

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: