

ACT 1 - INTRO

1

INT. NOTHINGNESS

1

Javier, alone and cut off from his senses, slowly comes to accept that he must have killed himself when he is confronted by a strange presence.

A dull and sightless void. Ambient noise rumbles and muted drips echo. JAVIER DURAN slowly becomes aware he is deprived of his senses, but is - apparently, and surprisingly - alive.

JAVIER

(groggily)

Uhn... no... please let me just keep my eyes closed and go back to sleep so I won't erhh feel so terrible.

(clearer)

Uhn. Wait... ARE my eyes closed? They don't feel closed, I guess. And I don't feel... terrible. I don't feel...

(louder)

Hello? I -- I can't see anything.

No response.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

(to self, quietly)

I can't see anything. I can't... I can't feel anything. I can't feel ANYTHING -- I can't feel MYSELF. If myself is even... here. HELLO? I CAN'T HEAR YOU... if there is a you. Okay, Javier, what did you do? It was probably bad, but... HELLO?

No response.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

(slow, then nervously
rushing at end)

Okay, well, let's think about this logically. I'm not black-out drunk or I wouldn't be having this conversation; I don't think I'm asleep, because this is crazy boring and has very few nude vampires demanding to see if my homework is done; a sensory deprivation tank is totally out of my budget; and I'm really starting to get scared about the remaining option.

(loudly)

HELLO? Can anyone hear me, or see me..

Pregnant pause.

(CONTINUED)

JAVIER (CONT'D)
(calmly, resigned)
Well, I guess that's it then.
Congratulations -- you did it, asshole.
Just gave up. Couldn't take it anymore
and now...
(briefly chokes up and
recovers)
And now you're... where exactly? There's
(breaks off)
nothing at all.

A warbling noise like muffled speech interrupts.

JAVIER (CONT'D)
Hello? HELLO! Is some [one out there?]

The disembodied voice of CHER GANDHI STATHAM becomes clearer,
focusing like a lens, but with a slightly shimmering echo.

CHER
Hold on... it's ... I wasn't expecting
that to be over THERE. Oh this is
ROUGH.
(low chuckle, then
composing itself)
YES. Hello! Greetings! Salutations...
there's gotta be some kind of... ok, yes
ETCETERA. ETCETERA to you, bearer.

JAVIER
You can hear me? And... understand me?

CHER
Of course, Bearer!

JAVIER
Bearer?

Synth music begins in background.

CHER
Yes, Bearer! Yes... let me just turn...
(turns down echo)
That's better. For you are one of the
chosen amongst the endless creations of
the universe... a being who holds
within, the noblest of spirits.

JAVIER
A soul?

CHER
[Just a] moment... ah y-yes. That
checks out... a soul.

(CONTINUED)

JAVIER

So then... this dark nothingness... Are
you saying that I really am dead, and
THIS is...

This is the afterlife?

INTERSTITIAL - THANKS

2

HI FOLKS, THIS IS ALAN/ROB FROM PARASITECOLOGY AND OTHER
FINE INTERRUPTED TALES PODCASTS SUCH AS INTERRUPTED TALES.

2

We want to thank you for listening and hopefully you're enjoying the show. If not, keep listening, there's a lot more nudity later on. We're talking full-frontal, full-rearal, Dolby 5.1, Audigy EAX enhanced, VRML 3d positioned nudity, all mixed down to glorious mono SO REAL you'll swear you can't hear the clothes.

Boy, that was some capital "A" acting there, wasn't it? If you though he was really crying there, you're right, it's an old acting trick, you just take a safety pin and when it comes time to turn on the old waterworks, BAM - you have someone punch you in the nards.

I want to tell you a little about the structure of the show. The current plan is that it will be 14 episodes long, released every other week. I'm not gonna do the math on that but that's a baker's baker's dozen individual downloads. And I think we can all agree, that's a lot of baking... the house is going to be very warm after that, so open the windows.

Kids, I want to get you back into the show, but first I want you to do one thing for us: if you like what you've heard the most important thing is that you tell somebody who might like it - maybe they like sci-fi, or dark comedies, or just audiodramas in podcast form. Send them a message, share this episode via AddThis, mention it when you show up unexpectedly to ask for money and you want to offer something of comparable value.

Thanks and back to the show.

ACT 2: A LIE AND THE GOOD NEWS

3

INT. NOTHINGNESS

3

The presence conveniently allows Javier to mistake the situation while convincing Javier to relive his most happy memory as a "test".

CHER

Afterlife, uhh it's really not accurate but that's maybe a... useful... shorthand since... Your previous life is no more, and a new joyous era begins.

JAVIER

But I AM dead?

CHER

That's not a good way for either of us to think about this, Bearer.

JAVIER

Us? But who... or what... ARE you?

CHER

I think you could call me a... guide. Yes, I will be GUIDING you through this process and helping you to come to terms with all... of this. Perhaps shepherd, or mentor, or... Bearer, I will be your ETCETERA! And I hope, in time, a friend.

JAVIER

(dismissive)

Ok, a guide. What's your name?

CHER

My name is not pronounceable by you, even in this form.

JAVIER

Eh... let me try.

CHER

Alright... "Coo inyrsthuh"

JAVIER

"Coors"?

CHER

Coorse.

JAVIER

"Coors"

(CONTINUED)

CHER
Coorse-thuh

JAVIER
"Coors"

CHER
Yeah, you got it.

JAVIER
Alright, Coors...

CHER
Now the second letter is much more
difficult, you're going to need to
pucker, well, basically anything that's
puckerable.

JAVIER
The second letter?

CHER
Bearer... we have a lot to cover, so I
will simply browse through your etched
memory flesh for a familiar name
representing my qualities. Perhaps
someone who has helped you greatly in
life, or a personal hero to you... Let
me... ok, yes, Bearer -- you may call me
CHER GANDHI STATHAM.

JAVIER
Ahh - no, but... This is a little
embarrassing, i didn't know you could
just...

CHER
Browse your etched memory flesh?

JAVIER
Browse my... well, to explain, I was
young and my tastes hadn't...

CHER
Of course... CHER STATHAM.

JAVIER
Well, what I meant...

CHER
CHER, you may call me Cher.

JAVIER
(affirmatively)
Yeah. Yeah, that works.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JAVIER (CONT'D)

Wait, if i'm dead, why do I still have
"etched memory flesh"?

CHER

Bearer, I know you have so many
questions, but please... just for a
moment, I need you to think... of your
happiest moment. It is the next step of
the process.

JAVIER

Well, "Cher" -- nice to meet you, my
name is not BEARER, it's actually
Javier... Cher. Huh. It kind
(cut off)
of rhymes, Cher, Javier.

CHER

Kind of rhymes, doesn't it? That's a
fun little thing we have together. Now,
please -- your happiest memory. It's
incredibly important.

JAVIER

Is this part of some... judgment? Is it
a test?

CHER

Yes, actually, I'm testing everything.
I'm ready for your happiest memory.
And don't just recall it, live in it.

JAVIER

Okay... I think I can...
(lets out breath)
I'm eleven years old.
(slow as if happening in
real time)
I'm alone in my bedroom and the window
is open. It's hot, really hot... and
bright... and we don't have air
conditioning. I'm laying on the floor.
My mom is downstairs, starting lunch.

CHER

How do you know that?

JAVIER

I can hear her getting pots out of the
draw under the stove. God, eleven -
that's before she found about the
cancer...

Pots bang softly in the distance.

(CONTINUED)

Yes, yes! I hear the pans. I can hear them.

CHER

Yes, Javier. Continue. What do you smell? Do you smell anything?

JAVIER

No, she hasn't started cooking yet. Wait... Yeah. I remember! We had these azalea bushes in the front yard and every summer the air smelled a little bit like them... almost sickeningly sweet, but barely there at all. That's it.

CHER

Yes, that's it. Just a little to the right and...

JAVIER

That smell! God, it's been years since I've smelled that.

CHER

And what about taste?

JAVIER

(Smacking lips)

The aftertaste of one of those frozen ice pops. Lime. We must have just opened the box - my sister would have eaten all the good ones, and it would be grape or ... Coconut.

CHER

In an ice pop? Ungh, oh that tastes awful - I mean, it sounds like it tastes awful. Stop thinking about that part. Now, what do you feel?

JAVIER

I'm... Laying on the carpet. It's ugly and blue and shaggy, and it's rough against my skin in the areas where it's worn down. And I've got a big box fan blowing on my face, full blast. And I'm so sweaty but it's like the fan is making it evaporate at exactly the same time, like a perfect equilibrium.

CHER

And you...

(CONTINUED)

JAVIER

And over the hum of the fan I hear
somebody playing the oldies station on a
boombox outside. I think it might be a
Rolling Stones song?

CHER

HA! No, I mean uh, you may be
misremembering that part, memories are
hazy, ethereal things.

JAVIER

No, I remember now... Midnight
Confessions by the Grassroots...

CHER

...Oh, you're getting specific now?

JAVIER

I remember because I loved sad old songs
filled with anguish... Not that I knew
what anguish actually was back then.
Just like I didn't know that Midnight
Confessions was actually about the
inappropriate sexual longing of a man
for his married coworker.

CHER

No, no, I think it was probably just a
generic-ish oldies tune, not
particularly memorable, largely
immaterial to the memory... we all get
the picture. Now, you're in your room,
the strong air current working in tandem
with your strange perspiration
mechanism. HOW do you feel?

JAVIER

I feel light, like the air could lift me
up and I would just fly away in the
wind. I feel...

CHER

Happy?

Audio of scene fades and major ambient music takes over.

JAVIER

I feel... Happy.

CHER

Yes! Ok, hold that, hold that...
(thrumming sounds while
Cher mutters)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CHER (CONT'D)

Alright, there it is, tucked away under that bluish gray thing which hopefully is NOT metastasizing. Just gotta poke it a little and oh, yes, that IS nice. Very nice.

JAVIER

(Dreamily)

I feel happy. And it's been so long since I felt like that -- I can't MAKE myself feel like that. Like I could just float away.

(Somberly)

Because now everything is heavy, and it's always pushing... pushing down on me.

Music becomes increasingly discordant

CHER

Bearer, concentrate. You're happy. For at least a few more 1/86400ths of your planetary revolutions. Uh what do you call them... Etceteras. Just a few more etceteras!

JAVIER

It's like my chest is a one giant, twisted knot, clutching at my heart and pulling on my shoulders.

CHER

I'm nowhere near the heart... Hold on to the happiness!

(quietly)

Just a little more before...

JAVIER

Everytime I make a decision, Everytime I worry and all I do is worry... The knot gets tighter and it's dragging me down and down and I can't get up.

Music and sound stops suddenly as Javier sobs. Pregnant pause.

CHER

Bearer... Javier. It's going to be alright.

JAVIER

Alright? Alright? Do you even understand what this feels like?

(CONTINUED)

CHER
(Wistfully)
Honestly, several lifetimes over...
Maybe not as deeply...

JAVIER
(Ignoring)
And tell me — just what is "alright"
about an afterlife that dumps you into a
shapeless black void and makes you
relive your happiest moment of your
childhood and then crush it with the
same pain you literally killed yourself
to get away from, only to have it follow
you the grave and tear at your soul...
(Pregnant pause)
What is so alright about being dead,
Cher?

No reply.

JAVIER (CONT'D)
Cher? CHER!

CHER
...Yes?

JAVIER
(quieter)
I thought you'd left me.

CHER
Oh, yes, no I did. I ran out to get
inflatable latex for your pity party, I
hope I didn't miss it, the lines were
very long and I told them what a big
deal this was...

JAVIER
I suppose you mean balloons?

CHER
Balloons, condoms, very tiny blimps,
ETCETERA, JAVIER. Party ITEMS, Javier,
for your party. Now, if you are willing
to listen for a few moments, I'd be more
than happy to jumpstart the process of
getting you out of this shapeless black
void.

JAVIER
Okay. I'm willing to listen as long as
you are willing to answer questions.

(CONTINUED)

CHER

Perfect. See, this is what's called a dialogue and it is one of the most wonderful things in existence, Bearer!

JAVIER

And stop [calling me]

CHER

Sorry -- JAVIER. Okay, well, I think we might be ready to move forward in the process. Now, have you heard of this thing called "Good news, bad news?"

(chuckling to self)

Oh, yes, of course you have, you are where I got it from. Well, I believe it's traditional to ask you whether you'd like the good news first, or the bad news.

JAVIER

I'll [take]

CHER

So, first the good news. Javier Duran, you are not dead. In fact, you are alive and ... living.

(pregnant pause)

So, congrats...

(shorter pause)

JAVIER

But you said I... and that this was...

CHER

No, I specifically didn't say that... because a. You aren't and b. It ain't.

(Pause)

You seem non-plussed, Javier, so I'm just gonna roll.. right.. on.. to.. the.. next.. part. You are now the host in a symbiotic relationship with an alien organism who is living in your brain stem and directing most of your bodily functions. Meaning...

(makes the "me" signal with hands, snaps and clucks)

JAVIER

(very slowly)

Oh. Oh. Well, thank you, Cher...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JAVIER (CONT'D)

alien organism Cher, for sparing my feelings so delicately between the welcome news that I am in fact not deceased, and the, and I don't want to hurt your feelings obviously so let's not say bad, let's say slightly "less welcome" news that I have a brain eating parasite.

CHER

Oh ah...

(chuckling nervously)

I do hate it when this happens... it's sort of uncomfortable put this out there now, but actually, I was still on the "good news"!

(pause, then audio fading)

So, where to start? I suppose there's the murderbots, but they say don't start the show with a show stopper...

OUTRO PART 1