**Hotline Romance**

ELP Radio Drama

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Characters:

A: The girl

A’s Mom

Jane: A’s best friend

B: The hotline counselor

Scene 1:

It’s well into first semester. Mom’s talking on the phone with her daughter, A, and expressing worry about her college life.

(Phone rings, A picks up the receiver)

Mom: Hi, Sweetheart. How is everything?

A: Things are OK. My roommates are nicer than expected, and my dorm room is fine.

Mom: Well, what I’m actually asking about is your daily practice. You’re sure you don’t want me to call you every day?

A: Mom, we’ve talked about this before, haven’t we? I can handle it myself. There’s nothing to worry about.

Mom: I just want to make sure that there’s really someone you can talk to. Are you talking to Jane? Or have you made some new friends?

Girls: Well…I’m not sure if he could be called a friend…

Mom: “He?” A guy? Well, tell me more. (eagerly)

A: Mom, you know what, I have to go now. Bye. (A hangs up and lets go a sigh of relief)

Scene 2:

This scene is a monologue by A which explains her situation and illness. It may have the same background as scene 1.

A: I have a rare brain disease. My doctors tell me to talk with people as much as I can, no less than one hour every day. Otherwise, my brain will atrophy and my language ability will deteriorate. This is not so easy for a shy girl who always keeps her mouth shut unless it’s absolutely necessary to speak up. Since I have only a few friends, my parents took it upon themselves to have extended conversations with me every day. My best friend Jane often helped out too. But starting from this year, things are going to be different. I’m now living in a university dorm; and Jane got into a different school. I will have to find a new conversation partner on my own. But making new friends doesn’t come easy for me, and it’s especially hard right at the beginning of a new semester. I ended up making a risky move: I started talking over the phone with a chance acquaintance.

Scene 3:

A calls City Hotline for the first time, but doesn’t know what to say, so she starts making up an excuse for why she called, but then gives up.

B, the hotline counselor: Hello, City Hotline. How can I help you?

A: Hi…uh…I have a situation here.

B: I see. So, can you tell me what *kind* of situation? Does it involve a U-bike? Or the MRT?

A: The MRT? Oh, yes, uh…one of the…lavatories in the station is…running out of tissue.

B: Um…OK. Could you tell me which station and maybe which restroom it is? I’ll contact a janitor for you to get on it right away.

A: Um…oh no, this is not working. What was I thinking?

B: Excuse me? (confused)

A: (sighs) Oh, I’m really sorry. It’s nothing urgent. Please just forget it. I just realized I’m late meeting someone so I have to go now…

B: So you’re meeting…?

A: Uh…Edgar…Poe?

B: Are you…referring to “the” Edgar Allan Poe? You know what? My father’s name is William Faulkner – I kid you not! – and an ex-girlfriend was named Elizabeth Browning.

A: (laughs) That’s funny. (pauses) So…I guess you read a lot?

B: Yeah, I guess so. Actually I’m an English lit major.

A: Really? (surprised)

B: So…you’re reading Poe these days? Maybe I can help you a bit with it. I wrote a killer paper on Poe – uh, no pun intended…

A: (laughs) Yeah…sure. Why not?

Scene 4:

A is talking to her best friend Jane about B.

Jane: So? How’s your new life? Sorry I’ve been so busy these days. Who’ve you been talking to lately?

A: Well, actually, I’ve found someone willing to chat with me on the phone.

Jane: Oh? Who, if I may ask?

A: I was desperate. I couldn’t just chat up one of my classmates and make her talk to me every day. So then I thought, I have to talk to someone, anyone – even a stranger would be OK.

Jane: So…what did you do? (worried)

A: I called City Hotline… Now don’t judge me. And the same guy keeps picking up my calls, so… we’ve been talking like…for a month. I think he’s kind of cute.

Jane: Oh, thank goodness (relieved). I thought you’d started hanging out in pubs and chatting up strangers every night.

A: What? Are you crazy? Why would I do anything like that?

Jane: Well…anyway…(pauses, stunned) So, seriously? You don’t even know what he looks like.

A: I know. But…I think we have a lot in common. He’s a lit major.

Jane: Oh, so that was your “hook”! Does he know about your condition?

A: No. That’s what I’m worried about…

Jane: Well, if you really think this guy has potential, you shouldn’t let *that* block your way. Maybe you should ask him out, and see if he really *is* your type.

A: …You think so?

Scene 5:

With Jane’s encouragement, A decided to work up the courage to explain her situation and ask A out.

B: Hi, I’m Jianguo (or choose another name), How can I help you?

A: Hi, it’s me again.

B: Oh, hi. So, what are we going to talk about today? Let me guess. James Joyce? Tennessee Williams?

A: Well, this time I’m not calling to talk about literature. Actually, I was wondering if you

might be interested in… (everybody freezes in place, holding their positions for quite a while, so the audience can figure out the intended completion of the sentence)

THE END