

Half Past Eternity

by

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INT. BOY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lights out. Dark inside.

A BOY (6) sleeps under a comforter.

We hear VOICES. Raised.

The sounds of a fight, muffled through walls.

And they're growing LOUDER.

The boy stirs, awoken by the noise.

He turns over, glances at a digital clock in his room.

Red diodes display the time: 12:23.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY

OPEN ON: an unblinking eye of a STUDENT.

It stares up at a clock on the wall.

3:26pm.

There is the sound of incessant MUTTERING, accompanied by chalk repeatedly SCRAPING against a blackboard.

The MUTTERER stands at the front of the class facing several large mounted chalkboards with vertical sliders.

Mid-forties, dressed in jeans and a sport coat, the muttering man scratches at a week's worth of facial hair. This is LORNE HAVEL.

Lorne gazes at the freshly scribbled equations that fill the chalkboard.

He looks tired.

He stares at his work, and with a hint of frustration, runs his hand through his hair.

Then he HURLS the piece of chalk against board. It SNAPS to pieces.

No reaction from the class.

He exhales. Steadies himself.

Slowly, he turns and faces the students.

A moment, then...

LORNE

What do we know? Or, rather, what
do we think that we know?

Lorne turns back to the blackboard. He slides the chalkboard
up to uncover a clean board underneath.

LORNE

Well, we know that light travels at
a fixed rate.

He scoops up a chalk fragment from the floor and writes on
the board.

LORNE

Two hundred ninety-nine million,
seven hundred, ninety-two thousand,
four hundred and fifty-eight meters
per second.

(beat)

That is how fast light travels in a
vacuum. And it is that speed, in
all reference frames -- that is, it
is that speed relative to
everything. It is constant.

(beat)

Now this presents us with a rather
unsettling fact. Does anyone know
why?

(beat)

Anyone?

(beat)

Didn't think so. If you had any
adeptness for this subject -- or
hell -- any subject, you wouldn't
be enrolled here.

(beat)

It is because, if the speed of
light is constant, then time...
cannot be. Time is not fixed, time
is not constant. We sometimes feel
that time slows down, and we're
right, especially during one of my
lectures. Right?

Lorne gives a forced chuckle as though mocking his lame
joke. No response from the students.

He turns back to the board.

LORNE

Time dilation is a scientific fact.
GPS wouldn't work without
accounting for time dilation.

He writes the formula for determining time dilation in
special relativity on the board.

LORNE

Relative velocity and gravitational
pull can create a discrepancy
between two accurate clocks -- time
can slow down.

(beat)

We know this. And that is not the
failure of the clock or our
measurements. It is simply, and
empirically, the nature of time.

Lorne glances at the hanging clock. 3:26pm.

For the first time, Lorne's classroom seems strangely quiet.
No squeaking of chairs, no tapping of laptop keys, no
shuffling of paper, no clearing of throats, no whispers and
crosstalk... no movement at all.

LORNE

To both observers in their
respective time references, time
proceeds normally...

The class is not simply still... they are frozen in time.

LORNE

For both, a minute to brush teeth,
five minutes to shave, fifteen
minutes to shower, but the
discrepancy between the two...

Lorne crosses over to a FEMALE STUDENT at the front of the
class. She sits frozen with her arm extended, trying to
catch a falling pen that hangs in mid-air.

Lorne grabs the pen in his hand and holds it up.

LORNE

... is significant.

He sets the pen down on her desk and withdraws from his coat
an ENGRAVED POCKET WATCH. It reads: "For My Constant." He
clicks it open. 3:26pm.

Lorne shuts his eyes tightly, mentally straining, and then
in a moment his eyes open.

Beat.

LORNE
Class dismissed.

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

Lorne exits a brick building and slings a backpack over his shoulders as he trudges past the picturesque buildings, sidewalks, bike paths, and well-manicured lawns of a typical college campus.

STUDENTS litter the landscape, every one of them frozen in the moment.

Birds, beautifully suspended in their flight, are pinned in the sky, and drops of water from a sprinkler hang motionless in the air.

Lorne walks past these wondrous sights, without so much as a second glance.

INT. COURTHOUSE - ELEVATOR LOBBY - DAY

One of the elevator doors is pried open, revealing an empty elevator shaft.

A climbing rope leads down the shaft.

ELEVATOR SHAFT

Lorne grimaces as he climbs down to an elevator that is stuck between floors.

ELEVATOR

Lorne drops inside the elevator. Inside are four people, two YOUNG KIDS, a WOMAN in her forties and a MAN in a suit.

The man stands pressed up against the corner. His frozen expression seems mildly uncomfortable.

Lorne kneels down near the the boy, SAM (6). Looks similar to the boy we saw earlier. He wears a suit that's a little too small for him.

LORNE
Hey champ.

Lorne kisses his boy on the cheek. Sam's face is contorted and scrunched as though he were crying. He clutches onto his mother JAMIE'S waist.

Jamie, short, gaunt and forlorn, gazes down with eyes of pity at Sam. Her hand, lovingly and eternally, rests tenderly on his head.

Her other arm carries her daughter, EMILY (3). A scared and troubled look frozen on her sweet face. She clutches in her tiny hand a small PLUSH TIGER.

LORNE

(to Sam)

How you doing?

(then)

I've been doing some rudimentary calculations, and do you know what day it is?

(beat)

Wednesday? Yes, Wednesday Sam -- smart aleck -- but what else?

(beat)

Don't tell me that you guys forgot, it would hurt my feelings.

Lorne smiles.

LORNE

You don't need to sing or anything.

Beat.

LORNE

I got you something. I know that's not customary, but...

Lorne pulls out a Nintendo DS game from his backpack. He holds it up for Sam.

LORNE

I think this was the one you wanted.

(beat)

It's rated Teen though, so you'll have to check with your mom if you can play it.

Lorne glances at Jamie.

Beat.

LORNE

I'll just set it here for you.

He places it on the ground next to Sam.

LORNE
And Emily...

Lorne sets the backpack down and rummages through the contents.

LORNE
Have something for you too...

A BOTTLE OF WHISKEY falls out of the bag.

LORNE
Dammit.

The bottle rolls along the ground and comes to rest at the foot of Jamie.

Lorne awkwardly looks away.

LORNE
(quietly)
It's my birthday.

He quickly scoops up the bottle and stuffs it firmly back in his backpack.

LORNE
Let's not do this. Not today. Okay?

He swallows back some angry thoughts and forcefully shifts his mood.

He pulls out a Hostess cupcake from his bag.

LORNE
C'mon, it's a celebration.

He tears open the plastic wrap with his teeth and frees the cupcake.

Holding it out, he stuffs a single candle into it.

LORNE
What should I wish for?

Lorne chuckles to himself.

He looks at his family.

LORNE
I know this hasn't been easy. But we'll work it out. I'm gonna fix it. I'm gonna figure it out.

He flashes a confident smile.

LORNE

Newton, Einstein, and then... me. A
new age of physics -- get set up at
a real university. Book deals,
speaking tours...

(beat)

And we'll all be together.

Lorne turns back to Sam. He kisses him again.

LORNE

I'm going to figure this out.

INT. COURTHOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Lorne finishes shaving off his beard. He rinses off the
razor blade in the sink and dries his face.

He rubs his hands along his smooth skin and stares into the
mirror.

INT. OFFICE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Lorne sits at the end of a desk. He runs his hand along his
thick and full beard. It's obviously a different time.

He stares out the window watching the traffic move along
below.

VOICE (O.S.)

You hear me?

Lorne snaps out of his daze. He turns to face ROBERT (50s),
a man with receding curly hair and a well-worn suit. He sits
behind his desk.

ROBERT

Four hundred dollar mandatory fine.
Plus three years probation.

(beat)

Fifteen to thirty days jail time is
typical.

Lorne shakes his head in frustration.

ROBERT

Look, you came here for my advice.

LORNE

No, I came here for a solution.

ROBERT
There isn't one.

Robert points to a thin folder on this desk.

ROBERT
This is going to be used against
you. And you'll lose. And not just
personally, professionally too --
this kind of thing ruins people. If
you're being offered a way out, I'd
take it.

Lorne scratches at his chin.

ROBERT
We keep it civil, we keep it quiet,
and in time... who knows...

INT. COURTHOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Right where we were before -- Lorne feeling at his smooth
skin.

He grabs a pencil and makes a note in a journal.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Lorne exits the courthouse and takes a seat on the steps.

He withdraws the bottle of booze from his bag and watches
the amber liquid swish around. It's almost hypnotic, and
Lorne seems lost in thought.

He screws off the top, raises the bottle as a salute and
then takes a massive swig.

But something catches his eye.

He jumps to his feet.

His eyes go wide.

The bottle slides out from his fingers, it falls and
SHATTERS.

The liquid runs down the steps. Lorne seems oblivious to it,
all his attention is fixed on a point in the distance. He
rushes down the steps.

SIDEWALK

He hustles over to the far sidewalk. There, lying on the ground is a FALLEN MAN. He, like everyone, is frozen in time, but his stasis state doesn't match his position.

He lies parallel to the ground, his legs angled out as though walking.

He looks like he was knocked over while frozen in time.

LORNE

Hello!?

Lorne looks frantically around.

LORNE

Please God, please God...hello!?

Beat.

LORNE

HELLO!?

(beat)

Anyone?

Lorne looks down at the fallen man.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - ROOF - DAY

Lorne bursts out of the stairwell onto the roof. He rushes to the edge, and quickly scans around the area, getting a decent view of the city.

No movement.

Not giving up. He frantically looks around, every direction.

Still no movement.

His jaw tightens.

MONTAGE:

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Lorne creates a perimeter around the FALLEN MAN with traffic cones and caution tape.

INT. HARDWARE STORE - DAY

Lorne grabs several cans of spray paint.

Loads up a large pallet of wood onto a cart.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - ROOF - DAY

Lorne has rigged a pulley system and uses it to pull his pallet of wood up to the roof.

EXT. BILLBOARD - DAY

Lorne climbs up to the billboard, pulls out a can of spray paint and starts spraying over the ad.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - ROOF - DAY

With a box of nails and a hammer, Lorne works to build a frame out of the wood.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - STREET - DAY

Lorne grabs the arm of a WALKING MAN from the street. He extends his arm out and closes some of the frozen man's fingers, making him point up toward the courthouse roof.

PULL BACK to see the entire street of PEDESTRIANS have also been rearranged to point at the roof.

And on top of the roof, Lorne has made a giant sign that says: "AWAKE. HERE." With an arrow pointing downward.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. ANOTHER BILLBOARD - DAY

Lorne finishes spraying this billboard. Written over the ad are the words, "AWAKE. COURTHOUSE."

He takes a moment to view his work. His facial hair is back to the same length we saw it at the beginning.

He stuffs the can of spray paint in his bag and turns back to the ladder.

Then, in the distance, almost imperceptibly -- SOMETHING MOVES.

Lorne quickly turns his head to the movement.

LORNE

Hey!

He frantically waves his arms.

LORNE

Hey!!

The small FIGURE darts away.

LORNE

HEY!!

Lorne rushes for the ladder.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Lorne runs as fast as he can, weaving his way through the frozen traffic and people, following where he thinks the movement came from.

LORNE

HELLO!?

He spins around looking, searching...

LORNE

(mumbling)

I saw it, I saw it, I saw it...

HELLO!?

Then... from behind a frozen PEDESTRIAN, a WOMAN MOVES.

She peers cautiously at Lorne from behind the safety of the stationary pedestrian.

Lorne sees her. His mouth droops open. He begins walking toward her, slowly, as though terrified that he might scare her off.

The woman eyes him and slowly steps out from hiding.

She's in her late twenties, has pale skin, super short jet black hair and carries a messenger bag.

This is EVA.

LORNE

You move.

Beat.

EVA

So do you.

For a long moment they simply stare at each other.

Then Lorne breaks down... half crying, half laughing.

Her reaction is more subdued, numb, as though still in disbelief. The moment is almost overwhelming for them.

Then suddenly something occurs to Eva, her demeanor shifts -- seems to harden.

LORNE
What's your name?

She takes a step back from him.

Then abruptly turns and hurriedly walks away.

LORNE
Wait! Wait! Wait, where are you
going?

Lorne quickly follows behind her.

He pulls out his notebook and pencil as he walks.

LORNE
Where are you going?

Eva keeps walking, her mind focused on her task. She picks up her bicycle that's resting on the ground, and walks with it.

LORNE
Okay... so... so... obviously
you're... you're... experiencing
some deleterious psychological
affect from extreme isolation.

Eva suddenly stops. She eyes Lorne for a long moment.

EVA
Dele..terious?

Lorne stares at her, puzzled.

EVA
I don't know that word...
(long beat)
You're real?

Beat.

LORNE
I'm Lorne.

He holds out his hand.

Beat.

EVA
Eva.

She doesn't shake it. She turns and walks on. He follows after her.

LORNE
Where are you going?

EVA
Just give me a damn minute okay!

Lorne stops in his tracks.

LORNE
Yeah. Sure.

He lets Eva get some distance from him.

INTERSECTION - AMBULANCE

Eva approaches an ambulance. She tosses her bike down and throws open the back door. She hops inside, squeezing past an EMT, who is tending to an INJURED MAN.

She glances down at the injured man for a moment and then starts rummaging through the ambulance compartments.

Lorne crosses over to the ambulance.

LORNE
How long have you been like this?

EVA
Like what? You mean, not a mannequin?

Lorne snorts a laugh.

LORNE
Mannequin. That's funny.

EVA
(answering his question)
Since always.

LORNE
Always is relative. How long, specifically?

EVA
How the hell would I know that?

LORNE
Well, obviously we're not in stasis, there are forms of measurement. Hair growth for one.

Eva eyes Lorne.

EVA
Hair growth?

LORNE
Yeah, my beard takes about a week
to fill in like this. Then I shave
it, and thereby... keep track.
(beat)
You didn't think to monitor the
time?

Concern crosses Eva's face.

EVA
How long?
(beat)
How long has it been?

Long beat.

LORNE
Seven years.

EVA
(in disbelief)
Seven years?

Eva slowly sits down, as though the weight of his words are
falling on her shoulders.

EVA
(sotto)
Seven years...

Beat.

LORNE
For me at least...

Eva snaps out of her daze and resumes rummaging through the
ambulance.

LORNE
What are you looking for?

EVA
Benzo, methohexital... any sedative
really.

She finds what's she looking for and stuffs a couple of
vials in her bag, along with a few syringes.

EVA
(off Lorne's look)
It's the only way I can sleep.

Lorne withdraws a map from his bag and unfolds it.

LORNE
Where were you when the uh... time
event occurred?

EVA
I was in my apartment.

LORNE
No I mean... where?

Lorne holds out the map. She cocks an eyebrow.

EVA
Does it matter?

LORNE
Yes. It does.

EVA
How?

LORNE
It's a data point that could help
explain the time anomaly.

She snorts in a scoffing way and shakes her head.

Lorne looks perplexed.

LORNE
What?

EVA
You're going to explain all this?

LORNE
That's the idea.

EVA
Oh I'd love to hear that. What are
you, like a, world famous scientist
or some shit?

LORNE
Professor.

EVA
Oh yeah, what do you teach?