

Spin

by Jack Woods

At end of the hall stood a man. I didn't care who really, I'd been walking so long through this labyrinth that finding anyone was bliss. You'd think in a grid one couldn't get lost, at least that's what I thought, but I'd come to realise the confusion came from the rooms looking the same.

Each room reminded me of a roman numeral I, two halls running parallel and connected by a bar, but it wasn't perfect, in the sense that looking down one of these bars, you knew on the other side of the wall ahead lay another I, unreachable from this perspective. Meaning not every I was connected to every other I in the traditional way, and not every parallel hallway on either side was walkable, because walking down it looked exactly like walking down the bar. It seemed like every way I turn I entered again the same situation; a hallway from which I couldn't escape.

This seemed like problem enough, but early on I made the mistake of thinking that the point of a maze was to go 'in' one side, and 'out' the other. Since each path was always accessible, I figured alternating left and right at each end would lead me across. But after walking some time I needed all the assistance I could get.

I hoped this man could help, he's the first person I'd seen since the beginning so his advice couldn't make me any more lost than I already was, and asking directions would hopefully set me on some course one may call the right direction. I walked to the end of the hall and tapped him on the shoulder, he turned around revealing the pale face of an elderly man, with the whitest eyes I'd ever seen.

"Excuse me?" I said. He didn't respond, his eyes seemed to look straight through me, to a point in the distance.

"Hell-o," I said waving a hand in front of his eyes, "do you know where we are?"

"...turn....around...please..." he said at last, barely audible. I took a few steps back, cautious, just in case he tried anything sinister. He seemed incapable of talking let alone launching an

attack of some kind, but I've learnt first hand the least capable people can be more dangerous than the obvious. They have the element of surprise, which in a detective story, is always the most powerful.

Eyes locked, I did a quick spin and couldn't help but lose sight of him for only a moment. When he came back into view he looked full of life, hands no longer limp at his side, he seemed unusually animated, granted I'd only known him briefly, he seemed to gain something of a character.

"Hello there!" he said, "And what brings you here?"

"Work, what about you?"

"My legs, I think," he said, taking a two steps forward and two back. "Yep, my legs."

"I'm lost, do you know the way out?"

"Ahh, common misconception, the way out can also be the way in. Which way did you come?"

"I can't remember, and besides, I'm looking for something."

"You might be in the wrong place, there are no things here." He said.

"I was told it was in here, was someone pulling my leg?"

"We pull our own legs, it's how we walk. I thought you were looking for some *thing*, now you say you're looking for *it*? I think you're a bit confused."

"Rhetoric is all I have, and now you're taking that from me too..."

"Never fear, it's only a trick."

"Are you the magician?"

"You suppose a trick implies a trickster? That line of questioning is useless, unless you want to find God, in which case you don't even need a question. Just point at something and say 'The Creator,' apparently he's in everything."

"Probably not, but it's best to be sure." I said, feeling a bit stupid.

"You're right, I apologise. I haven't had anyone to talk to for a while, it's easy to forget a good question simply rules out a line of

thought. Bad questions you tend to answer yourself.”

“Does working something out yourself mean the question was bad?” I said, wondering if my ideas about this place could be entirely wrong.

“I shouldn't think so, it's a process of elimination versus eliminating the process. If you started walking with something to prove, then you'll always prove it and have probably walked right by me.”

“Then who are you, why are you in here?”

“When you ask why, you really mean to ask how. Why supposes purpose, which I'm sure you realise by now, is meaningless.”

“How are you here then...”

“I was put here to prove a point.” He said.

“That means there is a purpose....”

“Nope, my legs brought me here for their own point. I'd ask them, but they can't talk. They only walk.” He said, “Turn me around.”

“Why?”

“*How...*” he said, raising a hand above, indicating a spinning motion. I obliged, more so to prove I understood than out of curiosity. Sometimes, it's easy to be selfish when we want to prove we're not stupid, and I like being considered smart. Or at least, smart enough for subtlety. So I took his hand as he stood on the ball of his foot, and gave him a good spin. He went round a few times, and it looked like the blur changed colours with each rotation; the grey became brown, then red, then brown again before he stopped and I realised I was holding the hand of a beautiful woman with mousy blonde hair. I took a step back, confused.

“Thank you,” she said, dusting off her dress.

“How did you do that?”

“Do what?”

“Change, I started spinning an old man and when he stopped, you appeared.”

“I didn't, I've always been here. But I see the

misunderstanding. Things usually change when they spin with respect to you, like when you look at the earth from space, if you were motionless you'd see the geography of the planet beneath looks different. From my perspective it was the world that was spinning until it stopped, and suddenly you were standing there."

"Where were you before?"

"Here," she said, shaking her head. "I didn't move. The world did."

I gave up understanding, on this place. That's probably why these people are here, entering however long ago before realising they're trapped in this absurd world, lost for so long they stood still in the hope someone would come their rescue, sick of walking the same hallways leading to the same ends that seemed geometrically impossible. I began to resent my teachers for not preparing me for such a situation, instead teaching us derivatives and structuralism and how to play a sport we only play in high school. Where is the practical use?

"You seem lost."

"Really, I thought now I was found." I said, annoyed at people restating the obvious. She smiled, I guess she provoked a reaction and seemed satisfied.

"Have you tried visualising this place?" she said, pulling a pen and paper from a pocket in her dress.

"That's the problem, I think my eyes are lying."

"Have you tried the math though?"

"No. Math doesn't seem useful here."

"That's your problem, maths is always useful when you know its application. Think about it, if every hall looks the same and you can't seem to find an edge, what does that imply?"

"There are no edges."

"Obvious, but good. What's the next step?" she said, pen at the ready and starring at me like I already knew the answer, that I was my own worst enemy when it came to thinking things through.

"That, from the outside, it would look the same, regardless of which way we chose to look at it perhaps?"

"Which, clearly stated, is...."

"This object is symmetrical under every rotation."

"*Any* rotation," She wrote it down, "what else?"

I thought for a moment. "Things that spin inside don't follow the same symmetry."

"Indeed, what about when you turn down a hall?"

And I was hit, by something simple and obvious.

"That me turning down a hall at the end wasn't me turning at all. This object I'm *in* rotates, creating the illusion of me turning." I said, looking left, then right. Both directions had a T at their end, I hadn't stopped to take a look before, only once I'd chosen a direction and looked back did it look like an I. I didn't think about how it should have a break halfway up, from the hallway I'd turned out of.

"There you go."

After thinking for some time I came to the conclusion that this idea assumes the maze is an object, a physical thing you can go in and out of, when each rotation may just be a rotation of a single object into itself. In that, it has no real edges, like a cube or a rectangle, or even a great circle, and it may just be a single inescapable repetition that you somehow must rotate yourself out of. Imagine a tennis ball suspended by some invisible force always spinning one direction, and then by some imaginary set of circumstances, it chose to spin the opposite way. The invisible force would no longer hold it in place because of the counteracting force, and it would fly off in whatever direction opposed this change of spin. Flung out into the world of the real once more.

"Spin me." I said

"No."

"What, why?"

"I don't want to turn out like the old man, he can barely talk from being trapped here so long. But you're different, you represent the introduction of another element into this place."

"I'll spin you out, and then I can spin myself out?"

"That sounds good, but who will end up here when you leave?"

I honestly didn't know, how many sides could I have? If I left, who would I make suffer this fate, and would it be a game of musical chairs, once all the sides of me figured out this trick would we end up constantly spinning one another in and out of this prison trying to avoid us being here. Others may not work it out, so would I be sentencing a perfectly respectable and decent person, that contributes to the world, to this doom. Or would it be a convict, some morally reprehensible person that deserves to be trapped? My fate seems tied to theirs, just as hers to the old man, could I trust such a person with this duty. Would they kill the old man who can't talk and thus kill her, or commit suicide, manifesting in some form of death for me in the real world—like being hit by a truck, or shot by a robber?

It seems these worlds are linked; what happens in one must correspond to an event in another. So the only person I could trust in this place was myself, not only to keep others alive, but I save me from wasting myself.

“Can you stay for a while, please?” I said, scared.

“Just because you feel responsible doesn't mean that responsibility is yours.” She said, giving me the piece of paper, “Look how Atlas turned out. Maybe this place is supposed to teach you something.” She raised her hand above her head, like the old man.

“Teach me what?”

“The world goes round,” she said. I span her slowly, each time she completed a revolution she became someone new. A schoolboy, a pharmacist, a confused looking anchorman. I was looking for the old man who could barely talk but stopped when I happened upon a cat. It fell to the ground with more elegance than I'd expected. I sat down next to her, patting her for who knows how long, thinking about home. I wouldn't mind seeing the sky once more, its blue and feel the sun shine against my face one last time. Maybe my next spin was an animal too; perhaps a microbe or a fungus that would simply grow over the walls, multiplying so it would never be alone.

The cat didn't do much, but purred as I pat. I decided it was my duty to take her with me, remove her from this place altogether, so I picked her up and, giving myself some room, closed my eyes and span as fast as I could. The breeze felt pleasant on my face, and I fell to the ground, disorientated.

