

Henry the Sneaky Salmon is sitting alone on the grass, in the sun. He is by a quiet, straight-ish stream that has a row of tall trees behind it. Who knows what's behind those. Probably more scenic loveliness. A hundred meters or so on his left, is a stone bridge that crosses the mini river. On his right is basically just more of the same. Sounds boring right? Think again. It looks great. Even though countless stones are scattered randomly, it doesn't look messy. That's nature for you. After being turned to ash, Henry's certainly a lot better now; he's actually completely back to normal in his white tuxedo. The only difference is that the suit has 'Undead' written on the front of it, in pen. Maybe I should have pointed that out first. What's more important the scenery or the miraculous reincarnation? I for one don't know, and I'm not going to be pretentious and claim I know I'm doing. I'm just noting facts. Probably in the wrong order. Screw it; I have a certain style and I'm sticking to it.

Henry comments to himself 'Hm. I haven't really been able to pick anything up since I got zapped by that laser. What the HELL is going on? I'm glad I've got my body back, though. A long few minutes, but I got there in the end.' He tries to pick up a stone by his side, but his hand passes through it 'That KEEPS happening! And who has ruined my tuxedo? What does 'Undead' mean? This is one of the weirdest times of my life.' He tries to pick up the stone again. He fails 'Well... It seems that skill's gone forever. No. I just need to believe in myself, that's all.' He tries again, with no success 'This is ridiculous! Never in my life have I had to psych myself up to pick up any object! I just need to think back to the time I was well. What's changed?... Wait... Maybe I died! I thought maybe, just maybe I just dreamt of getting turned to ash, but maybe not! I mean one thing I was obliterated, the next thing, I end up here! How do you explain that?... I simply can't think clearly right now... No... I know what's going on... When I find out who's given me LSD, he's dead!

Henry looks around and scratches his head 'Wait... Just how much of my life has been imagined whilst on narcotics? I didn't make that tree hugger up, did I?' Henry stares ahead, blank and cold, as a man materialises in front of him, hovering above the water, with his legs crossed. He is in a white shirt with the number '1234321' written on it in pen. Below that is the word 'Undead'. Henry widens his eyes 'Who are YOU?' The hovering man laughs 'Don't be scared, I'm a friend. My name's Alan Alan Alan. People who know me call me 'Triple Alan'. Henry rubs his chin 'That's really what your parents named you?' Alan nods 'Yep. I'm so amazing, I got named three times!' Henry shakes his head 'Actually, an argument could be made that no one bothered naming you at all. Were you an angry baby?' Alan gives a thumbs up 'You know what? I was. Maybe that does at least partially explain parental neglect.'

Alan coughs 'Anyway... Let's cut to the chase - We're both dead. Sorry to be so blunt.' Henry's eyes widen even wider 'What??' Alan laughs 'Yep. We're as dead as dodos.' Henry tries to pick up a stone again. He still can't do it 'Ah. I see what's going on, now...' Alan gives a thumbs up 'I admire the way you're handling this.' Henry chuckles 'Oh please. I'm used to much worse.' Alan looks sympathetic 'You're referring to your dead budgie?' Henry looks down 'How did you know about that?' Alan replies 'Never mind. Look. Being dead can be very lonely. Have you ever... considered getting into the palindrome spotting scene?' Henry pushes himself backwards 'Errr...' Alan responds 'You're nervous...' Henry sighs 'I don't know. Spotting palindromes can be a serious addiction...' Alan nods 'Of course. Of course. But we're not exactly alive any more, right? Who cares what happens?'

Henry shakes his head 'Look, it was nice meeting you, Alan. But I think I'm going to have to part ways. When I finally work out how to, I'm going to give you a salmon as a gift. As a token of my friendship. I pray that you feel the same.' Henry stands up and turns to his left. Still cross-legged and floating, Alan blocks his path in a flash. His fists are clenched 'You're not going anywhere.' Henry is calm 'Yes I am.' Alan tuts 'Nope. You can never get away from me. And who cares? Again, we have NOTHING left to lose. Can I make that any clearer? WE'RE DEAD.' Henry coughs 'I understand you're angry at me because you believe I've rejected you, but... how can I make THIS clear?... Go away.' Alan furrows his brow 'Nope. I'm not feeling rejected at all. Just a little annoyed at your know-it-all-ness.' Henry replies 'Forgive me if I don't trust you...'

Alan winks 'Look. Come with me. I have something to show you. It's not anything to do with palindromes, I swear. It's just something all ghosts need to see. It's an introduction to your future, if you will. Please.' Henry sighs 'Fine. If it will stop you from bothering me.' Alan uncrosses his legs and floats in a standing position. He slowly falls back to earth 'See that bridge over there?' Alan points to the structure as Henry replies 'Yep. A good looking bridge.' Alan puts his hand on his new friend's shoulder and replies 'Yes. But have you REALLY seen it?' Henry backs away, making his shoulder 'hand-less' 'What do you mean? I've seen it with my eyes, from here. Didn't you? What do you know that I don't?'

Alan laughs 'Just come with me.' Alan leads the way to the bridge. Henry comments as he walks 'So how many undead people are there?' Alan is nonchalant 'There are quite a few. You and me are basically Heaven rejects. We're not bad enough to go to Hell, but things still kind of suck. Can you imagine if people like you were able to mingle with saints? It would be the weirdest thing ever.' Henry face-palms 'Ah. Of course.' Alan continues 'I wouldn't worry about it. You've got loads of time to get your stuff together. Maybe God will forgive you.' Henry smiles 'I'm happy causing trouble for a while'. Alan gives a thumbs up 'Good man.' Henry is intrigued 'What's the craziest thing you've seen when dead?' Alan's eyes light up 'That's just what I was about to show you!'

Alan and Henry stop by the front of the bridge. The river continues even further. Henry sighs 'Is this as good as things get?' Alan laughs 'No!' He walks to the back as Henry follows him in a daze. Henry's jaw drops open as he points to some graffiti 'Someone has spray painted the number '123454321'... That's one of the nicest palindromes I've ever seen!' Alan nods 'Told you.' Henry stamps his foot 'But I told you not to show me any! Now I won't be able to think of anything else!' Alan tuts 'Stop being a baby. This is living. There are rumours someone has painted '12345678987654321' not far from here.' Henry screws his face up 'I don't believe you!' Alan is defiant 'No, I think it's true.' Henry bites his thumb 'Can't you see what this is doing to you? You're obsessed!'

Henry clears his throat 'How about I steer you into another direction? A better direction?' Alan looks down 'Does it involve salmon?' Henry winks 'Yeah'. Alan gawks at Henry and responds 'Can't you see YOU'RE obsessed?' Henry disagrees 'With all due respect, salmon are among the most delicious and healthiest foods. Attractive numbers on the other hand only lead to misery and doom. The REALLY

great thing about salmon is...’ Alan interrupts and stares through Henry’s soul ‘Ok. Fish are clearly very important to you. Let’s reach a compromise. I’ll show you a damn salmon. I’ll show you as many as you like. BUT you join me and the other number heads.’ Henry rubs his chin in deep contemplation ‘You’ll really show me some salmon...?’

Alan smiles ‘Great to have you aboard! Out of curiosity, is there a salmon scene like there is a number scene?’ Henry points upwards at an approaching, bright green helicopter in the distance ‘Hey! Hear that chopper? Why is it coming here? Do you think maybe some criminals are around these parts?’ Alan looks up and gasps ‘Keema Nan!’ Henry keeps staring ‘Keema Nan? What’s she doing?’ Alan replies ‘Beats me... But I know that helicopter from anywhere.’ The aircraft gets closer and closer, then stops above the bridge. A rope gets thrown out of it that reaches the ground by the ghosts, and a granny with green hair climbs down. The two immortals stare, dumbfounded. The granny waddles to the bridge, picks a spray can from her pocket and writes ‘111...’ Henry laughs ‘I think she’s painting a palindrome!’ The granny scribbles another ‘111’. Alan nods ‘Yep. Looks like a palindrome to me.’

The granny paints three more ones, walks to the rope and climbs up it. Once in the helicopter, it flies away into the distance. Alan comments ‘Well... 111111111... Not a bad number. Not a bad number at all.’ Henry stares blankly ‘So Keema Nan’s a part of the scene?’ Alan comments ‘I genuinely had no idea! It’s clearly growing every day.’ Henry coughs ‘Anyway, about salmon... I was wondering if it was possible to maybe eat them, as well as look at them?’ Alan sighs ‘Sorry. No.’ There is a chill in the air. It seems the gravity of the situation has finally hit Henry. He starts hyperventilating and shakes more and more ‘No... No... No... No salmon??’ Alan sighs ‘Just calm down!’ Henry continues, now pale ‘Will... will... will I be able to... bond with pet budgies??’ Alan replies ‘Sorry, no. They won’t see you.’

Henry slaps himself in the face, relaxes and speaks with no emotion ‘Ok’. Alan pulls a face ‘Really? You’re ok?? It seemed to me like you kind of needed to eat salmon?’ Henry sighs ‘No, I’m fine...’ Alan continues ‘But all you’ve been talking about since we met were the things! You must be the biggest salmon freak in the world!’ Henry looks at peace ‘That... that was a pretty good palindrome.’ Alan gives a hearty laugh ‘I know, right! It was flipping incredible!’ Henry hugs Alan briefly ‘You’ve shown me the way. You’ve shown me there is more to life than salmon. If anything palindromes are BETTER than salmon! I bet I’ll find an even better one than the ones here!’ Alan tuts ‘Ha. NO. I will.’

Henry looks around ‘The scenery in these parts is certainly very straight. I wonder why that could be.’ Alan shrugs his shoulders ‘I think it has something to do with old royalty. I think they just liked straight paths and stuff and commissioned them...’ Henry cries out ‘Why??’ Alan continues ‘Just a preference I think. Just like they liked the straight royal haircuts that were two meters tall.’ Henry replies. ‘Huh. Did you hear the theory that this isn’t the only universe? Apparently there’s this other one that had Kings called King George VI and all that stuff. No kings called Wooble the Dooble. It’s very fascinating.’ Alan laughs ‘No! No way!’ Henry looks puzzled ‘Well that’s what I heard.’ Alan replies ‘What’s the evidence?’ Henry sighs ‘Oh, I don’t know.’ Alan smiles ‘Anyway, come with me. I’ll show you my friends. Boy do they have some stories! I think you’re going to like being undead, my man!’ Alan walks

further across the path as Henry follows. The latter comments 'Anyway, about salmon...'