

This Way They Came

by
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BLACK.

OLD BROADCAST:
One small step for man,
(pause)
One giant leap for mankind.

ANNOUNCER:
This is a moment that will go
down in history, a moment where
humanity makes its mark on the
universe...

FADE UP:

EXT. OVERLOOKING CITY - DAWN

DAWN crawls over the city, a dead sprawl of concrete
awakening to a new day.

RADIO ANNOUNCER: (O.S.)
(static interference
under)
...This is one of those moments
folks, the one we all remember
where we were, a day we will
never forget.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Cars lie abandoned in the street, doors hang off hinges,
glass and debris litters the ground.

RADIO ANNOUNCER:
It is simply awe inspiring, of
greater importance than even the
moon landings forty four years
ago...

INT. SUPERMARKET - CONTINUOUS

The aisles of the shop are empty, bits of torn packaging
are strewn across the floor. A skinny rat nervously samples
a piece of card before retreating under a shelf.

EXT. STREET - EARLY MORNING

The sound of tired footsteps among abandoned cars and shops
as a loud AIR RAID SIREN shatters the illusion of peace.

A worn, weary, woman picks at rubble on the ground, turns and look skyward. Awkward apologetic clouds look back.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT, BEDROOM

Feet, a child's, drop onto soiled carpet, as a duvet falls off the bed in the background, and trot over to a nearby window, as the siren fades in the distance.

KAYLAN LEADERMAN, six, pushes his face up against the grimy glass, trying to see as much as he can of the sky.

The windows opened once. Now they are bolted or taped shut.

Kaylan turns from the window and moves quickly into the living room. He glances at his watch as he steps towards the door. The watch is modern, many sizes too big for him, clearly made for an adult wrist.

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kaylan emerges into the living room. A low hum fills the silence. A nearby generator. Battery operated lanterns and torches litter a lot of the available shelf space. The overhead light, dims, comes back.

A clock on the wall ticks every two seconds, and a phone receiver, off its cradle, hisses.

Kaylan looks at the blanket covered sofa. In front of it is a small, slick radio. It is HISSING with STATIC.

Kaylan flicks the watch around to look at it.

KAYLAN:

one week. Again. That's eight in a row. They'll come on in a minute.

He mutters, talking to himself.

He turns back to his radio vigil. He sits down on the sofa, wrapping the blanket around himself as best he can, and stares at the electronic box before him.

Then:

A BUZZ from a nearby door panel. Kaylan snaps around and peers over the back of the sofa at the door. He pulls the blanket around him tighter. Another buzz. He continues watching.

After a moment, Kaylan unwraps the blanket and moves over to one of the windows.

He looks down, a few stories, to see an old, hunched over woman, green coat dirty and torn, step awkwardly away from the building and slowly move away.

Kaylan turns from the glass and returns to the sofa.

CUT TO:

INT. NEAT KITCHEN - MORNING

A weathered hand GRIPS a set of ROSARY BEADS, rolling them methodically through wrinkled fingers. The wooden table beneath the clasped fist is well worn.

In the background a small hi-tech radio receiver sits on a counter. It's blue info panel casting a strange eyrie glow amongst the early morning sun. Static hisses from it's only speaker.

An unshaven FATHER ANGUS O'CONNELL wraps a shaking hand around the cup of weak tea in front of him. It looks merely like tainted water. A well used tea bag sits on a little silver tray nearby.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - MORNING (FLASHBACK)

JAMES LEADERMAN, Kaylan in hand, dressed in smart clothes, and a red satchel over one shoulder, walks down a busy shopping street. They pass a T.V. sales store, showing images of a news flash. James passes it, then back tracks. Kaylan follows. The people outside looking in are captured by what they see.

James moves up between them, removing a bluetooth earpiece. He looks from one face to the other.

JAMES:

What's happened?

A woman turns to him, a shocked but excited look on her face, she's still distracted by the images on screen.

WOMAN:

A signal. From another planet. Or star. Not sure.

James does a double take. Looks down at Kaylan, back to the screen. Below the announcer is a ticker tape scrolling from right to left. The words "S.E.T.I. SUCCESS" adorn it.

Suddenly, from a shop to the right of the T.V. store a man runs carrying tins of food, milk, batteries etc. A look of sheer panic is obvious on his face as he passes the group of television watchers.

A packet of Double A batteries falls from the top of the pile in his arms as he dashes off. The shop clerk, heavy, and running slower, follows the panicked man. Kaylan glances down at the tattered pack of Duracell on the pavement.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - MORNING

The empty packaging of four double A batteries drops onto the kitchen counter. Kaylan slips the last one into the under side of the lantern, flicks it on and illuminates a fouled, but working kitchen. Pipes and hoses run the length of the room, running out of sight through a door.

Kaylan opens a tin of beans, flops it onto a little stove and lets it cook. He reaches up and opens a top press. He is standing on a wooden chair in order to reach high. Inside the cabinet is a stack of tinned food and a few packets of dried crackers.

Kaylan counts the remaining tins, mouthing each number as he goes. He turns to the bubbling tin of beans, childish curiosity at the bursting bubbles on the surface outweighing anything else.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT HALL - MORNING (*FLASHBACK*)

The hall door bursts open as James and Kaylan, much cleaner, burst in. James heads into the living room, drops his red satchel beside the coffee table, and flicks on the flat screen T.V.

Kaylan sprints into the first bedroom, his parents.

INT. BEDROOM

ANNA LEADERMAN is lying sleepily in bed, sheets pulled up near her face.

KAYLAN:

Mom, mom, mom!

Anna reacts sluggishly.

ANNA:

Uh hmm?

Kaylan stops short of jumping on the bed. He's a well trained kid.

KAYLAN:
Space aliens are coming!

Anna lifts her head at this as a phone rings in another room.

ANNA:
Huh?

She looks at her son nodding his head profusely. Now she's awake. James steps up to the doorway, cordless phone in hand. He holds it up for Anna to see. The watch on his wrist is the same one Kaylan wears. Anna returns a gaze of confusion at her husband.

JAMES:
It's true, announcing more now.
News is on.
(he holds out the phone)
It's your mum. She's very
excited.

James steps into the room, hands his wife the phone, and grabs Kaylan by the shoulders.

JAMES: (cont'd)
C'mon, let's make mom some
breakfast. It's her day off.

Kaylan nods as his father leads him out of the room. Anna stays on the phone.

ANNA:
Look, mum, I've no idea if they
do, or don't, but we're not going
to mass because of it.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Kaylan, in battered pyjamas and dirty face, stands over the bed, plate of beans and dried crackers offered to his unmoving mother. He waits and stares. Then, after a moment, places the food on the side table, beside the dead body of his mum, a large, old red stain spreads out around her head, her hair dried into the mass of congealed blood. Kaylan removes an older plate, uneaten.

The cold, blue, decaying face of his mother makes no attempt to thank her son.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT (*FLASHBACK*)

Father Angus sits in a pew, on his knees praying. A tweed cap wrapped tightly in his hands. A door creaks open nearby, behind, and footsteps echo closer. They stop.

VOICE:

Father.

Angus lifts his head.

VOICE: (cont'd)

Father?

Angus looks over to face the owner of the voice.

ANGUS:

Yes, Mrs. Short?

MRS. SHORT moves closer.

MRS. SHORT:

I was wondering father, if you'll
be having a special mass, you
know for the things?

Angus turns around to face the little old wizened woman.

ANGUS:

For what, Mrs. Short?

She moves closer again, as if fearing to be overheard, hands rummaging through her heavy green coat, stopping a couple of feet away. She glances around the church, leans closer to Angus. No one else is there. Angus lifts an eyebrow questioningly.

MRS. SHORT:

You heard about the signal,
father?

Angus nods curtly.

MRS. SHORT: (cont'd)

Well, for those things on the
other planet. The ones that
aren't in our almighty fathers
image.

Mrs. Short blesses herself. Angus stares at her for a while longer than he should, then blinks, takes a breath. He sits up and pushes back into the pew.

ANGUS:

I have no idea, Mrs. Short.

MRS. SHORT:

My daughter doesn't care, But
father, they need to be prayed
for. They're probably not even
baptised.

Angus loosens his dog collar by a large amount, an action
that doesn't go unnoticed by Mrs. Short.

ANGUS:

Then pray if you must, Mrs.
Short.

She Just stares at the priest as he steps from the pew and
makes his way towards the sacristy. Angus doesn't stop at
the alter and genuflect, much to the chargin of Mrs.
Short.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (*FLASHBACK*)

Anna and Jay, dressed differently, sit on the sofa looking
at a flat screen T.V. The apartment is noticeably cleaner
than before.

They are staring blankly at the screen, shocked. Anna is
almost shredding her fingernails with her teeth. Jay sits
forward, rigid. Pale.

JAMES:

Unreal.

A voice comes across from the T.V.

ANNOUNCER:

The signal has been confirmed as
authentic and intelligent in
nature. SETI scientists are now
facing the arduous task of
decoding the message, if indeed,
there is one. At this time, the
government is urging all citizens
to stay calm.

As if to punctuate the statement, outside a nearby yell
goes out, followed by breaking glass, an alarm and then a
distant siren.

James runs to the window, shoves it open, looks out.

JAMES:

They're burning a car.

From behind comes soft footsteps. Kaylan, clutching a small
plastic green alien toy, pads across the room to the edge
of the sofa. He grabs his mums arm.

ANNA:

Hey, Kaylan, what are you doing
out of bed? Did the T.V. wake
you?

KAYLAN nods affirmatively. He stops shaking his head and
stares at the T.V.

KAYLAN:

Are they here yet?

His parents just stop and stare at the kid. Anna grabs his
arm, gently squeezes it.

ANNA:

No, not for many years.

Kaylan turns to face his mum, a sleepy smile spreading
across his face.

KAYLAN:

I wanted more friends to play
with.

He turns to the coffee table in front of the T.V. Kaylan
sees the spread of food and drink. Anna watches his gaze as
James stares wide-eyed at the T.V.

ANNA:

Hungry?

She gets a sleepy little nod as an answer.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - MID MORNING

Kaylan sits at the coffee table, munching on his meagre
breakfast. The radio still hisses with static. He puts the
fork down, fiddles with the knob on the radio.

Nothing.

He turns back to his watch, his dads watch, does a mental
calculation.

KAYLAN:

Late.

He gets up off the sofa and goes over to the window. He
looks out the city, unmoving, lifeless.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY (*FLASHBACK*)

An angry mob tears down the road, jumping onto cars, smashing glass, and each other as they go. A siren blares out from somewhere behind, too hard to see in the chaos. Blue flashing lights punctuate the noise with strobing bursts.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - EVENING (*FLASHBACK*)

Kaylan stands, little alien toy in hand as Anna slams the door in the hall and bolts it shut, hard. The mob noise is distant.

Smearred blood covers one side of Anna's face. Her hands are cut and grazed. The back of her head is clearly bleeding. Badly. She's hurt.

Kaylan watches as his mum tapes up the gaps between the door and frame, stopping eventually to rest against the door. Kaylan asks the inevitable:

KAYLAN:

Where's dad?

Tears flow freely down her face. She wipes them away before turning to her son.

ANNA:

We have to seal up the rest of the apartment, ok? Lock everything.

Kaylan nods.

ANNA: (cont'd)

And stay away from the windows, for now, ok?

Kaylan nods.

ANNA: (cont'd)

Promise!

KAYLAN:

Promise.

Anna runs to the main window in the living room, past Kaylan. She begins to run the insulation tape along the windows seems, checking each lock as she goes. Her breathing is laboured. She stops momentarily and looks down to the pavement below.

Lying in a heap three stories lower, is a broken body, a large crimson pool forming around its head, and a torn, bright red satchel lying nearby. Two net shopping bags, fallen in front of the body, spill their contents. Feet and shadows whip past the lifeless form, grabbing at bottles of water, batteries, tins of food.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Kaylan stares at the body of his father far below, the decay not as obvious as that of his mothers body, but it is clearly missing limbs.

The satchel is still there. The food and supplies are gone.

Then:

The static on the radio increases in volume. Kaylan turns to it, runs to the sofa, and leans down, watching the radio closely, staring silently at the little device on the table. After a moment, the static just dies. It doesn't fade, it just stops. It takes a few seconds for it to register.

Then:

RADIO VOICE:

This is the emergency broadcast system.

(pause)

This is an automated government response.

(pause)

He continues to look at the radio.

CUT TO:

INT. NEAT KITCHEN

RADIO VOICE:

Please remain calm. The emergency services will be coming to your area soon.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHURCH GROUNDS

Nothing. Nobody. Silence. No one is coming.

CUT TO:

INT. NEAT KITCHEN

RADIO VOICE:
Please be patient.

Angus lets the rosary beads slip from his grip as he turns to face the radio. He loosens his collar slightly, turns back to the table, and the closed bible that lies there, unopened.

RADIO VOICE: (cont'd)
And remain calm.

A subtle shake enters the recorded voice. Humanity may have a soul.

Angus pulls the collar from his neck, drops it on the bible, as a very withered and scruffy Mrs. Short steps into the kitchen. She turns to the priest, sadness in her eyes. Angus doesn't need to ask.

MRS. SHORT:
I never found him father.

ANGUS:
He's with his mother, I'm sure of it.

Then; The lights shut down in the room, and a distant generator hum dies, as a growing rumble begins to engulf the building. Angus turns to the window to see the daylight fade suddenly.

MRS. SHORT:
Father..?

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM

RADIO VOICE:
This ends the emergency broadcast system announcement.

Static returns. A far off hum stutters and stops. The lights flicker and die. And a dull grey sky engulfs the world outside. Kaylan looks toward the hallway, and beyond. Then he gets up, moves slowly towards a filthy window, place his hands on the lintel and press his nose to the glass.

And smiles.

KAYLAN:
(whispering)
They're here.

CUT TO BLACK.