

Humanity Speaks

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FADE IN:

EXT. BECKETT'S LANE - DUSK

A cat walks across a completely ordinary suburban street.

It passes a long row of paving stones in a conventional pattern.

Suddenly, it comes across a large set that don't fit with the arrangement. They look too new, too smooth, the design is a little bit off...

The cat looks around, taking this puzzling detail in.

However, before it can continue on its journey, an ominous RUMBLING sound begins to emanate from the ground.

The cat tries to run away, but it is frozen in place - it can only watch in fear.

The RUMBLING gets louder.

Suddenly the set of mysterious paving stones CRACK in two and part like the Red Sea, retreating into the rest of the ground.

A BALD MAN rises from the newly created hole.

He is unnaturally tall and thin with gray skin. He looks like a living skeleton and wears a crumpled suit.

As the Bald Man reaches ground level, the pavement stops rising and the noise ceases.

He puts his finger to his lips and makes a SHUSHING sound. He then points at the cat with his other hand and SNAPS his fingers.

The cat is now able to move again. It races off as quickly as it can.

INT. THE GRAHAM FAMILY HOME - LIVING ROOM - DUSK

A calendar hangs on the door. All the dates are crossed off except for OCTOBER 31.

In a modest and cosy living room, a grandmother and granddaughter sit opposite each other at an old-fashioned table. A pad of paper and a couple of pens lie between them at the centre.

GRANDMA GRAHAM (72) has hair which is dyed dark brown and wears clothes that are inappropriate for someone of her age.

ANNA (12) is currently dressed in a red wig, which fails to completely hide her blonde hair, and a blue dress. This trick-or-treat costume allows her to look like her favorite Disney Princess, Ariel.

Grandma Graham communicates in sign language, using it to tell Anna; "Be well-behaved, don't stay out too late, don't talk to strangers." However, Anna isn't listening.

As Grandma Graham finishes, Anna reaches over to the notepad and writes in it.

She finishes her message, tears it out of the pad and shows it to Grandma Graham. It reads; "Please don't treat me like I'm a weirdo."

She hands Grandma Graham the pad and her pen.

Grandma Graham composes another message in it, and presents it to Anna in the same way. She says, "You aren't."

Grandma Graham returns the pad and soon gets a response, "Then don't use sign language."

Anna continues writing, then gives her grandmother a final note; "And anyway, I know what you were saying. I hear it every year."

EXT. BECKETT'S LANE - NIGHT

Anna saunters down the road with a spring in her step and a basket full of sweets held in her hands.

As she proceeds, she sees a large, grey shape. She stops to look at it.

It's not a shape, but the Bald Man inside a giant sleeping bag that matches the colour of his skin. He now looks like he has been on the streets for decades rather than a couple of hours

An unread broadsheet newspaper and an empty bowl lie beside the sleeping bag, with a note on top of the bowl that says: PLEASE GIVE GENEROUSLY.

BALD MAN

Please show some compassion. For
the sake of humanity.

Anna puts down her basket, reaches into a pocket in her dress.

She eventually finds a quarter, which she throws into the bowl.

BALD MAN
Thank you very much.

The Bald Man climbs out of his bag again.

BALD MAN
Who are you?

Anna is visibly unnerved, but does her best to hide it.

She reaches into her pocket again, and takes out a movie-themed notepad.

BALD MAN
So, you are into "movies?". What is a movie?

Anna doesn't respond to this comment. She opens her notepad to the first page, which reads "My name is Anna", then shows it politely to the Bald Man.

BALD MAN
Anna. A lovely name for a lovely girl.

Anna flips to another page in her note pad. This one says, "I never talk to strangers."

She shoves it into the Bald Man's face.

BALD MAN
You have to speak. This is a matter of the utmost importance.

Anna reveals a third page, "I cannot speak to anyone."

BALD MAN
What a pity.

Anna turns and begins to walk back towards her house.

BALD MAN
You cannot go.

Suddenly, Anna freezes. She wants to move, but she isn't able to.

The Bald Man walks up to her.

BALD MAN
I did not want to do this, but you have left me no choice.

The Bald Man gestures downwards, and suddenly the ground beneath him and Anna begins QUAKING.

Anna stares, terrified, as the shaking continues, and the pavement that surrounds her and the Bald Man starts to crack with a horrible SPLINTERING sound.

The patch of pavement starts to descend like a lift, in a reversal of the process the Bald Man used to arrive.

It takes both him and Anna down into...

INT. A MYSTERIOUS COURTROOM - NIGHT

Whilst the courtroom itself looks like it has come out of a typical legal show, the characters who occupy it do not.

The jury is made up of a number of DEMONS. Some with tails, some with horns, all utterly grotesque.

The pavement stops descending, creating a mini platform. The Bald Man steps off it, and walks towards the jury box.

BALD MAN

My friends. We are gathered here
for the biggest trial ever seen.

The demons listen enthusiastically.

BALD MAN

We are going to be judging a
species that is responsible for
more damage than any other ever
created by "the man upstairs".

He looks at his audience and waits for a reaction.

BALD MAN

That species is the human race.

SOME TIME LATER

The Bald Man is nearing the end of a long speech.

BALD MAN

The human race is responsible for
destruction unparalleled by other
species anywhere else in any period
of time. For that reason, I believe
it must be destroyed.

He gestures towards Anna, whose fearful expression has not changed once throughout the Bald Man's diatribe.

BALD MAN

However, before we can find them guilty of endangering the planet, humankind must have someone to represent them. Therefore, we have given them a very unique representative. This girl.

With a SNAP of the Bald Man's fingers, she suddenly unfreezes, and is able to move again.

She tries to look for a way out, but cannot find one.

BALD MAN

Don't be shy, Anna. Come on up and defend your people.

Anna studies the jury, pure terror etched on her face.

She turns back to the Bald Man.

BALD MAN

This group of friendly beings is the jury. They will vote whether or not the human race can be allowed to survive another day.

Anna walks to the jury box, her fear of the monsters that inhabit it is tempered somewhat by her desire to defend the human race.

The Bald Man follows pessemistically.

Anna displays her notebook to creatures in the jury, and flips through the pages fairly quickly.

BALD MAN

Nice try. If you are not interested in taking part, we can save ourselves a trial and destroy humanity now.

Anna shakes her head angrily.

She takes a pen out of her pocket and scrawls "The human race is beautiful" on an empty page. She flashes her message to the jury and the Bald Man.

BALD MAN

Prove it.

Anna puts her notebook and pen away and looks around the godforsaken courtroom, searching for any evidence of goodness she can find.

She notices the sleeping bag and newspaper, lying on the paving stones completely undisturbed, and gets an idea.

She smiles to herself and goes back to the paving stones.

She picks up the newspaper and returns to the jury and the Bald Man, holding it wide open.

The Bald Man looks at it, unimpressed.

BALD MAN

Terrorism, tyranny, disease...We
are putting your kind on trial for
a reason, you know.

Anna frantically scans the newspaper, searching for a story that might prove her positive opinion of humanity correct.

Whenever she sees an article that looks good, she opens the paper wide and points to it, only to receive impassive and unconvinced looks from the jury.

BALD MAN

I do not think that you will find
anything there...

Anna seems to be on the verge of giving up.

The Bald Man notices this, and looks at her with a concerned expression on his face.

BALD MAN

Let us have a pause. Give the
defendant time to prove that there
is something good about the human
race.

Anna turns to the Bald Man. Tears form in her eyes, and she takes out the notebook and pen again.

She writes in the notebook, and reveals her message to the Bald Man.

It reads, "Why did you choose me?"

The Bald Man leans in close and whispers to Anna.

BALD MAN

When you donated money to me, you
showed that you were willing to
improve my existence. If you can
show me an example of the another
human doing that, your kind will be
safe.

Upon hearing these words, Anna's heart lightens.

She discards the notepad and returns to the newspaper, which she reads through with a renewed sense of purpose.

Finally, she comes across the perfect article. She opens the paper to reveal a film review, and presents it to the jury.

She uses her pen to circle comments such as: "FILM OF THE YEAR", "WONDERFUL", "BEAUTIFUL", "A TRUE ACHIEVEMENT".

For the first time, the menacing expressions on the faces of the demons begin to soften and they watch with interest.

BALD MAN (V.O)

What is a movie?

Feeling increasingly confident, Anna writes next to the review; "This is a movie. it represents our ability to create happiness."

She underlines the statement, her argument now complete, and the jury APPLAUDS.

Anna puts down the newspaper and glares triumphantly at the Bald Man.

A smile slowly forms across his face.

BALD MAN

All in favor of allowing the human race to survive, raise your hand.

All the demons in the jury, plus the Bald Man, raise their hands in approval.

BALD MAN

The jury has voted. As long as it continues creating happiness, humanity will be allowed to live on.

Anna beams joyfully. The Bald Man goes up to her and takes her hand. They walk up onto the paving stones.

BALD MAN

You must have a family up there. Come with me, I must return you to them.

The paving stones rise upwards, and Anna and the Bald Man leave the courtroom behind them.

EXT. BECKETT'S LANE - DAWN

The cracked paving stones open as they did at dusk. Anna and the Bald Man resurface.

Anna turns to the Bald Man. She gets her notepad out, scribbles a message claiming; "I must go now. my grandma is probably worried about me", and presents it to him.

The Bald Man smiles, accepting this statement. Anna starts on her journey home.

The Bald Man waves at Anna as she goes.

BALD MAN
Goodbye, Anna.

Anna notices this and waves back.

The Bald Man watches Anna until she has walked out of his sight.

The ground around him starts to CRACK - a less unpleasant sound than before, covering a smaller area.

The Bald Man descends back into his underworld, contented.

EXT. THE GRAHAM FAMILY HOME - DAWN

Anna arrives at her house, seeing her grandmother and the police on the lawn. They look worried.

Grandma Graham hands Anna a sheet of paper with the question "Where the hell were you?" written on it.

Anna scribbles a message in her notepad and shows it to Grandma Graham. It reads, "It's a long story."

FADE OUT