

"AD INFINITUM"
The Sheridan Tapes - Season 04, Episode 85
Recording Script - August 16, 2023

by

Van Winkle

Based on story and characters from
"Homestead on the Corner"

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1. EXT. DESERT - UTAH - NIGHT - 02/11/20

Late winter in the desert - no insects buzz, but the faint, desolate wind whistles through the nearby hills.

Ren lies on the roof of the van, staring up at the dizzying expanse of stars above. After a moment, he pulls a tape recorder from his pocket and switches it on.

REN PARK

(stream of consciousness,
venting slightly)

Sorry I haven't recorded anything for... a while. I would say I've been busy, but even with everything that's happened, this is the quietest my life has been since Babia Góra. Guess that's what happens when you sort of... quit your job without actually quitting your job.

(beat, growing slowly more agitated)

No -- it's not my life that's been busy. It's my mind. Honestly I don't think it's been quiet up there since I listened to Amy's tape... at least, not while I'm sober. Which I currently am, just for the record. Unfortunately. Getting high helps keep the fear at bay, but that doesn't mean it's gone. I've spent my whole life trying to figure out the shape of the universe, obsessing over those little puzzles and paradoxes of physics that might finally answer those big questions. And now that all those answers have just been dropped into my lap, I'm not...

(beat, gathering thoughts)

I've always thought of the universe as deterministic. A leads to B leads to C, a long chain of simple causation all the way back to the big bang, shaped by nothing more than the laws of physics. But a part of me always held on to the idea that there was some small exception for us. That human life, human consciousness has some cosmic significance in the grand scheme of the universe.

(MORE)

REN PARK (CONT'D)

That we give it purpose and shape by trying to understand it. That we're able to determine our own paths, our own choices, if only in small ways.

(beat)

But no. Turns out, there are an infinite number of Rens who made the exact same choices I have, and an infinite number of them who did the opposite, and the outcome they got was determined by nothing more than simple probability. I've never made an actual choice... I'm not making a choice now. The Source moved in a certain way, and now I'm recording this log. Speaking these words. Are they even my words? They sound like mine. They sound like Ren. But what if that's just because this is the most probable thing for me to say?

(beat)

I once told Adam that the only thing that makes our experiences significant is the fact that they are made of moments in space and time that can never be returned to or experienced in the same way again. No one could have experienced that night in the Observatory the same way we did, if only because no one else could ever be us in that moment. But now I know that isn't true at all.

(beat, feeling guilty)

I shouldn't be struggling so much with this. I'm a scientist... if compelling evidence comes along and challenges even the most well-established theory, I'm supposed to change my views with the preponderance of evidence. But I guess this goes a bit beyond theory. Even scientists need a framework for reality to work in... a belief system. Faith, even.

(SCOFFS, looking towards the horizon)

We're camped a little ways outside Salt Lake City tonight. Not that far from where Bill and Rob grew up... where they lost their faiths.

(MORE)

REN PARK (CONT'D)

I wish I could ask them how they dealt with that. Actually, I just wish I could see them at all... much as I hate to admit it, Ned's right about us taking too long to find them. As much as we talk about time not existing in the Source... it still feels like it's been too long. Then again...

(pause, sounding more disturbed)

What does it really matter if we find them? Even if they're okay... This is just one universe. One version of them. If the multiverse is truly infinite, then there are an infinite number of Bills and Robs who won't be saved... who will suffer and die alone and afraid because their Sams and Rens and Kates and Neds couldn't get to them in time. And an infinite number of Morrisons, holding them captive. Whatever our Morrison is planning... does it really matter if we stop him? We're fighting probability, and even if there's a one in a billion billion chance of Morrison winning and spreading out into "all the worlds that are" -- then somewhere out there, he's already won. It's only a matter of time before he gets around to this world, this universe. There's no way for us to stop it, and even if we don't, it makes no difference to the Source. The cosmic machine keeps churning with or without us, and no one will mourn us when we're gone.

Ren sits in silence for a moment with that thought, then switches off the recorder, lying back WITH A HEAVY SIGH.

REN PARK (CONT'D)

(whispered to the stars)

I hope those other Rens made better choices than I have. I would hate to see me in the state I'm in.

CLICK.

MAIN THEME

2. INT. SUPERSTORE - WINNEMUCCA, NV - DAY - 02/12/20

The tape recorder starts in Sam's pocket as he and Ren run through a crowded department store.

REN PARK
(slightly out of breath)
Are you sure it was him?

SAM BAILEY
(slightly out of breath,
calling back)
I don't even know who *he* is, I just
said he looked familiar.

REN PARK
Then why the hell are we chasing
him?

SAM BAILEY
Because there's something off about
him -- I felt it when we came in,
and I'm sure Ned did too...
(realizes, stopping)
Where's Ned?

REN PARK
(confused)
I don't know, he was right behind
me a second ago.

SAM BAILEY
(looking back)
Shit, he's going to get away.

REN PARK
Should I go get Kate? We can watch
the front to make sure he doesn't
/double back--

SAM BAILEY
--There's no time -- Come on!

Sam and Ren start running in the direction they last saw him. A few annoyed customers grumble and yell at them as they duck and weave through the carts, but no one stops them.

REN PARK
(spotting him)
Wait Sam, he's down here! He's
going for the emergency exit!

SAM BAILEY
(sees him)
Don't let him get out of the store!

Sam and Ren run, but his lead is already too long.

REN PARK
Shit, he's going to make it out--

Someone steps out of the aisle ahead and trips the person they're chasing, sending him sprawling WITH A CRY.

Sam and Ren stop, confused... then Ned steps fully into the aisle.

NED LEROUX
(smirking)
Guess y'all took the long way
round, huh?

SAM BAILEY
(annoyed)
What the hell, Ned?

NED LEROUX
What? I thought he might be heading
for the emergency exit... turns out
I was right.

SAM BAILEY
You could have told us.

NED LEROUX
(nonplussed)
Yeah, figure I could have.

REN PARK
(slightly nervous)
Uh, Sam? He's getting up.

Ned turns and steps in front of the older man, who's AUDIBLY STRUGGLING TO HIS FEET. Sam and Ren approach from behind.

NED LEROUX
(faux sympathy)
Just hang on a second there sir,
that's a nasty fall you just
took... don't want to stand up too
quickly now.

???

(irritated)

Oh, don't you people have anything better to do than harass an old man? Oooh, I think I might have sprained something...

NED LEROUX

You certainly don't move like you're that old. You may have these people fooled, but not us.

???

(faked incredulity)

What are you talking about? Look at me, I'm--

SAM BAILEY

(static rising, slightly distorted)

I can feel you lying. Don't bother.

The older man goes deadly silent, feeling Sam's power but trying not to react.

NED LEROUX

Besides, I'm pretty sure we can both smell the supernatural on you.

(to Sam)

Guessing that's why we're chasing him in the first place?

SAM BAILEY

More or less.

???

I could say the same about you two. You stink of the abyss. Among other things.

NED LEROUX

(offended)

What the hell are you trying to say about/my hygiene--?

REN PARK

(cutting in to stop them arguing)

--Who are you?

???

(beat, wide smile)

Why, I'm John Smith, store greeter.

(MORE)

??? (CONT'D)

Says so on my nametag, if you'd
bothered to read it on the way in.

SAM BAILEY

(connecting dots)

Wait... your teeth.

The smile vanishes from the man's face.

???

And what about them?

SAM BAILEY

The Mirror House... you're the
host.

THE HOST

(still trying to deny it)

I'm terribly sorry, you seem to
have me--

SAM BAILEY

--confused with someone else, yeah.
I thought your voice sounded
familiar. You use that line a lot,
don't you?

THE HOST

(connecting the dots)

Ah. So you're friends with that
nosy bint with the tape recorder.
Where is she, by the way? I was
rather hoping to repay her for
ruining my life.

SAM BAILEY

She is far away from here... and we
are not giving you her name. Nice
try, though.

THE HOST

Ah well... worth a try. Although I
guess you must be pretty close
friends, if she played that
particular tape for you. I
understand she had a rather...
personal experience in the inner
sanctum.

SAM BAILEY

It's... complicated.

THE HOST

(clearly doesn't care)
Oh? How delightful.

(GRUNTING AS HE STANDS)

Well, I'm just about due for my lunch break, and it's clear you three won't let me go anywhere alone... What's say we discuss this somewhere a bit more private? We're starting to attract stares.

NED LEROUX

(looking around,
realizing)

He's right... we're drawing too much attention out here.

REN PARK

Hold on... what if this is a trap?

THE HOST

(SIGHS, annoyed)

I give you my word as a monster, I mean you no harm. Besides, I no longer have a patron to feed, remember?

The host begins to walk away, and Ren grabs Sam before he starts to follow.

REN PARK

Seriously, Sam... how do we know we can trust him?

SAM BAILEY

We don't. But I've got... an odd feeling about this. Something tells me he might actually have some answers for us.

CLICK.

3. INT. BREAK ROOM - SUPERSTORE - LATER

The tape resumes in a cramped and poorly illuminated break room as Sam sets it down on the table. The host is sitting while Sam, Ren, and Ned stand.

SAM BAILEY

(fiddling with the
recorder)

Ah, I guess it was recording
before. Must have turned on in my
pocket.

NED LEROUX

(slightly confused)

Why did you bring it in the first
place?

THE HOST

(pointed, annoyed)

Any-way... you were saying?

SAM BAILEY

Uh... well, I think that's about
all of it. Something is wrong with
time, and it's connected with
Anna's disappearance into the
Source. Morrison has become...
something else, and now the entire
town is missing, along with our
friends. We're trying to figure out
how to save them.

THE HOST

Oslow, hmm? Never heard of it.

(GROANS AS HE STANDS UP)

Well, thank you for a most...
interesting tale. I'm not sure if I
believe any of it, but it was at
least entertaining.

NED LEROUX

And where the hell do you think
you're going?

THE HOST

Back to work, naturally. Some of us
do still have to make a living, you
know.

REN PARK

But you haven't told us anything!

THE HOST

And I don't intend to. Listen,
whoever you think I was, I'm not
that person anymore, and I would
rather like to keep this job--

SUPERVISOR (O.S.)
 (through radio, distorted;
 annoyed and impatient)
 Smith? Smith, where are you?

THE HOST
 (into radio, flustered)
 I'm, um... I'm taking my lunch in
 the staff room. Is something wrong?

SUPERVISOR (O.S.)
 You forgot to clock out. Again.

THE HOST
 (kicking himself)
 Oh... right, of course. I'll get
 that corrected at the end of the
 shift.

SUPERVISOR (O.S.)
 You'll get it corrected *now*, Smith.
 This is your third time this week.

THE HOST
 (trying to appeal to his
 pity)
 ...may I at least finish my lunch
 first? You know how I get in the
 afternoons if I haven't had
 something to eat.

SUPERVISOR (O.S.)
 (annoyed, but allowing it)
 Make it quick.

The radio beeps off, and THE HOST SIGHS, annoyed. After a
 moment, he turns back and sits down.

THE HOST
 Fine. What do you want to know?

SAM BAILEY
 (hesitates briefly, then
 genuinely curious)
 Who are you?

THE HOST
 (SCOFFS, surprised)
 Really? With everything else going
 on, *that's* what you want to know?

SAM BAILEY

Anna talked about the Mirror House a lot, but she didn't have much to say about you. And I've met a lot of, um...

THE HOST

(dismissive, impatient)

You can say monsters, I won't take offense.

SAM BAILEY

Beings, like me and Ned. But I just can't tell where you fit into all this.

4. CONTINUOUS

The Host settles back into his chair, somewhat amused.

THE HOST

Apparently you haven't met that many of us, if you still think you can fit us all into neat little categories.

(raises his hand to stop Sam)

No need for more argument, I'll tell you. The longer I stay in here, the longer I can avoid the ire of my supervisor. I doubt I'll be working here much longer anyway after that scene you made, but I would like to at least see out the month before moving on.

(gathers thoughts, begins his story)

I don't remember much of my life before the House, so forgive me if I leave a few of the details somewhat vague. It's not that I'm being obstinate, though you three would certainly deserve no less. My memories from before the mirrors are just somewhat... fuzzy. I do remember that I was born in England sometime after the turn of the century, and that I was trained as a Jesuit priest at a college of some renown. That made the move to America fairly easy, though I can't remember if I moved during or after the Blitz.

(MORE)

THE HOST (CONT'D)

Either way, I eventually found my way to one of the California universities as a professor of Theology, though I remember little of what I used to teach. In fact, the whole of my academic career is probably what I remember the least... that is, until I got my first letter from Zilberschlag.

(beat)

The morning I opened that first letter is when my memories finally jump into shaper focus. Ezra Zilberschlag was a silversmith living in the small town of Hilt in Northern California. It was a company town, but Ezra was an independent craftsman and a rather active traveler who took on clients all throughout the area of Shasta and the San Francisco bay. He'd had a hard time of it to begin with, but during the post-war boom he quickly found himself flush with cash... more than enough to buy a plot of land just outside town and build himself a house that fit his particular fascinations. I'm sure you know all about that from Anna and your little friend, so I won't go on about the particulars.

(beat)

What neither of them probably mentioned is that Ezra also had a lasting interest in comparative theology and religion, having largely lost his own faith during the beginnings of Hitler's reign of terror. He had been searching for answers to the brutality and hatred he'd witnessed from his fellow man in every major and minor religion he could find, and eventually, he discovered my name and address in a list of faculty while traveling through the area on business.

(beat)

Thus began a lengthy and invigorating theological debate that lasted through much of the next decade. Zilberschlag was brilliant, I'll give him that...

(MORE)

THE HOST (CONT'D)

a voracious reader in multiple languages, more than enough to put me to shame. He read Greek, Latin, and Hebrew fluently, and knew enough Arabic and Sanskrit to muddle through many other holy texts, which is much more than I ever learned. I've no idea where he found the time given how much he traveled, but knowing what I now know about his home and the forces that mustered behind those panes of glass and silver, I believe that time may have become... somewhat elastic for him, when he was working in that many-mirrored room at the center of his House.

(beat)

In any case, his study of religion was anything but an idle fancy. He was obsessed with finding some framework to fit his experiences into, some metaphysical reasoning for the brutality he'd witnessed that held up under his piercing, analytical gaze. He could not accept the idea of a cold and godless universe where human beings simply did horrible things to one another because they could.... And neither could I, at the time. In our letters, I wrote often of the fallen condition of man -- the poison of original sin and the corruption of the human soul it brought, as well as the atonement gifted by the sacrifice of the redeemer, unfolding into an age of renewal and divine justice still to come.

(beat)

But at every step, Zilberschlag challenged all the beliefs I'd once thought to be unassailable. The atrocities of the holocaust went far beyond any atonement I could conceive, and if my doctrine were taken at face value, then all those who suffered and died in the camps were condemned to eternal damnation by my so-called redeemer. Such a thought was untenable, but I could not deny that is what my own theology suggested.

(MORE)

THE HOST (CONT'D)

He also made clear that, while the Nazis despised Catholicism as much as any religion that did not bow to Hitler first and foremost, his so-called "final solution" was simply the last link in a chain of pogroms and persecutions begun by the church itself. He had also spoken with many religious figures amongst the native peoples of the state, and he had much to say of the deep hurt inflicted by the Catholic missions -- my own university amongst them. Naturally, he could hardly believe that the messiah I wrote about was the solution for the pain he had seen.

(beat)

We traded correspondence for more than a decade, as I've said, but we'd never actually met in person. And while the debate was rich and active, neither of us ever really shifted from our respective positions. It would have taken supernatural intervention to bring our debate to a head... which, funnily enough, is what actually ended up happening. While Zilberschlag was well versed in the theologies and demonologies of a half-dozen religions, I don't think he ever really expected to run into such a being in his lifetime. It was hardly surprising, then, that when he did have just such an encounter in own his home, I soon received a frantic phone call from Hilt.

(beat)

It was the first time I'd ever heard his voice, but my surprise was quickly overwhelmed by my shock at his words. His house and the mirrors within, he said, had been infected by some sort of demonic presence that took his reflections and made them move on their own... and his familiarity with my own religion told him that as a priest of the Catholic Church, I would have a better idea of how to drive it out than he.

(MORE)

THE HOST (CONT'D)

At the very least, he felt that he was no longer able to safely enter his study alone, and so requested that I visit him at his home at my earliest possible convenience.

(beat)

And so it was that I found myself on the train to Hilt the following morning, once I'd cleared the trip with my superiors and packed a small suitcase with a single change of clothes. I did not expect the trip to take long, and I recognize now the pride which swelled within me at the thought of finally being able to prove Zilberschlag wrong... to prove that the power of my savior was not simply in the religious institution I'd sworn to serve, and that He was able to drive out the dark things that sought to torment and condemn the living. The thought that I might fail -- that I might be in danger myself -- never even crossed my mind.

(beat)

My arrival, my first meeting with Ezra, and the short drive to his home passed without incident, and I barely remember anything about it except the heat of that summer's day. From the outside, the house was nothing special, but the inside... despite reading his descriptions of it many times over, nothing could really prepare me for the temple of light and reflection his obsession with infinity had birthed. Every mirror was spotless and immaculately cleaned, every lighting fixture bright and clear, and despite the general lack of windows beyond the foyer, the entire house shone with brilliant, piercing light. This, more than anything else, gave final proof to my mind that I needn't worry about Ezra's "demon" overmuch. In a place of such light and beauty, I doubted anything truly dark could fully take root.

(beat)

(MORE)

THE HOST (CONT'D)

Ezra was nothing if not a conscientious host. Despite some initial awkwardness, the rapport from our letters translated into our conversation face to face. We spoke of the various types of demons and spirits we had both studied while he prepared glasses of fresh lemonade and cucumber sandwiches in the small kitchen just off the main hall. There were far fewer mirrors in that room than elsewhere in the house, mostly limited to the faces of the cupboards... but I did notice that all of these had been recently covered with a variety of towels and curtains, seemingly picked at random and placed in a great hurry. I also noted the bags under Ezra's eyes, though having never met the man before I could not say if these were due to a newfound lack of sleep or simply a general insomnia.

(beat)

In either case, I said nothing, and we continued to speak pleasantly enough of demons in the theoretical as we finished our small meal. I had trained as an exorcist in my early days, and performed one or two moderately successful exorcisms in my youth, though I had not been requested to perform the rite since I'd moved to America and become more focused on academia. Even so, I was more than familiar with the doctrine of the church on such beings, and as such I had not requested the bishop's permission to perform a full exorcism. Officially, the church only believes that people can be possessed by demons, and the full rites of exorcism are reserved for such cases. However, my own studies and Ezra's own research had led me to believe that such a view on demons was too narrow, and while they may hold a tighter grip on a possessed soul than a haunted house, I imagined they could still be driven off by the same invocations and tools.

(MORE)

THE HOST (CONT'D)

Before I left the university, I'd packed the small copper crucifix that normally hung in my office, a thermos of holy water taken from the font in one of the smaller chapels, and a well worn pocket Bible I normally used while traveling. Whatever had taken up residence in Zilberschlag's inner sanctum, I was sure it stood no chance.

(beat)

I was a fool... an arrogant fool, blind to the powers that lingered and swarmed beyond the light of the Church's knowledge. I know that now well enough, but as I followed Ezra down the main hall and past the ever-multiplying mirrors, I believed with all my heart that I had nothing to fear. Perhaps that is why I insisted Ezra join me within that room. I was certain that no harm could come to either of us so long as I was there, and I wanted him to see me casting out this evil more than I wanted to see it defeated. He argued, of course... the man knew the danger far better than I. But I wore him down -- insisted and cajoled and finally threatened to leave if he didn't remain at my side during the exorcism. His face went pale at the thought of me abandoning him with whatever creature haunted his home, and without another word he entered the sanctum and closed the door behind him.

(beat)

It did not take long for the creature to make itself known. Our reflections multiplied into the infinite distance, fading into the dark as the reflected light was lost in murky, grey-green shadows. We stood there waiting, back to back and watching to see which of our reflections the demon would steal first.

(beat)

And then, at last, I saw it -- a flicker of movement in the corner of my eye.

(MORE)

THE HOST (CONT'D)

I turned to face it, and saw one of my far off reflections emerging out of the dark, no longer following the motions of the rest. I called out in a loud voice for the demon to stop in the name of Christ Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Ghost... But the creature did not stop. It moved slowly, patiently, clearly feeling none of the fear coursing through my own veins. I called out again, reciting the first few lines of the Lord's Prayer... but the Latin words affected my twisted reflection no more than the English I'd just spoken. I drew the cross from my inside coat pocket, holding it in front of me as Ezra turned, gasping as he finally saw the reflection approaching. He whispered something... I think he was saying that the mirror we faced was the one which covered the door. But I ignored him and held the cross out in front of us, seeing a hundred reflected versions of me do the same thing in every face of the mirrored room.

(beat, slightly shaken by
the memory of fear)

The creature -- demon -- my own reflection, paused at the sight of the holy Cross raised against it... then smiled as it reached over to the reflection beside it, wrapped its hand around the crucifix it held, and pulled downwards. As it did so, I felt the cross in my own hand grow heavy, and fight as I did, I could not hold it aloft for more than a few seconds. Slowly, inexorably, my arm sank lower and lower until at last the pull became too great, and I dropped the cross onto the floor. It clattered uselessly against the glass, and when I looked up my reflection was staring back at me with a look of pure triumph.

(beat)

(MORE)

THE HOST (CONT'D)

I had the strangest thought then, as I stared back into eyes which looked like mine, but were not: of course this creature would not fear the invocations and symbols of the Church. I had assumed it was a demon from the hell of my own faith, but looking at it now, I realized that there was nothing in it that truly came from beyond the limits of the natural world, save perhaps the forces which animated it. It was fully and completely nothing more than a reflection of myself... and though I had followed the catechisms and rituals of the one true Church for all of my life - - I had never truly feared the God at its center. I knew all there was to know of him, every letter of scripture and every tradition of my forebears. But I had never feared Him. Why should my reflection, twisted as it was in this place, be any different?

(beat)

Even so, I still made one last ditch effort to cast it back, reciting the Ave Maria as I uncapped the thermos of Holy Water and threw it wildly against the pane of the mirror. The liquid splashed against the glass, briefly obscuring the reflection and breaking the illusion of infinity. For a moment, I hoped that might be enough -- that by stopping the endless reflections, the things power might have been stolen, at least long enough for us to escape. But that hope was shattered a moment later when I saw the shadow of a hand appear behind the thin coat of water and wipe it away, revealing my twisted reflection now mere inches away. It smiled again, and I saw that its teeth did not stop at the gums like they should, but instead stretched all the way to the roof of the mouth like the teeth of an anglerfish.

(beat, feeling the terror
of this moment again)

And then it reached out its hand.

(MORE)

THE HOST (CONT'D)

It pierced the skin of the mirror like the surface of a still lake, reaching and grasping for my neck. Behind me, I heard Ezra whimper in fear -- and in an instant I turned, seized my host by the collar and threw him in front of me as I screwed my eyes shut, willing myself not to see what came next. And then all was silent and still.

(beat)

I must have stood there, motionless and terrified for a full five minutes before I finally forced my eyes to open. When I did, the room seemed to have returned to normal. The twisted reflection was gone, and every image of myself I could see moved only when I did. Ezra, too, was gone. There was no sign of him anywhere in that room -- and I did check thoroughly. Think of me as heartless for what I did if you must, but I honestly don't believe I ever really meant to do him harm. I think I was trying to shatter the mirror itself, not feed him to my reflection... but again, my memory is not what it used to be.

(beat)

Whatever I meant to do, he was gone, and as soon as I figured out which mirror concealed the door and worked out how to open it, I tried to flee that house... I swear to you, I did try. I found the spare key to Ezra's truck hanging on the wall and roared out of the driveway a minute later. I'd barely reached the end of the street before I began to feel... off. My vision started to swim and double, and every inch of my skin began to crawl. The sun felt too bright and too hot, and my mouth was suddenly very dry, as if I hadn't had water in days... though thinking about it, it's hard to say how long I'd been in that room with Ezra. I tried to keep going, but I didn't even make it to the highway before I began shaking so violently I could no longer control the vehicle.

(MORE)

THE HOST (CONT'D)

I didn't even bother pulling over and trying to wait it out. I knew this was the Mirror House, trying to pull me back. I returned to that bright and haunted place without incident, and the moment I crossed the threshold my symptoms vanished.

(beat)

They didn't go away for long, though. I remained alone in that house for months, making several short-lived escape attempts before I learned better. I kept expecting the police to turn up at some point to ask after Ezra's whereabouts, but they never did. I knew I was not the only person he was corresponding with, but apparently no one ever reported him missing. I also never received any mail addressed to him. The post was still delivered in a timely manner each weekday, but whenever I went out to check the mailbox, there was nothing for Ezra.

(beat)

There were, however, a large number of letters from various newspapers responding to my inquiries regarding their advertising rates. I hardly think it needs to be said that I had sent no such inquiries... but even so, I was not as surprised to see those letters as I might have been. As time went on, I began to feel weak, despite the fact that I hadn't tried to leave the house at all for nearly three months. I was confused at first, but I soon realized what this meant. The house had been well-fed when I hurled Ezra into the path of my reflection -- consuming its creator, body and soul. But it had begun to hunger again, and if it was to survive, it needed to feed once more. I knew well enough that the House's hold on me was unbreakable, and that if I did not find a steady stream of victims to appease its hunger, it would begin to feed on me.

(beat)

(MORE)

THE HOST (CONT'D)

I sent back envelopes thick with cash to a half-dozen newspapers across the Southwest. At first I used what little money I'd brought with me for my return ticket, but when that was exhausted I began to find stacks of bills laid out on the tables and counters when I woke up each morning... always enough to pay for whatever forms of advertising were needed. Newspaper ads gave way to radio, radio to television, and television to the steady rise of the internet. When enough of those advertisers switched to online billing, the cash stopped appearing, and the computer which appeared in Ezra's old bedroom one morning had access to a seemingly endless number of account numbers and credit lines which never seemed to run dry... but only when I was paying for what the house wanted.

(beat)

But even with all that impossible money being spent, the house only drew in a few people each month... Hilt was still fairly remote, and though the public's hunger for the macabre and strange only increased as the century wore on, the Mirror House was never more than a curiosity, despite the sheer number of tourists who went missing there each year. As with Ezra's death, no one ever came calling about those lost to the reflections, and the few who lost their nerve and escaped before the house claimed them never raised the alarm.

(beat)

The house remained... and I changed. I never felt any growing pains, any strange or unnatural shifts in my physical body. I would just wake up in the morning and notice that my face was slightly more drawn, my eyes were slightly wider than they'd been before... and my teeth were longer. Soon it didn't matter what mirror I gazed into...

(MORE)

THE HOST (CONT'D)

that face I saw in the inner sanctum, the face that had haunted my nightmares for years, now stared back at me wherever I went.

(beat)

Things stayed mostly unchanged until your friend arrived and shattered my life's work out of some idiotic need for closure. I should have known better, really -- but I was desperate, and I paid for it. True, I suppose I could be thankful to be free of the house and its influence... but I'm not. I spent more than 50 years in that place, bound to its service -- and in all that time, I never saw a single newspaper or heard a solitary scrap of useful information about the world outside. Now I was adrift in the middle of a new century with no money, no prospects, and no way of going back to my old life. I didn't even remember what my name had been before I came to the House, and even if I could find documents which proved I was that person, he should have been dead a long time ago. Ezra's old truck had rusted solid in the leaky garage, and so I began to wander -- hitchhiking or taking on odd jobs to pay for bus fare, just trying to find a place where I could stay. Even without the house, I was still less than human... I no longer needed to eat or drink or sleep, and now I didn't even need to make sacrifices to sustain me.

(beat)

I eventually managed to convince one of the hiring managers here that I was just a helpless old man in need of money, and they hired me as a greeter more out of pity than anything else. I hate it... but I don't have any better options. Funny, isn't it?

(MORE)

THE HOST (CONT'D)

I've seen the depths of eternity
and touched things these people
could hardly imagine of in their
worst nightmares, and now I'm
wishing strangers a pleasant
morning as they go to waste their
money on plastic baubles and ugly
clothing. And I thought the house
was a parasite.

(SCOFFS)

5. CONTINUOUS

His story finished, the host leans back slightly in his
chair, looking around as if he just remembered who he was
talking to.

THE HOST

My, you all let me ramble on for
long enough. None of you had any
questions?

SAM BAILEY

(slightly staggered,
clearly processing)

How... how old are you now?

THE HOST

No idea. More than a hundred, most
likely, but like I told/you--

SAM BAILEY

(annoyed)

Right, right... it's fuzzy.

(beat, refocusing)

How about the night Anna Sheridan
showed up? Do you remember that?

THE HOST

(scowls, anger)

Obviously. That's when it all
started to go wrong.

REN PARK

(confused)

I thought you said Maria was the
one/who ruined everything--

NED LEROUX

(annoyed)

--oh for god's sake, Park.

REN PARK

What?

NED LEROUX

You just gave him her name.

REN PARK

Oh. Shit.

THE HOST

Hmm. I was rather hoping one of you would slip up. Still, not like I can do much with that anyways. I'm sure there are millions of Marias out there. No way I'd ever find the right one.

SAM BAILEY

(pushing past the
distraction)

Just tell me what happened that night.

THE HOST

(bitter remembrance)

I'm sure you know most of the story already. She turned up on the doorstep in the middle of the night. I sensed there was something... unusual about her, but I didn't think much of it. Maybe it was some remnant of my old arrogance, but it was not uncommon for my guests to already be marked by other powers... fascination with the supernatural is one of the main reasons people came to me in the first place, after all. She did the usual tour, and then I let her into the inner sanctum to give the house its feast.

(beat)

I was halfway through congratulating myself on another job well done when I felt something I'd never felt before. The house itself seemed to shift suddenly out of frame, and my vision began to swim as the universe screamed. I felt pain like I had never experienced before... the pain of billions suffering in a calamity soon to come.

(MORE)

THE HOST (CONT'D)

It echoed back through the void and into my head... and I somehow knew that if Anna died here and now, then that calamity would tear apart this House, this *world*, and everything that lived within it. It cried that there were things which Anna still needed to do -- things that had somehow already happened -- and if she died at this moment, then everyone and everything would come undone.

(beat)

So I pulled her out of the sanctum just before her reflection claimed her, and sent her on her way. It was enough to prevent disaster... but it seems no good deed goes unpunished after all. The House was poisoned by the encounter, and it began to lose its form more and more as the years wore on. Time began to slip by faster than it should have, and no new victims arrived to feed the wounded house... that is, until your Maria came and dealt the killing blow.

REN PARK

(beat, stunned)

You're talking about a causal loop.

SAM BAILEY

A what?

REN PARK

(trying to explain
concisely)

Uh... it's an idea in theoretical physics. Events in the future that only occur because of events in the past, which were caused by the same events in the future.

NED LEROUX

(completely lost)

...what?

REN PARK

(beat, reframing)

If time travel to the past is possible, or if events that happen in the future can have causal effects on the past, then it's entirely possible that such actions could become their own causes... The Novikov self-consistency principle calls them closed timelike curves, but causal loop is easier to say.

SAM BAILEY

So like... a paradox?

REN PARK

(struggling to explain)

No, no, not a paradox... a paradox is when the chain of causality is somehow broken -- going back in time and killing your own grandfather or preventing yourself from discovering time travel at all. This is more like... going back and teaching yourself how to time travel in the first place. The causes all work logically, it's just that the cause is the effect, which is also the cause.

SAM BAILEY

(starting to connect he dots)

Amy did say that time was starting to come undone... could it be connected to how Anna escaped the tunnels, somehow?

REN PARK

(verbally processing)

I don't think so... that loop would have started in 2018 when she disappeared, and she went to the Mirror House all the way back in 2005. If that's the loop we're talking about, then what happened at the Mirror House is completely outside of it. If Anna died at that point, then the loop just... never would have started.

Everyone goes silent, minds reeling. After a long moment, the Host pushes back his chair WITH A SMALL SIGH.

THE HOST

(clearly done with this
conversation now)

Well... best of luck with your
little logic puzzle. I'm afraid
some of us do have to get back to
our jobs now.

SAM BAILEY

(suddenly concerned)

What's your plan here?

THE HOST

I beg your pardon?

SAM BAILEY

What are you going to do now? Long-
term, I mean.

THE HOST

(SCOFFS)

Suddenly concerned with how I plan
on spending the rest of my life,
are you?

(beat, thinking)

The same way as anyone else, I
supposed... I'll just keep living
until I die, then figure out what's
next.

NED LEROUX

(slight hesitation)

That might not be possible for you
anymore. The dying, that is. Not so
easy for people like us.

THE HOST

(pause, shrugs, apathetic)

I suppose I'll find a way, then.

CLACK. The recording ends.

ROLL END THEME
AND CREDITS