

NGS

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DRAFT 5
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INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Darkness. A kettle clicks into life on a cold work surface. The humming of a neon light buzzes nearby. A loud clock ticks on the wall, every second clacking louder than the last. The sounds get louder and louder and louder, until... there is a cough as someone clears their throat---

With a flash of colour, the picture is revealed. A comfortable but dark living room. A large window overlooks one side, but the curtain is mostly drawn, not allowing the strong daylight into the room. A loud desk lamp buzzes on a nearby table, the bulb faulty, flatly illuminating the room in a dim and false glow.

SIMON sits on a large sofa in the lounge. He is pale and gaunt. His white dressing gown accentuates his colourless face, complete with its tired and withdrawn expression. A large plaster rests across his forehead, covering what seems to be a nasty cut. Bruising spills out from underneath the plaster, hinting at what is underneath. His right arm rests in a sling.

Standing by the kettle in the adjoining kitchen is PERRY, relatively well dressed, sporting a safe brown jacket with a checkered top. His old fashioned glasses sit comfortably across his face. The appearance gives the impression of an atypical Junior Professor at the University.

PERRY
(turning to Simon)
Kettle's on.

SIMON
It takes a while. I could have done it, you know.

Perry wanders over next to Simon. Both men look awkward.

PERRY
Nah, you've got to get better. Want me to open the curtain?

SIMON
I'm still struggling with light.
(beat)
Thanks for coming.

PERRY
(sitting down)
Oh please, we've known each other a long time. Of course I came. You were in a bad way.

SIMON
I just thought that after the way I treated you when you came to see me in... well, it might be a while before I saw you again.

PERRY

I won't lie and say that it was nice, but the hospital staff told me not to take it too personally.

(beat)

Apparently it's all part of your bodies reaction to what happened. When you think about it, I got off pretty lightly.

Simon grins at this.

PERRY (CONT'D)

The intern though... that was pretty ripe. Do you remember that?

SIMON

I think I'll have to write both a letter of apology as well as a letter of thanks.

The sound of the clock ticks loudly in the background. The kettle still keeps heating up.

PERRY

(after a pause)

Have you heard any more on coming back to the University yet?

SIMON

Ha. I doubt they'd have me back. The Twitching Astronomer.

PERRY

Sounds like a crap superhero.

SIMON

Or a super villain!

There is another awkward pause.

SIMON (CONT'D)

And how are the planets doing, without me?

PERRY

(smiling)

No change there, old friend. Still all orbiting that big old Sun of ours, all day every day.

SIMON

Except Neptune of course.

PERRY

Hmm?

SIMON

Retrograde orbit.

PERRY

Oh. Yeah. Right. Obviously.

SIMON

Who's looking after my work?

PERRY

Arthur...
(beat)
...and Katie.

SIMON

Katie? Thin Katie or Fat Katie?

PERRY

Fat Katie.

SIMON

Better than Thin Katie I guess.
(beat)
I'm surprised he took it on, he
always drones on about my "star
formation crap". He's always more
interested in their destruction.

PERRY

With any luck he might disappear
into a black hole.

SIMON

Maybe Fat Katie's?

The two men both share a laugh.

PERRY

What do you remember then?

SIMON

(picks his answer
carefully)
A lot of light. Hospital sounds.
It's pretty much a blur.
(beat)
I'm fine. I'm all fine. I hope I'm
all fine. The Doctor said full
recovery within 18 months.

PERRY

You're lucky to be alive.

SIMON

Still a year and a half of my life.
It apparently depends on me
acclimating myself with normality.

The clock ticks loudly still. The kettle starts to bubble on
the cold work surface of the kitchen.

SIMON (CONT'D)

So you've been checking on Nova and formations?

PERRY

Yeah. A few here and there. FFC 2201, NGS 549672, EDS 785.

SIMON

(ears pricking up)
NGS 549672?

PERRY

Yeah, two star formation.

SIMON

Two stars? No. Four stars at its core.

PERRY

They're very big stars, admittedly, but two nonetheless. And there's a massive magnetic field, I know.

SIMON

No, there are four stars at the core of that system.

PERRY

Why do you say that?

Perry stares into Simon's eyes. He stares back. With a loud click from the kettle finishing, the gaze is broken. He doesn't really know what to say or how to react. Simon stands up from the sofa much to Perry's surprise.

SIMON

What do you want?

PERRY

Me? I just came to see an old friend.

SIMON

No. I mean tea or coffee.

PERRY

(embarrassed)
Oh. Don't worry, I'll get it.

SIMON

(slightly sinister)
I'll get them. I insist.

PERRY

Coffee then, please. Black. No sugar.

Simon walks over to the kitchen next to the lounge. He turns his back to Perry and pours them both a coffee. Perry focuses on the loud clock, still ticking in the corner of the room. Perry watches as Simon puts the white sugar into his coffee.

PERRY (CONT'D)

Oh, Simon, I said no sugar.

SIMON

It's instant, trust me, a little sugar goes a long way.

Simon returns back, two mugs in his hand. He passes one to Perry and sits on a chair opposite him. He faces him with a sharp stare, making Perry feel very uncomfortable as he starts to drink his coffee.

SIMON (CONT'D)

So, what do you want? Why are you here?

PERRY

Coffee?

SIMON

(shouting)
Stop lying to me!

PERRY

Whoa, Simon, I'm here as your friend.

SIMON

I know why you're here. You're here on the Doctor's orders. You're here to experiment on me.

PERRY

(getting up)
I should go.

SIMON

Sit down, Perry!

His arm pulls out of the sling, seemingly fine. Simon pushes Perry down to the sofa. Perry looks shell-shocked. The two struggle for a moment. Perry trying to escape Simon's tough grip. A mixture of fear and pity for his old friend.

Perry kicks out Simon's leg, who falls to the floor. His head gets knocked and blood starts to ooze out the plaster on his forehead. Perry stumbles towards the door but is pulled back. Simon throws him back onto the sofa. His hands clasp around Perry's neck, threateningly. Blood trickles down Simon's face gently.

SIMON (CONT'D)

I just want to talk.

PERRY

Violence isn't talking. What are you going to do? Hold me hostage?

SIMON

We've both heard all the stories. Your life is meant to flash before your eyes at that particular moment. Your first memories play out like a film. Old family members, friends, lovers... all return for one last moment in the spotlight. The idea that people are only greeted by the past when their future is no more. An explosion of existence.

PERRY

(trying to joke)
I'd just heard about the whole "Don't go into the light thing".

Simon tightens his grip on Perry's throat.

SIMON

So the Doctor told you about my little trip?

PERRY

It's all just to do with your medication. You seemed to be better, and the Doctor thought mentioning NGS would see if that place you imagined is still in your head, or if you've moved past it now.

SIMON

I'm not imagining this. You know what happened in the hospital.

PERRY

Five minutes, I know.

SIMON

Five minutes I left this life. Apparently there was no one around me to even notice.

PERRY

I know. They told me. They said it was--

SIMON

A miracle. Dead. But still here, talking to you.

PERRY

I know that NGS 549672 is your thing. Your vision. I was just asked to jog your memory. It was just a quick test, it's fine, I'll let the Doctor know.

Simon lets go of Perry's neck, turns and opens the curtain. Warm light pours into the room onto Perry's face. He coughs in surprise. All over the window, equations and diagrams have been written and doodled. The wall to the right of them, previously cloaked in darkness is now revealed to be completely filled with weird images and words.

SIMON

When I left my body, I travelled through space at a terrifying speed. It was cold but not dark. The stars exploded with light.
(beat, looking at his hands)
I remember looking down, trying to catch a glimpse of my hands or my feet. But it was too much. Life was a blur. The blur of infinite rushing past me.
(beat)
And then I was there. On a planet, orbiting four suns. The light never went out. It never got cold. A tapestry of moons and planets painted in a sky 1.3 million light years away.

PERRY

(looking unimpressed)
I'm a man of Science. Not faith. And you are too. The next thing you'll be telling me is that you met God. As Scientists we need logic, facts and linear theory. Not "my brain died and I went to Mars".

SIMON

It wasn't Mars.

PERRY

No. Course not. It was---

SIMON

NGS 549672. You've never doubted me in the past, Perry. Why start now?

PERRY

I'm going to go with a mix of the massive head trauma and the copious amounts of medication flowing through you right now.

Simon finally sits down, beaten.

SIMON

I'm sorry about all this, I just wanted you to hear me out.

Perry sips his coffee and looks at his old friend, who looks lost in sad thought.

PERRY

(out of pity)
So, what was it like?

SIMON

Colours you never thought existed on plants that have no right to be so beautiful. Skies as clear as crystal opening up to gigantic moons that conquer over the ground.

Simon looks up at the ceiling, Perry does too - confused.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Huge pools full of liquid that wasn't water, teeming with creatures inside that don't swim, but float.

The tap drips in the sink. They both look over to it.

SIMON (CONT'D)

The smell. Mint, grass and sulphur.

Simon takes a deep breath, reminiscing.

SIMON (CONT'D)

What a place. I want to go back. I want to take everyone with me, take you with me, and show it to you.

PERRY

What are you trying to say? You need to die again? Hook our brains into some higher power and beam over to NGS 549672. You sound like the people you hate.

Perry drinks the rest of his coffee down. A lump of something hits his throat. Looking at the bottom of his mug, a half diluted white powder swirls around the bottom. Panic floods his eyes.

SIMON

It's just a little sedative, so you can hear me out.

PERRY

Jesus, Simon. I was listening to you!

SIMON

You were here out of fear. Now you have to listen.

PERRY

You're insane, Simon. You're sick.

SIMON

I've never felt more sane. You're the one who refuses to see the truth.

Simon sits next to Perry, getting uncomfortably close. His voice is soft and certain of what is to come. Perry doesn't move. He can't. He watches Simon, terrified.

SIMON (CONT'D)

We're all stubborn dogmatics that barely register someone's viewpoint that differs from our own.

(beat)

That's the problem of being a man of Science compared to a man of Faith. Our brains are open, but our eyes are closed.

PERRY

Shit, I can't even move my legs. Stop being so dramatic and help me. I do believe you. I think your mind probably did go there. A thought of it flashed in your mind, and your unconscious self retreated there to calm the swelling on your brain.

SIMON

It wasn't the drugs. It wasn't the accident. I was there.

PERRY

It was a fabrication of your mind. Only the religious nuts will believe you on this, and they only reason they'll back you up is because it instils their theory of life after death. They wouldn't care if you went to another galaxy or the service station at Junction 9 off the A10.

(beat)

No Scientist is ever going to believe you.

SIMON

Until an experiment proves otherwise?

PERRY

I wasn't experimenting on you. I was just conducting a small test for the Doctor.

SIMON

A new experiment.

PERRY

It's impossible.

SIMON

I've come to realise that nothing is impossible. And I already have people who believe me. People that want to prove it too. I'm going to do a Thesis on all this. And I want you to help me.

PERRY

This is getting out of hand, you need to let me go.

Simon reaches over his paralysed friend to a drawer next to the sofa. He pulls out a needle. Perry sees it and dread fills his heart, but he can't move.

SIMON

My dear friend of twenty years, don't you see, I chose you, of all people! I'll show you.

PERRY

(barely getting words out)
Show me what?

SIMON

NGS 549672.

Simon injects the needle into Perry's neck. His eyes flicker, almost fitting. His mouth opens as his eyes close, and no more breath comes from his lungs.

Simon sits down on the sofa next to his dead friend. All that can now be heard is the still loud ticking of the clock. The door next to them opens and a dark figure walks in. A mysterious hand injects a second needle into Simon's neck, but he doesn't panic. He is willing and ready. His eyes close with a smile.

The dark figure places a stopwatch on the table between them. The figure sets it to go off in five minutes. He clicks the button and the clock starts.

SNAP TO BLACK.

THE END