

Episode 11: Palindrome

Hi friends... It is with a heavy heart and a battered soul that I tell you I suppose it is time. Time to wrap this thing up and move on to the next where we will explore the Casa De Cyana together and walk thru those withered halls and watch the unfortunate snuffing out of lives for the sake of entertainment for those who have it all and with it all, the inevitable and unfillable void they have within their very souls. The type of void that can only ever partially break the monotony of having *everything.* But to do that, I need you to take a trip with me, a slip slide down the light fantastic before light itself existed. Yes friends, in order to do that, we must go back to a time before time, and... you guessed it, a space before space.

And what does that even look like? How can such nothingness be conceptualized? I know you have begun to pick up a pattern within our little tale here and that pattern seems to be that everything always has and will always be *the same.* That the futile struggles of your life are struggles every thinking conscious thing that has ever existed faces: survival, sex, inebriation... the cornerstones of what life is. The difference being, with humanity in particular, the knowledge of the end always looms behind the whites of your eyes... always rears its pockmarked face, driving those struggles further, reminding you to never be too happy, never be too complacent. Because in an instant it will all be gone and you, my dear dear friends, will ultimately return to the void. (Laughs) But I will not. And that fact, and that fact alone, affords me knowledge that would twist the neurons in your brain into knots of circling thoughts, at odds with one another past the point of skirmish and force them into a devastating war in your brain that will undoubtedly plague the rest of your very short and very painful life until you make the decision to just... end it. To place bullet into brain, razor into wrist, or head into oven in a final attempt to make everything go away. And once again, return to the void. But one of the things that you don't know is you have made that trip often, you have walked this path and that, incalculable times. Because a little secret I will let you in on: there is only so much consciousness to go around. You, what you are, what you have been, what you always will be, has existed in one form or another since before time or light or what we know as the universe. Nothingness, at its core, is the inability of consciousness to observe and in observation, create what is known as *reality.*

And you... friends, you clever, clever people, have come close to figuring that out and that is *the one sin,* those of my kind deem unforgivable. Because confirmation of this one and only true and utterly undeniable *fact* about Reality will unravel the whole thing and leave all of existence, including my own, in irreparable shambles. So before we get started today let's begin with a crash course in quantum physics? Shall we? Oh I knew you'd be just so excited about that... So step into my classroom for just a moment and do not fear: all the things that make a story: plenty of death and drama and maybe, if you're lucky, some sex is heading your way. But I do find it prudent we all be on the same page.

[CLASSROOM JINGLE/CONTINUES THROUGH SCENE BECOMING MORE WOBBLY AND DISJOINTED]

Welcome one and all to @Voidbro669's Esoteric Quantum Foam Party Room! Where every cat is both dead and alive and not really a cat at all! Where superposition is our favorite position! Where spooky action at a distance is the only action we get! I am your host, the one, the only... me... you know me, we've been kicking it awhile now. What it do and how it be? Now I know you are all very excited so let's just calm it down cuz we have Serious Bizness TM CR to deal with.

[FILM PROJECTOR STARTS UP]

[RIGHT EAR]

So we all know what the double slit experiment is: light beams are shot at a surface with two slits, whereupon they elicit an interference pattern on a distant observable screen of multiple bright bands of photon strikes divided by darker bands. This occurs because the wave interferes with itself after traversing through one of two entry points. If one photon at a time is shot through the slits we should get two bands of light if a photon is just a photon. There should be no possibility of wave-like interference, with each photon creating a particle of each band depending on which slit it ended up traversing. And when this is measured by experimenters and their equipment, such as a sensor that counts photons as they pass through each slit, this is exactly what happens. Two bands of light created by photons behaving like a photon should in classical physics. But, when that equipment is removed from the equation and nothing else changes, the photons are still shot one at a time, after 140,000 or so photons pass through we again end up with an interference pattern, so with no outside influence, those particles aren't particles at all, but an expression of probability of where a particle might be, everything all at once. Until someone like you observes it, fucks it all up, and locks it into just one state.

Which means what friends? It means that without someone looking, the fundamental pieces of the universe are indefinite, until they are forced to be otherwise. And while you'll hear "both a wave and a particle" in reference to this experiment, know that it's always a wave - a statistical probability - until we observe it and force it into a discrete particle.

We have had this knowledge available to us since May of 1801 thanks to a Quaker guy named Thomas Young, a polymath hated in his time cuz of his lack of respect for the Apple guy. You know who I am talking about. Gravity fella.

[LEFT EAR]

{I know you do not care about this but it is important to realize that everything you see and smell and taste and feel around you is a hallucination processed by your brain. The space that you find yourself within is nothing more than a prison and realizing that will not even break your chains. There is nothing you can do but wait to die and then... and this is something *we* do not even know, but maybe, if all goes according to plan, you will receive a tiny, nearly insignificant fraction of answers to those impossible questions, and if you use your manners when you meet the Archons beyond, you may be able to bring some of that back with you the next time you visit.}

[RIGHT EAR]

{But this has all been expressed to you to lay the foundation for a more recent experiment. In the late 1970s one Mr. John Archibald Wheeler realized that experimenters could further delay the final, let's call it: choice, for lack of a better word, until the photon had made it almost all the way through an apparatus designed to emphasize one property over another, proving that the photon's behavior is not predetermined. By using two beam splitters, one to separate the quantum wave into separate directions and one to realign it further down the path toward a pair of detectors, which detector is ultimately pinged, and how light behaves, [FADING IN AND OUT LIKE SOMEONE WHO DOES NOT UNDERSTAND AND GLAZES OVER REPRESENTED IN THE AUDIO] is determined by the difference in the two paths lengths upon becoming recombined via the second beam splitter. But if the second beam splitter is removed after the photon passes through the first, the photon is sent down one path or the other like a particle, upon reaching the position where the second beam splitter would have been, both detectors are pinged with equal probabilities regardless of the lengths of the separate paths created by the first splitter. The only way this experiment works as described is if the act of measurement has “retrocausal” effects — meaning that what happens now travels back in time to “correct the record” making what we observe now the truth in the past, even if it wasn't that way to begin with. Wheeler himself rejected this argument, but his successors do not. Physicists in China have taken this a step farther and sent entangled photons, meaning a single photon is shot through a crystal to form a pair of entangled photons, more than 1200 kilometers away from one another and determined that when one of the entangled photons is observed, regardless of how far away the photons are from one another, the observed photon's quantum state, meaning the four levels of identification or numbers associated with that photon which is not shared with any other. Or, in other words, knowing one unique quantum state immediately defines the other. Of course, this cannot happen faster than light, because that would violate causality. The only way this works is if that measuring act jumps back to the point the photons were first entangled and sets both to the observational result in the future. This is what Einstein referred to, mockingly, as spooky action at a distance.}

[A RISING CHANT COMES UP THROUGH THIS EXPLANATION] Everytime you think you're looking up you are looking down. [MAYBE PULL SAMPLE FROM COWBOY DAN]

[LEFT EAR CONTINUED/ULTIMATELY OVERTAKING BOTH]

{Gravity keeps you held to the earth and you are hanging by a thread over a vast and inhospitable void. If the world let go you would fall into unending speckled black and the last thing you would see is the glitter of oceans you let the money fill with oil and trash, the land withered and warped because the petty gods you allowed to privatize the fossil fuels, then the crops, then the water that you need to survive. You let them convince you to give them everything for a .01 percent chance of becoming one of them. You bought into social darwinism, to might makes right, you let them twist Holy men who overturned money changing stalls and fed the poor and tended to the sick and downtrodden into a poster child of everything wrong with the very fabric of society: the love of violence and hate for anyone remotely unlike you... not a state you arrived at of your own volition but rather one you bought and paid for over time, at any point it all could've stopped... all you ever had to do was stop participating but you didn't. They ran their software, you accepted the new OS, you clicked agree on the terms of service and now here you are, and now there you go.}

[RISING BACK UP]

And the moral of this evidence, of these thought experiments and paradoxes is simple: without observation, there is no reality. But it goes deeper than that, and since you are on your way down, back into the caves until the time comes again to rebuild, to accept new petty gods who will do those same things, it really doesn't hurt for me to fill you in. It really doesn't hurt for you to know you are a mass of atoms with the ability to observe themselves in short, yet repeating, cyclical bursts of 60 or so years.

But before we go down the road that will always bring us back to the heart, inevitably always back to the demiurge... We should take a hop and a skip through time and visit the place where this story began. Yes friends, let's head back round the bend to the halls of Wireland Ranch. And then, I promise, I will take you to the beginning, not just of this story but rather, the beginning of all stories.

[REWIND]

[SITCOM JINGLE]

HORNET ANNOUNCER VOICE: Previously on Everybody Loves Wireland!

ABRIA: No worries, just thought I'd stop by and tell you. The delivery driver is free. Good luck fellas.

MALFASTICE: Motherfucker! There goes my money and my bitches. [LAUGH TRACK]

HORNET ANNOUNCER VOICE: Let's take a look inside that brain, shall we? Let's all go down to Overseer town. [WHISPER] Flashback music.

[SITCOM JINGLE STOPS ABRUPTLY/REPLACED BY DIRTY DRONE FROM EP 7/LAUGH TRACK REMAINS]

PALINDROME: Joseph, take our hand.

UNKNOWN VOICE: You know what she's doing right now? Cuz I do. Dontcha wanna knowwww? [LAUGH TRACK]

PALINDROME: Joseph, do not listen to it. You can turn it down. You can make it stop. Take our hand. We will show you how.

UNKNOWN VOICE: Turn me down? Turn meeee dowwwwnnnn? Do you see a fucking volume knob on my faceeee??? HMMMMM? [LAUGH TRACK] I am an INDIVIDUAL! WITH RIGHTS! WITH NEEEEEDSSSS! And right now, I NEED... [SLAM/SHUT DOWN THE LAUGH TRACK AND NOISE OF THE ROOM BELOW WHERE THE PARASITE REMAINS]

JOSEPH: What the fuck is that thing?

PALINDROME: It's ummmm, rather hard to explain. [DRAMATIC MUSIC DROP] But we can tell you if you are sure you wish to know. Only, there would be... caveats to that knowledge. In reality, because we can assure you this is still reality, regardless of how it seems... The potential remains that through incomprehensible possibilities, only one of two things is likely to occur. What these things are we cannot afford you. We can tell you that you seem to be in the unfortunate situation, for reasons beyond even our awareness, to break a cycle that has been spinning for millenia. If you choose to go that route, and we assure you it will come with immense hardship and pain, as does the route of inaction. So while this isn't really a choice the illusion remains that you can make the choice... you will never see the fruits of that labor. You will never see the sun shine on the other side of everything. [LAUGH TRACK]

JOSEPH: Will I see my family again? I am having a hard time recalling what they look like... my children I... I can't? Do I have children? I know I have children. Two of them? Three? [LAUGH TRACK]

PALINDROME: Depends. If you refuse what we offer... no. If you accept, long enough to say goodbye. [LAUGH TRACK] But the goodbye will not be easy to stomach.

As Joseph considers this, as the thoughts run through his brittle parasite fractured brain, images of the people he has known and loved float in the periphery, swaying hazy nondescript, mere oasis hallucinations his consciousness manifests, coping mechanisms in this alien place. Though, as he wills those apparitions to farther reaches, his children, his lover, his mother but never his father, he begins to understand that maybe this is not such an alien place after all: the room he finds himself in and yes, friends, it is a room, a room hanging precariously over a sickly pink landscape atop a tower that melted upwards into existence from the disease blushed terra firma, but still a room nonetheless. And this room has a soft glow, a warmth he hasn't felt since days well before, before his open heart surgery when life was still carefree as life can be, when viewed through the lens of innocence before it had been systematically destroyed by pain and anger and cynicism and well... reality. After all friends, we all know, reality comes for the best of us and leaves behind a rotten corpse of dismay and fear and anger that hangs about waiting for a ticket back to the void. The glow envelops him and clears his... mind, a word we are choosing to use loosely right now as there is no other way to convey the nature of what *this* is, so for now... mind will have to work. The walls surrounding him are seemingly crushed velvet expanses of space condensed to sparkled barrier, gleaming and glittering, galaxies spinning softly within, infinity shimmer... if he could step inside, if he could just...

[TERRIFYING NOISES ECHO FROM BENEATH]

PALINDROME: Joseph you need to make a decision. The thing beneath us will not stop. Cessation is found nowhere within it. Perpetual... that's the only word we'd use to define it. [LAUGH TRACK]

UNKNOWN VOICE [FROM BENEATH]: I know you're talking about me up there... I can feel the terror, feel the cortisol coursing through your veins, the adrenaline keeping your heart thumping along, such a fine *home* you are making for me. SUCH A WARM AND WELCOMING FAMILY UNIT WE WILL MAKE! [LAUGH TRACK]

UNKNOWN VOICE: NOW * LET * ME * IN. [THE FLOOR VIBRATES BENEATH/A CRASH WITH EACH ENUNCIATED WORD]

The Palindrome, having pulled Joseph to safety and immediately shied away to the darkest corner of the room, obscuring itself from our Overseer, giving him the space to adjust, to acclimate and accept, hoping he would come to the necessary conclusions alone, now moves slowly into the soft glow. What our Driver sees before him as it slips forward from the shadows is a mass of contorted angles that seem to bend back on themselves, breaking, shifting, reforming

anew with each calculated movement, an amalgamation of chaotic and ever shifting patterns which appear to slide in and out of his perception, bending the very fabric of reality around it, reflecting an array of colors from a spectrum nothing that lives has ever seen, taking in the particles of matter from those stardust walls and blending them into itself and then back out again, pushed into the environment, dulled and though his limited mind cannot discern, permanently altered, as each atom leaves something of itself behind, something that can never again be retrieved.

PALINDROME: It's okay Joseph. I am not how you perceive me to be, this is more a translation, a soft whisper from the other side of the rift, [JOSH SAYING "NEXT TIME ON WHAT'S IN THE RIFT"/WAY IN THE BACK] one day you will know but now is not that time. For when that time comes you will know naught else. [LAUGH TRACK]

[THE BANGING AND CHAOS GROWS LOUDER BENEATH/APPROACHING]

PALINDROME: We cannot hold it forever. You can leave this place. We can show you how.

[BANGING AND BEATING REACHES AN APEX/SOUND OF BREAKING WOOD]

JOSEPH: Okay. Show me.

[THE NOISE STOPS AND THE TOWER COLLAPSES/THE SOUND OF SPACE TWINKLES IN THE DISTANCE]

[REVERB OVERWHELMING]

PALINDROME: Zoom out with me.

Joseph spins wildly through the veil of space and time. A steady numbness overtakes him, whirring incomprehensible, moving at what could very well be the speed of light, cycling through nebulas and compressed pillars of helium that used to be hydrogen that used to be nothing. Endless chains of chemical reactions, quantum experiences, much like his own body, strapped to a chair in a dimension that defies all of this while simultaneously ushering the whole fucking shebang along toward an inevitable end that will turn out to be only a beginning of something else. Watching all his delusions of truth melt away in the sheer magnitude of what begins to settle before him, here at the very edge of everything, above it all where no man has ever ventured. The Palindrome, now a mere haze floating along before him, again takes his hand. He can feel the touch of it, the warmth radiating through his arm, pulsing waves through his body despite the fact that his body seems to be gone.

He begins to slow, the maddening rotations easing their trajectory to waning vibrations. The blur that had consumed him in the cosmic pirouette, the shapeless miasma gathering details, a sunny day in downtown Blythe slowly piecing itself together like fragments of a broken mirror in rewind. And friends, you'll never guess where our driver finds himself... This time from a slightly different perspective, as observer rather than participant, it seems he finds himself, as do we, outside the door of Reynold's Limited Curiosities, where lost objects go to be found.

PALINDROME: Funny, isn't it, how you spin and twirl... make progress, give yourself a sense of accomplishment but find yourself, without fail, at square one. The environment may have changed, the torrent of information spilling like a waterfall, churning toward the future but everything always is and always has been... right now.

He watches the scene, from multiple perspectives at once, from above and below, as both player and audience, multiple information streams filling out the scene in remarkable detail. He watches himself press the button beside the door, he watches as it does not depress, as he pushes the door with his hands that seemed so real at the time... the way it swung in hard and the wince twisting his features as he envisions the destroyed curiosity display case he just knew he was going to ruin. Envisioning the days earnings drop to zero. He can hear the bug murder zap noise of the flickering fluorescents... he can even see the wyrms writhing through them now though he did not before. And the scene plays out. Dust particles floating from ceiling to floor, disturbed by the slightest movements or changes in atmosphere. The expression of fear on his face as the white noise ring blares from his phone, the calculated calm of the everywhere voice directing him to the desk, which then awakens to reveal a neon sphinx gnashing at him out of fear and anger, a prisoner unable to break the bonds that hold it in limbo. The rainbow wyrms fall from the ceiling, powdered white glass rains down on our Driver from above, into his hair, settling between the fibers in his clothes, those fibers themselves just more atoms vibrating at different frequencies, the whole fucking scene before him, each different object and energy all made of the same things while pretending to be something else.

Everything is always nothing more than matter with an identity crisis.

The scene settles, plays out as it always has, and Our Driver watches the apparition floating from beside him to the back of the room and through the door, and with package in hand, he exits the building the way he came, into the seat of his car. The first few chords of House of the Rising Sun plays from his speakers, another trick of existence, converting gathered electric energy into mechanical energy compressing air molecules into vibrations and sending them out into the ether to be pieced together by fluid within his cochlea vibrating 25,000 nerve endings transforming the vibrations into electrical impulses to then be processed by his brain to again become, *music.*

But as the car disappears into a cloud of dust and speeds off in the direction of Pop's Gas and Sundries, the scene does not move with it. We are left here to see what happens next.

Down the road a ways, a corporate retreat at a local hotel convention space has gone awry. Employees lined up in a circle around the cocoon of smoke and dust that had been their CEO, one Mr. Nathaniel Godwynn, transcending his human form, shedding his earthly flesh to move on to more... ethereal pastures. Each employee in the circle, one by one, placing a cylinder in their mouths, tears dripping down their faces, their experiences blinking deep in their brains... all the illusions of life playing out in quick cut montages, reducing the whole of their existence into a few flashing moments. Each and all, they press a button on the cylinder and just like that... everything they are collapses into particulate aerosol, immediately pulled into the rotating sphere at the center. They know what is happening, you can smell it in the air, the fear of knowing death arrives quickly and without escape. The two employees who refused the cylinder, refused to kneel before this amalgamation of sacrifice and tragic fragments of consciousness wasted and what can only be deemed as magic, were unceremoniously shot in the back of the head by a bullet large enough to decapitate them. It was a gruesome scene and a scene that only had to be repeated once to make everyone else fall entirely in line.

Though Joseph cannot see these things, he knows they are happening. Every detail entrenched within his memory though the memory was never witnessed. He can see the last employee carry out their grizzly obligation, destroying the lives of their children, their spouses, their parents and siblings, so this billionaire can covertly unhinge the door of forever, and really is that any different from the average employee of any corporation proliferating under the veil of human misery? The cogs do no harm on the surface but there is a well of greed and anger and pain slowly pushed into the heart of this home we share, this home stripped of meaning and purpose for all of us, for the sake of a mere few? He can see the last of them explode in a cloud of promise, sucked into the swelling womb that holds their illustrious leader and that womb expands, breaking the walls of the hotel in an unfathomable blast, taking everything within range down with it and spits Godwynn toward the curiosities shop to complete the last leg of this ritual, to finally become what he knew he'd always be, to transcend this world that he and others like him destroyed long ago, and all he has left to do is consume a god.

NBD [LAUGH TRACK]

Joseph can see him in the distance, careening toward the shop, the car pulling away from the parking lot, sound waves chemically reacting a familiar tune...

PALINDROME: Watch this. It's our favorite part. [LAUGH TRACK] LOL he thought he had it all worked out. Thought his timing was perfect. The dumb motherfucker.

As Godwynn falls back to earth toward the space Joseph occupies, this curiosities shop somewhere between then and now and here and there, it disappears. Winked out of existence and Godwynn lands hard, the equivalent weight of a small nuclear explosion destroying everything within a 5 mile radius. Turning what was once a downtown anywhere main street into a mass grave of families and pets and rubble. And while I ask you to consider the human cost of such an explosion, you should know, investors were also harmed in the destruction of this property and money was lost that will take at least a week to return to their acco-[BLEEP]

[LAUGH TRACK OVERTAKES NOISE/A FLASH TO STILL SILENCE]

PALINDROME: Open your eyes Joseph. It's over.

And he does. It takes a moment to adjust to the light but he finds he is still observing Reynold's Curiosities, only now inside, standing before a shelf with thousands of years of orchids and flames, and somewhere on that wall, though he does not know how far back, is at least one person from his family line who shared this same fate.

PALINDROME: More than one... maybe, somewhere in there you may even run across yourself again.

Outside the windows above the door there is only stark starless black and Blythe has been destroyed so there is no telling where he *actually* is. The more he considers asking, the less he wants that question answered.

The Palindrome gestures hazy toward the door. The same door his protector had disappeared through after setting the ragged sphinx back into its place.

PALINDROME: This is the last chance. We can return back to the confines of your mind and you can let that thing chase you for the next 50 years, though to you, it will seem far longer. Damn close to forever. Or you can walk through the door. Once you do, the decision is made. There is no going back, not for you, not for anyone else.

JOSEPH: Okay. I am going. Give me just a moment.

PALINDROME: That is agreement. Goodbye Joseph. [WHISPERED IN RHYTHM/A SNAP BETWEEN EACH:] All * the * moments * are * gone.

[SOUND OF PALINDROME DISSIPATING]

As he considers a final plea for more time, he hears the fracture of wood like a chair breaking in slow motion, the crack and fissure of tree nymphs molting their flesh in ancient forgotten forests.

A deep growl. The hiss of a snake. He turns toward the noise as the desk again pulses neon glow, shaking off its black disguise. The sphinx stumbles forward drunkenly, spots of glowing phosphorescent purple blood seeping from old wounds, the serpent at its rear dragging along the floor, tongue pallid and still. The growl grows louder in the malnourished lion chest as it approaches. A growl that does not indicate weakness despite the rag of a body it emanates from within. There is power there, a potent mix of fear and anguish and something else, something our Driver cannot put his finger on, something akin to hate, but only when love also happens to be at play. Joseph locks in place. He looks over to the haze where the Palindrome had swayed to find it empty. To find himself alone in a shop at what might as well be the edge of everything, with this monster, jaw agape, eyes frozen with a starvation stare, fixed solely on him.

JOSEPH: [FEAR OVERTAKING HIS VOICE] Give me just one more moment... please.

[THE GROWL REACHES CLOSER/THE CREATURE LASHES OUT... SUDDEN SILENCE... HARSH NOISE/END]