

UNDERPASS

Short film

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2025

1. EXT. UNDERGROUND PEDESTRIAN PASSAGE - MORNING - SCENE 1

CLOSE-UP ON NICOLAS'S FACE, THE CAMERA GRADUALLY ZOOMS OUT TO A WIDE SHOT.

NICOLAS (22), a skinny dude wearing his father's oversized jacket—plays the melodica for passing pedestrians. Occasionally, a nervous tic makes him sharply twist his head uncontrollably. Because of this, Nicolas frequently misses notes, creating harsh and unpleasant sounds.

People pass by, nobody gives him any money for such a poor performance.

MEDIUM SHOT - A PASTRY STAND NEARBY

Three people are standing around it: DASHA (20), a charming round-faced pastry seller from Eastern Europe, MAX (25), a tough, streetwise guy, and his friend DAN (23).

DAN
(smiling mockingly, to
Max)
Watch: 3...2...1...

MAX
Nah, wait for it. 3...2...1...

Nicolas messes up again due to his tic. All three burst out laughing.

CUT TO:

2. EXT. UNDERGROUND PEDESTRIAN PASSAGE - SEVERAL HOURS LATER - SCENE 1 (CONTINUED)

Nicolas packs his melodica into his backpack and approaches the pastry stand to buy his favorite pastry. At the same moment, a stray cat approaches the stall, begging for food. Dasha tries to shoo it away, but Nicolas gently picks it up and feeds it some cat food he carries in his pocket.

DASHA
(irritated)
Why are you feeding him here again?
Because of you, he's always hanging
around and making this place
unsanitary. How am I supposed to
sell pastries with stray cats
everywhere?

NICOLAS
(smiling warmly)
Your pastries are perfect, Dasha.

Max and Dan laugh nearby. Nicolas briefly glances at them but remains unfazed.

NICOLAS

See you.

DASHA

(flatly)

Yeah, whatever.

MAX

(to Dasha, mockingly)

THE guy decided to make his move,
huh?

DASHA

(teasingly)

Jealous?

Max snorts arrogantly, his drool accidentally landing onto the pastry counter. Dasha clearly unhappy with Max's reaction.

CUT TO:

3. INT. NICOLAS'S APARTMENT - DAY - SCENE 2

Nicolas enters his apartment.

NICOLAS

(smiling gently)

Hi, sweet one! How are they - did they behave today?

A fluffy black cat with a small white spot above its nose appears at the doorway, winds affectionately around Nicolas's legs and meows happily. Nicolas places the melodica on the cabinet and walks into the living room.

NICOLAS

(warmly)

Hi, Mom, Dad! I'm home, and today, please note - I didn't come empty-handed.

He proudly shows off a bag containing pastries. At the dining table sit two life-sized puppets, carefully dressed in his parents' clothes. Silence fills the room in response to his words.

NICOLAS

(to the cat, cheerfully)

We'll have dinner soon, right, little one? And don't be jealous - I gave just a little food to another kitty on the street today. But only a tiny bit, I swear.

Nicolas strokes cat gently, takes out some leftover cat food from his pocket, and pours it into her bowl.

He walks into the kitchen, humming softly to himself (off-screen).

CLOSE-UP of the puppets. Nicolas returns to the living room and carefully places half of a pastry on each of the puppets' plates.

NICOLAS
(calmly)
Enjoy your meal.
(beat, quieter)
Thank you, Mom.

Nicolas sits comfortably in his favorite chair by the window and blissfully eats his pastry.

NICOLAS
(to the puppets,
thoughtfully)
You know, Dad, Dasha actually
talked to me today.
(short pause, embarrassed)
Oh, stop it, Dad! It was just a
little chit-chat – I don't think
she really likes me...
(pause, smiling)
You think so? Maybe you're right –
I'll just go ahead and ask her out.
She's nice; she could take care of
the housekeeping here, bake
pastries...

He sinks deeper into sweet fantasies about his imagined life with Dasha. While he gazes out the window, cat quietly jumps onto the table, nibbling pastry from one of the plates. Nicolas finishes eating, stands up, and walks toward the table.

NICOLAS
Have finished? Let me take your
plates.

On the table is one empty plate and one untouched pastry.

NICOLAS
(playfully scolding)
Dad, you're such an eater! I see
where I got it from. Mom, again you
didn't finish your meal. Out little
one will turn into a horse at this
rate.
(calling gently)
Come here, kitty – you're such a
lucky today.

Nicolas places the untouched pastry into cat's bowl.

NICOLAS
(playfully strict)
Manners, Dad.

Nicolas smiles on dad's burp, shaking his head gently (not a tic), stretches blissfully, and accidentally knocks a photo from a shelf. He quickly catches it. The photo shows Nicolas at the age of six, held lovingly by his mother, clutching a small black fluffy kitten with a white spot above its nose. His broad-shouldered father, dressed in a ceremonial jacket, holds his mother gently by the waist.

NICOLAS
(relieved)
Almost dropped it.

Nicolas tenderly strokes the photo with his finger.

NICOLAS
(warmly, nostalgically)
Remember that day, Dad? You and Mom
gave me sweet little one for
getting accepted into music school.
It was such a good day...

Cat rubs affectionately against Nicolas's legs.

NICOLAS
(smiling gently)
Aren't you sentimental, girl?
Attention, everyone, it's coming!

Nicolas picks up his melodica and starts playing his favorite melancholy accordion tune free from his usual tic or mistakes.

FADE TO BLACK

4. EXT. UNDERGROUND PEDESTRIAN PASSAGE - MORNING - SCENE 3

Nicolas approaches Dasha's pastry stand.

THE SHOT EXACTLY MIRRORS THE PREVIOUS DAY, CREATING THE IMPRESSION THAT THE PRECEDING ROUTINE EVENTS HAVE ALREADY HAPPENED.

DASHA
(teasingly)
And how many pastries did you earn
today playing your...hose thing?

NICOLAS
(sadly, with a tic)
Only one pastry today. And it's not
a hose, it's called a melodica.

DASHA
(mocking gently but with
some irritation)
You spend the whole day down just
for one pastry?

Nicolas doesn't answer. Dasha puts a pastry into a paper bag and hands it to him. He takes it but doesn't leave immediately, unlike usual.

DASHA
(slightly irritated)
Anything else?

NICOLAS
(hesitantly, with a tic)
Yeah... uh... Would you... go out with
me?

Max and Dan immediately burst out laughing. Dasha is about to decline, but the smug laughter from the two guys makes her change her mind. She decides to provoke Max's jealousy instead.

DASHA
(softening voice
defiantly)
Sure, let's go.

CUT TO:

5. EXT. COURTYARD - EVENING - SCENE 4

Nicolas and Dasha stroll through a random courtyard.

DASHA
(playfully)
So, you really like my pastries
that much, huh?

NICOLAS
(nods sincerely)
Yes, my whole family can't get
enough of it.

DASHA
(smiling, teasing
slightly)
Have you ever tried anyone else's
pastries?

NICOLAS
(innocently)
Only my mom's, but she hasn't baked
for a long time.

Dasha chuckles softly.

NICOLAS
(confused, with a tic)
What?

DASHA
(gently)
Nothing. You probably live nearby,
right?

NICOLAS
(surprised)
Yeah, how'd you guess?

DASHA
(amused)
There's nothing to guess, actually
— we've been walking for just five
minutes from the passage.

Nicolas suddenly stops.

NICOLAS
(impulsively, with a tic)
Hey, wanna come over to my place?
I'd like to introduce you to them.

DASHA
(surprised, slightly
cautious)
Wait...to your parents? Are you
nuts or something?

NICOLAS
(excited, not catching her
reaction)
They'll like you! I talk about you
all day long; they'd be really
happy to meet you.

Dasha about to refuse but instead says the opposite.

DASHA
(reluctantly, finding an
excuse)
You know, I can't just go like that
— I need to ask my grandma first.

Dasha pulls out her phone.

CLOSE-UP ON THE PHONE SCREEN:

She quickly texts Max: "He's inviting me over to his place."

CUT TO:

Max and Dan stand at a distance, unnoticed by Nicolas and Dasha. Max receives the text message, glances at it, and chuckles softly.

MAX

(to Dan, amused)

Check this out – our hose guy
already got her coming over.

DAN

(prolonged, surprised)

Whaaat?

Max quickly texts back: "Don't chicken out. Nothing will happen."

MAX

(to Dan, mischievously)

This'll be fun.

CUT TO:

Dasha sighs, annoyed by Max's message. She looks up at Nicolas.

DASHA

(suddenly, decisively)

You know what? Let's go!

CUT TO:

6. INT. NICOLAS'S APARTMENT – EVENING – SCENE 5

Nicolas locks the apartment door behind them.

NICOLAS

(excitedly calling out)

Mom, Dad – you'll never guess who's here!

(short pause, happily)

Yes, Dad! You were right.

Dasha looks confused and increasingly uneasy, not fully understanding what's happening.

NICOLAS

(gently, to Dasha)

Please, come in, make yourself at home.

Both step into the living room. Dasha screams.

CLOSE-UP ON THE LIFE-SIZED PUPPETS

CUT TO:

7. EXT. COURTYARD NEAR NICOLAS'S BUILDING – EVENING – SCENE 6

Max and Dan exchange a quick glance, hearing the scream, and rush toward entrance.

CUT TO:

8. INT. NICOLAS'S APARTMENT - EVENING - SCENE 5 (CONTINUED)

DASHA

(hysterical, horrified)

What the hell?! You're sick!

Panicking, Dasha turns and runs from the living room. Something quietly slips out of her jacket and falls unnoticed onto the floor. Dasha, terrified, doesn't notice.

CUT TO:

9. EXT. COURTYARD NEAR NICOLAS'S BUILDING - EVENING - SCENE 6 (CONTINUED)

Dasha runs out of the apartment, immediately bumping into Max and Dan. She didn't expect to see them here. Max confronts her first.

MAX

(mockingly)

What, did you see his little hose
or something?

DASHA

(disgusted, confused)

What?!

MAX

(arrogantly, aside to Dan)

Told you nothing would happen.

Dasha tries to respond, but no words come out. Tears begin to well in her eyes. Max attempts to grab her hands to calm her down.

MAX

(awkwardly comforting)

Come on, stop crying.

DASHA

(pulling away, sobbing
angrily)

Leave me alone! Sick - ALL of you!

Dasha breaks free and runs away, leaving the courtyard. Max, clearly irritated by her reaction, exchanges a glance with Dan. Silently agreeing, they decide to pay Nicolas a visit.

CUT TO:

10. INT. NICOLAS'S APARTMENT - EVENING - SCENE 7

Max and Dan burst into the living room, abruptly interrupting Nicolas.

NICOLAS
(confused, talking to the
puppets)
I don't understand...

MAX
(loudly, mock
astonishment)
What the fu-(silently mouths the
rest) is this?!
(pause, turning to Dan)
Dan, you seeing this too?

Dan is stunned into silence, not responding for the first time. No response is needed.

MAX
(amused disbelief)
Man, you're completely insane!

NICOLAS
(frightened, tic
intensifies)
(tic) What are you doing here? I
didn't invite you - get out!

MAX
(mockingly aggressive)
Not so fast, psycho! First, you'll
pay for what you did to Dasha. Dan,
hold him.

NICOLAS
(screaming, panicked)
Stop, no! (tic) I'll call the
police!

MAX
(laughing, sarcastically)
Who would believe you, psycho?
There're goddamn puppets at chears.

Max spots Nicolas's melodica, grabs it, and awkwardly plays a few distorted notes.

MAX
(mocking Nicolas)
Hey, turns out I'm better musician
than you! Earn at least ten
pastries right now.
(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)
 (to puppet-dad,
 sarcastically polite)
 Sir, mind if I dance with your
 lady?

Dan bursts into laughter.

MAX
 (smiling)
 Appreciate, sir. That's what I
 thought.

Max grabs the mother-puppet and begins mockingly dancing
 something vaguely resembling a waltz.

MAX
 (to Nicolas,
 sarcastically)
 And where's the music? Come on,
 dude, play us something.

NICOLAS
 (desperately, on the verge
 of tears)
 Leave Mom alone – don't touch her!

Max and Dan burst out laughing simultaneously.

MAX
 (amused, to Dan)
 Hear that? "Leave MOM alone!"
 (back to Nicolas,
 smirking)
 There's a lot of weirdos in our
 neighborhood, but you're definitely
 the winner!
 (beat, aggressively)
 Why aren't you playing yet? I said
 play!

Max hits Nicolas with the puppet's arm. Nicolas starts
 crying, his nervous tic worsening. Dan shoves the melodica
 into Nicolas's hands. Nicolas shakily attempts to play, but
 due to his intensified tic, it comes out as a chaotic mess of
 notes. Max tries dancing mockingly, soon irritated by
 Nicolas's incoherent playing.

MAX
 (frustrated, mocking
 harshly)
 You can't even play for your own
 mother!

Nicolas breaks down crying, dropping the melodica. Max,
 enraged, starts violently hitting Nicolas with puppet limbs
 until the puppet completely breaks apart.

MAX

(mock anger, ironically)

Look what you've done — Dad's going
to be furious.

Max grabs the second puppet roughly.

MAX

(mockingly imitating
father-puppet)

I'm furious! Aaaargh!

Dan bursts out laughing again. Max joins him, both laughing loudly. Max tosses the puppet to Dan, who continues beating Nicolas with pieces of it until the second puppet is shattered into fragments as well. Nicolas cries helplessly, curled up, twitching uncontrollably from his nervous tic.

Max notices the family photo on the cabinet, picks it up, and examines it carefully.

MAX

(contemptuously, to
Nicolas)

Hey psycho, seems you weren't made
by puppets after all. Your mom was
total knockout! Check it out, Dan.

Dan glances at the photo and nods approvingly.

MAX

(to Nicolas, mockingly
cruel)

So, they past away then. Couldn't
stand your playing, huh?

Max picks up the puppet mother's head in one hand, still holding the photo in the other.

MAX

(taunting, holding them
side by side)

Look: this is your mom — and this,
psycho, is a puppet's head!

NICOLAS

(sobbing, weakly
protesting)

Don't touch her! Go away!

Max signals to Dan, who resumes beating Nicolas. Soon, Nicolas stops resisting completely.

MAX

(to Dan, mockingly
professional)

Thanks, Doc – the session's over.

The patient's had his meds.

(turning back to Nicolas,
threateningly)

And you, sicko, better stay away
from people. Especially from my
chick – I better never see you
around her again!

DAN

(adding, mock-serious)

Consider yourself lucky – we didn't
drop you off at the loony bin.

MAX

(disgusted)

Let's get out of here.

Max and Dan leave, slamming the apartment door behind them. Nicolas lies alone on the floor, tears mixed with blood, clutching the shattered puppet fragments tightly to his chest – he's broken far beyond the puppets.

FADE TO BLACK

11. INT. NICOLAS'S APARTMENT – MORNING – SCENE 8

Nicolas awakens on the floor as cat gently licks his face. He tries to sit up, groans in pain, and carefully rolls onto his other side. Struggling, he finally manages to sit up, eyes immediately landing on the broken puppet pieces scattered around him and the family photo nearby. He picks up the photograph, slowly shifting his gaze back to the destroyed puppets.

JUMP CUT TO:

FLASHBACK

12. EXT. INSIDE A CAR – NIGHT – SCENE 9

SLOW-MOTION, BLURRED FOOTAGE FROM NICOLAS'S POV:

His parents, alive and well, sit in the front seats, casually chatting. Nicolas observes their faces in profile.

JUMP CUT TO:

From Nicolas's POV, a close-up of the family photo
(CONTINUED):

THE CAMERA SLOWLY PANS FROM HIS FATHER TO HIS MOTHER. SUDDENLY, A SHARP CAMERA MOVEMENT OCCURS—MATCHING NICOLAS'S NERVOUS TIC — THEN QUICKLY RETURNS TO THE INITIAL POINT AND CONTINUES THE SMOOTH PAN.

JUMP CUT TO:

CLOSE-UP ON YOUNG NICOLAS'S FACE IN THE CAR (CONTINUED):

Bright headlights flood Nicolas's face. He squeezes his eyes shut.

FADE TO BLACK

A woman's scream.

FADE IN:

CLOSE-UP ON THE FAMILY PHOTO:

THE CAMERA MOVES FROM THE PHOTO TOWARD THE BROKEN PUPPETS, HOLDING STATIC FOR A FEW MOMENTS — THIS TIME, NICOLAS'S TIC DOESN'T OCCUR.

WIDE SHOT OF THE ROOM

With great effort, Nicolas stands up, gently placing the photo back on the shelf. He exits the frame briefly. Off-screen sounds of a cabinet opening and a plastic bag rustling. Nicolas returns, holding a large checkered storage bag.

He carefully gathers the broken puppet pieces into the bag. His gaze lands on a phone beneath the cupboard, partially hidden by a puppet's hand—he recognizes it as Dasha's.

CLOSE-UP ON THE BAG FROM ABOVE

The father-puppet lies zipped inside like a body bag in a morgue. Nicolas slowly zips up the bag from bottom to top—a visual homage to a morgue scene.

He carefully folds his parents' clothes and puts them away into a closet.

WIDE SHOT OF THE ROOM (SAME AS SCENE 2)

Where the puppets once sat, a single storage bag now rests in the middle of the room.

Cat approaches Nicolas, gently rubbing against his legs. Nicolas silently strokes her, grabs his backpack with the melodica, picks up the puppet bag and Dasha's phone, and steps decisively out of the apartment.

CUT TO:

13. EXT. UNDERGROUND PASSAGE - MORNING - SCENE 10

CLOSE-UP, NICOLAS CARRIES DASHA'S PHONE CAREFULLY IN HIS HANDS.

WIDE SHOT, In front of Nicolas walks a tall, imposing POLICEMAN (36) in uniform. They both head toward Dasha's pastry stand.

WIDE SHOT FROM A DISTANCE

Max, with exaggerated gestures, enthusiastically describes yesterday's events to Dasha. Dasha listens anxiously, clearly distressed, while Dan laughs at every word. Their exact words are indistinct due to the distance.

Dan notices the approaching Policeman first and quickly nudges Max. Max initially brushes him off, but when Dasha turns around nervously, he finally notices as well.

Panicking, Max and Dan quickly dash away from the scene. Dasha remains in place, visibly frightened but trying not to show it.

POLICEMAN

(to Dasha, calmly)

Two with cabbage, two with potato.

Why'd those dums bolt like that?

(speaking into his radio)

Hey, stop those two runners at the exit – find out where they're rushing off to. Yours was with potato, right? Yeah, got it, coming.

(to Dasha, politely)

Thanks.

He hands her money and walks away. Behind him stands Nicolas. Dasha looks at Nicolas fearfully, bracing herself for whatever comes next.

NICOLAS

(gently, calmly)

You forgot your phone.

He extends the phone to her. Dasha hesitantly takes it. Nicolas turns around, heading towards his usual spot in the underpass.

CLOSE-UP ON DASHA'S FACE

Dasha's face reveals a storm of mixed emotions. Tears suddenly spill down her cheeks, she turns and running away from her stall.

Nicolas calmly unpacks his melodica, begins to play his beloved melody – clearly, flawlessly, completely free of his tic.

MONTAGE OF SMOOTH TRANSITIONS UNDER NICOLAS'S MUSIC:

Nicolas's apartment, Cat rests quietly.

CUT TO:

The bag containing the puppet remains placed neatly near garbage containers.

CUT TO:

A SECOND POLICEMAN (35) catches Max and Dan at the exit.

CUT TO:

THE FINAL SHOT MIRRORS THE OPENING SCENE BUT IN REVERSE ORDER: THE CAMERA MOVES FROM THE WIDE SHOT OF THE UNDERPASS TO A CLOSE-UP ON NICOLAS'S FACE.

Nicolas continues to play beautifully – no mistakes, no tic.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END