

Love and Wieners in *Everything Everywhere All at Once*

Out of the many featured worlds from the multiverse of *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, the Hot Dog Fingers universe has to be one of the strangest. In the main universe of the movie, our heroine, Evelyn, is a struggling, middle-aged laundromat owner. Unable to deal with her impending divorce, an IRS tax audit, and splintering relationships with her daughter and elderly father, Evelyn is pulled away from her world on a classic mission to save the fate of the entire universe. Throughout her hero's journey, she traverses many universes in which her other selves are living out an infinity of drastically different lives, one of them being a reality where everyone has hot dog fingers. This sudden change in human anatomy is explained through a farcical flashback to 10,000,000 B.C., when the traditional chimpanzee was defeated by a chimpanzee with hot dog fingers in a bid for dominance, changing the course of evolution and resulting in a radically different human genome.

The Hot Dog universe also features a romance between Evelyn and Deirdre, the IRS agent relentlessly spearheading the audit in Evelyn's main universe. When main-timeline Evelyn suddenly appears and rejects Deirdre from shock at both their fingers and relationship to each other, the rift created ultimately results in the dissolution of their relationship. In a movie filled to the brim with ridiculous gags, it is easy to pass over the hot dog fingers as a meaningless joke, joining the IRS butt-plug awards as another prop to laugh at and later sell as a novelty candle. While their presence in the film certainly adds another bizarre element of comedy, the hot dog fingers ultimately allow for a deeper exploration of Evelyn's repulsion to intimacy, revealing her struggle to accept love in her closest relationships, which threatens the whole universe. It is only when she embraces the intimacy of the Hot Dog universe that she can use kindness, patience, and love to save her marriage, her relationship to her daughter, and the entire universe.

During her first verse-jump to the Hot Dog universe, Evelyn finds herself in her laundromat. Despite this familiar setting, she contemplates her hot dog fingers in front of her face with confusion, immediately confronted by a strange version of reality. Discomfited by her own self, she whips around, only to face a warped version of romance playing on a television screen. The romantic movie that Prime Evelyn used to escape from the problems of her own life, complete with beautiful actors performing a coordinated dance and song to represent love, has now been twisted with the addition of these strange hot dog fingers, which the love interests slap against themselves as they dance around each other. Still reeling, Evelyn looks at the hot dog fingered hand that has been slung over her shoulder with consternation and screams when she realizes it belongs to Deirdre, pushing her away. She also continues to rebuff all of Deirdre's attempts to hug her and reconcile. At the same time, the love interests on television establish what intimacy looks like in this universe by shoving their hot dog fingers, slathered with condiments, into each others' mouths, which viscerally repels Evelyn. Retching into her hand, she consequently gets doubly disgusted by her own hot dog fingers. Evelyn's simultaneous realization of her romantic relationship with Deirdre and the ridiculous, repulsive love of this universe reveals how Evelyn equates queerness with absurdity and the grotesque.

The second time Evelyn verse-jumps into the Hot Dog universe is during a romantic candlelit dinner in the apartment she shares with Deirdre. While Deirdre approaches her seductively, the scene intercuts between the dancing of the romantic movie actors and shots of Evelyn and Deirdre imitating this type of mating ritual. The intercut moment changes to the disgusting scene of the condiments being shoved into the actors' mouths once Deirdre gets closer, associating queer intimacy from Deirdre with the disgust Evelyn feels toward the concept of love in this universe. Evelyn again rejects her, declaring that "this is wrong." The romantic

movie, a stand-in for idealized love, emphasizes the hot dog fingers as a signal of a “wrong” type of anatomy in Evelyn’s lesbian relationship to Deirdre. Disgusted by herself, human anatomy, and the intimacy rituals of this universe, Evelyn’s statement of “wrongness” reflects her inability to accept queerness and love in her daughter Joy’s life, which becomes the catalyst for the universe’s destruction.

In order to fix her relationships with Deirdre in this universe and her daughter in the main universe, Evelyn must overcome her aversion toward the hot dog fingers and accept their inextricably linked queerness and intimacy. Flashbacks of Deirdre and Evelyn’s love story are filled with mundane moments quietly bursting with love: Deirdre knits with her feet, Evelyn presses the buttons on a huge remote with her toes, and Evelyn’s foot wipes the tears off of Deirdre’s face. Through these ridiculous, heartwarming glimpses of Deirdre and Evelyn’s life together, *Everything Everywhere All at Once* puts forth love as the ultimate answer to fixing the universe and embracing the absurdity of life. The most absurd prop of the movie is able to facilitate Evelyn’s realization that there is something beautiful to love in anything, even the most ridiculous universe filled with wiener fingers. Although this small romance may feel meaningless within the context of the vast expanse of the multiverse, Evelyn’s decision to return to Deirdre in the Hot Dog universe and work toward a reconciliation expresses her newfound ability to find love and meaning in anything, even Deirdre Beaubeirdre the tax lady.