

THERE WERE PEOPLE ON SUNDAY

WRITTEN BY

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FADE IN ON:

Open water. Vast. No end. Slightly choppy.

A SCREAM. A SPLASH.

A BOY, no older than 7, struggles to stay afloat.

Trying to keep his mouth above the waves, he swallows some water, choking.

We move, closer, he reaches out for us and we reach for him.

He goes under.

We search the waves, he doesn't come back up. We go under and search for him, again, no sign.

We have to come back up for air.

We spin three hundred and sixty degrees, he's no where to be found.

MALE'S VOICE (V.O.)
I saw your wavy face under the
water but was not able to get any
closer than a dream.

CUT TO BLACK:

FADE IN ON:

An EYE, closed. It suddenly OPENS.

We see the face that the eye belongs to, the face of JOHN HEARD, 25.

He's just woken from the previous dream. His head doesn't move, his focus past us on....

A PICTURE OF HIMSELF AND A GIRL.

He sits up.....we find ourselves in an....

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - DAY

Sunlight is coming through the windows.

John looks around the room. Lining the wall and surrounding the bed are packed boxes and bags. The bed is the last remaining piece of furniture in the room.

He gets up and walks to the window, looking out. We're greeted with a view of the NEW YORK CITY skyline. He looks down at the street, focusing on a car parked in front of his building with a U-Haul attached to it.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

John opens the refrigerator door, there's nothing inside but various condiments. He walks into the....

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

He stands in the middle of the room, looking around, there's more boxes, the couch is gone.

We pull out as he stands, alone in the middle of the room, the only real thing there.

FADE TO BLACK:

Over black the main title appears:

'THERE WERE PEOPLE ON SUNDAY'

Over black the sound of heavy traffic, horns and the squeal of brakes that need to be replaced can be heard.

FADE OUT:

A CROSS on a church in New York City.

John's car pulls to a stop at an intersection in front o it, the window rolls down and we see --

John, stubble adorning his face and sunglasses on the bridge of his nose.

In the passenger and backseat are boxes, bags and clothes.

The light turns green and he turns onto a busy highway, his window down, the music on his stereo on.

He hangs his hand out the window, letting the wind catch it.

As he leaves the city, the buildings loom behind him and disappear as he enters the Holland Tunnel, going underground into darkness.

CUT TO:

EXT. REST STOP - DAY

John's car is parked outside the rest stop on the side of a busy highway.

Inside the car John sleeps, his seat reclined.

Attached to the back of his car is the small U-Haul trailer.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN'S CAR - NIGHT

John slowly wakes and pulls some change out of the ash tray. Getting out, he walks to the rest are building and buys a cup of coffee from a vending machine.

Stopping for a second to blow into the cup, trying to cool it and taking a sip, he looks around. He appears to be the only one awake.

Perplexed, he gets back in his car and pulls back onto the freeway.

FADE TO:

INT. JOHN'S CAR (MOVING) - DAYBREAK

After driving for awhile he turns off the CD player and turns on the radio. There's only a dull hiss, an incessant tone or just cold, still silence.

Ahead there is a cloud of smoke. As he gets closer the smoke grows black. A fire. He stops thirty feet from the now visible PILEUP.

CARS and TRUCKS smashed together, some on their sides.

A LARGE TRANSPORTATION TRUCK lays on it's side, wheels still spinning, it's back doors open and it's contents of oranges spilt over the road.

John gets out, approaches the mess and looks in a car that lies on the outskirts of the accident on it's side. He looks through the cracked windshield, he doesn't see anyone inside.

He looks down the highway in both directions. There is no sign of any emergency vehicles.

He looks in the next car, again no one inside.

He checks car after car and over and over again there is no trace that anyone was driving these cars at all.

John walks back to his car, grabs his cell phone through the open window and dials '911'.

It rings and rings and no one picks up.

Spinning around and looking up both sides of the highway, there's no sign of any car driving towards or away from him and the pileup.

He tosses the phone back through the window, gets in and drives into the grass around the pileup, continuing along his way.

As he continues to drive he notices there is no one else on the road. Every now and then he passes a car that has run off the highway, smoking after crashing into a tree or the guard rail.

FADE TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

John pulls off the highway at an exit labeled 'FT. MYERS'.

The town isn't big, he passes shops on the side now and then, palm trees line the streets. Gated communities seem to be the norm.

Outside of the grocery store, bags full of groceries lay toppled on their sides, their contents spilt over the concrete. Purses and handbags lay scattered in front of the various shops where people had been previously shopping.

Resting on the side of the road is a BABY CARRIAGE that has crashed on it's side. John slows and then changes his mind, driving on.

CUT TO:

THE CITY

John drives through the empty DOWNTOWN part of the city to the YACHT BASIN. The HIGH RISES and COURT HOUSE are empty, police cars sit unattended.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAINLAND YACHT BASIN - DAY

Like a giant parking lot, boats sit cramped together, slowly bobbing up and down with the gentle waves. There aren't any boats going out or coming in. There aren't any people cleaning them or on any of the decks.

John parks and walks to the end of the pier.

Out over the water is an ISLAND. All that can be seen on it is trees and the sand of the beach. It doesn't appear to be inhabited. He stares at it for a few moments before walking back up the dock.

He starts unloading his car, carrying everything to a boat tied to the dock. The name painted on the back reads - 'HEARD'.

Finished loading everything up, he unties it and starts the ignition, motoring towards the Island off the mainland he was staring at before.

EXT. BOAT - DAY

Looking around, there isn't any activity, no one fishing, no jet skis, nothing. Hearing a splash he looks over the side and sees a DOLPHIN following him, jumping out of the water beside the boat.

As he gets closer to the island we can see there is a dock protruding from the shore. A smaller, seven to eight person MOTORBOAT is tied to it.

CUT TO:

THE ISLAND

John docks the boat and climbs out, only bringing his backpack. He walks up a path leading into the woods.

He passes a tree with a sign reading 'EXIT' nailed to it pointing in the direction he just came from.

As he follows the path it opens to a clearing, revealing a CARIBBEAN STYLE HOUSE in the middle of the woods.

The front door is standing open, he walks into --

THE HOUSE

The interior is comfortable, nothing extravagant. There are no major electronics, no televisions, no stereos. There are however, book shelves lining the walls, filled to the brim with novels. Having run out room, some now sit on top of each other on the floor.

In the living room a GLASS CASE is mounted on the wall. Inside is a BOOK STANDING UP. The title on the cover reads - 'THERE WERE PEOPLE ON SUNDAY'. Next to it is the PULITZER PRIZE FOR FICTION.

It's engraved with the words - 'HAROLD HEARD - 1986'.

Over the case is a PICTURE of JOHN'S FATHER, HAROLD, at a podium accepting the award. He stands at the microphone, his wife, John's MOTHER, LYDIA, beside him. He holds RACHEL, John's YOUNGER SISTER, probably only two years old, in his arms.

To his left is JOHN, eight years old. Cradled in his arms is the Pulitzer, it looks too big for him, too heavy, he looks like he doesn't know what to do with it.

From behind him a creak and then 'CLICK CLICK', the sound of a gun being cocked.

John turns to see his father, HAROLD HEARD, 55, bearded, stout, a small gut, glasses and a fisherman's hat adorn his body. He's pointing a SHOTGUN at John.

HAROLD

John?

JOHN

Yeah?

Harold lowers the shotgun.

HAROLD

You cut your hair.

JOHN

Uh huh.

HAROLD

You should have knocked, I almost shot you.

Harold, rests the gun against the wall, quickly turns and disappears into the kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

John lays down his bag and on the kitchen counter and sees freshly caught FISH next to a sink. Laying in a pile next to it is the fish's guts and a knife.

Harold is prepping more fish to gut, his back to John.

JOHN
You're here.

HAROLD
Of course I'm here, it's my house.

JOHN
Where's Mom and Rachel?

HAROLD
Rachel's on the beach as usual and
your mother's gardening.

JOHN
Are you sure?

HAROLD
Of course I'm sure. What the hell's
a matter with you?

JOHN
You don't know.

HAROLD
Know what?

JOHN
Everyone's gone.

HAROLD
I said we're all here.

JOHN
Not here, everyone else, they're
all gone.

Harold puts down the fish and turns around.

HAROLD
Are you out of your fucking mind?

JOHN
Have you turned on the radio?

HAROLD
No.

John grabs the radio and turns it on. Nothing but static comes out of the speakers. He flips the channels, more of the same.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
We get bad reception out here, you know that.

JOHN
It's not he reception.

HAROLD
The antenna's probably damaged then.

JOHN
It's not the antenna.

Harold moves toward him.

HAROLD
Let me see your eyes.

He grabs the back of John's head with one hand and with the other pulls open his eyelids, one after another.

LYDIA (O.S.)
Harold! What are you doing?!

LYDIA HEARD, 51, still holding onto her beauty, walks into the kitchen.

HAROLD
Hide the jewelry, I think he's on a run.

John waits patiently for his father to check his pupils.

JOHN
I'm not on a run.

HAROLD
Sit down. Let me see your arms.

CUT TO:

THE BEACH

Laying on the sand in a bikini is RACHEL HEARD, John's 19 year old sister. Her eyes closed, a copy of 'THE CLOSING OF THE AMERICAN MIND' by Allan Bloom lays folded open to her side.

A LOW RUMBLING causes her to open her eyes. It stops and she closes them again. Suddenly, the GROUND SHAKES. She sits up quickly and looks out at the ocean.

Despite the tan, she goes pale.

RACHEL

Oh my god.

She scramble to her feet and sprints up a path into the woods.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

John sits in the same chair as before, Lydia and Harold stand over him as the kitchen door EXPLODES OPEN.

RACHEL

Dad! Come outside!

HAROLD

Not now Rachel.

RACHEL

Yes, right fucking now!

Harold and Lydia turn to see that their daughter isn't kidding.

CUT TO:

THE BEACH

Harold, Lydia and Rachel stand on the beach looking out at the ocean. From behind them John walks out of the woods and joins them. He's caught up in what they're looking at as well.

An OIL TANKER HAS RUN AGROUND. Leaning to it's side, it creaks and moans as if it's alive and is calling out for help like a beached whale.

Harold looks through a pair of binoculars, scanning the deck.

HAROLD

I don't see anyone on board.

JOHN

This is what I've been trying to tell you.

While still looking straight ahead Rachel talks to John.

RACHEL
When'd you get in town?

JOHN
An hour ago.

RACHEL
Well it's good to see you.

JOHN
Yeah.

Harold lowers the binoculars.

HAROLD
I think we should go to shore.

CUT TO:

INT. BOAT - DAY

The family sits on the boat as Harold motors them to the mainland. Laying on Harold's lap is the SHOTGUN.

CUT TO:

INT. SUV - DAY

Harold drives slowly through the streets seeing everything John passed on the way here.

RACHEL
Is it the end of the world?

HAROLD
No.

RACHEL
It's not a nuclear attack?

HAROLD
No, we'd be dead.

RACHEL
Then it must be the apocalypse.

HAROLD
Don't believe everything you read.