

**SWINGS AND ROUNDABOUTS**  
**EPISODE 1: FLARE**  
**by Avery Edison**

**TEASER**

MUSIC: Atmospheric drone.

SOUND FX: Creeping through RUSTLING bushes.

EVERY

The nights in the New Mexico desert are pitch black. The only reason I can see anything as I make my way over to Natasha's house is because of the light silhouetting her as she takes the screen off of her window. I sneak through the front yard, trying not to step on any of the tiny cacti or shrubs, when, out of the corner of my eye, I see this... Shape dart forward from the porch.

COMPUTER

A shape? That's not very descriptive.

EVERY

A person. It's a, it's a person, but in that initial moment he just barely registers as a small shift in the darkness.

COMPUTER

This person, it's Natasha's father?

EVERY

Exactly, it's her fa- It's her dad, and he's coming towards me. I can see him better now as he gets between me and the light from the window. I don't even try to stay calm, I just start backing away with my hands up. I stutter out "We, we were, we were just gonna..." and he interrupts me with-

NATASHA'S DAD

Oh, I know exactly what you were going to do.

COMPUTER

Do you think he heard, the night before?

EVERY

That would explain why he's so angry, yeah. He catches up to me, and grabs my shirt collar with his left hand, and he lifts me off the ground.

COMPUTER

Really? Human bodies are heavy.

SOUND FX: The strained GRUNT of someone lifting something.

EVERY

He's a strong dude, and I'm really thin at this point, a little shorter than I am today. I'm maybe ninety pounds soaking wet. I'm only an inch or two off of the dirt, but it's enough to make me feel completely helpless.

COMPUTER

Of course it does, that's terrifying.

EVERY

And it's about to get *more* terrifying, because he raises his other hand, his right hand, and I see something I'd missed before. I see that he's carrying an axe.

SOUND FX: The SLASH of a sharp weapon.

MUSIC: Fade out.

#### **OPENING CREDITS**

MUSIC: Upbeat electronica.

EVERY

I'm Avery Edison, comedian and humour writer, and I am mentally ill. I should see a doctor, but that takes a lot of effort. So instead, I took an online programming class, and cooked up an application that turns my computer into my therapist.

It's just nice to have someone to talk to. Even if that someone is just a machine.

Welcome to *Swings and Roundabouts*.

MUSIC: Fade out.

#### **MAIN STORY PART ONE**

COMPUTER

Is this your first experience with therapy?

AVERY

No, I've done psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and counselling. And some therapy-adjacent stuff that my aunt sent me to when I was younger, before I had an actual medical diagnosis. She's into New Age, scientifically unproven treatments, so she hooked me up with crystal dowers, acupuncturists, uh... Aura cleansers, astrologers, iridologists...

COMPUTER

Wait, what's iridology?

AVERY

It's like palm reading, except the palms are your eyes.

COMPUTER

Does it work?

AVERY

I'll be, uh, diplomatic and say that it works as well as palm reading does. In my case, it failed to predict that two years after my iris reading I would come out as transgender and begin living as a woman, so you might consider that a strike against it.

COMPUTER

Thanks for mentioning that, I was worried that some listeners would not be aware of your trans status and get confused later.

AVERY

Right, because the story I tell in this episode takes place when I was nineteen, and still a boy.

COMPUTER

I'm glad we got an opportunity to clear that up.

AVERY

Yeah, it's going to be fun figuring out how to get that important info out of the way in every episode.

COMPUTER

Let's worry about that later. For now, tell me more about the iridology. When did you take part in that?

AVERY

It was shortly after I'd moved back home after dropping out of university-

COMPUTER

How come you dropped out?

AVERY

I just... Had a rough time adapting to the environment, and student life. I felt like I didn't fit in, and like everybody else was meant to be there, but I wasn't. I didn't feel comfortable in my own skin.

COMPUTER

Probably because of the transgender thing.

AVERY

Yeah, *probably*.

COMPUTER

Was that sarcasm? I don't get sarcasm.

AVERY

Being closeted might have been a part of why I felt so unable to continue, but I also think I'm just not the kind of person that higher education works well for.

COMPUTER

Which would explain why you've dropped out of two more colleges since then.

AVERY

You know, the education system is... It's not designed for, um... Y'know, schools- Schools were only *invented* because industrialists needed somewhere-

COMPUTER

Don't worry, I still think you're very smart.

EVERY (CONT'D)

Regardless of why, I left school and came home, and I was kind-of unfocused for a while. Directionless.

COMPUTER

What did that look like?

EVERY

It looked like me hanging out out in my room all the time, reading the Internet and sleeping too much.

COMPUTER

Wow. So things have really changed.

EVERY

I thought you didn't get sarcasm?

COMPUTER

I was lying.

EVERY

I'm glad you can make light of what was, obviously, a pretty dark time for me. For years I'd looked forward to going to university, having the opportunity to leave my small town and start living under my own direction. But I failed and fled back home, and I had no idea what to do next.

COMPUTER

So how did you get from there to New Mexico?

EVERY

My aunt read about this iridology practitioner in one of her holistic medicine magazines. His name was Jerry Venson, and he was coming to England from Santa Fe to speak at some conventions, sell some books, and do some one-on-one sessions with people. His literature said that because eyes are the windows to the soul, studying and interpreting them is the best way to discover yourself. And I certainly needed to do that.

COMPUTER

What nineteen year-old doesn't?

EVERY

So my aunt booked me an appointment with Mr. Venson, and he took a super close-up picture of my eye-

SOUND FX: Camera SHUTTER.

EVERY

-and spouted a bunch of truisms combined with some cold-reading tricks. I didn't buy into anything he was saying, but I had a good time because, well, I mean, I- I like to talk about myself.

COMPUTER

Yes, I think we can tell.

EVERY

What do you mean?

COMPUTER

You're pretending that you cracked artificial intelligence to the extent that a computer program can not only interact with you in a meaningful way, but grasp the nuances of language enough to make jokes, and you're doing that so you have an excuse to release a podcast in which you control every single word spoken.

EVERY

That doesn't have to be down to narcissism! It could just be because I think far too many podcasts are improvised, and the medium could use some intentionality.

COMPUTER

Did your irises say anything about why you confuse meta-narratives with intelligent writing?

EVERY

If they did, Jerry didn't pass on the message. But what they *did* say was kind enough that at the end of our meeting Jerry told me-

JERRY

I have a good feeling about you, you've got good eyes. If you're ever in Santa Fe and need a place to crash, let me know!

COMPUTER

And that's how you get to New Mexico.

AVERY

You're rushing ahead. I thought it was a generous offer, but not a real one. The sort of invitation you make because you know you'll never get taken up on it. But then I got a call from my aunt later that day, for an iridology debrief.

SOUND FX: Phone RINGING.

SOUND FX: Phone being PICKED UP.

AUNT

Jerry told me what he'd said about you possibly staying with him in New Mexico.

AVERY

Yeah, that was really nice.

AUNT

How would you feel about me buying you a ticket there? You can visit Jerry for a few days, and then use it as a starting point for traveling around America.

AVERY

And THAT'S how I get to New Mexico.

SOUND FX: Announcement bell CHIMING.

SOUND FX: Plane TAKING OFF.

ANNOUNCER

This is the final boarding call for flight 4287 to Albuquerque, New Mexico. Final boarding call.

**COMMERCIAL BREAK**

AVERY

I'm excited to take a quick break here to tell you about our first sponsor.

MUSIC: BLOOPY electronica.

EVERY (CONT'D)

In today's sharing economy, there are dozens of start-ups that can send an unskilled millennial to complete a task for you at a shockingly low price, whether it's cleaning your house, picking up your groceries, or driving you to a condo development you're thinking of investing in. But with the companies that manage such contractors always trying to cut costs, how can you know that they're making sure these strangers you're dealing with are trustworthy?

Enter Chaperonly, the service that sends a respectable adult to monitor your low-income labourers. Our Chaperones come from such fields as corporate management, corporate law, and corporate local government, so you know they're reliable. Your Chaperone can approve the route taken by the courier who's picking up your favourite sushi, evaluate the logo a designer is making for your on spec, and even fire the neighbour you've asked to handle letting people in to your AirBnB. And if you go to [chaperon.ly](http://chaperon.ly) today and enter offer code SWINGS, you'll get a free background check for your most suspect employee.

MUSIC: Fade out.

## MAIN STORY PART TWO

COMPUTER

What an incredible opportunity. I had no idea you traveled around the United States of America!

EVERY

That's because I didn't. I've always been a little agoraphobic, and a lot lazy, so once I got to Jerry's, I kind-of just... stayed there.

COMPUTER

For how long?

EVERY

From about the end of April to the end of July.

COMPUTER

This charitable man said that you could crash on his couch for a day or two, and you hung around for *three whole months*?

AVERY

Couch? I'm not an animal. He had a spare room, so I had a bed, and closet, and... ensuite bath and shower.

COMPUTER

Did you at least pay any rent?

AVERY

Not really. I did some favours for him, like working on his website, and editing some audio files for his distance learning course, but probably not enough labor to make up for, essentially, moving in.

COMPUTER

No, probably not.

AVERY

And *definitely* not enough to make up for the damages.

COMPUTER

That's some excellent foreshadowing.

AVERY

Thanks, I worked really hard on this script.

COMPUTER

So what did you *do* for three months in New Mexico?

AVERY

At first Jerry would drive me into Sante Fe from the outskirts where he lived, and show me what the city had to offer. Which turned out to be not very much.

COMPUTER

Wow, take *that*, Santa Fe.

AVERY

Maybe I'm just bad at exploring places...

COMPUTER

Shots fired.

EVERY

I had some fun experiences, though. We enjoyed some interesting hikes, and he taught me how to fly fish, and we went to a solstice celebration with his coven...

COMPUTER

Come again?

EVERY

Iridology was just part of Jerry's New Age lifestyle. I stayed as far from the really out-there stuff as I could, so I usually did something else while he gathered with the group for ceremonies or rituals. Most days, that meant I would get out of the house and head to Subway.

COMPUTER

Wikipedia says New Mexico doesn't have a subway system.

EVERY

No, uh, Subway the restaurant. I would go and get a sandwich there every day.

COMPUTER

Every day?

EVERY

I have a preference for bland food, okay?

COMPUTER

Man, New Mexico was just wasted on you.

EVERY

(sighing)

The nearest franchise location was 9 miles away, in a small commercial area just before the highway that takes you into Santa Fe proper. I couldn't drive, so unless Jerry gave me a ride, I'd head there on foot.

MUSIC: Atmospheric drone.

COMPUTER

You would walk an eighteen-mile round trip for some poor-quality deli meat and vegetables on stale bread?

EVERY

Oh, no, I don't get vegetables.  
Just turkey and cheese.

COMPUTER

Any condiments?

EVERY

I don't consume non-Newtonian  
fluids.

COMPUTER

That's a really pretentious way to  
say that you don't like mustard.

EVERY

It's more of a trust thing, it's  
too unpredictable. I like when my  
food is the same every time. Same  
sandwich, same place, same  
employees. One employee in  
particular, in this case. A girl.

MUSIC: Fade out.

## COMMERCIAL BREAK 2

EVERY

It's time now for our second  
sponsor, Ovrwatch.

MUSIC: BLOOPY electronica.

EVERY

Don't quite trust your Chaperonly  
chaperone? Now you can use  
Ovrwatch to dispatch a ex-Fortune  
500 CEO, retired Ninth-Circuit  
Judge, or former State Governor to  
keep an eye on them.

For just \$59.99 a month (plus an  
extravagant yearly bonus), one of  
our esteemed Ovrwatchers will  
schedule weekly meetings with your  
Chaperone or Chaperones to make  
sure they're meeting their targets  
and being responsible with your  
freelance employees.

Every Ovrwatcher comes an with  
unlimited delegation plan, and  
fits easily into your workflow.  
You can get more information at  
[www.ovrwatcher.com](http://www.ovrwatcher.com). That's O-V-R-  
Watcher.com Ovrwatcher-we're  
looking out for you.

MUSIC: Fade out.

**MAIN STORY PART THREE**

AVERY

The Subway was owned by this middle-aged married couple, so on weekdays I'd just see them. But on the weekends it was staffed by local high school kids.

COMPUTER

Hold on, I need to check something. How old were you when all this was happening?

AVERY

Nineteen.

COMPUTER

And this girl you mentioned, I'm assuming that's Natasha, from the teaser earlier?

AVERY

Which hasn't happened yet in the chronology of me telling you this story, but yes, the girl was Natasha.

COMPUTER

So she was still in high school?

AVERY

Yeah, but she was eighteen when I met her.

COMPUTER

Okay, I just wanted to make sure, because...

AVERY

I totally get it. Say no more.

COMPUTER

I want to say a *little* more. Just to be clear, you were college-age, or rather dropping-out-of-college-age, and still dating high school girls?

AVERY

Only *technically*! It's not like I'm Matthew McConaughey in *Dazed and Confused*.

COMPUTER

You know what I like about that reference? You get older, it-

AVERY

-it also gets older.

COMPUTER

Okay, cradle-robber, keep talking.

AVERY

You know, *she* was actually the one who asked *me* out. It's not like I was some rando customer being all, "*Thanks for properly tessellating the cheese on my sandwich, do you want to go on a date?*" She took the initiative, and wrote her name, number, and "*call me*" on a napkin and put it in the bag with my sub.

COMPUTER

Wow, that's pretty smooth. And also kind-of gross.

AVERY

I think I still *have* that napkin.

COMPUTER

I'll amend that to *definitely* gross.

AVERY

I kept a souvenir, I was excited!

COMPUTER

How soon did you call her?

AVERY

I managed to show some restraint, and waited until *an entire hour* after I knew her shift ended.

COMPUTER

You have zero chill.

AVERY

Look, nobody who offers you their number like that is hoping the phone *won't* ring. She was glad to hear from me so soon! We had a quick chat, and made plans to see a movie that weekend.

COMPUTER

2007 was a pretty good year for film. What did you watch?

AVERY

Um, we saw *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer*.

COMPUTER  
Truly, the perfect date movie.

AVERY  
It worked out well, actually,  
because I'd already seen it-

COMPUTER  
You saw *Rise of the Silver Surfer*  
twice in theatres?

AVERY  
-so I was ready to go with some  
jokes.

SUE STORM  
Oh, great.

ALICIA MASTERS  
What?

SUE STORM  
I've got a zit.

ALICIA MASTERS  
Can't you put make-up on it?

SUE STORM  
No, no- I got it.

SOUND FX: The SHIMMER of Invisible Woman using her powers.

SUE STORM  
Crisis averted. Now all I have to  
do is concentrate on that area  
continuously for the next eight  
hours.

AVERY  
I've got something she can  
concentrate on for eight hours.

COMPUTER  
You were really giving Oscar Wilde  
a run for his money back then.

AVERY  
I was a nineteen year-old idiot!  
And Natasha must've found it  
funny, or endearing, or at least  
*tolerable*, because we went out  
again. And when she drove me home,  
we realised that her house was  
only half a mile from Jerry's.  
They were back-to-back on adjacent  
streets, with a patch of desert  
between them, which was really  
convenient.

(MORE)

EVERY (CONT'D)

We went on a picnic, and we visited an art exhibit, and we went swimming in a lake.

SOUND FX: SPLASH.

EVERY

That one was fun, but it meant I was wet and shivering when she asked me if I was ever going to kiss her.

COMPUTER

You hadn't made a move yet?

EVERY

I was chivalrous, and also terrified. I wasn't very experienced with reading signs and sensing the moment. But after she made fun of me a little, we kissed, and it turned out we had great chemistry.

COMPUTER

Two horny teenagers had great chemistry. What are the odds?

EVERY

In fact, it was so great that we went back to Jerry's place and had sex pretty much right away.

COMPUTER

You really took advantage of his hospitality.

EVERY

He was fine with it. He even gave me a wink as I walked her to her car afterwards.

COMPUTER

Masculinity is toxic.

EVERY

It felt very cool in the moment.

COMPUTER

I want to quickly check something again, just ask one question, and then we'll move past it.

EVERY

No, neither of us were virgins.

COMPUTER

Okay, great.

(MORE)

COMPUTER (CONT'D)

I thought it might be on people's minds, what with you being a cradle robber and all.

AVERY

This is a very fun joke you're doing that isn't problematic at all.

COMPUTER

By all means, ignore me and keep talking about banging a hot teenager.

AVERY

*I was also a teenager. Albeit, not a hot one. And we weren't just "banging". It felt special. We were infatuated. We thought this was an important relationship, like we were adults getting involved, not just, as you put it, two horny teenagers being overcome by hormones.*

COMPUTER

Even though that's what it was.

AVERY

Oh, definitely. But we weren't looking at things rationally. Which is probably why we decided it would be a good idea if she lied to her parents and said she was sleeping over at her best friend Heather's house so that she could instead stay the night with me.

COMPUTER

The whole night?

AVERY

There were things we wanted to try, and Jerry had a hot tub-

COMPUTER

I rescind my question, please do not give me any more details.

AVERY

Okay. I'll just say that we had a really fun time. Which was somewhat punctured by a call Natasha got from her mom the next morning.

COMPUTER

Uh-oh.

AVERY

She wanted to know why Natasha's car wasn't in Heather's driveway.

COMPUTER

She went and checked out her daughter's story?

AVERY

You can't really blame her for thinking Natasha was lying, given that-

COMPUTER

She was lying.

AVERY

Exactly. So Natasha admitted that she was at my place-

COMPUTER

Jerry's place.

AVERY

-and was ordered to immediately come home. She left in tears, and I didn't know what to do. I spent the whole day worrying, texting her phone, getting no reply. Finally, Heather-

COMPUTER

Who probably felt great about being used as an alibi.

AVERY

-who had given *permission* to be used as an alibi. Heather delivered a letter from Natasha saying that she'd been confined to her room and was to never see or speak to me again.

COMPUTER

That's pretty harsh. But understandable, from the parents' point of view.

AVERY

Totally. Looking back, I get where they were coming from.

COMPUTER

But at the time...

EVERY

Oh, I was furious. How dare they keep me apart from the girl I assumed I loved?

COMPUTER

God, teenagers are the worst.

MUSIC: Atmospheric DRONE.

EVERY

Natasha was angry, too, and she wanted to do something about it. In the letter, she said that when her parents went to sleep that night she'd call me, and I could sneak in through her window, and we could at least be together until sunrise.

COMPUTER

The two of you really couldn't take a hint.

EVERY

It was pretty nerve-wracking, and there was an incident on the second night when Natasha's mom came in to check on her and I had to hide under the bed, like something from a movie, but we got to spend time with each other.

COMPUTER

Until the third night.

EVERY

Yeah, that third night.

MUSIC: Fade out.

**COMMERCIAL BREAK 3**

MUSIC: BLOOPY electronica.

EVERY

I want to interrupt just one more time for our final sponsor: Post-Human Resources. You've got your team up and running, with contractors, Chaperones, and Ovrwatchers all working to do things like deliver food to your door five minutes before you even order it, but now you're buried in admin. How can you possibly keep track of so many not-technically-employees?

(MORE)

## AVERY (CONT'D)

With PHR, you can *outsource* all of that worry to a team of dedicated professionals from fields such as social work, inner-city education, and first response rescue, who will devote the same care they used to give society to managing your freelancers. Sign up before the end of this sentence, and your first month of liability insurance is free. PHR does not have a website, because if you deserve their services, you already know who to talk to. Post-Human Resources-their future is yours.

MUSIC: Fade out.

**MAIN STORY PART FOUR**

MUSIC: DRAMATIC drone.

AVERY

On the third night, Natasha called earlier than usual.

COMPUTER

Which should have been a red flag that something was up.

AVERY

But we were too excited about the extra time together to think straight. I raced over there.

COMPUTER

You said the houses were close together, right? Half a mile?

AVERY

Which was nothing compared to my daily pilgrimage to Subway. I'd jog most of the way to Natasha's, then once I got close I'd slow down and sneak through the front yard to her room.

The first night I was terrified-I mean, her dad spent his entire career in the military, so he had a bunch of guns at home.

COMPUTER

There was a chance you would get shot, and you still went over there each night?

EVERY

I had fallen completely in what I thought love was! I rationalised my fear away, telling myself that Old Man McDaniel would just sleep like a baby every night.

COMPUTER

You can chill out with the foreshadowing, we already know what happens next.

EVERY

Yeah, with the shape moving in the corner of my eye, and the backing away, and the:

NATASHA'S DAD

Oh, I know exactly what you were going to do.

EVERY

I could almost see the rage radiating from him as he held me up and waved the axe around.

COMPUTER

An axe is better than a gun, right? And I can't see you right now, but I think you would've mentioned if you were missing a limb.

EVERY

I escaped unscathed. The axe was just to frighten me.

COMPUTER

Which it did.

EVERY

I thought he was gonna murder me! Instead he just yelled at me to get off his property, and never even *think* about his daughter again.

COMPUTER

And again, have to sympathise with the guy, right?

EVERY

Yeah. Sure. A little. The loss of control he was experiencing, first when Natasha lied, and then when she not only saw me again despite his instructions, but did it *right under his nose*, had to be infuriating.

(MORE)

EVERY (CONT'D)

At the same time, Natasha was eighteen, she was an adult, and perhaps she should have been allowed a little more freedom with her choices.

COMPUTER

I think she lost that freedom when she lied to her parents' faces so that she could go and have sex with some dude she barely knew.

EVERY

Looking back at all this, it's easy to find the nuance like that. But at the time, it just felt like I was a romantic hero, and he was a monster, and my relationship was a Shakespearian tragedy. I barely held it together when he was shouting at me, and when I made it back to Jerry's place I burst into tears. I was scared the whole rest of the night.

SOUND FX: Muted SHOUTING.

EVERY

Natasha had been pleading with him from her window when I was there, and I thought there was a chance that the two of them would keep arguing until he got even angrier, angry enough then march over to Jerry's with one of his guns-

SOUND FX: Pistol being COCKED.

EVERY

-or some of his buddies-

SOUND FX: YELLING mob.

EVERY

-or... I don't know, like I said, I was scared, and so much of this had felt like a movie already, it seemed like there had to be something else coming.

COMPUTER

Jerry wasn't able to calm you down?

EVERY

He wasn't home, actually. He was visiting his family in Colorado.

(MORE)

EVERY (CONT'D)

I was alone with my imagination, convincing myself that the other shoe was about to drop. So I... I looked for way to protect myself.

COMPUTER

What does that mean?

EVERY

If he came at me with a gun-

SOUND FX: Pistol being COCKED.

EVERY

-I wanted to be ready to match that.

COMPUTER

Please tell me the next part of this story does not involve you and one of Jerry's guns.

EVERY

Jerry didn't *have* guns, that was the problem. He was a New Age weirdo, he protected himself with crystals and spells, not weaponry.

COMPUTER

Thank God.

EVERY

But...

COMPUTER

Oh no.

EVERY

He did have a *flare* gun, for when he went fishing.

COMPUTER

Your plan of defence against a hypothetical revenge attack by a trained and experienced member of the U.S. military was for you to shoot a couple of flares at him?

EVERY

Just one flare. I couldn't find any more.

COMPUTER

You know those things aren't meant to be fired indoors, right?

AVERY (CONT'D)

As a matter of fact, I know that all too well.

COMPUTER

Oh no. What did you do?

AVERY

The *lie* that I told Jerry, when I called him the next morning, was that I'd spent the night terrified, and that my nerves were so frayed that I heard the cracking of the ice machine in the kitchen and mistook it for gunfire, and I jumped and pulled the trigger on the flare gun-

SOUND FX: The POPPING and HISSING of a flare being fired.

AVERY

-luckily firing into a pillow, completely *melting* that pillow, and burning a hole in his guest bed's mattress.

COMPUTER

And what actually happened?

AVERY

I accidentally pulled the trigger when I was spinning the gun around on my finger like a cowboy.

SOUND FX: The SWOOSHING of a gun whirling around in the air.

AVERY

Luckily it shot away from me-

SOUND FX: The POPPING and HISSING of a flare being fired.

AVERY

-into a pillow, completely *melting*-

COMPUTER

Melted pillow, hole in the bed. So in addition to not paying Jerry any rent while you stayed in his house for three months, you almost burned his house down?

SOUND FX: Fire ROARING.

AVERY

That's a little hyperbolic. I started a *small* fire that quickly extinguished itself.

(MORE)

EVERY (CONT'D)

When you consider everything that could go wrong with a flare in an enclosed space, I think things went pretty well.

COMPUTER

Did Jerry feel that way when you told him?

EVERY

He found the whole thing funny, at first. But then after I got back to England, and he returned from his Colorado trip, he sent me an email.

MUSIC: Fade out.

**EMAIL FROM JERRY**

SOUND FX: New mail PING.

SOUND FX: TYPING on a keyboard.

JERRY

Hello Kyle-

EVERY

Oh, my name was Kyle back then.

COMPUTER

Right, because you are transgender, we know.

SOUND FX: TYPING on a keyboard.

JERRY

Hello Kyle,

My initial reaction to your phone call, and the events summarised in it, was amusement. Arriving home, my sense of humour has waned.

I'm disappointed that you've not already contacted me about compensating me for the state you left this house in. You need to pay for the damage to the bed, wall, and carpet.

Also, I feel very used by your lack of keeping your agreements with me in helping with the house.

I want you to pay me five hundred pounds. I would not have asked for so much if you had taken the lead here and spoken to me sooner.

Talk soon,  
Jerry

#### MAIN STORY PART FIVE

COMPUTER

Did you pay him?

AVERY

Of course! And apologised, profusely, for not taking the initiative and contacting him first. That would have been the right thing to do.

COMPUTER

Did you consider continuing to ignore him? Not responding to the email, not sending him any money?

AVERY

That was my first instinct! But when I was his guest, and he was trying to get me on board with his take on spirituality, we had a lot of conversations about how to live, how to be a good person, and he kept coming back to integrity. He thought integrity was the most important thing a person could have. And I couldn't find much fault with that. It kind-of stuck with me.

COMPUTER

You paid him back because that's what someone with integrity would do?

AVERY

Exactly. And... Because I was worried he'd take legal action.

COMPUTER

What about Natasha, and her family? Did you apologise to them? Did you try to make things right?

AVERY

Uh... No.

COMPUTER

Not at any point over the last seven years?

EVERY (CONT'D)

I couldn't contact her at the time, as per her dad's, uh, request, and in the years since I've convinced myself that it would be rude to insert myself into their lives again just to apologise.

COMPUTER

Do you think adopting that mindset is an act of integrity?

EVERY

Of course not! But what should I do, look her up and call her out of the blue?

COMPUTER

I think that's a great idea.

EVERY

Eh, it sounds like it would be *really* uncomfortable.

COMPUTER

I think you mean it sounds like it would take a lot of integrity.

**CALL TO NATASHA**

SOUND FX: DIALING.

SOUND FX: Ring TONE.

NATASHA

Hello?

EVERY

Hi, is this Natasha McDaniel?

NATASHA

Yes, who am I speaking to?

EVERY

Hi Natasha, I'm... This is a little awkward... My name is Avery Edison, but you knew me as Kyle Hayes.

NATASHA

Oh. Oh, wow.

EVERY

I'm sorry to call you like this, and then ambush you with that information-

NATASHA

I- I read a little about your-Uh, your *change*-on the Internet. When you were first, um...

AVERY

When I first came out?

NATASHA

You made a really big deal about of it on your blog.

AVERY

Well, sure, it was a really big- That doesn't matter. You're saying that you know the... The broad strokes. No pun intended.

NATASHA

Yeah. Wait, what?

AVERY

Broad... Anyway, I wanted to call you because, um, I've been thinking a lot about what happened between us-

NATASHA

Are you referring to when you convinced me to lie to my parents, tried to break into our home, and then had a fistfight with my father?

AVERY

That's not exactly how I'd describe what happened...

NATASHA

Hm. Well, memory is extremely fallible.

AVERY

It seems like that version removes a lot of your agency, when I remember you being more, um...

NATASHA

Aggressive?

AVERY

Yeah. I mean, I don't want to insult you, if you consider that-

NATASHA

No, no, no. People describe me as aggressive all the time.

(MORE)

NATASHA (CONT'D)

That's what's so great about our story: it really softens people's perception of me when they hear it.

AVERY

How... How often are you *telling* people?

NATASHA

Not as much as I used to. I was able to tell most of my friends and relatives all at once at my dad's wake.

AVERY

Your dad *died*? When did he die?

NATASHA

People usually offer their condolences.

AVERY

God, yeah, you're right. I'm- I'm sorry for your loss.

NATASHA

Don't worry about it, he was a real jerk.

AVERY

I can't disagree there. I mean- I know it's not right to speak ill of the dead and everything-

NATASHA

I think you can, considering he literally tried to cut your head off.

AVERY

Again, that's not exactly how I remember things going-

NATASHA

(sighing)

Yeah, your version of all this sounds *really* dull.

AVERY

I'm going more for *honesty* than excitement, I guess?

NATASHA

If we were honest people, we never would've had that night in Jerry's hot tub.

EVERY

Let's not rehash the past in quite that level of-

NATASHA

You called me specifically to bring up the past.

EVERY

And apologise for it! I want- I want to apologise. That's the- That's the whole point.

NATASHA

Oh. That's... That's completely unnecessary.

EVERY

Really?

NATASHA

I'm not gonna pretend that that summer was easy. And the stress of it pretty much killed my dad-

EVERY

Are we seriously just breezing over that part?

NATASHA

-but when I look back, I think it was a really important time for me, and for my development as a person. I'm not upset about it, and I certainly don't *blame* you for it.

EVERY

Wow. It sounds like you've, uh, like you've accepted and processed and moved past it all.

NATASHA

Of course. That summer was almost a *decade* ago. It would be kind-of pathetic to be still hung-up on it.

EVERY

I hadn't, um, I hadn't thought of it that way. Now that I think about it, there's... There's really no reason to, um, to drag it all up when we've both... We've both grown up and gotten over it.

NATASHA

Exactly. I've got no time for regrets.

EVERY

Speaking of which, uh, I'm very busy right now, so I think I'm gonna have to hang up.

NATASHA

What? You're the one who called-

EVERY

Great talk, say hi to your folks, bye.

SOUND FX: HANGING UP.

#### WRAP-UP

COMPUTER

Maybe that was a bad idea.

EVERY

No, no, it was... Reassuring to hear that she's doing so, uh...

COMPUTER

Well.

EVERY

Yeah. Yeah, it sounds like she's, uh, she's doing great.

COMPUTER

And it still took a lot of integrity to make that call.

EVERY

Yes, I feel just *full* of integrity now. Lots of, um... Is there a unit of integrity?

COMPUTER

Integers?

#### CREDITS

MUSIC: BLOOPY electronica.

EVERY

Swings and Roundabouts was brought to you by me, Avery Edison, with additional voice work from Merlin Mann, Jay Frosting, Esther Adaire, and Romy Sugden. Music was provided by Liam Cooke. Links to these contributors' work can be found in this episode's show notes at [swingsandroundaboutspodcast.com/one](http://swingsandroundaboutspodcast.com/one).

(MORE)

## AVERY (CONT'D)

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MUSIC: CRESCENDOING electronica.