

The New Yorker Magazine: Daily Shouts

I Work from Home

By Colin Nissan February 2, 2017

<http://www.newyorker.com/humor/daily-shouts/i-work-from-home>

Revised version based on audio performance:

<http://homepage.ntu.edu.tw/~karchung/30/IWorkfromHome.mp3>

Source page: <http://www.newyorker.com/podcast/the-new-yorker-radio-hour/episode-78-margaret-atwood-evangelizing-against-climate-change-and-greek-tragedy/?popout=true>

911 OPERATOR: (*sounds of phone buttons being pressed, then of answer tone*)
911—what’s your emergency?

ROBERT: Hi . . . uhm . . . I work from home.

OPERATOR: Uh, OK, is anyone else there with you, sir?

ROBERT: (*Tsk*) No, I’m alone.

OPERATOR: (*draws breath loudly*) And when was the last time you . . . saw someone else?

ROBERT: Uh, my wife . . . this morning, I guess.

OPERATOR: OK, I-let’s go ahead and open up the blinds, OK? Let some light in?

ROBERT: How much light?

OPERATOR: Just a little is fine.

ROBERT: O.K. (*Clicking of blinds being opened*) I did it. (*pause*) Wow, it’s bright. It feels so bright on my face.

OPERATOR: That-that’s good. That’s how it’s supposed to feel. (*pause*) I need you to tell me what you’re wearing, O.K.?

ROBERT: You know . . . uh . . . just regular clothes.

OPERATOR: Outside clothes or inside clothes?

ROBERT: Oh . . . lemme check. (*pause*) Pajamas. I’m wearing my pajamas. I could swear I changed into regular . . . I-I thought these were jeans!

OPERATOR: Uh, It’s-it’s OK, sir. Calm down.

ROBERT: Wait, this isn’t even a shirt. It’s just my skin! Goddammit!

OPERATOR: Can we assume that you haven’t showered today?

ROBERT: I don’t know.

OPERATOR: Yeah, I need you to walk over to the bathroom and see if your towel is *damp*. O.K.? Can you do that for me?

ROBERT: Yeah.

OPERATOR: OK, great.

ROBERT: Yeah, I'm walking over there, um...OK, I'm here. I'm in the bathroom. I see my towel...It's dry. It's a dry towel!

OPERATOR: OK (uh, huh, huh), that's O.K. Um, what is your name, Sir?

ROBERT: Robert. (*suppressed crying*)

OPERATOR: Robert. I'm Cherise.

ROBERT: Hi, Cherise.

OPERATOR: You did the right thing by calling today, Robert. (*soft crying by Robert*) I'm going to get some people over there soon to help you, OK? Now, now, Robert, did you eat anything today?

ROBERT: I keep putting things in my mouth a lot.

OPERATOR: Are...you eating *now*, Robert? (*Robert is making crunchy chewing noises*) OK, can you tell me what food you've eaten today?

ROBERT: Uh, I don't know exactly, uh...I mean, I started out with breakfast before my wife left for work...I think I maybe had a bowl of cereal when she left...

OPERATOR: Is that it?

ROBERT: Like an hour or so later...I, I had a banana with...peanut butter.

OPERATOR: Did you slice the banana?

ROBERT: Nope. I dipped it right into the jar, because no one was watching. (*speaking under his breath:*) No one watches.

OPERATOR: And...and did you have lunch after that, or was that lunch?

ROBERT: (*pause*) I remember ham... lots of ham.

OPERATOR: In a sandwich?

ROBERT: No. No sandwich. Just ham pieces.

OPERATOR: That's OK. Did you get any work done today?

ROBERT: I don't think so. Um, I was supposed to make a deck, for a meeting and I, uh...I started it...I started the deck.

OPERATOR: And then you stopped?

ROBERT: Well, the Internet has fun things for me to do, so...so I did them.

OPERATOR: What kind of things?

ROBERT: I watched a video about meerkats.

OPERATOR: A documentary?

ROBERT: Yeah. *(pause)* And then that led me to, uh ...other videos...that weren't...documentaries...

OPERATOR: OK, so you started watching pornography?

ROBERT: Yes.

OPERATOR: You went from meerkats straight to pornography?

ROBERT: That's right, yeah.

OPERATOR: *(pause)* And how long did you spend watching videos?

ROBERT: It doesn't really matter because I make my own schedule...you know...?
(sounds of hysterical sobbing)

OPERATOR: Robert? OK, Robert...Robert, I need you to stay with me, OK? All right, the EMTs should be there shortly, the EMTs are gonna help you get that deck ready, and get you showered...and changed.

ROBERT: Thank you.

OPERATOR: But, until they get there, no more eating and no more meerkat videos – or *other* videos – O.K.?

ROBERT: I work from home.

OPERATOR: Shh-shh...I know, Robert...I know you do. *(sound of chewing, and ambulance siren in background)*

OPERATOR: Are you chewing?