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Acting Edition

Today Is My Birthday

by Susan Soon He Stanton

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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TODAY IS MY BIRTHDAY was developed at Sundance Theater Lab, New York Theater Workshop, American Conservatory Theater, and New York Stage & Film with the Lark. In 2017, *Today Is My Birthday* won the Venturous Theater Award for best New Play, The Kilroy’s List, and received a Susan Smith Blackburn nomination. This play was produced by Page 73 in November 2017, directed by Kip Fagan. The cast was as follows:

EMILY Jeena Yi
**MOM/MRS. KOBAYASHI/ALYSSA/JOYCE/MRS. ASUNCION/
PATSY**..... Emily Kuroda
DAD/BILL TAPIA..... Francis Jue
KURT/RICHARD/SEBASTIAN/KEONI/SERGIO/FRANKLIN
..... Gabriel Brown
**DJ LOKI/GRANDPA Z/ DR. JOHANNNES CONNECTION/ LANDON/
AMAZINGPRESENCE83/TROY**..... Chivas Michael
**HALIMA/DJ SOLANGE/GODDESS SWEET LEILANI/HOSTESS/
GENERIC FEMALE VOICE**..... Atra Asdou

This production is part of the Lark’s Venturous Playwright Fellowship Program, funded by Venturous Theater Fund of the Tides Foundation.

Today Is My Birthday is supported in part by the New York State Council on the arts with the support of governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

CHARACTERS

EMILY – a temp

(All other roles should be doubled as much as possible.)

POSSIBLE DOUBLINGS

MOM – Emily's Mother

MRS. KOBAYASHI – Receptionist

ALYSSA – Bill Tapia's manager

JOYCE – Public radio hostess

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

DAD – Emily's Father

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

KURT – Artistic Director of Hawai'i Repertory Theatre

RICHARD – Emily's Boss

SEBASTIAN – Emily's ex-boyfriend

KEONI/JONATHAN/FRANKLIN – Emily's on-air love interest

DJ LOKI – FM DJ

GRANDPA Z – Caricature grandpa performed by DJ Loki

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

LANDON – Emily's high school friend

AMAZINGPRESENCE83 – A phone helpline volunteer

TROY – Emily's ex-boyfriend

HALIMA – Emily's best friend

DJ SOLANGE – FM DJ

GODDESS SWEET LEILANI – ADVICE Guru performed by DJ Solange

HOSTESS – Works at Doraku Restaurant

GENERIC FEMALE VOICE

SETTING

Primarily set in Honolulu on Oahu Island, Hawai'i and
in New York City.

TIME

The events of this play are loosely set in mid-2015.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

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

This play, while relying on technology which constantly changes, shouldn't feel like a period piece. If the reference to Facebook feels too dated, the following lines can be cut:

HALIMA. He's not my friend.

~~**EMILY.** But he's your Facebook friend.~~

~~**HALIMA.** I unfriended him when you two broke up.~~

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

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

MUSIC NOTES

I strongly encourage the creative team to listen to morning talk radio programs and specifically Honolulu Radio Stations. The music is a blend of modern Hawaiian, Jawaiian, and contemporary American top 100. There are also a number of stingers liberally applied to these programs.

One

(Telephone rings.)

EMILY. Hello?

KURT. Hey, Emily.

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

KURT. Shit.

EMILY. It's okay.

KURT. Sorreeeee. So I got a question for you.

EMILY. Shoot.

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

EMILY. So there are fake people who call in?

KURT. Oh yeah. No actual people call radio stations.

EMILY. That's so disappointing.

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

EMILY. Kurt, I'm not an actor.

KURT. Andrea dropped out and I'm stuck.

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

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

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

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

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

KURT. Really?

EMILY. Why, are you surprised I'm doing it?

KURT. Kinda. Thanks!

(Click.)

Two

(Telephone rings.)

MOM. Chang Residence. You've reached Grace.

EMILY. That's how you answer the phone now?

MOM. Who is this???

EMILY. Your daughter.

MOM. Mimi??

EMILY. Mom, you just called me.

MOM. Did you get the article I sent you?

EMILY. Hold on.

(Letter opening.)

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

EMILY. *(Reading.)* Thirty is NOT the new twenty: Top psychologist says twenty-somethings are damaging future career and relationships by treating the decade as 'downtime' before real life begins.

MOM. Go on.

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

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

EMILY. What laurels?

MOM. Exactly.

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

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

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

EMILY. It's called a blog. And my digital magazine's not ready.

MOM. How will it ever be ready if you –

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

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

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

MOM. I don't understand.

EMILY. It's acting.

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

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

MOM. You should call your father.

EMILY. About this?

MOM. Do you need a reason to call your father?

EMILY. Is something wrong?

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

(Click.)

Three

(Telephone rings. MRS. KOBAYASHI is sharpening pencils.)

MRS. KOBAYASHI. CDF Solutions. How may I direct your call?

EMILY. Hello Mrs. Kobayashi, this is Emily.

MRS. KOBAYASHI. And how may I help you, Emily?

EMILY. No. Oh. I work there?

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

EMILY. I'm replacing Trisha on her maternity leave.

MRS. KOBAYASHI. *(Less sweet.)* You're the temp.

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

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

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

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

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

MRS. KOBAYASHI. Mmhmm.

EMILY. Thanks.

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

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

EMILY. No, a note's fine.

Well. Uh. I'll be on Z 101.3 at eight thirty a.m. But I'll be answering under the name Iris.

If you want to listen in...

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

(Click.)

Four

(Telephone rings.)

HALIMA. Hey girl.

EMILY. Hey Halima.

HALIMA. I missed it, didn't I?

EMILY. No, I'm going on in thirty minutes! I'm just calling because I'm nervous.

I'm not like, a *performer*, you know?

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

It's great.

You're finally settling back in Hawaii.

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

HALIMA. New York misses you.

EMILY. I miss New York.

HALIMA. But not Sebastian?

EMILY. Hell no.

HALIMA. Good.

EMILY. Does he know I moved?

HALIMA. He's not my friend.

EMILY. But he's your Facebook friend.

HALIMA. I unfriended him when you two broke up.

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

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

EMILY. Singular. Not plural.

HALIMA. Oh, well then.

EMILY. How are the kids?

HALIMA. Baby is good.

EMILY. What's wrong with Layla?

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

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

EMILY. That's pretty common, right?

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

EMILY. Do you or Nigel sleepwalk?

HALIMA. I never told you about my sister?

EMILY. You have a sister?

HALIMA. My identical twin. She used to sleepwalk all the time.

When she was four, she sleepwalked off a balcony in Cairo.

EMILY. Oh my god. Did she?

HALIMA. She died.

EMILY. I am so –

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

EMILY. Oh God. That must –

HALIMA. Now my daughter's four years old.

Do you think my sister is trying to take her away from me?

EMILY. ...No?

Jesus Christ Halima.

I think she should see a sleep specialist.

And maybe you might consider seeing a therapist –

HALIMA. Therapy is a sign of weakness.

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

I mean, you're my best friend (*Baby begins to cry.*) and you've never even mentioned your twin.

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

EMILY. Yeah but.

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

HALIMA. Do about it? (*Baby cries louder.*) Hold on.

(**HALIMA** begins to coo and sing to her baby.)

EMILY. Can you sleep in the same bed as Layla?

HALIMA. (*In between coos.*) Nigel won't allow it. He thinks I'm mollicoddling her. British men.

(*Crying and cooing.*)

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

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

(*Sharp wail of Baby.*)

HALIMA. I gotta-I gotta-I gotta.

EMILY. No, don't worry about it. It's not *important...*

(Sound of fumbling hanging up.)

Five

(Telephone rings.)

EMILY. Hello?

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

Do I have... Emily on the line?

EMILY. Yes?

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

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

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

(EMILY clears her throat repeatedly.)

Still on the line?

EMILY. I'm here.

DJ SOLANGE. Okay. Here we go.

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

(Two faint sounds of something.)

EMILY. *(Dead air.)* ... Heeyyy. *(Throat clearing.)*

Hi I'm Iris –

DJ SOLANGE. – Don't say your name first. Nobody does that.

EMILY. We're not on the air? –

(Z 101.3 intro blares.)

DJ LOKI. This is Z 101.3, Hot Spot with DJ Loki –

DJ SOLANGE. And DJ Solange on your FM morning drive.

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

(Office Stud of the Week sound cue.)

DJ LOKI. Smoking!

DJ SOLANGE. Would you do him?

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

DJ SOLANGE. How about you, Grandpa Z?

(GRANDPA Z is played by DJ LOKI, with a ridiculous old person voice.)

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

(Smack Dat Monkey sound cue.)

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

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

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

GRANDPA Z. Smoking hot!

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

DJ LOKI. Alllll right!!!

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

*(Musical underscore begins.)**

EMILY. I'm... I'm a desirable woman and a fitness enthusiast!!! I've never done this before, but after hearing Keoni's voice on your show, I just got a feeling about him.

So I thought, what the heck, I'd call to see if I have a chance.

I'm twenty nine – twenty four-years-old, green eyes, extremely lithe.

(Record scratch, music out.)

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

GRANDPA Z. SUUUUUUUUPPPERAAAAWWWEE EESOME.

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

DJ LOKI. Ohhhhhh yeeeeeahhh.

(Restart underscore.)

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

(A brief moment of dead air.)

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DJ LOKI. Alllll rigggghhhh. Sounds like we got a girl who knows how to paaaartee.

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

(Horny GRANDPA Z sound cue.)

EMILY. No?

DJ SOLANGE. Hooooaaahhhh!!!! She showed you, Grandpa Z. What's your name, honey?

EMILY. My name is um. Iris.

DJ SOLANGE. So Um Iris. What would you say if Z 101.3 Hot Spot –

DJ LOKI. With DJ Loki –

DJ SOLANGE. – AND DJ So-lange, could get Keeeeeoouuuu on the tele-phon-eee?

EMILY. Oh! Really?

That would be – uh...

(Dead air.)

DJ LOKI. That would be aaaawwwesssooome. Wouldn't it, Iris?

EMILY. Oh yeah!

DJ SOLANGE. Hahaha. Isn't she grreeeeaat? Now, let's see if we can connect these two love birds.

If you think Iris and Keoni have a loooooooveeee connection, hit us up on Twitter or Facebook!

(Dialing. Telephone rings.)

KEONI. Sup.

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

DJ LOKI. Okay, Keoni, our Office Stud of the WEEK.

(Office Stud of the Week Sound Cue.)

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

KEONI. Sure.

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

KEONI. Sure.

(Deafening sound of bells, whistles hoots.)

DJ LOKI. DA BRADDAH said YES. Z 101.3, keeping da spot HOT for yoooooooouuuuuuu.

(Cue intro to a contemporary Jawaiian song, a song in the style of Natural Vibrations' "Maybe". Music fades.)

EMILY. Hello?

DJ Loki?

DJ Solange?

Keoni?

Grandpa Z?

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Six

(Telephone rings.)

EMILY. CDF Solutions, this is Emily.

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

EMILY. Should I come by your office?

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

(Sound of massive paper shuffling.)

EMILY. Err.

RICHARD. I can wait. *(Microsecond later.)* Do you have it?

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

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

EMILY. Was that not...

RICHARD. The original section was three times this length.

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

RICHARD. The auger tip!