REQUIEM

by Martin Lancaster HARRY (V.O.)

My name is Harry Grantham and, one way or another, I've been close to death my whole life.

FADE IN ON:

A COFFIN...

Lowered slowly into a grave. Camera pulls back to-

EXT. GRAVEYARD- DAY

A cold winters day. Snow falls lightly on a small circle of mourners who stand around the grave.

HARRY (V.O.)

Albert Lackey... fifty-two years old... died of cancer.

One of the mourners, a middle-aged woman burst into tears. She covers her face with a handkerchief. An elderly man places a comforting hand on her shoulder.

HARRY (V.O.)

Nobody ever talks ill of the dead but this guy was a jerk. He beat his wife, gambled his savings, drank and smoked himself to an early grave.

The graveyard is overlooked by a large Victorian building-a funeral home.

In a window on the third floor stands a man. This is HARRY.

HARRY (V.O.)

For as long as I can remember, it's been my job to make these people presentable.

INT. FUNERAL HOME, BEDROOM - SAME

The room is decorated in a traditional style, a four-poster bed, polished oak furniture.

HARRY (V.O.)

Bringing the dead back to life, that's what my mother called it.

Harry steps away from the window. He wears an old-fashioned woolen suit and black leather gloves. We don't yet see his face.

He walks to a full length mirror and carefully adjusts his tie.

HARRY (V.O.)

Somebody once asked me if I believed in ghosts... I still don't know the answer... even now.

Harry tilts the mirror revealing his face for the first time. His skin is ghostly white, lacking pigment. His eyes are pink. He's albino.

He removes his hat and runs a gloved hand through his thinning, bleach-white hair.

DOCTOR (V.O.)

(gently)

Do you believe in ghosts, Harry?

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD- DAY

Rolling fields covered in blankets of deep white snow.

A battered old car winds its way along the otherwise deserted country lane.

INT. CAR- DRIVING

Loud rock music plays.

Driving the car is MARCUS, early 30s. He has long brown hair and a few days beard on his chin. He swigs from a hip flask.

He drives fast, recklessly considering the conditions. Occasionally he glances at a photo hooked under the sun visor.

He stares wistfully at the picture, takes another swig from his flask.

Suddenly, he's broken from his trance by a BLARING HORN.

EXT. ROAD- SAME

A large truck approaches from the other direction.

The old car swerves to avoid it, sliding out of control on the ice.

The car SLAMS through a fence, careers down an embankment and CRASHES through the ice of a frozen lake.

INT. CAR- UNDERWATER

The car fills with icy water as it sinks slowly to the bottom of the lake.

Marcus exhales his last breath.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET- DAY

Harry walks briskly along the street. Footsteps crunching through the deepening snow. He's dressed for cold weather, wrapped in a scarf and a long overcoat.

He approaches the old Victorian building, fumbles in the pocket for his keys.

The sign above the door reads:

'Grantham and Sons - Funeral Home'

Harry enters.

INT. FUNERAL HOME, HALLWAY

Harry wipes his feet on the doormat, kicking the snow off his heavy boots.

A PHONE RINGS

Harry quickly removes his coat, walks down the hall and answers it.

HARRY

Grantham and sons (removing his hat)

Yes?

(his face drops)

I... I understand. Yes, of course.

Thank you, officer.

Harry ends the call.

He removes his scarf and looks at himself in the mirror. His face a mixture of shock and sadness.

DOCTOR (V.O.)

Do you believe in ghosts, Harry?

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYGROUND- DAY-FLASHBACK

A YOUNG HARRY (8) sits alone on a merry-go-round, rotating slowly. He wears a melancholy expression.

His milky white skin sets him apart from the other children who play happily in the sand and on the swings.

A group of boys stand next to the slide, pointing at Harry and sharing a joke. One of them begins to sing, and the others soon join in the chorus.

CHILDREN

(singing in unison)
Casper the friendly ghost, the
friendly ghost, the friendly ghost...

Harry closes his eyes as the world spins violently around him, the sound of singing and vicious laughter echoes around his head as we-

CUT TO:

INT. FUNERAL HOME- LIVING ROOM- PRESENT DAY

Harry sits in an armchair, sipping a cup of tea.

An expensive china tea set is laid out on the polished mahogany table.

An ELDERLY WOMAN sits in a rocking chair, seemingly asleep. She holds a framed photograph close to her chest.

The doorbell RINGS.

The old woman doesn't stir.

Harry puts down his tea and leaves the room.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME, FRONT DOOR- DAY

A stocky middle-aged POLICEMAN stands at the doorway, holding a clipboard.

An ambulance is parked on the driveway.

Harry answers the door.

POLICEMAN

(friendly)

Hello Harry.

Harry nods a greeting.

POLICEMAN

Your mother not home?

HARRY

She's sleeping.

POLICEMAN

I see...

Harry takes the clipboard from his hands, removes a pen from the policeman's shirt pocket and signs.

POLICEMAN

You're sure you're okay with this, Harry?

HARRY

We'll be fine. Thank you.

CUT TO:

INT. MORTUARY- DAY

White walls, tiled floors and polished steel. Surgically clean. An audible hum from the freezer.

Cold strip-lighting illuminates Marcus' body, lying on a stainless steel table, partially covered by a plastic sheet, only the head and chest visible.

Harry stands by a large sink, scrubbing his hands thoroughly. He wears a white lab coat.

He dries off his hands and takes a fresh pair of surgical gloves from a dispenser.

He walks slowly to the body on the table, stares into the lifeless eyes.

HARRY

All these years, Marcus. You finally decided to come back.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD- DAY-FLASHBACK

Young Harry (8) runs through a corn field as fast as his legs will take him. He wears a school uniform, tears stream down his face.

Behind him, a group of four boys chase after him, led by a young Marcus (10).

They hurl rocks and shout insults as Harry runs with all the energy he can muster.

INT. MORTUARY- PRESENT DAY

The scene is at it was. Harry stands over Marcus' corpse.

HARRY

I never told them. I never told anyone it was you. For some reason I... I looked up to you.

Harry traces a finger along the dead man's face.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Look at you now. (smirks)

It's funny how things turn out.

Harry turns over his hand revealing a deep scar on his wrist. His hand begins to shake as we-

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD- DAY- FLASHBACK

A warm summers day. Harry's MOTHER walks through the cornfield. She wears a long flowery dress. She looks concerned.

MOTHER

Harry?

She approaches an aging wooden shed and pushes open the door.

INT. SHED- SAME

Young Harry, (10), sits in the corner of the shed on a bed of hay. His wrists are cut and a pool of blood has darkened the hay around him.

His mother SCREAMS.

INT, MORTUARY- PRESENT DAY

Marcus' face, lifeless, still. Eyes stare blankly upwards.

Harry takes a damp cloth and gently washes his cold, bloodless face.

HARRY

Nobody talks ill of the dead. Posthumous respect and all that. But what about the living? Who respects the living, Marcus?

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE- DAY- FLASHBACK

A middle-aged, bespectacled DOCTOR sits behind a large oak desk. He speaks slowly and softly.

DOCTOR

They call you names, don't they Harry?

Young Harry, (12) sits opposite, dressed in a school uniform. He nods slowly.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

What do they call you?

YOUNG HARRY

Ghost...

The room falls silent for a moment.

DOCTOR

Do you believe in ghosts, Harry?

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYING FIELD- DAY-FLASHBACK

A crowd of boys are gathered at the far end of the field.

Moving closer, we see they are gathered around a figure on the floor, Young Harry (12). He's curled up in the fetal position as two boys kick him repeatedly in the stomach and ribs.

The crowd jeers and cheers, joining together in a chant.

CHILDREN

Ghost boy! Ghost boy! Ghost boy!...

Young Marcus is among the crowd. He watches, saying nothing.

CUT TO:

INT. MORTUARY- PRESENT DAY

Harry stands over Marcus' corpse.

HARRY

It made you feel better, didn't
it? Made you feel normal...
accepted.

(leans in closer)

How do you think I felt, Marcus?

Harry starts sobbing. Tears fall on the dead man's face as we-

CUT TO:

INT. FUNERAL PARLOUR- DAY

Marcus' body is on display in an ornate coffin. A steady stream of mourners passes by.

Harry sits towards the back of the room. He turns over his hand and runs a finger along the scar on his wrist.

HARRY (V.O.)
I didn't hate you, Marcus. I couldn't hate you. Even though you made me hate myself.

EXT. GRAVEYARD- DAY

The snow has melted, replaced by a sharp frost.

Mourners are gathered around another grave. Among them is Harry and his mother who weeps quietly as a coffin is lowered into the ground.

A PRIEST delivers a final prayer.

PRIEST

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust ...

Harry cries too as the coffin comes to rest in the grave.

A framed photo sits next to a wreath of flowers beside the grave.

The photo shows two young boys with their mother. One is Marcus, the other, with unmistakably white skin, is Harry.

HARRY (V.O.)

I never said a word, Marcus. I didn't need to. Deep down she knew what you did. Of course, she won't talk about it now... Nobody ever talks ill of the dead.

A CHURCH BELL echoes across the graveyard as we--

FADE TO BLACK