

ROUNDAABOUT

Written by

John J King

A scientist on the verge of discovering time travel must fight off
a strange traveler sent to kill her before she does.

Contact:
johnjking80@gmail.com
617.599.2929

FADE IN:

EXT. PARK - SUNSET

The sun dips behind a hill of trampled grass. Mottled rocks push out of the grass like tumors. Without the skyline in the distance, the place would feel alien, out of time.

ALVA (28), wraps her coat tight as she takes in the view, and pulls a trembling guinea pig from inside her jacket.

ALVA

OK Jerry. Third time's the charm.

Her sunglasses reflect two Jerry's on the rock. A COLLAR wraps his neck. Jerry wanders into the wilderness. Alva takes a REMOTE CONTROL from her pocket and presses a button.

A predator HOOTS in the distance.

TITLE CARD: ROUNDABOUT

INT. ALVA'S APARTMENT, DEN - DUSK, MAY 4 LOOP 1

A basement apartment, minimal apart from a large, paper-strewn desk. Alva enters. She goes to a CAGE by the window: Jerry runs laps on his wheel. Alva leans down to watch, cage bars splitting her face.

ALVA

Welcome back, Jerry.

Jerry squeaks.

A series of jump cuts as Alva examines Jerry:

- She times his speed in the wheel
- She checks his pulse, vitals, weight.
- She fills his food and water: he eats.
- She types data in a spreadsheet on her LAPTOP
- The Fridge: Alva's grabs a BOTTLE OF ROSÉ.
- The Cabinet: she grabs her MIT Class of 2012 MUG.

ALVA sits with laptop and wine, speaks into DICTAPHONE.

ALVA (CONT'D)
 May 4, 7:13pm. QuantaCollar test
 number three. Jerry's back. Again.
 Energy high. Tumors undetectable. X-
 ray to confirm. He's y-

She peers at the cage. Jerry plays.

ALVA (CONT'D)
 He seems younger.

Alva sips wine.

ALVA (CONT'D)
 Three times. Let him out. Collar
 'go.' Bam: back in his cage. He
 can't be getting back here faster
 than me. Plus he doesn't have a
 key. He doesn't have thumbs.

She drains her mug, stops the tape.

ALVA (CONT'D)
 Are you teleporting, Mr. Jerry? No.
 Silly scientist. You're drunk.

Alva walks to the hallway, singing.

ALVA (SINGING) (CONT'D)
 Fly me to the hill, Teleport me to
 my cage...

In the double-mirrored hallway, infinite reflections of Alva bounce back and forth as she passes through. She strips off her shirt and undoes her pants.

INT. ALVA'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Alva scowls at her under-eye skin in the mirror. She pees.

INT. ALVA'S HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The black gap under the closet door flashes with BLUE LIGHT.

THUNK. Blue turns black. The door opens. A boot steps out.

The boot belongs to a SILHOUETTE - vague and shadowy, seen from the back. They close the door with the toilet's FLUSH.

The Silhouette ninjas into the den. A BLACK RING glows at her neck. She's not of Now. She leans down to Jerry's cage.

SILHOUETTE (STILL FROM BEHIND)
Ciao Jerry. Long time, no see.

Alva enters the den, wearing bathrobe, sees SILHOUETTE.
And Alva SCREAMS. The stranger turns, pulls out a gun.

SILHOUETTE (CONT'D)
Quiet.

Alva does. Silhouette points at the couch with the gun.

SILHOUETTE (CONT'D)
Sit.

ALVA
I have no cash. I'll write a check -

SILHOUETTE
This is not a robbery.

ALVA
Just please: not my laptop and -

She cocks and points the gun at Alva, who finally -

SILHOUETTE
Shut up and sit.

Shuts the damn hell up. Alva sits on the couch.

SILHOUETTE (CONT'D)
This isn't a robbery. It's a an
assassination.

ALVA'S POV as: Silhouette steps forward into light and it's
... it is her own face. ALVA-2 (35) is Alva. But different.

ALVA
Who are you.

ALVA-2
You. Seven years from now.

Alva's hands tremble and reach for her mug, but it's empty.

ALVA
You can't be.

ALVA-2
But here I am.

Alva-2 lowers the gun. Alva watches her intently. With a
sudden burst, Alva talks, while Alva-2 mimics her, bored:

ALVA Prove it. What?! Holy- YOU'VE done this before.

ALVA-2 (CONT'D) Prove it. What?! Holy- YOU'VE done this before.

ALVA (CONT'D)
How are you-

ALVA-2
Not my first time.

ALVA
You're from the future? A time-

ALVA-2
A Chrono-naut.

Alva reaches for the wine.

ALVA
I need a drink, can I...?

Alva-2 waves the gun: "go for it." Alva chugs. Alva-2 prowls.

ALVA (CONT'D)
You said assassination.
That. That means I'm...someone-

ALVA-2
You invent it. Tomorrow.

ALVA
Invent what?

ALVA-2
Time travel.

Alva sneezes. Alva-2 sits, casually points the gun.

ALVA-2 (CONT'D)
May 10, 2021 - next week - you file
a patent.

ALVA A tracking collar for pets.

ALVA-2 (CONT'D) A tracking collar for pets.

ALVA-2 (CONT'D)
It's more than that. By the time
the patent clerks realize...

She points at her own collar.

ALVA
Jerry. He's not teleporting?

ALVA-2
No. He's not.

Alva laughs. She pulls the Veuve from the fridge.

ALVA
Join me?

She grabs a second glass.

ALVA (CONT'D)
We'll toast.

Alva turns back to find Alva-2 standing, gun aimed.

Alva drops the glass, shards sparkle across the floor.

ALVA (CONT'D)
You don't have to-

ALVA-2
I do.

ALVA
Whoever sent you -

ALVA-2
I sent myself. Goodbye.

The gun BURSTS. Alva's body slams into the wall, collapses.
Alva-2 sets down her gun, and turns to Jerry.

ALVA-2 (CONT'D)
Aw, Jerry. I'll be quick.

Alva-2 unhooks the door and fingers Jerry's collar.

Then she freezes.

ALVA-2 (CONT'D)
Hey, Jerry. If I kill the inventor
of time travel before she invents
it, I can't be here.

Alva-2's eyes jolt to her gun.

ALVA-2 (CONT'D)
Which means -

ALVA
(behind her, Rosé bottle
in hand)
I'm not dead.

Alva bottles Alva-2's skull with an awful THUNK. The gun skitters to the floor and Alva-2 crumbles.

ALVA (CONT'D)
Not my first time either. Ow, me.
You shot my tit.

Alva removes her bathrobe, a bullet proof vest underneath.

ALVA (CONT'D)
Real simple, hon. For you to be
here, I have to invent time travel.

Alva-2 grunts, gasps, and reaches. Alva picks up the gun.

ALVA (CONT'D)
Which means: I win.

Alva pops the cork on the Veuve.

ALVA (CONT'D)
Champagne for our real friends.
Real pain for our sham ones.

Alva fires a round into Alva-2's skull. Silence. Jerry calms.

INT. ALVA'S APARTMENT - DUSK, MAY 4 LOOP 2

Same night, Different loop. Jerry nibbles cabbage.

ALVA (O.S.)
Jerry came back again. Energy high.
He seems...younger.

In the hallway, the crack under the closet flashes bright blue. THUD, then black. The door squeaks open.

ALVA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
That's three times. Let him out.
Collar. Bam: he's back.

Alva-2 creeps out of the closet - infinite reflections of her ping between the mirrors - and peers into the den.

An empty couch.

ALVA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Doesn't make sense.

Alva-2 swerves her eyes. No sign of Alva. Then she sees it - on the coffee table, the dictaphone.

The voice is coming from the tape.

A few things happen near simultaneously:

- Alva-2's eyes go wide; she drops to her knees.
- Alva - behind her - swings the TOILET COVER, juuuuuust missing Alva-2's head, her momentum hurling her over ALVA-2.
- Alva-2 leaps onto Alva, grasps her throat.

A RAGING FIGHT ENSUES. It's a claw-to-the-death kind of thing - not highly skilled in a "I know Kung-Fu" kind of way - these are two scientists who overwork at home - but in a way that shows A) They are Equals, and B) this fight has been fought over many loops.

Each Alva pulls out hidden weapons or tricks - but for every new tactic there's a complimentary new shield or defense.

Everyone gets bloody and bruised. Power whirls. Then Alva has Alva-2 on the floor, garroting her neck with a bathrobe belt.

ALVA (CONT'D)

I told you: You don't win. Someone invents it, or you're not here.

Alva-2's eyes widen in wonder for a split second realization - you can almost hear the "wait, what?" - before she dies.

INT. ALVA'S APARTMENT - DUSK, MAY 4 LOOP 3

Same night, new loop. The closet gleams blue, then black. THUD. Alva-2 steps out, freezes. Silence. What the fuck?

Alva-2 peers around the corner and sees: Alva. Sitting. Waiting. Cheese plate, wine, two glasses.

Alva-2 jumps into the room, gun drawn.

ALVA

Chrono-Me. Welcome.

ALVA-2

What are you doing?

ALVA

Sit. We hungry?

Alva-2 eyes the food, the room.

ALVA (CONT'D)

We should talk. Prosecco?

ALVA-2
My favorite.

ALVA
I know.

Alva-2 lowers her gun. She steps into the room.

ALVA-2
You're older than I expected.

ALVA
Wow.

ALVA-2
I mean -

ALVA
I know. And you know I'm sensitive.

ALVA-2
I remember.

ALVA
You look younger than I do.

ALVA-2
Are we going to talk skin care or -

ALVA
What's the rush? Pressed for time?

ALVA-2
I know every time travel pun.

Alva sets the plate down: Let's get to it.

ALVA
Why kill me?

ALVA-2
You brought it on yourself when you invented it.

ALVA
What happened - happens. To you?

Alva-2 looks back at her, piercing.

ALVA (CONT'D)
To us.

Alva-2 paces, nibbling cheese.

ALVA-2
We're addicted.

ALVA
Me? I haven't-

ALVA-2
We don't stop. We go sightseeing.

Alva's frowns: like what?

ALVA-2 (CONT'D)
Last Hurrah, corner table, JFK
proposes to Jackie. Salem - red
bonnet in the back. The '04 Sox.

ALVA
Wow.

ALVA-2
Everything you read and thought
"wish I'd been there."

ALVA
How long did we -

ALVA-2
Two hundred twenty-seven years.

Alva's mouth drops open.

ALVA-2 (CONT'D)
You think you're old now?

ALVA
That's impossible. Unless -
ALVA (CONT'D) Einstein was right. ALVA-2 Einstein was right.

ALVA-2 (CONT'D)
The Twin Paradox. You travel faster
than the speed of light -

ALVA
You age more slowly. Jerry.

She eats a cracker.

ALVA-2
After the tourism, you start
editing.

ALVA
Groundhog Day?

ALVA-2
More like Happy Death Day, but
yeah.

A heavy bookend catches her eye. Her finger traces the edge.

ALVA-2 (CONT'D)
We can't keep up. Fix one mistake,
a thousand more blossom. Until -

She gestures: here we are.

ALVA
Why don't you kill yourself?

ALVA-2
I am. It's not just you. It's
everyone.

Alva-2 finds a BLADE under a pillow, drops it on the table.

ALVA-2 (CONT'D)
No one kills Hitler. We spend
lifetimes arguing with exes, or
fucking them. I know a guy relived
2020 seven times just trying to
bang his quarantine roommate. A
million petty loops. It's the new
app. We're monsters.

She aims her gun at Alva.

ALVA-2 (CONT'D)
It has to end. I have to end you.

ALVA
Kill me, you die too.

ALVA-2
(with relief)
Yes.

Alva-2 cocks the gun. Alva stands.

ALVA
What's it like? Apart from...

ALVA-2
Breathtaking. If I could go back -
not to fix things. Live it all
again. And pay attention. It feels
like real life. But no.

Alva-2 pulls the trigger. Nothing. She tries again. Oops.
Alva eats a carrot.

ALVA
I'll always be one loop ahead.

Alva-2 checks her gun's chamber - empty. The magazine: empty.

ALVA (CONT'D)
Not much, but it's enough.

Alva-2 pulls a spare magazine from her jacket - empty.

ALVA (CONT'D)
To wear a vest. Unload your gun.

Alva-2 throws her gun down, gnashes, screams.

ALVA (CONT'D)
There must be a way. For us both.

ALVA-2
I'll take that Prosecco.

Alva pours two glasses. Alva-2 sulks on the floor. Alva passes a glass and lifts her mug. They clink.

ALVA
To biding your time.

Alva-2 drains her glass. She glares at Alva.

ALVA (CONT'D)
What?

ALVA-2
You're not drinking.

Alva smiles.

ALVA-2 (CONT'D)
I came back this morning to poison
the Prosecco.

ALVA
I know.

ALVA-2
I thought if there's any way to get
you it's through a bottle.

ALVA
You know me so well.

White foam bubbles at Alva-2's lips. She gasps and claws at her throat as her body stiffens and she falls, dead.

ALVA (CONT'D)

Shh. We've got plenty of time.

The closet door crashes open and ALVA-3 - identical to Alva in bathrobe, hair down - explodes out of it towards Alva.

Alva flips the cheese plate at Alva-3. They grapple, crash into furniture. It's not clear who's who. One gains control, pins the other. Choking.

ALVA-3

I told us: I invent it. It doesn't matter when.

Alva's eyes tremble in fear - this isn't how it should go.

ALVA-3 (CONT'D)

I kill you. And I invent it.
Because I remember how.

She throttles Alva until Alva goes still.

ALVA-3 (CONT'D)

It's about time.

Jerry nibbles in his cage. His collar glows and hums.

EXT. SAVIN HILL PARK - DUSK

Same hill as before. New loop.

The hill, the rocks like tumors. The waves. Alva-3 looks out. She pulls Jerry from her jacket, nuzzling him.

Alva-3 removes his collar, sets him down. Her sunglasses catch a single reflection of Jerry scurrying off.

Alva-3 throws her collar, Jerry's collar and the remote control into the river.

She turns to leave the park, opening an umbrella.

One second later it starts to rain.