

Out From the Land of Uz
by
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INT. BEDROOM OF A RURAL KANSAS FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Soft moonlight pours in through the open window of the rustic bedroom. The pale, blue light illuminates the stuffed animals and wooden rocking horse of a child's room. On the bed HARRIET, dressed in a weathered, flannel robe, coos softly into the child JONATHAN'S ear to comfort him as he cries softly. Her voice is hoarse with sleep and worry as she lovingly strokes his blonde hair.

HARRIET

What's wrong child?

JONATHAN

(weeping softly)

I dreamed about it again. It said
it was going to take me away from
you.

Jonathan snuffles quietly into Harriet's robe and drifts slowly back to sleep.

HARRIET

(whispers lovingly into the
child's ear)

Nobody's gonna take you from us
Jonathan. You're God's child and
under the Lord's protection. No
baby, you're God's child and
ain't nobody gonna take you away.

Harriet smiles as she lays Jonathan gently back onto the bed and covers him with the thick colorful afghan.

FADE OUT:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

ROGER sits in the modest farmhouse kitchen, staring out the window at the sheep grazing calmly in the distance. He sips a cup of hot black coffee then stares at the steaming cup sitting in front of Harriet across the table.

ROGER

You gonna eat somethin' Harriet?
You really should eat somethin'.

HARRIET

No Roger, I'm gonna fast and pray
'til the Lord gives me a sign as
to what to do 'bout poor, little
Jonathan.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROGER

Honey, he ain't had a dream for two nights now and he seemed happy enough when he left for school this morning. Maybe that's God's sign.

Roger sips the hot coffee tentatively, then wipes at his thick, black mustache as he eyes Harriet closely. Harriet ignores him as she opens her Bible on the table, closes it then opens it again.

ROGER (CONT'D)

(slightly irritated)

Harriet, you listenin' to me?

Harriet doesn't answer or even look up, only continues to read her bible, periodically brushing a wispy, gray hair off her forehead. Roger sighs deeply, sips his coffee and returns to staring at the sheep in the fields on the horizon.

FADE TO:

INT. CHURCH - FIFTEEN YEARS AGO

Voices - speaking in low reverent whispers - echo through the church, which is empty except for two people. Roger, younger by 15 years, sits on a hard, worn pew clutching his Bible. He rocks back and forth, touching the book to his forehead, as he speaks tearfully to the older Pastor beside him.

PASTOR GREELEY

Brother Roger, you must strengthen your faith.

(lays a comforting hand on Roger's shoulder)

You must continue to pray for release from the demons of your past.

ROGER

(tearfully)

I try Pastor, God knows I try. But, but it's hard to, ... to give up old habits, old ways.

(pulls a handkerchief out of his back pocket and swipes at his nose)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PASTOR GREELEY

You and Sister Harriet have only been with us a short time but we have taken you both into our flock and into our hearts.

(pats Roger's broad shoulder as he leans in closer to him)

When you both came to us you were in sin brother; drugs, alcohol and godless religions. I fear that you both have not fully renounced Satan and, until you do, you will not fully know God's love and forgiveness.

ROGER

I know, I know. We're both tryin'.

(breaks down into sobs)

FADE TO:

INT. KITCHEN - PRESENT DAY

Roger turns from the window, looks at Harriet and smiles as he watches her study the bible.

ROGER

What you readin' there Harriet? Looks like you found somethin' interestin'.

HARRIET

Listen to this Roger.

(excitedly runs her finger along the letters of the passage in her Bible)

And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

Harriet looks up at Roger, her face awestruck as she searches his face for a response.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Roger I opened this Bible three times and each time it fell open to here, this place, now that's no accident!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROGER

What you sayin' Harriet? I don't understand what you mean.

HARRIET

But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.

Harriet pauses and looks up at Roger but is only met with a blank stare.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Roger!

(exasperated)

Can't you see this thing that's happenin' with Jonathan is a test? A test to see how strong our faith in God is!

Roger stares thoughtfully into his cup. Finally, he takes the worn, striped railroad cap out of his back pocket and stands up.

ROGER

Honey, maybe it is a test, I don't know, but if it is I know you're strong enough to pass it.

FADE OUT.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Harriet and Roger sit in the living room watching "Touched By an Angel" as Jonathan sleeps with his head in Harriet's lap on the sofa. Roger soon gets bored with the program, picks up the paper and turns to the sports section. Jonathan shifts uncomfortably and whimpers, as though troubled by a bad dream, while Harriet absentmindedly caresses his forehead.

HARRIET

What honey?

Roger looks over his paper and watches them both closely. Harriet looks down at Jonathan, who mumbles in his sleep but doesn't answer, just turns over and sighs.

ROGER

Boy's just havin' a dream is all.
(returns to reading his
paper)

Jonathan whispers something unintelligible but loud enough for Harriet to hear.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARRIET

What did you say Johnny?
(rolls him over and pats his
stomach)

The child doesn't wake, only continues to speak in the unintelligible language as Harriet's brow knots in concern.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Roger, I think somethin's wrong
with Johnny.
(shakes the boy gently but
gets no response)

Roger puts down the paper, walks over and kneels down to look into Jonathan's face.

ROGER

What's he sayin' Harriet?
(looks into Harriet's
concerned, frightened eyes)

HARRIET

(softly)
I don't know
(leans closer to better hear
what Jonathan is saying)
It don't sound like English.

Harriet shakes the boy again, slightly harder this time. Getting no response, she says Roger's name in a small, frightened whisper.

ROGER

He don't feel hot.
(touches the boy's head)
Can you make out what he's
sayin'?

Harriet sits Jonathan up, her eyes watering with fear and alarm as he continues, what sounds like, a conversation with someone.

HARRIET

The Devil walks the earth! The
Devil walks the earth!

Harriet repeats the phrase like a mantra, clutching Jonathan and crying as Roger caresses the boy's arm helplessly.

ROGER

(in a authoritative tone)
Johnny! Johnny wake up!
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ROGER (CONT'D)

This is your father talkin' and I
want you to wake up!

The boy continues in his conversational stupor as his perplexed and frightened parents look on helplessly. Roger picks up the boy's tiny body, stands and turns to go toward the stairs when suddenly all the electrical appliances go haywire. Stations on the television begin switching themselves, the stereo BLARES as it scrolls down the dial and the lights flicker crazily, creating an eerie strobe affect.

HARRIET

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall
not want!

Harriet runs sobbing to her husband and son and buries her face in Roger's shoulder as she repeats the Lord's Prayer. Jonathan is oblivious, continuing his foreign dialogue, as Roger and Harriet stumble up the steps toward their bedroom, fleeing the din of possessed electronics in the living room. Roger places the boy on the bed as he and Harriet fall to their knees crying, screaming prayers to heaven over the roar of the living room noise.

FADE OUT.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING - THE NEXT DAY

Roger and Harriet sit at the kitchen table, still shaken as they discuss the events of the previous evening.

HARRIET

(pleading)
He was speaking in tongues Roger,
couldn't you see that?

ROGER

I don't know what I saw.
(raises the quivering cup to
his lips)

Harriet thumbs through the pages of her Bible feverishly, searching for a passage that will make Roger see.

HARRIET

Look here, read what it says
right there!

Harriet thrusts the Bible toward Roger, her eyes wide with determination. Roger reads the passage twice, then sighs and rubs his forehead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROGER

Harriet, I see where it talks about speaking in tongues, but it also says that if nobody can understand you, it doesn't do any good.

(starts to hand the book to Harriet, but she pushes it back toward him)

HARRIET

Roger, if you read right there Paul says he wished that we all spoke with tongues, are you blind?

ROGER

No Harriet, I see where you're readin', but I also see where Paul puts more store in prophesying because, unless there's somebody to translate, speaking in tongues don't do no good. He says that himself.

HARRIET

You gonna argue with God?
(folds her arms defiantly)
Roger, nobody can argue with the word of God!

ROGER

(softly)
Why is this happenin' Harriet?
Why is this happenin' to us?

HARRIET

A test!
(loudly, her voice cracking in frustration)
God is testing our faith, same as he tested Job's. Satan walks the earth Roger, and he is jealous. Jealous of our faith in God, jealous of Johnny's innocence and jealous of the gift God gave us seven years ago.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ROGER
 (pensively strokes his
 mustache)
 The gift God gave us.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - SEVEN YEARS AGO

EAR-SPLITTING MUSIC permeates every room of the ranch-style house. Roger and Harriet lie together on a quilt against the wall in the north end of the room. Roger sits up, takes a long draw off an ornate glass bong and passes it to Harriet. She takes it and Roger turns his attention back to the checkbook he holds in his hand. His eyes follow the anemic balances as they dwindle to zero toward the bottom of the register. He smiles as he reads the memo notation that bears his father's name and the amount of the deposit that rejuvenated the ailing total.

ROGER
 (slurring his words as he
 glances at Harriet with
 heavy lids)
 Whatcha doin' baby?

HARRIET
 (blows out a thick cloud of
 smoke and brushes back a
 curly brown lock)
 Reachin' out man, reachin' out
 to, ... there.
 (points toward the ceiling)
 I can hear them Rog. I can hear
 them, umm and they said they're
 coming.
 (holds her head and moans)

Roger sits up and leans back against the wall, listening to strains of the KLAATU song, CALLING OCCUPANTS.

ROGER
 Baby, you been tryin' to make
 contact for years and every time
 you say you do, nothin' happens.
 C'mon, have a drink and forget
 about it.

Roger picks up a bottle of wine that sits next to the bong and takes a long, deep drink.

HARRIET
 (still holding her head and
 groaning)
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARRIET (CONT'D)

No, not this time Roger. They say they're in trouble an' they're comin'.

(moans louder this time)

They say they're in trouble and want to, ... give me somethin'.

ROGER

(laughs as he reaches over and strokes her long brown hair)

Baby, you're stoned.

The light from the dozens of candles scattered around the room suddenly brightens, far beyond the capacity of mere flames. The sound of the music filling the room swells and contracts as the air thickens into a light fog.

ROGER (CONT'D)

(blinks his eyes rapidly against the brightness)

Jesus, I'm pretty stoned too.

A loud groan from Harriet draws Roger's attention and, as he turns to her, a brilliant ball of light explodes in the center of the room. The light slowly coalesces into two large glowing figures that hover hypnotically above the floor.

ROGER (CONT'D)

(shields his eyes against the light with his hand)

Harriet, are you seein' this?

Harriet?

(looks toward Harriet out of the corner of his eye)

Harriet does not answer, only lies on her back staring blankly at the ceiling. One of the light figures glides toward Harriet as Roger's body suddenly goes limp. Roger's wide frightened eyes follow the entity as it stops at Harriet's staring form and produces a small brighter ball of light from its chest.

ROGER (CONT'D)

(frightened whisper)

Harriet, wake up!

The creature pauses and looks directly at Roger who can only make out the large eyes and a smiling slit of a mouth amid the brilliant light. The being lays the pulsing ball of light on Harriet's stomach as Roger's eyes close and he falls unconscious.

FADE OUT.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING - PRESENT DAY

Roger shakes his head and rubs wearily at his eyes.

ROGER

I got to go tend the sheep.
(stands suddenly without
looking at Harriet)
It's gittin' late and they have
to be looked after.

He puts on his cap and slips out the door, avoiding Harriet's steely gaze and breathing the cool morning air. He enters the shed and absentmindedly loads feed onto the quad runner. He finishes, climbs into the vehicle and heads toward the lower east pasture.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Harriet must be right.
(reaches the gate, climbs out
and opens it)
What else could it be?

Climbing back into the quad runner, he cocks his head, listening for the BLEATING of the sheep in the pasture. Nervously, hurriedly he drives in the direction of where they should be. He BEEPS the horn, but no sheep come running as he stops and surveys the pasture for any sign of them.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Maybe they're down in the valley.
(presses the accelerator and
heads in that direction)
Where the hell could over 200
sheep go?

Roger crests the hill, stops and looks down into the valley. Spotting clusters of sheep at the far end of the pasture, he steers the vehicle down the incline.

ROGER (CONT'D)

(shakes his head)
Crazy animals.

He turns in the direction of the largest group then stops as he sees the bodies of over two dozen sheep and lambs lying in the grass, their lifeless eyes staring blankly toward the sky.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Roger and FRANK THORNTON, the local veterinarian, sit at the kitchen table discussing the phenomenon that has taken place out in the fields.

ROGER

(irritably)

I don't know what happened to 'im Frank; you tell me, you're the vet. I just drove out there and found 'em lyin' dead.

FRANK

Well, I examined the feed and the self-watering tanks and be damned if I can find anything wrong.

(rubs the back of his neck in frustration)

Still feedin' 'em the same food Rog?

(looks thoughtfully at Roger)

ROGER

Yeah Frank, same as I always do.

(places his hands on his hips)

FRANK

What 'bout the tanks, all workin' right? Haven't added anything to the water?

ROGER

Look, you saw 'im Frank, all the other sheep were fine. If it was something in the feed or water, don't you think they'd be affected? Now I don't know what you're playin' at ...

(voice grows louder)

But I want some answers Frank, not finger pointin' at me to git you off the hook!

Roger immediately lowers his voice and glances into the dining room where Harriet sits reading a Bible story to Jonathan and throwing nervous glances into the kitchen. Frank stands up and puts on his hat as he tucks the jars with the samples of feed and water into his overcoat pocket.

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CONTINUED:

FRANK

(pensively)

I'll examine these and the sheep
out in the truck.

(points his thumb in the
direction of the truck
parked out front)

Let you know in a couple of days
what I find out. Hopefully
they'll tell me something cuz,
right now, I'm stumped.

ROGER

Alright.

(stands and extends his hand)

Just let me know what you find.

Roger leads Frank toward the door, opens it and lays a hand on
Frank's shoulder.

ROGER (CONT'D)

I really do appreciate you comin'
out on short notice.

They shake hands once again and Frank leaves. Roger blows out a
frustrated sigh, runs his fingers through his thinning, brown
hair and walks over to the dining room table.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Just have to wait and see what
the doc comes up with.

(smiles at Jonathan and
rustles the boy's hair as
Jonathan smiles back)

JONATHAN

Daddy, what happened to the
sheep?

Roger and Harriet look at each other nervously.

ROGER

Well,

(pulls out a chair and slowly
sits down)

Some of the sheep died and went
to heaven.

(gives Jonathan a sad,
nervous smile)

That sometimes happens with
animals and people.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JONATHAN

What made the sheep die daddy?
 (his smile suddenly fades)

ROGER

I'm not sure son, that's why I
 called Doctor Frank.
 (reaches for Jonathan's small
 hand)
 I think some of them may have
 been sick.

Harriet clears her throat with a disapproving little cough,
 which Roger ignores.

JONATHAN

(hesitantly as his eyes begin
 to water)
 Did, ... umm any of the lambs die?

ROGER

Yes, yes they did.

Roger caressing Jonathan's tiny fingers and looks down at the
 floor.

ROGER (CONT'D)

(softly)
 Yes Jonathan, some of the lambs
 did die.

JONATHAN

Did, did Sno'ball ... die?

ROGER

(quietly)
 Yes, yes he did.
 (kisses Jonathan's head
 gently as the boy begins to
 cry)
 You know Jonathan -
 (places the boy on his lap as
 Jonathan continues to cry
 heartbroken)
 Sometimes God gets lonely and
 sees some interestin' people or
 animals and decides to have them
 come and live with him.
 (avoids looking at Harriet
 who stares sternly at him)
 Now we don't always know when
 that's gonna happen, but when it
 does we don't feel bad -

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ROGER (CONT'D)

(gently brushes a tear from
Jonathan's round cheek and
smiles)

Because we know they went to
heaven.

Jonathan wipes at his face with the back of his hand and looks
at his father with innocent, bright-blue eyes.

JONATHAN

(smiling)

I'm sorry Sno'ball died daddy,
but I'm glad he went to heaven.

FADE OUT.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The miniature grandfather clock in the corner of the room CHIMES
ten. Jonathan has dozed in Harriet's lap so she gently carries
him up to bed. She tucks him in and is quietly moving toward the
door when he calls to her.

HARRIET

(softly)

Yes sweetheart, what is it?

(walks back and sits on the
bed)

Don't you think it's time little
boys were asleep?

JONATHAN

Okay mommy.

(gives her a hug and clings
to her tightly)

HARRIET

What is it Johnny?

(strokes his hair and kisses
his forehead)

JONATHAN

I know God gets lonely,
(mumbles into her dress)
But I wish he hadn't took
Sno'ball.

HARRIET

I know darlin'.

Harriet throws a glance toward the door and, seeing Roger is not
there continues.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARRIET (CONT'D)

You remember what your daddy said
about dyin' this morning?
(gazes out the window at the
bright half moon hovering in
the black velvet sky)

Jonathan nods and gives a tiny um hmm as a response.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Well, I think your daddy's partly
right. I think God does take the
people and things we love
sometimes because he gets lonely,
but I think the devil takes loved
ones too.

JONATHAN

(mournfully)
Why? Why would the devil want to
take Sno'ball?

HARRIET

Because you loved him.
(cups his chin in her
fingers)
The devil is very jealous of the
things we love.

JONATHAN

But why would God let the devil
take Sno'ball, couldn't he stop
'im?

HARRIET

(hugs Jonathan tightly)
He could, but sometimes he
doesn't because he wants to test
our faith, our love for him.
Sometimes what we love has to die
to bring us closer to God.

Slowly Jonathan's grip on her sleeve loosens and his small hand
falls into her lap.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Poor little thing.
(looks at his sleeping form
and gently lays him back
into bed)
Truly a gift from God.

FADE OUT.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - A WEEK LATER

Roger sits at the kitchen table working on the inventory of his feeder lambs. Harriet is in the living room putting the finishing touches on a sweater for Jonathan as the local news plays in the background.

HARRIET

(loudly)

Roger, why don't you quit for tonight?

Receiving no answer, Harriet puts down the sweater and goes into the kitchen to see what Roger is doing.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Roger honey, put that away for tonight.

(massages his broad shoulders)

You look beat to me.

ROGER

In a little while.

(pats her hand)

I only have a little bit left to go. You know, doc still don't know what happened to my sheep. If it's some kinda disease I could be in real trouble.

She walks over to the sink and is filling a glass of water when the television in the living room sounds as though it is switching channels.

ROGER (CONT'D)

What the devil is wrong with that thing?

Harriet shuts off the water and goes into the living room. The lights flicker momentarily, but Roger ignores it trying to concentrate on finishing the inventory. Harriet SCREAMING his name from the living room jolts Roger to attention and he springs from his chair and rushes to her.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Harriet what is ...

(stops short when he sees the ghostly face in the static of the television)

The face on the screen, fades in and out as the hard slit of a mouth moves slowly, uttering silent words.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Harriet tries to scream but it sticks in her throat as the huge, dark eyes in the thing's elliptical head fix their gaze on her. Harriet finally finds her voice and clutches the silver crucifix around her neck.

HARRIET

Yea tho I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death, I will
fear no evil.

The mouth of the thing on the screen moves rapidly now, as though it were shouting and at once the electronics in the room go crazy.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

(shouting)
Jonathan!
(grabs Roger's arm and gazes
at him in terror)
It's going to try to take
Jonathan!

Roger rushes upstairs, flings open the door to Jonathan's room and is about to call the boy's name when he freezes, petrified. Floating beside the bed and surrounded by a blinding white light is a thin, glowing apparition with long, skeletal fingers.

ROGER

(shouting)
No!
(rushes forward as the thing
turns and snarls)
Get away from him!

Roger strikes the thing, making contact. The air CRACKLES with the sound of electricity as the creature swings its taloned fingers, slashing at the air. Roger throws wild punches, never seeming to connect, while through it all Jonathan sleeps soundly, as though in a coma. Electricity shoots through Roger as he grabs the thing's slender, glowing wrist. He spins it around and pins it against the wall while turning his head to avoid the blinding light. The creature slides down the wall as though weakening. Suddenly, another creature appears in a bright, electrical burst. It grabs Roger, easily tossing him across the room as he hits the west wall and slides to the floor. He shakes his head to clear it and maintain consciousness, focusing on the blurry sight of the two creatures bending over Jonathan. The smaller of the two lifts Jonathan and turns to the other as a look of recognition flashes across Roger's face. He is slowly slipping into unconsciousness when Harriet appears in the doorway holding his hunting rifle.

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CONTINUED: (2)

ROGER (CONT'D)
 (hoarse whisper)
 Harriet don't.
 (groans as he tries to rise)

Roger slumps to the floor and the last thing he hears is the CRACK of the rifle and a loud pitiful WAIL.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. SPACECRAFT - SOMETIME LATER

Through the window of the craft the bright, blue globe of the earth falls away and with it the tiny, Midwestern town. The vessel speeds silently through the stars while inside one creature sits beside another who lies prostrate. Waves pass between the two as the smaller one is enveloped in the pale, blue field.

MALE ALIEN (V.O.)
 (soothingly, without moving
 his mouth)
 We both did all that we could. In
 his human form he was vulnerable
 and we had no time to convert
 him.

The smaller creature opens its eyes and looks at her companion.

MALE ALIEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 You did all that you could. We
 took every care to make sure our
 child could survive until we
 returned. We wrapped him in a
 human shell and placed him in a
 environment that we thought would
 be safe. That was all we could do
 in so short a time.

The male looks at the small hole in the other's chest that is nearly closed.

MALE ALIEN (CONT'D)
 We can't undo the mistakes of the
 past, you must try to get well
 and look to the future.

FEMALE ALIEN (V.O.)
 (quietly, painfully)
 I, ... I know there is logic in
 your words. I know we gave our
 son seven years of life that he
 would not have had.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The male smiles and nods.

FEMALE ALIEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I know that, then, he would not
have survived the trip home, no
child could have.

MALE ALIEN (V.O.)

(closes his eyes and
continues to nod)
It nearly killed us.

FEMALE ALIEN (V.O.)

All these things I know but,
knowing them is futile - our
child is dead.

THE END