

SILENT NIGHTS

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FADE IN:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The Motel 6 room is dark, then... a bedside lamp clicks on. Cardboard boxes on the bed. More on a small table.

CLOSE UP on slender fingers opening a box. It contains eight clear glass Christmas ornaments, each with a small triangle of gold braid for hanging. One is plucked out, turned this way and that, examined. A soft voice, gentle...caring.

SAMUEL(O.S)

The children will love these.

EXT. MARKET - DAY

SUPER - DECEMBER 23 MIDWEST U.S.A

A small town marketplace. It's a cold day but the sky is clear for now. People and children stroll past the two rows of stalls which have food, vegetables and craft. In the middle of the rows is a large decorated Christmas tree.

SAMUEL(35)a tall, pleasant faced man, has a folding table set up at the very end of one row. The boxes of ornaments are neatly stacked with one open on display. A handwritten sign reads: '\$5 PER BOX - CASH ONLY'.

A woman RACHEL(30) stops to look. Her two boys, JACK(8) and BEN(5)lean towards the table. Samuel hands two of the baubles to them. The boys take them carefully.

SAMUEL

All handcrafted by myself. Go
on...press the button on the side.

Rachel seems unimpressed. But her sons gasp as the ornaments suddenly come to life. Tiny lights appear inside, shining on a mini snowy village.

QUICK FLASH - the motel room. A stunted bare Christmas tree in the corner lit up by harsh spotlights...

JACK

Oh, wow, that is so cool. Mom, can
we get some for our tree?

BEN

Oh, yes, Mom. Dad will love them.

RACHEL

Well, they are rather impressive.

Even as they watch, more sights are revealed - a tiny Santa in a sleigh pulled by reindeer swoops across the village.

QUICK FLASH - the hotel room. A crude drawing on a wall: a goat's head in a pentagram. The Sigil of Baphomet...

JACK

No way! How do you do that?

SAMUEL

Ah, family secret, I'm afraid. But I'm honored by your appreciation of our simple ornaments.

RACHEL

Simple? These are nothing short of amazing. And such high quality.

She opens her purse.

RACHEL

I'll take two boxes and...let's see...another five for my friends.

SAMUEL

Why, thank you, ma'am. Would you like them gift wrapped?

RACHEL

No, no, that's fine. I can't believe the price is so low.

She hands over the money. Samuel bows slightly before putting it in his pocket. He counts out seven boxes.

QUICK FLASH - the hotel room. Samuel's VOICE reads from an ancient book in a strange language, as the artistic fingers touch each bauble...

SAMUEL(O.S)

My craft is for the children. i would not want one to be denied because of a worry about money.

The boys are still excited. They take a box each, peeking in at the glass ornaments. Rachel takes the other five boxes.

RACHEL

Thank you again and merry Christmas. Come along, boys.

SAMUEL
Merry Christmas to you.

The family walks off. Other patrons notice the boxes and curiosity leads them over. Samuel smiles widely.

SAMUEL
A merry Christmas to you all.

Soon, there's quite a crowd at his table...

LATER

INT. FAMILY ROOM - HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Rachel and the boys are decorating their Christmas tree. The room is cosy and warm, wrapped gifts under the tree already.

It's already dark outside. The faint sound of a car door shutting. Then, the back door opening.

RACHEL
That sounds like your father.

The boys aren't listening - they are looking at the glass ornaments, holding them up to the light. Soon, DAVE(32) a great bear of a man enters. He rubs his hands together, kisses his wife. Appraises the tree.

DAVE
Boy, is it cold out there. Looking like it may snow. But, I gotta say, this tree is looking good.

JACK
Dad, we bought these awesome ornaments at the market.

Dave takes the offered bauble. Nods seriously.

DAVE
I'm guessing this little button does something?

BEN
Press it, Dad. It's super cool.

RACHEL
Why don't we hang them up first, turn the lights off, then switch them on? It will be more special.

DAVE

As usual, your mother's right.

Working as a team, they hang the baubles around the tree. Rachel turns off the light.

DAVE

Great! Now let's turn them on.

Again, the family goes to it, clicking the little button on each bauble. Nothing happens...none of them light up.

JACK

Mom, why aren't they working? Dad, they have Santa in them, and snow and...you had to see it.

Dave shoots his wife a look - 'you've been had'. She frowns. Ben bursts into tears. Jack comforts him.

RACHEL

No wonder they were only five dollars a box. But they worked fine at the market.

Dave slips an arm around her, ruffles Ben's hair.

DAVE

The tree is fine without them. Hey, I just remembered...I brought donuts home! We can have them for dessert, right boys?

Ben looks up, wiping his eyes, nods. Jack takes down an ornament, stares into it, clicking the button.

RACHEL

We'll take them back tomorrow and demand our money back.

DAVE

Good for you, honey.

RACHEL

I wonder if the other boxes I bought for some of the girls are working? Maybe we got a bad batch?

As if on cue, her phone RINGS. She checks it, answers.

RACHEL(ON PHONE)

Hi Lucy...I'm good, I was just about to...they don't? Mine

RACHEL(ON PHONE)
 neither. Looks like I picked a bad
 one...I'm sorry.

She listens for a moment. Eyes widen.

RACHEL(ON PHONE)
 They are? Well, I guess it's the
 principle that counts. I'll be
 there...bye.

DAVE
 What's up, honey?

RACHEL
 The girls are not happy. They are
 taking the ornaments back tomorrow
 and getting their money back.

DAVE
 Well, good for them. And you.

Ben has stopped crying and wanders off. Jack continues to
 push the button on each bauble in vain.

EXT. MARKET - MORNING

BEGIN MONTAGE:

- Rachel and her friends head past the stalls as a light
 snow falls. They come to the end of the row. It's empty...

- Rachel questions the vendor next door as other customers
 with the ornament boxes turn up. The vendor shrugs...

- the disgruntled customers trudge to a nearby dumpster and
 toss the boxes in angrily...

END MONTAGE

EXT. MARKET - NIGHT

Samuel approaches the dumpster. He retrieves the boxes one
 by one, carries them to the large Christmas tree.

He INTONES in a harsh tongue as he hangs the ornaments
 around the tree. Steps back to survey his handiwork. Nods.

SAMUEL
 Accept my humble offerings as ever
 at this time of year, my lord...the
 One Who Was Cast From Heaven...

EXT. TOWN - MORNING

Moving over the streets and houses as the snow falls.

RACHEL(O.S)

Dave? Have you seen the boys?

Moving faster...the sounds now of front doors opening, of voices calling names, as parents across town wonder...

RACHEL(ON PHONE)

Lucy? Are my boys at your house? I think they may be pranking us.

(beat)

I...no, the twins aren't here.

QUICK FLASH - Samuel in the motel room kneeling naked before the Sigil, arms raised in worship, chanting...

The snow falls heavier on the town, blanketing it.

RACHEL(ON PHONE)

I'll call you back, Lucy. Natalie's ringing me...hello Nat, have you__

(beat)

Mikey and Beth are missing?

The SOUND of the phone hitting the floor.

RACHEL(O.S)

(screaming)

Dave? Oh my god, what is happening?

EXT. MARKET - AFTERNOON

The stalls are empty. In the distance, the faint sounds of VOICES calling names echoes across the snowfall. Samuel appears, crosses to the tree. He peers at the baubles. Suddenly, they glow and fill with the stretched faces of...the missing young ones.

The features of Jack are visible in one as he screams, mouth writhing in anguish. He and Ben and a myriad of others look out from their glass prisons...

SAMUEL

Suffer the little children, indeed.

He smiles, walks off into the swirling mist, vanishes...

FADE OUT