Pollyanna’s Pandemic Podcast

**A One-Woman Comedy by June Bowser-Barrett**

**Synopsis:** Pollyanna has decided to do a weekly podcast from her home as a public service. She is a thirty-something psychologist and family therapist who believes she has the background to guide us through the stresses and strains of this difficult time in America. The podcasts are done from her home, a condo in Brookline, Massachusetts, which she shares with her husband, two children, and a dog. The weekly podcasts go from upbeat advice to the ranting of someone becoming unhinged.

**Setting**: A desk on stage in a single spotlight. There is a laptop computer on the desk. At the end of each weekly podcast, the stage goes dark and the lights come up on the next week’s session. Ideally, there is a large screen at the back of the stage onto which Pollyanna’s image is projected.

There is no need to memorize lines. They can be read by Pollyanna as if from her prepared notes for the weekly podcast.

**WEEK ONE: March 2020** (ALL the dates should be read by **a Narrator)**

(Pollyanna is seated in front of her computer as the lights come up. She is unnervingly perky and upbeat. She is well-dressed, and well-groomed)

Pollyanna

Good morning, everyone, and I do mean “good.” I am here to walk you through some strategies for not only surviving this stressful time in our lives, but actually thriving in this “new normal.” My name is Pollyanna Pedersen, and I am a psychologist and licensed therapist specializing in family dynamics. You might be wondering about my name. Well, yes, I was named after that little girl in the Pollyanna books who taught us all how to play the “Glad Game.” Mother was a big fan, I guess! Mission accomplished, Mom. I do tend to always look on the bright side of things, don’t I? And what, you ask, is bright about our present situation? Many things, dear audience. First and foremost is family. What an opportunity to spend unhurried, open-ended time with the people we love the most. Dust off those board games and jigsaw puzzles. Choose a favorite movie to watch every night and tell a little story about why it’s your favorite. Get out those photo albums you’ve always wanted to share with the children and make it a family history lesson. Dinner can be a teachable moment about cooking with everyone pitching in from prep time to clean up. Does everyone know how to load and run the dishwasher? Life skills, my friends, so vital to the socialization of children, and yet so over-looked in our hurry-up society. Saying good bye until next week, this is Pollyanna Pederson your personal pandemic navigator.

**WEEK TWO: March 2020**

Hello, fellow travelers on this voyage of uncertainty. First, just let me say I understand this compulsion to buy toilet paper and paper towels. I know that it makes you feel that there are at least one or two things in your life that you can control. However, is that being a good neighbor? Remember, we’re all in this together as the lawn signs tell us. That means sharing IS caring. So, let’s make those words to live by, neighbors. Now, for you parents out there who are now your kids’ teachers, a little patience is in order. The schools are doing the best they can to keep learning happening. Yes, it was very frustrating adapting to the new Zoom format, and the hacker who inserted five minutes of hard- core porn into the Fun with Fractions lesson is abominable. Yet, this is another teachable moment. Talk to your kids about what they just saw and why someone would do something like that. It’s a good chance to establish your family’s values. Now, there do appear to be some shortages of product in the supermarkets: eggs, chicken, paper products, sanitizers. Why not set up a barter system with your friends and neighbors? Trade some bleach for a dozen eggs, maybe. Trade recipes, and get the whole family involved in cooking dinner. As Paula Deen says on her show, “Remember, food is really great for people.” I couldn’t agree more! Until next week, this is Pollyanna Pederson your personal pandemic coach reminding you to Stay Safe!

**WEEK THREE: April 2020** (Pollyanna is slightly less upbeat)

Good afternoon to all you shut-ins out there, Pollyanna Pedersen here with more words of wisdom for the socially depraved, er deprived, that is. Now this goes out to all the grandmas listening in; well actually, they’re not listening in because most of them have no idea what a podcast is, and that’s where you come in, kids. Walk your grandparents through the steps for Face Time and Zoom. I know it takes a lot of patience on your part, but staying in touch is so important. And, none of this “OK Boomer” stuff. The last thing you want is grandpa changing his will! It was very civic minded of grocery stores to implement special hours for seniors, but really long lines at six a.m. and jockeying for position does seem to be defeating the purpose of the plan. I have even heard that there is no attempt to keep six feet away when one is trying to grab the last carton of half ‘n half. Decorum, people, we could all use more of it in these turbulent times. And try not be a news junkie. This can make you crazy what with one broadcast telling you one thing, and another broadcast telling you another – masks versus no masks, six feet versus 13 feet, the young are not at risk, oh wait- yes, they are; the old are dropping like flies, no that’s just in nursing homes! Enough! Watch old movies; sports reruns; limit the governor and the president to the nightly news. Shut off Cuomo; we’re NOT in New York. Play games with your kids. Excuse me a moment. (She looks over her shoulder towards another room in the house). Jonah! Susanna! Wrestling is NOT A GAME! Whose arm is hurt?? OK folks, gotta go. Looks like game or not I’m called on to referee!

**WEEK FOUR: April 2020** (Pollyanna is starting to exhibit some annoyance)

Alright, everybody, I just need to vent about my trip to the supermarket. Now I’m sure we all look forward to this adventure because we can’t go anywhere else. It’s the only show in town! As I arrived at the door, I was told I needed to walk the entire length of the store outside in the pouring rain because there is now an “in” door and an “out” door. Obviously, I was at the “out” door. Upon entering the store. I immediately began looking for sanitizing wipes for the carriage. The container was empty! I was gratified to see that the aisles were marked with arrows showing one way to go. As I started up the UP aisle, there were two people coming towards me – no masks, no gloves. I told then they were going the wrong way, and they said “SO?” This happened on almost every aisle. IS IT SO DIFFICULT TO FOLLOW DIRECTIONS??? One man was standing in the middle of the aisle photographing each grocery item on his phone so his wife could confirm that was her choice! In the magazine aisle, another person was reading a magazine in the middle of the aisle. I stood for a few minutes waiting for him to move. Finally, I said, “Are you going to buy that magazine, or just read the whole thing in this aisle?” “Oh,” he said, “I didn’t see you.” Then, he put the magazine back on the rack, no gloves, and moved on. A young woman was sitting on the floor in the baby food aisle, comparison pricing. “Oh, you can just go around me,” she offered. I told her that’s not how it’s supposed to work. She gave me a blank look and continued sitting- no mask. Look, people, you’re not getting this social distancing concept! Pay attention. Be present. And what’s with discarding masks and gloves all over the parking lot?? There are no words for how disgusting that scene is! If we’re all in this together, I’m opting OUT!!

**WEEK FIVE: April 2020** (Definitely NOT upbeat at this point)

Good morning fellow hostages under house arrest! I’m beginning to understand how drug addicts feel. I’m scouring social media for hints about where I might score some toilet paper or hand sanitizer. A friend told me she made some from Aloe and alcohol. Great idea! But, who has Aloe and alcohol just collecting dust under the bathroom vanity, huh??? (She looks over her shoulder into another room) Susannah, the dog does NOT want to go for another walk. How do I know? Because you’re dragging him across the floor! STOP IT! Excuse me, another little mini crisis here. How are all of you coping with this distance learning? It’s really hard to corral the kids and get them to focus, but if your husband is also home, you should enlist him in the struggle. The burden shouldn’t be all on the Moms. (Looking into another room and shouting) I don’t know, Jonah, I’m busy. Ask your father. . . . He doesn’t know?? (Under her breath) For God’s sake, Roland, you have a Ph.D. in Linguistics, and you can’t figure out the Language Arts homework??? Mother was right about you! Now, just a word of caution about over-eating during this lock down. I know it’s tempting to indulge, probably from boredom as much as anything, but just imagine how difficult it’s going to be to shed those unwanted twenty pounds when it’s time to go out and about again. Eating healthy is vital to our physical AND mental well- being. ( Again, looking into another room) Excuse me. What? You’re making salad for lunch? Salad again? Do I look like a rabbit to you, Roland? Heat up the leftover Mac and Cheese! Sorry. OK, back again. (She sounds a little tipsy) Now, wasn’t it so perceptive of the governor to declare liquor stores essential businesses?? That’s enough to get him re-elected in my book. And, did you know that all the liquor stores in Brookline will deliver, all day, up to eleven p.m. (She holds up a bottle of wine) Look, this was on the doorstep at eight a.m. Could be the only thing that salvages this day. (laughs hysterically) Until next time podcast pals!

**WEEK SIX: April 2020** (There is a brittle edge to her in this podcast)

(With a glass of wine in her hand) So, how’s everybody doing out there? Aren’t you just sick and tired of people asking you that? We’re in the midst of the world’s biggest shit show, and they ask how we’re doing? We’re just TICKETY BOO! Jeez, of all the dumb questions! Long lines for free food, unemployment like we haven’t seen since 1935, workers in one hospital are on the verge of collapse, and in other hospitals they’re laying off people; restaurants are going out of business; nobody has two nickels to rub together even if they could go to the mall. (Looking into another room) Susanna! Don’t touch that mail! You don’t know who’s been licking the envelopes! OK, where was I? Oh, don’t you think it’s weird that the anthem for this epidemic seems to be “Lean on Me” when we can’t get any closer than six feet? (She takes a sip of wine.) They play it all the time. Makes no sense! Try to lean on me and you’ll be sitting on your ass on the sidewalk! (laughs a tipsy laugh) And speaking of sidewalks, what’s with all the rainbows in colored chalk? This is supposed to cheer us up? Cripes, there’s not even a pot of gold at the end of these rainbows. Why? Because nobody HAS any gold! Stimulus payments are about as scarce as hen’s teeth. Maybe if all goes well, they’ll come in time for Christmas! And if friggin’ Charley Baker or Marty the mouth Walsh pre-empts one of my favorite programs again, I’m gonna mount a crusade for impeachment. Enough already! Zip it! Speaking of things to be sick of, do we really have to watch one more car parade for somebody’s birthday? After a hundred car parades, is this really NEWS?? (Takes another sip of wine) Glorification of the mundane, that’s what the media is reduced to, and on that sad note I’m over and out!

**WEEK SEVEN: May 2020** (Her tone is disgusted and decidedly downbeat!)

(Bottle of wine is in full view) I’ve heard it said that you should never drink before 4 p.m. (laughs loudly) Well, hey, it’s four p.m. in Rome, right? Have you been watching the ads on TV? Everybody’s cashing in on the Corona Virus. Toyota, Subaru. (sarcastically) “Love is what makes a Subaru.” Really? Truth be told, I’m skipping the love and going for mechanical engineering. And, Uber. Uber! They’re thanking people for **not** taking a ride in an Uber! What else can we thank people for NOT doing? Hey, this is God. Thanks so much for not spreading your germs all over my pews. Hi, this is Carnival. Thanks so much for not booking a cruise this spring! Un-friggin-believable! (Looking into the next room) Yes, Jonah, I do know that your sister is a little puke! Deal with it! I’ve had to all these years! What? No, Roland, there is no hot sauce. Why not? Because they were out of it! Suck it up, I’m not running a restaurant here. Listen family, I have one nerve left, and you’re getting on it! Sorry about that folks! Listen, podcast pals, I have a stock tip for you. NETFLIX. It’s going crazy – just like us!! (She laughs hysterically while pouring more wine.) I’m drinking due to an “abundance of caution” that I don’t murder someone. It mellows me out. I have to share with you that this level of depression is UNPRECEDENTED! See, I try to incorporate the lingo of the epidemic into every podcast. How am I doing so far? You know what? I don’t really give a shit! (head hits the desk!)

**WEEK EIGHT: May 2020** (Pollyanna is definitely drunk. She is starting to slur her words.)

(The bottle of wine has been replaced by a bottle of Vodka.) Hello wonderful podcast pals! Where would I be without you? I’ll tell you where: locked up in this looney bin with screamin’ Mimi a.k.a. “Susanna”, and “wreck it Ralph”, my son Jonah, oh and don’t forget my husband, what’s his name? Oh, it’ll come to me later. . . maybe. I think he really is quite forgettable. Anyway, Uncle Charley Baker tells us we’re not out of the woods yet, and this could go on for another few weeks. . .or months . . .or years. (Takes a slug of Vodka right out of the bottle) Well, here’s to you, Charley, oh, and while you’re at it you better be making plans to open all those recreational marijuana shops. People are SO MUCH easier to control when they’re stoned! (She laughs hysterically.) I saw on the news this morning that the Senate is back in Washington. Yeah, they’ve been home for a couple of months. It was decided they were NON-ESSENTIAL. NON-ESSENTIAL, but, hey didn’t we really always suspect that?? (Laughs loudly) The House is still out. Wow. They must be SUPER NON-ESSENTIAL. I wonder if they feel bad about that?? Maybe they could get jobs as supermarket cashiers or truck drivers, and then they could feel necessary. I don’t know, maybe. But, hey, this is what I want to tell you. We should all be spending time every day thinking about what we’re grateful for. No, we should be writing it down. In fact, I’m going to find a pen right now so I can write something down. Well, I have to think of something first, I guess. OK, thinking, reaching . . . (She leans far to the right trying to grab a pen off the floor, but she is so drunk, she falls off the chair and passes out. There is a minute or so of silence, blank screen, and the stage lights go out.)

**END**