

FOUR MINUTES AFTER THE END OF THE WORLD

by
Brandon Lee Tenney

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Huddled underneath a protective layer of sheets and blankets, SAMANTHA (7) is silent as tears drip from the inside corners of her eyes. There is no sound. She sniffles.

Slowly, she peeks her head from under her cocoon. The darkness outside her window shows the hint of lightening a dull grey. She stares out the window. She sniffles.

Bursting through the threshold of Samantha's barely open bedroom door, her FATHER, haggard with sleeplessness wearing but boxers and a wrinkled white V-neck tee shirt.

FATHER

Samantha. Samantha get up. We've got to go. We've got to go.

He speaks more to himself than he does to her.

SAMANTHA

Dad. Dad. Where are we going. Why are we leaving. What was that noise. What was that noise.

Samantha breaks down as she's scooped into her Father's arms. Grasping behind her, a plush turtle, SHELLY, is just as swiftly scooped into her own arms.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Samantha's father races through the claustrophobic hallway, her in his arms, as a flash of white light blinds them, us, everyone.

Huddled in the now inky black the two shapes hold each other.

Scrambling to his feet, Father steadies himself with one hand against the wall, his other grasping Samantha's hand tight.

A white-yellow flash.

FATHER

Samantha.

Whimpering and scared.

SAMANTHA

Yes, Daddy.

FATHER
 What's the first thing you
 remember?

As she speaks they both move through the hallway.

SAMANTHA
 Ever.

FATHER
 The first thing ever.

SAMANTHA
 My mobile. My first one.

FATHER
 With the animals?

SAMANTHA
 The sea animals.
 (beat)
 And Mommy.

Samantha and her Father make it into the bathroom at the end of the hallway. They enter the stalled shower. In the corner, they embrace.

FATHER
 Have I ever told you the first
 thing I remember?

SAMANTHA
 Ever?

FATHER
 Yeah...

Through the opaque window in the bathroom, another flash lights the darkened space. They are both visibly scared.

FATHER (CONT'D)
 The first thing I really remember
 is playing hide and seek with my
 brother. I was probably three or
 four, and he was too big to fit
 into any of the really good hiding
 places then so I hid inside an old
 suitcase in the basement.

A high-pitched screeching becomes audible in the distance, growing louder, coming toward them. Father talks over it, louder still.

FATHER (CONT'D)

He couldn't find me. I kept hiding all day long.

SAMANTHA

All day?

FATHER

And night. I got so hungry and thirsty, but I didn't want to lose, so I didn't come out. I fell asleep in the suitcase and woke up and it was almost dinner time.

SAMANTHA

Where was your Daddy?

FATHER

Well, he came home and started calling for me. He told me I'd won the game. I didn't know if I had, but I was getting scared being alone for so long in the basement.

SAMANTHA

I'm scared, Daddy.

FATHER

I know, sweetheart. Do you know why I told you that story Samantha?

SAMANTHA

No, Daddy.

FATHER

We might have to play hide and seek for a very long time. But you'll never be alone like I was. Okay?

SAMANTHA

I don't want to be alone, Daddy.

FATHER

I promise. Pinky.

SAMANTHA

Pinky.

Their pinkies unite.

FATHER

Are you ready to start playing?

SAMANTHA

But the lightning and thunder.

FATHER

Hold your ears tight and squeeze
Shelly. Shut your eyes, Samantha.
We're going to be okay.
(then to himself)
We have to be okay.

The sound becomes muffled, the shrill shriek is dulled and the yellow-white flashes are blocked by Samantha's hand. She begins to hum and sing through whimpers.

EXT. OUTSIDE - CONTINUOUS

They're moving now, through the house and out of doors. We can make out the crunching of leaves and the quaking of the ground, but barely audible and nothing visible save the slivers of clues through Samantha's slatted fingers. They're running. She in her Father's arms, Shelly in hers.

INT. CELLAR - CONTINUOUS

They descend a stairwell, stumbling, and collapse to the floor. As Samantha removes her hands from her eyes, she sees her father slam the door of a bunker shut. Black. Silent.

FADE IN:

INT. CELLAR - DAWN

Four months after the end of the world/

Samantha and her Father eat with rustic spoons from a rusted can. The vibrantly green peas balance precariously on the ends of the tines.

FATHER

At least you're eating your peas
now.

Glaring at Father, Samantha shoves a too-full bite into her cheeks and smiles a green toothy smile.

SAMANTHA

(through her teeth)
Happy?

FATHER
In more ways than you know.

Father begins to pack a homemade backpack of blankets and tape.

FATHER (CONT'D)
It's time to go, Sam.

SAMANTHA
One more night?

FATHER
That was last night. We've planned this. We'll be okay. Better than.

Samantha casts away the emptied can of cold peas and takes her Father's hand. She tucks Shelly into her own backpack, and they ascend the stairs.

EXT. OUTSIDE - CONTINUOUS

As they cross the threshold, the sun is dimmed under a grey haze, but shines nonetheless. A road lies in front of them. They begin to walk.

SAMANTHA
Did we win?

FATHER
What?

SAMANTHA
The game. Did we win?

FATHER
Yeah Sam. We won.

FADE OUT.