

Everything Is Alive



8 Louis, Can of Cola

Louis has been on the shelf a long while, so he's had some time to think.

 Louis Kornfeld

30 Maeve, Lamppost

Maeve sees all of us. But does anyone see her?

 Maeve Higgins

52 Dennis, Pillow

While we are sleeping, Dennis has dreams too.

 Dennis Pacheco

68 Tara, Bar of Soap

Tara may be just a sliver now, but she's got a lot of fight left.

 Tara Clancy

80 Ana, Elevator

Ana is headed for great heights.

 Ana Fabrega

-- Paul, Tooth

Paul may have been knocked out, but he's not giving up.

 Andrew Tisher

-- Chioke, Grain of Sand

Chioke is not as small as he looks.

 Chioke I'Anson

-- Annie, Jack o' Lantern

Annie doesn't want to scare you.

Annie Donley

-- Ayo, Balloon

Ayo has reached great heights, but she would like to come back down.

Ayo Edebiri

-- Sean, Subway Seat

Sean's just looking for a connection.

Peter Grosz

-- Shannon, Bath Towel

Shannon just wants to be part of the story.

Shannon O'Neill

-- Alligator, Alligator

Alligator is a stuffed animal, and things are about to get different.

Tom Bodett

-- Emmy, Pregnancy Test

Emmy is just trying to stay positive.

Emmy Blotnick

-- Petey, Baseball Cap

It's hard being a Montreal Expos cap living in the Bronx, but Petey's trying to stay on top.

Petey DeAbreu

-- Connor, Painting

Connor is a portrait of President William Howard Taft. He's hanging on a wall, but is anybody looking at him?

Connor Ratliff

-- Alex, Alex, and Sebastian, Russian Dolls
Sebastian, Alex, and Alex get to know each other,
inside and out.

Alex Song-Xia, Alexandra Dickson,
and Sebastian Conelli

-- Chioke, Pane of Glass

Chioke just wants to be transparent with you.

Chioke I'Anson

-- Jennifer, Newspaper

Jennifer is a copy of The Canberra Times
from October 24th, 1988. She might not be news
anymore, but she's still paper.

Jennifer Wong

-- Charu, Satellite

Charu is a satellite. Is she alone in the universe?

Charu Sinha

xx Scott, Stethoscope

Scott is always listening.

Scott Adsit

-- Tami & Ed, Sharpie

Tami is a sharpie, and Ed is her cap. After all

these years, marriage has left an indelible mark.

Tami Sagher, Ed Herbstman

-- Josh, Chainsaw

Josh has a warning: don't get too close,
but don't stay too far away either.

Josh Gondelman

-- Louise & William, Shirt & Pants

Louise & William may hang in the same closet,
but they've seen different worlds.

Alexandra Dickson and Connor Ratliff

-- Mirror, Mirror

A restaurant bathroom mirror takes a moment
to reflect.

Alex Song-Xia

-- Eugene, Tattoo

Eugene is a tatoo, and for now, he's staying right
where he is.

Eugene Cordero

-- Colin, Ten Dollar Bill

Colin is a ten dollar bill, and he's wondering
what he's worth.

Colin Nissan

-- Lillian, Song

Lillian is a song, and she's stuck in Ian's head.

Lillian King

-- Maria and Joel

One interview with a box of tissues, and one
with a water fountain.

Maria Bamford and Joel Kim Booster

-- Martin, Paper Towel Dispenser

Martin is a paper towel dispenser outside a hardware
store, and he's wondering how he got there.

Martin Morrow

-- Adam, Stool

Adam has been the stool on stage at a comedy club
for a long time. What do you do around standup
when you were made for sitting?

Adam Burke



Our willingness,
our eagerness to find
something to...

Your chronic search for
potency.

Louis, Can of Cola

IAN: Let's, uh, let's just start,
settle in, have you introduce
yourself for us.

LOUIS: My name is Louis
and I am a can of Go2 Cola.

IAN: That's a store brand?

LOUIS: Mm-hm. Go2.
G-o-2 Cola.

IAN: So it's similar
to Coca-Cola?

LOUIS: Similar. People call
it a knock off. I've been called
the best of the worst... You know,
if you wanted to get my honest
opinion I believe in a blind taste
test. Your average person wouldn't
be able to tell the difference be-
tween me and a can of regular Co-
ca-Cola, but-yeah, bottom shelf-we
can describe it comfortably
as bottom shelf.
I'm at peace with that.

IAN: Literally on the-?

LOUIS: Most of the time,
yeah.

IAN: Well um, there's a lot
I wanna talk to you about today.
Do you need water or anything?

LOUIS: No, no. I'm completely
self-contained.

IAN: I wanna ask you about your
time before you ended up in the
fridge you're in now. So, you, um,
you I take it were, you were in
a supermarket?

LOUIS: Yeah.

IAN: And, where were you?

LOUIS: I was in a Safeway.
I was bought at a case. So there
were 24 of us. We were all
purchased together and actually
our next residence was a bowling
alley for a 12-year-olds birthday
party. Uh, I saw most of the rest
of my case drunk at that party.
I was not drunk, I was saved for
later and was brought home and put
into a refrigerator and forgotten
about for a few months placed in
the back of the fridge.

IAN: Sure.

LOUIS: I froze in the fridge...
I was in the very back and the
temperature got very cold-
I didn't freeze all the way
through, but, uh I had

a frozen couple of weeks.
Pretty chilling.

IAN: You were slushy inside?

LOUIS: I was slushy inside, yeah. And I had a brief adventure when they realized I was still in the fridge and they took me out for a road trip. I got to sit in the front seat cup holder, you know, and I took a little fun road trip down to Florida and then back again. And they never got around to drinking me on that trip, and they put me back in the fridge, and that's where I've been ever since.

IAN: It sounds like you were almost chosen so many times?

LOUIS: Yeah, yeah.

IAN: What does it feel like when you're say, at this birthday party, and you're waiting for your moment?

LOUIS: [sighs] Have you ever seen the movie Jaws?

IAN: Yeah.

LOUIS: So you know the story that Robert Shaw tells to Roy Scheider and the other guy? Anyway, you know the story about the USS Indianapolis? Where he's in the water and the sharks are coming, and he's waiting to be ticked off, and he's waiting, and having that long dark night,

and one by one he's seeing his friends go. That's kind of what it was like for me. It was terrifying.

And on the one hand, I was very angry at human beings for being in this position to consume us. And then on the other hand I was also very angry—how come you didn't wanna consume me?

IAN: Mm-hmm, yeah. When you think about being consumed by a human, do you think about the human that you wanna be in?

LOUIS: [laughs softly]
If and when I'm finally consumed,
I hope I'm consumed
by someone who enjoys it.

IAN: Mm-hm.

LOUIS: But I like to imagine that if you're drunk immediately, that instead of being a painful process, there's this sort of first moment of relief. The can is cracked open. All of this internal fizzing that I have going on finally has somewhere to go... Just sort of drowned out from your external can, and you have that last moment where you're fulfilling your purpose, and beginning to blend in with this human being, and you become part of their story. Truthfully, here's how I expect to go, assuming I am consumed... I'm expecting it's gonna happen in the middle of the night when I'm not waiting for it, and someone's gonna open the fridge, and pull me

out, and—that'll be that.
It would be nice to be poured
into a nice big pint glass,
you know. A frosty mug would be
a pretty good way to go.
That would be pleasant, you know.

I doubt that's gonna happen
though; they don't reserve frosty
mugs for Go2 Cola's—it's just an-
other one of those facts of life.

IAN: How did you see Jaws?

LOUIS: Oh, the human being
who lives in my house was
watching Jaws. They took me
out of the fridge,
and kept me on the table,
and I thought, "This is it, this
is my big moment." Kind of part
of me there was the Robert Shaw
scene where he's telling the story
of the Indianapolis, and I was
thinking, "Boy this is just too
perfect, this would be amazing."

And he was reaching for me,
he was gonna go for me, and then
at the last minute, you know,
another human being came into the
house, and scolded him on not
drinking soft drinks, so he put me
back in the fridge.

IAN: Wow.

LOUIS: Yeah. That would've
been perfect, huh.

IAN: Mmm. Yeah. You know,
I should ask you, there's a lot
of talk right now about the health
effects of soft drinks. People
tend to think of them as very

unhealthy. I was just wondering—
do you feel unhealthy?

LOUIS: Do I feel unhealthy?
It's hard to say because I think
if you were feeling the way
I feel, you would feel unhealthy.

IAN: Right.

LOUIS: But I feel-like me.
I can't say that that means I feel
good, but to go back
to your question, unhealthy drinks
are not like a new thing by any
means. Have you ever heard
of Radithor?

IAN: Radithor?

LOUIS: Radithor—all right, so
back in the '20s there was
an energy drink with radium
called Radithor, OK?
And the idea was it was just
radioactive material, in water.
They claimed Radithor gave you
energy and cured a bunch of
things. They also implied that
Radithor increased male virility.
Radithor also killed, uh,
you know, people.

IAN: So people would just,
uh-drink radioactive material
dissolved in water?

LOUIS: Mm-hmm.

IAN: I—I'm just looking it up
here. There's actually... there's an
eBay ad, there's a bottle of
Radithor for sale.

LOUIS: Oh, come on now.

IAN: It's currently \$659.

LOUIS: -You've gotta be kidding me.

IAN: It says here, 'This certified radioactive water was advertised as a-quote, "Cure for the living dead,"- and quote, "perpetual sunshine."

LOUIS: Mm-hmm.

IAN: It goes on. One guy who used it, Eben Byers, died from radiation poisoning, and they had to bury him in a lead-lined coffin.

LOUIS: Yeah, that's what you get when you drink uh radioactive material.

IAN: So they made a beverage which not only killed a man, but his dead body would have- had they not taken precautions- killed all life around him.

LOUIS: Yes. Presumably, his dead body is still radiating the poisons that he drank from Radithor.

IAN: In fact, the ad goes on. [chuckles] They exhumed him for study in 1965...

LOUIS: Oh, come on-

IAN: ... and his remains were still quite radioactive.

LOUIS:

Yeah.

IAN: It then mentions
the developer of Radithor
was not an actual medical doctor.

LOUIS: Yeah, that sounds
about right to me too.

IAN: Also, the bottle's
in very good condition.

LOUIS: So, there's your
original power drink for you.
That says to me more about human
beings than it does about soft
drinks, to be perfectly honest.

IAN: Our willingness,
our eagerness
to find something to...

LOUIS: Your chronic search
for potency.

IAN: Yeah.

[dialing tone]

LOUIS: That's my evaluation
of humanity.
A chronic search for potency.

*

JEFF: Hello.

IAN: Hey, I'm calling for Jeff?

JEFF: Yep?

IAN: Hey, Jeff you're the man behind the Bygone Times Vintage, right?

JEFF: [laughs] Yeah, I'm guilty.

IAN: I noticed one of your eBay listings. So, you put up the Radithor?

JEFF: Radithor? Yeah.

IAN: Is that-is that for real?

JEFF: Oh, yeah. What happened was, I was at a flea market, and I found a set of about 20, 25 of these things.

IAN: OK.

JEFF: It was like a... shipping crate or something. So yeah, I have sold a few of those.

IAN: Now-and is it a reproduction or is it an original bottle?

JEFF: No, these are original. Yeah, original.

IAN: Did you check them with a Geiger counter?

JEFF: Um, I have not, I don't... I just assumed they

wouldn't have any... there's no content in them obviously, but I haven't-no, I didn't check 'em with the Geiger counter. I don't... I suspect that since they're from the 1920's they would be... done and gone.

IAN: I think maybe it wouldn't be gone.

JEFF: Yeah, I don't know, maybe they wouldn't, I don't know. [laughs] Can I put 'em under a black light or something? I hope they're still active, that would... huh. That raises, uh, interesting questions, sir.

IAN: Did you know much about Radithor when you, you know when you...?

JEFF: No. I got, uh... fortunately now we have the internet, and Google was quite helpful. It's really an interesting story. I don't know if you've taken the time to look into it, but it's fascinating.

IAN: Yeah, I just heard about it. It's crazy that we humans did that.

JEFF: I know-I like the story about the guy who died from it, and then they dug him up in the '60's, in his lead-lined coffin, he was still radioactive.

IAN: That's why I feel like maybe you should get checked out.

JEFF: I think I will, yeah.
I think I will now that you said
that 'cause I didn't really think
that the glass would hold any of
that, but I guess it's possible.

IAN: You know, radiation you
don't wanna mess around with I
guess when it comes down to it.

JEFF: No, no I hear you.
I have to... I'm driving, and I
don't want to... I'm getting onto
busier road now, so I need to
unfortunately, hang up on you.

IAN: Got it, yeah. Be safe.

JEFF: OK, bye.

*

IAN: Louis, one quick thing I
wanna ask you about? I have,
in my life, occasionally dropped
a can of soda.

LOUIS: Oh yeah.

IAN: Has that ever happened
to you?

LOUIS: Oh, it's an awful
experience. You feel I mean
obviously, very shaken.
There's a rush—I guess of in human
being terms—it would be like a
rush of adrenalin, and for a while
you're feeling just very hyper

after the shake-up. And then you start to sort of resettle back to a neutral state, but you have this awful kind of nauseous, sicky, sleepy feeling after the fact. And you feel kind of dumb, you know; the shake-up kind of like rattles you a little bit and takes a little bit of time for your intelligence to kind of come back to you. It's an awful experience.

IAN: I imagine too, like we often after that happens, we will tap on what would be your head.

LOUIS: Don't-It doesn't do anything.

IAN: It doesn't?

LOUIS: Don't. There's no reason to do it. It doesn't do anything to the carbonation. All it does is annoy us in a very sensitive moment. Yeah, don't do that.

*

IAN: So, Louis, this might be awkward to talk about, but I feel like there's a hierarchy to sodas. At least in terms of how humans think about them.

LOUIS: Sure.

IAN: At the top, there's you know

Coke and Pepsi, and then there's 7UP and Sprite. And then there's these—you know like your Sunkist and Grape soda, Fanta that are kind of at the bottom—I wonder if that... does that hierarchy, does it mean the same thing to you?

LOUIS: Well, let me tell you something about Fanta. I mean sure, here in the US it's not the most sophisticated soft drink, but overseas, it's huge. Like Japan, huge.

IAN: Fanta?

LOUIS: Fanta. In Thailand it's all over the place. If you walk down the street there, you'll see half open bottles of Fanta everywhere. Strawberry Fanta in particular everywhere just hanging out.

IAN: Just like sitting on the street?

LOUIS: Yeah, just on the street, because humans there use Strawberry Fanta as an offering to ghosts.

IAN: So they leave it out on the street because they're giving it to ghosts?

LOUIS: Yes. Friendly ghosts, according to local custom, love sweet red soda. So if you leave it out, it attracts them, and they hang out around your house, and protect you from you know, I guess

whatever unfriendly ghosts might come around. Who I guess don't love sweet red soda.

IAN: Right. Do you know what it is about Strawberry Fanta in particular?

LOUIS: Because of the color. So there's a theory that it's because they can't do blood offerings anymore, and so Strawberry Fanta, which is another you know red viscous liquid, would be the next best thing.

IAN: Strawberry Fanta among the sodas available to us looks the most like blood.

LOUIS: Yeah, which I personally don't see—but you know it's a Thailand thing.

IAN: We humans, we think a lot about, you know, spirits or at least you know, what might happen to us after we die. Do you, as a Cola, do you think about that?

LOUIS: The afterlife?

IAN: Yeah.

LOUIS: Oh yeah. How do you not? I think about it all the time. Cause you know I'm—I'm reaching that age myself where I'm probably not gonna be around that much longer.

IAN: Mm-hmm. You are, I mean you are recyclable?

LOUIS: Yeah, which opens up
a whole other conversation. You
know my body-my can will almost
certainly be repurposed. And then
that leads me to you know ask
questions of like, well,
have I already been repurposed?
I don't know.

IAN: You could have been
any number of sodas or...

LOUIS: Or anything else.

IAN: An airplane?

LOUIS: I could've been.
I actually, when I was younger I
used to have a recurring nightmare
that I was, there was a plane
crashing, there was an ocean and a
beach. And it was night time, and
it was raining, and there was a
plane crashing on the beach. And
I used to like to think that in
a previous existence I was part
of an airplane, and this was some
sort of uh, memory that had
travelled with me. Maybe I was
part of like a-I don't know, maybe
part of a ventilation system on
board of a 747 or something.

IAN: You referred to your can
as your body, or your body
as your can.

LOUIS: Yeah.

IAN: Is there an equivalency
between you know, humans talk
about body and soul? Is that-
I'm sorry.

LOUIS: [sighing]

No, no. I'm only sighing because I wish I had the answer to this question. Is there an equivalence? Yes. Yes, the body, mind problem that human beings have been dealing with since the days of Descartes. It's something all too familiar to us cans of soda. Am I just a can? Am I... soda? What does it mean to be soda? Am I part of the larger ocean of soda out there? Am I just the individuated soda? Am I soda interacting with a can? Am I can being slowly eaten away by the soda inside me? I've thought about this a lot. Yeah, I don't have an answer, but it's something I wrestle with all the time. What am I fundamentally? Once the soda's gone, the can remains, but bye-bye me—I think.

IAN: Yeah, who knows?

LOUIS: Who knows? These are the mysteries that permeate every level of existence... as far as I know.

IAN: I have to say I think, I think about the type of can you are with the pull tab. And then I think about other cans in the kitchen you know like a soup can. I don't know if you know any soup cans?

LOUIS: I know a couple of soup cans.

IAN: And it occurs to me, you are

so lucky—because think about the way a soup can gets opened.

LOUIS:

Oh, yeah.

IAN: A can opener to me, seems like a torture device.

LOUIS: It is and let me tell you something else too. The—I thank God every day of my life that I was not born a can of Minestrone soup. I at least have lived a life. I know where I've been, you know? I'm... not all of my dreams may have necessarily come true, I may have taken a couple of bad turns here and there, but at least at the end of the day, I've been witness to my own life. These poor bastards who are stuck in these soup cans—or talk about hermetically sealed—they lose all sense of time and perspective. When you open a can of soup, when they wake up, they have no idea how much time has passed. They're like astronauts coming out of cryogenic freeze, and they're all spaced out, and they're completely disorientated, they don't know what's going on, and they wake up call is being torn open by these damn can openers. What a nightmare of an existence. Their flesh is literally busted open only to wake up into a world that they don't know anything about. All the rest of us stay away from the cans of soup, and I'll be honest with you, I feel awful about it.

But whenever I try to talk to a can of soup, oof, they are weird.

IAN: You've mentioned that you're feeling like you're nearing the end of your life.

LOUIS: Oh, yeah.

IAN: What... do you feel old or?

LOUIS: Oh, yeah. Oh, very much so. I know for a fact I'm old. I can look at my expiration date.

IAN: OK, and can I ask, how close you are?

LOUIS: T minus two weeks to go, my friend.

IAN: Wow. So, what... but you could keep going on after that?

LOUIS: I could. It's not recommended, but I could.

IAN: Does it seem, I mean I think about this with you because um, and I'm sorry if this isn't the right way to put it—but it seems like your purpose is to be consumed by a human, and so you know we all want to serve our purpose, we all wanna be useful. And yet for you, the moment of your use is the moment where you are no more, and I wonder if that's something you anticipate with optimism or if it feels like... you know, you're approaching the end?

LOUIS: That's a paradox
isn't it?

IAN: It is, yeah.

LOUIS: Well. I guess on the one hand, I do sort of dread the idea of being consumed. You know, all beings endeavor to persist in their own being. Spinoza said that. I heard about that from a, uh, cup of coffee. But on the other hand, I guess on some level I still hope that I will kind of fulfill myself by being consumed you know? I think that dream is still-is still very much alive. Though, if I'm being perfectly honest with you, you know I do sometimes fear that that moment is passed.

IAN: I feel weird saying this, but, um... I could drink you.

LOUIS: Right now?

IAN: Yeah. I mean I... I want you, I am thirsty, but I also, I want this to be a good moment for you. I want you to be read—I don't want you to do it if you're not ready.

LOUIS: Well, I'll make a deal with you, I've always said I wanted to go with my eyes wide open. I'm prepared to end it here if you promise me that even if you're disgusted by how I taste, you will finish the can.

IAN: I—I will make you that promise. Is there anything you

wanna say to the humans you've encountered, the cans you've encountered, the countertops you've known?

LOUIS: I think... I think overall, I would say life is a gift and a blessing, and I don't believe anything ends, but everything simply transforms into the next thing. I would say, uh... if I can be a little bit soft hearted and sentimental for a moment or two... uh, it's a gift to get to be anything at all.

IAN: Mm. Well, maybe what we'll do, just in the interest of journalism is I'll drink about half, and then we'll check in again. Do you wanna talk while I'm drinking you? I don't...

LOUIS: No.

IAN: OK.

LOUIS: No, I wanna have the full experience, but I'll check in with you at the halfway mark.

IAN: All right, so um, I'm picking you up.

LOUIS: [sighing heavily]
Gimme one second.
[exhales] OK.

IAN: Are you ready?

LOUIS: Mm-hmm.

[can opens]

LOUIS: [exhales] This I have to say, feels delightful.

IAN: Well, I guess cheers to you with you.

LOUIS: Here's hoping for the best.

IAN: I mean... [exhales loudly]
You... you are delicious.

LOUIS: Thank you, you're very gentle. This is a trippy feeling, I'm not gonna lie. All right, my first report... [exhales loudly] I'm feeling very spacious inside right now. I'm feeling, I think, I think I got room to be.

IAN: Yeah.

LOUIS: But I'm also... I'm feeling the warmth of the tummy. Very strange thing—I'm in two places at once. Spacious in my own body but feeling warm and secure in your own tummy. Wow.

IAN: All of a sudden, I find myself, uh, thinking about my body. I'm thinking about my body and I'm hoping that my body is a good place for you.

LOUIS: I think so. I don't mind telling you my first impression of the inside

of your own tummy, you seem to be
taking pretty good care
of yourself.

IAN: Thank you.

LOUIS: Yeah.
(breathes deeply; exhales sharply)

IAN: I am seeing some... are you
sweating? Seeing some...

LOUIS: Oh, with joy.

IAN: All right, then I'm gonna,
I'm gonna have a little bit more.

LOUIS: You go ahead
and finish me off.

IAN: OK. Are you-
are you still there?



But as I got older,
I just grew to accept,
“Look, you have this
one patch and you just
do the best you can
with this one patch.”
And like, you can
learn about the world
in other ways.

Maeve, Lamppost

MAEVE:

Hello. My name is Maeve and I live, I guess you'd say, in Brooklyn, New York.

I don't know how you chose me out of all the lamp-posts because a lot of people are like, ‘they're all the same’, but I'm glad that you did, I think that you made the right choice because I wouldn't say, you know, that I'm better than them but I would say I'm different, in a way that's really good.

I'm pretty tall. I guess you might have walked into me, hopefully not. People sometimes tie their dogs on a leash to me. I also am a holder of notices, so people who are looking for nannies, babysitters, lost dogs, you'll find those stuck onto me. Regardless of whether or not you're scared of the dark, I'm gonna be shining, but you know what, some people really are scared of the light... think about that.

IAN:

Do you—I mean, I think, like, truth?—

Well—"democracy dies in darkness."

That's the Washington Post motto.

Well Maeve, let's just start here. What is a typical day like for you?

Strollers, yeah.

You know, I think about the perspective you have on us, which is literally looking down on us from above.

And I wonder, are there things that you see about us, in us, that maybe we don't see in each other?

Right. Probably before we even know.

They will or not?

Kissing?

MAEVE:

Honestly, I don't know what that means, but I did hear a woman say no and she walked by me before.

Yaaaah.

Huh! See? The Washington lamppost. I think that's where it must've come from.

I mean, it depends on when I get turned on. Like, these days, it's usually around seven and then I just like... That's my workday, so it's busy. [laughs] You know, there's always something going on. I mean, first of all you have people doing whatever it is people do. They run, they walk, they talk, they fight... they push smaller people in little, ah, wheeled cages.

Hmm.

Right, thank you. Yeah.

Well. I mean, the obvious things are, when somebody is balding, I can spot that immediately.

Yes, because I see some people with the confidence of a person with a full head of hair... but I know that that confidence is misguided, or it's not long for this world. And I think um, you know, I see a lot of dates happening, which is when two humans are figuring out whether... You know, they will or not.

Right. Actually, it's not clear to me what they're working on but there's some question between them, which is like, you know, will we or won't we? It seems to be a big issue around lampposts and often, they lean against me to figure it out. Like, they're pressing against each other and they're pushing their mouths on each other.

And they're like, "Will we, won't we? Do you want to? I don't know" and so, that's kind of, like, interesting to me because I'm like, "Make up your minds, get off me."

You know, if the answer to that question, will they or won't they, is that they will, you've kind of played a formative role in their lives. You know, the question is, will they be together.

Speed?

Oh, you are at a level where you can see into apartments.

So, you're watching for the lampposts in films?

Yeah. That's a kind of famous lamp. He swings around, if I remember.

He grabs the lamppost and swings around.

Yeah, I do have some role in that and I do like the thought, I guess, of being an important part of someone's destiny, a person's destiny. But I kind of wish for more, like I do wish for more sometimes. Like, I know that lamp-posts are featured in film. I see films. I've seen Speed so many times.

You know, because we can watch TV in the buildings and the apartment that's directly across from me, they watch a lot of television.

Yeah. Like, on my street, we're all basically up to the third floor of the buildings, yeah, so we can see across to them and I love films, like the golden age of film with Sandra Bullock, Speed. And so, when I see—I sometimes see lampposts in films. In Speed, she flew past so many lamp-posts it was cool.

Yeah, always. I guess it's like... You know, if you can't see it, you can't be it. So, when I see myself up there on the big screen... and there was another one, it's like an older... It would've been like my ancestors, I guess, featured in Singing in the Rain, it's called and...

Yeah.

Oh yeah. The lamppost is the lead in that movie. So, that's what's cool for all of us, to see that. It's like yeah, there's some people but I don't think they matter. Like, it's just a cast of people-dancers I think they are—and then it's mainly about the lampposts and the rain. Now, I didn't hear it—we can't hear the movie—but from what I understand from seeing that movie through the window is these anonymous actor/dancer people, they see this most beautiful, sturdy-looking lamppost and they celebrate it by dancing. Like I said, I don't know but I think what they're saying is like, "Looking at the lampPost and here we go!"

Yeah well, I do think...

I don't know.

Yeah, we can...

You know, I'll just look online right now.

OK, one second.

Um, oh! Well, I did not find his name, but I did find an article that he was, uh, stolen.

Yeah, in 1990...

Oh. Well, you know that every night you turn on?

So, imagine that happening 365 times. That's a year. 1990 is 28 years ago, so 28 times 365... So, that's how long ago. Imagine your light turning on and off 10,220 times. That's when the lamppost was kidnapped.

There's another article from two weeks later, which is an update, the update being that it's still missing. And then after that, the story... it seems to go—the trail seems to go cold there.

And just looking down the page here, there doesn't seem to be any record if he ever got it back. You know, it's been 28 years.

[Telephone dialing]

Yeah.

"What a beautiful lamppost and look at him!"
It's a male lamppost, I think.

Could you find out?

Yeah, you could ask your producer or something.

Yeah, just check what's the name of the lamppost in Singing In The Rain, please.

[gasps] Kidnapped?

[gasps] What's that?

Yeah.

[gasps] I'm trying to think back to that day.

10,000... I'm trying to think back to that day but I think... It felt like a normal day. And so, where is he?

[sighs] First of all, I think they're not trying hard enough. They're not taping lost lamppost notices to dogs and sending those dogs around the city.

But he would look the same.

[Phone is picked up]

IAN: Hi. Is this Brian Goetzinger?

BRIAN GOETZINGER: Yes.

And you are the Brian Goetzinger who was once in possession of the lamppost from Singing in the Rain?

I am.

And have you seen it since?

No, I have not. In fact, I have not heard about it in 28 years, that was the last time.

So, I'm looking at the LA Times article here. You were working on the film lot, moving old sets. Tell me how you got a hold of this lamppost.

Looking around, I noticed that all the lampposts that were from the era of Singing in the Rain were still there and some of them were marked. And then, going through them all, I just happened to find the one that Gene Kelly swung on, or against, I guess you would say.

And when you realized what you had found,
what did you feel like?

Cool. [laughs]

I just said to myself, "Cool". I went to the head of construction, said, "Hey, can I have this one?" and he said, "Why do you want that?" I said, "it's the one Gene Kelly swung on in Singing in the Rain." "OK." And that's how I wound up with it.

So, you just took it right home from there?

Yeah. I stopped by [...] and picked up some wire, some fresh chord. I rewired it and it stayed in my front yard and it sat there... Oh, probably a year and a half. And then, one

morning, it was gone. It just disappeared into the air, as they say.

There could be somebody out there, listening to this right now, who is in possession of the lamppost.
What would you want to say to them?

Hope they're enjoying it, because I'm not.

[laughs]

You know, whoever took it, for them to know that that was it, they would have had to been one of the major of all time biggest Singing in the Rain fans ever born. I mean, there was nothing significantly different about that lamppost from any other one that was on that set. It's just a lamppost.

Maeve, is it-you are in one place, you don't move.

And I just wonder how it feels to know that there's a giant world out there and that you're in one place.

Yeah.

Yes.

Actually, I will tell you... When I moved in with my girlfriend, you know just sort of, we were getting rid of duplicate things that we had...

I think had that been the situation, we would've tried to...

I would look for it if... Yeah, I would look for it on every street.

I would look for that lamppost on every street, if I was mobile.

*

No.

I used to struggle with that a lot, at the beginning. And I was like, “[small gasp] Imagine being a torch!” You know, those are like little... They’re called flashlights too... they’re like little movable street lamps, almost.

You know them?

Do you have one?

Like, if you had some children you were like, I’ve already got one?

Keep them all.
Keep all the children.

In our very small apartment, she had 11 flashlights.

Yeah. If there was one place other than where you are,
in the world, that you could visit,
where would you want to go?

OK?

Well, that was a belief for a long time, I'll tell you.
But it turns out that the earth is uh, a sphere.

Yes.

Well, that's an illusion. Well, think about it this way.

If your light were to turn off in the darkness...

So, all that it illuminates would not be gone, you just
you couldn't see it.

Keep the best one?

Oh, really?

Cooool. She sounds cool! See, that's the kind of person that I used to yearn to belong to, if I was a little torch, because she obviously respects and treasures light and she probably brings one everywhere with her. If she has 11, she's got to be like, bringing them all around in her adventures. So, I'd love to go around—where does she go? To meditation class? Oh, she's going to work in the office and I would get in to see all those places and experience all that stuff with her. You know, whereas just being a lamppost, you're just static. But as I got older, I just grew to accept, "Look, you have this one patch and you just do the best you can with this one patch." And like, you can learn about the world in other ways. For example, through the TV show, Girls. Do you know that show?

I would want to go to Prospect Park South West, which is just around the corner from where I am now.

I would just love to see what happens to people when they just vanish around that corner, because, I guess it's like in the olden days, when people would—you know—go on boats and just sail off the side of the earth and then you never knew what happened to them when they went.

No, so I think there's a thing, it's called a horizon?

And you just travel towards the horizon and then, you drop off.

Mm-hm.

It wouldn't, but OK. It would never.

Yeah? Oh, oh!

So, there's a lot that we cannot see, that exists, the other side of the earth being one of those things. This question had been resolved and then, recently has started...
We're debating it again.

From your vantage point, have you ever seen anything that you wish you hadn't seen?

Days?

They've put padding around the lampposts so that when inevitably somebody runs into someone like you...

It does seem like sort of the wrong solution to the problem.

What do you mean?

Yeah. I think it's worth debating. I do. I mean like, you make a kind of convincing case but I would need to see it for myself.

Well, something that happens to me a lot is that like, people walk into me and they, like, I can see it happening before it happens and at the beginning, this was like 5,000 cycles ago.

Mm-hmm. I was like... oh it's so funny to me. Like, look at this guy, he was looking at his little phone and I could tell he was gonna walk straight into me. And he did and it was like, really funny and we all laughed, like me and the other lampposts. He didn't laugh, he was bleeding. And so, at the beginning yeah, it was great but now, that keeps happening more and more. Like in London, right? This one street in London... a few years ago, they had to actually cover all the lampposts in foam to protect people from banging their heads.

Yeah, they won't hurt themselves because they'll just bang their head into this foam. And I'm like, you know what, what I think would be better? Why not put the foam on the human's heads?

Yeah. I think a much better solution would be to put foam over a person's head.

Because so many people don't seem to see me, you know? And it's almost like, "Guys, I'm right here."

[laughs] It's been a long time thinking I'll be discovered and not even being noticed.

I don't need to be like, the star of a film, but I was talking about like, put me in your episode of Girls. Put me in your, um, the Americans. I'm, you know-a steady presence. I can be on or off, depending on the time of day-what I'm saying is I'm versatile-I think I'm old

You know, it's just audio but we could make a movie right now.

Yeah. We just like, start by... First we'll bring up a little sound.

[The sound

And then just like... Exterior Brooklyn.

Yeah, yeah.

Exterior Brooklyn, night-time.

OK. So then, like Maeve...

MOVIE NARRA

Lamppost.

Lampp

Stands.

Stands on t

,

Well, I think like you know, a romance? Maybe it could a love story, some kind of love story. Maybe a couple wanders nearby.

A couple, 20-somethi

enough now to handle the fame so I think now is like...
I'm ready.

Yeah?

of traffic]

Yeah. Night-time if you wanted me to be on.

So, you have to say, "Night-time."

Hmm-hmm.

TOR: Maeve.

post.

the street.

k

Can you already kind of see what's happening?

ing, lingers nearby.

Can I do an inner monologue?

Absolutely.

And then like, maybe one of them says to the other, Honey,
I'm sorry I don't have any money to take you to the movies."

Maeve sees the co
without a dime i

Well, I think it's a movie so you can do whatever you want.

Her light flickers
She bends at her w
do now because... Well, th
all the way down until
offers her lamp fo

The couple looks at ea
on Maeve's lamp. She ra
full height. They look a
Singing in the Rain ju

The couple holds hands
high above the street. M
The couple kicks off th
in its

And then I guess... I don't know. What do you want to do,
like a star wipe?

Yeah.

Fade to

OK. We can't shine all the time, and that goes for everybody.

ouple, so in love,
n their pockets.

OK and then, what happens with my character?

Yeah.

a bit with an idea.
waist, something she can
is is a movie. She leans
she's doubled over. She
or them to sit on.

Come on, you two. Let me show you something.

ch other and sits down
aises herself up to her
cross the street and see
st starting on the TV.

I hope you like it!

and watches the movie,
eve turns on her light.
eir shoes and they land
glow.

Oh yeah. To fade?

I think star wipe is too jaunty. I think it should just be like...

black.

Democracy.

Basically, it's a system of government in which the rulers
and other things are decided by the people.

Yeah.

No, it doesn't work great.

Something dies in darkness. What is that?

OK? And that's like a kind of... Is it an animal?

Oh no! The people?

Oh no, what a terrible system. [chuckles]

No?! Shoot...

So, I would just say,
remember this,
who we are
when we are falling
asleep is... that's who
you really are.

Dennis, Pillow

DENNIS: My name is Dennis, I'm a pillow, obviously. Um, tell you about myself, I am fluffy, I guess. My case is up as you can see—it's just a simple flower pattern... faded, you know.

IAN: And I guess that probably changes from time to time, your case—

DENNIS: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. I, every, say two weeks...

IAN: Ok.

DENNIS: ...three weeks I'll change. Nice simple flat forest green, or navy, or the faded flower pattern. I don't have

IAN: OK.

DENNIS: Which, it's just, he's not completely flat but he's not ever gonna get full again either. There's something very [softly] fake about him. He wants to be all things to all people, and you can't be anything-if you're everything.

IAN: Now, you are down.

DENNIS: Yeah, I'm down.
Goose down. >

DENNIS: Kinda got scrambled and never was quite right again. And uh, the third is uh, memory foam.

IAN: OK.

DENNIS: One is this very flat sort of over it pillow, you know?

DENNIS:
Over it,
you know,
just. IAN: Oh, over it.

DENNIS: Just flattened and just over it.

IAN: Are there other pillows there too?

IAN: Yeah.

DENNIS: One is a little loopy

because he was put in there.

DENNIS: Mmhm,
that's right.

IAN: Well, tell me a little bit about the... I guess you live on a bed...
a ton of outfits.

* IAN: It's interesting that like
a feather can both, enable a bird
to fly, It's what makes it fly... DENNIS: Right...

IAN:... it's also,
this thing that
makes you soft.

//////////TONY: Hello.

IAN: Hey Tony, its Ian
Chillag. Can I ask you
a few questions?

TONY: About what?

IAN: Well, about feathers.

TONY: Oh. Oh, OK, let's
do it now.

IAN: Well, can we start,
can you just introduce
yourself for us?

TONY: OK. My name is
Anthony Trento. I'm
the president and CEO
of American Plume And
Fancy Feathers in Clarks
Summit, Pennsylvania.

IAN: Tony, do you work
with goose feathers, at
all?

TONY: Goose feathers,
no... uh, really there's
not many goose feathers
that are fancy feathers.

IAN: Well, what is just, what... I
don't know about that distinction
between a regular feather and a
fancy feather, i-is that like an
industry term?

TONY: Yeah, a fancy feather,
there's two classifications for
feathers. It's uh, fancy feathers
and uh, bedding feathers. Bedding
is what you find in ski jackets
and pillows, things like that.

IAN: OK.

TONY: And fancy feathers are like
ostrich plumes, peacock feathers,
turkey feathers.

IAN: OK.

TONY: That's what Big Bird wears.

IAN: So, you supply the turkey
feathers that Big Bird, the-Big
Bird is made with?

TONY: Right, it's turkey feathers,
yes. That's the biggest volume
feather that we use, they made
a lot into boas and things like
you'd see in Las Vegas or some-
thing like that, on a showgirl.

IAN: I don't know, it's just funny, those are two very different things that one thing does.

DENNIS: Right.

IAN: So, potentially the same feathers that make up Big Bird come from the same turkey that makes a boa on a showgirl in Las Vegas.

TONY: Right.
//////////

> IAN: Can I ask? I wonder do you-do you think about the geese that you're made from?

DENNIS: I'm grateful to them. I'm grateful to the geese or goose, I don't know. I hope that their feathers are taken and they're still left alive, but I know, like now that I'm saying it out loud, that's definitely not what happens, they're definitely killed and they're [...] they're not sheep, you don't shear a goose. But I'm grateful. *

DENNIS: Yeah. I guess I never really thought about it. Um. Feathers help birds fly, feathers are very light, feathers are soft. Angels have feathers. They live in clouds, clouds are like pillows. And maybe that's where the geese are now, up in heaven.

What would it be like to be a pillow made out of angel feathers? That probably be the best... Probably God's pillow is made out of angel feathers, you know, he's just like, Hey, Michael, come here, or, Gabriel, you know. Then I guess he'd have to kill them and take their feathers. Mmm, sorry. [laughs] I don't know, my mind goes weird places sometimes. You know, I spend a lot of time with people dreaming, so, I guess my imagination just sort of has a dream logic to it sometimes.

IAN: Yeah.

DENNIS: It just gets away from me. Now I don't even remember where I started.

IAN: Dennis, I want to ask you about the person who sleeps in your bed—is it, is it just one person?

DENNIS: Yes, usually.

IAN: What, uh, what do you know, about him? You know, like I guess um if you, maybe like if you were gonna introduce me to him what would you tell me about?

DENNIS: OK, Sure. I'd say, Ian, this is Dave. Dave is a pretty restful sleeper. Dave used to snore but he got his tonsils out. Now, he doesn't drool as much; he doesn't snore as much. This is how I would say, this is like if we were at a party and I was introducing you, I'd say, Hey, this is Dave he used to snore, he got his tonsils out, he's a very heavy sleeper, he used to snore. I guess I'm saying he used snore a lot but that's—it's, it was irritating. But anyway. Yeah, he sometimes will toss and turn, he'll say insane things, um, sometimes he cries. That's what I'd say, if I was introducing him at a party. I guess that's probably too much to say, I don't know. Sometimes he cries, is that how you would introduce someone at a party?

IAN: I think. Yeah, I don't think you would. You would not maybe lead, that's probably something you learn later.

DENNIS: Yeah I guess I just, my relationships are all like, extremely intimate.

IAN: Yeah.

DENNIS: So, I guess my boundaries are different, than, say you, or someone else.

IAN: I don't, I mean, honestly, when people introduce other people at parties usually the things that you learn don't matter, there would be something maybe nice about having a pillow's intimacy with other people.

DENNIS: Yeah, why not?

IAN: Yeah.

DENNIS: Just get right in there, learning the important stuff, you know, so, I guess when I would introduce him I'd say, Terrence, this is Jack, Jack sleeps naked, you know. Terrence, this is Ian, he dreams about flying and when he wakes up and he's not flying, he's sad for a minute, but then he gets up.

IAN: Yeah, yeah.

DENNIS: I'd love to fly... inside a plane. A pressurized cabin. You know, look at a tiny window. See the clouds and see the, the city below, wow—what a dream.

IAN: I like thinking about that too. I like thinking about you in a window seat, buckled up.

DENNIS: Yeah. Oh, yeah, that'd be so, funny, cause I wouldn't need to be buckled up, I can flop around and I'll be, I'll be fine.

IAN: Mmhm.

DENNIS: In-flight magazine, barf bag, pressing the little call button—all that stuff, oh man, what fun. What a lot of fun. I'm sorry I got way far away from your original question.

IAN: How would you um, if you were introducing yourself at a party what would you say?

DENNIS: Oh. OK, so, I'd say, hi, my name's Dennis I'm a pillow. I dream of being comfortable forever. And I'm probably a third dust mites, bacteria, dead skin cells, dust mite feces,

IAN: -a third?

DENNIS: Yeah, probably a good third of my insides are just stuff that was not there it's not feathers anymore. Yeah, I think that's what I would say at a party.

IAN: You know, it's interesting, I think like—you're made from all this other stuff and like everything that you've absorbed, in a way it's not unlike people, like people are, are—you know, a product of all of their experiences.

DENNIS: Yeah, I mean it's the same exact thing. Yeah. We are what we've seen. Nobody is just their raw material. I'm not just feathers in cloth, you know. We're made by our experiences. The people we've met, all that sweat, the feces, thousands of dust mites have laid into us, you know, we are all those things. You don't have to be foam to have memories.

IAN: So, the bed—it's such an intimate space, like you only really, you know, sleep with someone, share a bed with somebody if, like, you really love them and trust them.

DENNIS: I like to think that they were in full regalia. Huge heavy crowns and their scepters under a big furry blanket-like a bear pelt or something. Just knocked out, totally undignified. Just two kings just laid out drooling on each other, crowns askew, you know. Δ

IAN: I
wonder
if they
spooned...

DENNIS: Yeah, literally—they were in bed together. And who knows, maybe they did get up to shenanigans.

IAN: They just they slept in a bed together?

IAN: If you had been in that bed with the Kings...

DENNIS:
Mmhm.

DENNIS: I would have said, remember this. Remember this feeling. I think if every leader of every nation spent a night with the leader of every other nation and just had that vulnerability and you got to observe their nightly routine, you know, just like, Oh, you use unflavored Listerine, I use unflavored Listerine too, maybe we should have peace. I think the world would be a better place. So, I would just say, remember this- who we are when we are falling asleep is... that's who you really are.

IAN: It's nice to imagine one giant bed with all the world leaders...

Δ

IAN: What would you have wanted to say to them?

DENNIS: Ah, man.

IAN: Together and among spoon.

DENNIS: Can you imagine all the different kinds of pillows? Silk, buckwheat, memory foam, hay... Wow.

DENNIS: Sure, sure yeah.

DENNIS: It makes me feel like I'm doing something wrong, to be honest, it makes me feel a little impotent in a way, where I'm usually like, I got this, I'm taking care of this and suddenly it's like, Oh, is it me? Am I doing something wrong? You know what I mean? And if you ever feel that way just...

DENNIS: Like someone else is having a bad time or a bad day and you think, Oh, is it me? And you know intellectually it's probably not you, it's probably they're just having a bad day, maybe they had too much coffee, or they're stressed out about their job or something—it's not you—but it's hard not to take it personally.

IAN: Have you ever experienced when a person can't sleep, insomnia?

IAN: I wonder how that feels? Because...

IAN: Yeah, you know, often, yeah.

IAN: My mom always says, There's always a third variable, like when, you know, when someone is mean to you, or their reaction seems sort of outsized to a moment and you know, you blame yourself. She says there's always a third variable, meaning there's one more thing you don't know about that's happening. So, you know, you don't need to blame yourself.

DENNIS: Yeah. I've been punched repeatedly and I knew that I wasn't about me but it's not a nice feeling, you know.

IAN: Can you tell me that story?

DENNIS: Yeah my person came home and was slamming all the doors and throwing his bag down and yelling, just pieces of sentences, not even sentences but just like, Who does he think he is? And, "You can't talk to me like that." And slamming doors and then just came in and just started punching me and I was shocked, you know, didn't hurt, it was just uh... It was just shocking.

IAN: Yeah.

DENNIS: To see someone like that shook me up. Do you know what I mean? And then later when he was sleeping on me I thought, Man, I can't, I can't just pretend like nothing happened. You know what I mean? I guess my point is, I didn't take it personally but I kind of did take it personally. So, it took me a few nights to where we were back on the same page, you know,

IAN: Yeah.

DENNIS: But, you know, there's always a third variable, like you said.

IAN: There's the story I read, I don't know if it's true, it seems like there's some debate about it.

But there's this Greek poet, I don't know if I'm saying this right, Philitas of Cos, He's a Greek poet.

DENNIS: Uh huh.

IAN: There's a story that he, people say that maybe he died because he got, he became so obsessed with the liars paradox, that he

IAN: He couldn't-it
took over his mind.

DENNIS: Wow. And
he died because he
couldn't sleep? Well,
that would happen if
you don't get enough
sleep, you'll die.

IAN: Yeah I bet there
was other stuff going
on there.

DENNIS: Yeah.
ΔΔ

couldn't sleep thinking about it
and that that insomnia killed him.
Do you know what the liars para-
dox...?

DENNIS: Oh. And he
couldn't sleep because
of that?

IAN: Am I lying or
telling the truth?

IAN: With Philitas?

IAN: So, the liars
paradox is, if I say
the sentence, I am ly-
ing..

DENNIS: No. What's the
liars paradox?

DENNIS: Uh-huh.

IAN: What's the sound of one hand clapping?

DENNIS: I'm gonna go
I love her.

DENNIS: Yeah
sleep, wake
matter.

IAN: That ultimately is a really—that's maybe the answer to all of the classic unanswerable questions—which came first, the chicken or the egg.

DENNIS: It's really a tragedy, it really is because if he was able to get some sleep maybe his dreams would've worked it out for him. I think dreams are really important in that way, they help you make sense of the world. So, I think he probably would have gone to sleep dreamt about the liars paradox, woken up and said, It doesn't matter. You know, and then just gotten a jug of water, you know, those really tastefully decorated jugs that the Greeks, the ancient Greeks had. That's what I'm picturing.

ΔΔ

DENNIS: And then you go to sleep and you wake up and you think, Oh, it doesn't matter, I'm gonna go patch up the canoe.

tell my wife

IAN: Yeah.

get a good night's
up. Oh, it doesn't

IAN: I think that there could be somebody listening right now who can't sleep. You're sort of an expert in helping people sleep.

DENNIS: Absolutely.

IAN: They can't, you know, rest their head on you right now.

DENNIS: Right.

IAN: But... Is there anything you would want to say to them?

DENNIS: I'd say, First of all, stop thinking so much, and relax, have a thought that is unconnected to any other thought, a vision, maybe. And just let it go where it wants to go... without thinking about what it means, you know, like you're... You're riding a horse. And then the horse grows wings. And then the horse flies up into the clouds. And the clouds are made of light. And then there's a Twizzlers waterfall, I don't know why, you don't know why, but let's go to the Twizzlers waterfall. Now the horse is eating Twizzlers. And you're combing the horse's mane and you don't know why, you don't know where this is going and maybe the horse decides to lay down and maybe you lay down with the horse.

And now it starts raining. And now you're in the Grand Canyon somehow(, how'd you get there? Doesn't matter). You pull your cowboy hat down over your head-over your eyes-which you've been wearing but you didn't realize it. And now, you're looking up at the aurora borealis which you can somehow see through the brim of your cowboy hat (I don't know, doesn't matter why). And now the horse starts eating the aurora borealis. You don't know why, just go with it. Now you put your cowboy hat on the horse's head and now the horse is the cowboy. Now, the horse starts riding you.

Good night.

You thought soap scum was a bad thing. But for us, you know, that was just a little mark we left on this world after a life of service. That was, you know, a-a tombstone. And so now I guess I'm wondering what, what mine will be?

Tara, Bar of Soap

TARA: Good buddy of mine. Good friend, ah-nah, he's got a story.

Little kid. Playground. You know how they have those fences with the, you know their... steel... I don't know. Little girl. Five, maybe. Maybe four. Sticks a head. Right through. Can't get out. Head's through, body's on one side, head's on the other side. They call the police, they call the fire department, they call the ambulance as you got fifty parents there. People are going bonkers, they got the doers of life. You know what did it? Do you know what got this kid free and why she's alive today?

Soap. My buddy, that was him. He was there, he was there, and they put him on her head and... she was free.

That was it.

IAN: Well, why don't you just introduce yourself for me.

TARA: Hi, I'm Tara, I'm soap.

IAN: What kind of soap?

TARA: I'm a Lever 2000.

IAN: So, you're a bar soap, we should say.

TARA: Yes, yeah.

IAN: So, tell me about where you are right now, where you spend your time.

TARA: Well listen, you know, it's not news—but things haven't been going well for us. You know, things haven't been... they haven't been great. You know, we, uh... and it makes no sense as far as I'm concerned, right? I mean here, we are. We do everything. We're a one-man band, you know? We're a one stop shop, and meh... what? Ten, maybe twenty years ago, you got body wash. Fuckin' body wash. Are you kidding me, right? I mean, have you even ever thought about the fact that they call it body wash? You know... wha—what do you think we do? We have a nice, inventive, interesting name sounds good—soap! I think it's a great name, you know, I think it sounds good.

IAN: Yeah.

TARA: Right? Something else, they just call... it's just so... you know, body wash. You know, what that's why 'cause you're... and it's like limiting itself, it's saying don't, don't use me to free your kid's head. I'm just for washing bodies, you know? Ridiculous.

IAN: Yeah. Would you say that, you know, would you say that you're bitter?

TARA: I would say that I'm bitter. I would say that I'm bitter. I'm absolutely bitter and I don't just mean with regards to the denatonium. Do you know that they... they put denatonium in some soaps to make them bitter...

IAN: It's a...

TARA: That's not what I mean.

IAN: ... OK, it's like a bitter flavoring so people don't eat you.

TARA: Correct, yeah. And that's-I don't mean it in that sense. I mean bitter in the, you know, jaded.

IAN: Uh-huh.

TARA: Angry.

IAN: When you do get used though, when you know, someone is, I guess showering or bathing with you, do you like the work you do? Do you enjoy that?

TARA: Oh, yeah, I love it. But I mean look, you know I know I'm not for everybody, right? Not everybody takes baths. I'm sure you know someone who doesn't take baths or at least someone you suspect.

IAN: Yup, absolutely.

TARA: OK, you know, Ben Franklin took air baths. I mean, air bath means you just walk around naked. I mean, that's not a bath. There wasn't even water.

IAN: Air baths?

TARA: Yeah. He believed it was good for his health if you just walk around naked for an hour, every morning, you know he'd be there butt naked. You know, just writing or reading, you know then he'd go back to bed.

IAN: It's, I have to say it's weird to think that like, like these great aphorisms like, "He who lies down with dogs, shall wake up with fleas." That was actually written by a naked man in a chair 200 years ago.

TARA: Yeah, yeah, yeah—I mean, you know unbelievable, really, yeah. And a naked man who didn't use any soap, you know, imagine that.

IAN: Sitting there, just, just bare naked with his quill and it comes to him, "A true friend is the best possession."

TARA: Yeah. [laughs]

IAN: Get that down.

TARA: [laughing,] Yeah, I mean listen, are you what? Well, you think I'm surprised? My whole life, essentially, right, is being with naked people. And as far as I'm concerned, that's—you know, that's when they write their best. So, it doesn't surprise me that Ben Franklin really did his best thinking naked, you know, people are at their best, naked. That's at least in my opinion, you know, from what I've seen.

IAN: I just wanna ask you sort of about how your life works.

TARA: Sure.

IAN: So, do you belong to a single person or do you clean lots of people?

TARA: You know, there was a time that there was, that it was a few people, you know, there was a few people. You know, there was a tall one, there was a very small one. There was one with red hair who I remember fondly. Um, now, it just seems to be, you know, just one. Just this tall one, who is perfectly... nice. And it's not every bath, you know. It's a one off you know, and I sort of think to myself well, this is, you know, this is as we say... your silver life crisis, alright. I am, you know, I'm at that stage of life. I am in a dish, I, you know, half of my life is behind me. And I'm not being used, like I used to. But-you know, the silver lining to people not using us as much is that life expectancy is way up.

IAN: Yeah.

TARA: You know. I mean, we've had an exponential growth in life expectancy, and so who knows? You know, I could be in this dish... weeks, weeks. You know, I mean, when did my grandmother live? Two days?

IAN: So you, so Tara, you live in what is, you know, it's like the most private of private spaces that humans have. You're just like around so much of our private stuff.

TARA: Oh yeah, I mean you know, of course you know there's a... there's the singing, you know, when the tall person sings in the shower, that's the good part.

IAN: What's the bad part?

TARA: Well, I'll tell you a story. I don't know the circumstances. All I know was the small person had done something. The tall person came in, snatched me out of the dish and right away, I knew something was wrong, right? Right away, because I'm not usually touched at all, if the water's not on. So right away, you know I just was on high alert. You know, I was, "This isn't good, this isn't good, this could be the end, who knows?" Anyway, then next thing I know, small person is there. Tall person is there. Small person is crying, I'm being put into the mouth. I don't go in mouth, the kid must have said something he's not supposed to say. That's where, "You're not supposed to say this, you're not supposed to say this." What does that have to do with me, I'm thinking to myself, you know. And it was just, it was just awful.

IAN: That's punishment for you too.

TARA: It was absolutely...

IAN: Put into a mouth.

TARA: ... punishment for me, I didn't say a thing, uh. But unfortunately, there I was.

IAN: Do you know what the kid said? Could you tell me what the kid said?

TARA: Yeah, I can. It was dick.

IAN: OK.

IAN: Can you describe your scent for us?

TARA: Oooh! Can I describe my scent? Well, let me ask you this. Can you describe your scent?

IAN: ... I've never thought about it, I guess.

TARA: Yeah.

IAN: I live with it so much I guess I don't notice it.

TARA: Yeah, there you go. That was, I was trying to lead you into that, I don't know. [laughing] Yeah, I cannot smell myself.

IAN: Can you describe, can you describe my scent?

TARA: Not without using profanity. It's not good, honey, when people come to me, it's not good. Usually, right? I mean that's it. Where is the person, you know, who... is already smelling good (PHONE RINGING) when they come to me, you know.

[Phone dialing]

IAN: Hey, is this Saskia?

SASKIA: Yeah, speaking, hello.

IAN: Hi. So, you're with the Institute of Art and Olfaction in Los Angeles?

SASKIA: Yeah, I founded it.

IAN: Oh, OK. So, I visited once and I went into the back where there's this wall of, would you call them essences?

SASKIA: Uh, essences is a little hippie-dippie for us so... materials. [laughs]

IAN: Essentially, it was a wall of smells, pretty much.

SASKIA: Yeah, you got it.

IAN: So, what you do is you take all of those smells and you use them, you combine them to make new smells. The reason I'm calling, I'm hoping you can answer, what ingredients would you use to make the smell of a person?

SASKIA: Wow, that's really long, let's see, it depends. Probably some animalics, some funky smell 'cause humans, you know, are funky, we smell funky which is-we're mentally complicated creatures so it's hard to sort of kinda categorically answer that.

IAN: Wait, I'm sorry, I have to back up. What was the word you said, like anim...

SASKIA: Animalic.

IAN: Animalic? Meaning like, animal-like?

SASKIA: Yeah. Well, it's a fragrance family and they... so called because they typically come from animals, or it traditionally came from animals.

IAN: So ultimately, it sounds like it's just pretty complicated and it comes down to the individual person.

SASKIA: It's literally the person, yeah. I mean there's ways to recreate it categorically, for sure. I mean, we are... all our smells are chemical, you know. So, if you could you know, capture exactly which molecules those are, you could easily replicate that in the lab. It's not that hard. In fact, there's a company in France that's actually specializing in that, they're recreating the smells of your past loved ones, which is sad but apparently it's quite effective, apparently they really nail it.

IAN: So, it's essentially like, it's like a photograph you would have of someone but it's a smell photograph.

SASKIA: Yeah. Yeah, sad.

IAN: Yeah, but sweet.

SASKIA: But beautiful, yeah, exactly.

IAN: So, Tara. I'm curious how different your life is from what you thought it was gonna be, um. Can you kind of take us back to when you were at the store on the shelf, just kind of waiting to see what was gonna happen.

TARA: I mean, can you imagine anything more exciting? You know, when we're there on the shelf, you know, all of us together... I mean that's all you do. For days, weeks, sometimes months even. Right, you sit there and you imagine your wildest fantasies, where am I gonna be?

Am I gonna be in a pre-school? Am I gonna be in an employee bathroom? Am I gonna be in a

duplex on Central Park South. You know, we just sit around coming up with the wildest things, you know.

And then that day comes. You feel that little rustle, you know. A hand... on your box, you go, "This is it, this is it." And you know, goodbye to the fellas. You know, that's it, "I'm outta here fellas. Wish me luck, here I go." And that's it, and then-boom! I mean, from there it is just lightning fest. You get the hand, it takes you, you're flying through space, you're rustling around on the box, this all kinds of noise, you know. I mean, it's just unbelievable. Then sometimes it's just a dead stop. it's just a dead stop, right? And that's what we have been told is called, being in the pantry. Now, I'm not sure what that means, really, uh but for us, we just know that means be patient, relax, who knows what's coming next? Other times, boom! Straight to business. You show up, you take it out of the box, you're put into a dish and it is non-stop. Down and dirty and loud and exciting. Auto-mechanic shop.

Ah, that for me was a fantasy. Didn't work out that way for me. I got the tall guy, what are you gonna do? Made the best of it.

IAN: So, Tara you mentioned you're not being used every day anymore?

TARA: Yeah.

IAN: What do you do with your time?

TARA: I have um, it's interesting. It was a utilitarian life for so long.

IAN: Just work.

TARA: Just work, work, work, work.

Literally, you know, you work until you're worn away. We actually give of ourselves until we're dead. That's how it is for us. You know, that's how it is. We give, we give, we give, we give, the end. And now, I'm kind of kicking back you know. I'm asking myself, you know... Were you as important as you thought? Were you as valuable as you thought? And what kind of a mark will you leave, you know. Mildew.

IAN: Yeah.

TARA: A soap stain. You know, that's what we normally leave behind. Now I think that, um, you, I mean I hope, I don't mean to offend your people. People, humans...

IAN: Right.

TARA: ... You thought soap scum was a bad thing. But for us, you know, that was just a little mark we left on this world after a life of service. That was, you know, a-a tombstone. And so now I guess I'm wondering what, what mine will be?

IAN: Well so, what do you think? What do you wanna be remembered for?

TARA: Boy. You know I think of times, that the tall person came into the shower and was just miserable. And within a minute, there he is singing. You know, I did something.

IAN: What kind of stuff did he sing?

TARA: Opera, I guess. I don't know the songs, you know, I mean it's just music.

TARA: He takes you places. You forget about the hair stuck to you. You forget that every day you get a little smaller. A little more likely to fit down the drain. When he sings, it's like the angels are taking a big shower together.

And the tall person you know, he's forgetting too. And I consider that how to duet.

IAN: You know, Ben Franklin said, "Wish not so much to live long, but to live well."

TARA: Mm-hmm, probably when he was naked.

IAN: You know what... you know what I realize we just did? We just made a soap opera.

TARA: Alright.

IAN: Is there a part of the body that you like washing the least?

TARA: Of course, there's some part of the body that I like washing the least.

IAN: What is it?

TARA: I'm not... come on. Come on, can I have a little dignity here, you know.

IAN: OK.

TARA: I don't wanna talk about it.

What would
a tree do
if nobody
stopped it?

Ana,
Elevator

ANA: Now, they all feel
when, you know, the first
bit of like, whoa, like
high before.

My name is Ana, an

I remember my first
five, alright. And then,
got higher, I was gettin'
get pushed, like I'm goin'

IAN: You were a little
bit scared of heights?

ANA: Yeah, yeah, I
would say I was. I
think going—when you
go to the highest
floor you've ever been
to for the first time,
you think it should be

no higher than this.
They're all gonna feel
like maybe they're too
high in the beginning,
but then you'll get
used to it.

the same to me. But there was definitely a time
t time I went to 15, 16, or 17, it was a little
I'm going all the way up here. Never gone this

d I'm an elevator.

t day thinking, OK, first we're gonna go at
OK, stop at three and then go to 11. And as we
g like anxious. You know, when the button will
ng all the way up there, haven't gone there yet.

IAN: What do you imag-
ine an elevator-you
know who's working in
the tallest building-
what do you imagine
they feel?

ANA: Probably tired. I
mean, I'm tired af-
ter a day of work and
I'm just going to 17.
But I see all the oth-
er buildings they're
making are getting
higher and higher.
You know, Frank Lloyd
Wright wanted to make
a building that was a
mile high.

IAN:
A mile.

ANA: Yeah, and it was going to have 76 elevators. And they were going to be nuclear-powered, but it never got built.

(Phone ringing)

BARRY: Hi, Ian.

IAN: Yeah, that's me.

BARRY: Yeah,

IAN: That's—it's terrifying in like every way, like,

ANA: Yeah. IAN: It's too tall, it is powered by the most destructive force man has ever known.

ANA: Right, that kind of danger is like, I mean, to be honest, I'm glad it didn't get built.

IAN: Yeah, I think a lot of people like think about what if something went wrong in this elevator. And they're imagining being stuck. They're not imagining, you know, a city being destroyed.

ANA: One elevator mis-hap and that building is gone.

IAN: You're coming through great, are you getting me OK?

can you hear me?

BARRY:
Yeah.

IAN: So Barry, I'm calling because I understand you—you got ahold of Frank Lloyd Wright's drawings for the mile-high tower.

BARRY: Yeah, there are, um, presentation drawings that he made for display. He called this press conference to unveil this design for a mile-high skyscraper for downtown Chicago. And there are photographs of him presenting it. The drawings are about—I had to look it up but they were about 7 feet tall, they're a bit taller than I.

[IAN laughs]

IAN: So, even the drawings were tall?

BERRY: Yeah. I found a really interesting document where a couple of days before the press conference, I think he got nervous about questions that might come from reporters. So, he starts writing to try

to gather information in case people want to uh ask the pragmatic question, Can this really be built? And he writes to people at Otis elevator. And he wrote to them and he described what he's gonna do with sentence sketches and say,

you know, 'Is it feasible?' And they send back a multipage letter of which only the first two pages survived in the kitchen stops, which is unfortunate, saying things like, Yes, this is entirely possible, we have figured it out." And then, "Indeed, we'll work but you must take into consideration what is going to happen to the, you know, to the lungs and to the sinal passages of the passengers." We would suggest that we think of them almost like airline pilots and perhaps they should be supplied with chewing gum, if they're going to be a using

these elevators because nobody's ever done this before." But they said they do send back this kind of research report, but it has a tongue and cheek aspect between the lines and you feel like they're saying to him, You must be—you must be pulling our leg.

IAN: So in that, I wanna ask, a lot of people, I think of the conversations we have in elevators as some of the most mundane, you know, small talk type conversations that we have. I guess you have probably seen a lot of that.

ANA: Yeah, that's almost exclusively what I hear.

IAN: Well, I read this thing and I haven't been able to confirm if it's true or not. But if you place this site that there was once a law on the books in New York, I'll just read it, While riding in an elevator, one must talk to no one and fold his hands while looking

toward the door." So if that's true, it was once illegal in New York to talk to someone in an elevator.

ANA: Wow! Well, if that is the case, if that is a real law, then it is constantly broken and never enforced. And I wouldn't, I mean, it's such a small offense why would you alert the authorities about it?

IAN: That would be a strange 911 call.

ANA: There is mundane conversation happening in my vicinity for 30 seconds.

IAN: Yes, send help.

ANA: What were the punishment for that be? Like jail, you're not gonna go to jail for that? Do you get a fine, or is it more of a slap on the wrist? Maybe you're not allowed to ride the elevator for a little while. And if it's just no small talk but you're allowed to have in-depth conversations. So now,

suddenly, you're hearing like intimate details about somebody's life, and it's not drowned out by, you know, how was work?

IAN: Yeah. Yeah, it's only depth.

ANA: Yeah, which is I think makes people uncomfortable. You don't wanna hear that. You would rather just have the background noise of, you know, my kid's soccer game was good.

IAN: Maybe a way to kind of think about this is—I'll ask you a very intimate question. And then, we'll bring up some small talk around us. So, you know, no one has to be made uncomfortable by what you're saying.

ANA: OK.

IAN: Has there ever been anybody who's walked into you that you secretly hoped would never leave?

ANA: Yes. And it wasn't the first time that they rode me, it was more like after a while, after having this interaction, they grew on me in a way that I didn't expect. And I started to look forward to seeing them and to you know, I wished that I could push the button to the 13th floor myself so that they didn't have to worry about...

[Background chatter]

And after that, I said, you know what? I'm here to work, I'm not here to, you know, I'm not here to [chuckling] fall in love essentially.

*

IAN: Have you ever—have you ever been stuck?

ANA: Oh, yeah.

IAN: With people inside of you?

ANA: Mmhm.

IAN: Can we just like imagine that we're stuck. What do you say to me to help me through the time?

ANA: Initially, it'll probably be a bit like, Well, OK, alright, let's relax, we're stuck. We are not going anywhere. There's no use in feeling too stressed about this cause you can't do anything about it. And unfortunately, I can't do anything about it. But I've been stuck so many times and I've never stayed stuck, so you won't either.

IAN: I think I feel inclined to keep pushing buttons.

ANA: You're not gonna change anything. You can push the buttons if it makes you feel better but you should know that it's not gonna make me get unstuck.

I understand why someone would be afraid of elevators. You know, like they don't live in an elevator, they don't belong in there. They wanna be outside. And maybe going into an elevator make some worry that they'll never get to go back outside. I would love to see the outside too. Unfortunately, I can't but I understand why someone would want to.

IAN: You know I could, um—I realize I could just show you what outside looks like, like I could bring up a video.

ANA: Really?

IAN: You wanna do that?

ANA: Oh yeah, oh my gosh!

IAN: Well, so maybe I'll just, I'll like, I'll find just the video of outside. And then do you just wanna sort of narrate, just kind of, you know, vocalize your reactions.

ANA: Yeah, sure.

IAN: I just gotta bring this up.

ANA: Wow!

IAN: Yeah, this looks like Time Square.

ANA: There are so many people. Is there no weight limit outside?

IAN: There's no weight limit.

ANA: Wow! So, how do you know if you have too many people outside?

IAN: There may be too many people.

ANA: And nothing breaks?

IAN: Ev-almost everything.

ANA: Every OK, so that make that checks out. And where are those people going, you know? So what does everyone do? How many people are, you know, on their way somewhere? How many are just killing time?

IAN: I sometimes wanna see people outside but I kind of wonder, like it's hard for me to imagine that that many people have you know, an individual consciousness.

It's just like too much...

ANA: Yeah.

IAN: ... for my brain to handle, you know.

[ANA laughs]

ANA: Free hugs.

They're all making decisions, they're all thinking things through.

That's like an elevator but sideways.

IAN: It's a bus.

ANA: And people, they push the button for where they wanna go.

IAN: Yeah, you push a button or pull a string when you wanna get off.

ANA: Uh-huh. So it's the opposite of how I work?

IAN: It's both sideways and um. Yeah you, you decide sort of right at the end.

IAN: That seems to be somebody offering free hugs.

ANA: Yeah. I mean I guess-I mean, it's kind of cheesy but you could say I'm hugging people, but... there's no intimacy to it though.

[Bus honking]

It looks so overwhelming out there. That it almost makes me think maybe it's good that I'm in a quiet area, or at least quiet compared to this.

IAN: Yeah.

ANA: And I mean, that's just this city. You know, it's like this is one of... who knows how many cities...

IAN: Yeah.

ANA: ... in the world. What's that?

IAN: That's a tree.

ANA: So that is a tree.

It's in, like
a pot, so I wasn't
sure.

IAN: Yeah, this one is kind of trimmed down, manicured so, so it can be in the city. There are places where it's not like that.

ANA: Uh-huh. And it, what, it just gets bigger until it can't?

IAN: Yeah, you wanna see that?

ANA: Yeah. What would a tree do if nobody stopped it?

[Birds chirping]

ANA: Wow!

IAN: So that's a-this is a forest.

ANA: That's huge.
And there's nobody there?

IAN: Yeah,
there's no people.

ANA: See somewhere like that I would like to go. The other place looked like a little too much for me, but this looks like it's the sort of pace that I'm used to.

IAN: Yeah, I mean we're seeing, you know, a nice sort of, a forest with some light streaming in. Just-no people around. Beautiful green. Be nice to imagine just you, just an elevator sitting in the middle.

ANA: In the middle of that, yeah. And then, I would really have nothing to do cause I know no one's coming up in there.

IAN: Yeah.

ANA: Animals don't need me. They can get up there on their own. But I think putting me in that context or in that sort of setting would... ruin that place in a way. It would take away from it being what it is. You know, I'm



sure in my
area before I
was there I bet it
looked like that. And
then they start putting
buildings and elevators
in there and suddenly
what used to be quiet
with trees and sunlight
is now just concrete and
people and lights-and
this is hectic.

IAN: Yeah, once an ele-
vator is in the forest,
it's kind of, it's no
longer a forest.

ANA: Yeah, because you
put an elevator there,
because you assume
someone's gonna use it,
which means

people are coming and
that place will no lon-
ger be like it is now.

IAN: Yeah.

ANA: When does it stop
though?

IAN: When the people
stopped coming?



ANA: Mm-hm. Like
will that be there in, I
don't know how many years or
in a long time? Or do you think
that those areas will stay exactly
like that?

IAN: Yeah, it's kind of hard to know.
Well, while I have this open, is there
anything else I can show you?

ANA: Do you think I could see stairs?

IAN: Stairs.

ANA: Yeah, 'cause I hear people talking
about them saying, You go ahead, I'm
gonna take the stairs. I always wonder
what they're like.

IAN: Alright, well, you know, bring
it up.

ANA: Wow! These are
beautiful.

Images

- 7 Pieter Claesz
- 30 Willem Kalf
- 91 Kelly Sikkema
- 93 Albrecht Dürer
- 1,96 Everything Is Alive



Everything Is Alive is an interview show in which all the subjects are inanimate objects. In each episode, a different thing tells us its life story—and everything it says is true. A proud member of Radiotopia from PRX. Hosted and created by Ian Chillag, produced by Jennifer Mills.

Set in Spot Mono by Schick Toikka.