

The Consistency Paradox
(aka Causal Loop)

by

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FADE IN ON:

INT. LOBBY - C.T.R. LAB - DAY

Three cameras. TEN REPORTERS. Five of whom stay glued to their phone.

SOPHIE (30) and DOUG (30) hold court up front. Clad in white lab coats, they stand before a corkboard. A STRIP OF PAPER's the only thing it holds.

Blonde and pretty-plain, Sophie's the more gregarious of the two. Uncomfortable in the spotlight, Doug lingers at her side - absorbs Sophie's energy like rays of sun.

A BALD REPORTER raises his hand.

BALD REPORTER

Who are you two again?

DOUG

My name? Uh, Doug Jackson. Ph.D.

BALD REPORTER

What's your title, Dr. Jackson?

DOUG

Director of CTR Research for ten -

SOPHIE

That's twelve, Darling.

DOUG

- years.

The two hold hands, exchange a secret smile.

SOPHIE

(whispers)

It doesn't seem that long, does it?

DOUG

(whispers)

No, Sweetie. Not at all.

BALD REPORTER

"CTR" stands for what?

DOUG

Center for Temporal Research. Of course.

A NEBBISH REPORTER with glasses CLEARS HIS THROAT.

NEBBISH REPORTER
That's Time Travel, right?

SOPHIE
Exactly; you got that in one!

Reporters glance up from their cells, the buzzword music to their ears. The bald reporter turns to Sophie next.

BALD REPORTER
And you are?

SOPHIE
Sophie Jackson. Also Ph.D.

NEBBISH REPORTER
Is this a family project? Any relation?

DOUG
We're married. Does that count?

BALD REPORTER
(snorts)
Well, not to me.

LAUGHTER ripples through the crowd. A FEMALE REPORTER swings her camera the couples' way.

FEMALE REPORTER
How does the CTR Project work?

NEBBISH REPORTER
And how is Time Travel even possible?
Doesn't time just flow one way?

SOPHIE
Usually, it does. But time is a dimension, like a two way road. One that can be distorted, just like space.

FEMALE REPORTER
Space can be distorted? Since when?

DOUG
It is by gravity. We see that, every day.

NEBBISH REPORTER
What about the "Grandfather Paradox?"

BALD REPORTER
Grandfather Para-who? What the Geek is that?

Sophie beams. It's a nerdy question dear to her heart. She grabs a marker, and scribbles on the paper strip.

SOPHIE

Forgive me for not being an artist. But this is simple to explain...

DOUG

I'll leave this one to Sophie. Fixing things is more my speed.

Sophie sketches STICK FIGURES and ARROWS.

SOPHIE

Listen up people, here's the deal. Imagine a Time Traveler steps into the CTR Accelerator, and is leaped back in time -

BALD REPORTER

Woah - don't go so fast!

SOPHIE

Once he arrives, he kills his Grandfather.

BALD REPORTER

What'd the old coot do to him?

SOPHIE

(shrugs)

Didn't give him the present he wanted when he was three?

More LAUGHTER from the crowd. Sophie doodles a cartoon GRAVESTONE. And the letters: "RIP:."

SOPHIE

Needless to say, that creates a problem.

The bald reporter rolls his hands: "Get Going. And?"

BALD REPORTER

We know the Looper scenario. Why don't you "leap" to the punch?

DOUG

That's where quantum dissonance comes in.

BALD REPORTER

Diso- what?

SOPHIE

The temporal conflict, as it were. How could he have killed his Grandfather, if our time traveler was never born? But here's where the paradox cancels out. Time can be twisted in multiple ways. Like Schroedinger's Cat, writ large.

BALD REPORTER

(mutters to the Nebbish)
Now they're talkin' bout cats?

NEBBISH REPORTER

Yeah, it's... um, never mind.

Sophie yanks the paper off the board, and loops it several times. She holds her "origami" out to the reporters. The ends point in opposite directions now.

SOPHIE

See what happens?

BALD REPORTER

No, I don't. My brain hurts!

DOUG

(fidgets)
It's actually quite easy to comprehend. Time splits in certain ways...

NEBBISH REPORTER

In other words, Multiple Universes?

DOUG

We call it Quantum Superposition. Sure.

The female reporter GRUNTS and turns to her team.

FEMALE REPORTER

(sarcastic)
Now entering National Inquirer Territory. Pack it up; we're outta here.

She and her CAMERAMAN leave. The remaining reporters focus on Sophie and Doug.

BALD REPORTER

You gonna send back anything live? Like Sputnik? Leap a monkey there?

NEBBISH REPORTER

Sputnik sent a dog. And you think that's a smart idea? Haven't you seen Planet of the Apes?

SOPHIE
Hold your horses, folks. This isn't
Terminator Genisys.

DOUG
We're only sending back one particle. For
a few seconds. That's all.

All the reporters deflate. They trudge towards the exit.
Their interest.. drained away.

Sophie and Doug exchange knowing glances as they go.

DOUG
Did you have to bring up Terminator? That
stretches our credibility a bit.

SOPHIE
I thought I would spice this up. Okay?

INT. LABORATORY - C.T.R. LAB - LATER

A huge white room. Not much there. Except for the small
Accelerator machine. It looks like a high-tech lathe.

Doug watches from a separate room, behind a ceiling-to-
wall Plexiglass shield. Sophie checks the Accelerator by
hand - pure excitement on her face.

SOPHIE
Are you *sure* you won't join me?

DOUG
This is your moment in history, Dear.

SOPHIE
No, it's ours!

DOUG
It's your insights which made this
reality. All I did was draw up
blueprints.

Sophie SNAPS on Mechanic's Goggles.

SOPHIE
If you insist - game on!

She flips switches. The Accelerator HUMS. Sophie steps
back and counts.

SOPHIE

Ten, Nine, Eight, Seven. Your end is recording, Doug? This'll be over in the blink of an eye.

Doug nods. Gives thumbs-up.

SOPHIE

Four, three...

Doug blows a kiss.

SOPHIE

Two, one...

DOUG

"Knock it out of the Park", Dear!

The Accelerator WHINES. Followed by a blinding FLASH.

The top section of the Accelerator RIPS OFF - hurtles towards Sophie at lightning speed.

Piercing her stomach, it pins her to the wall.

Doug HOWLS and pounds on the glass. Dashes to the lab.

He's far too late. Doug tries to pull Sophie free, but she's stuck to the wall - like paper to that corkboard.

TECHNICIANS swarm inside. Doug cradles a dying Sophie in his arms.

SOPHIE

(gasps)

Was the leap a success?

DOUG

Who knows? Who cares?!

Sophie holds a trembling hand to Doug's face.

SOPHIE

We did it. Didn't we?

DOUG

Don't die, Sophie. Stay with me!

SOPHIE

Maybe we won't grow old together. But at least we had twelve good years. And I loved every moment. We complete each other, don't we..?

The light extinguishes in her eyes. Doug WEEPS and cradles his dead wife.

INT. LABORATORY - C.T.R. LAB - NIGHT

A broken Doug hunches in a chair. He's aged one hundred years in a day. He pours over transcripts from the Leap.

A YOUNG TECH pokes his head in the door.

YOUNG TECH

Dr. Jackson, do you need a ride home?

DOUG

(mutters)

What I need is peace and quiet. Only I can interpret the results now.

YOUNG TECH

Dr. Jackson, I'm so sorry. Dr... Mrs. Jackson was a great lady.

DOUG

Please just... go away.

The Tech slinks out.

Doug jumps up and runs to the Accelerator. He picks up the bloody shard from the floor.

START MONTAGE

Doug putters around the lab. He patches the Accelerator.

And builds... something more. An array of REFLECTIVE PLATES, leading from the machine to the wall.

The nervous TECHS give Doug space. There's nothing safe they can say.

END MONTAGE

INT. LABORATORY - C.T.R. LAB - NIGHT

Doug and the Young Tech work alone. Doug fiddles with the reflective plates. The Tech shoots Doug "the eye."

YOUNG TECH

How'd you get authorization for that?

DOUG

I'm the Director. That helps, a bit.

YOUNG TECH

What's it for?

DOUG

(snaps)

It's a precautionary measure. To diffuse the overflow of energy. So this won't happen... ever again.

Doug's voice trails off in a SOB. The Tech inches away.

When he's gone, Doug jumps into action. He turns the Accelerator on full throttle.

The machine starts to HUM.

Doug lifts Goggles to his head. Decides against it; throws them aside.

DOUG

Five, four, three... Come on, Occam's Razor. Let this work!

The Accelerator WHINES. Heating fast.

DOUG

Two, One... and....

Another FLASH like before. Doug cowers, shields his eyes.

Energy from the Accelerator ricochets off plates.

The air shimmers and distorts. Lights coalesce until -

...SOPHIE APPEARS. Her image looks distorted, like filtered through black and white TV.

Doug reaches a hand toward her. His wedding ring glints with light. The field ZAPS! Doug recoils.

DOUG

Sophie?

SOPHIE

My God - Doug, is it you? I thought you were... I saw you dead!

Sophie's face lights up in relief. Doug stares, confused.

DOUG

I died in the experiment?

SOPHIE

You stubborn bastard, you insisted on doing it yourself. You didn't want me to take the risk!

She looks past Doug. Spots the plates on the floor.

SOPHIE

That's what I was missing.

DOUG

What?

SOPHIE

I've been trying to bring you back for weeks. Find *some* way to straighten out the temporal coil. But all I'm good with is theory. You're the engineer.

The two share a poignant moment. Only inches apart, yet separated by a wall of time.

DOUG

Darling, I've found a way. All I have to do is flip this dial -

He touches the Accelerator switch.

SOPHIE

Don't! Doug - you're everything to me. If I'm gone in your world - just think of it as... fate. If you do that, who knows how time would split? Your "side" of the world could be torn apart.

DOUG

You don't know that for sure.

SOPHIE

(shrugs)

The equation's never been clear to me.

Tears well in Doug's eyes.

DOUG

You know what they say about science. Experimenting's a necessary evil...

SOPHIE

Not if it could mean your death!

DOUG

(chuckles)

Well, that's *your* "Sophie's Choice."

Sophie thinks it over, LAUGHS.

SOPHIE

You finally found your sense of humor.
Good. I'm tired of being the "fun one"
all the time.

DOUG

(grins)

I'm just glad to see you alive. If
there's anyone that deserves to live to
old age, it's you.

SOPHIE

Thanks. I think?

DOUG

I'm not meant for this world. I'm too
boring. Life is - livelier with you here.

Doug's hand jumps to the switch. Sophie reaches out,
screams -

SOPHIE

No!

The force field FLICKERS.

The couples' fingers intertwine.

Then everything EXPLODES. The Accelerator SHATTERS.

And BOTH scientists disappear.

A moment of silence. The Young Tech runs in. He surveys
the damage, horrified.

YOUNG TECH

Dr. Jackson, are you there?

Neither Sophie nor Doug answer. The time stream splits -
one final time.

FINAL FADE OUT: