

# EMILY - JIM

*two conversations without pause or warning. Separately, her computer beeps. Her eyes glance at it, then return to Jim.*

EMILY. What is it?

JIM. I'm not interrupting?

EMILY. You are, but this takes priority.

JIM. I didn't want to bother you.

EMILY. You're starting to bother me.

JIM. Ah.

*Pause. She lets him suffer for a moment, then grins to signify she's joking.*

Oh. Right.

EMILY. You're doing a good job. I took a look at the log on the drive. I like the way you set up the spreadsheet—

*Emily pushes the button on her phone.*

Tell him to take a FLYING FUCK.

*Jim's eyes widen.*

I don't care if "Congressional Spouses" was ready—it'll be ready next year.

*She mutes her phone again.*

*(To Jim, without missing a beat.)*—easy to read, well organized. What's the trouble?

*Emily's computer makes another noise. Her eyes dart to it.*

JIM. Do you need to—?

EMILY. No, that's just a group—wait, do I? No. Go on.

JIM. Oh, right! So, the article.

EMILY. Yes. What about it?

*She holds up a finger, pushes the button on her phone.*

We hold production for this because it's better.

*Pushes button again, back to Jim.*

Go on.

JIM. The article is really good.

EMILY. Yes?

JIM. Best thing I've ever seen in the magazine.

*Her computer makes another noise. She glances at it, triaging.*

EMILY. Bold assessment, but I agree.

JIM. Daring way to push the envelope, making an indelible statement about life and death.

*A beat. Emily's computer makes another noise.*

If you need to get that—

EMILY. It can wait. What about the article?

JIM. Literate, eloquent. A beautiful piece of work—

EMILY. I got it.

JIM. Yeah. Okay. So, there's just a few things.

EMILY. *(Pushes the button on her phone.)* If they want overtime, fine. This is the article. Okay? This is the one.

*She disconnects the call. A beat.*

Good grief.

*She calms herself.*

So what is it?

JIM. Is this a bad time?

EMILY. There are no good times, and I have a call in seven minutes. Please proceed. As you just heard, I am holding Kankakee for you.

JIM. Oh, god, um, okay. *(Paging through his notebook.)* So barring what I can confirm through official documents—coroner reports, police reports, etc.—

EMILY. I did say Monday.

JIM. Right. Right. Okay, he says that on the day Levi died, "lap dancing was temporarily banned by the city," but that doesn't check out. The day before Levi died, the *Las Vegas Sun* wrote about a possible upcoming ban on touching strippers in fully nude establishments, but there's nothing about a possible ban on lap dancing altogether in topless or even so-called go-go bars, where nipple nudity is essentially banned, but of course establishments get around that using pasties—

*He riffles through his notes as he speaks. Emily's email noise happens again. And then twice more.*

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Also, he says there were thirty-four licensed strip clubs in Vegas; his reference is Adult Industry News, which wrote that "since 1999 the number of strip clubs in Las Vegas has skyrocketed from three to sixteen" but then claims there were "thirty-one topless or all-nude clubs." So even if we trust "Adult Industry News," it doesn't say thirty-four strip clubs, plus it contradicts itself.

*Emily taps her touchpad decisively.*

EMILY. Shorter sentences.

JIM. John gives one number for strip clubs. But his source not only does not confirm that number, it contradicts itself by providing two different numbers. *(To himself.)* But maybe that's because—wait, though, that brings up another problem, is he talking about topless bars or fully nude bars?

*Hereafter, Emily's computer, phone, etc., occasionally makes a noise or otherwise distracts her, but, except as indicated, nothing she can't handle.*

EMILY. Jim—

JIM. Though I guess they're not necessarily bars; in fact, it's harder to get a full liquor license if you can see the vaginal area... like I'm guessing you can at this place, Pussy Rockets—

*He looks up at her, alarmed.*

Sorry, can I say...?

EMILY. You may say Pussy Rockets.

JIM. Great—yeah, he says "clubs," which could indicate any place where people pay women to take off their clothes—but wait, is he including male establishments!?

EMILY. Okay, first—

JIM. I mean, ones where guys show their—

EMILY. —first, this is great. You've got the hang of it, you're checking each fact. You're doing the job I instructed, and you're doing it really, really—the spreadsheet was a great start. I clearly picked the right person.

JIM. The spreadsheet was important so you can filter the issues by—

EMILY. And that's your question? The strip clubs?

JIM. Well I have a couple others. One or two or a few more of these little details. There's this chicken—

EMILY. How many? Details?

JIM. Well, if you check where I marked "unresolved" you can see a few. Well, more than a few. Kind of a fair number, actually.

EMILY. How many?

JIM. How many—?

EMILY. Ballpark?

JIM. Well, kind of a lot. Do you mind if I just get in there—

*Jim starts to go around her desk, reaching for her keyboard.  
Emily holds her hand up, firmly rejecting his movement.*

EMILY. Please don't. ← END

*He jerks his hand back and notices the small, framed photograph on her desk—facing her, not visitors.*

JIM. Sorry. That's an interesting picture.

*She gestures sharply for him to step away.*

EMILY. Don't!

JIM. *(Flustered.)* Yes.

*For an instant her eyes dart around and her mind races, surveying her various emails, iPads, phones, and all the time she's lost during this meeting.*

EMILY. You know what? You should check all this with John.

JIM. You mean, like, talk to him?

EMILY. Email him. Introduce yourself, use my name. He's passionate about his work, but I've known him for a long time, and he always has time for people who are polite and intelligent. And you're polite and intelligent. Right? Are you?

JIM. Of course!

EMILY. So, I'll send you his contact info. Clear up whatever you have a question about.

JIM. Okay. I think I can do that.

EMILY. But stick to the facts. Don't change anything with regard to the shape and intent of the piece.