



YOU DON'T KNOW

Episode 1: Every-Few-Weeks

Produced by David Turner: **DT**

Written by Lizzy Turner: **LT**

Transcription by Christabel Smith (Intro, Outro) and Lizzy Turner (Every-Few-Weeks)

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Intro:

LT: Hello. Welcome to the first episode of You Don't Know. My name is Lizzy Turner.

DT: And my name is David Turner. For those of you that haven't yet listened to our introduction episode, a quick recap. You Don't Know is a collaborative project between myself and my wife Lizzy. We will be recording, and basically messing around with, some of our writing. Initially it's going to be a six-part series, running throughout 2021. There's a chance that it might extend into more projects, but at the moment we reserve the right to knock it on the head if we get bored of it, so we're only promising six innit.

LT: This episode is based on a short story, written by me, called 'Every-Few-Weeks', and it has been produced by David. We'll be coming back at the end of the episode to have a little chat about how we made it, about the writing and the recording, so if you want to hear that, keep listening at the end.

DT: This episode is accompanied by an A2 poster of the text written by Lizzy. The poster is designed by me. I'm doing air quotes, which you can't see in audio. The very loosest definition of the term 'design'. You can find that over at our website youdontknow.uk, on our online

shop. One quick thing before the recording and I will get out of your way. If you like this, tell some people.

Every-Few-Weeks:

[Track begins by fading in with synth music, which continues throughout the entire track as a musical 'bed', rising and falling in intensity with different sections of the track, with occasional siren-like sounds. The character of the music creates an atmosphere of apprehension and dread]

[Narrating voice (NV), with slight crackly digital quality]

I can smell the inside of my own guts and it smells morbid so I have been secretly searching:

[Voice with deep-pitched effect. Simultaneous sound effect of person typing on a keyboard]
'menstrual hormones and increased sense of smell'

[NV]

I'm exhaling into a glass to try and fathom my own breath, and I'm changing my clothes every couple of hours. There's a stench out in the hallway apparently. Some of the terms I use for skirting around these issues:

[Voice with high-pitched, scratchy effect (HV) – sounds panicked. End phrase swoops down in pitch as it is spoken]

I feel wonky in the head; my muff hurts; I am bleeding; my womb and my brain are conspiring against me; I'm having a psychological problem; help. I'm trying to just lean into it...

[NV. Sound effect of an audience applauding fades in during end phrase and continues]

I would say I'm keeping the majority of this under wraps but my beloved would see my face looks like a wrought thing and I'm holding up my paws like a hungry cat. I would say I haven't described the half of it but he would know that I know I don't need to, and he's lovely and he's right. There is guilt that I feel over these plays in my head.

[Computer-generated male voice, with 'well-spoken' English accent, which begins sped up and slows down over course of speech. Applause effect gradually slows, distorts to a crackle, and trickles out after speech]

I'm an angry, ugly, horrible whore. A play, by me. One more nutty bitch bar. A play, by me.

[NV]

My bad performance is disconnected and out in front of me, out of control from my real soul. How am I supposed to stay on top of my CBT exercises when I'm just another boring chestnut?

[Phrase echoes strongly, and drags out as synth bed rises to a brief crescendo]

(I know, I know.)

[NV]

Some of the things I have seen and heard:

[HV. Sound effect of a large public crowd moving about and talking within a large echoing space fades in and out over course of passage]

an open trapdoor in the carpeted floor, beneath which a lit passageway, bustling with people, a hurry of heads in a back-of-house corridor; lots of little black cats and dogs, in corners, one at a time, down between the bookcase and the wall, or by the doorway, or crouching in the bathroom; my loved ones calling my name over the radio music, but this is a classic.

[NV]

I haven't yet found the clearance to go to the doctor with:

[HV, speaking harshly]

"my reproductive organs are exacerbating my mental illness!"

[NV, becoming increasingly frantic]

How do they manage to never be real people? And I'm not as sick as my best friend, and I'm not as sick as our other friend, and I'm not as sick as many of our friends and so I don't go. I'm already tired of taking up this emotional space and the repetition is too frequent for anyone to stand. Some of the ways I might describe this to others:

[HV]

I feel like I look like a Frank Auerbach painting (piled up paint, blurry face, can only see it when far away etc); I feel like I look like I'm full of lead (but I'm so bloated I'd only float, bloat/float etc); I feel like I look like an old cartoon rendering of John Major (grey, outdated etc).

[Sound effect of a telephone ringing out, preceding speech. NV, with slightly muted effect and reverb, which sounds distant, as though it is being heard through a telephone receiver]

Hi, I'm so huge right now, and yet I keep curling up inside acorn cups. What would you normally prescribe for this? Because I'm a bit worried about side effects. I mean, if I become too loose will I be able to cling? I've clung my whole life you see, and I've been aiming for koala-bear-fridge-magnet so I really can't stop now, but maybe I'm just too heavy, sticky as I am, but yeah, the pain, yeah it's been making me hang over things, like any metal bar, I'll hang over it for the weight, you see, and the pressure is great for I am so heavy, and this will help temporarily, but then the pain just sinks into my legs and I start to feel really long, but not in a good way, in a heavy snake kind of way, though this does mean I can still coil myself into things, I only wish I was small enough to plop into his pocket, a grumpy woodlouse would still be sweet, but I only get longer, and wider, and I stink, and I'm so hateful, and so how could anybody want me to live?

[Sound effect of a telephone 'disconnect' message, a female voice with generic American accent, followed by a continuous harsh beep, which fades out into next passage]

The customer you're trying to reach is not available. Please call back.

[NV. Second phrase is whispered, with added reverb. Third phrase is whispered more quietly, with more reverb]

You think that kind of thing's going to be okay? You think that kind of thing's going to be okay? You think that kind of thing's going to be okay?

[NV]

No wonder I have gender hesitations when- I'm not going to go into that. When the Year 6 teacher gave us 'the talk' and then asked, "who feels like, yeah! I'm becoming a woman!" none of us raised a hand or smiled. Someone leaked the information to the boys and then my face was panic-hot all day. Never got over it.

[HV. Sound effect of sea waves crashing fades in during speech, increasing in volume and intensity, continuing after speech and fading out during next passage]

Wombs are weird and I really don't like admitting to having one, and what an awful thing to think, so hateful, ungrateful, but I didn't ask for this, and why should I be grateful, oh yeah because my beautiful mother had a hysterectomy when I was born, and we both have regular nightmares of tsunami waves, and waves of guilt are heaving up to meet my levels of self-repulsion, waves, why is everything described in waves for us? Because we weep and bleed, in waves, in desperation.

[NV, sounding increasingly depressed]

I'm not sure how to tell if it's my body that's distorted, or my mind. Same thing? Read despair, read distress. Read wrought, wrenched, wrecked. God, I feel repulsive at the drama. Some people are really sick. Read tortured, self-reprimanded. It's interesting, I suppose, how two ill processes become combined. Collaborate, collude, conspire. They find each other through the body (ugh, I'm talking about 'the body'), they recognise the work at hand, they act to form a conduit together. What for? They pull the strings, they push me about. This is all very self-centred. And somehow, I'm not involved at all.

[Voice with choral and autotune effects. Effects increase gradually over first phrase. Then heavy 'stepping' autotune and chorus effect continue as passage is sung, with each 'oh' prolonged in varying degrees of elaboration]

It me, it me, it me, O Lord, standing in the middle of all this nonsense, and really quite small. Oh, what do I do, if I am strangled in the night by my own conduits? And oh, what do I do if I am poisoned by my own venom? Oh, what will I do when I am hefted away on a Wave? Oh, what will I do when the boys find out? Oh, what will I do when I forget my loved ones? Oh, what will I do when they're finally sick of me? Oh, what will I do when the music stops? Oh, what will I do when the railing is calling? Oh, what will I do when I sink? Oh, who am I talking to?

[NV]

Some of the subjects I've been thinking about:

[HV]

the dead people who are still on Mount Everest.

[NV]

Just that really. Lost to nature.

[Sound effect of footsteps descending a stone staircase begins and continues throughout next passage]

Before I'm able to arrange answers to my racing questions, this will all be winding down.

[NV gradually deepens in pitch throughout passage, matching sound effect of descending footsteps, until it sounds distorted and monstrous. Steps continue after speech and fade out]

The spiking will continue for a bit, so you've still got to remember that the way down can be as dangerous as the way up (Everest). But despite what you may think, you do still look the same (corpses on Everest). You'll feel embarrassed at the repetition and feel compelled to say sorry many times.

[NV]

Some of the things to watch out for next time:

[HV, sounding increasingly distressed]

obsessive list-making; dropping and smashing a lot of glasses; falling down when standing still; feeling worthless; falling, feeling, falling, feeling; noticing that the morbid smell of your guts is polluting the hallways of your entire block; noticing that thoughts of 70s mountaineering attire are infiltrating your entire day; noticing that your bodily processes are getting into each other. It's not very easy to talk about this. I can see the teacups filling but I can't stop pouring. I'm trying to work out what it means to lean into it, ride the wave. I don't know how to talk about 'the body' without copying my best friend, and our other friend, and many of our friends. I'm not sure why cycles beget cycles or which one comes first.

[Voice with deep-pitched effect and reverb, which deepens in pitch with each phrase until it sounds monstrous. Simultaneous sound effect of person typing on keyboard, which continues throughout and beyond speech, getting quicker and more frantic, before stopping suddenly]

Does anyone else feel like this? Is anyone else getting worse? Is this just what happens? Is this normal?

[Synth bed continues for a time, pulsating and 'swishing', with siren-like sounds, until it eventually fades out to silence]

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Outro:

DT: That was 'Every-Few-Weeks', written by Lizzy Turner and produced by me. As is plastered all over the website and promotional literature, You Don't Know is an experiment, and in that vein, I'm not really too sure how these conversations are going to go. They will probably be different every episode. To kick things off, I'm going to ask my wife and collaborative partner, for the first episode, why did you decide to go banging on about your menstrual cycle?

LT: [Laughs] I never intended to write about ‘the body’, as I say in the story. It was something I began writing not far into lockdown, wrote over the course of about a month as it sort of mapped my menstrual cycle. At the time, obviously not much was going on, so I just carried on tinkering with it and then it turned into something which I thought was pretty good. I don’t feel like the mental side of that issue is talked about very much and how, often, your mental state is so influenced by the coursing of hormones through your body.

DT: Obviously, the writing is what it is and people have heard it in this format. I suppose that was the reason for You Don’t Know as a project on the whole, in that so much of our writing, individually and collaboratively, relies heavily on working with the visual aspect as well. It’s hard, isn’t it, to find an outlet within books and anthologies and journals, even websites, that will allow you to be creative using different fonts and space within text.

LT: Definitely. It was something which I did immediately with writing the story, I automatically started putting each section into a different visual form and I felt that reflected how I was feeling, the ups and downs of my mood, the boldness of some of it, the wiggleness of some of it.

DT: To give the listeners some sort of context as to how this particular project came about, and I’m talking specifically about ‘Every-Few-Weeks’ here; you gave me the text, which was already formatted and with the use of different fonts trying to highlight different voices, each of which were your own. They weren’t different people, but they were different voices and different perspectives. It was laid out very graphically, but did you have an idea of how those voices might sound audibly?

LT: Not at all, no. I hadn’t imagined it would become sounds. I hadn’t even thought about it, I don’t think they sounded different in my head.

DT: Yeah I suppose they’re not different voices are they, they’re just different perspectives.

LT: Yeah I just turned the feelings into visuals, like, how would it look on the page?

DT: I suppose that’s how the design of the poster came about – which you can go and see at the online shop on our website, and is available to buy – that informed the layout of the poster, to try and highlight the different voices or the different areas and perspectives of the text, but with it remaining as coming from a singular mouth, a singular brain, if any of us indeed have singular brains.

LT: Can I ask you a question?

DT: I really wish you would.

LT: Why did you decide to format it as an A2 poster?

DT: I wanted it to seem a bit like all the sort of arts manifestos that I really hate, which I’m fascinated by, in that people can have such firm ideas about what they are going to go forward

and create. That doesn't relate to this project, but mainly what annoys me about those things is that they are a pure rejection of other ideas. They don't create new ideas, they just reject what comes before and, I say this slightly tongue-in-cheek and I only say it because I know you trust me when I say it, I wanted it to retain the feeling of a rant. I don't personally see the word 'rant' as being negative, but I think when it's used in terms of women and how they feel about their bodies, it's a very negative connotation and I don't mean to associate it with that, but I wanted to retain the idea that the emotions were spilling out without many barriers to contain them. There weren't any walls to stop these feelings flowing out over the page. I didn't want the reader to have the opportunity or any reason to turn a page to see everything, I wanted the person viewing it to be overwhelmed.

LT: No, it's perfect. That's why I asked the question because it feels to me like the ideal form for it. I wanted it to be big, and relentlessly all in one go. It doesn't give anyone a choice. It asks questions but doesn't wait for any answers.

DT: Yeah, and I suppose in the same way that I am acknowledging that I wouldn't necessarily use certain words with people I didn't know really intimately, and obviously we're married and we obviously trust each other to use certain words, but I do wonder whether I would have been able to, or even been trusted to, rework this particular piece of writing if it was written by someone I wasn't intimate with. I don't think I would have gone near it, certainly not in the same way, I wouldn't have been trying to highlight the aspects of the ranting nature of a woman writing about her body in that way if I didn't know her really well!

LT: I know you wouldn't. That's why I allowed you to do it.

DT: That way, a firm and resolute and very deserved cancelling lies. Also, at the same time, I think because I had heard you read drafts of the text, looking back on it now, the reason I asked you whether you could hear any different voices as you were writing it is because they are so distinct in my mind, but it's hard when you've worked so closely on something, that you don't start to impart your own emotions. I feel very clearly that they are different-sounding voices, and I feel like when you talk about certain aspects of your physical and emotional experience, you do physically use different voices to me, or in front of me. But I think that maybe exists in my head only. Or I'm picking up on it, it probably isn't that relevant to you. But it's become so entwined with it that I can't separate that aspect.

LT: I'm sure it does all sound different, but because it's all taking place in my head and my body, I can't necessarily differentiate them, until afterwards perhaps. When I look back on things I've said and how I've felt, I can then see that I wasn't quite myself.

DT: But that's also not true is it, because you are very much yourself. It's not an out-of-body experience. I think that's where so much of the guilt lies, isn't it, for people, they feel they are not being themselves, in any aspect.

LT: That's perhaps not the right way to say it.

DT: Yeah but we've been conditioned to feel like that haven't we. I said I was going to do this at the beginning of the conversation; it's important to acknowledge that we have been

together for over six years, married for over half that time, and talking like this into microphone is not a very natural process, it's quite awkward. But off the back of that, it's interesting, in the last couple of weeks when we've talked about recording this conversation, or any conversation, I've interviewed you previously for Lunar Poetry Podcast projects, which we had to do twice because the first one was such a shambles...

LT: It was painful.

DT: It was terrible yeah, and I don't think even the second one came out that well... But you've said to me a couple of times that you feel most awkward talking to me. Not in general, only when there is a microphone present. So why is that?

LT: I think I am intimidated by you in this setting because you are so natural on the microphone.

DT: I cut a very stern figure.

LT: And you look so fierce!

DT: I know what you mean but you're dancing around the issue a little bit here. What is it about talking to me specifically? In the course of our creative lives we have been recorded talking about our work, and you do seem to be far more embarrassed talking to me than anyone else.

LT: I don't know, it doesn't make much sense, does it? Because you see me at my most vulnerable, so it wouldn't be true to say I am too vulnerable. I think I just want to impress you! I'm worried I'll sound like an idiot if I bullshit you. Maybe I'm just not very sure of my own skills.

DT: None of us are, are we? There is a truth in that isn't there. What attracted me to this collaborative project is that there is nowhere to hide. If I write something that's a gross exaggeration, trying to make myself look better, you're going to know that. But at the same time there is a security, because you can talk about menstruation with me in terms of a creative process because I've seen it and heard it, and lived it with you. Smelt it, tasted it, etc. I mean, how many months have we been together? I don't in any way want to lead anyone to feel like I'm trying to garner sympathy, like it's some sort of burden. You yourself are living with someone with bipolar, and you know just what it's like living with someone whose moods swing wildly. Mine just do it over the course of seasons rather than months. Often, though, hour-to-hour as well.

As part of these conversations though, I did feel it would be important to talk technically about how each episode / issue develops. Not everybody's going to be that interested in it, but the A2 poster was printed by a printing press called the Ludo Press, down in South West London, which we have used previously for other projects. They are fantastic, exceptionally patient with us, who ask for paper stock in terms of emotions and how things might feel and look in certain lights. They've interpreted our descriptions excellently every time and always sent selections of paper so ultimately, we've always been able to choose a stock which we've

really liked. The A2 poster is 250gsm with a silk finish. Ideally, I would have liked some sort of letterpress or silkscreen poster. At the same time, at the heart of everything we do, we like things to be affordable and if we'd gone down that route, each poster would have been £30 or £40 instead of £10. So there's a slightly more glossy, commercial feel to this poster.

LT: Who would want to spend £40 on a rant to put on their wall?

DT: We talk a lot about access to work. I think it would become immediately inaccessible to a lot of people if it was at that price.

LT: One thing I'd like to ask, and you've sort of answered this a bit already, but how complete an idea of sound did you have when you read the story? Actually, no, because between you first reading the story and us deciding to make a recording of it, there was quite a bit of time. So, when you read it, did you hear it as a soundscape? I know you've said you could hear the distinct voices in it, but how close was it to the recording that we have now?

DT: It was fairly close in that I wanted you to read it pretty straight. In that, all I really asked you to do immediately was read the text. It wasn't until the poster was finished that I had a real idea of how I wanted the sounds to work. There are a couple of sentences which disappear visually. They repeat and become gradually lighter in text until they disappear. Initially, I felt I wanted those as echoes or repeating into the distance. But then that didn't quite work. I felt the 'I know' bit worked really well as an echo, mainly because I had an idea of what the soundbed would do with it; but the part where you repeat three times, 'you think that kind of thing's going to be okay', using purely reverb and echoing, which now doesn't exist in the recording, just didn't work at all. And it sounded too repetitive, both in itself, but also because it just mimicked the 'I know, I know' refrain.

Talking to you more about what the text meant, it seemed more appropriate to have the whisper, in that it feels more apologetic. In talking about approaching doctors and talking to people about having emotional problems, and those emotional problems exacerbating other parts of mental illnesses and physical problems; I wanted some element in there of it feeling apologetic because it actually doesn't- what I really like about it in terms of a piece is that it's not that apologetic. It touches on how you can feel like you need to apologise, but the text in itself isn't an apology.

LT: It's quite angry, I think.

DT: Yeah and I suppose it's a direct reaction to being made to feel like you have to apologise for something you have no control over. Once the visuals started to develop for the poster, I had a much firmer idea of which sound effects I might employ. I wanted there to be some elements of really obvious things, like the phone call. Actually that's the only bit you don't read out, on the poster is it tells you there is a projected telephone call. I didn't want that to be read out, I wanted it to be implied through the sound. And that's a really obvious thing, the ringing, the disconnect message, but it wasn't until I had all the sounds layered up that I started to think about the bed that runs underneath it, which is created on an app I've got on my phone, for synths. If anyone would like to try anything like this and you're looking for somewhere to start, there's a great website called freesound.org, which is where I got

most of the sound effects from. It's a huge community of people recording and uploading sounds for use by sound recordists. Then for the voices, we have this amazing voice modulator called a Roland VT-4, which you've been playing around with.

LT: Yeah, a lot. I love autotune.

DT: So the 'second voice', the whiney, creaky voice, did I tell you what to record or did I give you a description?

LT: What sort of sound to make, do you mean? I can't remember. I think you suggested something quite vague and then I knew then how it should sound. I was just trying random things with the VT-4 and then that came out and it seemed to fit perfectly.

DT: Yeah. I can remember writing down quite firm instructions of what to do with the autotune. I had a real vision, knew exactly how I wanted that to sound because I knew how I wanted it to be reflected in the synth. I think that's when I started to have a real firm idea of how the synth and the voice should match up, it was in that part with the autotune, because they blend in so well. And the repetition of the waves, both literal recordings of waves, but also mimicking that in the sound. For anyone who's interested, let me just bring that up on my phone. I have an app called Synth One. Brilliant. I'm going to try and play a bit in the park. I wonder if we can hear this. This is part of the programme that I played. [Section of synth music plays]

LT: Can I talk over that?

DT: Please do. Oh no, it's gone off now.

LT: Overall, I think you've interpreted the writing really well. Because, as you say, I got some instructions, recorded my part almost in one go, and then most of it ended up being a surprise to me when it was finished, and I felt like it was a perfect interpretation of what I was trying to say.

DT: That's good to hear, that you like it. It will be interesting to see what people think of it, whether other people think it's a success. I suppose that's the whole point of a collaborative project, it's trying to make the other person happy. Not necessarily happy, but at least elicit some sort of emotion. It would be terrible to think that you were just bored of what I'd done!

LT: It's the funest thing about it. This is perhaps a bit of a strange question for the listeners, because it has just come out, but obviously we've prepared this quite far in advance; I'm wondering whether, if you were to do it again, would you do anything differently in the process?

DT: Yeah. There are elements of the recording that I'm not happy with, that would just take far too much work to undo. There were certain places where I wanted to leave more of a gap, but because you'd employed, especially with the 'second voice', because there is quite a lot of reverb on it, it wasn't possible to just stretch those parts apart. This is quite a boring thing to say, but if I'd clipped it and made a space, there was a dead sound, but then if I tried

to copy it, there were certain tones which would repeat, which just sounded weird. So I suppose, like with a lot of things, perhaps I would just have allowed more time for re-recording. I think it works well now because I deliberately pitched the synth to match the tone of your voice when there weren't effects being employed, so your 'normal voice'. But because you read it through one of our BeyerDynamic M58 mics, through the Roland VT-4, without an effect employed, in real time it sounds as if it isn't doing anything, but it does affect the tone.

LT: Quite badly.

DT: Quite drastically. It sounds a bit crackly, but in the recording it sounds fine. But these are technical things. I'm just trying to work out whether creatively I would have done anything differently. I wish I had made more of an effort to record some of the original sounds myself because I have the capability with a portable recorder, and I really enjoy that. But I'm happy enough with the results initially, to sort of use it as an educational project for myself.

LT: An experiment, if you will.

DT: It's a bit of an experiment, right? I don't think I've ever made anything that I've been completely happy with, so it's not an unusual experience to have to let people experience something and not be quite satisfied with it. Overall, I'm just happy that you're content with what I've done to what is a very sensitive time of your life, which repeats and repeats in waves.

LT: Endlessly.

DT: Endlessly, it feels like. Well, there will be an end to it, but you don't really want to wish that on yourself either!

LT: Then something else will happen! But yeah, I think it's brilliant.

DT: Well, I don't want this conversation to descend into five minutes of us telling people that what we've done is brilliant. I think we will leave it up to them to decide. I think that's probably as much as we've got to say. It feels like we'll start dragging. For what was a 12-minute recording, we've probably said enough. Shall we wrap it up?

LT: Yeah.

DT: Alright. We will be back in two months, with an episode/issue called 'Picking at the Carrion'. I'm not going to tell you too much about that, mainly because we haven't recorded it.

LT: I'll be leading the production this time.

DT: We're switching it around a bit. It doesn't matter. You'll hear it in two months.

LT: Just wait!

DT: Yes, just wait, will ya? For God's sake. This series will not be available early and in full on Netflix. You will have to wait as we drip-feed it to you. Honestly, if you like this, if you thought it was interesting in any way, go and tell people about it because it's really hard to spread the word about podcasts now that the BBC and Gemma Collins are doing it. Her and Peter Crouch, you can't get a word in on the airwaves now. Anyway, tell people you love us, because we love you.

LT: Yeah.

End of transcript.