

Emmy, Pregnancy Test

IAN CHILLAG:

Heads up. This episode is an interview with a pregnancy test. There's nothing objectionable or explicit, but it does acknowledge that reproduction is a thing. With that said. Here's the show.

EMMY:

My first memory...I lived in a... It's called Rite Aid. I don't know if you've heard of it?

IAN CHILLAG:

Yeah.

EMMY:

But I lived in... It's an aisle of Rite Aid, called Feminine Care, and I lived there for a long time.

IAN CHILLAG:

But you did get purchased.

EMMY:

Yeah, it just happened. It was so wild because this lady put her hand on like all my neighbours. Like, she touched all of us, and she was reading our backs. And she went with me and I was just blown away. It's sort of... It's a blessing and a curse, you know, 'cause getting to leave...I don't really know what's out there. I mean, I know what's in my instructions. I know what can happen to us. I know that eventually...If everything goes according to plan, I'm going to get peed on.

IAN CHILLAG:

Yeah.

EMMY:

Yeah. My name is Emmy and I'm a pregnancy test.

IAN CHILLAG:

Do you just for...I guess for our listeners that can't see you...Do you just want to describe what you look like, for us?

EMMY:

Sure, sure. Well, I live in a box. So, a lot of people... I haven't shown my form in the world before, I guess. But you can tell from the picture on the box, I think. I'm tall and... Sort of slender and I've got a very long neck.

IAN CHILLAG:

So, you live in a box?

EMMY:

Yes, I have instructions too, it's not just me.

IAN CHILLAG:

I first thought I would start by asking you some questions about babies. But, you actually, despite what you do...You actually interact with adults a lot more than babies. Do you have a sense for what babies are like?

EMMY:

I know it's like a small... I've seen them in the aisle, before. And they're like...they're like little people that can't do anything.

IAN CHILLAG:

Yeah.

Emmy, Pregnancy Test

EMMY:

I think I understand them as little people that...They make noise. They don't really help with anything.

IAN CHILLAG:

Yeah, so...so what you're...

EMMY:

Like, I've never seen a baby, like, refill the stock pregnancy tests.

IAN CHILLAG:

Right.

EMMY:

Right. But I understand they're very cute. And people like taking care of a thing that does nothing.

IAN CHILLAG:

And, what about the adults you encounter in the aisle?

EMMY:

Sometimes, it's, like, moms and daughters. Sometimes it's when by themselves. Sometimes it's like little boys who come to laugh at us. And I don't take that personally. But some of the products in the aisle don't like that.I... But I don't blame them, you know? Everybody's curious.

IAN CHILLAG:

When people are embarrassed or excited or scared, are you feeling that?

EMMY:

Yeah. Yeah. It's hard because, as a pregnancy test, I can only be...I can be positive, I can be negative, but people can be a lot more things than that.

IAN CHILLAG:

Yeah. Can I actually...Can I actually ask you some just yes or no questions, because you are a 'yes' or 'no' thing?

EMMY:

Yes, yes. And you can just give me answers, yes or no.

EMMY:

Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:

I guess... Are you...Would you say you're happy to be who you are?

EMMY:

Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:

When you think about delivering the big news that you're going to deliver, are you nervous?

EMMY:

Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:

Are all people inherently good?

Emmy, Pregnancy Test

EMMY:

Yes. Is my dad proud of me? I think he would have to pee on me for me to know that.

IAN CHILLAG:

Are there any mistakes a person can't undo?

EMMY:

Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:

Will I ever have a kid?

EMMY:

Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:

Should I have a kid?

EMMY:

Yeah.

IAN CHILLAG:

When you think about how you're going to be used, is it... Is that gross to you?

EMMY:

No. I've been wanting to know what it feels like. I know about pee from my instructions, but I don't know exactly where it comes from. So... Like I know the area, generally. I know it's...But I don't know exactly where. I don't know...You would think humans would be like sponges, you know? Or like, when they soak up a bunch of liquid, you just give them a twist and it all comes out. But you have a much different system.

IAN CHILLAG:

Yeah. And then, what's your understanding of what happens to you?

EMMY:

OK. So what I know from the instructions...It... I think they're gonna hold me over the toilet and she'll pee on me, and then we wait. And that I... You know, I wean out my window and say, yes or no. I don't... You know, what...I figuratively wean out my window.

IAN CHILLAG:

The waiting period is so interesting. 'Cause it's like... I don't know. What is it? A couple of minutes.

EMMY:

I think it's a few minutes.

IAN CHILLAG:

That is maybe, the most intense 3 minutes that a human experiences.

EMMY:

Yeah. I don't know what you're supposed to do during those three minutes. I'm kind of in the ultimate third wheel situation. It's a very strange position to be in.

IAN CHILLAG:

I just think about, like, people are, you know, sometimes, probably picturing their whole lives. What if it is, what if it isn't?

Emmy, Pregnancy Test

EMMY:

Yes. Yeah. It's a lot of anticipation. And I think I'd rather dwell on the anticipation. Because if I think to the next step, it's... Whatever it is. I'm in a trashcan. They don't keep you.

IAN CHILLAG:

And I guess you're just...Yeah, you're just positive or negative forever.

EMMY:

Yeah, yeah. I mean, in my dreams, I would stick around, you know? I think... I'd like to meet the grandparents and the extended family, but I know that that's not really my role. It's only... Yeah.

IAN CHILLAG:

Yeah. Obviously, like, the people are thinking about their family and I'm not really a part of it. I feel like a part of it but I'm not. I think, in my dreams, I would bring the photos with them, you know? I would be part of the family. That I should be like a charm on a necklace, at the very least. It's so fast when you think about it. It's three minutes. You're opened, three minutes later, you're done.

EMMY:

Yes. It's just going to be a lot at once. It really is like, imagine...Imagine if like, you had, like, all your birthdays at the same time.

IAN CHILLAG:

Just a lifetime of birthdays.

EMMY:

Yeah.

IAN CHILLAG:

Yeah.

EMMY:

And then died. You know, like when a bee stings, it loses its stinger and that's the end of its life. And we're kind of like that too.

IAN CHILLAG:

Yeah.

EMMY:

Yeah.

IAN CHILLAG:

It is amazing that, you know, something so significant happened so quickly.

EMMY:

Yeah, 'cause it used to be a lot more complicated. Like, you'd to have to send away for something from a lab. And then, they'd send you a jar and you'd send it back. They'd test the jar... Before that even, they used to use a frog.

IAN CHILLAG:

For a pregnancy test?

EMMY:

They'd use a frog as a pregnancy test

Emmy, Pregnancy Test

IAN CHILLAG:

How? How did that work?

EMMY:

Until the 1960s, If a woman thought she was pregnant the doctors would take a urine sample, inject into a live frog, and then, if the frog laid eggs, it meant she was pregnant.

IAN CHILLAG:

It's crazy to think about you and a frog having the same job.

EMMY:

That is crazy. That is absolutely crazy. It would be weird if the Rite Aid sold live frogs in a box. But I think it would be great if I lived on a lily pad. You never see a pregnancy test on a lily pad. Like, when you go to a pond, we're never there.

IAN CHILLAG:

That's true.

EMMY:

I wouldn't mind trading lives with a frog. I think... I mean the frog... The frog gets to lay eggs and start a family of its own, you know? Like, I don't get to have my own family.

IAN CHILLAG:

Do you wanna have a family?

EMMY:

Like, would I like to start a family?

IAN CHILLAG:

Well, yeah. Yeah, what if you could start a family. Would you want to start a family?

EMMY:

No-one's ever asked me, before. Yeah, I'd have...It would be tough for me to meet another test that I would want to have tests with. I think it would probably be, you know, me and my partner, and then to little test. We'd live in a very nice box. Like, a very big box. Like, a family pack. And we would, you know, do regular family things.

IAN CHILLAG:

Like what?

EMMY:

We'd have, you know, like an addict full of puzzles. We would make dinners.

IAN CHILLAG:

Uh-huh.

EMMY:

We'd sit on the couch and we'd eat up lasagna. Maybe me and my partner would be pushing the kids on these tiny little swings. I don't know, it's...And we'd take photos. We would definitely take photos.

VOICEOVER:

Support for 'Everything is Alive' comes from HelloFresh. HelloFresh is a meal-kit delivery service that sends step by step recipes and pre-measured ingredients, right to your door. You can choose classic or veggie or family. After that, they do all the planning, prepping and shopping for you. It snowed a lot, yesterday, in New York, where I live. And because we had a box from HelloFresh, I didn't have to

Emmy, Pregnancy Test

leave my house. We made their tortellini with mushroom sauce which was delicious and easy, and only use two pans. And again, importantly, did not require me to leave my house.

If you like food and do not want to go out into the soggy freezing cold hellscape right outside your door. You can get \$60 off -that's \$20 off your first three boxes by going to hellofresh.com/alive60 and entering promo code, Alive 60. When you use the promo code, it really helps our show. That's hellofresh.com/alive60, promo code Alive 60.

IAN CHILLAG:

Is it true that everything happens for a reason?

EMMY:

No.

IAN CHILLAG:

Is it true that you are what you eat?

EMMY:

No.

IAN CHILLAG:

Is it true that the youngest sibling is the best-looking?

EMMY:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

Is it true that cats have nine lives?

EMMY:

No.

INTERVIEWER:

Would the world be a better place if people came with instructions too?

EMMY:

Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:

Are you ever scared of delivering a false positive?

EMMY:

Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:

Do you have a hard time saying, no?

EMMY:

Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:

Do you think the way humans reproduce is weird?

EMMY:

Yes.

Emmy, Pregnancy Test

IAN CHILLAG:

Are there weirder ways of reproducing?

EMMY:

Yes.

GEORGE:

Hello.

IAN CHILLAG:

Hello, this is George?

GEORGE:

Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:

So, I want to talk to you about Tex. Is that okay?

GEORGE:

Sure.

IAN CHILLAG:

So, Tex is a whooping crane. Tell me about the first time you saw Tex.

GEORGE:

It was at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. And, my first thought was, this poor bird is really screwed up.

IAN CHILLAG:

Really?

GEORGE:

Mm-hmm

IAN CHILLAG:

What did you see... What made you think that?

GEORGE:

She was dancing with people as they walked by. She was raised by humans, not by cranes. So, she's imprinted in humans. She really liked dark-haired young men, and she hated women, and she hated redhead men.

IAN CHILLAG:

Wow. So, she didn't just...It wasn't as humans. Like, she had a type.

GEORGE:

Yeah, she has a type, but she wouldn't behave that way at all towards cranes. She would attack them. And I'm a scientist. And so, I reasoned that, in order to get her to ovulate, she would require a human mate.

INTERVIEWER:

So, the idea here is...At this time, it was really important to get whooping cranes to reproduce, because they were 100 in the world.

GEORGE:

No, about 70.

Emmy, Pregnancy Test

IAN CHILLAG:

Wow. So, you... George. You ended up being the mate. And Tex, she really did bond with you. How did you know that that had first happened?

GEORGE:

She would approach me and want to stay beside me and would do this courtship dance. And she would also do different types of calls that cranes do to each other. And she would just be at my side.

IAN CHILLAG:

OK. So, you moved into her territory to try and make this happen. Can you tell me, what your days were like with her?

GEORGE:

You know, it wasn't like...She was like a pet, sort of, to me, I suppose. I would get there at dawn and I would stay with her until dark, completely, for six or seven weeks, every spring. And I have a little Shack on the top of the hill and the door was open. And when she wanted me to dance with her or do something or go somewhere, she would stick her head in the door and make a particular sound, and then I would go out and follow her and I'd just let her take the lead.

IAN CHILLAG:

What was it like when you danced with her?

GEORGE:

I would just leap when she would bow. I would go, like, do deep knee bends and jump in the air and flap my arms and run around a bit, and that would excite her. And after the dance, the crane sometimes solicits for copulation. And the male will flap upon her back and mate with her. But what I would do is just stroke her back, and she would go into the copulatory reflexes. And two other people would come into the area and they would have the semen in a tiny syringe, and they would insert it into her oviduct and deposit the sperm.

IAN CHILLAG:

Wow.

GEORGE:

And then they would run away and she would chase them.

IAN CHILLAG:

She thought that they were intruding.

GEORGE:

Right.

IAN CHILLAG:

After years of trying this, it finally worked. And Tex had an offspring, a male whooping crane which was named, Gee-whiz. He still he still around. Do you feel differently about G-wiz than about other birds?

GEORGE:

Of course, I do because of his importance. He is paired to a crane, lives in the facility of the Crane Foundation. They produce many chicks, and they now have over 100 grandchildren. So, he's working.

IAN CHILLAG:

I guess, his offspring are your grandchildren too.

Emmy, Pregnancy Test

GEORGE:

I suppose. So, when the time comes for you to do what you do, you're gonna say, yes or no. Does that ever feel limiting?

EMMY:

It's hard because I'm sort of like a Magic 8-Ball that only has two answers, like a Magic two-ball. And I wish I could do more, you know? I wish I could do more than just yes or no. I wish I could say like, "Let's all hang out after this. Or, you know, like, congratulations." Or if it's not the result they want, I'd like... I hope they know that I support them.

IAN CHILLAG:

Yeah.

EMMY:

Yeah.

IAN CHILLAG:

Whatever it is.

EMMY:

Whatever it is. I would love to be able to offer a comfort of some kind. Like, I could just shoot out meatballs.

IAN CHILLAG:

You would make them feel better by shooting out meatballs?

EMMY:

And they'd be good.

IAN CHILLAG:

The meatball.

EMMY:

Yeah, they'd be good meatballs.

IAN CHILLAG:

Do you worry about having to tell someone the answer they don't want?

EMMY:

Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:

Is it weird to think about how you'll communicate a secret that you don't know yet?

EMMY:

Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:

Should people put those bow things on baby girls, so that people know it's a girl?

EMMY:

No.

IAN CHILLAG:

Does the question you answer create more questions?

Emmy, Pregnancy Test

EMMY:

Yeah, yeah. Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:

Will the world our children grow up in be better than the world, as it is now?

EMMY:

Yes, 'cause, I mean...There more and more things in the aisle, and I feel like that's a sign of progress in some way, right?

IAN CHILLAG:

Yeah.

EMMY:

Yeah.

IAN CHILLAG:

Whatever you end up saying to the humans, are they going to be OK?

EMMY:

Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:

Are you going to be OK?

EMMY:

Yes, I'll go yes with this.

VOICEOVER:

This is Everything is Alive. The show's produced by, Jennifer Mills and me, Ian Chillag with Evo Watchiver and Isabella Kulkarni. Thanks as always to Emily Spivack and special thanks, this week, to Juki I Anson and Stevie Lane. Special thanks, last week, to Lauren Spohrer. More thanks still. A big thanks to Hillary Frank. She's author of the new book, 'Weird parenting wins' and creator of the podcast, 'The Longest Shortest Time'.

We are grateful to the reporting of, Ed Yong from whom we first learned about the frog pregnancy test. And thanks to George Archibald for telling us about his work saving whooping cranes. 'Emmy, the pregnancy test' was played by Emmy Blotnick. Music in this episode was by

Blue dot Sessions. Everything is Alive is a proud member of Radiotopia from PRX And without Julie Shapiro, executive producer. we would be a plate of spaghetti without any meatballs. You can find any number of ways of getting in touch with us at everythingisalive.com. We'll see you soon.

EMMY:

Do you know what Ikea is?

IAN CHILLAG:

Ikea?

EMMY:

Ikea.

IAN CHILLAG:

Yes. I know what Ikea is.

Emmy, Pregnancy Test

EMMY:

So, Ikea made a magazine ad out of this paper that you could pee on, and it was a pregnancy test, but it was like a very different kind. And you would pee on the paper and it would tell you if you were pregnant or not, by giving you a coupon for cribs.

IAN CHILLAG:

So, you would pee on your magazine?

EMMY:

Yes, which... I don't think people normally do that.

IAN CHILLAG:

No, and then it would...If you were pregnant it would change.

EMMY:

It would show you Cribs if you were pregnant.

IAN CHILLAG:

I feel like, whether or not you're pregnant you kind of... You have ruined your magazine.

EMMY:

Absolutely. Yes.

VOICEOVER:

Radio TempeX

VOICEOVER 2:

From PRX

IAN CHILLAG:

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EMMY:

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IAN CHILLAG:

Yeah.

EMMY:

But I lived in...It's an aisle of Rite Aid, called Feminine Care. And I lived there for a long time.

IAN CHILLAG:

But you did get purchased.

EMMY:

Yeah, it just happened. It was so wild because this lady put her hand on like all my neighbours. Like, she touched all of us, and she was reading our backs. And she went with me and I was just blown away. It's sort of...It's a blessing and a curse, you know, 'cause getting to leave...I don't really know what's out there. I mean, I know what's in my instructions. I know what can happen to us. I know that eventually... If everything goes according to plan, I'm going to get peed on.

IAN CHILLAG:

Yeah.

EMMY:

Yeah.

Emmy, Pregnancy Test

EMMY:

My name is Emmy and I'm pregnancy test.

IAN CHILLAG:

Do you just for... I guess for our listeners that can't see you... Do you just want to describe what you look like, for us?

EMMY:

Sure, sure. Well, I live in a box. So, a lot of people... I haven't shown my form in the world before, I guess. But you can tell from the picture on the box, I think. I'm tall and... Sort of slender and I've got a very long neck.

IAN CHILLAG:

So, you live in a box?

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I first thought I would start by asking you some questions about babies. But, you actually, despite what you do... You actually interact with adults a lot more than babies. Do you have a sense of what babies are like?

EMMY:

I know it's like a small... I've seen them in the aisle, before. And they're like...they're like little people that can't do anything.

IAN CHILLAG:

Yeah.

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I think I understand them as little people that... They make noise. They don't really help with anything.

IAN CHILLAG:

Yeah, so...so what you're...

EMMY:

Like, I've never seen a baby, like, refill the stock pregnancy tests.

IAN CHILLAG:

Right.

EMMY:

Right, but I understand they're very cute. And, people like taking care of a thing that does nothing.

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And, what about the adults you encounter in the aisle?

EMMY:

Sometimes, it's, like, moms and daughters. Sometimes it's when by themselves. Sometimes it's like little boys who come to laugh at us. And I don't take that personally. But some of the products in the aisle don't like that. I... But I don't blame them, you know? Everybody's curious.

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IAN CHILLAG:

When people are embarrassed or excited or scared, are you feeling that?

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Yeah. Yeah. It's hard because, as a pregnancy test, I can only be... I can be positive, I can be negative, but people can be a lot more things than that.

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Yeah. Can I actually... Can I actually ask you some just yes or no questions, because you are a 'yes' or 'no' thing?

EMMY:

Yes, yes.

IAN CHILLAG:

And you can just give me answers, yes or no.

EMMY:

Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:

I guess... Are you... Would you say you're happy to be who you are?

EMMY:

Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:

When you think about delivering the big news that you're going to deliver, are you nervous?

EMMY:

Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:

Are all people inherently good?

EMMY:

Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:

Is my dad proud of me?

EMMY:

I think he would have to pee on me for me to know that.

IAN CHILLAG:

Are there any mistakes a person can't undo?

EMMY:

Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:

Will I ever have a kid?

EMMY:

Yes.

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IAN CHILLAG:
Should I have a kid?

EMMY:
Yeah.

IAN CHILLAG:
When you think about how you're going to be used, is it... Is that gross to you?

EMMY:
No. I've been wanting to know what it feels like. I know about pee from my instructions, but I don't know exactly where it comes from. So... Like I know the area, generally. I know it's... But I don't know exactly where. I don't know... You would think humans would be like sponges, you know? Or like, when they soak up a bunch of liquid, you just give them a twist, and it all comes out. But you have a much different system.

IAN CHILLAG:
Yeah. And then, what's your understanding of what happens to you?

EMMY:
OK. So what I know from the instructions... It... I think they're gonna hold me over the toilet and she'll pee on me, and then we wait. And that I... You know, I wean out my window and say, yes or no. I don't... You know, what... I figuratively wean out my window.

IAN CHILLAG:
The waiting period is so interesting. 'Cause it's like... I don't know. What is it? A couple of minutes.

EMMY:
I think it's a few minutes.

IAN CHILLAG:
That is maybe, the most intense 3 minutes that a human experiences.

EMMY:
Yeah. I don't know what you're supposed to do during those three minutes. I'm kind of in the ultimate third wheel situation. It's a very strange position to be in.

IAN CHILLAG:
I just think about, like, people are, you know, sometimes, probably picturing their whole lives. What if it is, what if it isn't?

EMMY:
Yes. Yeah. It's a lot of anticipation. And I think I'd rather dwell on the anticipation. Because if I think to the next step, it's... Whatever it is. I'm in a trashcan. They don't keep you.

IAN CHILLAG:
And I guess you're just... Yeah, you're just positive or negative forever.

EMMY:
Yeah, yeah. I mean, in my dreams, I would stick around, you know? I think... I'd like to meet the grandparents and the extended family, but I know that that's not really my role. It's only... Yeah.

IAN CHILLAG:
Yeah. Obviously, like, the people are thinking about their family and I'm not really a part of it.

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I feel like a part of it but I'm not. I think, in my dreams, I would be in the photos with them, you know? I would be part of the family. That I should be like a charm on a necklace, at the very least.

IAN CHILLAG:

It's so fast when you think about it. It's 3 minutes. You're opened, three minutes later, you're done.

EMMY:

Yes. It's just going to be a lot at once. It really is like, imagine... Imagine if like, you had, like, all your birthdays at the same time.

IAN CHILLAG:

Just a lifetime of birthdays.

EMMY:

Yeah.

IAN CHILLAG:

Yeah.

EMMY:

And then died. You know, like when a bee stings, it loses its stinger and that's the end of its life. And we're kind of like that too.

IAN CHILLAG:

Yeah.

EMMY:

Yeah.

IAN CHILLAG:

It is amazing that, you know, something so significant happened so quickly.

EMMY:

Yeah, 'cause it used to be a lot more complicated, like, you'd to have to send away for something from a lab. And then, they'd send you a jar and you'd send it back. They'd test the jar... Before that even, they used to use a frog.

IAN CHILLAG:

For a pregnancy test?

EMMY:

They'd use a frog as a pregnancy test

IAN CHILLAG:

How? How did that work?

EMMY:

Until the 1960s, if a woman thought she was pregnant, the doctors would take a urine sample, inject into a live frog, and then, if the frog laid eggs, it meant she was pregnant.

IAN CHILLAG:

It's crazy to think about you and a frog having the same job.

EMMY:

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IAN CHILLAG:

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IAN CHILLAG:

Like what?

EMMY:

We'd have, you know, like an addict full of puzzles. We would make dinners.

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EMMY:

We'd sit on the couch and we'd eat up lasagna. Maybe me and my partner would be pushing the kids on these tiny little swings. I don't know, it's...And we'd take photos. We would definitely take photos.

(SOFT PIANO)

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No.

IAN CHILLAG:

Is it true that the youngest sibling is the best-looking?

EMMY:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

Is it true that cats have nine lives?

EMMY:

No.

INTERVIEWER:

Would the world be a better place if people came with instructions too?

EMMY:

Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:

Are you ever scared of delivering a false positive?

EMMY:

Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:

Do you have a hard time saying, no?

EMMY:

Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:

Do you think the way humans reproduce is weird?

EMMY:

Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:

Are there weirder ways of reproducing?

EMMY:

Yes.

GEORGE:

Hello.

Emmy, Pregnancy Test

IAN CHILLAG:
Hello, this is George?

GEORGE:
Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:
So, I want to talk to you about Tex. Is that okay?

GEORGE:
Sure.

IAN CHILLAG:
So, Tex is a whooping crane. Tell me about the first time you saw Tex.

GEORGE:
It was at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center.

GEORGE:
And, my first thought was, this poor bird is really screwed up.

IAN CHILLAG:
Really?

GEORGE:
Mm-hmm

IAN CHILLAG:
What did you see... What made you think that?

GEORGE:
She was dancing with people as they walked by. She was raised by humans, not by cranes. So, she's imprinted in humans. She really liked dark-haired young men, and she hated women, and she hated redhead men.

IAN CHILLAG:
Wow. So, she didn't just...It wasn't as humans. Like, she had a type.

GEORGE:
Yeah, she has a type. But she wouldn't behave that way at all, towards cranes. She would attack them. And I'm a scientist. And so, I reasoned that, in order to get her to ovulate, she would require a human mate.

INTERVIEWER:
So, the idea here is... At this time, it was really important to get whooping cranes to reproduce, because they were 100 in the world.

GEORGE:
No, about 70.

IAN CHILLAG:
Wow. So, you... George. You ended up being the mate. And Tex, she really did bond with you. How did you know that that had first happened?

GEORGE:
She would approach me and want to stay beside me and would do this courtship dance. And she would also do different types of calls that cranes do to each other. And she would just be at my side.

Emmy, Pregnancy Test

IAN CHILLAG:

OK. So, you moved into her territory to try and make this happen. Can you tell me, what your days were like with her?

GEORGE:

You know, it wasn't like... She was like a pet, sort of, to me, I suppose. I would get there at dawn and I would stay with her until dark, completely, for six or seven weeks, every Spring. And I have a little Shack on the top of the hill and the door was open. And when she wanted me to dance with her or do something or go somewhere, she would stick her head in the door and make a particular sound, and then I would go out and follow her and I'd just let her take the lead.

IAN CHILLAG:

What was it like when you danced with her?

GEORGE:

I would just leap when she would bow. I would go, like, do deep knee bends and jump in the air and Flap my arms and run around a bit, and that would excite her. And after the dance, the crane sometimes solicits for copulation. And the male will flap upon her back and mate with her, but what I would do is just stroke her back, and she would go into the copulatory reflexes. And two other people would come into the area, and they would have the semen in a tiny syringe, and they would insert it into her oviduct and deposit the sperm.

IAN CHILLAG:

Wow.

GEORGE:

And then they would run away and she would chase them.

IAN CHILLAG:

She thought that they were intruding.

GEORGE:

Right.

IAN CHILLAG:

After years of trying this, it finally worked. And Tex had an offspring, a male whooping crane, which was named, G-wiz. He still he still around. Do you feel differently about G-wiz than about other birds?

GEORGE:

Of course, I do because of his importance. He is paired to a crane, lives in the facility of the Crane Foundation. They produce many chicks, and they now have over 100 grandchildren. So, he's working.

IAN CHILLAG:

I guess, his offspring are your grandchildren too.

GEORGE:

I suppose. So, when the time comes for you to do what you do, you're gonna say, yes or no. Does that ever feel limiting?

EMMY:

It's hard because I'm sort of like a Magic 8-Ball that only has two answers, like a Magic 2-ball.

Emmy, Pregnancy Test

And I wish I could do more, you know? I wish I could do more than just yes or no. I wish I could say like, "Let's all hang out after this. Or, you know, like, congratulations." Or if it's not the result they want, I'd like... I hope they know that I support them.

IAN CHILLAG:
Yeah.

EMMY:
Yeah.

IAN CHILLAG:
Whatever it is.

EMMY:
Whatever it is. I would love to be able to offer a comfort of some kind. Like, I could just shoot out meatballs.

IAN CHILLAG:
You would make them feel better by shooting out meatballs?

EMMY:
And they'd be good.

IAN CHILLAG:
The meatball.

EMMY:
Yeah, they'd be good meatballs.

IAN CHILLAG:
Do you worry about having to tell someone the answer they don't want?

EMMY:
Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:
Is it weird to think about how you'll communicate a secret that you don't know yet?

EMMY:
Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:
Should people put those bow things on baby girls, so that people know it's a girl?

EMMY:
No.

IAN CHILLAG:
Does the question you answer create more questions?

EMMY:
Yeah, yeah. Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:
Will the world our children grow up in be better than the world, as it is now?

Emmy, Pregnancy Test

EMMY:

Yes, 'cause, I mean... There more and more things in the aisle, and I feel like that's a sign of progress in some way, right?

IAN CHILLAG:

Yeah.

EMMY:

Yeah.

IAN CHILLAG:

Whatever you end up saying to the humans, are they going to be OK?

EMMY:

Yes.

IAN CHILLAG:

Are you going to be okay?

EMMY:

Yes, I'll go yes with this.

VOICEOVER:

This is 'Everything is Alive'. The show's produced by, Jennifer Mills and me, Ian Chillag with Evo Watchiver and Isabella Kulkarni. Thanks as always to Emily Spivack and special thanks, this week, to Juki I Anson and Stevie Lane. Special thanks, last week, to Lauren Spohrer.

More thanks still. A big thanks to Hillary Frank. She's author of the new book, 'Weird parenting wins' and creator of the podcast, 'The Longest Shortest Time'. We are grateful to the reporting of, Ed Yong from whom we first learned about the frog pregnancy test.

And thanks to George Archibald for telling us about his work saving whooping cranes. 'Emmy, the pregnancy test' was played by Emmy Blotnick.

Music in this episode was by Blue dot Sessions. Everything is Alive is a proud member of Radiotopia from PRX. And without Julie Shapiro, executive producer. We would be a plate of spaghetti without any meatballs. You can find any number of ways of getting in touch with us at everythingisalive.com. We'll see you soon.

EMMY:

Do you know what Ikea is?

IAN CHILLAG:

Ikea?

EMMY:

Ikea.

IAN CHILLAG:

Yes. I know what Ikea is.

Emmy, Pregnancy Test

EMMY:

So, Ikea made a magazine ad out of this paper that you could pee on, and it was a pregnancy test, but it was like a very different kind. And you would pee on the paper and it would tell you if you were pregnant or not, by giving you a coupon for cribs.

IAN CHILLAG:

So, you would pee on your magazine?

EMMY:

Yes, which... I don't think people normally do that.

IAN CHILLAG:

No, and then it would... If you were pregnant, it would change.

EMMY:

It would show you Cribs if you were pregnant.

IAN CHILLAG:

I feel like, whether or not you're pregnant you kind of... You have ruined your magazine.

EMMY:

Absolutely. Yes.

VOICEOVER:

Radio TempeX

VOICEOVER 2:

From PRX.