing that's really important to me is, as a love language, is someone appreciating a photo I took without me telling them that that's what I need.

- Feel that.

- Because I didn't notice that. It's not, is it validation, maybe? But it's like, oh, you appreciate this thing that I was appreciating, and I really appreciate that.

- I mean, it's also them appreciating you.

- True.

- Because again, we're like so connected to our art.

- Yeah. That could be someone buying me roll of film. I don't know literally anything, just.

- Yeah. Or buying you a camera in your face and you not realizing until...

- Yeah, that. For sure. How? We were not even friends for that long when you got me that camera, it was like 2019.

- That's two years.

- Yeah, but like, that's a \$200 camera.

- Yeah, and it was about to be your birthday. And you were a really great friend to me. What do you want?

- Oh wait, didn't I bring you back like, gold earrings?

- Yeah. The ones that are literally in my ears as we speak? That I don't ever take out?

- Yep.

- Remember how you came back to work from being gone for two weeks? And I literally cried in your arms? Because I missed you that much at work.

- It's true.

- Don't even.

- Don't even.

- Yo, my guy, like, are you dumb?

- Don't start with me. Are you dumb, bro? Oh remember when, I didn't, when I haven't called, when I didn't let myself be called a Torontonionian? And then you almost got violent about it?

- Yeah, I was about to drag you. Continuously dragging you, actually.

- Yeah. You're the only reason I call myself that. Because I know if I don't, I'll hear your voice in the back of my head.

- It's like, I lived there for six years, am I a Torontonian?

- Duh. I guess. If you say so. I'm gonna take your word as someone who grew up in Toronto their whole life.

- Say less dog. Come to my ends.

- Yo, come to my ends, bro.

- But also, like don't come to my ends unless you're invited.

- Yeah, no, no, no, this is not an open invitation.

- Yeah, come to my ends if you're trying to be dealt with. But like, I mean, that's very violent. I should not say that. I mean, my neighbourhood is wonderful. And it actually really is. And there's a reason why we've stayed here for twent—oh god, let's do the math. This is year 24 of living here.

- Wow.

- Yeah, we've been here for a while. And I feel like I don't really know anything else. So if we moved, I would feel so lost and displaced.

- Well.

- Yeah. Like my my world has been so regimented from being here and not being anywhere else. I was realizing throughout the beginning of the pandemic, when everyone was masked, walking together, because that was all we were allowed to do, I realized that I actually don't know my neighbourhood as well as I thought. There are so many side streets that I've not been down, there a lot of like pockets that I haven't been on, blocks that I haven't been on, and I've been here for a long time. And I don't know if I was, I wouldn't say I was ashamed, but it made me realize that I am so, I'm lost in my routine, and I need to maybe shake things up and explore more. But I think that also has to do with my social anxiety and stuff.

- Mm.

- Yeah.

- I'm the opposite of that. But I think that's something I learned from, from my ex, is learning how to navigate and making sure to just like get lost to find your way. So when I moved to Lebanon I made sure to have almost like, the thing is about Lebanon, it's not like, or Beirut, sorry, it's not like Toronto. There's no, like, I can't use Yonge and Bloor. There's no equivalent to Yonge and Bloor, okay? I have to remember what's parallel to what, what's behind what. So, that's what I do. And I make sure to get, especially when I first moved here, I made sure to almost get lost. That way, I knew how to get places.
- It's funny that you say that because, I get lost and find myself in other places all the time, just not at home. Like, if I'm in a new city, I'll do that all the time of like, oh, where am I? Oh, I'll walk for like hours. Just like just exploring. But I just don't do that here.
- Maybe you're living too much in a subconscious when you're in your area, which is what I was happy, once I. Whoa, here we go. Once I realized I'm more conscious in life when I left Canada, I was like, oh, I'm activated. I was living way too unconsciously.
- Do you feel like you can walk at night safely by yourself with headphones in? That's my gauge.
- Never. As a female presenting person? In what world? Literally, no world you can do that.
- I feel like I can do that. In my neighbourhood. Sometimes. Most times, actually. I can be with my headphones on and be walking at night by myself and feel safe. But there have been a few times that I have not felt safe.
- I lived at Yonge and Bloor when I was in Toronto, and Charles and Isabella. There's no way I was gonna walk with two headphones in, you know? I want to keep an ear out.
- Yeah, definitely. Privilege.
- Like, you need to listen. I've had people follow me. In Canada. In Toronto.
- I remember. I remember getting a few phone calls from you.
- Yeah.
- It's like we're going to talk while I walk to my front door.
- The good old days.

- Good, good old days, being the same time zone. But guess what? I'm in the future, and I'm gonna tell you, you're gonna have a great day today, because I've been having a great day.

- Thanks for telling me that. That feels like a nice way to end.

- Yeah.

- I'm gonna have a great day and you're gonna have a great day.

- I hope so. It's been great so far.

- You're gonna have a great evening. So the time is now 11:31 in Toronto.

- And it's 6:31 in Beirut.

- Wow. And here we are sharing the same time and space through a Zoom screen.

- I used to have that app on my phone. The air horn app. I was the most annoying person on the line in the kitchen. I'm like bow-na-na-nooow, now-now-now. Yeah.

- I feel like if I had been in the kitchen, anytime that would happen, I would have been the most happy. So that just shows me that everyone on the line was just a hater. Yep, yeah. Hateration and holleration in the dancery. Um, I don't know how to end this because I've never done this before. So I guess, do you want to like, oh. This is how like podcasts do their thing. Is there anything you'd like to plug? And where can people find you?

- Well, what I was gonna say is, if anyone wants to see my day-to-day life in Beirut, because it can be a little interesting. Sometimes. Sometimes my photos are a little, how would you describe my stories?

- Snapshots. Of a day in the life.

- Exactly. If you want to see what I'm doing, and see my photography, because this is my portfolio as well. It's @FatimaElie. So, F-A-T-I-M-A-E-L-I-E. And it's Fatima, I said Fatima.

- I was gonna say, please say your name right.

- Fatima Elie.

- That was a recent change, where you told everyone how to say your name properly.

- Yeah, because I had my friend Dima on my butt about that. They're like listen, this whole Fatima shit? Cut it. I was like, yeah.

- Because you know, what we're not gonna do? We're not going to anglicize our names anymore. Our big names are going to be complicated in your mouth, and you will figure it out, okay?
- It's easy. Fatima. Fatima Elie.
- Period. One time for the one time. Say it again. Fatima Elie.
- Fatima Elie.
- And I'm Emerjade. E-M-E-R-J-A-D-E. You can find me on Instagram at E-M dot E-R dot J-A-D-E. It's a syllabical? phonetic? breakdown. It's in syllable. It's, you'll figure it out. I said it once already. But I'll say it again: em.er.jade. Follow me. Yeah, that's it. Love you.
- Love you.
- See you later, friends.
- See you on the flip side.

HOST:

Is anyone out there? Is anyone out there? Is anyone? Is anyone out there? Look at what I'm resorting to. My god, please. Can you tell I'm desperate. Because I actually am. Welcome back, Leslie here. I've been experimenting with sound. Being near. And far. And I've discovered that I miss being close to others. I miss receiving love and care and people laughing at my jokes. And I want to find someone to love, hold, and be with. That will be real nice. The problem, I'm realizing is that if I want something, or in this case, someone, I have to seek that out. Dreams themselves are all fine and good. Because the word dreams implies a certain amount of passivity. Yeah, you dream when you're at rest. You're not doing anything about your dreams, because of course you're not, you're sleeping, duh. You know? But then you get older and people start asking about your dreams. What they are. What dreams have you achieved. Maybe. Maybe some of your dreams get smaller, or more grounded. Or perhaps you grow so tall and long that you're just closer to the sky and the clouds up in dreamland. Or maybe you can fly, or whatever, I don't know. But when you actually have to do something about your dreams, that's a whole other ballgame. That is no longer in the land of theory or make belief. No, that's real. And I have come

to the conclusion that real tends to be scary. Take finding love, for instance. Growing up, for me, such feelings weren't talked about. Love was a distraction from the biological outcome of cicada civic duty of, you know, laying those eggs in a pile of sticks somewhere. But you know, over the past little while through the magic box that I have made my home, I have heard it described so beautifully. Something exciting, something worth living for. And I love other perspectives. I mean, of course I do, I keep talking to fill the absence of other perspectives. But here's the thing. Sure, love sounds nifty. But I could also die in the process of looking. What if I meet someone higher on the food chain than I? They could eat me! And not in a cute way. I just want the outcome. I'm just worried about the perils on the journey of getting there. Oh, the other day, I heard this story written by Lisa Alves. It's passionate, complicated, and about who's there to hold us in the dark. This is "Bi's Phobia" by Lisa Alves.

Lisa Alves - Bi's Phobia

- What the. Who is it?

I was already running late. I needed to be at Carlo's five minutes ago.

- It's me, Beth. Taylor. Ms. Taylor?

I was supposed to be at Carlo's five minutes ago, meeting Ms. Taylor. What was she doing here? I look at my phone remembering the text I sent 20 minutes ago. In my rush to get ready, answering her question about what my address was, I didn't even question why she was asking.

- The power's out everywhere in a six block radius. Your building seems like it's the only one still with power.

Ms. Taylor is standing in my doorway. Time doesn't matter. Right here, right now, time as we know it is this envelope we have found ourselves in. Starting with her standing outside my door, and will be sealed with her entering my home. My memories of who she was won't be of significance. How she

remembered me ten years ago won't hold much weight. Her worries don't belong here, and my teenage fantasies of her and my longings may have influenced how I react tonight. But my future anxieties have no place. They are null and void. Ms. Taylor hasn't changed. It's as if I was looking at her under a doorway at Metropolitan High over a decade ago. My beloved music teacher. And me, just one of her students. I haven't seen her since, not because of any lack on my part. I tried, in my extremely keen fashion. I haven't seen her for some other reason. Some reason I was hoping to get to the bottom of at Carlo's. Not in my home.

- That's why I texted you? Asking for your address?

- Sorry. Yes, um. I remember sending it. I have just been focused on getting ready.

I still wasn't fully ready. I didn't have my hair done. It was still damp from the shower I took 30 minutes ago. I was going to change my shirt, and I still hadn't brushed my teeth. But being ready was the least of my concern now with Ms. Taylor standing in my hallway.

- I need a minute to clean up a bit.

- Oh, it's okay. We can reschedule if that would be better for you. I wonder if I can get a cab, since the subway doesn't seem to be in service.

- No. We can stay here.

- Okay.

She was ready to tolerate stepping into a twenty-something's home and accepting it wouldn't be the neatest. But I don't think she would be so understanding of a double-ended dildo I had laid out on my green velvet couch.

- I really need a minute, Ms. Taylor. Just count to 60, and I'll be ready.

- Jacqueline, you can call me Beth now.

- I don't hear you counting.

- 1, 2, 3, 4...

I'm looking at the disarray that is my living space. It is messy. There is nothing minimalist about this apartment.

- 7, 8, 9,10...

I immediately run into my bathroom and quickly style my hair with some gel and hairspray.

- 15, 16, 17...

I begin gargling some mouthwash realizing I have already wasted a third of the time I've given myself to clean up.

- 20, 21, 22...

In front of my diner window, looking into the kitchen, there was a messy small kitchen table with wine glasses from the night before, stained with lipstick around the edges, and a mess of snacks which will unfortunately have to stay that way. But I fix the chairs to not be so skewed.

- 29, 30, 31...

I feel like everything I own is strewn all over the place. I gather my leather skirt, black tights, a see-through crop top, and all the scarves, why do I have so many scarves? I stuff them under the couch pillow.

- 37, 38...

I place the guitar on its stand and aim my takeout containers for the diner window. I pick up the bras that are leading to my bedroom, one that is mine and two that are not mine.

- 42, 43...

I ball them up with the sex toys and do a little panic dance.

- 50, 51...

I shove the sex ball of chaos I have gathered under the couch cushion with a pile of clothes. I try to brush off all the dust I could see on my coffee table with my bare hands, because I'm pretty sure Ms. Taylor wouldn't appreciate the dust. At least the low lamp lighting will disguise my lack of vacuuming this month.

- 58, 59...

I realize I still have mouthwash in my mouth.

- 60.

I spit out the mouthwash in my snake plant.

- Okay.

I open the door, and she's not there. I look around the corner.

- Ms. Taylor?

- It's Beth, Jacqueline. Please.

She walks around from the opposite corner of my door.

- Beth. Hi. It's good to see you.

I take in my high school teacher and crush. She looks the exact same, but completely different from ten years ago, if that's even possible. She stands in the same way casually, with her head tilted to the side.

Her style hasn't changed. But it's always been timeless, trousers with a delicate collared shirt.

Katharine Hepburn, as I live and breathe. Her hair's in the same spiralled, stranded bob.

- It's been a long time.

What's changed are the things that have increased with time. A few more grey streaks, deeper laugh lines, more sparkle in her eyes, more warmth in her smile.

- It has been a long time. Much longer than I would have liked.

- I know.

I watch her take me in. I'm taller, my hair shorter, my face rounder, my clothes more eclectic. But she looks at me as if I were back at Metropolitan High in her music room, talking about composition, sound, harmony. It shouldn't have been like this. We should have seen each other more often. At least once a year. I would have settled for once every three years. Oh my god. Am I being a selfish brat? I should be grateful we're in front of each other now. She's fully at my home.

- How was the quick clean?

- Yeah, yes. It was fine. Come in, come in. It was more of me hiding my mess rather than cleaning.

- Do I get a tour?

- Oh, yeah. This is the living room, and the couch over there gets more comfy the longer you sit on it. The kitchen is through there with my favorite diner window. And the bathroom is through the door by the front over there.

- It's cozy. That's your home. No roommates?

- No. Just me.

- Is this a studio apartment? Does your couch fold out into a bed?

- What? No. My bedroom is through that door by the bathroom.

- Well, you missed the bedroom on your tour.

- Right. Right. Take a seat. I can get you something to drink. I have water, wine, beer.

- What were you going to have?

I was trying not to let this question or the whole bedroom query delude my thoughts.

- I'll get us some wine.

Ms. Taylor picks up one of the wine glasses on the kitchen table that I didn't have time to hide. The ones with the lipstick stains around the edges. These glasses still have dregs of red wine I had the other night on my date.

- If you have any white, that would be lovely. I'm not much of a red wine drinker.

- Lucky for you, I don't have any of what was in there left.

I take the glasses into the kitchen and I watch her through the diner window. Ms. Taylor sits cautiously on the couch. I can see that she's trying to get comfortable, readjusting her position as I list the reasons why I love Carlo's so much.

- Well, we can reschedule another time to try Carlo's.

- Absolutely. I think my favourite item in their menu is their tiramisu. I thought it would be a place you would like, you know, authentic Italian. You can't go wrong. It's a shame I didn't know the power had gone out.

Maybe Carlo's had too much of a romantic atmosphere. Maybe this blackout was a good thing. I come back into the living room and hand her the glass of wine. Just as she was about to stick her hand

between the couch cushions. The couch was probably much more uncomfy than before. The couch is probably much more uncomfy than before now with all the stuff I hid in it.

- Thank you. I mean, I just didn't want to go home without seeing you. It's a two-hour commute for me. And to not see you would have been a total waste of time. I just would have been disappointed.

- Me too. I was excited when I saw your email last week asking to get together.

- Oh, well. I've actually been wanting to message you for a month now. More like a few months. I saw you had a concert last night at the tavern. I wanted to get tickets.

- Oh, it was a great show. Yeah, such a great crowd.

- Well the audience can really make or break a show. It doesn't matter if what you have for them is complete brilliance.

- Yeah, it also matters who shows up for you.

Yikes. That was too harsh. She falls back into being uncomfortable on the couch, thanks to me attacking her for the absence in my life. Ms. Taylor starts reaching behind the couch cushions.

- I'm sorry. That was so rude. Did you want to come to the show? Is that why you messaged me? I stopped sending you invites because you weren't responding all those years after I graduated.

She stops fidgeting and takes a small impatient sip.

- No, no, I'm sorry. I was getting your invites. I regret ignoring them.

- You know, it felt like shit not hearing back, so I just stopped.

- Well, I was raising a 16-year-old kid. So I was a little preoccupied.

- God, I'm such an asshole.

- No, no, it's okay. I should have let you know I couldn't attend some at the very least. I reached out to you because you recently crossed my mind. Last term, a student played Claire de Lune. And it was pretty horrendous. And I just remembered that that was your senior piece.

She finished her wine. I didn't believe this was actually the reason she reached out to me. Or was I just wanting to hear something different?

- I remember that exam pretty well. Yeah. I don't know if it was anything good though.

- You found the breath and the movement in it, Jacqueline. The way you moved through the piece. You told the story clearly. You told the story as if you were translating something through the song. You captured the bittersweetness of life. The calmness, the melancholy, the hope, the despair. You questioned the entire song as you played. But you had the confident determination throughout the performance to figure out the complexities Debussy composed. You met the piece where it needed you to meet it. And it met you where you were.

We stared at each other for what felt like eternity. I had no idea what to say to that. She looks back with a mixture of what I could only tell as pride and adoration.

- I was just trying to focus on the technique to be honest.

- Well you achieved more than just passable technique of the piece.

- Thank you. It's sweet you remember that.

I couldn't hold her stare any longer. I down the last of my wine and quickly get up.

- You came all this way into the city for dinner, and we haven't even talked about food. I'm guessing I can't call many places if their power's out. Their kitchens are probably not working. But I do have frozen pizza that could get us by, and more wine. I can get us some more wine.

- Pizza sounds great.

I snatch her glass and dash into the kitchen. I hover over the sink to catch my breath. I need to calm the fuck down. Why am I freaking out? Probably because I was still in love with her. I move slowly to focus on my breath as I undo the pizza box and slide the frozen slab into the oven.

- I like your artwork. You've hung up a lot. But um, who's this? Is this Anne Bancroft?

- Oh, yeah, it fully is. My ex-girlfriend gave me that poster as a joke, but I'm very serious about it.

I come back into the living room with the wine glasses and place them on the coffee table. I sit on the couch, which I can completely feel the dildo shoved underneath the cushion. Ms. Taylor stands at the poster.

- From *The Graduate*.

- Yeah. And Annie Sullivan in *The Miracle Worker*. She's phenomenal. I've had a crush on her since—

Have you ever seen *The Pumpkin Eater*?

I go on to tell her about how obsessed I am with Anne Bancroft.

- Annie Sullivan. Yeah, she was one hell of a teacher. What? Why are you looking at me like that?

- Um. Just like you. You are one hell of a teacher.

- Oh, I don't know about that. Was she your first crush?

- Celebrity wise? I don't think so. I didn't see any of her movies until high school. I think my first crushes were cartoons. Hercules and Meg? I'm not ashamed of that. I guess it just snowballed from there with Kate and Leo from Titanic.

- Hmm. You seem like you were so self aware as a kid.

- What do you mean?

- Oh, well, you seem like you knew who you were attracted to at a very young age. The way you just spoke about Anne Bancroft, just now. I mean, when did you see *Hercules*? Four, five, six years old, and you had a crush on both of them? I just think it's tremendous that you knew who you liked.

- You think I knew? What, that I was bi when I was a kid?

- Yeah. Yeah. Didn't you? Sorry, am I missing something?

- No, no, I'm laughing because I had no idea I was queer until after high school. And I was in denial several years after that. I didn't come out to my friends, until I was like 21? I didn't have the language for what I was feeling and who I was. And when I got the language, it took me years to feel settled with it. When I was watching *The Graduate*, I didn't understand what I was feeling towards Anne Bancroft. And, certainly when I was a kid watching Leo and Kate at the helm of the ship, I just thought I was feeling that way because I was supposed to like guys. Leo was there. I just figured it didn't matter that I was also feeling that way towards Kate. And probably even more so. No, completely moreso. I mean, I didn't fully understand how I felt about you until a few years ago, honestly. I knew you were my favourite teacher. And I wanted to impress you, and make you know how much I appreciated you. I made an excuse all the time, why I was picking up peppermint teas for you every Friday. It was

because we had early morning choir practices, and I just wanted to be nice. Like, come on. Oh my god. That's the first time you're hearing all of this from me. I was in love with you, Ms. Taylor. And not just the idea of you. You weren't something I idolized. I was inspired by how your brain worked. You taught me how to feel, not just through the music. I mean, we told stories with the sounds we made on those out-of-tune pianos and secondhand guitars at school. You helped me find myself. It was communion. It was holy, and I felt so safe. And you never once abused that. And all through that, all those feelings I had for you, even back then I wouldn't have ever considered labeling it as a crush. The majority of my adolescence I just thought girls must have liked other girls. I truly thought straight girls had to have a little attraction to other girls. Damn. Was I shocked when I found out that wasn't the case.

I chugged the glass of wine because I haven't admitted that outside my therapist appointments to anyone so succinctly. I had to do something aside from staring at Ms. Taylor's face which I just couldn't read.

- I'm gonna get a refill and check on the pizza, want anything?

Ms. Taylor shakes her head and slumps in her seat.

- It looks like the pizza is going to need 10 more minutes. And the power is still out, at least across the street that is. Do you mind if I turn on some music?

- I knew, Jacqueline. I knew.

- Huh?

- I said, I knew.

- You knew what? You knew that I was queer?

- No. Maybe... no. I was gonna say I knew you liked me. I knew you had a crush on me. It was completely obvious.

- I never had a chance with you did I? I mean, besides being your student, I was just some deeply closeted queer girl who was crushing on you, a very straight, very married woman. There was never going to be a chance.

- No, you never had a chance with me because you were a student. And I would have never taken advantage of you. I would have never crossed that line.

- Why are you here?

- I already told you. I have a student who played the same piece as you did for your exam 10 years ago.

She starts lifting the couch cushions, contorting herself to reach into the abyss.

- No. Why are you here?

- To catch up, Jacqueline? Should I have not wanted to see how you were doing?

- Well, you could have seen how I was doing on my Instagram. Can you just stop digging in my couch?

- There is something poking my ass.

- I don't want to explain what you'll find under there, so please—

But it's too late. She pulls out the sex ball of chaos I shoved under there earlier. Ms. Bethany Taylor is now sitting on my couch holding my double-ended dildo, bras, a womanizer sex toy, all the clothes I stuffed under there, and I am mortified. She just sits there, staring at the pile in her hands, and I am staring at her staring at the pile.

- I can explain.

- Oh, Jacqueline, um, you really don't have to. I'm not someone you have to explain this to.

I slowly take the pile from her hands into my cradled arms. I fumble some items, some things fall to the ground, but I just keep scrunching my face, because maybe, just maybe, that will help me disappear and erase this absolute shit show from both of our memories. Where are the men in black when you need them to erase your mind?

- What's the blue one?

My mind is discombobulating. Ms. Taylor is asking about a sex toy. My sex toy that has fallen to the ground. She has now picked up my sex toy and is asking about it. Please, god, send down the four horsemen of the apocalypse at this moment so I can just not be in this situation. Or don't. So I can live out this weird-ass fantasy. Oh god, I don't know what I want.

- I've never seen something like that before...

- Ms. Taylor, Beth, I cannot have this conversation with you. I can't explain what this is to you right now.

- Sure, no, yeah, of course. Nevermind, I'll just Google it later.

I dropped the rest of the sex chaos pile on the floor in complete defeat. And I take a deep breath to face this moment. I take the toy from her hand gently.

- Okay. I'm going to be an adult. It's only weird if I make it weird, right? Okay. It's called a womanizer, at least this brand and model. It's more like a vibrator than anything, but um, instead of vibrating it pulsates the air. So it replicates as if someone were to...

- That seems like it could be nice.

- Would you like to feel it? On your arm? Would you like to feel it on your arm? This is how I would get customers to test out the toys in the shop. The sex store I worked at years ago? You know, you can't have a full test run with these things. It's clean. I had it drying on the couch from washing it before you arrived.

She nods her head, and I turn on the sex toy with one hand. I take her arm and I hold her hand with mine, and turn her arm to expose her wrist. I gently hover the toy over her wrist.

- Oh.

She tenses as I bring the toy to touch her skin. I watch her face as she watches me circle the toy on the inside of her arm.

- The pizza's ready. Um, here. Take this and feel free to try it out. I mean, the other settings. Feel free to try the other settings. There's different rhythms, patterns.

I rushed into the kitchen. What was happening? Was I hallucinating? Was this a dream? It couldn't be because I reached into the oven without an oven mitt to pull out the pizza.

- Fuck. Ugh, I'm fine. I'll be right there.

I get myself and the pizza together and I bring it to the living room. Ms. Taylor has put the toy on the coffee table and is staring at it with the most concerned look I had ever seen on her face.

- Can I get you some water?

Ms. Taylor chugs the rest of her wine.

- Ms. Taylor, why...

- Beth. I already said you can call me Beth.

- No. Ms. Taylor. Why are we in my apartment? Why are we having frozen pizza here? What was all of that? Why did you ask me to get dinner after all this time?

- Because I wanted to catch up.

- You never kept in touch before.

- I didn't know you wanted—

- I wanted you to be my mentor. Or something, at least be in your orbit.

- There's better people than me who could have mentored you. Your university profs, artists, so many other—

- I ran into Mr. Lockhart one time on the subway. And I asked about you because I thought you must have switched schools, or died, because I think in extremes. And he said you were still teaching at Metropolitan Secondary. He said he was shocked that we hadn't kept in touch.

- I know. He told me.

- Okay, so why now?

- I told you. I saw you were doing a show and I have this student who did Claire de Lune.

- Yeah, yeah, Claire de fucking Lune. Why do you care? Do you do this with all your other former students? Do you just wait a decade after we all graduate and then make your rounds?

- This was a bad idea. I should go.

- Why?

- Because I think you're getting the wrong idea.

- What idea do you think I have, Ms. Taylor?

- It's Beth. I am not your teacher anymore. You and I were just completely different people when I last saw you. You were my student. And I was your teacher. Oh god, I am still a teacher. This is so ridiculous.

- Beth, what's going on?

- I've, um. I've been feeling like I've become a different person. My entire life is not the way I thought it would be at this point at my age. It's been going fine. It's been going well. I have a family, a house, a mortgage, my work. People say that you have to tend to your relationships and priorities like they're gardens, so that they can grow. I thought I was tending to my marriage, but maybe not in the right way. My husband, Tom. He's just slowly becoming less of my person. And I, I don't think I'm in love with him anymore. I don't think I've ever been in love with him. You know, the way that married people are. I don't want to get a divorce. I don't want my kid to have to deal with that. Maybe it's just easier if I, if I just kept pretending.

- Beth, I'm so sorry.

- I don't know who I am. I don't know what's happening.

- Would you like a cup of peppermint tea? That might help?

- I think I'm gay. I'm sorry.

- No, no, there's nothing to be sorry about. Thank you for telling me. Have you told anyone else? I mean, if you're thinking that, it could be worth exploring as much, or as little as you're comfortable with. Beth looks at me. And I stare right back. She leans into me, going in for a kiss, and I jerk my head back in the complete opposite reflex I thought I would have when I thought about Ms. Taylor kissing me. We erupt from our seats and get to the furthest points possible from each other.

- I'm extremely sorry.

- No, oh my god. No, I'm sorry.

- No, no, I'm awful. I literally just said I would never take advantage of you, when you were my student. And here I am being so completely...

- What are you talking about? We are ten years away from when you were my teacher, you have nothing to feel bad about you. You were here being human. And I don't want to take advantage of you. I said I'm in love with you, was in love with you. And we've been drinking, and the whole womanizer thing didn't help, and we've been drinking, and then you got vulnerable. I mean, you're coming to terms with who you are after years of not knowing that part of you. It's just overwhelming.

- I need um, some water.

- Yeah, yeah.

- Can I go...?

- Go, go help yourself, yeah.

I rush to the couch and pick up a slice of pizza. But then I put it back down. I am starving, but I can't bring myself to eat anything right now. The womanizer is staring back at me, taunting, what has just transpired. I pick it up and put it under the couch again. Beth comes back into the living room inhaling a glass of water as she walks.

- I should get going. What? No, stay. You haven't had any pizza, and we can talk or not talk, and maybe we can just listen to music, or I can play something. You can choose a movie.

- No, no, Jacqueline, I've embarrassed myself far too much for one night and I should get going.

- The power is still out. Let me at least get you an Uber or a cab.

I grab my phone I had left on the kitchen table where Beth was standing beside. As I approach her, the lights go out. The blackout has finally arrived at my building. I can't see anything. I know Beth is in front of me. But I reach out to reach Beth. And we find each other's hands in the darkness.

- Jacqueline.

- Beth.

- Jackie.

I gently pull her towards me. She wraps her arms around my waist and I wrap mine around her shoulders. I trace her fingers up her neck to her jaw. She presses herself into me. I graze my thumb over her lips and I replace it with my lips on hers. Time tumbles away. It feels like I am no longer

standing in my apartment with Beth. We are both floating somewhere between complete abandon and tender relief. A very dangerous place. The lights flicker back on but we don't notice and we don't stop. She's returning my kiss and I lose my breath. The lights go off, and this time I pull away. But I pull her with me to the couch. I hold her face in my hands, bending as she finds her seat. I get on top of her, straddling her lap, finding my breath, and I can feel her losing hers. I take her hands and guide them gently to my waist. And then my hips. The lights flicker on again. We pull away from each other's lips, but I know I won't stop unless she wants to stop. She grabs my shirt and pulls it off. And I help guide it over my head. I have a feeling we won't be stopping. She pushes me off. So I fall onto the couch and she climbs on top of me. She begins pulling off her shirt as the lights go off. We don't stop. We don't see each other again. She leaves my apartment in the middle of the night. And I wake up to an empty room.

We don't call each other. I don't text her. She doesn't email me. And I continue on with my life as I had been doing before the night with Ms. Taylor. I try very hard to forget about that night. It's difficult at first, but then I fill my days with work, lots of work. I compose, I write, and when I'm feeling like my artistic practices aren't enough, I pick up part-time work from temp jobs. I make more money than I've ever had by distracting myself with my art and with people. So many people. I started seeing friends I haven't seen in years, and I go on a lot of dates, really good dates and really bad dates. Years go by. My life grows. I keep my apartment, and I grow up my hair. I retire some eclectic clothes. And then the years go by, and I'm 38. How did that happen? One day, I'm at a record store, looking for a gift for a friend. I pick up Queen's debut self-titled album and consider it, if not for my friend, for myself.

- Amazing album.

I look up and this man who looks more like a child is smiling at me.

- "My Fairy King"? The last song on there? It's my favorite. No one could ever write a song like Mercury.

- I'm sorry, how old are you?

- Oh, come on. You weren't alive when Mercury died?

- You're correct. I wasn't, but you also were not.

- I'm Robert.

- I didn't ask for your name, I asked how old you were.

- Well, if I tell you will you tell me your name?

It didn't matter that he was 26 and I was 38. 12 years divided us, and somehow Freddie Mercury brought us together. I called him Robbie. And he called me Lynn. We spent the first three months held up in each other's homes exploring each other. I rediscovered what a 26-year-old body could be like, and he had way too much curiosity for what this 38 year old body was like. He didn't live too far from me. A basement apartment he kept exceptionally neat, nothing like mine, cluttered, but he saw it as cozy. I helped him study for the bar exams, and he helped me write songs with his saxophone playing. I think he helped me more with my music than I did with his studying. Three months turned into six months turned into nine months, turned into him asking me to marry him. I said yes. And now we needed to tell his mom. On the day I planned to meet his mom, I drove myself into this small suburban town a few hours outside of the city. Robert stayed the night with his mom, prepping her, I'm sure, about who I was. The entire drive, I kept thinking about how Robert spoke to me about his childhood, and how he adored his mom. Last week, he assured me I was nothing like her. But he was sure we would get along. I pulled up to Robert's childhood home, and I knocked on the door.

- Hello, you must be Lynn.

- Jacqueline?

I'm seeing a ghost. Ms. Bethany Taylor, ten years older, was standing in Robert's mom's home. She looks exactly the same, but completely different. If that's even possible. She stands the same way, casually, with her head tilted to the side. Her style hasn't changed, but it's always been timeless. Trousers, with a delicate collared shirt. Katharine Hepburn, as I live and breathe. Her hair was in the same spiral, stranded bob. What's changed are the things that have increased with time. More streaks of grey, deeper laugh lines, but her sparkle in her eyes and warmth. Her smile had turned cold. She's seeing a ghost too.

- Beth.

- I'm, I'm supposed to be meeting Robbie's girlfriend.

- Ms. Taylor.

Robert comes rushing to the door like a Golden Retriever puppy.

- Lynn, you've made it. I can see you've already introduced yourself to each other. Mom, this is Lynn, the woman I've told you all about, my fiancé.

This story is to be continued.

HOST:

Everyone, Leslie here, back with a super fun update. I explored, I boldly went out into the world and survived to tell the tale, but. Wowee! Let me tell you. It was a doozy. It's also left me with many a question. Or perhaps one large question with many sub-questions. What is horniness? What sick creator's idea was that? Yes, procreation. Cool, party legacy, whatever. I understand it's crucial. We were taught about it in school. If you don't procreate, you're merely a slut who will die alone. You know, classic, understood. Oh, yeah, I mean, also the part about, you're a cicada, most of your life is spent living underground, and when you finally emerge, you will become an adult, and you will have to mate like yesterday before you die, and you will die, probably quickly, because literally everything wants to eat you. But fear not, for your babies will sing the song, the horny song, of your people and fulfill your legacy. The more babies the better, because everything wants to eat you. Again, classic sex ed. But we don't talk about the horny. It is embarrassing. Cicadas crawl out of the ground, horny as ever. It propels so much of our very being. What's wrong with being horny, you ask? Well, let me tell you. I tried to mate with a lawn mower today. So that's how I'm doing. Sure, there's fun in horny. Absolutely no slut shaming here, that's not what this is about. But to have it play such an integral part of the emotional core of not just you, but your people, your ancestors. Ew. To mate is a biological need. Horniness is the

engine of mating. Technically, I need to mate. I know this because my skin aches with a yearning for touch and I am on a mission to eradicate that feeling. Does horniness have to do with love? Sometimes. Not always. But it sure as fuck has to do with loneliness. Horniness is a biological need to be touched. A deep biological loneliness. So yeah, this whole finding a mate thing is going great and not stressing me out at all. There's also like this fear in hardness. Touch me like I'll never be touched again. I thought it was lust, but I think it's more complicated than that. And when love gets involved, whew! That's a fun combination. The trials and tribulations of being a lover in this world. Who knew this would all be so complicated, existing in the world, trying to love yourself and love others in whatever shades you do. And then some people take that as their business, who you love, whether it's yourself or other people. They have a problem with the way that you do that. Ooh. Alex and Robin can speak to that. They have a queer history podcast called *And Their Siblings*. So here's some of that.

Robin - And Their Sibling: Stonewall

- Hello, everyone, welcome to *And Their Sibling*. We, we're doing a heavy episode today, so Robin and I might be a little bit more awkward than we usually are. But first things first, we're gonna get our spirits up a little bit, and see how each other doing, so how are you doing Robin? Can you tell that was improvised?

- How am I doing, that's a very good question, I have no clue, I don't know how I'm still doing things, that, that. How are you doing?

- I'm, yeah. Okay, has, what's, what's, what's a positive thing that's happened this week? You're allowed to say sex.

- Yes.

- I can't.

- Um, I. I did a photo shoot this week.
- Oh my god, you did? What are you famous?
- That freaking Robin didn't tell me or Blanco that we were both in this photo shoot.
- I, I did not know you would both be in the photo shoot. I did not have that information.
- Didn't you?
- No.
- Didn't you recommend both of us?
- Yes, but I didn't know that either of you would be in it, nor that the both of you would be in it, nor that it would be at the same time.
- Okay, fair enough. I'll accept that.
- Like neither of you told me that you actually got booked for it.
- Oh, true.
- That's on you.
- That's fair.
- Should we introduce the podcast a little bit more, because this is not a regular episode and there's gonna be new listeners?
- Oh, right.
- Hello everybody, sorry for all the banter. This is not gonna stop. I don't know what you were expecting. Information? History? Smart people talking? That's not gonna happen. My name is Robin.
- My name is Alec. Welcome to the show *And Their Sibling*, the show where we talk about queer people and their siblings in the proverbial sense that everyone is a queer sibling. But basically we talk about queer people who've done cool things in history.
- Amazing. And today's episode is gonna be about Stonewall uprising, and it's also running on [programsound.fm](https://www.programsound.fm), which we're very glad to be a part of, so thanks for tuning in. And if you're not listening to it on [programsound.fm](https://www.programsound.fm), there will be a link to that project in the description, or we might record a different intro for that. Who knows?

- We'll see. If you are listening through program FM, um, come, come hang out with us on our regular episodes where we talk about queer people, and you can find us andtheirsibling.com, right? Is that our website?

- No. Just find us in your favorite pod catcher.

- The show's called *And Their Sibling*.

- We have so many other episodes for you catch up on.

- So before we get into this episode, Robin, what kind of music have you been listening to?

- Well, whilst doing the research for this episode, I found a list of songs that were popular at Stonewall club and whatever it was called. And "Build me up, Buttercup" just really hit everything. It's like, look at that, 50 years and the gays are still gaying the same way.

- Oh my gosh. I haven't thought about that song in a long time. I think I heard that as a kid once.

- So what have you been listening to?

- I've been listening to "Get Up," by Charmie, who I met at the photoshoot. But then I went and I listened to her music, and it was really fucking good. So go and check her out she's Charmie, C-H-A-R-M-I-E, on all, on Spotify, for sure, and also on YouTube, and the song is "Get Up," but also her other music is good too. But I added it, immediately added it to my morning playlist, because it's like a good chill song. It's also called "Get Up", so it gets me out of bed.

- Subliminal messaging at its best.

- Hey y'all. So this is going to be a lot of content warnings in this episode, we're talking about Stonewall, we're going to go in with our same sort of humour and fun attitude. But there's gonna be a lot of things that we talk about. We're going to talk about transphobia, we're going to talk about homophobia, we're going to talk about police violence, drugs, racism, it's going to be a lot. If this is not the episode you want to listen to today, put it on pause and come back a different day. Think about yourselves first and whether or not you can listen to this. It's a hard time, but it's an important time in our queer history. So thanks for listening, even if you only get this far. Okay, here's the episode.

- Alright, so where, where did you research? We did something different, and we both did the research, which is gonna make it extra chaotic. But we'll still try to give you the information in a chronological way. So, what date did you start at?

- What do you mean? What date did I start at?

- Because I have stuff from 1930, for context.

- Oh, I mainly looked at Stonewall and the effects afterwards. So.

- Okay, good.

- Go team. Go team. I also, okay, I wanted to mention this, and I think, I think I'll talk about it later. But I decided, if you don't know, there's a very shitty movie made about Stonewall that I've never seen before. And I decided that this was the episode.

- Oh no, you watched it?

- This was finally the reason to watch that shit movie. And it's so bad.

- Can't wait to get to that.

- So, we could talk about that after we talk about Stonewall, because then I'll tell you everything that the movie did that's just like, way off.

- Amazing. Okay.

- So, tell me about the 30s.

- My story of Stonewall starts in 1930, when there was a book that was published under the, the author's name was Mary Casal, but that was a pseudonym. And it was an autobiography, written by a 65-year-old lesbian. And the title of the book was *The Stone Wall*.

- Really?

- Yeah. And in that book. I'm so glad I found something that you didn't find.

- What?

- Yeah, so in that book, she tells like her entire life, and things like how she was in a relationship with another woman for like, 15 years. And she traveled to Paris and New York, and was like, friends with a bunch of, it was, it was always the theatre kids that were gay. So she was friends with a lot of

actresses. And the same year that the book was published, there was a tea room, quote, unquote, that was opened. It wasn't at the location where the Stonewall bar ended up being, originally, because it moved, but it was also called The Stone Wall. And the clear connection or assumption is that the, they both got the name from the same place, and they knew each other because they were in the same social circle. So this place was, the full name of the establishment was Bonnie's Stonewall Inn. And even though it was advertised as being a tea room, it really was a place where people could go be lesbians and drink alcohol.

- Oh my god, what the heck?

- Yeah, at a time where women weren't allowed to be lesbians and weren't expected to be socializing with alcohol.

- Oh my god.

- Yeah.

- I'm in shock.

- I know, right? So, so yeah, so eventually Bonnie's Stone Wall Inn did move to the location that, 5153 Crystal Street in Greenwich Village, and then in 19, what was it, in 1966, the like, Bonnie had not been the owner for a long time. So it changed hands and slightly changed names until it got purchased by the mafia and opened as Stonewall Bar and Dance Club, and that is, that is the establishment where the Stonewall uprising did happen. But the reason why it has been called Stonewall Inn nowadays, is because when it was like turned into a like national monument or whatever they call it, and like reopened in 2017, they called it Stonewall Inn, because that was like the first name that it had as a queer bar at that location.

- Got it. Was it, because I tried to, I tried to find this, was it an inn? Or was it just a bar?

- Was it what?

- Because from what I understand, what I understand, there weren't, there were rooms on the second floor, but they weren't like hotel rooms.

- Yeah, the rooms on the second floor weren't part of the bar thing. So there was, there was just like a bar and a dance room, and that was it. Um, yeah. Oh, I have one more detail about *The Stone Wall* the book, which is that like, yeah, it was really popular amongst lesbians. And there was this magazine called *The Ladder* that was published by The Daughters of Bilitis, which was a society, a lesbian organization from San Francisco that argued that lesbians can be feminine and acceptable. They're so problematic. But they did have that magazine.

- Yeah, going off of that, the two sort of like main societies that people talk about pre-Stonewall were the Mattachine Society, which was the male equivalent of The Daughters of Bilitis, and both of them were very much like, we are just like the average, all-good American, which we all know what that means. We just happen to like people of the same sex. So like, the Mattachine Society forced all of their members to wear suits and ties. You had to be a minimum of 21 years old. And like, yeah, it was interesting.

- It was a weird time.

- Yeah, and they did not like trans people or queens.

- Nope.

- Depending on which terminology you're using.

- Yeah. The Mattachine Society had this like, I almost want to say caste system, but that's not it. It's like, uh, layers. And then like, like, orders, and people weren't like allowed to know who was like in the next order, it was, it was the fucking...

- Oh my god.

- ... MLM of gay rights.

- Yeah, that's my favorite friggin part. Like, no one used their real name in the Mattachine Society until, I think, I think it was Craig Rodwell who was like the first one? I can't remember if he was in the Mattachine Society or not.

- Yeah. Okay. And I do want to say like, when I call it the MLM of gay rights, it's because one of the things that they would do was raise money from their members to pay for the legal fees for a higher-level members getting in trouble. Like literally MLM.

- Oh my god.

- And also they had self-improvement seminars.

- God, fucking wild. So that's some background of the sort of like upright citizens, quote unquote, of gay society. Other side of gay slash queer society would be the street queens and drag queens and trans people also frequented the Stonewall Inn bar. The Stonewall.

- The Stonewall. It's had too many names to keep track of.

- So, just some like background knowledge. When we talk about trans women in particular, there's a couple words that people would use. It would be a lot more fluid, but queen was sort of the general term, would mean someone who uses she/her pronouns sometimes or all the time. A street queen would be someone who uses, who'd use she/her pronouns pretty much all the time and was almost always dressed feminine. They were usually not allowed in Stonewall. There was also scared drag, which meant that, that would be someone who wore a men's shirt, usually would be like tied in a knot around the waist, tight pants, and a wig, so that when the police showed up at Stonewall, they could just quickly become a man.

- That's smart.

- Yeah, right?

- Yeah. Okay, I've also noted down some of the pre-Stonewall uprisings. So we have the Pepper Hill Club in Baltimore raid in 1955, where over 162 people were arrested. In 1959, there's also been, what's the word, uprising following a riot, uh, following a raid at Cooper Do-nut? Do-nut? I feel like there's a gay joke in there I'm not getting.

- Well, from my understanding Cooper Do-nuts was, it just happened to be a donut shop in between two gay bars.

- Ah, that makes sense.

- Yeah.

- Mhmm. I want to be a donut shop between two gay bars.

- Oh god, but yeah, so that one was a lot of trans and queer and gay people would go to that bar, and then they would get raided by the cops every once in a while. And then they were like, fuck no. And then they fought back.

- Nice.

- Yeah.

- There was also an event called The Black Nite brawl in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on August 5, 1951. I didn't do research on what any of those were, because there's, there's too much and like, I don't want to hear more raids and bullshit.

- Yeah.

- And the other, the last two, in 1966, there's Compton's Cafeteria raid in San Francisco, and the Black Cat raid in Los Angeles. I feel like I never say Los Angeles correctly. Anyways.

- Did you read about the Compton Cafeteria raid, by the way?

- I, yes, a little bit, but I didn't take any notes. So I forgot.

- Because, okay, so this was one of the most, I like this one because it's like one of the most badass moments I've ever heard. But that one started because a trans woman was sipping on coffee. And then the police tried to grab her so she threw the coffee at him in his face. And then everyone started pouring hot beverages onto the cops. Like, are you fucking kidding me? That's so cool.

- You know what cops like? Coffee and donuts. And gay bashing.

- Whew.

- I should not be laughing about this.

- No, but we're we're making it through the episode.

- Yeah, anyway we can, so.

- Yup.

- So, all that to say that any of these events could have been the catalysts for the Pride movement as it became after Stonewall, and yet Stonewall's the one that people remember, and not those other events.

- Yeah, there's a lot of, some of the discussion I saw around that, too, was that Stonewall was primarily a gay, male, a cis-gay male bar. And so even though there were queens, and there were lesbians, and there were dikes, and drag kings, it was primarily a gay male bar, and that's why it ended up being the one that got the most recognition, whereas a lot of the others were led by trans women. So.

- Right. The other explanations that I've heard is that there was almost like a media ban on covering any of that, like, it wasn't acceptable to even see that queer people were fighting for their rights? But the people that were at Stonewall didn't let people shut them up about what happened, and just kept talking and talking and talking.

- Yeah, well, and Craig Rodwell, this is what I was going to mention, and the reason why he's in my notes, is he actually, the very first thing he did is he shouted gay power, and then ran home to grab his camera to take a bunch of pictures. None of the pictures turned out, by the way. But he also.

- That happens.

- This was back when it wasn't just digital cameras and everyone had one. But what he also did was he immediately, on his run back to the bar, called The New York Times and The Post and like some other major news networks, so that there would be news coverage of this event.

- Nice. Good work.

- Yeah. Yeah. He got to the news before the cops could get to themselves for backup.

- Yeah. All right. All right. So should we get into get into the cops?

- Get into what Stonewall was to begin with?

- Sure. What the...

- Because we still haven't touched that.

- Yeah. What the bar was?

- Yeah. So Stonewall was, as we mentioned, run by the mafia. At the time, that was sort of the only way that gay people could go out drinking because it was illegal. I heard rumours that it was covered in mirrors so that you could talk to people without having to look them in the face. But also people would dance together. So I'm kind of curious what that would mean. The main thing about Stonewall though, was that it was kind of like a shithole. But it was a shithole where people were allowed to be. So they didn't have any running water except for in the washrooms, so they would wash all of their glasses with just a giant tub behind the bar. And then they would just dip their glasses and shake them around and then pull them out to pour the next drink.

- That is absolutely disgusting.

- Fucking disgusting. Like, it was a thing. Like you did not get a cocktail at Stonewall.

- Noted.

- It was, yeah, not a thing. The other thing was that...

- The patrons may have been fruity, but the drinks sure weren't.

- Oh, disgusting. Still nasty. They were raided regularly. So, that was something that gay people were just used to at the time, was that your bar would get raided every week, every couple of weeks, and Stonewall would actually pay off the cops. So usually the raids would come in around 9 PM, they would arrest one or two people who they would consider cross-dressing, and then they would take their money and leave. Like check everyone's IDs, and then they'd be on their way. So for cis white gay men, usually not that big of a deal.

- No, it's fine. I should say that the definition of cross-dressing in New York City at the time was not wearing at least three items of clothing that were of the gender on your ID.

- Which is why scared drag queens dressed the way that they did, because then they would have the pants, they would have the shirt, and then they would say their boxers were men's clothes.

- Yeah, that works.

- They would also usually end up arresting the staff because it would be a mafia shakedown would be what they would say it was for. So the Stonewall would only hire gay and or trans staff members so that when they got arrested for doing mafia work, it wasn't actually anyone from the mafia.

- I hate that.

- Yeah. So the, also just like random fact.

- Yes.

- Which is just like, I just think it's like kind of funny. Apparently the owner of Stonewall has the most mafia name ever, and his name is Big Tony. I know.

- That's real? It sounds like a joke. Like what is this an SNL sketch?

- I saw that very briefly mentioned, or sorry, I heard it briefly mentioned in one of my references so I could be completely wrong with this, but I thought it was hilarious.

- That's hilarious. Either way.

- Okay, so in the. Have you seen the Stonewall Veterans Society website?

- No, I haven't.

- Okay.

- Maybe I? Oh no, I think yes, I have, but not in this research.

- So, it is, it's exactly what you imagine a bunch of gay boomers would do as a website. It's so pink. There's so many fonts. There's rainbows everywhere.

- Oh my god. I'm on the website. It's beautiful.

- It's just pushing HTML to its very lowest.

- All right, go on. What are these? What are these songs?

- So there's Aquarius "Let the Sun Shine In" from *Hair*, "My Way" by Frank Sinatra, "Come Together" by The Beatles, "Make Your Own Kind of Music," by The Mamas and the Papas, "Suspicious Minds," by Elvis Presley. And a bunch of songs that I didn't know that were by Jackson Five, Aretha Franklin, The Beach Boys, Stevie Wonder, Frankie Valli, Marvin Gayes, gays? Freudian slip. And generally that kind of Motown and pop rock boy band sort of music. So that's the atmosphere, just to put you in.

- Okay. Before we go too far into that, though, um, the atmosphere was very different because it was two separate rooms, Stonewall. So there was what was called the White Room and what was called the Black Room.

- This is not at all racism, don't worry about it.

- It's important to put out, to mention that the entire bar was painted black. In both rooms.

- Again, not racism. Don't think about it. Don't think about the fact that the black room was also called the Puerto Rican room.

- That was the dance floor.

- Yeah.

- Yeah.

- Yeah. So there were two very different vibes at the Stonewall.

- Yeah, so the, that music was the dance room music. The front room sounded more, just kind of mostly boring people sitting around and chatting. And that's where the people who could pass as not too queer would hang out. And sometimes there'd be entertainment. And the other room is where the fun happened.

- Yeah, yeah. Very much that.

- And also apparently, like, I couldn't, I couldn't quite make sense of that. But they were seeing that the front door was like solid steel?

- No idea.

- And that annoyed the cops because they could just like, close it and not get bothered? But I don't know. That sounds like a fire hazard. Anyways.

- I mean, the whole thing was a fire hazard. So the reason the bar was painted entirely black was because they didn't want to repair the fire damage from previously.

- Yeah, it used to be a horse stable. And have you ever met a gay bar where anyone wants to repair anything?

- Yeah, the lesbian bar.

- Yeah, they're just looking for an excuse to go to Home Hardware, but that was the 60s. I'm not sure they let women into that store.
- Stop, I was gonna, I was gonna be like, of course women were at Stonewall. You meant hardware... Help. Anything else we want to we want to say about Stonewall as a building or as community space?
- No, I think I got all of my facts out.
- Me too. I do have, I found the capacity.
- Ooh, what was that?
- So the cap, the capacity was 185 patrons plus five employees. So there were about 205 people in the bar of the night of Stonewall.
- Jesus.
- Sounds about right.
- That place is so small.
- Yeah.
- Okay.
- The whole bar was perfectly legal.
- Yes.
- Yeah. It was a shithole.
- And that's how we liked it.
- Alright, so now that we've we've finished the pre-ramble of Stonewall, the historical context, let's get into the actual event of the night itself, shall we?
- Right. So June 29th, 27th, 1969 was the day of the funeral of Judy Garland, who was both a gay icon and a former patron of the Stonewall.
- Was she a former patron of the Stonewall?
- Rumours say she used to go there.
- Really? That's ridiculous.
- Yeah.

- Wild. So this is rumoured to have been the reason why the Stonewall was so busy that night, and also why the gays were so upset that night. What does your research say?

- My research says that some people say that it had nothing to do with Judy Garland, and other people say that everything to do with Judy Garland.

- The, okay so, I heard from one historian that the only reason Judy Garland was even brought into the discussion is because it was like, articles written, apparently it was homophobic articles that were written that were like, all the gays are so mad about Judy Garland that they beat up the cops. And that's where that rumour apparently started.

- Look, whatever it gets the press to admit that the cops were beaten by gays, I'll roll with.

- Mm. Mhmm. True. I'll take it. So that was also the night that the Stonewall uprising happened. So for the backstory on the police side, Seymour Pine was the officer sort of responsible for this raid. He decided to go a couple nights after the place had just been raided. And he wasn't, he was super like anti-corruption. He did not accept any sort of like money or payment or anything for his raids. And he's an interesting guy. He has since become an LGBTQ activist, which is interesting because he was the one who raided Stonewall, and said that it was entirely a mafia run and had nothing to do with the gays being gay. So that's interesting, but he decided to go and raid the bar at 1:20 in the morning, which was also very unheard of. Usually these raids happened at 9am.

- 9am or 9pm?

- Pm, sorry. So the bar was full. It was a weekend. It was super late at night, and this was completely unheard of at that location.

- Okay, I'm sorry, I'm distracted, because we just took some recycling out of the carpark where I'm recording. And there's a chicken that just loves the recycling. And now she's very distraught.

- Oh, no.

- It's like, where's my garbage?

- Baby, baby. I was wondering what you were distracted about. What a chaos episode.

- We knew it was gonna be this way. So. All right. I was gonna say so they came in with only six officers at this unusual time.

- And they also, so initially it was six officers, but they had earlier in the evening sent in two female and two male officers to sort of like scope out the place. The two male officers returned, but the two female officers did not. And one of my favorite rumours, which is so out of left field, is that one of them was actually a lesbian and decided to just stay.

- Okay, I want to one up you on that, and be like, it just sounds like they were like, well, we're already here, might as well go on our date.

- Like, okay, but think about it. I hate the police. Sorry, that's not what I was about to say. But that's how I was feeling.

- But also true.

- Yeah. Especially that, okay, so we know the numbers better for things like voluntary conscription around World War Two, where it was like the vast majority of women who signed up for the army were lesbians, right? So I wouldn't be surprised at that point. Any woman who would take a job as a police officer was already not entirely following all gender rules.

- Fair. True. True.

- But then, why. I don't want to know why people want to do that to themselves.

- Trauma.

- True. Okay, so what happened?

- So, yeah. So, the cops went in, the six of them. They turned all the lights off. They said we're shutting this party down. The weirdest so, sorry, I'm gonna add one more weird backstory. This is the first time that any of the cops at Stonewall had like gotten a permit to, a warrant, sorry, to actually like take down the bar. And so they got a warrant to take the physical bar, to take all of the drinks, and the jukebox.

- That's so weird.

- Yeah. Yeah. So yeah, anyway. So they go in, they go to shut down the party, they start IDing everyone. And then that's sort of where the myth of Stonewall gets a little fuzzy. But the things that we

do know for sure, and feel free to butt in at any point, is that people started to come out slowly, usually around one minute intervals, the, let, releasing people from the bars happened very slowly. And so when people started going out, they sort of didn't disperse like they usually would have, they all stuck around and waited for their friends to get out. They waited for other people to get out. So people started to use this as an opportunity to to be silly and move around. So people would start coming out, they would start voguing, they would start saluting to the police in a very sarcastic manner, and sort of be like I'm free, I made it out. And then, after a couple of people came out, then the police started to bring out those that they had arrested inside, and were going to arrest. And this is when, you know, the crowd was already feeling very rambunctious. This is when people started to really get, you know, pissed off, because they were like, okay, now you're like making a show out of taking all of our friends out of here. So there's a couple people that are like noted of being taken out, one of them I've mentioned before, which is called the Stonewall lesbian, who was being put into the paddy wagon and then looked at the crowd and shouted, why don't you just do something? And then the crowd burst out into, and starts fighting back. Another was, and I have these notes on my phone, one second.

- So, okay, whilst you're looking those up. The crowd at that point included both people who were inside the bar, and people who just like were out in the neighbourhood, and also the people that had been like, gathered around from like, people going to nearby bars and like calling them, their friends and things like that to bulk it out. So you've already said there were over 200 people, so many people in the bar.

- There were already just over 200 people in the bar, and then the crowd at that point had gotten to between 500 and 600 people.

- Okay.

- So another one is Tammy Novak, who was quoted to have swung her purse at police who were trying to put her into the paddy wagon. Another one being Raymond Castro, who was handcuffed by police but fought back. This one's really cool. So he, apparently he was handcuffed, and it's like from a frickin

movie scene, he put his feet up on the back of the van, and then pushed back and knocked the police over.

- Nice.

- So these are the three, the Stonewall lesbian, who is unnamed, rumoured to be Stormé DeLarverier, Tammy Novak, and Raymond Castro. You'll notice none of them are Marsha P. Johnson or Sylvia Rivera.

- It's almost as if what they did that was important wasn't that night or in that place or, you know?

- Yeah. Yeah.

- Okay. So I do want to point out, I guess now's a good enough time, that the uprising lasted for longer than just that one night. So it went on until like, at least sunrise on June 28. But then people did meet back up and protest again, the following night, and the following night, and then again, the evenings of July 2nd and 3rd. So that's why, sometimes people think that it was like a three day protest. Sometimes they say it was a five night uprising. And both of the accounts are true, because people just needed some days off, apparently.

- Listen, I would too.

- Yeah.

- Yeah. Yeah, it also, and I think, I think this is one of the reasons why Stonewall ended up being sort of like the birthplace of gay liberation, was that it was yearly recognized. And, again, Craig Rodwell, who I mentioned before, is one of the reasons why there were yearly marches. He was the one to bring it to the to the Gay Liberation Front to say, hey, we should have a yearly march to commemorate Stonewall.

- Yep. So some of the other things that happened during those evenings included, the protesters threw coins at the police to symbolize the fact that police was often getting paid off to stop those raids. And they formed a can-can line, which I thought was a hilarious detail.

- I have a recording...

- You do?

- ...of the can-can line song. This is from the shitty movie *Stonewall*, but this is one of the things that they sort of like commemorated in that movie. Do you want to hear it?
- Yes, I do.
- Okay, hold on.
- Can you imagine if I'd said no?
- I'd be like okay, that's fine. And then I'd cut this conversation out. So this is, this is from the Stonewall movie. This is during the sort of like uprising scene. So there's, there is some background noise, just.
- I cannot believe what I'm looking at right now
- That's about it.
- That is hilarious, thank you for finding that. And thank me for the beautiful segue into it.
- That was beautiful.
- So if you couldn't hear it, the lyrics are, We are the Stonewall girls, we wear our hair in curls, we wear no underwear., we show our pubic hair, which the movie switched Stonewall out for village, but whatever.
- Still goals. Goals.
- So beautiful.
- The participants called the uprising both beautiful and terrifying, is a quote I found. And, yeah, so aside from the fun things, the, of course, as is bizarrely famous, some brick throwing and Molotov cocktails use? And the...
- Okay, so this was this was a distinction that I learned through this. A Molotov cocktail is apparently very different than what they did, which is they used lighter fluid from like handheld lighters, and then lit things on fire. But they used that as a way to trick the cops into thinking they were Molotov cocktails.
- That is indeed not a Molotov cocktail.
- Yeah.
- If you want to know what a Molotov cocktail is listen to our Tom of Finland episode.
- I was thinking of that when I, when I was like, okay wait, so what did they do?

- And the protests weren't just about the actions of the police in that specific time and place. But it was really protesting the generalized system of oppression and humiliation that queer people faced when trying to simply exist and socialize in public.

- Yeah, yeah. I don't know what else to add from the night itself. If you have other things?

- About the night itself? About, okay, I have a note about the word riot. So the, some of the Stonewallers have also said that they don't like the use of the word riot, because that's what police call it to justify their force.

- Yeah, I do, I did. I did want to know Marsha and Sylvia, because this discussion has become a big part of the Stonewall discussion. And I think Queer is Fact, which is a podcast that I listen to, in their episode of this, they have a really good discussion of where this conversation comes from and what the conversation is, is that, was it, was it Raymond? Was it Marcia? Or was it Sylvia, who sort of started the Stonewall uprising? And the discussion there is really sort of, who has the main hold on the gay liberation movement and the LGBTQ movement in general? And it kind of erases the fact that it was a whole group of a lot of different people who were fighting this. But the discussion is, like, when we talk about that, it's kind of like saying, was it trans people, was it lesbians, or was it gay people who started this movement. And the answer is...

- Yes.

- Trans people and lesbians did a lot of the work for the movement, but also there are gay people who did a lot of work as well.

- Yeah, like, as much as I hate the acceptable queer thing like, people weren't ready to hear Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson. They were ready to hear Harvey Milk or other, you know, more normal quote unquote people. Okay. So, about what happens to the inn, it tried to reopen. It had lost its liquor license, so it got converted into juice bar that eventually closed completely in December 1969. So it got listed as a national monument on in June 1999. So, 30 years after the uprising. It had over the years housed various businesses that it, since March 12, 2007, the address, 53 Christopher Street, which is

only one half of what the original location was, has been reopened as the Stonewall Inn. You can still go, if you're ever in New York City.

- Yeah, in terms of the gay and queer movement, from the Stonewall uprising came yearly reminder marches in New York. We talked about STAR which was created by Marcia and Sylvia. The Gay Liberation Front was also something that was created shortly after by Bob Kohler, who was close friends with, I believe was close friends with Marcia and Sylvia.

- So with tisa, we are going to talk about the 2015 movie. But before we get there, is there anything else you want to mention?

- Aw geez. I, okay, this was just a random fun fact. But the back room, the fun room, had a full-sized wishing well. Just a fun fact. And that's where they kept all of the booze.

- Nice. Okay. So I have another fun fact, which is about adaptations and retelling of Stonewall. In 1994, there was a musical play called *Stonewall, Night Variations...*

- Oh my god.

- ...that opened in theatre in New York City, and also had some site specific productions on docks and back alleys.

- Oh my God, I need to see this.

- I don't. Well, there might be videos of it. I haven't looked them up.

- There must, there must be a script somewhere. And there must be some footage of someone doing this one time.

- Yes. Also in 1995, so one year later, there was a movie that was also called *Stonewall* that came out that was a fictionalization of Martin Duberman's memoir. And that film includes documentary footage and lip sync numbers. Because the gays in the 90s just knew what was up.

- Oh my gosh, that's beautiful. That's stunning. That sounds like Linda Evangelista. Did you stone that musical?

- Okay, so. Let's get to 2015.

- So in 2015, there was a film called *Stonewall* that was made. And it follows the life of some guy from the country named Danny, who goes to New York, because he got kicked out of his house and he meets all of these people that, none of them, they like, they all have names, but like, none of them are people that I recognized. And then there are people that are recognized, but they're like side characters. So like my absolute favourite is that Marsha ends up getting handcuffed at like the uprising, because like they can't have her in the actual scenes because the whole thing is supposed to be about the unsung heroes, and Marsha's a known name. So she ends up being handcuffed to this guy from the mafia named Ed. And then, this is a reflection of like something that actually happened, but not to Marsha. And then they got out of the van, the paddy wagon, and they like ran around until they could find someone who was in the S&M community to unlock their handcuffs. Which is what actually happened, by the way. Not to those people, but there is a story about that.

- Oh my god, that's so good. Where's our stone butch tab, we have a problem.

- And alright, so here's, here's my favorite. So they use the brick in the movie. There's a lot of things that are just like, what the fuck is happening, but this is my favorite. They use the brick in the movie. And one of the characters who is a black trans woman goes to throw the brick, and then Danny takes it from her and goes, no, you can't do this. And then he runs in his head, all of the bad things that happen. And then he's like, you're right. This is messed up, and he throws the brick.

- Fucking white man.

- And he starts the uprising. Because he's the main character.

- Of course he is.

- It was, yeah. But there were a lot of close ups of people's underwear. And that was nice. Do you have anything else you want to say about Stonewall after this chaos of a 'sode?

- No.

- All right.

- Don't be a chicken, send us to all of your friends. Who are you sending this episode to?

- I'm sending this episode to someone who wants to start learning about queer history, because Stonewall's a pretty natural place to start. So why not start with this show?

- Awesome.

- Oh god. All right. Have a good one.

- Bye.

- Bye.

HOST:

Hi listeners, Leslie here, again, and I am not doing great. I need to calm down. I need the world to stop spinning because you know, when you're already upset, and then the slightest thing can make the world feel like it's gonna explode. Well, I'm trying to avoid that because exploding wouldn't be very survival of me. So, Gabbi Greco is here with a mindful moment to remind us that our heads are still attached to our bodies, and that nothing is on fire. Yet.

Gabbi Greco - MINDFUL MOMENT 1, BREATH

It's time to slow things down. For a mindful moment. With programsound. This mindful moment is dedicated to mindful breathing. Learning how to focus on the breath allows us to ground ourselves in the present moment, relieve stress, and reestablish inner calm. Let's get ourselves into a comfortable position. Sitting on the ground, on a chair, lying on the floor, on a bed, couch, whatever feels good. Allow your eyes to close. Relax your jaw, shoulders, and any other tension you might feel in your body.

Take a big breath in, and out. Become aware of your breath. The natural cycle of your breath. Feel the cool air travel in through your nostrils and softly into your lungs. And exhale. Feel the warmth of your breath release. Breathing in for three seconds and out for three seconds is a good natural rhythm. For diaphragmatic breathing, place one hand on your belly and the other hand on your heart. Feel your belly raise and lower as you breathe in and out. This is the best kind of breathing to increase oxygen in the blood, cleanse toxins, and relax. Maybe by now some thoughts have come into your mind. Objectively notice them and then let them go, like these rad radio frequencies moving through the air right in front of you. Every time you get distracted by a thought, bring your attention back to your breath. Rest in the rhythm of breathing in and breathing out for a few more moments. We are coming to the end of our mindful moment. So let's gently open our eyes. And together take one big final breath. All the way in, and all the way out. Thanks for joining the mindful moment. With programsound.

HOST:

Okay, listeners, it's Leslie here, back and zen as ever. So, there are some days where the world just won't stop. And you hear all the sounds. You know when they stop being individual sounds and instead just become a whole lot of noise? It starts to pulse, its overwhelming rhythm, a barrage of dread and auditory claustrophobia. It's very easy to feel surrounded. But sometimes, when you wake up on the right side of the nest, you don't hear all those noises all at once. It becomes less of a matter of noise and it's just sounds. That's all they are. You can tune in as you see fit. But on days like today, maybe you just need to be. This feeling could change. It will. And that's okay. Sit with me. Now I'm serious. Yeah, let's do this. Get back in that comfortable position, wherever it was. And we will sit. Settle in, close your eyes. Let's find some of that calm again, and don't let it leave. What's a thing you're grateful for today? It can be anything, doesn't have to be tangible. I'm grateful for this moment, just to sit. I mean, I do a lot of sitting. But at this moment, I'm able to enjoy it before any of the fear swoops in. [caw, caw] False alarm, listener. A bird swooped close, but it did not see me and it did not eat me and it is now gone. That's a win! Wow, I'm gonna let that one go. Shake that off. Yeah. Oh, anyway. What are

you grateful for? Yeah, something recent or near. But trust the first thing that comes to your mind, you know? Inhale it. Really visualize it. Mine is relief. Sorry, I probably should have given you more time there. But fuck. Relief is one of my favorite feelings. It's like adrenaline for people who have really small comfort zones. I don't seek out the thrill, not me. The five steps I take out into the world every day are enough to cause sudden death. But you know, it doesn't. And isn't that a fucking relief? Nice. Or even when something simply doesn't become your problem anymore? You know, I would be addicted to relief if it didn't cause so much anxiety immediately beforehand. But this? Oh, this is nice. To sit in relief, an underrated pleasure. You know, I'm content with this, this company, with me and you. Is that weird? You know, even if you do think it is weird, I can't hear you. But I like to think you're there. And you're just sitting with me. And we're super zen, you know? We're zen, we're calm. And you know as thoughts are coming, we can just, just let them go. Let them go. Just like Gabbi said, let the thoughts go. Okay, okay, a thought's coming. I realized I have been standing still. I've been, I've been standing still. I know it's funny I'm saying that as we're sitting still, but I've been standing still. In a sort of new home, which is great, because that's never something I thought I would really have. But, a part of me hates that I'm saying this, but my world is small. It is kind of small. And I made it that way. And maybe I ought to get into the practice of leaving and expanding it just a little more in the hopes of living stories like the ones I hear on the radio instead of just hearing them? I'm afraid I won't ever have my own stories. So I'll go bit by bit. Tiny steps. The only steps I am capable of. So, okay, I am departing from my favourite metal box for an excursion to that tree just over there. I need a better view, and I will be walking. For now. Thank you very much. Meanwhile, I will be throwing it to Jacqui du Toit, station correspondent, to bring perspectives from all kinds of beings, old and young. Okay. I'm off.

Jacqui Du Toit - Social Weaver Podcast EP1, Artur

Hello, everyone, and welcome to the Social Weaver podcast. My name is Jacqui Du Toit, and I am your host, your storyteller of the day. For today I'm going to share with you the magical tale of the Social Weaver and what its purpose was. And then we're going to meet some wise young souls who are going to share with us their wisdom of the day. Are you ready? Are you ready for a beautiful story? Yes. Then let's begin with our magic words. Once upon a time...

The Social Weaver is a beautiful, tiny little bird found in the Northern Cape, a province in the southern regions of Africa. The bird is tiny with a sharp beak. And the bird is known for building the largest nests in the world. These nests are built in acacia trees or on telephone poles that can sometimes house over 100 different species of birds, as well as some predators. These birds are known for bringing community and weaving together a safe space for other birds to come in and find a home and a community. It was through this bird that I was inspired to also have the tattoo of the bird on my back. Being someone who loves to travel and spread her wings and fly, I saw myself as this little Social Weaver bird. And through the arts, and what I do in the art of storytelling, I found ways to build community with other little birds who have also been traveling around the world seeking community. And it was through the art of storytelling that helped me weave these beautiful stories together. I do hope that you enjoy the next few minutes in listening to these wonderful stories as much as what I did. Now, it's time for our first story. I hope you enjoy.

- Yeah, so, my name is Artur, I'm 12 years old. I'm about to thirteen. I'm from Ukraine. I moved here like six months ago, because me and my mom were running from war. It's hard to think about philosophy of life when things like that are going on. But I'm trying my best to stay calm and like, practice my mental health, because that's really what matters to me.

- And how you practicing your mental health?

- So like, each morning, I start with saying like, saying to myself what things I'm proud of, like, and what do I enjoy my life, what I'm like, grateful for. Usually, I say like, I'm healthy, I have family, I have friends. I have place to live, I have enough money to buy food. I'm like not a person in need.

- And what brings you joy?
- Well, most of it is being with my family and doing what I love.
- What is that?
- Well, playing games with my friends, going out for walks. Just doing basic stuff that makes me happy.
- I love your philosophy of life. And how do you find living in Canada in the past six months? How has it been for you?
- It was really good. Initially I feel like I want to go back to Ukraine.
- You want to go back?
- No, not really.
- Oh okay. Oh, you said you don't want to go back. Nice. And I see you sitting here by the river enjoying the river. How are you feeling right now?
- I feeling really happy because I can say stuff like that.
- Nice. Nice. And if you have any words of wisdom you'd like to pass on to someone, what would it be?
- I'm basically grateful for every person, like persons who are good to me, and ones who are bad to me. Because when someone is good to me, it's, they make me feel really nice. But if someone is bad to me, they're example to me like, what I don't have to be, and what people can be.
- That is so beautiful, and so wise. Thank you. Thank you for sharing. That was lovely.
- Thank you so much.
- Thank you for being on the podcast.

Victoria Wang - On Michelle Branch

On Michelle Branch, High School Bands, and Finding My Voice.

One. All you wanted.

I am tracing back the origin stories and threads of my creative voice. Let's talk about Michelle Branch. If there ever was a pop idol for me, she was the one. More so than Britney, Christina, even the Spice Girls. Michelle inspired me to learn the guitar, beg for lessons in China, continue to teach myself and write songs. Writing songs led to forming my high school band, Velvet, which led to two of my closest friendships with my bandmates that I still share to this day. A memory from that time in my life recently resurfaced. And I've been holding on to it as a symbol of my self energy, a core confidence and resolve that in this decade has felt so much further away. I was around 12 or 13. And there was a talent contest in Hong Kong where I grew up. I cannot remember where or how I heard about it, probably on the radio, but it was a city wide Talent Search. I recorded myself on cassette tape singing a Michelle Branch song, most likely "All You Wanted," mailed it in, and can't remember to whom or where. It gets a bit hazy, but next time the memory refocuses, I'm at a live version of the auditions, the next round. Part of me questions if this was a dream, but it definitely happened. It was at a mall, somewhere central, somewhere I got to myself unaccompanied except for my acoustic guitar and its cheap cloth case. This was very much a local talent show, local as in Cantonese speaking participants, local as in Cantopop-based edition selections, people singing off of backing tracks. So I stood out like some country bumpkin with my English cover of Michelle Branch. I don't remember much of the process, except that I was on a different, possibly misguided wavelength, but that it seemed to be well received, if not by whoever was judging, then by the other contestants there. I look at this memory of my pre-teen self and it's basically like, fuck yeah, you go. I was shy and quiet and awkward and had stage fright. But it was something I just did because I wanted and decided to. Because Michelle Branch inspired me to use my voice, even if it was an imitation of hers. I want it to be like you, I wanted everything, so I tried to be like you, and I got swept away.

Two. Goodbye to you.

Michelle Branch released her hit debut album *The Spirit Room* in 2001, the same year my band, Velvet, was inceptioned in grade eight. After a few iterations, including one original member moving to New Zealand, one failed attempt to recruit a much more musically-gifted peer, and one ill-fated venture into emo, we finally landed on a lineup and sounded that felt as authentic as possible for three nerdy teenage girls, before being a nerd was considered cool. There was Lydia on vocals, myself on guitar and vocals, and Connie, a classically-trained pianist, on keyboard. By our senior year, we had played a handful of school concerts and gained considerable respect for our original songs, harmonies, and a cover of "Stolen" by Dashboard Confessional which we inexplicably decided to remix with the theme song of a 1982 British Christmas animation called "The Snowman." The school even recorded an album of various student bands which included us, featuring a song I wrote about Jack and Rose on the Titanic. But despite the grandiose fantasies of stardom and touring the world with my bandmates, these projections functioned more as an outlet for my overactive imagination. Truth be told, I never was able to get over my stage fright, and while the process of creating music and writing songs lit me up, their public presentation was never half as enjoyable. The obligations of higher education and graduation plans meant that Velvet eventually had to disband out of necessity. By the time I was preparing to move to Canada for university, Michelle Branch had also entered a hiatus in her solo career. I somewhat kept up with her as she ventured into country music with The Records, who dissolved after one album, and also got married and became a mother in her personal life. Like Velvet, it felt like she was to be a fond memory in my make-believe rockstar days. As her prominence in the 2000s music scene faded, so did my mimetic desire to be on stage and in the spotlight. Perhaps it makes sense then that I eventually developed my creative voice behind the scenes, pursuing theatre production and stage management.

Three. Where are you now?

I quickly got sucked into my college's drama society at the University of Toronto. And it was there that I got my first taste of stage managing. By the time I was calling queues to our student production of *Rent* in my final year, I was hooked. One gap year of Fringe shows and three years of theatre school in

Montreal later, I was back in the Big Smoke, hungry for apprenticeships and my equity card. I loved everything about stage managing, facilitating the precious act of creation, collaborating with creative minds, bearing witness to the full process from page to stage, and the privilege of holding the most intimate knowledge of a production. Still, while I was convinced I had found my calling in this role, the search for my voice continued to be a work in progress. I remember being told by a director and producer after stage managing a week-long workshop, that they had decided to move on to someone else for the production because they needed a quote, stronger voice in the room. I was hurt and disappointed, but I also recognized the kernel of truth in their feedback. In theatre school, I was praised for my maturity and grounding energy, but I often questioned the compatibility between my introverted personality and a leadership role. In the balancing act between speaking and listening, I naturally tilted towards the latter. I'd argue now that listening is a much more valuable skill to possess, but there's a difference between choosing to say less, and being afraid to say more. Part of it was a general anxiety around public speaking, the older cousin to the stage fright on my high school days. And part of it was the baggage from my conservatory training, which scrutinized every detail of our mannerisms, skills, and instincts in the name of creating a consummate professional. I was a consummate professional, but I had also internalized that being a good stage manager meant always being discreet, agreeable, and maintaining the status quo. This, on top of code switching in the predominantly white spaces and institutions I worked in, resulted in an uncomfortable division between my private and public self. What happens then, when your most private unfiltered inside voice finally outs itself for better or worse?

Four. The trouble with fever.

On August 11, 2022, at 1:28am, Michelle Branch sent out a tweet accusing her husband, Patrick Carney from The Black Keys, of cheating on her while she was at home taking care of their six-month-old baby. She named the woman in question before deleting the tweet and following up with a public statement announcing her split from Kearney. More dramatic details emerged. Police were called in response to a domestic dispute. Michelle was arrested, then released on bail. She filed for divorce

before they decided to try reconciling, etc. etc.. All this coincided with the release of her fourth studio album, *The Trouble with Fever*, co-produced by Kearney, with songs presciently themed around lust, anger, and betrayal. You are not my lover, you are not my lover, you were just a lesson that I learned. When you said you didn't love her, you were just a liar. Just a lonely bridge I had to burn. Never in a million years did I expect to see Michelle join the ranks of celebrity mug shots, but it is her initial tweet that I find most intriguing and humanizing. The impulsive yet casual call out, complete with a shrug emoji, a throwaway tone belying a burn-it-down rage that had us fans ready to go to war for her. Who among us hasn't lost composure at some point, and said something we knew would be at our detriment, yet would also be worth the small amount of agency and satisfaction granted for a few seconds? During one of my early apprenticeships, an audience member, upon seeing me waiting with a bucket and mop to clean up a bloody finale on stage, approached and made a patronizing comment along the lines of, aren't you glad you went to school for that? As she walked away and I went on stage to clean, her words burning in my ears, I started to hear what I can only describe as a slow pulsing electric guitar in my head. The triggers set off were manifold. My own insecurities, versions of my parents' concerns about the path I'd chosen, the unjust social and racial dynamics towards cleaning staff in general. All this swirled into an Arctic resolve that hijacked my prefrontal cortex as I walked out the theatre into the lobby where she was standing, and said simply, why would you say something like that, don't speak to me like that, before walking back into the theatre. Reader, this is not the reaction I would choose now in response to such a scenario. But standing up for myself in that moment was almost worth the fallout with management in the following days. I won't go into the details of how I was intimidated into making an apology, threatened with being blacklisted, how as an apprentice I really thought that was it for my career, how my voice retreated and fell back in line as quickly as it had come to my defence. The trouble with always biting your tongue is the gradual erosion of your self trust and integrity. The trouble with speaking up is the bridges others will try to burn in retaliation.

Five. Find your way back.

When I finally saw Michelle Live in Concert, it was in 2017 at The Phoenix in Toronto. She was touring her first album in a decade, *Hopeless Romantic*. I didn't get tickets in time and had to buy them off someone in a Facebook group. I convinced my friend Diana to come with me. She mixed Michelle up with Vanessa Carlton until well into the concert. The guy I was seeing at the time and trying not to be a hopeless romantic about also had no clue who she was when I told him about the concert, which I found personally injurious. Michelle came out in a Playboy bunny t-shirt and jeans. Same shoulder-length dark hair, smoky eyeliner, cradling different guitars throughout the night. She opened with not a love song off of the new album, a breakup anthem equal parts Carly Simon and Taylor Swift. Of course, I was losing my mind, but in a mood closer to reuniting with an old friend than feeling anointed by a deity. She gestured for more volume on her mic, because a pro knows what they need and deserve. She sounded good, no great. Grounded, strong but easeful, in her skin, happy, I was reminded by how much I love her as a vocalist. The purr and crackle of her lower register, halfway between singing and speaking, or the way she can ride through vowels, drawing them out like a cat's yawn before spitting the end off a cliff. It's not vocal gymnastics so much as an intimate understanding of one's own voice as an instrument. Her new songs too sounded lived in. Melancholic, but assured. The themes, questions, and longings from her 17-year-old self still there, as they inevitably are in all of us, but honoured through a lens of wisdom and openness. I keep talking but no one listens. And I keep hearing things that I can't understand. And I see beauty and disaster. And I'm just trying to figure out who I am. It was the same summer of my first equity contract as a stage manager. Yep, I was still working, and my fear of being blacklisted forever had thankfully been put to rest. I had survived my unprofessional transgression. And it would be another five years before Michelle's own public outburst hit the internet. It would be too simple to narrativize the incident from that apprenticeship as a turning point, the moment I found my voice and rode off into the sunset. The lessons around negotiating and calibrating my own instrument would continue, with more missteps, mistakes, and pivotal moments of clarity and realization. Life continues to present multiple arenas within which to figure out who I am. And I've been

blessed by so many teachers, other stage managers, directors, actors, friends, bosses, therapists. I learned about and participated in talking circles. I learned to ask for what I want and deserve. I learned about check-ins and an ethic of care. I learned to negotiate. I learned to ask for more money. I learned to set boundaries. I learned to say yes, to say no. I learned how to quit. I learned how to teach yoga, which coincidentally is another form of cueing that I do pretty well. I'm still learning all these things, inside and outside the rehearsal hall. And like many of us in the past three years, I learned that I'm more than any one job or role or thing that I do. And I think most of all, I've learned to have compassion towards all the voices inside me. The one too scared to sing or speak, the one that will give you a piece of her mind, the one who says the wrong thing, the one who can say the exact right thing, the one who advocates for me and others, and the one that has yet to make herself known. Speaking of honouring all your voices, remember my band, *Velvet*? I'd love to make my 15-year-old dream come true and put us on the radio. From the dusty archives, this one is for you Michelle.

Rina Shimomura - Greeting

Hello everyone, I'm Rina. I am an improviser from Japan. In 2021, I moved from Japan to Vancouver. Nice to meet you. How is it going, everyone? I'm so great. I have finished my dinner, sushi. By the way, I love creating a story with improv. And today I will improvise a story for you. I got two words for the story. The first word is model. This word was given to me by staff, Lucy. Thank you, Lucy. The second word is tree. This word was suggested by my friend Haruka. Thank you, Haruka. Model and tree. I will make.

Once upon a time, there was a tree. It was just a young tree. It was about a meter tall. Its leaves were all green, and it bloomed beautiful flowers. Spring has come! Tweet tweet, tweet tweet, tweet tweet.

One hot summer day, a kid found the tree. Hey there, little tree. You look so thirsty. Oh, would you like some water? And from that day on, they took care of the tree like it had their own. Every single day during the summer, they came to see a tree, and give it some love. One day, the tree started thinking. Hmm. I want to say thank you to the kid. Oh, I have an idea, I will write a letter to them. But how? At that moment, the tree drop it leaves. Oh, this is my way to write a letter. I hope they enjoy my leaves. When the kid came back, they saw this incredible sight. The ground was covered in the colourful carpet of leaves. Wow! This is so beautiful! Thank you, tree. Day after day, the tree kept dropping it leaves, expressing love to the kid. Finally, the tree had dropped every single one. It made the ground all soft and comfy. A big pile of leaves! The kid enjoy this cozy spot so much. Ah, wow, this is so comfortable. I can sleep here. They took a deep breathe and said, mmm, the smell is amazing. This is my favourite place ever. From that day, they enjoyed sleeping on those leaves every single night. One day, the kid didn't wake up. Every fall, the tree kept sending letter by piling up the leaves on them. Years passed. The young tree became old. It became about three meters tall. Its leaves were all green. And it bloomed beautiful flowers. Spring has come again. Tweet tweet, tweet tweet, tweet tweet. The End.

Catherine Gava - Margaret and Daphne

Hi! Yeah, yeah. Come on in. Oh, just watch your step there. There's a little puddle. The plants were just watered. Oh, I, I just I love it here at sunset when everything's watered, the drops in the sun. It just makes everything sparkle. That's a really great jacket. I love that, the pastel green. I can hang it up for you? It's a little humid in the glass house. It's not a big deal, but did you happen to bring your invitation for tonight? With the black and white daisy? It's bordered with laurels? Great, great. Yeah, you can just hold on to it for now. I'll explain everything in just a moment. Welcome to the Botanical Gardens of Flowers and Trees, and to an evening dedicated to Margaret and Daphne. Tonight, I'm sharing the

stories of two women, with a little bit of music inspired by their shared branches in art and floriography. The greenhouse full of blooming flowers, it seemed like the perfect spot to showcase and experience their intertwined stories. It may be that you've never heard of or seen Margaret Watts Hughes's work before. By coincidence, I came across her story while I was reading about sound and music. Her work is displayed along the paths of the gardens, and is also on your invitation. Margaret Watts Hughes was a singer, initially known for capturing musical ears throughout the nineteenth century with opera and hymns. Also important during the century, it was a very fashionable time for floriography, which means the language of flowers, and cleverly coordinating flower arrangements to send symbolic messages to communicate with people. Ah, the invitation with Margaret's work. Right, ah, here. It has this vivid daisy right in the centre with this seemingly tie-dye pattern splashing outwards like this abstract piece of art. The daisy is my favourite part because of how dimensional it is. It, it just looks like a real flower placed right in the centre of the page. Margaret named this one "Daisy Form." Margaret had this great wonderment for the voice, and wanted to figure out what voice vibrations could produce. So it led her to studies, experimentations, explorations, and soon she had developed her own invention called the eidophone. As a musician myself, I was so intrigued and inspired by Margaret's curiosity and passion for exploring music and science and how music extends into life beyond the stage. Her invention allowed her to see her own voice vibrations, and how it can bubble, bounce, and blossom into patterns in a sandy paste. Mysterious landscapes, waves, and splatters became visible. And she saw three octaves of her voice come to life. As her experimenting continued, the patterns sharpened into uncanny images of petals, roots, and branches. "Daisy Form" was one of the flower patterns her voice created. And she called all of these flower forms voice speakers, and went on to publish a reputable scientific paper and book describing her process. I felt excited and amazed with Margaret, reading alongside her findings. How incredible it must have been to see these two beautiful worlds collide. She searched for what her voice would look like. And the answer somewhat happened to already be the talk of the Victorian era, which were conversations of floriography and bouquet arrangements. On display in the gardens, you will find daisies, ferns, chrysanthemums, and marigolds, which are all flower patterns

Margaret witnessed in her voice figures and noted in her 1891 paper "Visible Sounds." Some of the corresponding voice images are exhibited beside the plants as well. We are able to exhibit some of Margaret's work like "Daisy Form" and "Fern Form" because it is in the public domain. In Margaret's catalog, there is another image I was drawn to called "Tree Form." Tree looks almost completely bare, only a few splotches that may be a few leaves, and it has veins glowing from the inside out. The roots appear like liquid waves flowing into the sky, or maybe into an ocean that is behind Tree. "Tree Form" connects us to my second story, which is about Daphne. Tree reminded me of Daphne, in Ovid's Daphne and Apollo. Daphne is a nymph who embraces maidenhood, dashing throughout the woods, declining a future of marriage and motherhood. Apollo is a confident warrior with archery skills, but she believes, are incomparable to Cupid. He looks down on Cupid, viewing him as a young boy incapable of matching him. If Apollo has the nerve to insult Cupid, Cupid will surely put him in his place. So with Cupid's craftiness, calculatedness, and creativity, he strikes Apollo precisely, with an arrow of love, and Daphne with an arrow of repulsion. In Ovid's myth, Apollo's desire for Daphne is described as an easy and quick burning of straw after harvest. The power Apollo once had to heal with plants and herbs are useless against Cupid's feverish arrow of gold. Daphne sprints throughout the forest, desperate to escape Apollo's pursuit, but her speed is not enough. Daphne screams to her father, a river god, for help. She tells him she is willing to relinquish herself to, to change herself to end this chase. And within moments, she is no longer the nymph Apollo adored. She is transformed into a laurel tree, and is behind a new figure of branches and leaves. She is grounded and surrounded for the rest of her life by the forest she grew up sprinting through. But she is never left alone. Apollo embraces her, and Daphne feels his arms close around her. He declares he will keep her presence with him, with crowns and wreaths of laurels, and celebrate, praise, and honour Daphne forever. The stories of Margaret and Daphne inspired me, and made me think about an idea of a possible friendship between these two women. I thought about Margaret introducing Daphne to her work, and the novels of floriography that were popular at the time. Would Daphne be interested in all the symbols and patterns of flowers? Would there be a renewed power of language and flowers? Would Daphne feel less lonely? I imagine

them making a bouquet together, or maybe a crown or wreath, and then pondering what flowers might be in it. I think there could be daisies in the bouquet, for all the lost days of innocence. And marigold, to respect the days of sorrow Daphne felt. It inspired me to write a song reflecting on their stories and their potential friendship.

Margaret and Daphne I have ferns for you,
messages of branches and petals sing to you.

Outside the vase, I think of days where you two talk.

Do you miss seeing daisies?

Only wreaths from Apollo I am told.

Thinking of marigold, laurels taking up space in your brain,

Let's make a place for a bouquet.

Honour, glory, praise in green.

A wreath of more than laurels on a tree.

'Cause Margaret and Daphne I have ferns for you,
messages of branches and petals sing to you.

Outside the vase, I think of days where you two talk.

Wander through the nineteenth century,

years of rings and seasons of crowns.

Running is past but science has caught up.

You hear a friend's voice at last.

Honour, glory, praise in green.

A wreath of more than laurels on a tree.

'Cause Margaret and Daphne I have ferns for you,
messages of branches and petals sing to you.

Outside the vase, I think of days where you two talk.

Thank you for joining and listening to Margaret and Daphne's stories. Please wander throughout the gardens. And hopefully you're encouraged to think about the possible friendship between Margaret and Daphne, the two worlds of sound and flowers colliding, and the traces of music around us. This piece was written and performed by Catherine Gava. The research for Margaret's story can be found in her 1891 paper "Visible Sounds," and her book from 1904, "The Eidophone Voice Figures: Geometrical and Natural Forms Produced by Vibrations of the Human Voice." Fountain_one sound effect by Sky Co. was sourced from freesound.org, CC0 license. Thank you so much to programsound.fm for the opportunity, and to Arya Sharma for all your help and support.