

[Jovial, upbeat music plays.]

BRENT (Abe Goldfarb): (laughing mockingly) Yeah, okay pal, you keep up that energy, I'm sure the Deep State is pissing their Y-fronts over your newsletter.

[Double-beep sound of hanging up. Brent swivels in his chair.]

BRENT: Folks, we're gliding silkily into our second hour of friction-free frolic, and I remain, as ever, Brent Ziff, living Brent-Free in your head, out of Denver C-O!

[Multiple phones ring and continue ringing as Brent speaks.]

BRENT: My god, so many suitors, how shall I choose, who shall escort me to the ball? (Laughs) See here's the thing, people: it's really all on you. You encourage my bad behavior, you reward it. I'm completely transparent about how things work here. You all know I've got a screen right in front of me telling me how many people are listening to this stream at any given moment, and if I can do anything to jack those numbers? I'm gonna do it. And that's exactly what picking a fight with Dr. Newsletter just achieved. Let's not mince words: I'm here to add money to my coffers by subtracting time from you.

[Phones keep ringing.]

BRENT: Amazing, I'm just straight-out saying that and none of you are leaving, I love it, we understand each other, what a beautiful thing. Okay, I don't know this number, let's have some fun.

[Clicking sound of answering call.]

BRENT: Hi there, you're on with Brent Ziff, and I am living Brent-Free inside your head.

[LEO SHORT (on the phone) (Brian Silliman) groans in pain. Leo is on the phone throughout.]

BRENT: Uh... we doin' okay there, caller?

LEO: I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm okay... (Groans again)

BRENT: Folks, I always said, sooner or later we'd have someone bleed out on the air... again.

LEO: No no no no, I'm fine, I'm sorry, just a little pain, not like hospital pain, just regular pain.

BRENT: Oh well if it's regular pain then fuck you guy, zero sympathy, power through. Where are we calling from tonight, Regular Pain?

LEO: Oh, Casper, Wyoming! I knew you'd ask me that, I was ready.

BRENT: Nice, Casper, practically neighbors compared to most of my callers.

LEO: Oh, I-I don't live here, I'm in a hotel.

BRENT: So, Regular Pain, what has you taking time out of your kitchen rewiring convention or whatever the hell happens in Casper to get Ziffed tonight?

LEO: Oh, well, a-a couple things, actually, in fact, th-there's—

BRENT: Yeah, we'll see if I keep you on long enough for a "couple things," I got a lot of phone lights blinking, a lot of competition.

[Brent presses a button, and the phones briefly ring.]

LEO: I like how you turn the ringing sounds on and off, I like how you can do that.

BRENT: Uh, yeah, I'm a regular Tony Stark with this mute button. What are we jawing about tonight?

LEO: I just, (laughs giddily) I can't believe I'm talking to you.

BRENT: Hey, I can't believe it either, but maybe let's move on to—

LEO: No, because I've listened to the show for quite a long time, you know, a few years, in fact, because I love your show so much, but I've never actually called in before.

BRENT: Yeah, we have kind of a famous expression for that in the industry. Let's throw some lube on this, try easing you in: what's your name?

LEO: (grunts) Leo Short.

BRENT: Then I am sorry my friend, 'cause you are "Shorty" for the rest of this call, and not a thing on this Earth could make me change my mind.

LEO: This Earth...

BRENT: Ahh, so what changed tonight, Shorty? What jumper-cables-to-the-nuts shocked you out of longtime listener into first-time caller?

LEO: I never had something to offer before.

BRENT: And you do now? 'Cause you're off to a slow start. (Laughs)

LEO: I've always been like this. I can't approach someone unless I know what I'm bringing to the table.

BRENT: Loser attitude, Shorty, you need to be thinking about what the other person is bringing to the table.

LEO: I know, Brent, I know you're always saying that, but then part of me thinks, "If I wasn't this way, none of this would've happened."

BRENT: None of what would've happened?

LEO: No 'cause, 'cause here's the thing, Brent: I'm not funny. I'm not interesting. I don't look like much of anything.

BRENT: You amaze me.

LEO: If someone's spending time on me I need to know why, I need to know what they're getting out of it. [Brent laughs.] If I'm, you know, if I'm... interested in someone, I need to have some, I guess, theory or credible notion of why they might be interested back. You think I would've gotten into breathing otherwise? Not in a million years!

BRENT: I'm-I'm-I'm sorry, did you say "breathing"?

LEO: I know how it sounds—

BRENT: You've "gotten into" breathing? You're—you're dabbling in breathing, that's your new interest, that's your version of going to book club to meet unfulfilled moms?

LEO: Kind of. (Laughs)

BRENT: Shorty, if you're just gonna agree with me every time I mock you, it's gonna get—

LEO: It's this girl.

BRENT: Okay, now we got ourselves a conversation! Tell me about this girl, where'd you meet her?

LEO: At my work, she was in a nearby—

BRENT: Shorty, if this story ends in HR, I might have to—

LEO: No no, she's not my (sighs with frustration)—not a colleague, exactly [Brent laughs]—it's a shared space, a shared workspace, one of those offices with a million little businesses, everybody rents a cubicle, everybody's—

BRENT: Sure, gotcha, gig-economy, late-late capitalism, I get the picture. So give us the stats, Shorty, what does she look like?

LEO: Oh—yes—of course—I knew from my many years of listening that you would ask this, and I prepared an answer that you would like but that I would also feel comfortable expressing—

BRENT: Shorty, am I about to find out that you have a basement full of pictures of me, ‘cause—

[Leo intensely groans with pain.]

BRENT: ...Shorty?

LEO: It’s okay, it’s okay.

BRENT: Kinda sounds like it’s not.

LEO: No, it just means I need to keep an eye on the time. (Groans more quietly.)

BRENT: Okay while you’re “keeping an eye on the time,” how ‘bout I ask you something, man-to-man?

LEO: Okay...?

BRENT: Are you... calling me... from the shitter?

LEO: Yeah but that’s not what’s important—

BRENT: I knew it! (Laughs triumphantly.)

LEO: No, but—

BRENT: ‘Cause I already assume 90 percent of you shut-ins call me from the john, but most of you at least make an effort to conceal it.

LEO: What’s important is *why* I’m in the—

BRENT: But not ol’ Leo Short here, Leo’s gonna bless us with a play-by-play as he eases that recalcitrant log from his—wait, why do you need to “keep an eye on the time”?

LEO: Michelle Meyrink. *Real Genius*.

BRENT: Go on.

LEO: The girl, you asked me what she looks like. I know you like lesser-known 1980s hotties, so I thought this would be a useful reference—

BRENT: Are you seriously telling me this filly in your polycule looks like Meyrink in *Real Genius*? 'Cause that's one of my holy grails.

LEO : Okay, well—

BRENT: Don't make this comparison lightly.

LEO: The-the face, the body, but not the haircut.

BRENT: Okay 'cause that's important context—

LEO: I-I used to imagine that when we fell in love she would get that same haircut because she'd know how happy it would make me.

BRENT: WOW. Hope she's not listening right now. (Laughs derisively.)

LEO: Do women listen to this show?

BRENT: What the f—why does everybody assume—women absolutely—I'm the guy who sees the data, wouldn't I be the one who knows? Jesus!

LEO: (low) Good, we'll need them.

BRENT: Okay, so: Meyrink minus the haircut, one cubicle over, the air is thick with thwarted passion. Tell us what happened next.

LEO: Nothing. I misunderstood the whole thing like I always do.

BRENT: So tell me some more about that, Shorty, what did you misunderstand?

LEO: I take any form of interest as if it's love or friendship, and most of the time it's not.

BRENT: You should just assume it's not. I do.

LEO: How do you go through life like that?

BRENT: (laughs contemptuously) How do you not?

LEO: No it was how she kept putting her hands on me, like casually, and I thought... a signal? Isn't that what they say in the, whatever, the-the articles? If she keeps touching your knee, if she keeps touching your forearm...?

BRENT: Was she touching your knee or your forearm?

LEO: Mostly my shoulders. She was obsessed with the idea that I-I wasn't relaxed. She kept saying "Can't you feel where your shoulders are right now? Can't you feel what your jaw is doing?"

BRENT: (laughs) Oh Christ, we got one of those "drop your shoulders" people, I know this type. I'm guessing this is where the "breathing" comes in?

LEO: Yeah, exactly! One day I was telling her how I felt like the other people in the workspace were boring, that when they would come by my desk to talk to me I was so bored that I felt desperate for them to stop.

BRENT: Starting to know how they feel, Shorty—

LEO: But she said, "No, Leo, that's wrong. It's not that those people are boring, it's that you hold your breath while they're talking to you! [Brent sighs.] Of course you're desperate for them to stop talking: you're literally suffocating the entire time! Are you aware of how much of each day you're just holding your breath?"

BRENT: And that was the story of how Leo Short joined the Breathing Club. Folks —

LEO: No, it was a revelation. The second she said it, it was like seeing the world the first time. Like the first time you're horny, or-or the first time you notice how different neighborhoods look depending on who lives in them? Or... like you, Brent!

BRENT: M-Me what?

LEO: How you said you had to get famous to realize what it was like to not be famous?

BRENT: Sure. When, uh, when people treat you a new way it makes you realize how differently they were treating you before. But what did this actually—

LEO: Like suddenly it was everywhere, it was constant! I would find myself gasping in front of people who were telling me perfectly ordinary things because I'd realized I'd been holding my breath from the minute they started talking. It was almost like, "How am I alive?"

BRENT: And you didn't think, like, a therapist, or—

LEO: All I could think was, how can I make this into something I bring to the table? [Brent laughs mockingly.] How can I make this something I'm offering her?

BRENT: God, Shorty, you should see the phone lights blinking, half of America is calling in to yell at you!

LEO: Oh, could you unmute them for a second? I'd love to hear them.

BRENT: How 'bout let's stay focused on "How I Turned a Basic Bodily Function into a Dad-Hobby."

LEO: Well, there's a lot to it! It's actually quite a vast subject: meditation, mindfulness, nose-versus-mouth, Buddhist traditions, I was into all of it. If I, if I could make myself an expert, if I could make myself into Mr. Breathing, then maybe that's my value to her!

BRENT: (laughs) Oh, my Christ, "Mr. Breathing," you poor sad chump.

LEO: I know you think it's ridiculous, and it sorta was—

BRENT: Mainly I admire the hustle. I had to get famous to get laid, and I honestly think that was easier than whatever this is. And this is normally when I'd unload a spray of real-talk about 'owning your value' and 'making women work for you,' but as you can hear... [Brent unmutes the phones for a few seconds. Many phones ring.] ...a lot of other folks are waiting their turn to take you to the woodshed, so lets see if—

[Leo moans in very intense pain.]

BRENT: Damn, Shorty, that's the worst one yet—

LEO: Listen, LISTEN!

BRENT: Whoa-ho, okay—

LEO: It's fine for you to hang up, it's fine for you to take those other calls—

BRENT: I know it's "fine"—

LEO: But I need you to do one thing first.

BRENT: I don't need to do any things first, I just to push a button—

LEO: No-no, you have to do it now, we're almost out of time!

BRENT: Before what, you unload a deuce that paralyzes the public works of Casper, Wyoming?
(Laughs)

LEO: No, I need you to go on YouTube and search "Freedom Seattle."

BRENT: And uh... why would I do that?

LEO: Because you hate boring. And this'll be the least boring thing you ever see.

BRENT: Big talk, Latrine Leo.

LEO: It's true.

BRENT: You know "Freedom Seattle" is gonna bring up about a billion results, right?

LEO: The algorithm should push the most popular one to the top.

BRENT: And I'm guessing you already know—

LEO: It's a live feed of a concert called Freedom Seattle. Playing tonight, in progress right now. Mostly right-wing bands, everyone's there to, whatever, make a big show of hanging out in a crowd with no masks on, some Senator's gonna—(grunts) whatever, it doesn't matter! The point is it's live, the point is you get to see what's about to happen!

BRENT: Okay Leo if this is you calling in a bomb threat we're gonna have to—

LEO: No, a bomb is something I could theoretically know about ahead of time.

BRENT: And this isn't?

[Leo groans in pain again, very intensely.]

BRENT: Jesus, guy—

LEO: (breathing heavily) I would only ask that you take note of my number, and when you see it again, you take my call.

BRENT: Yeah, I'm not gonna talk to the same guy twice in one show, a lot of people are calling—

LEO: No, you'll make an exception for this.

BRENT: And why am I gonna do that?

LEO: Because everyone at that concert is gonna be killed by a tsunami in the next couple minutes.

BRENT: Yyyyyeah, okay, it's been real, Shorty!

LEO: Just watch for my number. ‘Cause this is only the first one.

BRENT: First what, first call?

LEO: First tsunami. Talk soon.

[Triple-beep of Leo hanging up. Phones begin ringing again.]

BRENT: Yeah, okay, sorry about that folks, I called that one wrong. I had Shorty pegged as semi-nuts, which is good fun, but it turns out he’s full-on nuts, which is just tedious. Let’s see if we can’t find someone to...

[Beat. Brent mutes the ringing phones.]

BRENT: Here’s the thing, though... this guy Shorty... people don’t usually stick their necks out with something so immediately disprovable... you know what, let’s actually throw this shit on.

[Brent types on his laptop.]

BRENT: Freedom... Seattle... [Low sound of crowd cheering on computer speakers. The computer makes little beeps that get incrementally louder as Brent turns up the volume.] Oh yeah, this is definitely it. [Band music plays under the following.] (Laughs) Look at these assholes. Can you guys hear this? Pull it up at home if you can’t, it’s hypnotically bad. God almighty. Riddle me this, people: if right-wing nationalists are taking over every country in the world, why can’t they put together a decent bar band? Look at these fucking bros in the crowd. Flounders flopping around on the dock. Seriously, pull this up and watch these head-banging Texas Chainsaw write-offs. And I’m on the record, you all know, I thought lockdowns were bullshit, I said it every night, that it was a gateway drug to some way bigger government oversteps down the line, but that doesn’t mean “hit the mosh-pit,” Smooth-Brain. (Speaks in mockingly-dopey tone) “Oh yeah, my freedom, my freedom is exemplified by paying 20 bucks for parking to listen to some sad-ass lineup of 44-year-olds they wouldn’t book in a Red Lobster—” (Resumes normal tone.) Wait. Wait.

[Over the computer speakers, the crowd’s cheers turn into screams of fear.]

BRENT: Okay wait, that’s...

[On computer speakers, rushing water overpowers and silences the screams, then the video cuts off, leaving static.]

Brent: What did I just... did any of you... [Repeatedly clicks to refresh the livestream, but there’s only static.] I can’t tell if it’s the camera, or... or if like the feed... [Static continues.] Okay there’s gotta be some way of... checking... like... like not the news, the news wouldn’t have time to... there’s gotta be some other live video of Seattle, right? What’s always live, like, something that

has to be interact—cam-girls! [Brent types quickly.] I'll search Seattle cam-girls, if the cam-girls are okay, then this is just some bullshit that what's-his-name... somehow... Yeah, okay, guys, I can see all your calls, just gimme a fuckin' second... none of these cam-girl feeds are... they're all just... [Clicks a few more times.] All the comments are like "where'd you go, baby," 60-year-olds all over Utah with quarter-chubs in their calloused mitts... I'm just gonna search live Seattle anything...

[Keyboard keys clack.]

BRENT: Guys! Stop fucking calling! I'm not CNN, I don't have anything to... [Brent slides back in his chair.] Folks there's no... I can't find anything showing... [Brent hits his desk.] STOP CALLING, WHAT DO YOU EXPECT ME TO—[Beat.] Oh, god, that's... that number right there, that's... Okay, you know what? You know what? [Presses button to answer call.] Shorty! Good stuff, tell us how you did it.

LEO: God, it's one thing to know...

BRENT: All done with, uh, mirrors, right, big guy?

LEO: But to actually see it...

BRENT: Take us behind the curtain. 'Cause I'm running the numbers in my head, and I can't figure out how some jamoke kills a live concert stream and six unrelated cam-girl feeds all at the same time.

LEO: You think I made this happen?

BRENT: And really, standing-O, but now's when you flip to the back of the Encyclopedia Brown and tell us how—

LEO: I mean I get it, early on I thought the same thing, but then I realized how ridiculous that was. It doesn't do what I want, it's just letting me know.

BRENT: Who are you talking about, Shorty—(distracted, caught off guard) Oh fuck.

LEO: Brent?

BRENT: Oh fuck, what the fuck...

LEO: Oh, are the news stories coming up?

BRENT: Oh my god...

LEO: Those short ones, right? Where it's like just a paragraph because they barely know anything yet?

BRENT: It's everywhere, it's everywhere, this-this can't be you, there's no way you...

LEO: Hacked Google News?

BRENT: (reading) "A shock meteorological event..."

LEO: That's what they always have to say at first, 'cause no one can get close enough to report any facts. All they know is A Thing Happened...

BRENT: (reading) "...without warning..."

LEO: ...and they have to put up something because no one wants to wait for information anymore.

BRENT: The fuck is "without warning," nobody saw a giant fuckin' wave heading for—

LEO: My guess is they did see it, but only half an hour out, and that's not enough time to do anything.

BRENT: But...

LEO: A city like Seattle? [Brent sighs.] Population, what, half a million? You're basically just debating whether the panic or the wave should kill people first.

BRENT: But they're supposed to know way before that, right? They, they, they, there-there's a thing, those people—

LEO: The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

BRENT: That's how you knew! You're with them!

LEO: I wish.

BRENT: You... [Slides forward in chair.] You knew it was coming and you called me?

LEO: No, I wish I was with NOAA, you know how many times I tried to get hired there?

BRENT: Then-then-then h-how...

LEO: I called, I visited in person—and I was very clear that I had no formal training, but that I had a unique qualification that would compensate.

BRENT: What fucking qualif... oh my god, oh, look at this, it's the whole internet...

LEO: I just never had the proof.

BRENT: Proof of what?

LEO: It was always a timing problem, right? Even if I called in the second I had the Feeling, their instruments would already be on the case. I'd say, "There's gonna be an earthquake in Sinaloa," and they'd be like, "Yeah, Nostradamus, we just put out a press release." The Feeling isn't an asset if it doesn't work faster than the tech they already have.

BRENT: Hold, on what's—

LEO: But then today it finally did. For the first time ever, the Feeling picked up something they didn't... and it doesn't matter.

BRENT: You keep saying "the Feeling," what are you talking about?

LEO: Okay, it's gonna sound funny but it's not funny.

BRENT: Nothing is funny, Jesus Christ, we just lost the whole...

LEO: It feels like I have to take shit but I don't.

[A beat. Brent laughs maniacally.]

BRENT: (takes a deep inhale) What?

LEO: It's like the same heaviness you feel when you have to shit. That core of your body, low down, your center.

BRENT: Oh my god, man, what are you even... fucking...

LEO: The first few times, it felt like I couldn't get to the toilet fast enough. But then I'd be sitting there and nothing was happening, which made perfect sense, because I shitted just that morning! So why did it feel like there was a bowling ball down there?

BRENT: What is even happening right now?

LEO: I went to doctors, and all they could think was, maybe psychological? Which made me mad, but I didn't have any better ideas... until the day I had the Feeling at the exact same moment I was looking at a map.

BRENT: A-a map of what?

LEO: The world.

BRENT: Why would you be on the shitter looking at a—

LEO: I was cramming for a pub quiz. It's the same old story.

BRENT: Oh sure, that old chestnut—what in God's name are you—

LEO: There was a guy. And he was hot. And he asked me to be on his quiz team, and—

BRENT: Wait-wait, guy? A hot guy? What happened to Michelle Meyrink?

LEO: (scoffs) I mean, Brent, bisexuals do exist, you know—

BRENT: WELL I'M SORRY FOR THE ERASURE, DAVID BOWIE, WE JUST LOST A WHOLE FUCKING CITY!

LEO: (low) Gonna lose a lot more than that...

BRENT: Say what?

LEO: (ignoring Brent) Now I don't know where he got the idea, but somehow he thought I was this ace at geography? And like an idiot, I wanted to have something to offer, so I went along with it. So I'm on the john, and I'm looking at all these countries, and I realize it's just gonna be a disaster. There's like whole cities that are in different nations than I thought they were, and then just as my colon contracted for the... third time... my eyes just went to the southern tip of South Africa. And somehow just knew, to a certainty, that what was happening in my gut was directly tied to what was happening there.

BRENT: Sorry—wait—hold on—you're—

[Leo groans repeatedly in pain.]

BRENT: ...Shorty?

LEO: (grunting)Two hours ðlater, all over the news: "Cape Town Earthquake."

BRENT: What the hell is this, man, what are you telling me right now?

LEO: I feel the Earth, Brent. I feel it deep inside of me. When it moves, I move. I move with the Earth. I feel the Earth.

BRENT: You're saying because you looked at a map... while taking a dump you somehow concluded—

[The sound of a helicopter rotor plays over Brent's computer speakers.]

BRENT: Oh my god look at this shit, it looks like some nuclear...

[The sound of footage on Brent's computer shifts to the faint sound of an interview.]

LEO: Yeah, I imagine.

[Over Brent's computer speakers, voices yelling questions, other voices answering, all inaudible.]

BRENT: They're saying...

LEO: What?

BRENT: Gimme a second, they're-they're-they're... they're saying it went all the way to... thank fuck my Mom moved to St. Paul.

LEO: It won't matter.

[The press statement continues under Brent's line.]

BRENT: They're saying—Jesus—there's just this wall of official-looking assholes saying there's no way they could've... we're like two minutes out and they're already covering their asses...

[On Brent's speakers, more questions are shouted and then the person answering continues, all inaudible.]

LEO: They're right, though. They couldn't have known. This is new. I've been feeling the Earth for a while now, and I've never felt it shift like this before. I didn't know it could.

[Brent clicks to turn off the press conference.]

BRENT: But you... I mean I've got it on tape... you called it several minutes beforehand... because you had to take a dump?

LEO: I said it feels like having-to-take-a-dump—I didn't—

BRENT: You're saying every time you feel a deuce coming on there's an earthquake?

LEO: No, sometimes it's just a deuce, I am a person. It's just hard to tell the two feelings apart, even after a couple years.

BRENT: A couple years, a couple years you've been having this?

LEO: I think partly it's that they both feel so organic, you know, like the most natural thing in the world.

BRENT: Shorty, I just listened to you howl like you were being tortured!

LEO: Well, sure, nothing's more natural than pain.

BRENT: Hold the fuck on.

LEO: ...Brent?

BRENT: You just howled.

LEO: What, you mean a minute ago?

BRENT: Yes a minute ago, you just made a huge goddamn pain noise a minute ago. Why did you do that?

LEO: Well I'm not doing it on purpose—

BRENT: But the earthquake already happened. It's-it's over. Shouldn't the "Feeling" stop too?

LEO: It stops when the Earth stops, yeah.

BRENT: Sssso...

LEO: The Earth hasn't stopped. It's still moving. And it's gonna keep moving for a long time.

[Beat.]

BRENT: You're saying...

LEO: Yes.

BRENT: I mean, y-you're saying... when you cried out just now...

LEO: That was Uruguay and Argentina.

[Brent shifts abruptly in his chair.]

BRENT: Oh come the fuck on!

[Brent slaps his desk.]

LEO: This isn't over, Brent. Seattle was just the beginning, barely the beginning, really.

BRENT: (quietly) This is gonna keep happening?

LEO: This is what is happening, this is the world now. The waves are just gonna keep coming, higher and faster, reaching further and further, until everything we know is gone.

[A portentous drumbreat leads into the end credits music, the same upbeat jovial tune from the beginning.]

VOICEOVER (Jordana Williams): Gideon Media presents *The Earth Moves* by Mac Rogers, based on an idea by Abe Goldfarb, directed by Jordana Williams.

Featuring Abe Goldfarb and Brian Silliman.

Sound design by Cara Ehlenfeldt. Produced, edited, and with music by Sean Williams.

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[The music fades.]

END OF PART 1