

BEFORE THE TONE - EPISODE 2 - “Shadowing”

EXT - THE STREET ON MACK’S WAY HOME - NIGHT

(The intro music plays.)

NARRATOR

Knave Of Hearts presents Before The Tone.

(beat)

Episode 2: Shadowing.

(SFX - The intro music continues and finishes with a ‘Bong’.)

(SFX - Mack is walking home during this call.)

(SFX - Sounds of a phone ringing (from the caller’s end). It rings twice before getting the answering machine.)

DARIA

(in a recorded message)

Hey. You’ve reached Daria. I’m not at the phone right now, so leave a message after the tone, and I’ll get back to you when I can.

(SFX - Answering machine beeps.)

MACK

(exaggerated, drawn-out, and sarcastic) Wow. I call you, you don’t answer. I leave you a long and, might I add, glorious voicemail, you don’t respond. *(scoffs)* I get that time zones are a thing, but you haven’t even texted! And, yes, I am obviously panicking a little that something might be

wrong, since you're normally good with texting and stuff. But I can tell you've charged your phone, and are in a place with cell service, so I'm just going to assume that you're busy and that time is an enemy force. I mean, you said you would be working on... what was it this time? Sales? Journalism? I can never keep track with you. ... Come, one, you have to at least call me back later in retaliation for my not even knowing what job you have!

(Music enters.)

(pause, lowered angry voice) There's some guy who's going the same way I am. I'm gonna take a bit of a different route to avoid him.

(SFX - Pause, maybe a slight rustling. Music exits.)

(sighs) Alright, this seems good. *(back to more of her normal tone)* I guess I shall leave you yet another voicemail regaling you with my adventures and *(pointed)* hope you get back to me later.

Today was my first day of work at Atlas Consulting. It was interesting. I've done security before, but it's a little different to work CCTV at Target than at a big office building. You might think it would be less weird, but it's just weird in a different way. But *(imagine she has a shit eating grin on her face)* I wouldn't dream of telling you that without telling you about the first part of my day first.

My shift started at the extremely standard work hour of seven. PM. Yeah. My shift is 7 pm to 1 am. Which sounds insane, haha, I know, but actually works out really well with the classes I'm gonna be taking. And I mean, you know my sleep schedule is fucked. Mm. So it works out.

I was told to arrive a little early to be shown around the place and all that jazz, so I arrived there at 6:30 and was met by Eve Cacace at the door. It was kind of nice to not have to traverse the hallways to get to her office again. *(SFX - Mack walks past a group of people chatting.)* She told me that she'd introduce me to my coworkers in various departments as well as to the people in security, so they could teach me about the set up they use and how it all works.

Our first stop was at the main desk to pick me up a temporary security badge. We were getting it from the secretary, whose name I'm not yet privy to. I'm not really sure what's up with her, but she does *not* seem to like me very much. She hasn't said anything, but she gives me a bit of a death glare when Eve isn't paying attention. I stepped away for a minute and overheard a bit of what she was saying to Eve though. She said something along the lines of "I am not sure why you've taken to hiring people like her." to which Eve responded, "I assure you, she seems quite capable." Look, I'm not sure what the *fuck* I did to make her dislike me as I have barely spoken to or interacted with her at all.

Anyway, moving on from that joyous encounter, Eve took me upstairs to meet some of the consultants who work a similar shift to me-- these are people I'd be most likely to run into even though we wouldn't be working together. The ones I ended up meeting were Anton, who's a tech consultant, Buck, who's a marketing consultant, and Safirah, who's a strategic consultant. I got good impressions from all of them, but we didn't really get the chance to talk. (*Music enters, a bit odd or mischievous.*) After introducing us, Eve kind of stepped to the side, almost inviting us to talk a bit, but she was still paying really sharp attention like she was studying how we integrated. Unfortunately, my social interaction has never done well in a test setting, so any potential getting to know each other was clipped before it could grow. In that moment, at least. They all seemed really nice, and Safirah and Buck promised to give me an extended tour if they were still around at the end of my shift or tomorrow.

The way Eve was watching me, it reminded me a lot of how she watched me in the hallway before my initial interview. (*SFX - Music enters, a little ominous.*) And once I had picked up on it, I noticed her doing it a lot. She was generally very subtle, but she'd hang behind slightly when we'd be going up a flight of stairs or down a corridor and watch how I moved. It's a little unsettling. A part of me wants to joke and say I hope she doesn't have a thing for me, but I can tell it's not anything like that. She's almost... studying me. It feels almost like this is another part of the interview: interactions with the environment.

And what an environment it is! Remember I told you about the weird hallways? Well, they aren't less weird now than they were before. It's a little hard to-- I don't know-- stay sharp when walking down them? It's like everything gets slightly out of focus. And the stairwells are just as bad. Remember what I said about the depth perception thing? Well, depth perception is kind of important when using stairs. I honestly don't have a better way of describing it. Without depth perception, things look fine, but the detail of movement isn't there. It's a little hard keeping your balance and being able to gauge how to move. Which is something your brain normally does automatically. SO, I don't know what's going on there. But, when I'm under the scrutiny of my new boss, I really don't want to seem incompetent, so I'm trying to find work-arounds. One thing I've found is I either need to be completely manual or completely automatic in how I interact with the hallways and the stairs. What I mean by that is that I either need to be hyper focused on my movements, doing every little thing manually to counteract the off-balance nature of it all. Or I have to rely entirely on muscle memory, on my body knowing how movement works. I have to pay literally no attention at all to my surroundings, the concept being that depth perception matters not if you are walking in the dark. Now, both of these are not perfect. I still feel off-balance, but they at the very least help me hide that fact. The one other thing I've noticed is that it is not as bad when Eve is directly leading me. I wonder if that's part of why she was studying me while walking a bit behind. (*yikes breath*) But that assumes that her actions are based off of the building's architecture causing...? Bad depth perception? That does not make any particular level of sense. You know what? I am going to actually set an appointment to get a new glasses prescription to hopefully clear this all up.

(*SFX - Music enters, a little quirky and more energetic for the next lines.*)

Alright, alright. I've rambled about hallways and stairwells long enough. (*mock hype*) Let's get to the good stuff. The exciting stuff. The much anticipated... learning about the CCTV equipment I'm gonna be using.

I'm kidding. But not that much. No. It was actually pretty interesting going over everything. I was introduced to the head of security, Mr. Baxter, and the person who works the shift prior to mine, Danny. They both seemed really nice. And also nice was the fact that Eve didn't stick

around after introducing us, so I was not under her watchful gaze. But yeah, they both seemed really nice. Although, I won't really be seeing them around-- maybe Danny, but that's probably just two ships passing in the night-- because we won't be working at the same time. Uh, Mr. Baxter just more or less introduced himself and explained a bit about how the security team works overall before heading out. It was Danny who explained what my actual job entails.

It was all more or less what I was expecting, inasmuch as I expected anything at that point. According to Baxter, security works thusly: (*SFX - Music enters, chimes a little offputting.*) the building has a million security cameras monitored by the CCTV operator. I asked him how many security guards were on shift, and he just looked at me blankly, which, um, I *assume* means none. A little weird, but ok.

After Mr. Baxter had left, Danny stayed to show me how to use the equipment and explain what the job looks like in the day-to-day. I was actually pretty relieved that the shift ended up being more of a training / shadowing thing rather than just going straight in, as I had anticipated. It's not that the equipment is that complex or that I haven't done the job before; it's just on a bit of a bigger scale. At the Target job I was only responsible for part of the store and was not working alone, while at Atlas, (*SFX - Ominous music returns.*) it's just a different situation. They've got a lot of cameras and a lot of levels and stuff. Plus, I'm not really watching for shoplifters. (*pauses, a bit of a huh, I hadn't really thought of that tone*) I'm not super sure what I'm watching for specifically, if anything at all. No. I'd imagine it would have to be something, otherwise they wouldn't have so many cameras. (*trails off. she's getting off-track. pulls herself back in.*) Where was I going with this? Yes. (*back on track*) Danny showed me how to do the things.

I'm not gonna go into the type of CCTV they use and all the details because while I do so love to ramble on, (*as if a noir heroine*) I would hate to bore you when you can't be bothered to pick up your goddamn phone. (*SFX - Ominous music with chimes returns.*) But what you need to know is that I can see all the cameras and cycle through them as I please, generally looking at one camera per area at a time unless there is an important thing going on like some important business people coming in for consulting. They would get a few of the cameras open at a time. Oh, and one thing that is pretty cool in a slightly creepy big-brother kind of way is that their system

includes audio. There is one audio recorder per area that I can turn on and eavesdrop with at any time. Danny mentioned that they would sometimes pick an area to listen in on for the duration of their shift, but that most of the time it was pretty boring, so they'd stick with music.

They were really nice. It's a shame that we won't actually be working together. The job seems like it is going to be fine. I do find it pretty cool to watch what's going on, even though today it wasn't much and probably won't ever be much, but you know.

But don't worry, I'll most certainly let you know if any of what I see ends up being interesting. You know me. I would make a great—

(SFX - Music enters, quick paced and a little tense and continues through the answering machine.)

(pause, lowered voice) Fuck. It's that guy again. I think he followed me. I'm gonna go. I'll when I— I'll call you back.

(SFX - Beep. Call ends.)

INT - MACK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

DARIA

(in a recorded message)

Leave a message after the tone, and I'll get back to you when I can.

(SFX - Answering machine beeps.)

MACK

(slightly out of breath, sounding a little worried) Hey, Daria. I just thought I'd call again to let you know I made it home safe. Didn't want to leave you on an ominous note. But yeah, that was... pretty unsettling. That guy definitely followed me. I mean, I guess he could just live near

me and taken the same route, but *(is about to say something. Thinks better of it)* no, yeah, that's probably what it is. I'm gonna go to bed.

Goodnight, or whatever time of day it is where you are.

(SFX - Beep. Call ends.)

(End credits with theme music.)

NARRATOR

This episode has featured the voices of Anna Stein as Mack, Emma Johanna Puranen as Daria, and Rebecca Hansson in the credits. It was written by Anna Stein with script editing by Sarahlily Stein. Sound design and dialogue editing were done by Katharine Seaton. The theme music was composed by Duck Edwards. Featuring score by Arhynn Descy. It was directed by Anna Stein.

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For updates and ominous messaging, follow us on Twitter and Tumblr @ KnaveOfHeartsAD.

Disclaimer: Common side effects may include the feeling of being watched.

TRANTHOLOGIES - TRAILER PROMO SWAP

NARRATOR

Tranthologies is an anthology podcast written exclusively by trans people!

If you want your heart warmed -

(from Cicada Nights)

LUCKY

You askin' me to be your boy?

BEAU

If you wanna.

LUCKY

Oh, I wanna.

NARRATOR

Or your heart shattered -

(from Forsaken Act II - Curiosity Killed the Cat)

SOLEDADA

(crying) Urgh!

(the sound of something smashing)

NARRATOR

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