

The Tunnel

written by

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OVER BLACK:

The sound of a man nervously clearing his throat, once, twice.

FADE IN:

INT. PLUSH EXECUTIVE BOARDROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON SASHA KLEINMAN (40's), looking down at his hands, which are shaking badly.

He is wearing an expensive suit, and is gazing out at his audience.

WE ARE WIDE ON THE ROOM to show a plush boardroom, the table surrounded by twenty or so greying white men.

Sasha's POV as he is lost in his own world. The lighting is harsh, sickly.

The sounds around him oddly indistinct with a slight ringing, like hearing through water.

(O.S.) A man's voice is talking.

Sasha glances up to look up at his boss MILES EDMONDSON, who is speaking to warm up the crowd.

Miles is very slick - a corporate creature in his element.

Miles has clearly built up to a flourish in passing the baton to Sasha, as the audience are all laughing and looking expectantly in Sasha's direction.

Sasha has no clue what had just been said.

Mild panic spreads across Sasha's face as he stands, shakes Miles' hand, and completely fumbles the chance for a smooth and professional transition.

This is a like an anxiety dream come true.

SASHA

Oh,...ah...

A beat as he tries in vain to swallow again. Sweat beads on his upper lip.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Thankyou, Miles.

He clears his throat and looks up at the slide on the screen he has summoned with the clicker in his trembling hand.

It reads simply 'The Multiverse'. He draws himself to attention and continues more strongly as the well-practiced presentation kicks in.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Thank you for your time today gentlemen.

He manages a small smile at -

ANGLE ON THE AUDIENCE, dressed in dark handmade suits to a man.

These are men not used to having their time wasted.

They are relaxed in their position as powerbrokers, and gaze back at Sasha with shrewd curiosity.

SASHA (CONT'D)

I hope that in fifteen minutes you'll be glad that you were here, and I'm convinced that in fifteen years, you'll still be dining out on what I'm about to tell you.

A slight ripple of amusement from the audience, but they are not going to make it too easy for Sasha.

CLOSE ON MILES, who's broad smile doesn't touch his eyes, which flick anxiously from the audience to Sasha and back again.

NEXT SLIDE - a monochrome photo of a balding bespectacled man with a rather severe downturned mouth.

SASHA (CONT'D)

This, is the Nobel Prize winning Physicist Eugene Wigner. In 1961 he devised a thought experiment.

A quick sip of water returns life to Sasha's mouth, and he takes a breath to centre himself.

SASHA (CONT'D)

He wanted to demonstrate a paradox of quantum mechanics, whereby two observers, say, he and his friend, might experience different realities.

A quick glance reveals enough raised eyebrows in his audience to indicate that they are beginning to get hooked.

Sasha's shoulders relax slightly, his breathing begins to slow. He is in charge now.

SASHA (CONT'D)
(More confidently)
Wigner imagined a single photon,
that can be polarized either
vertically or horizontally,

He demonstrates the two planes with slicing movements of his hand.

SASHA (CONT'D)
...so there are two potential
measurable states. However,
according to the laws of quantum
mechanics, before the point of
measurement, the photon exists in
both states simultaneously -
something we call 'superposition'.

NEXT SLIDE - this is a computer graphic of a doll's house style laboratory with two little featureless human figures, one inside the lab and one outside.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Once measured in the lab, the
photon 'chooses' a state. But for
Wigner's friend outside the lab who
doesn't directly measure the
photon, it is still in
superposition.

Dramatic pause.

SASHA (CONT'D)
The photon now exists in both
measured and unmeasured states -
dual realities exist.
(Beat)
This thought experiment has been
used to predict that multiple
versions of our universe exist
alongside each other.

Another well rehearsed pause.

SASHA (CONT'D)

The prediction is that each time you and I make a choice between Option A and Option B, quantum effects cause our universe to split, so that there is now a parallel world where decision A was made, and another one where decision B was made. These incalculable numbers of realms sit side by side in higher dimensions that human senses are incapable of perceiving. Of course this was all theory.

(Beat)

That is until, a few years ago, the Wigner's Friend thought experiment was demonstrated to be true in reality.

A beat to let this sink in.

SASHA (CONT'D)

But now, gentlemen...

Another smile, this time broader and more genuine.

SASHA (CONT'D)

the reason you are here this evening is that our research has brought us further still. We have had a breakthrough with our Near Field Generator technology. We believe that, with your investment, our research will allow us to actually sense the presence, and even interact with, those alternative universes.

(Beat)

WIDE ON the room to see the stunned faces gawp back at him.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Let me explain...

NOTE: The Near Field Generator will be referred to as the NFG in the following pages.

CUT TO:

INT. PLUSH EXECUTIVE BOARDROOM - LATER

SASHA is shaking hands with one of his investors as the man leaves the boardroom, before turning to the last remaining person in the room, MR. TURNER.

He is in his 70's, but his eyes are bright and quick.

SASHA

Mr. Turner. I hope we can rely on your support?

Mr. Turner looks searchingly into Sasha's eyes.

MR. TURNER

(Smiling)

Well Sasha, I think that judging by the reaction just now from the others, whether you have my support or not is immaterial.

Sasha laughs politely, unable to work out whether there is a criticism in there somewhere.

MR. TURNER (CONT'D)

You know, normally, I would be quizzing potential investees such as yourself on their contingency plans for if things go wrong.

A beat as he momentarily looks down at the floor and lets out a long breath through his nose. When he looks back up at Sasha his demeanour has changed, and he is now deadly serious.

He points an arthritic finger at Sasha.

MR. TURNER (CONT'D)

But in your case, my main worry is, what if you actually succeed?

Sasha smiles and frowns at the same time in confusion as Mr. Turner briskly spins on his heels and leaves the room.

Alone, Sasha leans against the desk and blows out his cheeks in relief.

Having seen the guests out of the building, MILES sweeps back into the room, seeming to take up more space than necessary for his average frame.

MILES

Jesus H. Christ Sasha. You nearly gave me a heart attack.

(MORE)

MILES (CONT'D)

I thought you were going to corpse
on me back there.

SASHA

I know...sorry. I guess I was more
nervous than I thought. This is
kind of a big deal for me you know.

He smiles cheekily at MILES. The presentation, despite its
inauspicious start, has gone down very well.

MILES

Well I guess it doesn't matter now,
does it? Looks like we got the
money.

He slaps Sasha on the shoulder in the accepted gesture of
corporate male celebration.

MILES (CONT'D)

Now build your machine, and let's
see how many of the promises you
just made were bullshit.

He turns and leaves, leaving Sasha alone with his thoughts.

EXT. LABORATORY BUILDING - EARLY EVENING

SASHA exits the building where he works, a temple of marble
and glass occupying prime real estate in the centre of a
major city.

It screams money at passers by on the wide pedestrianised
concourse in front of it.

Sasha pushes through a small crowd of protestors who have
gathered outside the main entrance in front of a logoed sign
indicating that the building is occupied by 'NOVA Corp.'.

The hand made signs held aloft by the protestors have slogans
like: 'If it's Public Money, it should be Public Knowledge!'
'NOVA=Weapons R Us', and 'NOVA: Industrialised death since
2001'.

Sasha ignores them, and walks away, completely oblivious to
their jeering, and still floating on the success of his
presentation.

EXT. SASHA'S HOUSE - NEXT DAY

WE ARE WIDE ON THE HOUSE. Sun shines on the front of a large
double-fronted detached suburban house.

The house and its gardens are well maintained and manicured. Bees and butterflies flit from one well-chosen plant to another.

Two expensive looking cars sit on the large driveway in front of a double garage.

It exudes a vibe of success.

SASHA is nearly half way up a huge ladder at the front of the house, the meagre collection of tools in his expensive toolbelt jangling weakly against his thigh with each rung ascended.

CLOSE ON SASHA to reveal he is not in a good way. He looks pale and sweaty, like he is having a heart attack.

A couple of times he chances a glance down at the ground and looks like he's going to throw up.

When he eventually reaches the top of the ladder, he clings to it as if it were life itself.

Sasha's wife JEN (40's) calls up from the foot of the ladder.

JEN

Sash, are you OK?

SASHA

(Tonelessly)

Yes.

(Clenches jaw)

I'm fine.

JEN

Are you sure?

SASHA

Yup. I can do it.

JEN

You don't have to do this you know.

SASHA

I know. I'm fine.

JEN

(Very slightly mocking)

You do know it will be more difficult with your eyes shut?

SASHA
 (Furious, but responds
 flatly)
 Thanks. Yes.

Sasha opens his eyes, and tries to calm himself.

CLOSE ON THE BACK OF SASHA'S right HAND as it clings to the ladder.

Sasha's POV as he focuses on the distinctive TRIANGULAR BIRTHMARK on the back of his hand at the fleshy junction between thumb and palm.

WE ARE WIDE as after a few seconds he looks upwards towards the crooked gutter he is determined to fix, and stretches out gingerly with one hand.

Slowly, slowly, he reaches away from the safety of the ladder towards the gutter.

But with a tiny wobble of the ladder we see in the terror on his face that he is convinced he is going to fall.

He snaps his hand back to cling to the ladder once more, pushing his body as hard against it as he can.

SASHA (CONT'D)
 (Under his breath)
 No. Fuck it. No.

JEN
 (A mixture of pity and
 disappointment)
 I thought so. I'll call Hayley, she
 said Frank would be able to do it
 for a couple of beers.

SASHA
 (Quietly)
 Fuck Frank.

JEN
 I don't think that's an option, but
 you can ask him when he comes over
 if you'd like?

SASHA
 (Exasperated)
 Ears like a fucking bat.

JEN
 Yup.

Jen walks off, and Sasha begins the long descent, impotent and seething.

EXT. LARGE GARDEN - DAY

SASHA is in their sunny back garden with his wife JEN, and their two sons OSCAR (8) and MILO (6).

The boys are playing frisbee (badly).

Jen reclines in a lounge reading a thick novel, while Sasha finishes folding a paper aeroplane on an outdoor table.

He makes the final touches and throws it towards the boys.

WE ARE WIDE ON THE GARDEN as the paper plane glides past the boys and catches their attention.

MILO

Ah, wow! I wanna make one, I wanna make one!

He drops the frisbee, making Oscar roll his eyes in annoyance, and runs over to Sasha.

MILO (CONT'D)

(Excited)

Can you show me how to do it, Dad?

SASHA

(Smiling)

'Course I can. OK, here we go.

He grabs two sheets of paper, and gives one to Milo. They sit down next to each other at the table.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Alright, copy what I do. First, we fold it in half, lengthways like this.

Milo watches intently and copies, but it's a bit slapdash.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Now, Smilo, the important thing to make it fly really well is balance, so you have to make sure you line the edges of the paper up really carefully, like this.

He realigns the fold in Milo's paper.

SASHA (CONT'D)
OK, see I'm making the corners
match up? Now, you push those
crease down hard.

Milo obliges, enjoying the attention.

SASHA (CONT'D)
That's it, make them nice and
crisp. Now, next fold - bring the
top corner of the paper down about
two thirds of the way, line it up,
and crease it well, and unfold it
again.

Milo copies, much better this time.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Then we do the other side, and
bring the sides in like this.
That's it, now the other one. Good.

They are now working next to each other in unison.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Good. Fold the nose in, and we're
done! Now throw it gently like
this.

He demonstrates. Milo again copies, and as soon as his plane
is launched Sasha scoops Milo up in a sitting position and
runs after the paper plane making machine gun noises, as if
Milo is a fighter pilot chasing an adversary in a dog fight.

Milo thinks this is brilliant, and is cracking up laughing.
Jen smiles over the top of her book at them.

When the plane lands Sasha puts Milo down. Milo runs off to
collect the plane. Sasha walks over to Oscar, who is poking
distractedly at the soil in a flowerbed with a stick.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Hey Oz, do you want a go?

Oscar looks up, and shrugs, 'whatever'.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Come on, I'd like to show you.

Oscar stands and walks slightly sullenly with SASHA's hand on
his shoulder to the garden table.

They start the process again. Two sheets of paper.