

LIFESTYLE CONTENT

a short play
for stage, screen, Zoom, or
audio by
Lia Romeo

Representation:

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Characters

KIM, 20s, female

KATIE, 20s, female

KELLY, 20s, female

RACHEL, 20s, female

Setting

A conference call

Time

The future, or something like it

(KIM, KATIE, KELLY, and RACHEL are on a conference call. KATIE, KELLY, and RACHEL are wearing cute outfits, makeup, hair and nails done. They look like what they are – staffers at a popular women’s fashion and lifestyle website. KIM is wearing sweats and has her hair in a messy ponytail.)

RACHEL

Okay. Kelly. Go.

KELLY

Okay. Um.
How To Give Yourself an At-Home Manicure.

RACHEL

Didn’t we do that last week?

KELLY

No, I don’t – I don’t think so.

KATIE

We did, we did at-home manicures last week.

KELLY

Really? I’m sorry. I guess there’s just so much that’s happened since then.

RACHEL

What else?

KELLY

Okay. Um. Five Fitness Influencers With Killer Workout Videos.

RACHEL

Well, I don’t like the word killer, but that sounds...

KATIE

Vogue literally had that story up on their site on Tuesday.

KELLY

Really? Well... we could feature different influencers?

KATIE

There aren’t really that many of them left at this point.

KELLY

But I mean, there are more than five, right? There’ve got to be more than five. Right?

RACHEL

Katie. Tell me you have something better.

KATIE

Yes. Okay. So I was thinking a video tutorial... of how to play Pachelbel's Canon on the ukulele.

RACHEL

Hmm. That's promising. Ukelele-related content's been performing really well. What else?

KATIE

Stuck Inside? Don't Lose Your Hard-Earned Tan.
It's a piece on how to make DIY self-tanner out of dirt and rancid butter.

RACHEL

Does that actually work?

KATIE

(turning her head from side to side)

Do I look tan to you?

RACHEL

You do, Katie – you do look very tan. That's great. What else?

KATIE

All Out of Mixers? Ten Yummy Cocktails to Make With Your Own Urine.

RACHEL

Have you tried that?

KATIE

I used it in a French 75 last night. Not as good as lemon juice, but honestly not bad.

RACHEL

Great. Really nice work, Katie – these are all right on brand in terms of providing the kind of aspirational lifestyle content we're known for, and modifying it to be appropriate for the current circumstances.

(KELLY sulks. KATIE beams.)

Kim. How about you? What have you got?

KIM

Shit.

RACHEL

Interesting, tell me more...

KIM

Huh?

RACHEL

What are we doing with shit? Making probiotic pills? Polishing furniture? Using it as eyeliner?

KIM

No I mean, I've got shit. I've got nothing.

(KELLY and KATIE are shocked. Beat.)

RACHEL

Kim, you know our readers are relying on us to help them get through these challenging times with poise and style.

KIM

Are they though?

RACHEL

Kim, we talked about this, when everything first –
We agreed that our readers were really going to want to lean in to self-improvement during this difficult time –

KIM

How many of us were at that first meeting? When we agreed that?

RACHEL

I don't know... twenty?

KIM

And how many of us are still –

(She stops herself before she says "alive." Beat.)

RACHEL

The fact that there are only a few of us staffing the website right now just means it's even more important to come prepared with innovative ideas for content –

KIM

Important for who? How many people do you think are still out there reading?

RACHEL

Okay, it's true that our metrics have been down in the past few days. But I'm confident we can get those numbers back up if we just –

KIM

Are you insane?

I mean I was there with you, I really was. For a while. But everything just keeps getting worse, and we're all stuck inside our little bunkers just waiting for this to –

RACHEL

Kim –

KIM

So it's the end of the world, it really is, and you think people want to read about how to *improve themselves* right now?

RACHEL

Kim, maybe you want to refer back to Katie's piece from Wednesday:
Five Ways to Maintain a Positive Attitude In the Face of a Slow and Horrible Death.

KIM

Yeah, no, I don't. I really don't.

RACHEL

I understand that things are very –
But you know what they say – the show must go on –

KIM

Well, maybe they're wrong. Maybe sometimes the show doesn't need to go on. Maybe sometimes the show should just... stop.

RACHEL

Okay, so I don't necessarily feel like this meeting is going in a productive direction. Maybe we should adjourn for now, and we can reconvene in a couple of hours. And hopefully Kim and Kelly will have come up with some creative ideas by then.

KIM

I'm not going to reconvene in a couple of hours. I only came on this call to tell you all I'm done.

(KELLY and KATIE are shocked.)

KELLY

Kim – you can't – our readers need us –

KIM

What readers? Do you honestly think there are still any readers?

KELLY

I – I don't know, I mean – I think so?

Rachel's the only one who has access to the numbers –

KIM

And why do you think that is?

RACHEL

Because I'm the editor-in-chief.

KIM

You're not the editor-in-chief! Two weeks ago you were an assistant copywriter! And Kelly, you did something with graphics, right? – and Katie was a customer service rep.

KATIE

Reader experience concierge.

KIM

Whatever. And me? I answered phones at the office. You know, back when we had an office. You know, back when we had a world.

(Beat.)

RACHEL

Okay. So you're right. Two weeks I wasn't an editor. But I wanted to be. We all did. That's why we worked here, taking whatever jobs we could get, planning to work our way up.

KIM

Yeah, well, I think it's time for a change of plan.

RACHEL

To what? What else are we going to do? I'm not particularly interested in sitting in my room alone and waiting to die, are you?

I mean, you're right. I don't know how long we'll have readers. I don't know how long we'll have internet. I don't even know how long we'll have power. But for as long as we do, I want to keep delivering wellness and beauty and lifestyle tips to help make life a little sweeter, especially at a time when it isn't very sweet at all.

I think at times like this, it's important not just to try to stay alive, but to try to stay human. And sometimes that means making eyeliner out of poop.

(Beat. KATIE starts clapping. She waits for KELLY and KIM to join in. They don't.)

KIM

I think you're all out of your minds. Good luck.

(KIM exits the call.)

KELLY

Whoa.

KATIE

We don't need her anyway, Rachel. She's just bringing all of us down.

KELLY

I don't know, maybe she's right.

(KATIE and RACHEL are shocked.)

Maybe we aren't losing readers because they're – well, you know.

Maybe we're losing them because we're not giving them what they want.

RACHEL

Tell me more...

KELLY

Well... maybe we ought to have some content that just... acknowledges where we are. Some content says that if it makes you feel good to think about makeup, and cocktails, and learning to play the ukulele, that's okay...

And if it doesn't, then that's okay too... you know?

RACHEL

Something more practical.

KELLY

Um. Kind of.

KATIE

Ten Tasty Casseroles You Can Make Out of Rats.

KELLY

Um. No.

More like... here's where we are... and it's... really, really hard... and you should do whatever makes you feel better. Whether that's... making casseroles out of rats... or not.

(Beat. RACHEL and KATIE consider this.)

KATIE

Ten Tasty Casseroles You Can Make Out of Rats... But Only If You Want To.

KELLY

Um.

RACHEL

Perfect!

Okay, so what are you both still doing on the call? We've got a lot of important work to do. Let's get started.

(RACHEL exits the call. KELLY exits the call.)

KATIE picks up her ukulele and begins to pluck out Pachelbel's Canon – a dirge for a lost world – as the lights go down, or the credits roll, or the sound fades out.)

END OF PLAY