

# Leave A Message

Hannah Moore

**Characters: (Note - Carol, Mom, and Receptionist can be played by the same person.)**

LILA - Young adult, owner of the phone, afraid of the consequences of her own actions.

ANDREW - Young adult, Lila's (ex?) boyfriend, determined to win Lila back.

AUTOMATED VOICE - Voicemail operator/robotic assistant, ie. Siri.

CAROL - Lila's oncologist, a professional woman.

MOM - Lila's mother, well-meaning, loving, and concerned for her daughter.

RECEPTIONIST - Receptionist at Lila's oncologist's office, kind, helpful.

**Director's Note:**

Punctuation in this script is used to enforce a rhythm/flow for the actor's speech. It's important to understand what certain marks mean in order to follow the natural cadence of human speech that I attempted to replicate. Here's a key for what the punctuation I used means and/or how to utilize it in a line:

- Commas ( , ) are used to denote short, quick changes in tone or thought. The comma is like the shifting of railway tracks to a new line. They don't always change the objective, but they indicate a new idea or a discovery from the character. (Unless, of course, it's just for grammatical reasons.) Really, this punctuation rule should be used at the actor's discretion, however, a comma should never slow or ultimately stop the rate of speaking; no pauses should be taken as a result of a comma.
- Dashes ( - ) indicate a full pivot in thought or a correction. Whereas the comma is used to denote quick shifts in thinking, the dash is used to tell the actor when the character's tactic changes or when a beat can be added. Again, these shifts should not slow or stop the rate of speech. Dashes are like obstacles placed along the path of speech.
- Ellipses ( ... ) denote a fall or trailing off of a character's speech. As used in this play, their purpose is to indicate a transition from outward reflection to inward reflection; the character's feelings go from spoken to silently felt. They are much like the dash in that they represent an obstacle in the character's objective and force the character to use a new tactic. However, ellipses can allow for longer shifts and pauses; it's absolutely fine to go slow with these shifts.

The ultimate goal is for the dialogue to sound authentic to human speech. Reading the line as written ensures that the dialogue sounds real and doesn't sabotage the integrity of the characters. Fast-paced beats and careful attention to the placement of "um's" and "just's" are incredibly important. The speed of the actor's delivery should be relatively quick, but not to the point where it begins to be a punchline. However, the monologues -

especially Andrew's - should not drag. They should be filled with energy and tension if the ultimate drive of the play is to be maintained.

Beep.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Please enter your 4-digit voicemail password.

Beep, beep, beep, beep.

AUTOMATED VOICE

You have... 8... new messages. (*Pause.*) First message.

Long beep. A man's voice starts to talk. This is ANDREW.

ANDREW

Hey! Lila! It's Andrew. Um. I don't really know why I'm calling. I just- we haven't really seen each other since... (*Beat. His speech quickens, stream of consciousness-style.*) And, you know, I was thinking about you, and I guess I wanted to call to see how you were, but, you didn't answer, so I'm leaving a message. Yeah. Uh, anyway, call me back if you want to talk. Or- I mean, if you don't want to talk, don't call me back. Yeah. Okay, uh, bye.

Beep.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Next message.

Long beep.

ANDREW

(*Jumping straight into it.*)

Okay so I feel like my last message came off as a little aggressive? Or- not "aggressive," but- you know. So I just wanted to clarify. I don't- I feel bad about what happened, and I feel worried about you, because, you know, I care about you, so I was just calling to check in on you, and- Yeah! Okay that was it. Um. I guess I'll hear from you soon. Or not. Or- yeah. Bye.

Beep.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Next message.

Long beep. A new voice, a woman's voice, speaks. This is CAROL.

CAROL

*(In a professional tone.)*

Hi, Lila, this is Dr. Carol Shelley from the Freedman Institute. Your test results have come back, and I'd like to set up an appointment with you to discuss them. Just give my office a call back soon so we can set that up. My office hours are from 10 to 5, so anytime between then would be great. I do know that you have work for a large amount of that time, so if you'd like to schedule during one of my extended workdays, I'd be happy to work that out with you. Again, just call my receptionist, and she'll walk through setting that up with you. Alright. Thank you so much, bye bye.

Beep.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Next message.

Long beep. It's ANDREW again.

ANDREW

Hey! So, I know this is like my third voice mail, but you don't answer when I call, and I really want to tell you this stuff, because I don't normally say what I'm thinking, and I was reading this magazine- not GQ, some other magazine with Lindsey Lohan on the cover looking a little sad- but- it said that breakups happen because men are never able to express what they want or what they're feeling, and- and, I mean, I'm not gonna argue with Lindsey Lohan, you know? *(He laughs weakly.)* Well, so, I feel like that had some part in what happened so- If it was my fault, if I did anything to hurt you, or hurt our relationship, I'm so sorry. I really tried to be a good boyfriend. *(Beat.)* I haven't ever really dated anyone for as long as I dated you, and I don't really know what I did wrong? I guess what I'm saying is, I'm new to the long-term relationship thing, and if I did anything, like, weird or out of the ordinary, just let me know. Cause I really- I really loved you, Lila. And it hurt, I guess, that you couldn't say that you loved me back? That sounds so stupid, um- *(He clears his throat.)* So yeah, um- if I did anything wrong, I'm really, really sorry.

Beep.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Next message.

Long beep.

ANDREW

Okay I know this is getting obsessive, and I'm sorry, it's just- looking back on our relationship, I can't really think of anything I did wrong. I mean- You know, I did good, courteous, boyfriend things. All the things that Lindsey Lohan swears by. I bought you flowers for every date, I pulled the chair back for you at restaurants, I went to your family's dairy farm in Wisconsin for Thanksgiving because you didn't want to have to listen to your Uncle's rendition of "Danny Boy" alone. Which, I mean, he wasn't terrible, just a little pitchy, but I've definitely heard worse. *(He pauses. He's getting off track.)* And I don't want to act like I was perfect, because I definitely wasn't, but- I don't know, I can't think of anything throughout the entire course of our relationship that was really "break-up worthy." And maybe that's not a good thing to say immediately after a break up, but that's how I feel. Yeah. *(A little bolder.)* I'll be honest, I'm kind of confused. I guess I don't really understand your reason for breaking up with me? I don't know. *(Beat. With more certainty.)* I think I deserve to know. *(Beat.)* So, call me back, I guess. Or not. You've kind of been ignoring my calls, so I don't really expect anything different at this point. Sorry, low blow. Okay. Bye.

Beep.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Next message.

Long beep. A different woman's voice, this time more maternal. This is MOM.

MOM

Hi Lila, it's your mom. I was just calling to check in on you. It's been a while since we talked, and I miss chatting with you. I've only had your father to talk to up here in Wisconsin and now that football season has started, if your name isn't Brett Favre or you're not wearing a striped shirt and a whistle, he doesn't give you a word. Have you gotten your test results back yet? Let me know when you do. I know your appointment was last week. I've got the whole family praying for

you. I sent an email blast to everyone, including the cousins. We're all rooting for you, Lila. I know this is a scary time, but whatever happens, your father and I love you so much. Your sister is coming into town for Thanksgiving this year, and we want to know if you and Andrew will be joining us as well? Your uncle is very excited to see Andrew again. He was so happy to hear that Andrew enjoyed his singing, and he's decided to sing again this year since Andrew liked it so much. Which is good for your uncle, but terrible for everyone else who has to listen to him sing again. We might have to seriously consider buying those ear plugs we joked about last year. Could be a smart investment. Well, that was all I wanted to talk to you about. I love you, Lila! Call me back as soon as you get the chance. You're awesome! That's a fact! Alright, I love you, sweet girl. Okay. Bye.

Beep.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Next message.

Long beep. It's ANDREW again.

ANDREW

*(Emboldened. Quicker than before, but not uncertain. Informed.)*

So I know this is getting excessive, cause this is like, what, my fifth voicemail now? Yeah. Anyway, I feel like maybe you broke up with me because I didn't tell you how I really feel about you, and I want to do that now. Because I feel like I should be able to do it. So here. I'm- I'm going to do it now. *(Beat.)* Lila, I'm in love with you. Like, the kind of love that fuels 80s rock ballads. Or maybe the kind that fuels those 90s rom coms with Cameron Diaz that you think are gonna be bad because the trailer seems to reveal the whole plot and the premise is overused but it actually turns out to be sweet and romantic, and you're once again surprised by how good of an actress Cameron Diaz is. *(Beat.)* Look, Lila. The last week has been miserable without you. I wake up with this ache in my chest that doesn't go away. I just sit on my couch feeling like I should be doing something, but to be completely honest, I'm not sure what I should do. Because the truth is, what I really want to do is kiss you and tell you a thousand times that I love you. I love you *so much*. And I'm not sure if you know just how amazing you are because you never let me compliment you, but- I just have to say, you're the most beautiful, intelligent, scary woman I've ever met. *(Beat. He realizes that might not sound very romantic.)* Scary in a good way! Like, "David Bowie in Labyrinth" scary, not "the rest of the movie Labyrinth" scary. *(Beat.)* That doesn't make sense. Um. I hope you get what I'm trying to say. I really suck at this. But I

want to try and say this because you're worth it, Lila. You're worth everything. *(Beat.)* Anyway, um, I'd really love to talk to you instead of the automated voicemail lady who tells me to "leave a message after the tone." I get a feeling she's not as beautiful as you. No offense to her. *(Beat.)* But yeah, give me a call back when you get the chance. Um, bye.

Beep.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Next message.

Long beep.

ANDREW

Also, I forgot to tell you, I still have your Lost season 1 DVD, so is there a good time I could come over to drop that off? Maybe we could chat then? I just know how much you like Lost, and it's not really my favorite show, so... you get it. Just let me know. Yeah. *(Beat. Then, laughing it off:)* Okay this is awkward now. Cause I just confessed all of my feelings for you and now I'm calling about a Lost season 1 DVD. But I guess that's just how life goes. Without you, I'm Lost. Haha, get it? *(Beat.)* Okay, yeah that was bad. Sorry. Anyway, um, all the stuff I said in my last message still applies, so- give me a call when you can. Okay. Bye.

Beep.

AUTOMATED VOICE

You have... no... new messages.

Long beat. It should feel like the end of something, like an intermission. The string of voicemails is over and LILA sits in silence, processing what she's just listened to. The silence seems to speak louder than the 8 voicemails combined.

Finally, we hear 9 beeps - a phone number being dialed - then the phone rings. Brrrring. Brrrring. Brrrring.

RECEPTIONIST picks up.

RECEPTIONIST

Freedman Institute of Oncology, how can I help you?

LILA

Hi, my name is Lila Cleary, I'm a patient of Dr. Shelley? I was told my test results came back and that I should call to schedule an appointment?

RECEPTIONIST

Lila... Yes! Your test results are back, and I'd be happy to set that appointment up for you. What is your date of birth?

LILA

7/15/85.

RECEPTIONIST types audibly, then clicks her mouse. LILA waits silently.

RECEPTIONIST

Alright... Would November 14th at 10 AM work for you?

LILA

That would be perfect.

RECEPTIONIST types some more.

RECEPTIONIST

Perfect! You're all set!

LILA

Wait, um... I don't know if this is out of the ordinary, or if it's, like, a breach of the hippocratic oath or something-

RECEPTIONIST

I haven't taken the hippocratic oath, so I don't think that will be a problem.

LILA

Okay, good. Um. Could you let me know?



RECEPTIONIST

Hm?

LILA

My test results. Could you let me know-?

RECEPTIONIST

Positive or negative?

LILA

Yeah.

RECEPTIONIST

*(After a beat.)*

Look, I'll be completely honest with you. This is my first day here. I don't really know what the procedure is for this kind of stuff. They stuck me at this desk with this George Clooney calendar and- I'm not complaining, obviously, I've seen all the Oceans movies and he's... Okay, Lila, here's what I'll do. I'll tell you the results because you sound nice and this seems like a pretty big deal. If I get fired, I can just- um- Well, I don't know what I'll do but I'm sure there won't be a George Clooney calendar there. Which is a little disheartening because October Clooney is hitting all the right notes. *(Beat.)* Sound good?

LILA

*(Laughing a little.)*

Yeah, yeah, that would be awesome.

Suspense builds with every clack of the RECEPTIONIST's keys. We can feel LILA's anxiety float from the phone. Each keystroke feels like a pang from a rapidly beating heart. What will the results be?

RECEPTIONIST

Alright, Lila, it looks like your results came back negative.

LILA breaths an audible sigh of relief. These results are, clearly, *very* good.

LILA

That's great.

RECEPTIONIST

Is that all I can do for you today?

LILA

Yes, thank you so much.

RECEPTION

Not a problem, Lila. Have a good day!

LILA

You too! Bye.

Beep. The call ends.

We hear nine more beeps. Another phone number. The phone rings. Brrring. Brrring. Brrring. Brrring.

No one answers.

ANDREW

Hey, this is Andrew. If I don't answer, I'm probably super busy doing really important stuff. Leave a message and I *might* get back to you. No promises, though.

AUTOMATED VOICE

At the tone, please record your message. If you have finished recording, you may hang up, or press one for more options.

Beep.

LILA

Hey, Andrew, it's Lila. I got your voicemails. All six of them. And I have to come clean about something: I never wanted to break up with you. I really, really like you, and I never wanted to hurt you. When you told me you loved me- I just- no one has ever told me they loved me before. Romantically, I mean. And- I felt so awful that I couldn't say it back, and I got scared that I'd never be able to say it back, especially with everything going on with me. And you deserve to know

what I have going on with me. I- I had some medical tests done, and when I broke up with you, I thought they were going to come back positive. And I couldn't imagine putting you through that, and, to be honest, I didn't want to have to deal with a relationship along with... *(Beat.)* But the test was negative and I feel so stupid because I should have never let you go. No matter what was going on with me, I should have stayed with you because the truth is... I- I love you, Andrew. Yeah. Didn't see that coming, I bet. *(She laughs a little.)* I don't know why it was so hard for me to say, because you're just so amazing, and it should have been easy. And you say that I'm all these great things, but Andrew, so are you. You just- you're so vibrant and happy and funny and sweet and the fact that you came with me to Wisconsin to listen to Uncle Richie sing "Danny Boy" just proves that you're the only guy for me. I mean, what other guy would leave six messages professing his love for the girl that just broke up with him? You're amazing, Andrew. I'm sorry I didn't tell you that before. *(Beat.)* So, yeah, uh I guess that's it. No, no that's- ugh that's dumb. That's dumb.

Beep.

AUTOMATED VOICE

If you are satisfied with your message, please press-

Beep.

AUTOMATED VOICE

At the tone, please record your message. If you have finished recording, you may hang up, or press one for more options.

Beep.

LILA

Hey, Andrew. It's Lila. I love you. *(Beat.)* And yeah, please bring back my Lost season 1 DVD. Cause... I'm Lost without you.

Beep.

Blackout.