



Futile Ascent by Rong Bao



Chinese Livestreamers, China Insider Instagram Reel

NOTES

SETTING

- (a) The SHEIN Office building, where the Office Sirens all work. There is a tennis court on the roof (floor 333) , The Office is on floor 18, the pool on floor 50, and the Aerospace and Defense division on floor 111. Nobody ever leaves.
- (b) A variety of other worlds that feel like filters happen. Specifically: Rockaway Parkway Beach, Zhen Huan Zhen (Chinese drama), a Farm, and the Hunger Games arena.

CHARACTERS

OFFICE SIREN — A sexy “woman” (an office siren). She is played by a chorus of four performers of varying gender identities, it is important that they are not all cis women. She at first feels like “blank canvases”. She has no name, and is referred to by her number.

EUNICH — Only in the Chinese Drama world. Voiceover taken from the Chinese drama referenced above.

MANAGER/EMPEROR — Voiceover by a performer (not one of the Office Sirens).

MAID — Only in the Chinese Drama world. Minor character, played by one of the Office Sirens.

EMPRESS DOWAGER— Only in the Chinese Drama world. The “mother of the Harem”, has almost as much power as the emperor. Voiceover taken from the specified episode, embodied via something like lip sync by one of the Office Sirens.

CASTING

OFFICE SIREN 1Josephine Chiang
 OFFICE SIREN 2Miranda
 Kang
 OFFICE SIREN 3/EMPRESS DOWAGERSam
 Xu
 OFFICE SIREN 4/MAID/ EUNICH.....Ring Yang
 STAGE/TRANSLATION /MANAGER/EMPEROR..... Isabel
 Ebeid

ABOUT THE MICRO-ACTS

There are nine micro-acts. Moving between these acts should feel like a world-change, but the general feeling should be like drilling down deep, with the intention of hitting the “core” of this earth. Each world shift is triggered by a mouse click sound, followed by a dream-like interlude as transition.

CT READING NOTES

- > “//” will indicate when the Translations start to cut in
- > ASMR Convention: The performer doing ASMR comes to the lip of the stage while all other OS turn CW away, and CCW back when it’s done (with the exception of Act 8)
- > Whenever “moon” is said, everyone takes a pause, looks to stage left, and then continues again

ACT 0: EMPTY DREAMS

This act is completely in Mandarin Chinese. There are subtitles here.

(We start with: OS 1 facing downstage, sitting at the lip of the stage, OS 2-4 facing upstage.)

(All of the Office Sirens tap their nails on a mic.)

(A pause.)

(All of the office sirens tap their nails on a mic again.)

OFFICE SIREN 1: *(WHISPERING, ASMR)*

Hello. Hellooo, Hello..... 欢迎。来到你的安心。空间。// 今晚我将帮助你缓慢入眠。现在你可以放松身心，闭上眼睛，我将会放一些让你平静的声音。深呼吸。现在你可以慢慢入睡。

Hello. Hellooo, Hello..... Huānyíng. Lái dào nǐ de ānxīn. Kōngjiān. // Jīn wǎn wǒ jiāng bāngzhù nǐ huǎnmàn rùmián. Xiànzài nǐ kěyǐ fàngsōng shēnxīn, bì shàng yǎnjīng, wǒ jiāng huì fàng yīxiē ràng nǐ píngjìng de shēngyīn. Shēnhūxī. Xiànzài nǐ kěyǐ màn man rùshuì.

TRANSLATION: //Hello. Hellooo, Hello..... and welcome. To your safe. Space. Tonight I'm going to be helping you fall asleep. So relax, and decompress. Close your eyes for me. I'm going to play a few sounds, some triggers that I know you'll enjoy. Take a deep breath. Feel free to fall asleep.

(Some more tapping of the nails on the mic and breathing.)

OFFICE SIREN 1: *(ASMR)* 我可以从你的呼吸声中听出你准备好了。我们开始吧。

Wǒ kěyǐ cóng nǐ de hūxī shēng zhōng tīng chū nǐ zhǔnbèi hǎole. Wǒmen kāishǐ ba.

TRANSLATION: *(ASMR)* I can tell by your breathing that you're ready. Let's get started.

ACT I: TENNIS OVERTURE

This act exists in an absence of time.

1.1

OFFICE SIREN 1: *(Using a mic, does ASMR breathing.)*

OFFICE SIREN 2: *[ASMR]*

The other night, there was a full moon. It was so bright that they decided to keep the stadium lights off.

And there I was, in the middle of the purple tennis courts, looking up at the moon.

And there I was, wearing a cream blouse and a plaid skirt, in the middle of the tennis courts.
 And there I was, popping the top button – it was a minute after five PM, and I deserved to relax.
 I should take a breather. I've been working so hard.

...

Wait, where am I?

...

When did the moon get so bright?

1.2

(OFFICE SIREN 3 taps long nails on the mic, and at some point here, transition out of ASMR)

OFFICE SIREN 4: [ASMR]

I called my grandma, the time difference is about 12 hours.

I think.

I can never remember, I always need to check the world clock app on my iphone in order to know for sure.

The issue is that I don't really know where she lives. I just choose a random city.

Like today I chose Shandong.

Because Wikipedia says that it is a coastal town,

and my grandma says that it is where she is from,

and I spend all of my time thinking about what it would be like when I finally take my beach vacation.

1.3

OFFICE SIREN 1:

Thank god it's Friday. Thank god it's Friday. Do you have any weekend plans? Are you doing anything fun? Anything interesting? Anything you want to share with the team?

OFFICE SIREN 3: Hope you had a good weekend. I know, it's only Monday. Huge bummer, am I right? But it'll be Friday soon enough. Can't wait.

OFFICE SIREN 2: At the hump. Just two more days left until the weekend. The grind never stops.

1.4

OFFICE SIREN 1:

And I'm talking to my grandma and I ask her how Shandong is and she tells me that she actually lives in ShenYang, not Shandong, even though when I checked on maps it's only an eleven hour drive away, which might seem like a lot but isn't really that much if you think about how big China is. And I tell her if she drives, then takes a boat through the Yellow sea, and then drives again- it's even closer than you would think.

She doesn't say anything.

I am looking at the pink tennis balls that litter the court.
 She asks me: Is the moon bright for you?
 And I say yes.

I remember the one time she told me a story about a devil, who lived inside her town's well.
 She said that he was frequently visited by those who wanted a favor.
 and when she finally visited, the devil told her that if her child ever embarrassed her, she should
 send it to fetch some water.
 So that when the child pulls up the bucket, the devil would be there, waiting, with a pair of silver
 scissors.
 And every night, the child's snipped eye would become the moon.

OFFICE SIREN 3:

My grandma first told me that story when I was ten. I had just failed my typing test. She told me
 that, and then she told me that I had disappointed her– so tonight there would be a full moon.

1.5

OFFICE SIREN 2:

I am applying makeup on the tennis court.
 I am sitting in the middle of the tennis courts.
 There is no other light than the full moon
 And the youtube tutorial that I am watching:

1.6

OFFICE SIREN 4: [ASMR]

ASMR, get ready with me. Hi everyone, it's 5:01 pm, sorry that it's so pitch dark out here. I
 totally forgot my ring light at home. So you'll just have to bear with me. I'm putting on my
 makeup, putting on my face, putting on my mask to get ready for work to get ready for people to
 see me, to get ready for everyone. So welcome. Hi. Okay, we're going to start with foundation.
 This brand I really like, I got it from a local store, something maybe you have heard of. Maybe
 you haven't heard of it. I've been trying to gatekeep this store, but it is important to shop local.
 Okay, I'll tell you.
 It's called Sephora.

1.7

OFFICE SIREN 1:

After my grandfather left, my grandma completely changed her life. She grew out her hair. She
 let her ears grow to her waist and she got them pierced. She bought fancy pearls to wear on
 them. She started watching youtube tutorials. She got really into Adele.

OFFICE SIREN 3:

She started playing tennis.

1.8

(As if they are having a real tennis match.)

OFFICE SIREN 2:

I serve.

(A beat or two.)

OFFICE SIREN 3:

I hit with my backhand.

(A beat or two.)

OFFICE SIREN 2:

I hit with my forehand.

(A beat or two.)

OFFICE SIREN 3:

I hit with my backhand.

(A beat or two.)

OFFICE SIREN 2:

I hit with my backhand.

(A beat or two.)

OFFICE SIREN 3:

I hit with my backhand.

(A beat or two.)

OFFICE SIREN 2:

I hit with my forehand.

(A beat or two.)

OFFICE SIREN 3:

I hit with my backhand.

(A beat or two.)

OFFICE SIREN 2:

I move up to rally the ball.

(A beat or two.)

OFFICE SIREN 3:

I hit the net.

I don't want to talk about this anymore.

1.9

OFFICE SIREN 4:

My grandfather has a second family in Bermuda. Out there, he has two sons, three daughters, and only one wife. Here he thinks he has no one. Every single year, on Christmas, he sends us a postcard.

I am working on Christmas day. I am in the office. I am sitting at my desk. I am waiting for an email to come in so I can send an email back out.

There are no windows in the office. I like that.

My phone rings.

I go into the bathroom. There is a toilet and enough room that my company has put in a small couch. I sit on the toilet.

"Hello?" I say and I hear my grandma's voice.

She is annoyed.

She says that the card is not addressed to any of us.

"Ok" I say.

She says that the card only says: "I am happy."

"Ok" I say.

She says that he couldn't even bother picking out a Christmas themed card.

"Ok" I say. "I don't want to talk about this anymore."

1.10

OFFICE SIREN 2: Are you coming to the lunch happy hour.

OFFICE SIREN 4: I serve.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Are you coming to the lunch happy hour.

OFFICE SIREN 1: I return with a backhand.

OFFICE SIREN 2: Coming you to lunch happy hour.

OFFICE SIREN 4: I return with a backhand.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Come you come want you to come to lunch happy hour.

OFFICE SIREN 1: I return with a forehand.

OFFICE SIREN 2: You come to lunch.

OFFICE SIREN 4: I return with a forehand that I want to land in the court and not out of the court. One that has spin, or something like spin, or whatever that makes it hard to hit back and is actually in the bounds and not a fault of my own. I want it to get in. I want it to be unpredictable for her but known to me. I want it more than anything. I think I'll lose my mind if it lands even an inch away from where I'm looking. I know it will hit that spot. I know it.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Office happy hour. Now.

OFFICE SIREN 4: I hit the net.

ACT II: GOOD MORNING

This act takes place in "SHEIN" headquarters.

2.1

OFFICE SIREN 1: Hi, good morning.

OFFICE SIREN 2: Hi, good morning.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Hi, good morning.

OFFICE SIREN 4: Hi, good morning.

OFFICE SIREN 1: I love your makeup.

OFFICE SIREN 2: I'm obsessed with your shirt.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Where did you get that skirt? I need it.

OFFICE SIREN 4: I won't tell you... until you tell me where you got those fabulous earrings!

OFFICE SIREN 1: I'm going to be late to the check-in.

OFFICE SIREN 2: Running five behind!

OFFICE SIREN 3: I'm just grabbing an oat milk cappuccino, no foam, sprinkle of cinnamon.

OFFICE SIREN 4: When did you start drinking oat milk?

OFFICE SIREN 1: They say drinking regular milk makes you bloated.

OFFICE SIREN 2: Well I'll also have an oat milk cappuccino, no foam, sprinkle of cinnamon.

OFFICE SIREN 1: [ASMR, slightly faster]

ASMR: make an oat milk cappuccino, no foam, sprinkle of cinnamon in the office with me. Here are the beans I'm using. (*Taps nails on the jar of beans*). Here's the machine I'm using. (*Taps nails on the machine*).

(*NOT ASMR*)

Here's how late I'm running for the check in.

OFFICE SIREN 2: Let's check in.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Are we checking in?

OFFICE SIREN 4: I'm checking.

OFFICE SIREN 2: Okay, all here?

OFFICE SIREN 1: Here's your oat milk cappuccino, no foam.

OFFICE SIREN 4: And my sprinkle of cinnamon?

OFFICE SIREN 1: Yes.

OFFICE SIREN 2: I'm sitting down.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Gathering around.

OFFICE SIREN 4: How are the numbers?

OFFICE SIREN 1: They're good. But we're not really in charge of the numbers.

OFFICE SIREN 2: Nobody knows how the sales are doing?

OFFICE SIREN 3: I don't think that's our job.

OFFICE SIREN 4: Right. I forgot.

OFFICE SIREN 1: And what about retention rates at this company?

OFFICE SIREN 2: No clue.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Brand partnerships?

OFFICE SIREN 4: Who cares? You're so silly. You seem to have forgotten. Our job is waiting.

OFFICE SIREN 1: Correct.

OFFICE SIREN 2: Yes, correct:

OFFICE SIREN 2: [ASMR]

ASMR: wait with me... for my daily email! Hi everyone, I'm here in the office, right by my computer. It's an old model, from 1988. There are only four functioning ones left in the world.

And you won't believe where all four are.

(they're right here in the office).

Yes. You won't believe it. But I've seen all four!

(Start to transition out of ASMR)

In moments of weakness, I wish I could have something sleeker, newer, up-to-date. Sometimes, I have to give myself a hearty slap to snap out of it.

I remind myself what my manager tells me: why should we get something more high tech, why should we get something that keeps up with the times when this works just fine?

And he's right. It's the only thing I know. I wouldn't know how to use a new computer. The keyboard would feel different, the mouse would scroll much faster than I'm used to, and the screen would be too bright. So I'm happy to be here with something I find familiar, something I've known all my life. It works. It looks just like a computer. And I only need it for the one email that I send.

OFFICE SIREN 3:

Every morning I clock into work at 9 AM, I arrive and I am ready to work. I get ready to work by waiting. I am actively waiting. Not passively waiting. I am actively waiting for one email to come in. The one email that we check in about. It's an important email, because I play an important role in the chain of events. Without me, this whole company probably wouldn't exist, so you could say everything hinges on this one email. I know. It's why it's so important that I come in looking so good... An email recipient can tell when you're responding in jeans and a t-shirt.

2.2

OFFICE SIREN 4: My desktop is ready. My computer is ready. I am actively waiting.

OFFICE SIREN 1: My keyboard is actively out.

OFFICE SIREN 2: I toggle my mouse to wake up the screen.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Hello, good morning.

OFFICE SIREN 4: It's a random picture each day. Most days it's beaches. One time, it was a farm. How delightful.

OFFICE SIREN 1: How delightful.

OFFICE SIREN 2: I've never been to a farm.

OFFICE SIREN 3: I'd like to go to a farm.

OFFICE SIREN 4: I don't think I've ever been anywhere except the Office, and the tennis courts.

OFFICE SIREN 1: Why would you need to go anywhere else?

OFFICE SIREN 2: So true.

OFFICE SIREN 3: So true.

OFFICE SIREN 4: One time, I thought the background was a painting. I was like "Ooh. That's new."

OFFICE SIREN 1: But it was actually just lagging.

OFFICE SIREN 2: And the landscape loaded eventually.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Oh.

OFFICE SIREN 4: Okay, so, today, it's a picture of the beach in Cabo San Lucas.

OFFICE SIREN 1: I've always wanted to go.

OFFICE SIREN 2: I've always wanted to go.

OFFICE SIREN 4: I know. I heard it is fantastic there.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Maybe with our one vacation day a year we can go to a beach.

(All OFFICE SIRENS sigh wistfully)

OFFICE SIREN 1: I mouse over the little mailbox icon on the bottom bar.

OFFICE SIREN 2: Open it!

OFFICE SIREN 1: Ok: I open it.

OFFICE SIREN 2: And

OFFICE SIREN 1: Nothing.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Nothing, yet.

OFFICE SIREN 1: Right. Yet.

OFFICE SIREN 4: It's 9:03 AM right now. It usually comes in by 9:08 AM, every day the latest the time stamp will go is 9:08. So we just have to wait. It'll come. And if it doesn't? Well there's no need to think about that, because no matter what, the email will come in and we'll have to respond to it. It has to come in or the whole company will have to shut down. So, there's no need to think about situations that won't happen. Or will never happen. It leaves you unfocused, bad at your job. Until we go back to the tennis courts on the roof, there's no choice but to focus.

OFFICE SIREN 1: And to actively wait.

2.3

OFFICE SIREN 2: The trick to "win" actively waiting is that you should always be doing something that enhances your value. Your self.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Learn to code.

OFFICE SIREN 4: Invest in stocks.

OFFICE SIREN 1: Put on makeup.

OFFICE SIREN 2: Yes, I spend all my waiting time learning how to better put on makeup.

OFFICE SIREN 3: There are many tutorials available on YouTube:

OFFICE SIREN 1: I search "ASMR learn how to put on makeup with me."

OFFICE SIREN 2: ASMR 70s makeup look.

OFFICE SIREN 3: ASMR 90s makeup look.

OFFICE SIREN 4: ASMR 2000s makeup look.

OFFICE SIREN 1: ASMR 300 BC makeup look.

OFFICE SIREN 2: There are endless things to learn.

OFFICE SIREN 3: My grandma says I'm getting too old to not know how to do a perfect winged eyeliner.

OFFICE SIREN 4: She says if I wait any longer, I might as well get it tattooed on my face.

OFFICE SIREN 1: Well, that could be nice.

OFFICE SIREN 2: Blush tattooed on my face. Lipstick tattooed on my face.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Colored contacts tattooed on my face. My eyes.

(STAGE begins to use a rainstick)

OFFICE SIREN 1: What kind of color should I get? Maybe brown?

OFFICE SIREN 2: You already have brown eyes.

OFFICE SIREN 3: A slightly different shade of brown. Maybe lighter? Maybe I'd get blue? Or green? Actually, I've always wanted purple eyes. I think I'd look so cute with purple eyes.

OFFICE SIREN 4: My grandma always said she wished I was born with purple eyes.

OFFICE SIREN 1: Does it run in the family?

OFFICE SIREN 2: No.

OFFICE SIREN 3: There's a lot of colors and tutorials to choose from. But I know that it's important that I pick one that makes me stand out. I have a very important job, after all. Every morning I look at myself in the mirror and think: "this company couldn't run without me". And it's true. So it's important that the choices I make reflect how important I am and inspire trust and awe in those around me. Change can happen from the inside, and the insides of me inspire change. Like my manager always says: Here at SHE-

(STAGE rings a bell)

OFFICE SIREN 4: Oh.

OFFICE SIREN 2: The email.

OFFICE SIREN 3: It's here.

2.4

OFFICE SIREN 1: [ASMR]

ASMR: open my first and only work email with me. I know you've had a good night of rest and are ready to tackle the work day. It's nine in the morning. Take a big yawn (*big yawn*), good morning. Can you smell the cup of fresh coffee next to you?

(OFFICE SIREN 2 taps nails on the cup of coffee into the mic)

OFFICE SIREN 3: [ASMR]

Ohhh I see you're stretching your back. Yeah. What a big stretch. Just like that. Okay, are you ready to open the email? I'm ready to see what was sent. I'm opening the email desktop application again. Oh oops. I have to log in again to my work email.

(OFFICE SIREN 4 does the ASMR keyboard clacking sounds)

OFFICE SIREN 1: [ASMR]

One second, two factor authentication.

(OFFICE SIREN 2 does ASMR nail tapping on a phone)

OFFICE SIREN 3: [ASMR]

Okay, now I'm logged in. I'm going over to the unread email in my inbox. There is no sender. The subject line says "SHEIN daily email. Sent on [*actors should insert the current date*]". I click on it, it opens. The screen is white. There is a single line of text. It's from my boss, my manager. We have to respond to it.

(OFFICE SIREN 4 does a nail tapping sound on a mouse)

OFFICE SIREN 2: I think there's a leak in this building.

(STAGE begins to use the rain stick a bit heavier.)

OFFICE SIREN 1: I think the computer is making the noise. Windows systems.

OFFICE SIREN 3: [ASMR]

So now I'm opening the email. I click on it twice. It opens to a white screen, some white noise.

(STAGE continues to use the rainstick.)

OFFICE SIREN 1:

We should read the email. It's a single line, it just says:

MANAGER: *(VOICEOVER + WORDS PROJECTED)* good morning

MANAGER: *(VOICEOVER + WORDS PROJECTED)* can you confirm that you are currently sitting in your assigned chair

2.5

(The sound of rushing water becomes so loud that it begins to drown them out, the Office Sirens struggle to talk over it.)

OFFICE SIREN 4: And every day I have to respond with the same thing. Yes, I am sitting in chair 039842E. It's a simple response. Actually my email auto generates a few options: "Yes, I am!", "Not yet- but if you want me to, I could drop everything and come down", and "I have stapled myself down into this chair". I want to write a more personalized response though. My grandma always told me that I needed to go the extra mile, if I wanted a promotion. I could get people to notice me better. And then it would be smooth sailing from there: 8 figure salary, roth IRA full of money. So I click "reply all" and I start to type—

OFFICE SIREN 1: Do you hear that?

OFFICE SIREN 2: It's my Windows.

OFFICE SIREN 3: It does kind of sound like it's coming from the windows.

OFFICE SIREN 4: No, windows. System.

OFFICE SIREN 1: It sounds like water.

OFFICE SIREN 2: What are you talking about?

OFFICE SIREN 3: Like there's a flood coming for us.

OFFICE SIREN 4: The rain outside has gotten heavier in the past few seconds.

OFFICE SIREN 1: Yes, see?

OFFICE SIREN 3: What if the walls cave in?

OFFICE SIREN 2: I'm going to respond to this email.

OFFICE SIREN 1: I heard drowning is by far the worst way to die.

OFFICE SIREN 4: I'm hitting "reply all" now.

OFFICE SIREN 2: Don't worry. Our company will protect us! SHEIN will protect—

(STAGE rings the bell again, all OS turn to look at the moon)

STAGE: PLOP

(Abrupt blackout – and the sound abruptly stops as well. Like they have been sucked into a blackhole.)

ACT III: LONGEST SENTENCE WRITTEN

Interlude. This should feel like a palette cleanser. It is not a continuation of the last act.

3.1

(In English:)

OFFICE SIREN 1:

Are you coming to the lunch happy hour.

OFFICE SIREN 3:

Are you coming to the lunch happy hour.

Coming you to lunch happy hour. Come you come want you to come to lunch happy hour.

OFFICE SIREN 4:

Want want you to come

You want you

OFFICE SIREN 1:

Oh alright I'll slack you

You I'll slack

Come here you or I'll slack you

OFFICE SIREN 3:

No free lunch

Free lunch, no?

Give free lunch me / Give eat free lunch / me eat free lunch / give me eat free lunch/ give me you.

3.2

OFFICE SIREN 1:

你要来午餐欢乐时光吗

Nǐ yào lái wǔcān huānlè shíguāng ma

TRANSLATION: Translation: Are you coming to the lunch happy hour.

OFFICE SIREN 3:

你要来午餐欢乐时光吗 //

来你去午餐欢乐时光。来你来想你来午餐欢乐时光

Nǐ yào lái wǔcān huānlè shíguāng ma // lái nǐ qù wǔcān huānlè shíguāng. lái nǐ lái xiǎng nǐ lái wǔcān huānlè shíguāng

TRANSLATION: //Translation: Are you coming to the lunch happy hour.

Coming you to lunch happy hour. Come you come want you to come to lunch happy hour.

OFFICE SIREN 4:

想想你来 //

你要你

Xiǎng xiǎng nǐ lái // nǐ yào nǐ

TRANSLATION: //Translation: Want want you to come

You want you

OFFICE SIREN 1:

好的我要slack你 //

你我要slack

来这你或者我要slack你

Hǎo de wǒ yào slack nǐ nǐ wǒ yào slack lái zhè nǐ huòzhě wǒ yào slack nǐ

TRANSLATION:

//Oh alright I'll slack you

You I'll slack

Come here you or I'll slack you

OFFICE SIREN 3:

没有免费午餐 //

免费午餐, 没有?

给免费午餐我 / 给吃免费午餐/ 我吃免费午餐/ 给我吃免费午餐/ 给我你

Méiyǒu miǎnfèi wǔcān // miǎnfèi wǔcān, méiyǒu? Gěi miǎnfèi wǔcān wǒ/ gěi chī miǎnfèi wǔcān/ wǒ chī miǎnfèi wǔcān/ gěi wǒ chī miǎnfèi wǔcān/ gěi wǒ nǐ

TRANSLATION: //No free lunch

Free lunch, no?

Give free lunch me / Give eat free lunch / me eat free lunch / give me eat free lunch/ give me you.

3.3

OFFICE SIREN 2:

I went to the office for free lunch. I went to the office because I was promised free lunch. I slacked and made sure that there would be free lunch. The free lunch happy hour, they said I could have a bottle or two, that there would be so much to go around that I could have as much as I wanted. And so I got ready that morning, "ASMR get ready with me", so that I could have my free lunch. And when I walked into that room, it wasn't just an empty room. Which would've been bad enough already. I walked in and my grandma was there. She had been flown in. By my company, no less. She said that they were worried about me. That I couldn't stop asking about the free lunch happy hour. That whenever one was thrown, I would eat all the food and drink all the wine. And I said that it was unfair. I had spent hours getting ready. She said that I was greedy, that I was spoiled rotten, that I had to work hard for this free lunch that they promised me, and I said that I worked from nine to five and then spent five to nine perfecting my makeup. If I looked good, I deserved a free lunch. She said that was the bare minimum. And maybe we shouldn't talk about this anymore.

3.4

(In a "cannon" - one starts and after "And hey," the next one goes)

OFFICE SIREN 1:

And hey, nice to see you, xx. *(OFFICE SIREN 1 does a muah-muah cheek kiss)*

OFFICE SIREN 2:

And hey, nice to see you, xx. *(OFFICE SIREN 2 does a muah-muah cheek kiss)*

OFFICE SIREN 3:

And hey, nice to see you, xx. *(OFFICE SIREN 3 does a muah-muah cheek kiss)*

OFFICE SIREN 4:

And hey, nice to see you, xx. *(OFFICE SIREN 4 does a muah-muah cheek kiss)*

3.5

OFFICE SIREN 1:

I dreamt of a dark alleyway and I / and myself / and we are all working for the O group – like from the reality TV show, but in my dream they did porn as well as sell houses. And because I don't want to be left out, I am also trying to make adult content but I'm not used to this. While I am filming I keep tasting my skin and it keeps peeling off. So I tug at one piece of skin and

when it pulls off of my body, I look down and I have a twenty dollar bill in my hands. I tug at another piece and it pulls apart into a fifty. A third one pulls into a stack of singles. I peel and peel and maybe we shouldn't talk about this anymore.

OFFICE SIREN 2:

A list of things I am growing out:

My hair.

My acrylic nails.

My PTO and my patience (both accrue hourly).

ACT IV: ROCKAWAY PARKWAY 116

The Office Sirens have just been sucked into the ocean (Rockaway Parkway beach at 116th street).

4.1

OFFICE SIREN 1: If you look up from the bottom of the ocean floor.

OFFICE SIREN 2: And you squint really hard. You can see the outline of the moon.

OFFICE SIREN 3: It's supposed to be a full moon tonight. My grandma had called me earlier but I had missed it. Where's my phone?

OFFICE SIREN 4: Where's my coffee?

OFFICE SIREN 1: Where's my computer?

OFFICE SIREN 2: Yeah wait, where's my computer?

OFFICE SIREN 3: [ASMR]

ASMR: We are underwater. Help me look for my computer...
while I hold my breath the entire time!

[NOT ASMR]

Hi everyone. I am currently underwater. I am currently in the Atlantic ocean. I'm looking for something. I'm looking for my work computer. I'm swimming through the seaweed and garbage and looking for a 1988 Windows computer.

The monitor is square.

OFFICE SIREN 4: And now I'm realizing I didn't even get a chance to put conditioner in my hair before I was swept underwater. If I had a chance to prepare I would have used my L'Oréal total repair conditioning shampoo. And then brushed out my hair.

OFFICE SIREN 1: But here I am. Hair knotted.

OFFICE SIREN 2: Mascara smudged.

OFFICE SIREN 3: And I'm also looking for my office chair. If you see it. I need to be in my office chair, with my computer, responding to my manager.

OFFICE SIREN 4: He must be worried about me.

4.2

OFFICE SIREN 1: The other night, I fell into the office pool.

OFFICE SIREN 2: I woke up right as I was about to hit the water.

OFFICE SIREN 3: I've only ever been at my desk and on the rooftop tennis courts.

OFFICE SIREN 4: But now I'm in the pool.

OFFICE SIREN 1: And the chlorine burns my eyes.

OFFICE SIREN 2: I must be on: "fiftieth floor- pool".

OFFICE SIREN 3: The tennis court is on the roof. The fiftieth floor has a pool, and my designated chair and 1988 Windows computer – the Office – is on floor eighteen.

OFFICE SIREN 4: Well, usually on eighteen.

OFFICE SIREN 1: As I fall I wonder what is on the other floors.

OFFICE SIREN 2: Eight nights ago, I was in the elevator with someone else. They got off on the:

OFFICE SIREN 3: "one hundred and eleventh floor – aerospace and defense division"

OFFICE SIREN 4: And I saw something. I saw something hexagonal and shiny and perfect.

OFFICE SIREN 1: And then the door closed. And then I opened my eyes. And then I was underwater, on the fiftieth floor– pool.

OFFICE SIREN 2: Above me I see the moon.

OFFICE SIREN 3: My phone is ringing.

OFFICE SIREN 1: It's my grandma.

OFFICE SIREN 4: She says she has just picked up tennis. She really enjoys it.

OFFICE SIREN 2: I am underwater so I gargle out: That's amazing, grandma.

OFFICE SIREN 3: She tells me about her match:

OFFICE SIREN 1: She serves.

OFFICE SIREN 4: (*As Grandma - in Chinese with subtitles*) 哦, 我那天看到了你的照片
Ó, wǒ nàitiān kàn dào le nǐ de zhàopiàn

TRANSLATION: Translation: "And also, by the way, I saw a picture of you."

OFFICE SIREN 2: She returns with a backhand.

OFFICE SIREN 4: (*As Grandma - in Chinese with subtitles*) 好像是在Wechat上
Hǎoxiàng shì zài Wechat shàng

TRANSLATION: Translation: "I think it was on WeChat."

OFFICE SIREN 1: She returns with a backhand.

OFFICE SIREN 4: (*As Grandma - in Chinese with subtitles*) 你妈妈发在朋友圈的
Nǐ māmā fā zài péngyǒu quān de

TRANSLATION: Translation: "Your mom posted it."

OFFICE SIREN 2: She returns with a forehand.

OFFICE SIREN 4: (*As Grandma - in Chinese with subtitles*) 我放大了很多
Wǒ fàngdà le hěnduō

TRANSLATION: Translation: "I pinched and zoomed in so much."

OFFICE SIREN 1: She returns with a forehand that she wants to land in the court and not out of the court.

OFFICE SIREN 4: (*As Grandma - in Chinese with subtitles*) 然后我就想, 你要是化点妆的话会多漂亮啊
Ránhòu wǒ jiù xiǎng, nǐ yàoshi huà diǎn zhuāng dehuà huì duō piàoliang a

TRANSLATION: Translation: "And I thought - my god. You would be so pretty if you had on more makeup."

OFFICE SIREN 1: She hit the net.

4.3

(OFFICE SIREN 3 STANDS UP AND STAYS STANDING)

OFFICE SIREN 3: While they were talking, I found the computer.

4.4

OFFICE SIREN 2: I am in the water off of 116th street. My body is on the bottom of the ocean floor. If you were coming by train you would have to walk eight blocks at least before even getting to sand. And then you'd have to walk through the water out towards the horizon for at least another hour or two until you'd reach the spot that my body was at. When I was younger, I sank to the bottom of the pool on the fiftieth floor and I saw nothing but the moon. At the bottom of the ocean, I opened my eyes. And I could see the surface. I could see the full moon above me, cutting through the water. And if I squint, I think I see myself. I see my own body above the water, looking down, looking down at me. She is standing on top of the waves, in a dingy, and she looked... well... she looked like a wet dog. She definitely has seen better days. And I thought about how down here, deep at the bottom of the ocean,

I

looked

perfect.

I was free.

Even if she reached down to try to grab me, I knew it would be nothing except a nasty trick. To get me to switch places with her. And yes, I could feel water filling my lungs, but I knew she wanted to be where I was. I knew there was nothing more that she wanted. And she would do anything to get it: save me, and fill her own lungs with seawater. But I wanted to be here. I deserved to be here. I slacked and checked about the free lunch happy hour. I got ready on a tennis court this morning. I've never been to the beach before. So fuck her! My final thoughts are that. Fuck her.

4.5

OFFICE SIREN 3: While they were talking, I told them– in a dramatic manner– that we need to respond to the email.

(All office sirens stand up)

4.6

OFFICE SIREN 1: In the middle of the tennis court. Wednesday evening. A pink ball flies past my ear. I have my computer with me. It sits on a stack of expensive rackets. Each racket is at least four hundred dollars. I move the mouse to wake up the screen.

OFFICE SIREN 4: ASMR: write an email with me.

OFFICE SIREN 1: It's addressed to myself. I'm just writing something small to myself, for myself to keep. And I am thinking about what it would sound like if read out loud. What do these words sound like read out loud. What would people think about these words if they read it out loud. And somehow I'm no longer on hard court. I'm in the sand. I'm at the Rockaway Parkway beach: deep in the ocean, looking down at myself writing an email underwater. And the email is still addressed to me. And I edit my email based on what I think other people would think about me. And I fold my email in on itself based on an imaginary audience that it'll never get to. And I end up with nothing but "Hi," and "Best," on a screen before I hit send.

4.7

STAGE: *Back in the ocean.*

OFFICE SIREN 1: My body is floating aimlessly underwater.

OFFICE SIREN 2: I had the thought that I needed to respond to the email.

OFFICE SIREN 4: I am important to the company.

OFFICE SIREN 2: Maybe someone had mentioned it?

OFFICE SIREN 3: Yes, me.

OFFICE SIREN 1: I know that my makeup is messed up.

OFFICE SIREN 2: I have already come to terms knowing that everyone can see how bad I looked.

OFFICE SIREN 1: At least I'm not in jeans and a t-shirt.

OFFICE SIREN 3: But right as I start opening the email –

STAGE: *A glitching sound.*

OFFICE SIREN 4:
What was that?

OFFICE SIREN 1:
Must be nothing.

OFFICE SIREN 2:
I told myself it must be nothing. But I also asked myself what was that? Probably nothing. But then it happened again. And again. And it started picking up speed. My whole vision became

clouded. I try to repeat some things to myself: I have my work computer in my hands. I had just opened up my email. I need to respond to my manager.

OFFICE SIREN 3:

He needs to know if I'm sitting in chair 039842E or not.

OFFICE SIREN 4:

My skin is wrinkled from being underwater.

OFFICE SIREN 1:

The whole email chain needs to know if I'm sitting in chair 039842E.

OFFICE SIREN 2:

I accidentally bite into my forearm. I can't see anything!

OFFICE SIREN 3:

The company's future definitely depends on this.

OFFICE SIREN 4:

My flesh feels sticky in my mouth.

OFFICE SIREN 1:

I really have to send this email!

STAGE: *A glitching sound.*

OFFICE SIREN 2:

Wait—!

STAGE: *A glitching sound.*

OFFICE SIREN 3:

I am going to "reply all"!

STAGE: *A glitching sound.*

(A bell rings)

OFFICE SIREN 1:

And then everything changed again.

4.8

OFFICE SIREN 2:

When my skin peels off I have the thought that this is really not cute. That I probably look.. well.. kind of fugly. And then I was like - am I getting fugly? No. I can't go there. I can't be ugly

because I'm a problem solver. So then the second thought I had was that maybe I could lather on enough lotion to glue my skin back together. And when I tried that, it sank right under the outer layer and stayed as large, pus-filled globs. During this stage it hurt when it was touched. But I told myself it was only a temporary issue. Beauty is pain. Right? But then it began to balloon out. My skin bulged and extended itself until it couldn't hold the lotion anymore. I braced myself for a pop, but the skin just cracked and peeled away to reveal a sticky glob. I wanted to touch it but suddenly every part of my body started swelling. And as my eyes began to change as well, I thought that my worst fears were confirmed: I've become seriously, genuinely fugly.

ACT V: THE EMPRESS' PALACE

This act is meant to replicate a famous Chinese drama. There are subtitles here.

5.1

OFFICE SIREN 1 (VOICE OVER): [ASMR voice] 小姐... 小姐...
(Miss... miss...)

OFFICE SIREN 4 (VOICE OVER): [ASMR voice] Are you okay? Are you asleep? You must be asleep. Can you open your eyes? You're in a dream. I can feel it. You want to stay in the dream. I know. But you can't. I need you to open your eyes. It's urgent. 太后.....太后她.....小姐.....奴婢...不敢妄言
Tàihòu.....tàihòu tā.....xiǎojiě.....núbì...bù gǎn wàngyán

TRANSLATION: Translation: The empress dowager... the empress dowager...miss, I can't even say it....

We are in the Imperial palace. Funeral processions are taking place. The Empress Dowager is dead.

(All OS turn to stage left and start a rushed in-place walk with small steps)

5.2

OFFICE SIREN 4: A list of things to send my maid to fetch.
White flowers- Chrysanthemums. A big bouquet. You can gather some from the garden to the right of the prayer hall. A bouquet that stretches from the floor to the ceiling.
Jade earrings, a gold necklace, a pile of silver coins.
Some oranges, dates. She always liked sweets.
Incense. Nothing too musky. Something that will put her spirit at peace.

(All OS turn downstage and continue the rushed in-place walk with small steps)

OFFICE SIREN 1: Good morning.

OFFICE SIREN 2: Good morning.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Good morning.

OFFICE SIREN 4: Good morning.

OFFICE SIREN 1: I love your makeup.

OFFICE SIREN 2: I'm obsessed with your shirt.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Where did you get that skirt? I need it.

OFFICE SIREN 4: I won't tell you... until you tell me where you got those fabulous earrings!

OFFICE SIREN 1: I'm going to be late.

OFFICE SIREN 2: Running five behind!

OFFICE SIREN 3: I'm just grabbing the last of the things we need.

OFFICE SIREN 4: Oh right, did you make a list?

OFFICE SIREN 1: No, I have a good memory.

OFFICE SIREN 2: It's the same each time, no?

OFFICE SIREN 3: It's for the Empress Dowager this time.

OFFICE SIREN 4: When my mother died, they only gave her a few bronze coins.

OFFICE SIREN 1: Shush! Or you'll get punished!

OFFICE SIREN 2: There are ears everywhere.

(All OS turn stage right and continue the rushed in-place walk with small steps)

OFFICE SIREN 3: A list of things to fetch.

OFFICE SIREN 4: Fresh white Chrysanthemums.

OFFICE SIREN 2: Jade earrings, gold necklace, silver coins. Bless her soul.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Oranges. Dates. Rice.

OFFICE SIREN 4: Incense.

OFFICE SIREN 1: Almost there.

OFFICE SIREN 2: The prep is almost done.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Wait.

OFFICE SIREN 1: Hm?

OFFICE SIREN 3: What about the email?

OFFICE SIREN 2: What?

OFFICE SIREN 4: Come on, let's go.

OFFICE SIREN 3: The email. The work email.

OFFICE SIREN 1: Oh.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Aren't we waiting?

OFFICE SIREN 2: Waiting for?

OFFICE SIREN 4: We're going to be late to the funeral.

(All OS stop the walk. They look back out to the audience.)

5.3

OFFICE SIREN 1: The daily email from our boss. It should be coming in any time now.

OFFICE SIREN 2: We have to leave right now, or we'll be late. The emperor said he would come here before going to hers. He'll be here any time now.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Where's my computer?

OFFICE SIREN 4: Where's my maid?

OFFICE SIREN 1: And my chair.

OFFICE SIREN 2: And I haven't done my hair yet.

OFFICE SIREN 3: 039842E. The chair.

OFFICE SIREN 4: Quick, quick.

OFFICE SIREN 1: It's going to be here somewhere.

OFFICE SIREN 2: We'll be punished if we're late without a good reason.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Check behind the chrysanthemums.

OFFICE SIREN 4: Wait, I need to do my hair and eyebrows first.

OFFICE SIREN 1: Yes.

OFFICE SIREN 2: Yes.

OFFICE SIREN 3: ASMR,

OFFICE SIREN 2: [ASMR] Get ready with me

OFFICE SIREN 3: [ASMR] To open my daily email.

OFFICE SIREN 2: [ASMR] To attend the Empress Dowager's funeral.

OFFICE SIREN 1: We really shouldn't hesitate, it just arrived in our inbox. It's our daily task, the only thing we do every day.

OFFICE SIREN 2: [ASMR] We need to do your makeup, first. Let's start by measuring your proportions. From your forehead to your nose...

OFFICE SIREN 1: You toggle your mouse to wake up the screen. And then you open up your inbox, and hover over the one email that's arrived.

OFFICE SIREN 2: [ASMR] I'm going to use my brush. It's made of the finest horse hair, found deep in the countryside. I had one of my servants find it just for you.

OFFICE SIREN 3: It's normal to be nervous, but you know what this email says. It's the same email each day. You should click on it.

OFFICE SIREN 2: [ASMR] There. Measured. Now, can I paint your face? Yes? Okay. I'm dipping the brush in the powder, and then gently dusting your face with it.

OFFICE SIREN 1: Click on it.

OFFICE SIREN 2: [ASMR] I ask your maid if she can start combing through your hair. Can you feel that? Close your eyes. She's combing from your scalp, all the way down to the ends. Slowly and carefully.

OFFICE SIREN 1: Is everything all right?

OFFICE SIREN 2: [ASMR] I dip my brush into the rouge, and slowly put it on your cheeks. Wow, you look so beautiful. I'm going to paint your eyebrows now, okay?

OFFICE SIREN 1: Hello?

OFFICE SIREN 2: [ASMR] I'm almost done. It's time to do your eyebrows. Wow, there we go. Your maid is putting on your headpiece now.

OFFICE SIREN 1: Hello? Open it.

OFFICE SIREN 2: [ASMR] You're ready. You look amazing. Okay, take my hand, we can go together.

OFFICE SIREN 3: You finally click to open the email.

5.4

EUNICH: *(voiceover, in Chinese)* 皇上驾到!
Huángshàng jiàdào!

TRANSLATION: Translation: THE EMPEROR ARRIVES

All Office Sirens kneel with a handkerchief over one shoulder.

OFFICE SIRENS 1, 2, 3, 4: *(in Chinese)* 皇上万福金安
Huángshàng wànfú jīn ān

TRANSLATION: Translation: Peace be to Your Majesty.

STAGE: Emperor Manager says:

EMPEROR (MANAGER): *(VOICEOVER + WORDS PROJECTED)* good morning

STAGE: Emperor Manager says:

EMPEROR (MANAGER): *(VOICEOVER + WORDS PROJECTED)* can you confirm that you are currently sitting in your assigned chair

STAGE: Emperor Manager says:

EMPEROR (MANAGER): *(VOICEOVER + WORDS PROJECTED)* i've been waiting...

EUNICH: 皇上起驾——
Huángshàng qǐ jià——

TRANSLATION: Translation: THE EMPEROR LEAVES

(A beat.)

MAID: 小姐, 我们该怎么办?
Xiǎojiě, wǒmen gāi zěnme bàn?

TRANSLATION: Translation: Miss, what should we do?

MAID: 小姐, 近日事务繁杂, //未能及时回复皇上。
Xiǎojiě, jìnrì shìwù fánzá, //wèi néng jíshí huífù huángshàng.

TRANSLATION: //Translation: Miss, we've been too busy to respond to him...

MAID: ...或许皇上能体谅.....
...huòxǔ huángshàng néng tǐliàng.....

TRANSLATION: Translation: ...maybe he'll understand....

(A beat.)

OFFICE SIREN 1: 皇上既问起此事...你们觉得, //本宫当如何应对?
Huángshàng jì wèn qǐ cǐ shì... Nǐmen juéde, //běn gōng dāng rúhé yìngduì?

TRANSLATION: //Translation: The emperor is asking. What do you think?

(The maid makes a noise of understanding.)

MAID: 这深宫里啊, 除了皇上, 其他都是虚妄。//凡事快一步, 皇上心里就多记您一分好。
Zhè shēn gōng lǐ a, chúle huángshàng, qítā dōu shì xūwàng. //Fánshì kuài yībù, huángshàng xīnlǐ jiù duō jì nín yī fēn hǎo.

TRANSLATION: //Translation: Nothing else matters. The faster we respond, the more favorably he'll look onto you.

(STAGE rings a bell)

5.5

A different world.

OFFICE SIREN 2: When she actually dies, it is in a sterile room on a hospital bed. I am asked if I want to see her body, and to be honest, I don't. But I do anyway because that's the filial thing to do. And when I walk into the room, I don't recognize her at all. Her cheeks are sunken. Her one cratered eye looks out at me. Both her eyes are still open. I look at her. I look at her. I am looking at her. And I think... well... I think she looks bad. She kind of looks horrible. No offense. And I can say that because if she was alive and I was dead, she would think the same thing about me. Where did the water in her body go? I become scared of looking like her. Of ending

up in her position. But I'm not scared of dying. I make a note that right before I die, I need to put on some blush. Maybe even some eyeshadow. Maybe I should dye my hair a different color too, to add some liveliness to my body. Oh. Adele is playing in the background. That was nice of the nurses. I wish that they would have closed her eyes. I look at her "looking" at me and I think about how she told me she was scared in the hospital. I think about how I only ever texted her and never visited. I think about how my excuse was that I had an email that I had to answer every day.

5.6

STAGE:

(Pointing at OS 3, laying on the ground) This is the Empress Dowager. She is laying on a bed. Everyone else is a consort. Everyone else plays her grand-daughter (in-law).

CONSORT 4: 臣妾给太后请安 (bows in respect to Your Majesty.)

Chén qiè gěi tàihòu qǐng'ā.

STAGE: She bows in respect.

CONSORT 4: 愿太后凤体康健，福泽万年。(wishes peace and grace to your majesty.)

Yuàn tàihòu fèng tǐ kāngjiàn, fú zé wàn nián.

STAGE: She is wishing peace and grace.

EMPRESS DOWAGER: 来，坐到哀家身边来。(Come, come sit up here next to me.)

Lái, zuò dào āi jiā shēnbiān lái.

STAGE: The Empress Dowager asks her to come sit next to her.

CONSORT 1: 谢太后。(Thank you Your Majesty.)

Xiè tàihòu.

STAGE: She thanks your majesty.

EMPRESS DOWAGER: 哀家老了，身子也不中用了。//这后宫的事，早就交给皇后打理。可到底也是她无能，才闹出这样的事来。

Āi jiā lǎole, shēn zǐ yě bù zhòng yòngle. //Zhè hòugōng de shì, zǎo jiù jiāo gěi huánghòu dǎ lǐ. Kě dào dǐ yěshì tā wúnéng, cái nào chū zhèyàng de shì lái.

TRANSLATION: //Translation: I am getting old, and my body is as well. Everything I used to do, I've handed to the empress to take care of. But it's also her inability that has caused this as well.

CONSORT 4: 宫中之事盘根错节，皇后娘娘一人也难以周全。//臣妾恳请太后不要责怪皇后。

Gōng zhōng zhī shì pángēncuòjié, huánghòu niángniáng yīrén yě nányǐ zhōuquán. //Chén qiè kěnkǐng tàihòu bù yào zéguài huánghòu.

TRANSLATION: //Things in the palace are intertwined. The empress cannot take care of everything by herself. I beg Your Majesty to not blame her for what has happened.

EMPRESS DOWAGER: 孩子，你自己还顾不过来，//倒替别人操心？
Háizi, nǐ zìjǐ hái gù bùguò lái, dǎo tì biérén cāoxīn?

TRANSLATION: //Child, are you still worrying about others?

EMPRESS DOWAGER: 脸色比先前更差了，还在伤心？//可你年轻，刚入宫不久...
Liǎnsè bǐ xiānqián gèng chàle, hái zài shāngxīn? //Kě nǐ niánqīng, gāng rù gōng bùjiǔ...

TRANSLATION: //Your face is paler than before, you must still be grieving. But you are young and new to the palace.

EMPRESS DOWAGER: [ENGLISH] “The face of a woman fades faster than the flower on a tree”,

EMPRESS DOWAGER: 再好的容颜也经不起岁月。//日子是回不去的。
Zài hǎo de róngyán yě jīng bù qǐ suìyuè. Rìzǐ shì huí bù qù de.

TRANSLATION: //and even the most beautiful face cannot stand the passing of time. You cannot turn back the clock.

EMPRESS DOWAGER: 这些日子你只顾着自己伤心，//可想过皇帝的感受？若你心里没有他，任凭你伤心到极致，下次便是别人来伤心你了。

Zhèxiē rìzǐ nǐ zhǐgùzhe zìjǐ shāngxīn, //kě xiǎngguò huángdì de gǎnshòu? Ruò nǐ xīnlǐ méiyǒu tā, rèn píng nǐ shāngxīn dào jízhì, xià cì biàn shì biérén lái shāngxīn nǐle.

TRANSLATION: //All these days, you’ve just been wallowing in your grief. Have you thought about how that makes the emperor feel? If you haven’t been thinking about him, no matter how much you are grieving, the next time it will be others grieving for you.

CONSORT 4:臣妾知罪... (I understand my offence.)
Chén qiè zhī zuì

STAGE: She understands her offence.

EMPRESS DOWAGER: 不是罪不罪的。保全自己，才能周全别人，这样哀家才能放心。(It’s not about that. Take care of yourself, and then take care of everyone else. That will relieve me of my worries.)

Bùshì zuì bù zuì de. Bǎoquán zìjǐ, cáinéng zhōuquán biérén, zhèyàng āi jiā cáinéng fàngxīn.

STAGE: She says it's not about that, to take care of herself so she can take care of the emperor. That's all that matters in this world.

CONSORT 1:是... (yes.)
...Shì...

EMPRESS DOWAGER: 回去歇着吧。听哀家的话, 别再伤心了, 嗯? (You should go back and rest now. Listen to me, don't be sad anymore, okay?)
Huíquò xiēzhe ba. Tīng āi jiā dehuà, bié zài shāngxīnlè, ǎng?

STAGE: She asks her to go now.

CONSORT 1: 謝太后, 臣妾告退。(Thank you, Your Majesty. I bid Your Majesty goodbye.)
Xiè tàihòu, chén qiè gàotui.

STAGE: She bids her majesty goodbye.

EMPRESS DOWAGER: 去吧。(Go ahead.)
Qù ba.

CONSORT 4: 是。(Yes.)
Shì

(EMPRESS DOWAGER does a dramatic death scene. All other OS dramatically cry, and then leave.)

(OS3 is "resuscitated" and leaves as well.)

5.7

OFFICE SIREN 1: In a dream that I recently had, I found myself in a barrel of hay. The sun was setting. I looked out and a field of wheat stretched endlessly. I am overtaken with a craving for wheat. I can hear the frogs croaking and feel the breeze caress my hair. I look over and see a barn. I am going to go over to the barn. I decide. I want to go over to the barn. I want to curl up on the floor with a tuft of wheat in my mouth. I want to get to the barn. I want it more than anything. I think I'll lose my mind if I stay here. I take a step, and another step, and I am about to take another step when I feel my femur break in half and I am now hinging at my hips over the wheat. I take another step and feel the muscles snap apart and roll up in my leg. I crash to the floor. I taste dirt in my mouth. My hands shoot up to my hair, and I realize suddenly that I am bald. I am bald and when I look over, the emperor is watching me.

ACT VI: MEETING UP WITH A TRAGIC MISHAP, I BREAK A FRONT HOOF

6.1

OFFICE SIREN 2: Hee-haw...

TRANSLATION: Translation: You look different...

OFFICE SIREN 3: **Hee**-haw...

TRANSLATION: Translation: **You** look different...

OFFICE SIREN 4: Hee-haw?

TRANSLATION: Translation: What's going on?

OFFICE SIREN 1: Hee-haw. Hee.... haw....

TRANSLATION: You look rough. Like ... you are obviously having a bad hair day...

OFFICE SIREN 2: *[Actor makes a snorting sound]*

TRANSLATION: No, not just that.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Hee haw?

TRANSLATION: You've been having a rough week?

OFFICE SIREN 4: Hee-haw??

TRANSLATION: What are you talking about??

OFFICE SIREN 1: Heeeee!!!!

TRANSLATION: Look at my face!!!!!!

(The Office Sirens all look at their faces back and forth. They collectively bray (scream).)

OFFICE SIREN 2: Hee-haw Hee-haw?

TRANSLATION: How can I go into the office looking like this?

OFFICE SIREN 3: Hee-haw, hee-haw.

TRANSLATION: Oh my god, I just got a new haircut.

OFFICE SIREN 4: Haw..... *[Actor snorts]*

TRANSLATION: My lashes do NOT work on this face shape.

OFFICE SIREN 1: *[Whispered]* Hee-haw, *[Not whispered]* Hee. Haw.

TRANSLATION: ASMR get ready with me as a donkey..... It just doesn't work. It doesn't work.

OFFICE SIREN 2: *[Actor snorts]*

TRANSLATION: What will grandma think?

OFFICE SIREN 3: *[Donkey groan]*

TRANSLATION: She'll say: You gained weight.

OFFICE SIREN 4: *[Donkey groan]*

TRANSLATION: She'll say: This is because you aren't married yet.

OFFICE SIREN 1: *[Donkey groan]*

TRANSLATION: She'll say: This is because you're always on your computer.

OFFICE SIREN 2: *[Donkey groan]*

TRANSLATION: She'll say: This is because you keep spending money.

OFFICE SIREN 3: *[Donkey groan]*

TRANSLATION: She'll say: This is because you don't have children.

6.2

(An animation plays. It's a picture of a donkey being live edited. Lashes are added, the donkey is given a snatched waist. Lipstick is added, a pencil skirt is edited onto it.)

OFFICE SIREN 4: *[In English]* Reasons why I hate being a donkey.

OFFICE SIREN 1: One.

OFFICE SIREN 2: I smell bad.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Like really bad. Like the stench of a farm but amplified. And I used to pride myself on how I smell. Last year I spent four hundred and twenty dollars on perfume alone.

OFFICE SIREN 4: Two.

OFFICE SIREN 1: I can't wear any of my clothes.

OFFICE SIREN 2: And I refuse to be naked.

OFFICE SIREN 3: I'm not a donkey.

OFFICE SIREN 4: And three.

OFFICE SIREN 1: It's impossible to play tennis like this.

OFFICE SIREN 2: How can I hold a racket?

OFFICE SIREN 3: How would I shuffle at the baseline?

OFFICE SIREN 4: How would I volley?

OFFICE SIREN 1: I can't do anything anymore.

OFFICE SIREN 2: Not to mention. I look horrible.

OFFICE SIREN 4: I almost wish I was back in the ocean. Waterlogged and drowning.

6.3

OFFICE SIREN 3: Everyone says I inherited my grandmother's circadian rhythm. Every morning, even before I can hear the rooster's crow, my legs are restless. I must stretch them out, I need to expel some of this energy. And so as the sun is finally rising, I find myself running—on all fours—through the wheat fields. I jump, I leap, I bound. I feel the strands brushing past my ears and tickle my fur. And it is exactly during this time that I can feel the farmer's eyes on me. He is watching me. He is thinking that I am wasting energy, wasting time, and as I'm jumping around I see his shadow come up behind me. His hands grab my face. He forces a collar onto me, and I can no longer jump. But I can move forward, dragging behind this plow. I walk forward until the sun dips back behind the hills.

6.4

OFFICE SIREN 4: My grandma has always said that I am too spoiled, too soft. That I've never had to 吃苦.

Chīkǔ

TRANSLATION: That means "suffer".

OFFICE SIREN 4: That one day when I would have to, I just wouldn't be able to. And I used to think that she would be wrong. That I would prove her wrong. That in the moment where I had to 吃苦

TRANSLATION: suffer

OFFICE SIREN 4: I would want to do it. It would be unpredictable for her to know how I would handle it but it would be known to me. I would want it more than anything. I used to think that I would lose my mind if I wasn't able to bear it like I knew I could. I thought that I knew that I could do it. I thought so.

OFFICE SIREN 1: But on the third day of plowing the field. When one acre became two and then four, right in the middle of my three thousandth step of the day, I suddenly remember that I am very stinky.

OFFICE SIREN 2: I smell disgusting.

OFFICE SIREN 3: I suddenly remember what perfume I used to wear–

OFFICE SIREN 4: The Glossier one...

OFFICE SIREN 1: I remember how to apply eyeliner–

OFFICE SIREN 2: ASMR Get ready with me...

OFFICE SIREN 3: My L'Oréal total repair conditioning shampoo.

OFFICE SIREN 4: My L'Oréal total repair conditioning shampoo...

OFFICE SIREN 1: And in the middle of that thought, right as I remembered where I had left it –

OFFICE SIREN 2: 18th floor, to the right of the elevator, in the brown drawer of the third cubicle–

OFFICE SIREN 3: And I imagined what it must feel like to apply it to my human hair —

OFFICE SIREN 4: [ASMR] ASMR: I'm realizing I didn't even get a chance to put conditioner in my hair before I was swept away.

(NOT ASMR)

If I had a chance to prepare I would have used my L'Oréal total repair conditioning shampoo. And then brushed out my hair.

OFFICE SIREN 2: I was thinking about all of that, when my hoof caught on a rock, cracked and broke off.

OFFICE SIREN 1: Donkeys are known for their ability to 吃苦.

TRANSLATION: suffer

OFFICE SIREN 1: But... well..

OFFICE SIREN 3: That's great – for them. I am not a donkey. So:

OFFICE SIREN 4: Heeeee!! Hawwww!!!!!!

TRANSLATION: Translation: Fuck!!!!!! Shit!!!!!!

OFFICE SIREN 1: I don't even try to limp forward. I just slump to the ground.

OFFICE SIREN 2: And as my farmer's whip embeds itself into my flesh, I really only have one thought left:

OFFICE SIREN 1: That maybe my grandma is right.

6.5

OFFICE SIREN 4: The next time I open my eyes, I am back in the barn. This time shoved into a corner. The feed is nothing but leftovers, what the other donkeys didn't want to eat.

OFFICE SIREN 4: I realize that I have been left for dead.

OFFICE SIREN 1: I am still a donkey.

OFFICE SIREN 2: But this time, I remember everything.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Most importantly, that I have an email that I need to respond to.

OFFICE SIREN 4: If I don't respond to this email, I'll be left for dead.

OFFICE SIREN 1: I dangle my leg in front of me. My hoof is still broken.

OFFICE SIREN 2: But where is my computer?

OFFICE SIREN 3: I see it, hiding behind my mother. I try to call out to her. To cry out for her.

OFFICE SIREN 4: She ignores me.

OFFICE SIREN 1: So I drag my body through the hay, using my three working legs. I leave behind me a puddle of blood and piss.

OFFICE SIREN 2: And I try to log into my Microsoft Outlook account.

OFFICE SIREN 3: But my hoof. It smashes something random into the username and password.

OFFICE SIREN 4: I try again. And again. And right when I think I'm about to be locked out forever,

OFFICE SIREN 1: It asks me to do two-step verification.

OFFICE SIREN 2: Where the fuck is my phone?

OFFICE SIREN 3: I ask it to send it to my personal email instead.

OFFICE SIREN 4: This sucks.

OFFICE SIREN 1: So I open up gmail and try to type in my username and password.

OFFICE SIREN 2: And it asks me to do two-step verification.

OFFICE SIREN 3: And this sucks.

OFFICE SIREN 4: So I wait thirty minutes, open an incognito browser, and really carefully, with the tip of my hoof, type in my username and password.

OFFICE SIREN 1: And this still isn't working.

OFFICE SIREN 3: This is ridiculous. What the fuck are we doing here hee-hawing?

OFFICE SIREN 3: Enough is enough.

(OFFICE SIREN 3 goes to take the bell from STAGE.)

OFFICE SIREN 3: No need for all of this suffering bullshit. You are in charge of your own destiny. And I am going back to the office now.

(OS3 hits the bell.)

ACT VII: ENDLESS TREADMILL OF TIME

4 Mini treadmills are lowered from the sky.

7.1

The Office Sirens get on the treadmills and start to walk. A clothing rack is wheeled out. After a while, they start to do little gestures and alternate out to do outfit changes.

7.2

OFFICE SIREN 1: I take. I'll take that. I'll leave that. I care. I'm discerning. I'm told often that I'm good at discerning what I want and what I don't want. Yes, yes, no, yes, yes.

OFFICE SIREN 2: The devil at the well. Yes.

OFFICE SIREN 3: The sharp silver scissors, yes.

OFFICE SIREN 4: The devil's shrimp tail. No.

OFFICE SIREN 1: A piece of my eye forever in the sky, yes.

OFFICE SIREN 2: She thinks that there is something important in being able to be discerning. That there is something important in being able to figure out what you want and what you don't want. She is trying to do things on her own terms.

OFFICE SIREN 3: [ASMR]

ASMR, get ready with me as I tell you all about how my grandparents separated.

OFFICE SIREN 4: I want the house. You can have health insurance. I want the rooftop terrace. You can have the pool. I want to tell the children.

OFFICE SIREN 1: My grandma said that the devil stops trailing you when you become an adult. There's no need. If your eye was cut up, it would be too big to be the moon. It would have to become a separate planet. The devil has tried before, tried and made craters from his failure.

(Office Siren 1 blows a little kiss.)

OFFICE SIREN 2: My grandfather's new wife sent a letter four Christmases ago. It was addressed to him and sealed with her perfume.

OFFICE SIREN 3: She smelled like the beach.

OFFICE SIREN 4: Rockaway beach.

OFFICE SIREN 1: Bermuda beach.

OFFICE SIREN 2: Cabo San Lucas beach.

OFFICE SIREN 3: My grandma took out her silver scissors and opened the letter.

OFFICE SIREN 4: And then she took her silver scissors and went upstairs to open his eyes up.

(Office Siren 4 makes a little heart shape with their hand.)

OFFICE SIREN 1: I want the dog. You can have the fine china. I want the dresser. You can have the kitchen pots. I want that letter. You can have your new family.

OFFICE SIREN 2: It is fair for her to do that. She is becoming discerning, choosing what she wants and what she doesn't want anymore. My grandpa was still around for another year after that.

OFFICE SIREN 3: And when they would go out in public, she would look at his cratered eyes and feel embarrassed. What would people think? He no longer looked perfect.

7.3

OFFICE SIREN 4: Years later, I was in the office.

OFFICE SIREN 1: I had already answered the email.

OFFICE SIREN 2: SHEIN daily email. Sent on *[actors should insert the current date]*.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Hi, Yes, I am in the office today. Yes, I am in chair 039842E. Best, ...

OFFICE SIREN 4: Sent.

(The sound of an email being sent)

OFFICE SIREN 1: When she called me to get my opinion on something.

OFFICE SIREN 2: She wanted to know if she should also cut craters into her eyes.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Why would you do that?

OFFICE SIREN 4: She said then they could match.

OFFICE SIREN 3: Oh okay, then go ahead.

OFFICE SIREN 2: "Wait- no. What would other people think? It could be a testament to my loyalty. But if I was out in the world alone, what would other people think?"

OFFICE SIREN 3: Oh okay, then don't do it.

OFFICE SIREN 4: "Stupid child, are you even listening to me?"

OFFICE SIREN 3: Yes.

OFFICE SIREN 2: "So then should I do it or not?"

OFFICE SIREN 1: Yes.

OFFICE SIREN 3: No.

OFFICE SIREN 1: [ASMR]

ASMR: listen with me as my grandma cuts craters into her eyes.

(One of the Office Sirens use scissors to cut through paper, the mic is held close to get the sound)

7.4

OFFICE SIREN 2: She cuts craters into her left eye while listening to Adele. It's easy. She tells me. Later of course.

OFFICE SIREN 3: "It was easy... enough"

OFFICE SIREN 4: I wonder: when the scissor breaks the outer layer of the eye, would everything come oozing out? Probably not. It probably let her clip away, making different shapes in her eye. Circles, squares, stars, even.

OFFICE SIREN 1: And then she started to move onto the other eye. She held up the scissors, squinted at it and right when the tip of it pierced the firm layer, she stopped. What was she doing?

OFFICE SIREN 3: No amount of makeup could cover that up. Here she was, determined to fix herself. Change herself to match him. And she couldn't follow all the way through. She still cared what others thought of her.

OFFICE SIREN 2: When I was little, I asked her to tell me a bedtime story. She told me about how when she was young, she almost drowned in the lake in her hometown. Years later, when I visited, nobody seemed to remember what she was talking about.

OFFICE SIREN 1:
Are you coming to the lake?

OFFICE SIREN 2:
Are you coming to the lake with the lunch happy hour?
Coming you to the lunch lake happy hour.

OFFICE SIREN 3:
Come you come want you to the lunch happy hour at the lake.

OFFICE SIREN 4:
We want lunch.
Lunch want you.

OFFICE SIREN 1:
Oh alright the lunch is here
You I'll here
Come here you or I'll lunch you

OFFICE SIREN 2:
No free lunch
Free lunch, no?

Give free lunch me / Give eat free lunch / me eat free lunch / give me eat free lunch/ give me you.

ACT VIII: LIFE AND DEATH ARE WEARING ME OUT

Neither life nor death have real consequences.

8.1

OFFICE SIREN 1: I am in the forest. But I think I am by the mountains. It's at the far edge of where I can go. Any further and I would have to scale up the rocks. Which is nearly impossible in these heels. And even if I could scale up, once I get to a certain height, I'll get electrocuted. I saw that happen to someone. I feel lucky that when the clock started, I rushed to get a backpack and a large knife. It's humid. My hair is completely ruined. My heels are caked in dirt. It's humid. The air is thick. I have trouble breathing. It's humid. But I still hit my vape. I am alive. Right now.

OFFICE SIREN 2: I am in the forest. Down by the river. It's fresh water. I think it is most likely in the middle of the land. The mud is cold and slimy. I lay down and lather it across my body. My right thigh has a deep cut in it, and I have no supplies with me. I look up to the sky and pray and pray and beg that my order of a tourniquet and balm will be delivered to me. I have an amazon prime account. I know that the delivery drivers can't access where I am, but I also think: I paid for single day delivery. They could try harder. I hear a rustle in the leaves and continue to cake mud onto my body. My once beige blouse gets dyed brown. I think about how I'll probably never get this shit out of my hair again.

OFFICE SIREN 3: I am dead. I thought that I was climbing to get a higher viewpoint. I had taken the bow and arrow from the center at the start and wanted to pick everyone out one by one. The tree I was climbing on was sticky. My pencil skirt was getting stained. I wasn't looking up. I didn't see the electric ceiling. It was hexagonal and shiny and perfect. I was supposed to see it when the light hit it. What I saw on the aerospace and defense floor. But I didn't look up. I was only looking down.

OFFICE SIREN 4: I am using a heavy wooden bat to bludgeon Office Siren 2. I made it from a stump of dead wood and the pocket knife I grabbed. I have never whittled before. So it took a while. But I have time.

I miss having an oat milk cappuccino, no foam, sprinkle of cinnamon. I can't hear anything except the sound of me missing:

OFFICE SIREN 3: The tennis courts.

OFFICE SIREN 2: The office cubicle.

OFFICE SIREN 1: My grandma's cratered eyeballs.

OFFICE SIREN 4: When 3 got electrocuted, I heard 2 curse about her Amazon account. And she was loud enough that I was sure I could find her. Only leaves and branches were in my way. And then I got to her.

OFFICE SIREN 2: "Hi, good morning".

OFFICE SIREN 4: "Hi, good morning"

OFFICE SIREN 2: "Where did you get that skirt? I need it."

OFFICE SIREN 4: "I won't tell you... until you tell me where you got those fabulous earrings!"

OFFICE SIREN 2: "Are we checking in?"

OFFICE SIREN 4: "I'm checking." And then I bludgeoned her to death.

8.2

OFFICE SIREN 1:

A week ago, we started getting Outlook calendar invites. To watch parties. These were the only emails besides the ones I got from my manager.

OFFICE SIREN 3:

Are you coming to the lunch watch party.

OFFICE SIREN 2:

Coming you to lunch watch party. Come you come want you to come to lunch watch party.

OFFICE SIREN 4:

Want want you to come

You want you

OFFICE SIREN 1:

Oh I can't but I'll email you

You I'll email

Come here you or I'll email you

OFFICE SIREN 3: The lunch happy hour watch party.

OFFICE SIREN 1: Can't: grandma.

OFFICE SIREN 2: In hospital. Bandages over cratered eyes.

OFFICE SIREN 3: She is waiting for me.

OFFICE SIREN 4: I can't but I'll have to email. I'll have to email you by hitting "reply all" –

OFFICE SIREN 4: –and writing something simple, like: "Can't. :(Best, ". It's a personalized rejection. I feel like what's the point in watching? There's not even a money prize at the end.

STAGE: Sound of an email sending

OFFICE SIREN 1: That's all?

OFFICE SIREN 2: It sent.

OFFICE SIREN 3: I guess.

OFFICE SIREN 4: Okay great. Can we go back to the office?

OFFICE SIREN 1: Yeah.

OFFICE SIREN 2: We should be there.

(Office Siren 3 hits a bell again)

OFFICE SIREN 3: We're still here.

(STAGE starts playing the audio)

OFFICE SIREN 4: Where?

OFFICE SIREN 1: In the middle of the arena.

OFFICE SIREN 2: What if we tried to focus really hard on getting back.

OFFICE SIREN 3: ...

*(When the rain is blowing in your face
And the whole world is on your case)*

OFFICE SIREN 4: ...

OFFICE SIREN 1: Do you hear that?

OFFICE SIREN 3:

*(I could offer you a warm embrace
To make you feel my love)*

OFFICE SIREN 4: Hear what?

OFFICE SIREN 1: That.

8.3

(Office Siren 1 speaks like they are delivering a sermon, at the same time as Office Siren 3 starts singing.)

OFFICE SIREN 3:

*When the evening shadows and the stars appear
And there is no one there to dry your tears
I could hold you for a million years
To make you feel my love*

OFFICE SIREN 1: ASMR get ready with me as the ground underneath me collapses. I'm alive, and I thank my manager for letting me live another day. Thank you, [redacted] [redacted]! I've learned my lesson. I know that if I'm able to weather this storm, and make it out of here, things will be okay. I know I'll be able to leave with a million dollars – pre-tax, like they promised.

OFFICE SIREN 3:

*I know you haven't made your mind up yet
But I will never do you wrong*

OFFICE SIREN 3:

*I've known it from the moment that we met
No doubt in my mind where you belong*

OFFICE SIREN 3:

*I'd go hungry, I'd go black and blue
I'd go crawling down the avenue
No there's nothing that I wouldn't do
To make you feel my love*

OFFICE SIREN 1: [Sermon]

But then I hear the ground underneath me start to shake, so I decide I need to get creative. I shimmy up a tree. My pencil skirt is ripped and torn. This is the perfect location- inoffensive. I think: that shouldn't be an issue, right? But then I look up at the sky and see something shiny and hexagonal. I look closer and it's no longer what I thought, but weapons in the sky all in a different pattern. SHEIN's Aerospace and Defense division.

OFFICE SIRENS 3:

*The storms are raging on the rollin' sea
And on the highway of regret*

*The winds of change are blowing wild and free
You ain't seen nothing like me yet*

(As Office Sirens 2-4 still continue to kill each other)

OFFICE SIREN 1: [Sermon]

ASMR come share my last thoughts right before we're all fucking blown into bits. It's really silly. I can't get that stupid Adele song out of my head. And because of that, I can't get thoughts of my grandma out of my head. She was listening to this song when I visited her body in the hospital.

OFFICE SIREN 3:

*I could make you happy, make your dreams come true
Nothing that I wouldn't do
Go to the ends of the earth for you*

(Slow fade to blackout.)

OFFICE SIREN 1: [Sermon]

She would probably think that I was stupid to get myself in this situation.

OFFICE SIREN 3,2,4:

*To make you feel my love
To make you feel my love*

8.4

(Office Siren 2 goes to take the microphone from STAGE)

OFFICE SIREN 2: I woke up from a dream about you. In it I was at a lunch happy hour at the all you can eat Chinese Buffet where we used to go on Friday afternoons. There was a large drinking well inside the restaurant that separated us, and at first I didn't even realize you were there. There were people moving around and milling about. I didn't mean to see you but I did and you looked like you did when I was young: short hair, no makeup, and small earlobes. You looked happy and healthy and like you did when I was 16 and not like how you looked when I was 26.

I tried to leave and walk away but you looked up and saw me. I tried to smile but I couldn't. You smiled at me, almost like you weren't surprised I was there.

In my dream my dead turtle was still alive. And she was also happy, in my dream. Right before I saw you, my turtle had grown a long tail – kind of like a shrimp's tail. I wanted to take it off, I wanted to chop it off with a cleaver. I remember thinking she looked disgusting and that I wanted to throw her away, to bury her in trash. But at the last minute, I had decided that it wasn't fair for me to do that. I went to the Chinese Buffet to release her in the drinking well and I watched her swim around in the water right before I looked up and saw you.

OFFICE SIREN 2: End of play.