

BEYOND SATURN

Written by

Liam Sherriff

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FADE IN:

1

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - AFTERNOON

1

The sky is blue and nearly cloudless.

The azure tranquility is pierced by the needled nose of a retro-stylized rocket ship as it travels across the sky.

The deep hum of the engines rise in pitch until it becomes the imaginative sound effect issued from a young girl's mouth.

SOPHIA (8), an excited, rosy-cheeked girl wearing a baseball cap a size too large plays with 1950's style tin toys - all rocket ships, robots, and laser guns. She is squatting on a gentle grassy slope in front of a quaint rural house.

SOPHIA

Pew! Pew! Take that Dr. Eizenhertz!

Pew!

(Imitating a deeper voice)

Arrg! No! Ahhhhh...!

(Back to her regular voice)

Prepare to take off!

Sophia positions the rocket ship on the ground next to a toppled robot. She makes deep rumbling sounds and slowly begins lifting the rocket off the ground.

Sophia's mom, CAROL (40's) walks from the house, carrying a book.

CAROL

Sophia! Do you want me to keep reading that story?

SOPHIA

The one about the explorers and the Mars people?!

CAROL

That's right.

SOPHIA

Yeeeeesssss!!!!!!

Carol sits down next to Sophia and opens a science-fiction novel titled "Beyond Saturn," flipping it open to a bookmark.

CAROL

... Now where were we? Oh yes ...
the space explorers had just
discovered a mysterious new planet
...

She begins to read.

CAROL (CONT'D)

"They descended quickly, navigating
over the large red sphere towards
what appeared to be a magnificent
alien city. Without a single
warning from their ship's
instruments, the city vanished and
changed into a verdant forest, with
valleys falling away into deep
depths."

Sophia is enraptured by this story.

CAROL (CONT'D)

"The craft landed gently within a
small clearing, despite the
voyagers' fears at this seemingly-
solid city disappearing without any
warning. At first glance they saw
no signs of life, but inexplicably
felt a presence - though
scientists to an individual - as if
they had suddenly acquired a new,
more subtle, sense.

Sophia fiddles with her toys, imagining the scenes in the
story.

SOPHIA

Mom? When can I go to other
planets?

CAROL

In the future, when people invent
things like spaceships and flying
cars.

SOPHIA

When is it going to be the future?

Carol laughs.

CAROL

It's always just around the corner!
No matter how fast you go, the
future will always be just ahead of
you.

SOPHIA

So I'll never get to the future?
What about if I had a time machine?

CAROL

Maybe. But they don't exist yet.

SOPHIA

Then I'll invent one!

CAROL

Maybe you will! Won't that be fun?

SOPHIA

Mom? How does time travel work?

CAROL

Well, you're already travelling
through time ...

SOPHIA

I am?!

CAROL

Yes. At the rate of one second per
second.

This does not appease Sophia.

SOPHIA

Mom! I need to go faster than that!

CAROL

Well, did you know that if you go
at a really fast speed, away from
the Earth and then back again, then
you will arrive sometime in the
future?

SOPHIA

So if you go really really fast you
can travel through time?

CAROL

That's right. It's called special
relativity. But you have to go
really really really fast.

A dusty old pickup truck pulls into the driveway and makes its way up to the barn. Carol watches it and waves.

SOPHIA

How fast do I have to go?

The truck stops and backs up to the open door of the barn. A man gets out.

CAROL

Well, unfortunately you have to go the speed of light. Which is very fast.

SOPHIA

I'm going to do that!

CAROL

Ok honey. But right now I have to go deal with something else. I'll help you with your time machine soon as I'm done.

SOPHIA

If I had a time machine then I wouldn't have to wait at all!

Carol laughs as she walks away, towards the truck and driver.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

The future

She looks towards the distant road, on which the occasional car goes by.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

Fast.

CUT TO:

2 EXT. THE SAME HILL - AFTERNOON

2

From off-camera, Sophia bursts into frame, running down the hill as fast as she can.

She reaches the bottom and slows, tired. Looks around.

SOPHIA

(disappointed)

Awe!

3 INT. BARN - MOMENTS LATER 3

Sophia pokes through the storage corner of the barn. She struggles to pull out what she's been looking for: a spaceship made from a cardboard box.

She places it on the floor, and sits inside.

SOPHIA
LIGHTSPEED!

Nothing.

Glum, she sits for a second. Then has an idea.

Sophia gets out of the box spaceship and pulls her old red wagon from a different corner of the barn. It's a little rusty, but the wheels still work.

4 EXT. THE SAME HILL - MOMENTS LATER 4

The wagon shoots into view, Sophia sitting inside and steering. It doesn't go down the hill any faster than her legs took her.

Disappointed again, she sits at the bottom of the hill and watches a car zoom past on the road.

Dejected, she hauls the wagon back to the barn.

5 INT. BARN - MOMENTS LATER 5

Sophia pulls the wagon inside next to the cardboard spaceship.

Suddenly she has an idea. She pulls the cardboard spaceship on top of the wagon. Perfect fit!

SOPHIA
Faster ...

Outside the barn, out of sight, she can hear the murmur of her mum and the truck driver conversing. The rear end of the truck sits just outside the open door.

Sophia regards it contemplatively. Then looks around. Her gaze falls on a length of rope.

6 EXT. BARN - MOMENTS LATER 6

The man jumps into his truck.

MAN

Later!

CAROL

See you soon.

She waves goodbye as he starts the engine and peels off down the driveway.

As he does the rope clumsily tied to his bumper uncoils and then straightens, snapping lightly as it finally drags the wagon, to which the other end is tied, out of the barn doors. The cardboard spaceship wobbles atop it.

CAROL (CONT'D)

Sophia?

7 INT. CARDBOARD SPACESHIP - CONTINUOUS 7

Inside the confines of the box, Sophia suddenly realizes she has made a terrible mistake.

She screams.

SOPHIA

MOOOOOOM!!!!!!

8 EXT. BARN - CONTINUOUS 8

Carol screams as she realizes that Sophia is tied to the back of the truck by the rope. She chases after the truck.

CAROL

STOOOPPP!!!!!!

As the driver turns onto the road it whips the wagon, smashing it against the fencepost at the end of the driveway.

CUT TO:

9 INT. BEDROOM, RURAL HOUSE - MORNING 9

Sophia, now aged 80, wakes up.

She coughs, then notices something is different.

SOPHIA

MOM?!

Her voice is riddled with age, her breathing weakened and shallow. Something is wrong.

She slowly swings her legs around and off the bed, standing up painfully.

Once mostly upright she notices something odd about her room. It is obviously the room of a child, but the photos and wallpaper are all faded, and everything seems very old and worn. Something is very wrong.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

MOM?!!!

On the dresser she notices her tin spaceship. It is incredibly aged - the paint has all been rubbed away, it is missing a tail fin, and the middle is held together with tape.

She slowly makes her way out of the room to the top of the stairs.

10

INT. STAIRS - RURAL HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

10

At the top of the stairs Sophia grabs the railing for support and gingerly makes her way down.

SOPHIA

Mom ...? MOM! I don't feel so good!

At the bottom of the stairs she stops. The sound of footsteps approaches from the kitchen.

Sophia's head swivels to the sound. She raises her eyes, expecting Carol.

Instead JANICE (early 30's) comes into view.

JANICE

Good morning Sophia.

SOPHIA

You're not my mom ...

JANICE

No, I'm not.

SOPHIA
Where's my mom? I feel sick.

JANICE
Come eat breakfast Sophia. You
always feel better after some food.

SOPHIA
Where's my mom?

11 INT. KITCHEN, RURAL HOUSE - LATER

11

Sophia sits at the kitchen table eating oatmeal. She chews distractedly, staring at the large holographic screen above the stove. Janice watches the news as she cleans up.

Sophia finishes chewing. Puts down her spoon.

SOPHIA
Where's my mom?

Janice comes over and sits down across from her.

JANICE
Sophia, your mom isn't here. She
died twenty years ago.

SOPHIA
No she didn't! I saw her yesterday!
You're lying!

JANICE
Sophia, you had an accident. When
you were very young. You don't
remember.

SOPHIA
I don't remember that!

JANICE
No, you don't. The accident, it
took away your ability to make new
memories. You can't remember
anything past when you were eight.

SOPHIA
You're lying! Mom says you
shouldn't lie!

Janice is calm. She has explained this a thousand times before.

JANICE

Sophia, your mom isn't coming back.
I'm sorry. She cared for you every
single day until she passed.

SOPHIA

You're lying! I WANT MY MOMMY!

Sophia jumps up (somewhat slowly) from the table and makes
for the door.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

I need to go back!

12 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

12

While the house itself still stands, the landscape has
changed. A flying car sits next to the barn, and in the
distance impossibly high skyscrapers pierce the clouds.

Sophia runs as fast as her aged limbs can carry her for the
barn.

13 INT. BARN - MOMENTS LATER

13

Inside the barn Sophia stops. In front of her sits her busted
old rusty time machine. The wheels have fallen off and the
cardboard is beyond aged.

Sophia stops and stares at it. Janice enters behind her, not
in any great hurry. She has a book tucked under her arm.

JANICE

Sorry kiddo. You can only go
forward. One day every day. Seventy-
two years and a couple days for you
now. One day for everyone else.

Sophia stares at her time machine. There is a huge dent in
the side where it hit the fence post. She is slowly - slowly -
coming to grips with the fact that it won't work again.

JANICE (CONT'D)

Com'on. Lemme read to you. You
always like that.

Janice sits next to Sophia on the top of the hill and opens the book to a well-worn page. The spine has been bent almost to nothing. She begins to read.

JANICE

"In a moment, out of nothing at all, in front of the expedition's revered leader, a man materialized: a man she felt she recognized immediately, though at the same time equally sure that she had never seen such an uncanny figure before in his life. It was as if she was meeting someone she had already known for many, many years."

As Janice reads Sophia raises her head and watches the many jet trails that crisscross the sky.

JANICE (CONT'D)

"Greetings," the creature began, "I am able to speak your language despite your being a very inferior species-- I prefer to communicate through telepathy, however your understanding of more advanced practices is non-existent, or indeed, even the relation between time and space is lost on you. Your greatest things, such as the flying-

The wind suddenly picks up, catching the open book and causing its tattered pages to finally fall apart and scatter across the grass in front of them.

JANICE (CONT'D)

Oh shoot! Sophia, I'm so sorry.

They watch the pages get blown apart and away. Sophia makes to slowly get up and chase them.

JANICE (CONT'D)

Don't move, I'll grab them.

(chuckles)

Though I can probably recite it from memory by now.

SOPHIA

I just want to know how it ends ... that's all.

Janice jumps up and attempts to grab the loose pages. It's pointless, as most have blown all across the grassy hill. She chases them anyways.

Sophia lies back, looking up at the sky. Above her, in the distance, a fantastic flying machine circumnavigates the blue half-sphere.

Sophia raises her arm. She puts her fingers together until they squeeze the distant ship. She makes a deep humming noise with her mouth.

On the grassy field in front of her the loose pages of the book scatter in the wind, never to be bound again.

FADE OUT.