

ON THE BEACH

by

Sir Loyne Berger

FADE IN:

INT. HOUSE, BEDROOM - DAY

A paintbrush glides along the wall. Light blue is the color. Then --

An empty crib that looks brand new. A dresser that still has a tag.

Downstroke of the brush in the hand of CAROLYN, 30, mother-to-be, sweating, hair in her eyes. But it can't hide the glow on her face.

The open window lets in the sound of a car pulling in. Now the sound of the house door closing, followed by footsteps coming up the stairs.

CAROLYN
(calling)
Did you pick up the armoire?

In strides DOUG, 32, shot-out-of-a-cannon enthusiastic, holding a plastic bag.

DOUG
It's in the car. I gotta put it together. Hey, check this out...

Carolyn puts her brush down, looks behind her as she eases herself onto the floor.

DOUG (CONT'D)
Wait, wait. What are you doing? Are you okay?

CAROLYN
I'm fine. I just need to sit. I've been painting all day.

DOUG
You want a chair?

CAROLYN
No, up against the wall is better for my back.

DOUG
You look beautiful.

CAROLYN
Yeah right.

He joins her on the floor.

DOUG
I'm serious. You should always be
with child.

She laughs and snorts.

CAROLYN
Oh really?

DOUG
So, anyway, I got this book. I
wanna read it to him.

CAROLYN
Right now?

Doug nods.

Carolyn silently approves, arches her back and puts both
hands on her pregnant belly as Doug settles in.

DOUG
(reading to her belly)
*Among The Stars... Harold always
wanted to be an astronaut. Even as
a baby he would point to the night
sky and make his baby noises.
Noises like "coo" and "gurgle..."*

We slowly edge away, Doug curled next to Carolyn.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Late Spring trees, greening leaves. A tan brick and mortar
complex -- baseball and football fields.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL, MAINTENANCE - DAY

Water is hosed into a mop bucket. The soapy water rises.

HALLWAY

Doug casually swishes his mop back and forth. He dunks it in
the water, wrings it out. Repeats.

His phone buzzes.

DOUG
Hello?

The wooden mop handle clanks on the floor and --

EXT. CALLOWAY BEACH - DAY

Bright Summer sun. Blankets and umbrellas everywhere.

At the water's edge stands Doug, holding BABY JEREMY above his head. Carolyn stands nearby.

DOUG

Three... two... one - blast off!

He throws baby in the air, catches him.

CAROLYN

Doug! Don't do that. It's dangerous.

DOUG

He's all right. See? He likes it.

On the beach are three unoccupied CHAIRS -- two adult-sized and one for a small child.

The sound of a wave crashing onto shore.

INT. DOUG AND CAROLYN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Doug and Jeremy, now 6, at the table. The paper in front of them has simple handwritten math equations.

DOUG

That's good, buddy. You didn't even use your fingers. At least, I didn't see you.

Doug launches into a controlled coughing fit. He turns away, covers his mouth, composes himself as Carolyn comes in.

She looks at her boys.

CAROLYN

You guys want to go out for dinner?

JEREMY

Big Barry's! Big Barry's!

DOUG

(to Carolyn)
Can we?

She goes to them, kisses Jeremy's head.

CAROLYN

I have money. I picked up a couple shifts.

Doug breathes out, forces a grin.

DOUG

Big Barry's, it is.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL, MAINTENANCE OFFICE - DAY

The maintenance office appears only a level or two nicer than the maintenance closet.

Seated at a desk is ROB, 54, Doug's boss.

Doug raps on the open door.

ROB

What's up?

DOUG

I'm gonna take off.

ROB

Okay...

DOUG

I was just wondering if you had any other work for me to do.

ROB

Like what?

DOUG

I don't know. Mowing the fields. Weeding, trimming...

ROB

Grounds keepers do that. Besides, you're like this close to overtime, Doug.

He emphasizes this, thumb and forefinger almost touching.

Doug nods, resigned. He presses his lips tight. It's as close to losing it as he'll get.

INT. HOUSE, GARAGE - DAY

A hand grabs a wooden axe handle.

BACKYARD

Doug balances a log atop a tree stump.

He splits it. Another one. Then another. Over and over. Each swing of the axe more aggressive than the last.

He picks up a piece of timber and heaves it, goes to swing the axe at a tree when --

From deep within his chest, he coughs violently.

He drops the axe, falls to one knee. It's that bad.

The coughing eventually subsides. Doug catches his breath. He looks down at something, and pokes his finger into a small pool of mucous and spit on the ground.

There's a mix of dirt and blood on his fingertip.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Carolyn and Doug side-by-side, stone-faced, sitting across from a DOCTOR, seated behind a desk.

The Doctor speaks, voice barely audible and echoing.

Carolyn turns toward Doug and lowers her head.

Doug registers the news, eyes wide and unblinking.

EXT. HOUSE - LATER

Carolyn and Doug pull into the driveway. Doug sits there, car running.

CAROLYN

Are you coming in?

A long pause. Doug shakes his head.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

Okay.

She exits the car, heads up the walk. Jeremy bounds out of the house. Trailing behind is an OLDER WOMAN.

Jeremy waves to his father as he backs out of the driveway and takes off down the street.

JEREMY

Where's Daddy going?

Carolyn plants a kiss on his cheek.

CAROLYN
He's just going for a drive.

JEREMY
Isn't that where you just came back
from?

INT. HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - LATER

Carolyn curled up on the couch, a blue hue from the TV the only light.

Headlights shine on the wall. The sound of a car door closing. Carolyn looks up, her eyes resting on Doug as he sits across from her.

CAROLYN
I was worried about you.

DOUG
I know.

A pause.

CAROLYN
I tried to call you--

Doug kisses her, and not just a peck on the cheek, but deep and passionate.

Carolyn's caught off guard, but doesn't resist.

His hand behind her head and pulls her closer... Slowly climbs on top of her... His hand slips under her shirt... She quickly unbuckles his belt.

They make love. It's raw and fast. Like two kids in the back seat of a car who can't keep off each other.

EXT. HOUSE, BACKYARD - DAY

Sunny day, bright blue skies.

Doug, thinner, tightens a bolt on Jeremy's swing set. Jeremy stands by, watching.

JEREMY
Dad, when are you leaving us?

Doug looks up, returns to his work like it's nothing.

DOUG
Soon. I think. I'm not really sure.

JEREMY
Because of the cancer?

DOUG
Because of the cancer.

JEREMY
Where do you go when you die?

DOUG
(laughs)
I wish I knew. Some people believe you go to Heaven and live forever. Others believe you turn into something else... Like an animal. Or a whole other person. Who knows - maybe I'll go into outer space.

JEREMY
Mommy says we go to Heaven and see all our friends relatives who died.

DOUG
Like Grandpa.

Jeremy looks down. Silence save for the twisting of a screw.

DOUG (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

JEREMY
I don't want you to go, Daddy. Why do you have to go?

Doug stops.

DOUG
I have an idea.

MOMENTS LATER

Doug and Jeremy kneeling in the dirt in the back corner of the yard. Doug bites an apple, hands it to Jeremy, who does the same.

Doug pulls the apple apart, takes out the seeds. He pushes his finger into the soil, drops in a seed, covers it.

DOUG
Now, you do it.

The boy does exactly what his father just did.

JEREMY

Are we growing an apple tree?

DOUG

Four apple trees.

JEREMY

Why four?

DOUG

I don't know. In case they need to cross-pollinate or something. I'm not exactly sure how it works.

JEREMY

When can we eat them?

DOUG

I don't know how long it takes. We can look it up later. What I'm trying to say here is that when they do grow you can, you know, have an apple and think of me.

Sounds like a plan to Jeremy.

JEREMY

Where are they gonna bury you?

DOUG

Right here.

JEREMY

No-ooo...

DOUG

Yeah, they could plant me right here in the backyard with the apple trees.

JEREMY

No, you'll be a graveyard ghoul.

Doug raises his hands like a Zombie and gives chase, as Jeremy runs away, laughing.

Jeremy turns. Big smile. Doug stops chasing him, and stops just before his son.

For a moment they are across from each other, close enough to touch, until suddenly...

Doug FADES AWAY, leaving the boy alone. The day speeds by, the sun fades and sets and the shadows grow longer until it's night time.

INT. HOUSE, JEREMY'S ROOM - DAY

Jeremy, a little older than we saw him last, underneath his covers with a flashlight. He's flipping through a book and...

INT. LAUNCHING PAD - DAY (ANIMATED)

The animation is jumpy and crude and colorful, like something a child might have drawn.

A ROCKET SHIP stands at the ready, against a blue sky.

HAROLD comes into frame -- he's a grown up, wearing a space suit and a smile. He climbs the stairs leading to the door of the rocket.

NARRATOR

And Harold turned and waved to his family and friends. He was finally ready for his journey...

Harold enters the rocket, and within moments, in a haze a fire and smoke, the rocket takes off for the heavens.

Higher and higher it climbs into

SPACE

Harold's face in the window, eyes wide, watching as they pass the smiling MOON. Past the rings of JUPITER. The EARTH a tiny blue marble, fading. Meanwhile...

BACK ON EARTH

Harold's proud parents, in each others arms, gaze skyward.

INT. HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Carolyn's rinsing dishes, putting them in the dishwasher.

JEREMY

Mom?

She turns and there's Jeremy in the doorway.

CAROLYN
Yes, honey?

JEREMY
Can we go to Calloway beach?

And this catches her a bit off guard.

CAROLYN
We haven't been there in a few
years. Not since...

JEREMY
Can we?

Off Carolyn...

EXT. CALLOWAY BEACH - DAY

Bright Summer sun. Blankets and umbrellas everywhere.

Carolyn sits by the water's edge, toes in the sand. The sun
feels good. She turns to see --

Jeremy sitting next to MAGGIE, 18 months, wearing a floppy
hat and a pink one-piece beach outfit.

Maggie picks up a sea shell, looks it over, then throws it.

On the beach are three unoccupied CHAIRS -- two child-sized
and one for an adult.

The sound of a wave crashing onto shore.

FADE OUT.