

THE EXCHANGE

Written by Philip Kelly

philipgkelly@gmail.com

EXT. UNDERPASS - NIGHT

A FOX casually sniffs around the bin at the entrance to the well light pedestrian underpass. It is startled by a loud CLAP that reverberates from the tunnel. The fox stiffens and stares down the tunnel. Nothing stirs. The fox returns its attention to the bin.

CLAP! CLOP!

The fox darts behind the bin but continues looking down the tunnel.

CLAP! CLOP!

A light at the end of the tunnel goes out.

CLAP! CLOP!

The next light goes out.

CLAP! CLOP! CLAP! CLOP! CLAP!

The fox presses its body closer to the bin, curiosity keeping it frozen in place. All the lights in the tunnel are out.

The silhouettes of two people appear at the end of the dark tunnel.

INT. UNDERPASS - MOMENTS LATER

A well dressed MAN and WOMAN stand at the end of the tunnel. Both are in their early thirties. The woman holds herself stiffly but with confidence. The man is a bit looser and fluid in the way he moves. The woman holds two halves of a COCONUT in her hands.

MAN

All I'm saying, dear Sister, is must we always embrace the theatrics? After all the talking rivers and witch burning I'm rather bored of it.

SISTER

You know as well as I do, *dear Brother*, that these 'theatrics' are a necessary precaution.

BROTHER

You missed one.

Sister looks down the end of the tunnel and sees one light remains on. She places the coconut halves on the tunnel wall then hits them off it one at a time.

CLAP! CLOP!

The light blinks out. Moonlight floods the tunnel. She places the two halves of the coconut together and twists them. It appears to be whole again. She slides it into her bag.

BROTHER
Handy little thing.

SISTER
It has its uses.

Brother walks down into the tunnel, sliding his hand along the wall and looking at the roof of the tunnel.

BROTHER
He's not here.

SISTER
He will be. He craves it. (beat)
Nobody will bother us. People are
always afraid of the dark.

CUT TO:

INT. UNDERPASS - LATER

Brother is hunkered on the ground. He tips the last few drops from an ornate hip flask into his mouth.

BROTHER
I'm out. And he's not coming.

UNSEEN PERSON (O.S)
Who's not coming?

Brother stands up.

BROTHER
Anansi. (whispering to Sister) See?
Theatrics.

Sister addresses a SPIDER dangling from the roof of the tunnel.

SISTER
Hello Anansi.

ANANSI

Hello, you two.

SISTER

My brother is in a particularly grumpy mood. Would you mind if...

ANANSI

For you my dear, anything.

The spider drops from the roof, growing in size as he moves towards the floor.

By the time he reaches the floor he has transformed into a slender man, about 50 years old but with very white almost shiny skin, clad entirely in black. He lifts up his head to reveal eight eyes.

BROTHER

Oh for the love of...

ANANSI grins broadly. He places his hands over his face and pushes them back around to his neck. The eight eyes are gone, replaced by two.

ANANSI

(To Brother)

Better?

Brother just grunts in reply.

ANANSI

Your little sister, always looking out for you.

SISTER

Now boys. This is a business meeting. Let's conduct ourselves accordingly.

ANANSI

Apologies my dear. Quite happy to get to the point. I'm a very busy... man. Do you have it?

Sister slips her hand into her bag and produces a small ORNATE BOX. Anansi eyes it excitedly.

BROTHER

(Surprised)

Is that...

Sister cuts him off.

SISTER

Do you have something for me?

A clatter comes from the end of the tunnel. All three pause a moment. Anansi returns his attention to the box. His nostrils flare.

He produces a small piece of paper from his inside pocket.

ANANSI

There you go my dear. Now. Please.

Sister hands over the ornate box in exchange for the paper. Anansi snatches it immediately, bringing it to his nose and inhaling deeply. Brother produces a cigarette and lights up.

ANANSI

Ahhhh the wisdom of family, passed down through the generations. Such a unique gift. (beat) I can't wait to add it to the pot.

BROTHER

(Mumbling to Sister)

I hope you know what you're doing.

ANANSI

No doubt she does. Although I must say, you might be wasting your time. A few hundred years hasn't made her any less irritable. What business do you have with that beauty?

SISTER

My business.

ANANSI

Ah I see. Well there you go. I guess our business is concluded.

Anansi turns on his heel and starts to scuttle away. Brother steps in closer to Sister.

BROTHER

Now tell me, why did we just wait for several hours, in the dark, just to trade *the* family heirloom, for a scrap of paper?

SISTER

Because it's Anansi. And it's not *the* family heirloom. We traded wisdom for knowledge. This is the location, of Sleeping Beauty.

Brother chokes on his cigarette smoke.

BROTHER

The Beauty? What do you want with her?

SISTER

My business.

She looks down at the piece of paper and opens it. She starts to laugh to herself.

SISTER

He just can't help himself.

Brother slides over to have a look at the paper. He snorts. We see the words '*Somewhere close*' written in ornate writing on the paper.

BROTHER

You decided to make a trade with one of worlds most notorious tricksters and you forgot to be specific?

SISTER

I thought he'd changed.

EXT. UNDERPASS

Anansi steps out of the tunnel into the moonlight. The fox swiftly moves to the other side of the bin, now out of sight. Anansi shouts over his shoulder, his voice echoing down the tunnel towards Sister and Brother.

ANANSI

Should have asked for an address my dear. Got to be specific when it com...

The coconut comes hurtling from the tunnel hitting Anansi on the back of the head.

CRACK!

Anansi drops to the ground like an empty sack. Sister and Brother step out from the tunnel. Sister picks up the coconut

and drops it into her bag.

SISTER

Told you it was useful.

BROTHER

Please, no lectures about appearances
being deceiving. Now what?

SISTER

Well, she's close by.

She drops the piece of paper on Anansi's unconscious body.

The fox steps out from behind the bin.

FOX

I can tell you where Beauty is.

SISTER

Fox? Have you been there the whole
time?

FOX

Might have. Might have seen something.
Might have seen nothing.

BROTHER

(rolling his eyes)
Bloody theatrics.

THE END.