

ON THE BEACH (1959) BEATSHEET 09.11.09

beated by Erik LeDrew

1. Towers (Gregory Towers) tells his submarine crew to surface. The crew makes preparations to surface.
2. OVER CREDITS: Submarine -- the "USS Sawfish" -- surfaces. Towers scans the horizon, the sky: nothing.
3. Lighthouse sees submarine coming in to port. Radio reports: "...no proof of survival anywhere but here..."
4. Holmes (Anthony Perkins) caring for newborn baby O.S. Brings bottle to baby, tea to his sleeping wife, Mary (Donna Anderson). Holmes is in the Australian Navy, getting ready to leave his wife and newborn. We find out it is 1964 (near-future at time of film's making).
5. Holmes arrives at the admiralty's office, they've "got an assignment" for him: he is to be liaison officer aboard the Sawfish. Holmes wants to be back with his wife before the fallout reaches Australia's shores. Admiral isn't sure when that'll be.
6. Towers watches as torpedoes are loaded into the Sawfish. Holmes arrives, he'll be bunked with science officer. Towers invites Holmes to a drink.
7. They walk on flight deck of aircraft carrier. Holmes wants to know what their mission is, Towers doesn't know beyond "going North to do reconnaissance". Towers wants to get shore food, scotch -- Holmes will take him ashore.
8. Holmes and his family at the beach. We find out that Towers lost his family in the nuclear exchange, America "is gone". They argue over hosting Towers for two days at their house, and Holmes wants to throw a party. Mary makes him promise that the partygoers won't talk "about anything morbid".
9. Towers arrives at train station in civilian clothes. Moira (Ava Gardner) meets him, says Holmes sent her to pick him up.
10. Towers wants to know if there's anywhere he can get some breakfast. They get into a horse-drawn carriage. We hear Towers' name for the first time.

11. Towers listens to an old woman telling a story of traveling with her husband: they used to travel the world telling everyone they were American, until “someone finally shot him in one of those eastern countries”.
12. Inside at party, men talk about the war: was it a mistake or was it planned? Whose fault was the war? Julian (Fred Astaire) and another nuclear scientists argue over whose fault it is -- the man who designed the bomb or the one who built it? Continued critique of Cold War-era policies. We find Holmes’ wife is listening to the doom-saying, charges into the room saying there “has to be hope, there’s always hope”. She breaks down.
13. Holmes goes to comfort his wife.
14. Towers sits on the stoop drinking milk. Moira, drunk, joins him. Moira is “the town drunk”, Towers asks what she’s “trying to forget”. He “has” a wife and two kids -- Moira asks why it’s taking him so long to admit that they’re dead. Moira waxes her fate is “unfair” because neither she nor anyone she knew did anything to provoke the war. She talks about having wanted to go to Paris -- implying that it’s destroyed. Moira says that everyone was afraid Towers would be the one crying at the party, instead she cries and he comforts her.
15. Towers puts passed-out Moira in bed, gathers his things and leaves.
16. Naval and science bigwigs discuss how far north Towers’ submarine can travel to search for survivors.
17. Moira comes to the docks looking for Towers, the sailors ogle her.
18. XO tells Towers that Moira waits in his stateroom.
19. Moira looks at a photograph of Towers’ kids. Towers looks at the photo of his dead kids, talks about getting “them a boat of their own one of these days”. Moira and Towers flirt.
20. Moira doesn’t like Julian, warns Towers against bringing him with. Moira wants to go with the sub but doesn’t know what she’d do.
21. The Admiral’s crew detects a scattershot Morse code signal originating from San Diego. Towers and the Admiral agree that it’s worth the Sawfish going to investigate.
22. Towers and Moira have fun racing a small sailboat in the Melbourne harbor, Holmes, et al, look on from the beach. Moira intentionally swamps

- the boat. The beach crew spy Towers feeling Moira up as he helps her back into the boat.
23. Holmes asks a scientist at the beach with them what the effects of radiation poisoning are. Then he asks the scientist for some pills to give his wife and kid. The scientist refuses, "not until the time comes".
 24. Towers and Moira wrestle on the beach, Mary plays jealous that Holmes never wrestles with her anymore. Towers accidentally says something that kills the mood.
 25. Rich old men shoot pool, drink port. An old chap wines about there being more than 400 bottles in the cellar and "only five months to go" until the radiation kills them. Asks for a second bottle. Holmes arrives.
 26. Holmes talks with one of the old men, asking for something for his wife and kid since he might not be in Melbourne when "it" happens. The implication is euthanasia.
 27. The rich old men still moan that they have 400 bottles of port to go through.
 28. Holmes arrives home. Mary makes small talk, while he tries to hide something. She finally notices. He tries to talk to her about what he has, how dangerous his mission is, but she doesn't want to hear it. He tells her how sick radiation makes you, he tells her that his "sleeping pills" will end it. His wife refuses, is in denial.
 29. Towers and Moira dance at a packed dance hall.
 30. Towers and Moira walk. Moira likes that he takes her for granted "like an American wife." She tries to seduce him using end-of-the-world logic. T: "No." She runs off to the train, shot down.
 31. Towers catches her at the train station. He tries to explain his war experiences, how they've shaped him: he's used to the idea that he might not make it back home, but that his family would always be safe. Moira understands, but leaves anyways.
 32. Moira shows up drunk at Julian's. They have history. She sees he is working on a Ferrari Gran Prix. She wants to know if he is still in love with her. He thinks he would be "in a normal world". She has a breakdown, he offers to take her home.
 33. Arctic-like ice floes cover the ocean surface.

34. Towers and Holmes are on the bridge of the Sawfish. They are 5 miles from Point Barrow at periscope depth. They take a radiation measurement: "It is hot." Towers orders to dive.
35. Holmes finds Julian in the galley. Julian asks if he's ever been to San Francisco. Holmes cries to Julian that he doesn't know how to get his wife Mary to acknowledge the end may be coming for them all. Julian envies him: "You have someone to worry about." Julian tells him to quit blubbering and be grateful he has someone. Holmes thanks him.
36. The Sawfish sails under the golden gate bridge. The bridge is empty, devoid of cars.
37. Towers orders full-stop, up-periscope. He looks on San Francisco: the city is intact and unmolested; a closer look reveals there is no sign of life or movement anywhere. Series of reactions of the rest of the crew looking through the periscope: shock, sadness, anger, etc. Towers is told one of the sailors' hometown's is SF.
38. Towers wants to know where the signal is coming from
39. The sailor whose home is SF looks out, seems fine and exits. While the crew wonders where all the people are, Towers is told the sailor from SF has opened the escape hatch. He finds him in the periscope, tells him not to be a fool. Sailor refuses, says he's "going home". Towers asks how long he'll last. "A few days." Towers says they'll be under way that night.
40. Sailor fishes on the docks. The periscope and loudspeaker surfaces. Towers and the sailor have a convo on what its like in the city, how he's feeling, etc. The sailor says everyone's dead, explains he'd rather die at home than in Australia. Towers understands, tells him they won't be coming back. The sailor watches the conning tower recede into the distance.
41. Radio operator still listens to the intermittent morse code. Shift change: "Nothing new, can't tell what they're saying."
42. Officers at dinner in galley, trying to make sense of the war, how it started. Julian says there is no simple answer: blames it on the principle of nuclear deterrent. "Somewhere, some poor bloke probably looked at a radar screen and thought he saw something. He was afraid his country would be wiped off the map, so he pushed a button..." Towers tells one of the officers to get Julian a drink.
43. The Sawfish surfaces in San Diego.

44. One of the officers gets a radiation suit on. Towers tells him the sub will blare its horn four times, but he better be headed back by the third.
45. The officer partially floods the airlock before exposing it to the outside.
46. Towers watches through the periscope as he paddles toward land.
47. The officer reaches land. Sees a still-illuminated sign, but no people. Montage of him walking through various deserted places.
48. The Sawfish blares its first horn.
49. The officer walks through a deserted but still running power plant.
50. He sees power lines, decides to follow them.
51. The Sawfish blares its second horn.
52. The scientist enters a deserted radio control room. We hear the random Morse code bursts O.S. He finds the source of the Morse code: "window shade tugging on a coke bottle." The scientist removes the bottle, transmits his findings to the Sawfish.
53. Towers receives the transmission, laughs.
54. The Sawfish blares its third horn.
55. The scientist shuts down the power plant.
56. The sign he saw earlier turns off.
57. Idyllic field with horses in Australia. Moira talking with an old dude about how worried she is about Towers. Old dude: "Why don't you tell him?" Towers stands in B.G., Moira runs to him and they kiss and embrace. He wants to know if her invitation is still open, she says it is.
58. Holmes's wife Mary looking forlorn. Holmes arrives home and they embrace. Holmes says he'll never leave her again.
59. Julian flies up a country road in his Ferrari, arrives at Moira's. He gives a copy of his report to Towers. Julian asks if they're coming to his race on Saturday when Towers gets a phone call, exits. Moira asks Julian why he's being so reckless.
60. Australian Admiralty tells Towers he's now in charge of all US Navy assets, is to be promoted from Commander to Admiral if he wishes. Towers thanks him.

61. Julian races. He peels out, gets back on the track. He is hauling ass, passing cars. Towers and Moira watch. M: "He should be more careful, it's not that important." T: "It is to him." Various cars crash or spin out. Julian spins out, makes it back on the track. We find Holmes and his wife watching as well. More cars crashing and burning. Julian wins the race -- he's happy. Towers asks Moira to go fishing in the mountains with him for a few days. She knows a quiet spot.
62. The spot is hardly quiet -- singing drunks, fishing couples, playing kids, etc. Towers and Moira stands in the stream fishing. He slips and falls into the water, everyone laughs but he doesn't look thrilled.
63. Towers and Moira relocate to a hotel during a storm that night. They try to have a quiet moment over champagne while the drunks sing the same song they were singing at the stream. The window beside them flies open and they struggle to get it closed. Towers and Moira are soaked. The song changes to a more tender note and Towers and Moira embrace and kiss passionately.
64. Towers crosses the deck of the aircraft carrier. Towers is told one of his sailors is "in a bad way."
65. The sailor is bedridden. He says he's alright, but must've "had a few too many beers the other night." Towers tells him he'll be okay, but when he turns away his look says he thinks otherwise.
66. The doctor tells Towers that Ackerman has all the symptoms of radiation poisoning. T: "This thing is coming sooner than we thought." The doctor concludes this isn't a freak case -- he himself has been getting irritable, which is "one of the first symptoms."
67. A crowd gathers in a town square. A band plays and a preacher prays over the bowed crowd. There is a banner that reads "There is still time...brother".
68. A hospital hands out the same "sleeping pills" Holmes tried to give his wife earlier. A long line of people, old and young, wait to get theirs. Towers watches from his cab as it drives by.
69. Towers gathers his crew on the deck of the Sawfish, tells them they have permission to stay in Australia if they like. The XO tells him the crew's already voted -- they want to go home.
70. Towers and Julian discuss the rising radiation levels. Julian tells him Holmes' wife is experiencing irrational thoughts. Julian asks what he wants to do about Moira. Towers bids so long to Julian.

71. The Admiral pours himself two drinks. He calls for his secretary, who looks ill. He asks her to share a drink with him. She accepts and the admiral flatters her.
72. Mary sits in bed eyes open but unresponsive. The baby cries O.S. Holmes doesn't know what to do about her. Moira tries to see after the baby. The phone rings, Moira answers. Towers is calling about something urgent. Moira leaves immediately.
73. The pool hall is empty of everyone but the butler. He shoots a ball just as the power goes out.
74. The preacher at the crowd gathering stands silent, looking exhausted.
75. Moira races along a beach-side road in her car.
76. Julian pats his car down, seals the garage off, and fires it up. He smiles as the room fills with exhaust.
77. Moira runs toward Towers on the dock. He is leaving, going back to the States. They kiss goodbye.
78. Holmes puts down an empty teacup. He gets in bed next to his wife, who aimlessly brushes her hair. He tells her he loves her. They talk about the first time they met: "It was on the beach." They have a long conversation about the past and the future their daughter will never have.
79. The Sawfish sails out of port. Towers stands at the conning tower, while Moira watches it leave in the distance. They share a look across the bay. Then the Sawfish submerges.
80. A montage of desolate, trash-strewn streets ends on the now-empty square where earlier the crowd had gathered. The final image is of the banner that reads, "There is still time...brother."