

Over and Out

By

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A lost hiker's only chance to be saved is a high-functioning autistic boy and a two-way radio.

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. FOREST CLEARING - SUNSET

A young boy with messy hair, a colorful sweater, and jeans tucked into his socks, sprints into a clearing surrounded by dense forest.

There is a FIRE WATCH TOWER in the center of the clearing. The sun is setting behind the tower.

It was taller than any of the trees surrounding it.

The boy, TOMMY YESTER, walks towards it with uneven steps.

Cupping his hands around his mouth, Tommy yells at the tower.

TOMMY

HELLO! Is anyone up there? Dad?

Silence.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Dad! I'm sick of playing hide and seek!

All he hears in return are crickets and the WIND through the trees.

The boy begins to ascend the 6 sets of metal stairs. One hand grips the rusted railing and the other begins to rub his earlobe.

2 INT. FIRE WATCH TOWER - EVENING

At the top of the tower, Tommy turns the doorknob, the wooden door CREAKING open slowly.

There is no one in sight.

Inside is a large, round, and table-like map, as well as an emergency two-way radio with a microphone. A thick layer of dust covers both.

Tommy inspects the radio, pressing the power button, surprised when it turns on with a crackling HISS.

He twists and turns the knobs, only receiving loud static.

TOMMY

Um, can anyone hear me? Mom? Dad?

Tommy begins to rock slightly back and forth on his heels.

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He covers an ear with his free hand.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
Dad! I don't want to play anymore, I
just want to go home.

Tommy freezes when the static stops, and he, at last, hears a man's voice.

MIKE
(Over radio)

Does anyone copy? I repeat, does
anyone copy? My name is Mike Cornell.
C O R-

Tommy grabs the microphone, holding it too close to his mouth.

TOMMY
Is someone there?! My name is Tommy
James Yester and I'm looking for my
dad and-

MIKE
Woah! Slow down, slow down. Who are
you? Is this a kid? Over.

TOMMY
Over what?

MIKE
What?

TOMMY
You said over, what's over what?

MIKE
(Chuckling)
That's how people talk on radios, you
say over when you're done with what
you're saying. You say over and out
when you're both done talking. Over.

TOMMY
Oh, okay, that makes sense. Uh, over!

MIKE
Cool, good deal. So kid, is there an
adult you can hand the radio to? Over.

(CONTINUED)

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Tommy shakes his head.

TOMMY

I'm the only one here, I'm all alone.
Over.

Silence hangs in the air.

MIKE

Tommy, can you connect me to the
ranger station? Or maybe the police?

TOMMY

I don't think so, everything was all
static-y...

MIKE

Okay, do you see a trail map or a
forest map anywhere? If you can get me
to the tower you're at, I could get us
both out of here. Can you do that for
me, bud? Over.

TOMMY

Yeah, there's this big round map here.
Over.

MIKE

Great! So I started at Gother's Bay,
can you find that on the map? Over.

Walking to the map and scanning the labels, Tommy nearly
pressing his face into the glass, he quickly finds it and
bolts back to the radio.

TOMMY

Found it! Over!

MIKE

Awesome! Look, I've been walking for
two or three days, I honestly have no
idea where the hell I am. Pardon my
french. Over.

TOMMY

How many miles do you think you've
walked? Also, I don't think that was
french.

MIKE

Jeeze, I have no clue. I have a step
counter my little bro gave me but that
only tells me steps, not miles. Over.

(CONTINUED)

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TOMMY

How many steps? Over.

3 EXT. DENSE FOREST - EVENING

A man with shaggy blond hair and the beginnings of a beard, MIKE, reaches down to his canvas belt where a small step-counter hung, reading the numbers on the display.

Clenching the black walkie-talkie in dirt-covered hands, he holds it to his red and chapped lips.

MIKE

Let me see...Looks like it actually maxed out, it says 99,999 steps.

A silence falls over the transmission, Mike trudges along, whipping his head towards any slight sound in the dark forest. The only light he has is a small clip-on lamp attached to his grey hiking jacket.

The boy's voice shoots through the silence of the forest, causing Mike to trip over a rotting tree.

TOMMY

(Over Radio)

45 miles! You've walked at least 45 miles, maybe more. Over.

Pushing himself to his feet once more, he swears under his breath before pressing the talk button.

MIKE

Wait, what? How do you know that?

TOMMY

I saw on tv that there are approximately 2000 steps in a mile. So, of course, 2000 would go into 99,999 steps around 50 times. Over.

He runs a hand through his hair and CHUCKLES, shaking his head.

MIKE

(To himself, imitating Tommy)

Well, of course!

(Hushed, normal voice)

And people say tv is bad for kids.

He continues forward, the radio to his mouth.

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MIKE (CONT'D)

Okay Einstein, so how can we get me in the right direction to where you are? Over.

Reaching into his backpack, he pulls out a water bottle. Holding it above his open mouth, he squeezes out the last few drops.

TOMMY

What kind of radio do you have? Over.

Mike shrugs, tossing the water bottle back into his bag.

MIKE

I don't know, just some walkie-talkie I got from Bass Pro Shop. I don't know how that is going to help us-

TOMMY

Well, there was a book in my dad's garage stuff that said walkie-talkies could only work around 4 or 6 miles away.

Eyes widening, Mike stops walking and holds up a hand.

MIKE

Hold the phone, so that means, since we're even talking, I'm only a few miles away from the tower? You're a genius!

4 INT. FIRE WATCH TOWER - EVENING

Running back to the map, Tommy takes a few pebbles from the tower floor, making a small grid around the tower symbol.

TOMMY

I found spots on the map where you could be. A couple of them are by a lake. Can you see anything?

Tommy bounces on the front of his feet, a smile on his face.

MIKE

(Over Radio)

Actually, yeah, I can. Looks like there's a lake or something pretty close to where I am.

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TOMMY

Then you just need to go to the other side of it and you'll be here!

The boy punches the air, letting out a small cheer.

MIKE

Bud, you're a lifesaver, literally. I'm gonna shut off the radio so I don't waste the batteries, okay?

TOMMY

Okay!

MIKE

Cool, see you on the other side, bud. Over-

TOMMY

And out!

There are a CLICK and the loud static returns. Tommy turns it down quickly so that it is just a small HUM.

MONTAGE

- Tommy walks over to the map and fiddles with a compass and other tools.

- He crawls around on the floor, looking for more pebbles or sticks.

- Tommy organizes the pebbles in a line from smallest to largest.

- He proceeds to stack the pebbles, failing three or four times.

- Tommy ends up laying on the floor tossing the pebbles at the windows, trying to catch them as they bounce back.

- He stands up, brushing himself off, walking to the door of the tower.

END OF MONTAGE

5 EXT. TOWER DECK - MIDNIGHT

The tower door CREAKS open, breaking the serene quiet of the night. The moon shines brightly in the sky, among a sea of stars.

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Tommy walks out onto the deck surrounding the tower. There are trees as far as the eye can see, like an ocean of darkness. He sees the sparkling surface of a small lake.

Walking slowly to the other side of the tower, the boy spies yet another lake, this one larger, and much further away.

He stares at it, and his eyes grow wide. His mouth opens slightly, and Tommy sprints back to the map.

6 INT. FIRE WATCH TOWER - MIDNIGHT

Tommy presses a finger to the glass, following a trail frantically, gasping.

Rocking back and forth on his feet, he grabs his earlobes with his thumbs and index fingers and rubs them. His eyes dart between the radio and the map. Sweat begins to appear on his forehead.

A noise comes through on the radio, making Tommy jump. The faint voice of Mike is heard through the speaker.

MIKE

(Over Radio, faint)

Tommy? Tommy, do you come in, bud? I'm not really seeing anything, I think I might have gone the wrong way. Over.

Tommy creeps to the radio, lifting the microphone cautiously.

TOMMY

W-What's wrong?

Hearing nothing, he turns up the radio volume.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

I...checked the map again...I think it was maybe...the wrong lake.

Tommy waits for a reply, pulling on his earlobes harder. Hyperventilation is making his chest heave like a fireplace bellow.

The young boy's face contorts as tears escape down his cheeks.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

I-I'm so sorry...I didn't mean to...

a fast HEARTBEAT is heard in his ears as memories flash in his head.

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MEMORY IMAGES (TOMMY POV): SCENES OF PERSONAL DISTRESS FLASH IN SUCCESSION.

- An old lady with half-moon glasses hands handing him a math test filled with drawings instead of answers, she crosses her arms, looking past the point of annoyed.

- Peeking through a barely-opened door, a twenty-something woman is seen crying on a bed, a happy mother's day card is torn in half on the floor.

- Middle-aged man yells at Tommy, a large hand gripping his arm pointing to permanent marker scribbles on the wall behind him.

- The same man drags Tommy through a forest, a blindfold seen in his free hand.

Tommy weeps, wiping away tears with his fists. He leans back against the wall, and slides to the floor, wrapping his arms around his knees.

7 EXT. DENSE FOREST - MIDNIGHT

Spying a large rock he walked past an hour earlier, Mike rips the bag off of his back, throwing it to the ground forcefully.

He kicks a pile of sticks and rocks before winding his arm back, about to launch the radio into the lake.

Mike looks up at the radio in his hand, gripping it tightly in his hand.

Lowering his arm in defeat, he runs a hand down his face and releases an exacerbated sigh.

Turning the radio back on, Mike presses the talk button, speaking softly this time.

MIKE

Tommy, you there?

There is no response.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Bud...it's okay. Everyone makes mistakes, we're both just super tired.

A minute passes without an answer.

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MIKE (CONT'D)

You there, bud? Look, I've already backtracked. It's no big deal, seriously.

Looking around, Mike climbs to his feet and swings his bag over his shoulder.

Brushing the forest floor from his pants, he walks in the direction opposite to his previous one.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Okay Bud, how about we keep on truckin'. Over.

The boy's voice appears over the radio finally, still faint.

TOMMY

You're not mad at me?

MIKE

(shakes his head)

Not at all, you've done a great job so far. More than what I could probably do in this situation. So Tommy, where we heading?

TOMMY

(more confident)

Thanks Mike...I'm sorry again. You need to go around the other lake that's further down to your left. Over.

MIKE

Roger that!

Mike continues moving forward with large and determined strides.

MIKE (CONT'D)

So Tommy, I can't believe I haven't asked this yet, but what the heck are you doing out here all alone?

TOMMY

(Over Radio)

We were all going to the woods for the day, for a picnic.

Mike raises an eyebrow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIKE

What was that, bud? Over.

TOMMY

How I got lost in these woods. My mom and dad drove us. It's been a while since I could be with my mom and my dad at the same time. My dad works at night and my mom works in the day.

Beat.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

It was a long drive, I slept the whole time. When we got there, dad told me I had to put a blindfold on and we'll play hide and seek. Mom gave me a super tight hug, but she didn't come with us into the woods.

Mike's eyebrows crease and he narrows his eyes, his smile turning into a slight frown.

We walked for a long time and dad told me "Stay right there and count to 60". When I took off the blindfold, dad was gone. I think he might have got lost too. I sure hope not. Over.

Mike stops walking, eyes switching from narrowed to wide. He runs a hand through his dirty blond hair, grimacing as tears clouded his vision.

Clearing his throat, he starts walking again and swallows hard.

MIKE

I'm...I'm sure he's fine. I bet he's worried sick about you. Your mom too. I'd do anything to find my little bro if he got lost. Once I get to the tower, I'll make sure you get back safe and sound, okay? Over.

TOMMY

Roger that, Mike! Over-

MIKE

And out.

8 EXT. FOREST CLEARING - SUNRISE

Stepping into the small forest clearing, Mike squints at the sunlight. He holds a hand to his forehead like a visor.

The tower stretches into the sky, taller than any tree surrounding it.

The rising sun is positioned right behind the structure, framing it with a mural of oranges and reds and pinks.

From a large window at the top of the tower, Mike could make out a silhouette of a small figure waving its arms wildly down at him.

He smiles wide, a few small tears of exhaustion and relief trailing down his cheeks.

Mike holds the radio to his red and chapped lips, pressing the button to talk,

MIKE

I see you, bud. Let's go home. Over
and out.

He walks slowly towards the tower and begins to ascend the 6 flights of stairs.

FADE OUT: