

## Season 6 Episode 5: Sexy Mushrooms with Avery Trufelman

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**Kelsey:** Hello, and welcome to *Normal Gossip*. I'm Kelsey McKinney. In each episode of this podcast, we're going to bring you an anonymous morsel of gossip from the real world. I am so excited to have with me today Avery Trufelman. Avery, welcome to the show.

**Avery:** Thank you so much. What a dream.

**Kelsey:** Avery Trufelman is the host and producer of the podcast *Articles of Interest*, which was named one of the best podcasts of the year by *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, and many others. She was named one of the 500 most important people by the trade journal *Business of Fashion*. Um, Avery, do you want to start me off with a classic first question and tell me what your relationship with gossip is?

**Avery:** I mean, I love it. I adore it.

**Kelsey:** Great start.

**Avery:** In my own life, as you, as you may well know, podcasters have like a very niche fame. It's, it is very rare and exciting for me if someone recognizes me and comes up to me and they're like, Hey, I listened to your show. I'm like, wow, thank you so much. That's so cool. But historically, I keep having this problem where the very few times that someone approaches me, I like, happen to be in the midst of talking some serious shit. Just like, saying awful things out loud, and then someone will come up to me and be like, Hey, are you Avery Trufelman?

**Kelsey:** shit!

**Avery:** I'm like, oh, oh no, oh no! And it feels like when you like, look in the mirror, And say Bloody Mary three times. I feel like every time I say something spicy, someone will, will recognize me and like only then, so I should do it less, but I can't.

**Kelsey:** That's also so funny because your show is like that very shit talky, so it's like

**Avery:** oh no at all.

**Kelsey:** So it's like very funny to me to imagine being at a party and hearing you be like. I hate that fucking bitch. Like she's so unfair. And so it's like Avery Trufelman of articles of interest?

**Avery:** I love everybody.

**Kelsey:** Yeah. I love everyone I've ever met. Forget everything you've heard. How do you handle that situation? If you're in the midst of talking shit and now you're meeting someone who listens to the pod. I'm asking for a friend, not for me.

**Avery:** Yeah, exactly. Yeah, I don't know. I feel like if I get caught in the middle, I, I just stumble all over myself and try to defend myself. And the other thing is, probably no one cares. They just, and they also, it's not like they want to be my friend, they just want to be like, hi. Yeah. Hi. Bye. So.

**Kelsey:** How do you gossip with your friends? Like, what is your role within the group?

**Avery:** Uh

**Kelsey:** are you the bringer of gossip? Are you the receiver of gossip?

**Avery:** All of the, all of the above. I worry I'm gonna undermine my, my standing as a journalist. I never, I always fact check the things that I put on my show.

**Kelsey:** Well, yeah, that's the show.

**Avery:** Oh yeah. But I love an apocryphal story. I love rumors. I just, I just love them. And

**Kelsey:** How dare you come on my show and use a big word like apocryphal. Get outta here.

**Avery:** But I just, I don't know. I, I feel like, um. Especially in the world of fashion, everyone's so frightened of gossip and so scared about what other people will think

**Kelsey:** Oh wait, say way more. Why?

**Avery:** Well, cause it makes, it makes sense. Because in fashion, you know, you're like wearing someone else's name on your body. Like, that's their brand! And for a lot of cases, if—in some cases, the way these brands make their money is by literally selling their name to some sunglasses manufacturer or some perfume manufacturer. So, like, the name and associations with the name are everything. And so if you know, like, something bad, or even just humanizing, you know, something about them as a person that, like, maybe you don't agree with and wouldn't want their name plastered on you—

**Kelsey:** Attached to you.

**Avery:** Yeah, exactly. So, So, everyone's really, really protective of gossip in the fashion industry in a way that I think leads to this vicious cycle where like everyone's so frightened that nothing can get out and everyone's supposed to be perfect and I don't know, I do, I want to believe that like if we knew the truth and flaws and humanity of the people behind the various fashion lines maybe would be more drawn to it, although that really doesn't apply for people like Coco Chanel and other people.

**Kelsey:** Sure, yeah

**Avery:** There's no redeeming that, you know?

**Kelsey:** Yikes!

**Avery:** So, you know, like, yeah, people want their clothes, their brands to be kind of a blank canvas so that they can have associations with them.

**Kelsey:** Um, okay. I want to ask you about trends

**Avery:** Oh, yes. I love talking about trends.

**Kelsey:** And if trends are tied to gossip, like, are those things connected?

**Avery:** Well, it's interesting, right, because some trends start in this very, like, grassroots viral way.

**Kelsey:** Okay. Can you give me an example?

**Avery:** Well, you see something on, on TikTok, like, there was that whole wave, especially after the pandemic, of like, Gnome Core, Bistro Core, Tomato Girl, like, Coastal Grandma, like, what are these things? And then, you get to the sort of galaxy brain level, like, you, have you heard about, like, the mob wife aesthetic?

**Kelsey:** Oh, yeah.

**Avery:** Oh, yeah, and so there's this whole, this, uh, conspiracy theory that was a plant from HBO to promote, um, this, uh—

**Kelsey:** What, The Sopranos?

**Avery:** Yeah! There was like a new, uh, Whatever. I don't know the details of it, but there was some like promotion tied in with the Sopranos and they were like, listen, it's not that hard to like start one of these things if you just pay a few people to do it.

**Kelsey:** Honestly, if they did it, it worked, right?

**Avery:** Exactly. So it does kind of function like the, the rumor mill and that's, you know, part of how trends work, I mean like, I'm a big believer in trends, just in the same way that I think like, gossip tied communities together since days of yore. I don't think fashion was invented by capitalism, obviously capitalism like put it into hyperdrive. You know, just in the same way capitalism didn't invent love, but they like will sell you anything in its name. I think that like trends were something, I mean trends existed under feudalism, like trends are just a way to say like I am of this community, like I follow these people and so when, even if you're looking at like Maori tattoos or like, I don't know, you know, grass skirts, literally any form of dress in any culture. They follow trends and they are like organized by group. And so, yeah, I think the need to like latch onto a trend and follow other people and be a part of a group is very linked to that same sort of like importance of gossip. You know, this, this is like something very, uh, innate, I think within, within like communities.

**Kelsey:** That's interesting because it also plays on the idea of like both gossip and trends as using a system that exists to create belonging for yourself within it, right? Like if I can adapt to the trend of this group, if I can bring gossip to this group, I can be one of them, which is an interesting power dynamic.

**Avery:** Totally. There's like these interesting, uh, roles at play.

**Kelsey:** Can you think of any like trend recently that you feel has had like a kind of grassroots organizing around it in the way that like a true gossip story might take off into the public sphere?

**Avery:** Well, it's interesting because obviously like some trends are driven by like lifestyle and the most obvious example is like sweatpants and the pandemic, you know? Like that just happened and the world adapted but I also think, you know, like I have this long hair now that I used to not have and it like grew out during the pandemic and I spent pandemic alone. And so to me, it's like very I feel like I earned like this is my lion's mane, like i'm not gonna cut this and I think a lot of people feel that way. So like, you know, like claw clips for hair are really in right now but I think it's just because people are like oh, I guess I have this like long hair now and like I don't know what to do with it. But it definitely is like a trend, you know what I mean? Yeah, like things get set in motion from the world.

**Kelsey:** Right, like by your existence in the world.

**Avery:** Exactly, exactly. And so, I have a whole collection of claw clips. I'm like, how did this come into my life? I was like, I guess I just like slowly figured out I needed this.

[music/ad break]

**Kelsey:** Today's story is about someone like who loves their hobby so much that it is like infectious to other people, so that like they start to love it too. Has this ever happened to you? Have you had any experiences like this?

**Avery:** Yes. I feel like I'm especially susceptible to this. Like I recently, I like everything. I'm just like, this is the most important thing. Like I recently went to a, uh, flamenco show and I was like flamenco is the mother art form and I was immediately googling like "flamenco classes New York City." It's just the most incredible thing and I met someone last night who was like I make my own shoes with my own lathe and I was like ahh! Must look into like making shoes. I mean I'm passionate about other people's passion. I always used to joke that I should never go to a Scientology headquarters because I'd be like, okay, like, yeah, you guys are so passionate.

**Kelsey:** That's very relatable to me. Okay, here we go. We are in the Pacific Northwest today. Big trees. Forests. Our friend of a friend today, her name is Izzy.

**Avery:** Okay.

**Kelsey:** She's in her mid twenties. She's like, totally a lovely girl, but she's feeling super lonely recently. And that is because she made a mistake and she moved to Boyfriend Island.

**Avery:** Nooo!

**Kelsey:** Do you know what Boyfriend Island is?

**Avery:** Where you don't talk to any of your friends and you just get sucked up by your relationship?

**Kelsey:** Yes.

**Avery:** Oh, no.

**Kelsey:** Boyfriend island is a gender neutral term, right? You can have a girlfriend and still move to boyfriend island and get absorbed by all of their energy and lose your entire life

**Avery:** Oh, oh that's I never knew that word for it. It's so useful. I didn't yeah to have a shorthand for it

**Kelsey:** Yeah, it's sad when someone moves to Boyfriend Island because you're like, I've lost my friend, they've disappeared into the abyss, and who knows if they'll ever return.

**Avery:** Oh, I feel like when that happens, I'm like, they'll be back. I just gotta wait this one out.

**Kelsey:** Okay, Izzy's friends did not wait her out. She was there for like two years and she comes back from Boyfriend Island and like, basically wakes up and realizes she has no friends left.

**Avery:** Oh my, the nightmare. Oh.

**Kelsey:** The nightmare.

**Avery:** I feel like I, I, I went to the brink of that, of that place.

**Kelsey:** You went to the airport.

**Avery:** Yeah, exactly. The, the harbor, you know, on the ferry back.

**Kelsey:** You stood on the dock

**Avery:** But yeah, I don't, I don't know. I can't, I'm very curious about what, what Izzy did.

**Kelsey:** Yeah, Izzy tries all sorts of stuff. She's like, I'll join a rec sports league, but she's too competitive, right? She like, tries a bunch of things. She's like, I'll go to a dance class, but she's uncoordinated, right? Like none of these things work for her. And finally, she's like, fuck it. I'm going on the apps. I'm going to start dating again.

**Avery:** That's, that's her way to make friends. All right.

**Kelsey:** Okay. Listen, I didn't say everyone on this podcast was a hero. She gets on the apps. She's going on lots of dates. She's like, everyone is so boring, right? Like she keeps going on these dates and they're just like, the conversation is going nowhere. Nobody has anything fun to say. And so she like invents a question to start asking people. And the question she's asking people is like, What are you a sicko about, right? Like, what's something that you're so passionate about that you just, like, could talk for hours?

**Avery:** That's a great question.

**Kelsey:** Do you have one of these topics?

**Avery:** See, I, I, I know a whole little bit about a lot. I am like, I am like a mile wide and two centimeters deep, I mean... But that's the thing. I think that's part of why I admire it. Because I admire people who've, like, taken the time to really become a sicko about something. Oh, yeah, totally totally totally.

**Kelsey:** This is why I love this question, right? Is it's yeah, tell me the thing that you're gonna get all worked up about

**Avery:** A hundred percent. That's brilliant

**Kelsey:** So she goes to this date with this guy. His name is Theo and he's like giving young John Lennon vibes, right? Like swoopy hair round glasses clip on sunglasses. He's wearing like a loose vegan leather bomber. This is the vibe. They have dinner. They're having drinks. After the second drink, she's like, what are you a sicko about? And he lights up. The thing he is a sicko about is foraging for mushrooms.

**Avery:** Ughhh. I mean, okay.

**Kelsey:** [cackles]

**Avery:** Sorry. No, that's cool. No, that's cool. No, that's cool. I really respect that. And like, I don't know. Okay.

**Kelsey:** No! Don't lie to me.

**Avery:** I mean, that's such a phylum of guy.

**Kelsey:** Uh huh. Say more.

**Avery:** Wow. I'm so mean. This is...

**Kelsey:** Go off.

**Avery:** Okay. There are some passions that I think that everybody should do and everybody should be into. And so I don't like when people make them their whole identity?

**Kelsey:** Like, exercise.

**Avery:** Yeah, exactly. It's like, these are things that everybody should be able to do. Like, not dogmatically. So, no, foraging is cool. Foraging, foraging is fascinating and, you know, obviously

you have to know what you're doing so that you don't die. Like, I know someone who got very, very sick from a bad, bad forage, but...

**Kelsey:** Don't like that. Izzy's like, I'm into this, right? She's like, I can be any, I can be into anything that someone is going to get all worked up about. So she's like getting him worked up. Right? She's like,

**Avery:** he looks like John Lennon. Right?

**Kelsey:** He looks like John Lennon. She's like, whatever, tell me, right? Like what's going on there. Who's involved. What are the communities? She's like, is there any drama? And Theo's like, Oh yeah, there's a lot of drama because foraging is like kind of a communal experience, right? You're going out, you're going in. You're getting your mushrooms, you like, are supposed to like, not take more than you need, right? And like, share with others, and it's this kind of like, egalitarian community. He's like, but, people often have like a secret grove. Which is where they go to get their special mushrooms. And they don't tell other people where it is. And so they like, are protective of their area with their secret mushrooms.

**Avery:** Oh my god. I was just like, okay, then just go have a garden. Like why, why engage in the community? If you're like, I'm going to go tend to my little, okay, whatever.

**Kelsey:** Right. Is he's like, do you have a secret mushroom foraging zone?

**Avery:** Good question

**Kelsey:** He's like, yeah, of course I have one. And she's like, where is it? And he's like, Oh, I won't. I don't tell anyone that until at least the fourth date.

**Avery:** Oh, this is like everything that I hate about, like, liberal posturing, you know? It's like, I believe in being connected with the earth and with my community, but

**Kelsey:** And also I've created a police tape zone around my own secret mushroom foraging area.

**Avery:** Exactly.

**Kelsey:** Izzy is like, you know what? I'm having fun in this conversation. Like, I'm learning a lot, I'm being kind of judgmental, I'm like pretty interested in what you're saying about foraging, and like the community that you've built, and like it seems like this guy has a lot of friends, so I'm like, that's interesting to me. But she is like, not sexually attracted to this man at all. Like, zero percent sexual attraction.



**Avery:** Oh, no. Okay.

**Kelsey:** But she's like, enchanted with him, right? Like, as he's talking, she's like, so engaged, he's so charismatic. She's like, this is so interesting.

**Avery:** Alright.

**Kelsey:** And then the minute she goes home, she's like, what the fuck was I thinking? Like, this guy was talking about mushrooms all night. Like, he was, why?

**Avery:** I wanna be like, do we know if Theo asked Izzy any questions, but I think I know the answer

**Kelsey:** That's a good question. I think probably not. Yeah I don't know. Has this ever happened to you though where you're like enchanted by someone while they're in front of you and then they leave and you're like that person was actually like kind of weird? Or like mean to me or like this kind of dissonance?

**Avery:** Definitely in dating I've had that and like oh, this is so fun and we're like vibing in the moment and then yeah I feel like when I was younger also, like when I was Izzy's age, I felt that a lot. I'd be like, oh, is this just like a great, is this just an interesting time? Or, and I remember I was living with an older woman once. My roommate was 30 and I was like, Oh, she's an older lady. I remember her pulling me aside and being like, Avery, you gotta wanna fuck him. You gotta wanna fuck him, Avery.

**Kelsey:** Honestly, good advice.

**Avery:** It's great advice.

**Kelsey:** Okay, so what's your advice to Izzy in this situation where she is enchanted by him, she's been on one date, but then when he like texts her to be like, Hey, I had a great time. She's like, mm, I don't know. Do you go on a second date with this guy?

**Avery:** I mean, now as a wizened 30 something, I say, Izzy, honey, you gotta, you gotta wanna fuck him. If that's what you want. Although, maybe she is looking for a friend. She has indeed lost all of her friends. In which case, she should make that clear to him and not leave any ambiguity. But I bet that's not what's gonna happen.

**Kelsey:** Izzy is in her early 20s. So she's like, well, how could I know anything from a fir—like, if I had a good time on the first date, I'd do a second date, right?

**Avery:** Ha ha ha!

**Kelsey:** So she goes and immediately the minute he's in front of her, she's like enchanted again. This man is so charismatic. Like he just like has, you know when people just have like *it* and they're like the flame that everyone is drawn to. She's like this is crazy. Like I don't—and today he does ask her questions. He's like, what's your sicko subject? And she's like, my sicko subject is like early 2000s girl pop. And so they are like chatting, chatting, chatting, he's asking her all these questions. She's getting all worked up again. She has like this enchanting conversation with him.

**Avery:** That's great. That's rare in this world.

**Kelsey:** And then the minute he leaves, she's like, I don't care about this man at all. Like, it's like the, the rose colored glasses come off the minute he's out of her sight.

**Avery:** She like lost her object permanence. That's so weird.

**Kelsey:** Yes! But she's also like, we've been on two dates and I'm not obsessed with him. Like, I don't think he's hot. Right? I'm not like trying to fuck him. So she's like, I cannot keep going on dates with this person. Like, I do not want to sleep with them. So she texts him and she's like, I've had a really great time on the dates, like, but I just don't think that this is gonna work between us. Like, I don't really have, like, uh, romantic feelings here.

**Avery:** Good for her. Yeah.

**Kelsey:** And she's like, but I really loved, like, learning about your sicko subjects. Like, thank you so much for sharing those with me.

**Avery:** Okay.

**Kelsey:** And he texts her back and is like, totally understand, like, this is part of dating. If you ever want to come forage with my group, though, just let me know. You're totally welcome.

**Avery:** What a kind response. Yeah, I think that's great. Like, I, I, I hope Izzy does it.

**Kelsey:** Okay.

**Avery:** You know, I have this theory that like, in the old timey world, when people met in person, well, you kind of started from zero. You know, you were like, oh, is this a date? Is this friendship? What is it? And you could sort of feel it out, but it's very hard in online dating where the bar is set so high where it's like, oh you're gonna date, like you're gonna sleep together and

you're gonna be in love that anything less than that feels like some sort of demotion when that's actually so rare to find like a friend you like talking to and I've made like Amazing friends from my time on the app, but it was very hard to like, get to that place of friendship, because the bar was already like, so high. So I appreciate that he's open to it.

**Kelsey:** Izzy's like, both of our quote unquote dates have not felt like dates. So actually, this is ideal. Like, I kind of would like to be like, in the periphery of this person.

**Avery:** And it seems like Theo's game, yeah.

**Kelsey:** Yeah, and she's like, and I need friends. Right?

**Avery:** Okay, love this for them.

**Kelsey:** He's like, cool. Here's the deal, I actually lead a foraging group.

**Avery:** Oh he leads it?

**Kelsey:** But there's like one caveat and that's that the foraging group is like a guided lesson tour and so it costs like 40 bucks to go.

**Avery:** All right. I mean, you know, the menschie thing would be to let her go for free, but I feel like if it were me and I were in my mid twenties, I'd be like, Oh, I'm such a little turd. I can't believe I like told him that I didn't want to date him anymore. So I'll pay this \$40 as penance and then I'll feel better. And I would actually, I think. Appreciate that out. I'll be like, well, you know, it's fair. Like I paid

**Kelsey:** Yeah. Yeah, for sure. And then you're also like, this definitely isn't a date, right? Like I'm paying someone \$40 to learn their skill. Okay, you and Izzy are like clocked in. She's like, absolutely. I'm so game I totally want to do this. So she like Venmo's him the \$40 and she goes. This is the first week.

**Avery:** Okay

**Kelsey:** She shows up and to the woods at 10 a. m. And she's like, this is early. I'm so brave.

**Avery:** It's literally a fairy tale. It's like We know how this goes. She arrives at the edge of the woods.

**Kelsey:** They're crumbs. She follows the crumbs. No, she shows up and she's like wearing a normal thing that you would wear to go foraging, right? She's wearing like hiking boots and like athleisure

**Avery:** Sure.

**Kelsey:** She gets there, and there are like 15 people there waiting for Theo, and all of them are so hot. Like, unbelievably hot.

**Avery:** Okay. Like, yeah, what are they wearing?

**Kelsey:** They're all wearing athleisure, but they're all wearing like the same color palette. Like they're all wearing like either like light olive or like taupe or like beige.

**Avery:** Okay. Okay.

**Kelsey:** And so she's like immediately feeling like she's like out of place because she's in her like, you know, black leggings.

**Avery:** Right.

**Kelsey:** Can you talk a little bit about how like style seeps? Like why might one group all end up dressing the same?

**Avery:** It's so interesting that you say that. Like, I went to a party the other day and it was in this very elegant loft and everybody showed up and they were wearing white. I was like, where did this memo come from? Like, how did you all know to wear white?

**Kelsey:** Were you wearing white?

**Avery:** No, I wasn't. I was wearing plaid. I was wearing blue plaid. I felt like a, I felt like a bumpkin.

**Kelsey:** King. My king

**Avery:** And I, I was just asking myself this question of like, how do they all know work on the same wavelength? But that's really how it happens. Like people in a certain cohort just like fall—It's like how birds know how to fly south. They just follow each other. It's some miraculous thing beyond us.

**Kelsey:** Yeah. And if you aren't the right bird, you don't know. So she's like, I'm wearing all black. I'm feeling a little weird. Whatever and she's also like because of my tenure on Boyfriend Island I've lost all my friends. So I am gonna introduce myself to all of these people, right?

**Avery:** Bless

**Kelsey:** So she like introduces herself to all of these people. Two of them are Rosa and Yvonne. And she's like, these are the people that are my friends, right? In this group of 15 it's you two and they've been here like Rosa's been here for like three months doing this, and Yvonne's been here for six. So they're like Way better than her

**Avery:** And they're very hot, I imagine.

**Kelsey:** They're very hot. Everyone in this group is so hot. And so she's like, this is so great. Like I've made two friends. They're hot, they can teach me about the mushrooming. I have someone to hang out with, I can like maybe regain my social circles.

**Avery:** Oh god. Okay

**Kelsey:** About five minutes before they start, another Subaru pulls into the parking lot. It's blaring Mandy Moore. Izzy's like, I love Mandy Moore

**Avery:** Yeah, that's her that's her sicko thing. Yeah.

**Kelsey:** The car parks. It is Theo. And she's like, this is so weird. Like, that's the kind of music that I said was my sicko subject. Like, he's here. He gets out of the car. He's like walking up to them. And Rosa's like, isn't it so crazy how charismatic he is?

**Avery:** What?

**Kelsey:** And Izzy's like, yes! Like, why is it that he shows up and we're all enchanted by him? He's standing up there. He's like, giving them the basics. He's like, here's what we're gonna do today. We're gonna walk in this area. We're gonna walk so slowly. We're gonna look for this specific kind of mushroom. Like, you're gonna get your little mushrooms. You're gonna put them in your little basket. We'll all wander for a long time. Then we'll meet back here and we'll lay them out on the table and we'll identify them together. We'll talk about like, what we found.

**Avery:** Okay.

**Kelsey:** He's making a lot of eye contact. They're like, we've got it. Here we go. So they go walking into the woods. Immediately, Theo is like, you're all walking too fast. Like, everyone

walk slower. And they're like, okay, sorry, sorry, sorry. So they're walking slower and he keeps like stopping at things and gasping. And then people will like gather around him and he's like, look at this mushroom. And he'll like tell them to touch it and they'll touch it. And he'll like get it out of the earth. Rosa goes to get a mushroom and he like swoops in front of her and grabs her arm and he's like, you can't get that one because there's like a difference that is very subtle between chanterelles, which are on every fancy restaurant menu, and jack o lanterns, which will kill you.

**Avery:** Oh, okay. Yes.

**Kelsey:** So he's like, not that one. That one will kill you. Like, jokes on you, it is poisonous.

**Avery:** Oh my god, sorry, that's so hot. I'm like, daddy, ugh, like, you saved me.

**Kelsey:** Yes! And Izzy is like, this is a great moment of clarity for me. Because, like, that should be hot. Like, I should think that this is very hot, but I do not think it's hot. I'm like, how nice of him to save Rosa.

**Avery:** Right, right, right.

**Kelsey:** Okay. After the hike, they get all the mushrooms. They put them on the picnic table. He's like brushing them all off. They're all looking at the mushrooms and Theo pulls out his, the ones that he found. And the ones that he found are like way more special than the ones that everyone else found. And Rosa is like, I don't know how he's always finding those. Like he's always finding mushrooms that no one else can find. Like I do all this same shit and I can't find any of these. You have been on two platonic-ish dates with this man, and you know that he has a secret spot.

**Avery:** Right.

**Kelsey:** Do you tell them?

**Avery:** Yeah, I would, I would probably try to talk to Theo first. Like pull him aside and be like, yeah, where are these from?

**Kelsey:** Izzy has like totally shifted her allegiance now. And she's like, I'm going to tell Rosa and Yvonne about this because sharing secrets is a good way to make friends. She's like, Oh, well he told me that he has like a special spot where he gets mushrooms from and Rosa and Yvonne are like, didn't you just join this group? Like, how did you know that?

**Avery:** Ahhhh

**Kelsey:** Do you tell them that you went on a date? Like what?

**Avery:** Yeah, I would definitely be like Because that's also cool to be like whatever, like we dated, but we're friends now. It's totally cool. Yeah.

**Kelsey:** Izzy is like replaying the interaction that Theo had with Rosa and she's like, she's like, I don't know if I wanna mention that I went on a date with her.

**Avery:** Sure, sure, sure.

**Kelsey:** Right. Like, I don't know what the vibe is here.

**Avery:** Sure.

**Kelsey:** So she's is like, she's like, oh, I just like heard him mention it to someone else and they're like, oh, he has a secret grove. Right now they're whispering. Once he's done with this whole mushroom thing, people get to come up there and, like, get mushrooms that they want to take home. The ones that they picked and also, like, extra ones.

**Avery:** Oh, that's nice.

**Kelsey:** Yeah, the girl in front of Izzy gets up there and she, like, gets her little mushrooms and Theo is like, Oh, I love your bangs. And Izzy's like, Oh, that girl does have great bangs. Right? Like, she's looking at this girl. Incredible bangs. Izzy is given her mushrooms to take home. She's like, You know what? I had a really good time. Like, this was really fun for me. Do you think she should go again? Like, after this experience, would you go again?

**Avery:** Like, I probably would just try to get Yvonne's number and hang out in a different way. But I guess the real answer is depends on how good the mushrooms are. Like, what if they were amazing? I'd be like, I'm going to get me some more.

**Kelsey:** They are amazing. She gets home and she's like, these are amazing. She makes a little pasta with them. And she's like, I'm basically a Michelin starred restaurant, right? Like this is going so well.

**Avery:** Hey, that's not nothing.

**Kelsey:** So she's like, I'm going to go again. Also, she did not get Yvonne and Rosa's numbers. So she's like, I'm going to be going back. But over the course of the week, she like can't stop thinking about that girl who got bangs and like how good her bangs looked. And a terrifying question has entered her mind, which is, should she get bangs?

**Avery:** Ah, she has come to the moment where she must decide the blue pill or the red pill.

**Kelsey:** Yes. Every woman's terrible journey.

**Avery:** Yes, we all get to this precipice. I have certainly impulsively cut my own bangs at various moments in my life at the drop of a hat. It's if I were in a more fragile emotional place, Kelsey, I would look at your beautiful bangs and tonight go like cut my hair, you know

**Kelsey:** Yeah, this is the problem with bangs is that they are kind of like a viral airborne infection.

**Avery:** It's true

**Kelsey:** That night Izzy cuts her own bangs.

**Avery:** Wow. How'd it go?

**Kelsey:** She looks great. She's like, I like these. Like twee is back in. Great. I love these for me.

**Avery:** I have to say that there's this great, one of my favorite pieces of fashion writing ever is this piece by John Waters. He's like, listen, when you're in your twenties, you should just like wear your shirts inside out, wear garbage bags, cut your own hair, like just do whatever. Like you're going to look great. Like don't worry about it. And he's like, when you, when you get past 40. Then you're going to need designers. Like then you're going to need help, but you know, great. Vaya con Dios, Izzy, like go cut your bangs.

**Kelsey:** Yes. So she does it. She's like, I look great. It's now week two of the Mushrooming Adventure. She goes again. This week she does wear like olive green. Cause she's like, everyone else is wearing olive green.

**Avery:** This is a fascinating study of how trends work. Yes. This is how it happens.

**Kelsey:** But something surprising has happened, which is this girl with the perfect bangs has also infected Rosa and Yvonne. So they have all returned with bangs

**Avery:** Wow. The bangs are that good.

**Kelsey:** So now they all have bangs and they're all like, wow, we look so great, right? Like, this is a funny thing to have happened to you and your two new friends. You're like, look at us. We all have bangs.



**Avery:** It's like your cycles aligned.

**Kelsey:** Yeah. Literally, literally. Theo shows up this week. His car is blaring Hillary Duff. And Rosa is like, Oh, I love this song. And Yvonne is like, I love this song too.

**Avery:** Well, now I'm like, which song is it?

**Kelsey:** Great question

**Avery:** There are good Hilary Duff songs that everybody can agree on.

**Kelsey:** Well so that's the thing is that Izzy is like, I mean, yeah, it's a good song. Right? Like it's not the kind of song that like means anything

**Avery:** Yeah. It's not a deep cut. Okay.

**Kelsey:** Theo gets out of the car. He starts them off hiking. They're all following him around. You know, it's like one of those cartoons where there's like a smell of pie wafting and they're all like carrying behind it except the pie waft is like his charisma. Today he finds something exciting and he calls everyone in this group over and he's like, look at this thing that I found. He's like, has all of this awe and tenderness like in his voice. Uh, I cannot describe what's happening here because I don't want to, but I do have something to show you. Uh, the video that I'm going to show you, we will link in the show notes, but I'm just going to show you because this is what happens. This is an example of what this man is doing. Can you read the title of this?

**Avery:** Flicking a wet witch's butter fungus.

**Kelsey:** Mm hmm. Yeah, okay. Let's watch this, shall we? It's 12 seconds long.

**Avery:** What? Okay. Oh. [gasps] Oh my god. Um, it looks like a mound of melted yellow candle wax. Uh huh. And I wish there was a more like beautiful word for it because it's really hot. He's stroking it like a clitoris. And then it actually is like dripping water. It is so sensual and unexpected. I was about to say it would be hot if it wasn't so, like, strange, but it is also hot and it's strange, but it's really, it's really bizarre.

**Kelsey:** Yeah. Okay. So Theo is doing this. There are 15, like, people gathered around him watching him.

**Avery:** Geez.

**Kelsey:** What do you, what do you do with this?

**Avery:** For me personally, this is such a nightmare. Like I spent, I mean, I spent seven years living in the Bay Area. Like, I know this man who, like, wants everyone to watch him like stroke a mushroom.

**Kelsey:** Yeah. Yep.

**Avery:** I'd be like, okay, you know, all right. Curiosity sated.

**Kelsey:** Yeah.

**Avery:** Thank you. Gonna get Yvonne and Rosa's number and not be here anymore.

**Kelsey:** Yes. On the way out, Rosa and Yvonne are like, do you want to get a drink with us? And Izzy is like, yes, very much. I would like to get a drink. Like let's all have a drink. And so they go out and they have a drink. You know, they're having a good time. What do you, like, what are your goals for this conversation with your two new friends? Do you have any goals? Do you have any questions you want to ask them?

**Avery:** Yeah, I would definitely be like, how do you know, how do you know Theo? Like, how did this group get started? Like, what's the, what's the deal? I want to know everything.

**Kelsey:** Izzy is going to plan to get to those things, but the first thing she wants to get to is like, what the fuck was going on with that, like, witch's mushroom?

**Avery:** Well, I thought you were going to say that she was going to pose the sicko mode question on them, but no.

**Kelsey:** She's like, she's like, she's like, what is going on? On with that. Like, it was like, very sensual in a weird way, but also I didn't feel, like, sexy or horny at all.

**Avery:** Yeah.

**Kelsey:** And Rosa and Yvonne are like, oh my god, we're always talking about this with Theo. That he's like, doing things that are like, objectively horny, but then we like, don't feel any which way about it.

**Avery:** Huh.

**Kelsey:** They're like, he's giving like, middle school teacher vibes. And they're like, they're like, yeah, exactly. So they've all like bonded over this. They're like becoming new friends. They have another drink. Izzy's getting a little drunk. She's like, you know, how did this group get started?

And they're like, you know, Theo started it because he wanted to share his love of foraging mushrooms. And she's like, you know, you have one more drink and you're suddenly like, why does everyone wear the same color?

**Avery:** Yeah.

**Kelsey:** And Rosa and Yvonne are like, what? And she's like, literally everyone here is like, wearing taupe or green or like, some nature color. And Rosa and Yvonne are like, oh my god, like, I didn't even notice that.

**Avery:** Oh, wow.

**Kelsey:** And Yvonne is like, oh my god, remember when Alice joined? And Izzy's like, who's Alice? And Yvonne's like, Alice is the girl with the bangs. And she's like, oh yeah, okay, yeah, I know Alice. And Yvonne's like, yeah, when Alice joined, she was wearing like, an entire like oatmeal set of athleisure and he complimented her and she's like remember Rosa then you and I went and bought one.

**Avery:** What? So everyone just copies Alice.

**Kelsey:** Everyone just copies Alice.

**Avery:** Activated by Theo.

**Kelsey:** Activated by Theo.

**Avery:** Okay.

**Kelsey:** They're getting more into it and it's like, okay, so we're all like not attracted to this man. We're all kind of directed by him. That's a little weird. Do you tell them at this point that you went on a date with him?

**Avery:** I mean, yeah, again, totally. Like, again, if it were me at this point, they would have already known, but maybe that wouldn't have been the wiser, but, uh, yeah, I would have been like, you know, it's so funny because.

**Kelsey:** Yes. Izzy is like, can I tell you two something? And they're like, yeah, of course you could tell us something. And she's like, so we went on like two dates. There were perfectly nice dates, I had a good time, but I was like, not into him. Like the only crush I got was like on his interests. And now I'm here. And Rosa and Yvonne are like, That's so crazy because we also went on dates with him.

**Avery:** I knew it! I knew it! I knew it!

[music/ad break]

**Kelsey:** So you have a decent sample size, 3 of 15 people who have been on dates with him.

**Avery:** Yeah.

**Kelsey:** Is there anything like wrong with this in your mind?

**Avery:** Mmmmm. Nooooo. I mean, it kind of reminds me of, um, like Kelsey, have you ever been anyone's type before?

**Kelsey:** Yes.

**Avery:** Exactly. I feel like I've had partners where I look back at who they've dated. I'm like, God, they all look just like me. And it's like, well, you can't. I mean, I think they all look great. Like, I love them.

**Kelsey:** You're like, all your exes are hot. Congratulations.

**Avery:** All your exes are hot and awesome. Like, great taste. And I feel a way. I feel weird. And I feel like something else is happening that's not about us.

**Kelsey:** Yes. So the girls are kind of in this same circle of thought where they're like, this is like a little weird. And it's a little suspicious, but they're also like, we all look different, right? Like none of us like look the same.

**Avery:** Oh. Okay.

**Kelsey:** So like, it's not a physical type, but it may be like a mental or emotional type, right? Where it's like, okay, you've gathered up all of these people who don't want to date you, put them in this group. So they're like, how many people in this group have gone on dates with him, right? Is it just like the three of us? Do you go next week to find out? Remember you have to pay \$40 to go on this trip.

**Avery:** I know, exactly. I mean I would like try to find other ways to contact the people in the group, but I guess I don't know their names. Okay, I guess I would Yeah, I guess yeah

**Kelsey:** Yeah, they're going. Everyone's going. Rosa, Yvonne, and Izzy are like, we are on a fucking mission and our mission is how many women in this group have dated this man.

**Avery:** Okay. Wow, it really is like Scientology. They just keep you coming back to like, try to figure out what it is that's going on.

**Kelsey:** Yes. Out of rebellion also this week, the three girls are like, we're not wearing taupe. Like, we're not wearing olive, we're wearing black. Like, we're gonna be different.

**Avery:** Good for them! Uh huh, okay.

**Kelsey:** So they all show up in their, like, black, navy outfits.

**Avery:** Mm hmm.

**Kelsey:** They get there, and they're like, Who do we want to ask first? And they're like, well, Alice is our spiritual and emotional leader, so we will ask her. So they're like, Alice. Her eyes are, like, huge. She has the biggest eyes on earth. They're like, Alice. She's like, What? They're like, Have you ever gone on a date with Theo? She's like, why would you ask me that? And they're like, we're just asking because we each went on like two or three dates with him. And Alice is like, Oh my God, you've got to be fucking kidding me. She's like, yeah, I went on like three dates with him like a year ago. And I've been here ever since. Another girl is like, Oh my God. I also went on two dates with him like eight months ago.

**Avery:** Okay.

**Kelsey:** At this point, a very tall man in this group overhears them. Okay. And the tall man is like, no, Theo's gay. And they're like, no, he definitely is not.

**Avery:** Oh my god! I knew it!

**Kelsey:** And the man is like, no, I also went on a date with this man.

**Avery:** Oh yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

**Kelsey:** So there are like six girls and two non binary people and seven men in this group and they have all been on dates with Theo.

**Avery:** Oh my god. This is like everything that I wanted *A Shot At Love With Tila Tequila* to be. This is fantastic.

**Kelsey:** Izzy's like, I've got a few questions here. She's like, my first question is why are we all here?

**Avery:** Right.

**Kelsey:** And everyone is like, well, I did think the mushrooms were cool and then I started coming and it's like nice to walk around outside and now I have friends and so like, I just keep coming.

**Avery:** Oh my God.

**Kelsey:** And she's like, okay, I have some more questions. Question number two, has anyone banged this man? Like has anyone here slept with him?

**Avery:** Great question. Has anybody?

**Kelsey:** No. Everyone in the group is like, no.

**Avery:** And everybody's paying every time?

**Kelsey:** And everyone is paying every time

**Avery:** Oh my god. Theo, good job!

**Kelsey:** Why good job?

**Avery:** He's like iconic. He's like made a very steady income stream by like, fishing people from dating apps. I wish I was that passionate and sociopathic.

**Kelsey:** Yeah. Now Izzy is like kind of mad because she's like he's getting \$40 from all of us and you've been like collecting people across this app. And she also remembers like something he said to her on their first date, which is like, there is a secret place where I go to find mushrooms. And I will not tell anyone until the fourth date. And so she's like, did anybody here make it to the fourth date?

**Avery:** Oh my God.

**Kelsey:** And everybody's like no. Right? It's one date. It's two dates. It's three dates. And she's like, so nobody knows about the secret mushroom thing. And everyone's like, what secret mushroom thing? And she's like, he has a secret place that he goes to find mushrooms. And they're all like, you've got to be fucking kidding me. Because they're like, he always has these like beautiful mushrooms that none of us can ever find.

**Avery:** Right.

**Kelsey:** And that he's like giving us advice to find and we can't find. Theo shows up. He's like blaring Natasha Bedingfield today. They're like, what is happening with him? He gets out of the car and he's like, I love these outfits. The three of you look like spies. And they're like, thank you, Theo.

**Avery:** If you only knew, Theo.

**Kelsey:** If only you knew that we were on a reconnaissance mission. They go out, they're walking around. They're all getting their mushrooms. Today, when Theo reveals the like beautiful, rare mushrooms that he has found, no one is like happy, right? Everyone is like a little mad

**Avery:** Stone faced. Yeah

**Kelsey:** Everyone is like now jealous of the mushrooms, right? And they're like this sucks like this man has been going on dates with all of us in the past

**Avery:** Mm hmm

**Kelsey:** and now is finding these secret mushrooms and won't tell us where they are. We're paying him \$40 a week. He won't tell us where a secret spot is.

**Avery:** Yeah, that's terrible

**Kelsey:** Like what do you do here? This week is over. Are you like gonna come back? Are you done here?

**Avery:** I mean, I'm not going to pay the money, me, I would not pay the money again. I'm like, we got to settle this now.

**Kelsey:** Okay. How are you going to settle it now?

**Avery:** I'm trying to think about what I'd actually do. In like the Hollywood movie, I'd be like, Hey, what's the deal?

**Kelsey:** In your mid Atlantic accent.

**Avery:** Hey, you're bringing us out here and embarrassing us with your superior mushrooms. No, I wouldn't actually have the courage to do that. I don't know. I still would like try to talk to him.

**Kelsey:** Yeah. What Izzy does is she's like chatting with people, right? She's like, me and Rosa and Yvonne are going to go to this bar afterward today if anyone wants to come.

**Avery:** Oh, she's so good. Her like soft diplomacy.

**Kelsey:** And some people are like, I'm done here. Like now that I know what's going on, I'm like, I'm out. Goodbye. You'll see me never. And they're like, goodbye. There's still like 10 of them, right? And so they go, they go to this bar. And Izzy is like, what are we going to do here? Like, do we all stop coming? Do we start just like foraging by ourselves? Do we stop mushrooming entirely? And everyone's like, no, I don't want to stop looking for mushrooms. Like, I like doing this. This is like my hobby now. And I like to do it in my free time. They're like, this is my special thing.

**Avery:** Yeah.

**Kelsey:** But they're all also like, it's fucked up that we don't know where the special grove is. So they decide they're going back next week and they're gonna follow him.

**Avery:** Brilliant.

**Kelsey:** It's week four. Everyone shows up in all black.

**Avery:** Oh. Trends in action. Week four. Isn't that \$160 that has each been given?

**Kelsey:** It sure is.

**Avery:** That's crazy.

**Kelsey:** Everyone is like following Behind Theo from afar. They're like trying to track him, trying to see where he's going, like trying to keep separate. Somebody's like, I saw him in a meadow and he came back with a fancy mushroom. And so they like go in there. No more fancy mushrooms.

**Avery:** Okay.

**Kelsey:** Someone else is like, I saw him by that weird gnarly tree. And he returned with two different fancy mushrooms, and so like, they go scampering over there and there are none left. It's as if like, the mushrooms are just like, appearing out of the ground for him alone. It's week five. Everyone has returned again.

**Avery:** Wait, what?



**Kelsey:** Because they're like, they're like, we found nothing. We made no progress and we want it.

**Avery:** Okay. So that's, he's made 200 from each person.

**Kelsey:** Do you know about the sunk cost fallacy?

**Avery:** Yes. Yes.

**Kelsey:** Can you explain it?

**Avery:** When you've already invested so much in something, you don't want to give it up.

**Kelsey:** Right. Like a good example to me is like waiting for the bus where you're like, the bus is supposed to be here in eight minutes and then it's been eight minutes and then it's been 12 minutes and then it's been 16 minutes and you're like, I'm surely it must come eventually, right?

**Avery:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Like if I leave now, I'll miss it. Yeah.

**Kelsey:** Exactly. So you have a pretty deep sunk cost fallacy going on here, which is that you've spent five weeks in this forest with this man and \$200 plus the outfits you've bought.

**Avery:** Oh yeah. And the bangs

**Kelsey:** Which you now have to keep up

**Avery:** the friends you've made along the way. It's, you know, a lot has happened.

**Kelsey:** How many more weeks are you willing to do this?

**Avery:** Me, none, but I, uh, I don't, I don't, I'm not made of this much patience.

**Kelsey:** Our girls go week six.

**Avery:** What?

**Kelsey:** They go week seven.

**Avery:** No. Stop.

**Kelsey:** By week eight, there's only like six people left. Today, Izzy is the one that is like following him. She's right on his trail. He like disappears from her sight and he emerges from behind a tree with like a gorgeous giant mushroom.

**Avery:** How did he do that?

**Kelsey:** She goes back there and once he's out of sight she's like looking around like crazy, right? She's like how the fuck did he do this? Like where is this mushroom? And then she spies like through the brambles of this brush like a kind of open area.

**Avery:** Okay.

**Kelsey:** And she's like Hmm. And so she pushes her little body through there and it's like, it's so pokey to get through the frame.

**Avery:** Yeah.

**Kelsey:** And then she gets through and it's like dark, like there's a lot of like leaf overhang. And so it's like really dark and really damp, full tree cover. There's this huge empty space in there and everywhere are these like excellent mushrooms.

**Avery:** No!

**Kelsey:** She's like, I did it.

**Avery:** Amazing.

**Kelsey:** You've found the secret spot. You did it. You have all of these magical mushrooms at your disposal. Uh, we're back to the kind of like question we started at the beginning, which is the tension between community and individualism. Do you tell the other people about this secret spot?

**Avery:** Yeah, a hundred percent. Like, I mean, that's the whole point why you're going to mushrooms to like be with people and enjoy it. If you just wanted nice mushrooms, you just go to the store. And, and, and also to gloat, to be like, I found the spot and you want everyone to be like—

**Kelsey:** Praise me! Wow.

**Avery:** Wow! You did it. Like, totally. I'm like, come on. Yeah. Praise me. I'm not going to eat all these.

**Kelsey:** Izzy's like, leading this team through the brambles. They're so excited. They're thrilled. Everyone's like using their knife to take just a few mushrooms, right? Not too many. They're like brushing them off. They're putting them in their baskets. They're like, we did it.

**Avery:** Wow.

**Kelsey:** At the end of this hike, as happens every single week, you basically lay your mushrooms out before Theo and he judges them.

**Avery:** I, that, ugh, okay.

**Kelsey:** Izzy presents her mushroom this week and Theo is like, oh my God, this is a great mushroom. Like, where did you get this? Do you tell him?

**Avery:** No. I'm like, I'll never tell. Yeah. Give him a taste of his own medicine.

**Kelsey:** Izzy is like, the same place as you got yours. And Theo's like, I seriously doubt that. And Izzy's like, no, I did. Like, I found the secret spot you bragged about that was only for fourth dates. And now we all know where it is. Like, we all know that you went on dates with us. Look!

**Avery:** Hell yeah!

**Kelsey:** And now everyone's like, bringing up their fancy mushrooms to show Theo. Fancy mushrooms left and right. A whole table of fancy mushrooms. And Theo is like, I'm really proud of you guys. Like, these are great mushrooms, like really good job, everyone. He's like, but these aren't from my spot.

**Avery:** What?

**Kelsey:** And everyone's like, how do you fucking know that? Like, what are you talking about? And Rosa is like, what is so great about your spot? Like we found this spot. We have all these mushrooms, like stop being rude. And Theo's like, part of like foraging is having your secret spot, like spaces that are just for you. And like, I would never have brought you guys near the spot where like I forage alone. That would cut into my own supply, but I'm like so glad that you found a spot of your own.

**Avery:** Oh, ew.

**Kelsey:** Why ew?

**Avery:** Well, there's this idea of like, well, the thing about nature is carving it out for yourself and owning it. It's like, ew.

**Kelsey:** Uh huh. Yuck. Izzy's like, so you brought us to a subpar mushroom forest?

**Avery:** Yeah.

**Kelsey:** And you guided us in darkness and like made us pay \$40 to join your like mushroom cult? And Theo's like, I'm not, what? I'm not running a mushroom cult. And Izzy's like, look at us, we're all wearing black. And he's like, I never told anyone to wear black. What do you think here?

**Avery:** I mean, it's true. He didn't tell them to wear black.

**Kelsey:** How do you distinguish between a group trend and a top down leadership?

**Avery:** Oh, I mean, he did really get them, he did introduce them to each other. He did get them inspired about the thing. I feel like he knows not what he's done, maybe. I'm gonna give him the benefit of the doubt and be like, he genuinely thinks he's doing an innocent thing without realizing how absolutely—I mean, listen. When Izzy was looking for friends, she turned to the dating site. She is no different than Theo.

**Kelsey:** No angels here.

**Avery:** No angels here. That's the thing. Like, I'm sure he was like, well, what do you mean? I just happened to have found all my friends.

**Kelsey:** I just happened to invite people that I connected with not in a romantic way on a dating app to come foraging with me in the forest. What's wrong with that?

**Avery:** Yeah. He, he, he probably just has no idea how weird it is. If I give him the benefit of the doubt.

**Kelsey:** Okay. We are almost at the end. Whose side are you on at this point?

**Avery:** Aw, Kelsey, I see both sides. I see, well

**Kelsey:** It's beautiful.

**Avery:** No, no. You know what, I'm sorry. I'm on Theo's side. Because again, if I were Izzy, I would have, like, she's been playing into this. Sorry.

**Kelsey:** Yeah. No, that's a great point.

**Avery:** She didn't need any, no one was making her do this. Yeah. And also, she got her, she found Amazing Grove and she doesn't need him anymore. Like.

**Kelsey:** And she found friends. Right? Like, it's like, yeah, you paid, you know, many hundreds of dollars. Yeah, but you got a mushroom foraging spot and the knowledge of how to forage mushrooms and two friends Like it's not the worst deal in the world.

**Avery:** It's kind of a win win, but I am so curious about like what what this is

**Kelsey:** Do you want to hear my final notes?

**Avery:** Oh, yeah

**Kelsey:** Okay So Yvonne and Rosa and Izzy became like very close friends and they are still friends and they go mushroom foraging every week to their like special spot, which is very cute

**Avery:** That's beautiful.

**Kelsey:** And a few months later, after this whole ordeal, they saw a group of three girls waiting by the table.

**Avery:** No, no, no, no, no, no.

**Kelsey:** Would you go over there?

**Avery:** Yeah.

**Kelsey:** Yeah. You're going over there. They're going over there. They're like, what's up girls? What are you doing? And they're like, oh, we're like going to go on a foraging lesson. Like this guy's going to take us on a foraging lesson. And they're like, is that guy Theo? And the girls are like, yeah, that's so crazy. Like, do you know him? And the girls are like, oh yeah, we went on that foraging trip. Um, I wouldn't go with him. He's a, he's a bit of a weird, weird guy. They're like, we'll teach you for free.

**Avery:** Beautiful.

**Kelsey:** Beautiful! And so now, our girls are like running basically a little like foraging tutorial that is free.

**Avery:** Oh! Beautiful!

**Kelsey:** I know.

**Avery:** Oh, that's what I mean, foraging for everybody, yeah.

**Kelsey:** Yeah, yeah, foraging for all. And they're like, you know, they're running their little thing. They don't see Theo again.

**Avery:** Wow.

**Kelsey:** They're like, yeah, exactly. They're like, isn't that weird? Like, we haven't seen him. He was supposed to meet these girls and then we absorbed the girls into our group and like, he showed up, they weren't there, he left, and now we haven't seen him again. So like, if we haven't seen him and we're here every week, was this really his spot?

**Avery:** Ah, yeah. How far away was his superior spot?

**Kelsey:** Uh huh. About a year later, after this whole ordeal, Izzy goes to the farmer's market. And she runs into Alice, our trendsetter, our girlina with the bangs.

**Avery:** Yes. With the beautiful huge eyes. Yes.

**Kelsey:** Yes. Alice, like frantically waves Izzy over. And Izzy's like, Alice, it's so good to see you. Like, what's up? And Izzy's like, I cannot believe that I did not have your number. I didn't have anyone in the group's number. She's like, but something has happened. And Izzy's like, what happened? Six months after this group dissolved, Alice started working at this stand at the farmer's market. And she's like, I really liked it. But all of the men who worked at the stand with Alice fucking hated Theo. And they were like, he's manipulative. He's judgmental. He's a faker. And the guys told her that he was buying the mushrooms that he was showing off from a farmer's market fucking stand and like posting them to Instagram as his own.

**Avery:** What a tool! What an absolute tool!

**Kelsey:** This man has never had a secret foraging spot.

**Avery:** Okay, but I admire it as a magic trick, honestly. Like, how did he hide them? How did he reveal them?

**Kelsey:** It's an illusion!

**Avery:** Exactly! Like, the forethought of, like, hiding mushrooms in your little sleeves and your pockets and things like that. You know, I just want to give a hats off for the elaborateness of the ruse. You know, it's pretty impressive.

**Kelsey:** The con is precise. It is impressive.

**Avery:** And he didn't even get laid from it. Like what for?

**Kelsey:** He didn't even get laid. All he got was some money.

**Avery:** Money that I'm sure he spent a large proportion of it on these mushrooms.

**Kelsey:** Buying mushrooms.

**Avery:** Yes. Buying expensive rare mushrooms.

**Kelsey:** Exactly. Wow. So in the end, the secret mushroom spot that our girls found was always theirs.

**Avery:** Aww. And never his

**Kelsey:** That's beautiful. Whose side are you on now? Have you changed your mind?

**Avery:** I mean, again, I do really appreciate the dexterity of the con.

**Kelsey:** I love it.

**Avery:** I'm sorry. I mean, yeah, but obviously, obviously I'm excited for the, for the, for the real mushroomers of this story.

**Kelsey:** It really is a democracy of mushrooms.

**Avery:** Mm hmm. Just beautiful. Mushrooms for all. Wow. And it does ultimately at the end validate my thesis that You can just buy mushrooms.

**Kelsey:** Avery, thank you so much for coming on the show. It was a delight to have you.

**Avery:** Oh, thank you very much. This is a great story.

**Kelsey:** This podcast was produced by Alex Sujong Laughlin and Ozzy Llinas Goodman. Justin Ellis is Defector's Projects Editor. Jasper Wang and Sean Kuhn are Defector's business guys. Tom Ley is our Editor in Chief. Jae Towle Vieira is our associate producer. Abigail Siegel is our intern. Dan McQuade runs our merch store, which you can find at [normalgossip.store](http://normalgossip.store). Tara Jacoby designed our show art. Thank you to Jasper Wang, Kathryn Xu, Patrick Redford, Israel Daramola, Ray Ratto, Chris Thompson, David Roth, Dave McKenna, and Luis Paez Pumar for your help on this season. And thanks to the rest of the Defector staff. Defector Media is a collectively-owned, subscriber-based media company, and Normal Gossip is a proud member of Radiotopia. I'm Kelsey McKinney, and please remember, you did not hear this from me.