

DISTANT PLANET

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EXT: WOODS - DAY.

The woods have a tight, tropical feel but the trees are like nothing on earth. The light is tinged red. Move to a humanoid alien creature with smooth skin and no hair. He watches tiny spots of light dance above a metallic device on the floor.

Now we see a smaller figure. Younger. They converse in a language densely packed with hard consonants, but her voice is bright and his is gentle. *Subtitled.*

YOUNGER

(Alien language)
Why don't you ever let me go through?

OLDER

(Alien language)
We have everything we need here. And more. This is for those in other worlds, who may be without...

The lights begin forming a glassy, red orb a few feet off the floor. We watch it become fully formed, then the older humanoid presses a button on the device and picks it up.

He departs. The young female is left staring wondrously at the orb for a time, then turns and hurries after her father.

EXT: WOODS - NIGHT.

Same place. A glow appears within the orb. It builds, then crescendos with a flash and a creature exits the orb with a squeal and lands on the soft, mossy floor.

She stands up into a wary crouch. Peers around. Eventually she stands up straight. A slim figure with a thin head and large eyes that face out to the side like a fish.

We become aware of chanting in the distance. Tribal. She turns toward it, then edges into the trees.

EXT: ABERGLAS VALLEY - DAY.

South Wales. Pan along the green valley, over the terraces. Past the rusting pithead. Just behind the last row of terraced houses sits a large patch of bare ground, 100 yards across.

INT: KITCHEN - DAY.

HELEN LEWIS, 38, places toys on the edge of the table. A collection of ponies, a rag doll and an alien.

HELEN

Oh, and you...

She fetches a buzz lightyear. Daughter, AMY, 5, plays quietly across the kitchen and Sabby the dog sleeps on an old settee.

Happy, Helen perches stylishly on a chair near the patio door. Facing her inanimate audience, she reads from a notepad.

HELEN

Lurching through the clinging brambles
Of a life controlled by fear...

She glances up and catches the stare of the Buzz Lightyear. She becomes unsettled, clears her throat and resets.

HELEN

Lurching through the clinging brambles...
Of a life controlled by fear...

Another glance. She falters under the glare of the ponies.

HELEN

Divided by faith, colour and money
Now I hate those I also hold dear, oh
this is stupid...

Bright red, she stands and walks to the sink. Shakes her head.

HELEN

What's the point?

Amy's sweet voice comes from the other side of the kitchen.

AMY

They were pretty words Mammy.

Amy is idly playing with play-doh. Helen smiles, thrilled.

HELEN

Oh. Thank you sweetie!

Suddenly, loud music from out the back of the house. Helen goes to the patio window.

HELEN

Oh, the ceremony thing. Come on Ames,
let's have a look.

EXT: BACK GARDEN - CONT.

Helen and Amy wander down to the bottom of the back garden. Helen picks Amy up to sit on the wall, and they watch proceedings in the adjacent building site with interest.

EXT: AMPAK PLASTICS FACTORY SITE - CONT.

With dozens of diggers in the background, Local Mayor DOUG JONES, 62, climbs up onto a temporary stage containing a large screen and loud speakers. The music stops abruptly.

He begins a speech to an audience of media, dignitaries and locals. Helen and Amy have the perfect view.

DOUG JONES

To think that just four months ago this was a patch of empty ground...

An ANGRY LOCAL pipes up.

ANGRY LOCAL

Empty ground? Rugby club more like!

DOUG JONES

...and now it will become a beautiful symbol of growth... Growth for AmPak and for this town, over forty jobs created.

A tall, tanned man with dazzling white teeth climbs up onto the stage behind him.

DOUG JONES

A pure, symbiotic relationship. AmPak supplying economic salvation, us supplying that granite Welsh work ethic, evolved at the coal face...

EXT: HELEN'S BACK GARDEN - CONT.

Helen is smiling at the proceedings. Amy is looking on with curiosity. Helen leans in.

HELEN

Exciting isn't it!

AMY

I don't like that man.

HELEN

Oh... No, he's a good man!

EXT: AMPAK PLASTICS FACTORY SITE - CONT.

Mayor Doug Jones is finishing off his bit.

DOUG JONES

Now, please give a special Aberglas welcome to AmPak CEO, Todd Forbridge!

The tanned American, TODD FORBRIDGE, 47, steps forward jauntily. He attempts to speak in Welsh.

TODD FORBRIDGE

Shoe May! Shoe May Aberglas... So nice to finally be here in the nation of song...

His dazzling smile falters as he peers down at his notes.

TODD FORBRIDGE

Cum... Cimrew...

Polite applause from a few dignitaries.

TODD FORBRIDGE

On behalf of my thirty seven *thousand* team members across the globe, I want to welcome Aberglas into the Ampak family!

Pause for applause, which eventually comes.

TODD FORBRIDGE

Now, lets hear it from the team!

Now a video starts up on the large screen behind. Overly loud, jaunty pop music and a series of clips.

In each clip, a different team of factory workers are standing together in canteens, or corridors, or boardrooms, holding up pieces of paper that spell out AMPAK WELCOMES ABERGLAS, and shouting the phrase out loud.

The video moves to a series of individuals, who deliver phrases with nauseous smiles and hammy 'Thumbs Ups'. First a New York accented man, wearing overalls and a cowboy hat.

AMERICAN MAN

YEEHAH! Welcome to Ampak, Aberglas!

GERMAN MAN

GO TEAM ABERGLAS!

SPANISH WOMAN

You can do it! Hey!

AMERICAN WOMAN

(Painfully quietly)
Hey you got this Aberglas...

EXT: HELEN'S BACK GARDEN - CONT.

Helen, smiling but slightly cringing, picks Amy off the wall.

HELEN

Come on, let's give Sabby a walk...

EXT: PEN-Y-FAN POND - A LITTLE LATER.

Local beauty spot. A pond surrounded by grass banks and ancient oaks. Local residents mill around. Amy throws a stick into the pond and Sabby splashes in to fetch it. Nearby, Helen is reading a book on the bank.

PAT GRIFFITHS, 89, arrives with her Yorkshire terrier Charlie, and takes off her coat to reveal an ancient bathing costume.

HELEN

Hia Pat!

PAT

Hia Love!

Pat wades into the cold water easily and leaps into a smooth breast stroke. Charlie rushes in to swim after her.

INT: KITCHEN - A LITTLE LATER.

Helen is perched stylishly on the chair reading her poetry to the inanimate audience again, but now with more confidence.

HELEN

Lurching through the clinging brambles
Of a life controlled by fear
Divided by faith, colour and money
Now I hate those I also hold dear.

She smiles at the assortment of toys, then nods graciously.

HELEN

Oh! Thank you... So kind... I'll take some
questions but then I have to dash... Yes.

Helen nods toward the Buzz Lightyear. Pauses.

HELEN

Great question. It's about unshakeable
belief in your own ability. Learning not
to care what other people think of you.

She smiles benignly at her plastic and cloth audience.

HELEN

Not being embarrassed to love poetry.

The front door slams. Helen crams the poem into her pocket and runs to the kitchen sink. Her mum JEAN, 64, walks in.

JEAN

Looks like a bomb site in here! Put the
kettle on love. I see him next door got
daytime TV on again...

HELEN

And?

JEAN

He won't find a job sitting watching
countdown. Three kids they got...

She plonks down next to Sabby, who leaps off the settee.

JEAN

These Polish next to me now, claiming
benefits then watching Netflix every
night!

HELEN

(Weary)
They're Bulgarian. And the Mum is a
teaching assistant.

INT: AMY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT.

Helen is reading with Amy in bed.

AMY

I have a little frog
His name is tiny Tim
I put him in the...

HELEN

Bathtub

AMY

I put him in the bathtub
To see if he could swim

INT: JOSIE'S NEWSAGENTS - MORNING.

Helen, with Amy in school uniform, buys her 'POETRY' magazine.
Newsagent JOSIE, 64, has a gravelly smokers voice.

JOSIE

How's your Mother love?

HELEN

Oh God, don't.

Josie scans the magazine and contemplates Helen's answer.

JOSIE

It's not her you know.

HELEN

Amy, put that down love, good girl.

JOSIE

I've known your Mother since we were nippers. She's a kind soul.

Helen looks doubtful.

JOSIE

We grew up believing what we read. Some still do. We mustn't hate them for that...

Josie picks up a lollipop from the counter.

JOSIE

You know, the best behaved girl of the day gets a free lollipop in here now...

This gets Amy's attention. Josie hands the lollipop to Helen.

JOSIE

And Amy just won the prize for today!

HELEN

Oh, wow, thank you! (Quietly to Josie)
Josie, you don't need to do that.

JOSIE

That's just the rules!

Helen passes the lollipop to a beaming Amy.

AMY

(Thrilled) Thank you!

EXT: HIGH STREET - A LITTLE LATER.

Helen and Amy step out of Josie's. The Gazette newspaper board outside reads 'Council Bribery Questions Over Factory Deal'.

A HOMELESS MAN, late thirties, is lying face down on the pavement near an empty shop. People casually step around him.

HELEN

Hello?

She crouches and taps him on the shoulder.

HELEN

Can you hear me?

AMY

Is he dead Mam?

Helen feels his neck. Pulls him into the recovery position.

HOMELESS MAN
Fugginell mun, whass goin on.

EXT: HIGH STREET - A LITTLE LATER.

The man is now sat up against the doorway on his cardboard.
Helen approaches with coffee, sugar and a Cornish pasty.

HELEN
I didn't know if you wanted sugar.

HOMELESS MAN
Ah that's amazing. You're an angel.

HELEN
Now listen, don't be getting so drunk
that you pass out like that.

HOMELESS MAN
Yeah, no, I'm quitting now anyway.
Enough's enough.

EXT: SCHOOL GATES - MORNING.

Helen fusses over Amy at the crowded school gates.

HELEN
Right, bags... Oh look at your mouth!

Helen glances up at a group of alpha mums nearby. Two of them
look at Amy's filthy mouth then turn back into the group.

HELEN
(Whispering)
Fucking hell...

Helen licks a tissue, rubs it over a horrified Amy's mouth.

HELEN
Right off you go! I love you!

Amy hares into the playground, shoe sole flapping as she runs.
Alpha mum LYNSEY, 40, turns to Helen and smiles.

LYNSEY
They go through shoes so quick...

A timid smile from Helen.

LYNSEY
It must be hard though, on your own.

HELEN
Oh, I'm alright. I mean...

Lynsey has already turned back to her friends.

EXT: AMPAK PLASTICS FACTORY - DAY.

The factory is *already* twenty five metres high. We see it is starting to loom over Helen's entire street.

EXT: FACTORY GATES - DAY.

At the gates to the building site, three protestors stand behind a large yellow placard containing *Hazard* style skulls and the words 'NO To Toxic Plastics'. The protestors are JEFF, 61, LEAH, 34 and TOMOS, 19.

A TV news cameraman and REPORTER are preparing for a piece to camera. The reporter organises the protestors for the shot.

TV REPORTER

Just lift the poster up in front of you,
that's it...

JEFF

Can I put it in front of my double chin?

LEAH

No! I got my best cardy on, I need
people to see it!

JEFF

Don't get my bald patch mind!

A sleek black car with blacked out windows arrives at the gates from within the site, and pauses as the gates open.

JEFF, LEAH, TOMOS

Boooooo!

TV REPORTER

Derek! Get this!

INT: CAR - CONT.

Todd Forbridge and Doug Jones are in the back seat. Suddenly a TV Camera is pointing at them as they are booed vociferously. There is a darkness to Todd as he turns to Doug.

TODD

You said your town wouldn't protest.

DOUG

It's three people!

TODD

It only takes one TV camera Doug.
Listen. Deal with them.

DOUG

I'll have a word.

TODD.

No. Deal with them.

INT: JOB CENTRE - A LITTLE LATER.

A large, busy office. Helen is with a female ADVISOR, 28.

ADVISOR

I'm really sorry. No new vacancies this week.

HELEN

Nothing come up in the factory? That's opening soon.

ADVISOR

Nope, I think that's it now. All filled.

Helen looks defeated. The advisor looks at her with sympathy.

EXT: HELEN'S STREET - A LITTLE LATER.

Helen is chatting with neighbour from across the street, JOHI, 36, who is of Libyan heritage. Johi is bubbly, self-effacing, and has a strong Valleys accent.

JOHI

I went there last night. It's got sexy low lighting, excellent ambience. Somewhere you can put a nice dress on, you know?

HELEN

Ooh that's nice...

JOHI

And you get burger, chips AND a pint for five quid!

HELEN

Ooh, that's good.

JOHI

You should try it!

HELEN

Yeah, maybe...

JOHI
Come with me.

HELEN
I don't think I even own a dress.

Johi places a friendly hand on Helens shoulder and smiles.

JOHI
Well the offer's open.

HELEN
Thanks Johi.

INT: ABERGLAS SOCIAL CLUB - DAY.

Infant ballet class. A dozen Mums sit on the side beaming at the dancers. Helen, just away from them, smiles at Amy. The INSTRUCTOR, 23, has the class in the palm of her hand.

INSTRUCTOR
Let's stamp the sand down with our feet...

Amy and friends lift their knees up and stamp the imaginary sand.

INSTRUCTOR
Now, don't let the pirate see you, let's tip toe back to the ship..

She gracefully whirls on her tip toes. The class follow with varying levels of grace. The mums giggle, some through tears.

EXT: CAVE - DAY.

Back on the alien planet. The orb creator and his daughter are inside a cave with a sandy floor. The man presses buttons on the metallic device, then turns to his daughter and smiles.

OLDER
(Alien language)
You want to do it?

The young girl is thrilled. She steps forward nervously, crouches and goes to press a large button. She hesitates and turns back to her father. He nods. She presses the button and the dazzling spots of light appear above.

YOUNGER
(Alien language)
How do you know where the other end is?

He crouches down next to her, and they watch the spots of light begin to dance.

OLDER

Every world has several lines of energy running along the landscape. Like rivers of power.

The wondrous light show reflects in their huge, deep eyes.

OLDER

Occasionally these rivers intersect to create an incredible energy fountain. There may be several fountains on each world... We have designed our portals to automatically land on the most powerful energy fountain in whichever star system we have chosen to link with.

The girl stares at the lights as their dancing quickens.

YOUNGER

...is the fountain beautiful?

OLDER

Well, it is impossible to see energy fountains with our eyes, but yes... I'm sure that the most powerful energy fountain of each system must be in a place of wondrous beauty...

The girls eyes dance as she leans toward the lights, now almost a blur, and tries to picture the wonder beyond.

INT: HALLWAY - DAY

Cut to Helens airing cupboard. Helen opens the door and pulls several pairs of old knickers off the top of the boiler, then some towels from the shelf underneath. She pops them all into a washing basket and closes the door. The doorbell rings out.

EXT: HELEN'S DOORSTEP - CONT.

Helen swings open the door to ANDREW, 45, rather a fashion victim with his navy blazer, white t-shirt, above ankle jeans and white socks. He looks weary and stressed.

HELEN

Oh, hi Andrew.

ANDREW

Hi! She ready?

HELEN

She wants to stay with me this weekend, is that ok?

ANDREW
Oh. Yeah. Course!

HELEN
I did text earlier... How's Susie?

ANDREW
Yeah, she's fine.

Helen glances over to Andrews white BMW, where a young woman sits in the passenger seat examining herself in the sun visor mirror. She looks angry, even from a distance.

HELEN
How long now?

ANDREW
Six weeks.

HELEN
How's she coping?

ANDREW
Yeah, she's... Well. Angry. About being fat.

HELEN
She's too young..

ANDREW
She's twenty three!

HELEN
No, too young to have a baby.
Emotionally.

ANDREW
Yeah. She just wants it out now.

Andrew suddenly looks uneasy.

ANDREW
Listen. I've had a tough week... The showroom had to let me go.

HELEN
Oh no.

ANDREW
I'm looking, but there's hardly anything out there at the moment. And with the baby on the way too... Helen...

He looks down at his feet, then guiltily up at Helen.

ANDREW

I can't afford the payments. For now.

HELEN

What?

ANDREW

I can barely pay the rent. And Susie, she's... she just can't stop buying clothes.

Helen slumps against the doorframe, hands to her temple.

ANDREW

Not even baby clothes! Clothes for when she's thin again. It's like a manic compulsion...

HELEN

Andrew, I'm barely afloat here.

ANDREW

You still looking for a job?

HELEN

Yes! Every day!

There is a shriek from across the road.

SUSIE

ANDREW! Fuck sake!

Andrew is immediately overwhelmed by panic.

ANDREW

I'm sorry. I have to go. She gets... sorry.

HELEN

What the hell am I supposed to do!?

ANDREW

I'll get the house valued.

HELEN

What? No!

ANDREW

Look, we're all having to live by our means, if you have to downsize then...

SUSIE

ANDREW!!!

Andrew trots away. He looks over before getting into the car.

ANDREW
Helen, I'm sorry.

INT: LIVING ROOM - CONT.

Helen enters, plonks down on the settee. She's reeling. Amy is doing hula hoop.

AMY
Mam! I did three, look!

Amy tries to replicate but only does two. Helen forces a smile.

AMY
Aw... That was only two.

Amy tries a couple more times, then steps out of the hula hoop and observes her mother. Helen has her head in her hands. Amy sidles up close to her.

AMY
Shall we do dancing?

INT: KITCHEN - A LITTLE LATER.

Helen presses play on her old hi-fi, Jim Reeves 1963 song 'This world is not my Home' comes on warm and loud. Amy climbs onto Helen's feet and they start dancing. Amy can't stop laughing. Eventually, this spreads to Helen.

JIM REEVES
(Singing)
This world is not my home
I'm just passing through
My treasures are laid up
Somewhere beyond the blue

The angels beckon me
From heavens open door
And I can't feel at home
In this world any more

INT: BEDROOM - EVENING.

Helen tucks Amy in. Kisses her head. She shuts the curtains, briefly grimacing at the huge factory outside, then heads out.

HELEN
Nigh night petal.

AMY
Nigh night Mam.

INT: LIVING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER.

Helen sits in comfortable jogging bottoms and t-shirt, alone. Bottle of wine on the coffee table. It is dusk, no lights on.

An inane comedy panel show on the TV. After every line, Helen murmurs a humourless laugh along with the studio laughter.

INT: LIVING ROOM - NIGHT.

Helen is in the same position, but asleep. The bottle of wine is empty. Family Guy on TV. A scream on the show wakes Helen.

HELEN
Andrew?

INT: HALLWAY - CONT.

Groggy, Helen walks to the kitchen, out of shot. We hear her place the bottle into the bin. The kitchen light goes out.

She ambles along the hallway in near darkness, locks the front door and turns to walk up the stairs.

A soft red glow is emitting from the cracks of the airing cupboard door. We see Helens right hand moving up the bannister. It stops halfway up.

Her head appears and she peers down at the glow. She hurries back down and stands by the airing cupboard.

HELEN
Fuck!

She rushes to the kitchen, comes back with a small fire extinguisher, then pulls the cupboard door open. She gasps and stumbles back against the wall.

Inside is a spherical, glowing red orb. Three feet high, the bottom just above the floor. The boiler seems curved around it. Within the orb is... is that snow? Sand? And a red sky? The scene is distorted as if viewed through a fish-eye lens.

HELEN
What the fuck?

She stumbles to the front door and plunges into the street. She looks around for help, then takes her phone and dials 999.

EMERGENCY OPERATOR
Emergency. Which service?

HELEN
Um... Police?

EMERGENCY OPERATOR
Connecting.

POLICE CALL HANDLER
Hello, where are you calling from?

HELEN
12 Attlee Terrace, Aberglas.

POLICE CALL HANDLER
What is the nature of your emergency?

HELEN
Um...

Helen presses her left hand into her temple.

HELEN
There's an orb in my airing cupboard.

POLICE CALL HANDLER
An orb.

Helen steps into her hallway and peers toward the cupboard.

HELEN
An orb, like a sphere, I don't know...

POLICE CALL HANDLER
Is there an intruder in your house?

HELEN
No.

POLICE CALL HANDLER
I'm sorry... what is the nature of your emergency madam?

Helen closes the front door and goes to the orb. Now her fear subsides to the extent she can see its incredible beauty.

HELEN
I don't know. I... It's...

POLICE CALL HANDLER
What do you mean an orb in your airing cupboard? Can you be more specific.

HELEN
It's a perfect sphere...

POLICE CALL HANDLER

There's a perfect sphere in your airing cupboard. (A beat) Is it on fire?

HELEN

No.

POLICE CALL HANDLER

Madam, have you consumed alcohol or recreational drugs?

HELEN

No! Yes, wine. A bottle of wine.

POLICE CALL HANDLER

I can send someone to look at your sphere, but we're very busy so it might be some time. Perhaps you should ring 111 for the NHS out of hours service.

HELEN

Yes, I'll do that. I'm so sorry.

Helen ends the call. She is transfixed by the orb. The perfect clarity of the image. The lower half snow, or sand, the upper half... there is movement. Clouds moving across the red sky.

She pulls her phone back out and scrolls to 'Andrew' on her contacts. She presses call, then immediately cancels it.

HELEN

No.

She scrolls to 'Mam', pauses over the call button. She scrolls to 'Johi Price(Ethan Mam)'.

INT: HALLWAY - A LITTLE LATER.

The hallway light is now on. Helen opens the front door.

HELEN

Oh Johi, thank you for coming.

JOHI

What's the matter, Amy alright?

HELEN

This is quite hard to explain.

She moves to the airing cupboard door, Johi follows.

HELEN

There's something in my airing cupboard

JOHI
What? It's not a spider is it!?

HELEN
I'm just going to open the door ok...

Helen opens the airing cupboard. Johi's mouth drops open.

JOHI
What. The. Fuck.

HELEN
(Hysterical)
I rang the police but they thought I was
on drugs...

Mouth still wide open, Johi turns to Helen.

HELEN
I couldn't ring Mum cos it's gone ten...

Johi looks back at the sphere.

HELEN
...and so I phoned you.

JOHI
What is it?

HELEN
I don't know!

JOHI
We need to report it. Who do you report
it to?

HELEN
The government?

Johi pulls out her phone.

JOHI
What's the governments phone number?

HELEN
Have they got a phone number?

JOHI
Or is it the FBI?

HELEN
The FBI is America isn't it?

Johi starts typing into her phone.

JOHI
What am I googling?

HELEN
Um... Hovering sphere. In airing cupboard.

JOHI
How do you spell sphere?

HELEN
Sphere... S-P-H-E-R-E

JOHI
...it's just got toys. Oh this is stupid,
we have to call the police.

HELEN
I did, they thought I was on drugs!

Johi moves to the sphere. She reaches forward to touch it.

HELEN
Careful!

JOHI
It's the most beautiful thing I've...

She puts a finger in. It becomes huge and mis-shapen through whatever distortion of light is at play.

HELEN
Johi!

There is a brown streak as Sabby the dog appears from the kitchen, runs through the women's feet and leaps into the orb.

HELEN
Sabby, no!

It is too late. Sabby is frozen for a second within the orb, tail up, then she disappears.

JOHI
Fucking hell!

Suddenly, Sabby is visible on the other side. Walking away fast, as if sped up, like old black and white movies.

JOHI
She's there!

Now we see that Amy has come downstairs and is standing just behind them, holding her rag doll.

End of sample