

= Time Enough at Last =

" Time Enough at Last " is episode 8 of the American television anthology series The Twilight Zone . The episode was adapted from a short story written by Lynn Venable (pen name of Marilyn Venable) . The short story appeared in the January 1953 edition of the science fiction magazine If : Worlds of Science Fiction about seven years before the television episode first aired . " Time Enough at Last " became one of the most famous episodes of the original Twilight Zone and has been frequently parodied since . It is " the story of a man who seeks salvation in the rubble of a ruined world " and tells of Henry Bemis / ?bi?m?s / , played by Burgess Meredith , who loves books , yet is surrounded by those who would prevent him from reading them . The episode follows Bemis through the post apocalyptic world , touching on such social issues as anti @-@ intellectualism , the dangers of reliance upon technology , and the difference between aloneness (solitude) and loneliness .

= = Opening narration = =

= = Plot summary = =

Henpecked , far sighted bank teller and avid bookworm Henry Bemis (Meredith) works at his window in a bank , while reading David Copperfield , which causes him to shortchange an annoyed customer . Bemis 's angry boss (Taylor) , and later his nagging wife (deWit) , both complain to him that he wastes far too much time reading " doggerel " . As a cruel joke , his wife asks him to read poetry from one of his books to her ; he eagerly obliges , only to find that she has inked over the text on every page , obscuring the words . Seconds later , she destroys the book by ripping the pages from it much to Henry 's dismay .

The next day , as usual , Henry takes his lunch break in the bank 's vault , where his reading will not be disturbed . Moments after he sees a newspaper headline , which reads " H @-@ Bomb Capable of Total Destruction " , an enormous explosion outside the bank violently shakes the vault , knocking Bemis unconscious . After regaining consciousness and recovering the thick glasses required for him to see , Bemis emerges from the vault to find the bank demolished and everyone in it dead . Leaving the bank , he sees that the entire city has been destroyed , and realizes that a nuclear war has devastated the Earth , but that his being in the vault has saved him .

Finding himself totally alone in a shattered world with food to last him a lifetime but no one to share it with , Bemis succumbs to despair . As he prepares to commit suicide using a revolver he has found , Bemis sees the ruins of the public library in the distance . Investigating , he finds that the books are still intact and readable ; all the books he could ever hope for are his for the reading , and (as he gazes upon a huge fallen face of a clock) learns that he has all the time in the world to read them without interruption .

His despair gone , Bemis contentedly sorts the books he looks forward to reading for years to come . Just as he bends down to pick up the first book , he stumbles , and his glasses fall off and shatter . In shock , he picks up the broken remains of the glasses he is virtually blind without , and says , " That 's not fair . That 's not fair at all . There was time now . There was ? was all the time I needed ? ! It 's not fair ! It 's not fair ! " and bursts into tears , surrounded by books he now can never read .

= = Closing narration = =

= = Production = =

" Time Enough at Last " was one of the first episodes written for The Twilight Zone . It introduced Burgess Meredith to the series ; he went on to star in three more episodes , being introduced as " no stranger to The Twilight Zone " in promotional spots for season two 's " The Obsolete Man " . He

also narrated for the 1983 film *Twilight Zone : The Movie* , which made reference to " Time Enough at Last " during its opening sequence , with the characters discussing the episode in detail .

Footage of the exterior steps of the library was filmed several months after production had been completed . These steps can also be seen on the exterior of an Eloi public building in MGM 's 1960 version of *The Time Machine* . John Brahm was nominated for a Directors Guild award for his work on the episode . The book that Bemis was reading in the vault and that flips open when the bomb explodes is *A History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* by Washington Irving .

= = Themes = =

Although the overriding message may seem to be " careful what you wish for " , there are other themes throughout the episode as well . Paramount among these is the question of solitude versus loneliness , as embodied by Bemis ' moment of near @-@ suicide . Additionally , the portrayal of societal attitudes towards books speaks to the contemporary decline of traditional literature and how , given enough time , reading may become a relic of the past . At the same time , the ending " punishes Bemis for his antisocial behavior , and his greatest desire is thwarted . "

Rod Serling 's concluding statement in the episode - that Bemis has become " just a fragment of what man has deeded to himself " - alludes to Robert Burns ' Scots language poem " To a Mouse " (1785 , for which John Steinbeck 's book , *Of Mice and Men* (1938) , was also named) . The poem concludes : " The best @-@ laid schemes o ' mice an men / Gang aft agley " (translation : " Often go awry ") .

Although " Time Enough at Last " implies that nuclear warfare has destroyed humanity , film critic Andrew Sarris notes that the episode 's necessarily unrealistic format may have been what allowed its production to commence :

In the era of the Internet and eBooks , the irony depicted in " Time Enough at Last " has an information age counterpart , according to Weston Ochse of *Storytellers Unplugged* . As Ochse points out , when Bemis becomes the last person on Earth , he finally has time to read , with all his books at his fingertips and the only impediment is technology when his medium for accessing them ? his glasses ? breaks . In a hypothetical world where all books are published electronically , Ochse observes , readers would be " only a lightning strike , a faulty switch , a sleepy workman or a natural disaster away from becoming Henry Bemis at the end of the world " ? that is , a power outage has the potential to give them time to read , yet like Bemis , they too would lose their medium for accessing their books ? namely the computer . This analogy has been taken further by those who suggest that today 's technology @-@ dependent world , where books have become passé (cf . Bradbury 's " The Pedestrian ") , could render an outage both a liberator and an executioner : As the gateway to both work and entertainment (be it a computer , video games or television) , removing electricity from the equation presents Henry Bemis ' heaven but modern society 's hell .

= = = Similar episodes = = =

The *Twilight Zone* often explored similar themes throughout its run . " Time Enough at Last " has strong thematic ties to a number of other episodes in the series , starting with that of isolation , first explored in the series pilot , " Where Is Everybody ? " . It is also a prominent theme in the previous episode " The Lonely " . Additionally , in a plot very similar to that of " Time " , " The Mind and the Matter " tells of a man who uses his mind to erase humanity , only to find that existence without other people is unbearable . The notion of being an outsider , lost in a sea of conformity , was one of the most common themes of the series .

Other thematic elements in this episode can be found throughout the series , as well . " The Obsolete Man " takes the episode 's literary subtext ? the notion that reading may eventually be considered " obsolete " ? to an extreme : The state has declared books obsolete and a librarian (also played by Meredith) finds himself on trial for his own obsolescence . This notion , akin to Ray Bradbury 's short story " The Pedestrian " (1951) , is also alluded to in the episode " Number 12 Looks Just Like You " , in which a perfect and equal world contradictorily considers works like those

of Shakespeare " smut " .

= = Impact = =

= = = Critical and fan favorite = = =

" Time Enough at Last " was a ratings success in its initial airing and " became an instant classic " . It " remains one of the best @-@ remembered and best @-@ loved episodes of The Twilight Zone " according to Marc Zicree , author of The Twilight Zone Companion . When a poll asked readers of Twilight Zone Magazine which episode of the series they remembered the most , " Time Enough at Last " was the most frequent response , with " To Serve Man " coming in a distant second . In TV Land 's presentation of TV Guide 's " 100 Most Memorable Moments in Television " , " Time Enough at Last " was ranked at # 25 .

In an interview years after this episode aired , Serling cited " Time Enough at Last " as one of his two favorites from the entire series . (The other episode was " The Invaders " , with Agnes Moorehead .)

= = = In popular culture = = =

Many elements of American popular culture frequently pay homage to " Time Enough at Last " .

= = = = Amusement park attractions = = = =

The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror , a theme park ride at Disney 's Hollywood Studios and Disney California Adventure Park , displays a replica of Henry Bemis ' broken glasses in the lobby . It is noted that , while they are indeed reading glasses , Burgess Meredith wears them the entire episode to make Bemis look more bookish .

= = = Comics = = =

The comic book version of The Simpsons , Simpsons Comics , published a story called " The Last Fat Man " , based partially on " Time Enough at Last " , and includes a short scene where Homer Simpson shoos a bespectacled man who is reading a book out of a nuclear bunker so he can eat in it , unintentionally taking shelter in it .

= = = Film = = =

In Twilight Zone : The Movie (1983) , Albert Brooks recounts the episode to Dan Aykroyd as they drive along an empty stretch of highway . " This thing freaked me out when I was 7 years old , " says Brooks ' character , adding : " I bought another pair of glasses just in case that would happen . "

The episode 's title was borrowed by a 2004 independent film about a man who tries to escape an office building . The film 's official website listed the webmaster 's e @-@ mail alias as " rodserling " .

The Pixar movie WALL @-@ E (2008) , which takes place in a desolate future , also contains a scene in which a pair of broken glasses can be seen in the foreground .

= = = Games = = =

The PC game Fallout Tactics (2001) includes a librarian in a desolate world who wants the player to find his missing glasses so he can read his books .

= = = Music = = =

The episode 's title was borrowed by a song on The Fall 's 1992 album Code : Selfish (1992)

= = = Television = = =

There are numerous , notable television spoofs of the episode . Examples include :

Stephen Colbert 's A Colbert Christmas : The Greatest Gift of All ! (in the DVD 's second alternative ending)

Family Guy (at the end of the season 2 episode " Wasted Talent ")

Futurama (during an episode of " The Scary Door " [a Twilight Zone @-@ style TV show that airs in the year 3000] on " A Head in the Polls ")

SpongeBob SquarePants

The Adventures of Jimmy Neutron : Boy Genius (" Return of the Nanobots ")

The Drew Carey Show (" Y2K You 're OK ")

Episodes of other television shows that refer to " Time Enough at Last " include :

The Modern Family episode " Airport 2010 " references " Time " when the screen on Jay 's electronic reader gets broken . Jay pours the broken glass to the floor while saying " Not fair . It 's not fair " .

Episode 12 of Revolution , titled " Ghosts " , has Jim Hudson 's character who goes by the name of Henry Bemis . Henry (Jim) has become the town librarian , until Miles convinces him to help the rebels and go back to his real name .

The line , " Seconds , minutes , hours , they crawl by on hands and knees " was referenced to in The Powerpuff Girls Season 2 episode , " Speed Demon " , where the villain , HIM , torments the Powerpuff Girls before revealing that they have unknowingly arrived 50 years into the future , landing in a Townsville that HIM now controls .

" The H?mega Man " segment of The Simpsons episode " Treehouse of Horror VIII " features Homer , who accidentally survives by hiding in a nuclear bunker and comes out to discover that he is apparently the last person alive .

In the season 14 episode of The Simpsons , " Strong Arms of the Ma , " a postman is accidentally trapped under a car in front of the Simpson house . He intends to read The Twilight Zone Magazine but discovers that his glasses were broken in the accident and says , " That 's not fair ! " , while the Twilight Zone main @-@ theme music is heard in the background .

The sitcom Two and a Half Men made references to it when the character Alan has a nervous breakdown in a bookstore .

This episode was mentioned in the CBS drama series , Under the Dome 's third season .

= = Adaptations = =

" Time Enough at Last " has been released in numerous formats over the years .

In 1988 it was available on VHS as part of a Twilight Zone collector 's edition .

Two releases were made in 1998 and 1999 , as part of a more widely available two @-@ episodes @-@ per @-@ tape release scheme .

Although similar individual multi @-@ episode DVDs were released , it is now exclusively available as part of The Twilight Zone ? The Definitive Edition , the first volume of which was released December 24 , 2004 . Included is an audio @-@ only interview with Burgess Meredith as well as the clip of The Drew Carey Show 's parody of the episode .

The story which inspired it has been released in eBook and MP3 form , capitalizing on the success of the episode .

In 2003 , the Falcon Picture Group produced a series of radio dramas based on the series ? stating , " In the 1950s many radio series were turned into television series ? so why not the reverse ? " ? which were broadcast on about 200 stations through the USA ; " Time " was included in volume six .

In 2005 , " Time " became one of the first Twilight Zone episodes offered for download via Google

Video and later on sites such as Amazon.com.