

PAST AND FUTURE TENSE

by
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FADE IN:

INT. LAB - JANSON NEURO SYSTEMS - DAY - FUTURE

TONY RIVERA, 35, sport coat and jeans, enters a room filled with an array of cabinet-sized devices centered around a heavily padded reclining chair.

Sprawled on the chair is a DEAD WOMAN in a green dress. A metallic helmet encloses her head. Sprouting from the helmet are scores of cables attached to the devices.

On the floor, next to the chair, is a 50-year-old DEAD MAN in a white lab coat.

Tony goes down on a knee, checks for a pulse on the Dead Man, then stands up, and places his hands on the helmet to remove it-

-and BLUE TENDRILS OF ENERGY shock him and fling him away from the chair, to crash to the floor.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY - PAST

An unmarked COP CAR suddenly swerves to the curb, jumps it, and stops. The driver's door opens and Tony staggers out, holding his head, though there's no visible injury.

INT. LAB - JANSON NEURO SYSTEMS - DAY - FUTURE

Tony gets up, sees the DOCTOR and PATIENT'S BODIES TURN TRANSPARENT, then DISAPPEAR.

TONY

What the fuck!

The door opens and the RECEPTIONIST sticks her head in.

RECEPTIONIST

Where's Doctor Janson?

TONY

(stupefied)

Where lost socks and pencils go?

INT. CAFE - DAY - PAST

Tony enters the sparsely crowded diner and acknowledges the people who greet him with a nod or a wave. He sits at a table by a window. A WAITRESS attends him. She frowns.

WAITRESS

Hey, Tony, weren't you just here?

Tony rubs his temples, trying to massage the pain away.

TONY

Huh?

(beat)

Could you get me some aspirin with my coffee, Ellie?

Ellie nods, leaves. Tony's cell rings and he answers it.

TONY (CONT'D)

Detective Rivera. What's up, Sam?

(listens)

Gimme the name again.

He pulls out a little notebook, checks his watch, and writes down the time.

TONY (CONT'D)

Why can't a uniform handle this?

(listens)

Yeah, sounds bad. Hope no one's dead.

(beat)

No, Sam, this is the first time we've talked today.

EXT. PARKING LOT - JANSON NEURO SYSTEMS - DAY - FUTURE

Tony, a little unsteady on his feet, exits the building and crosses to his car. He's clutching a brochure.

TONY (V.O.)

When I called in the disappearing bodies, Captain Dean told me to go home and sleep it off. Idiot. The receptionist told me Doctor Janson treated patients with an experimental machine that did something to their brains. That's all she knew. But I knew exactly what it did -- it made them disappear.

He opens the driver's door and gets in.

INT. TONY'S COP CAR - DAY - FUTURE

He brings out his notebook, checks the time on the DASHBOARD CLOCK -- "1:43" -- and makes an entry.

TONY (V.O.)

I had a killer headache and thought about getting checked out at a hospital, but I had to get to the bottom of this mess.

INT. TONY'S CAR - DAY - FUTURE

Tony ignores the passing scenery, one eye fixed on the brochure in his right hand. Behind the brochure we see the DASHBOARD CLOCK: "1:37."

TONY (V.O.)

The Janson brochure was written in some version of english I didn't completely understand, but apparently Janson's machine "impacted the cytoskeleton and microtubules within neurons which affect quantum states in the brain that mediate consciousness." Man, some people spend way too much time in college.

He tosses the brochure, then does a take when he sees the DASHBOARD CLOCK: "1:34." He brakes to a hard stop and flips open his notebook. He next checks his watch.

TONY

One-thirty-four. No way.

He almost jumps when the CLOCK changes to "1:33."

TONY (CONT'D)

What the hell's going on!

He picks up his phone and makes a call.

TONY (CONT'D)

Hey, Sam, could you give me a time check?

(beat)

One-thirty-three. Thanks.

(beat)

No, I didn't just ask you that!

EXT. PORCH - LOTTIE JONES HOME - DAY - PAST

Tony presses the door bell. He brings out his notebook, checks his watch and notes down the time.

The door opens and LOTTIE JONES stands there. She's 29, wears a green dress and clutches a purse.

TONY

Lottie Jones? I'm Detective Rivera.

LOTTIE

Thank you for coming, detective. I'd invite you in, but I'm on my way to an appointment. The reason I called you is that one of the people in my counseling group, Monica Santos, left a very strange message on my phone a while ago.

TONY

What kind of counseling?

LOTTIE

If you must know, it's a group for depressives. Actually, I'm going in for my first treatment right now. It was Monica's first time this morning, too.

TONY

Drugs? Electro shock?

LOTTIE

Experimental. Monica and I are in a clinical trial group. Doctor Janson invented a machine that uses magnetic fields to do something to the neurons in the brain. It's all very exciting.

TONY

Huh. Well, good luck with that. Now about Monica Santos...

LOTTIE

On the message she sounded strange-- incoherent, you know? I tried calling her back, but got no answer. All I have is her phone number, so I called 9-1-1, but they said a policeman would have to check it out first.

TONY

Got it. Dispatch will get me the address.

LOTTIE

Uh, this may sound weird, but this feels so familiar.

TONY

Like we've already had this talk?

LOTTIE

Exactly!

INT. TONY'S CAR - DAY - FUTURE

Tony's car is in front of a bank with a large digital clock out front. Customers go into and out of the bank. BANK CLOCK reads: "1:22." Then it changes to "1:21."

TONY

If time is going backwards, how come people aren't walking backwards? Crazy people want to know.

(beat)

Dammit, I forgot about Monica.

He puts the car in gear and burns rubber.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MONICA SANTOS HOME - DAY - PAST

Tony enters from the kitchen and crosses to the sofa where MONICA SANTOS, 25, is stretched out. She looks exhausted, a haunted look in her eyes.

TONY

You didn't answer the front door, so I came in through the kitchen.

MONICA

(labored)

Key inside planter on porch.

TONY

I'm calling an ambulance for you.

He brings out his phone, but Monica grabs his arm.

MONICA

Doctor Janson's machine.... Time going backward...

She dies.

EXT. MONICA SANTOS HOME - DAY - FUTURE

Tony stops his car at the curb. He flings the driver's door open and runs to the porch. He reaches into a ficus planter and pulls out a door key.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MONICA SANTOS HOME - DAY - PRESENT

The front door opens and Future Tony enters and stares at Past Tony. Their mouths drop open at the same time.

PAST TONY
What the fuck?

FUTURE TONY
What the fuck?

Their attention turns to the sofa as MONICA'S BODY TURNS TRANSPARENT, then DISAPPEARS.

FUTURE TONY (CONT'D)
That's going to happen to me.

PAST TONY
Huh? What the hell's going on?

Future Tony checks WATCH: "1:08."

FUTURE TONY
The Janson machine kicks your "clock" into reverse. Then you die and disappear.

Past Tony's eyes suddenly go wide.

PAST TONY'S POV

The WALL AND FURNITURE behind Future Tony TURN TRANSPARENT, then DISAPPEAR.

PAST TONY (O.S.)
Everything behind you is disappearing.

Future Tony looks behind him, shakes his head.

FUTURE TONY
Looks okay to me.

NEW SCENE

The world continues disappearing behind Future Tony, while everything around Past Tony remains the same.

FUTURE TONY
I guess you can't see what's behind me, because it's in my past -- and in your future.

(beat)

Fuck it. Don't do anything I wouldn't do.

He laughs, but the LAUGHTER FADES AWAY as HE TURNS TRANSPARENT, then DISAPPEARS. The world returns to normal where Future Tony used to be.

Tony just stands there, lost.

FADE OUT.