

Door Buzzer

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

The house's high-definition doorbell camera captures an approaching child: WILMA CLOUD (8). She's dressed as a witch for Halloween. Her hat points to the dark sky.

The blue-tinted night footage registers the date and time: October 31, 11:15 p.m.

Wilma sidesteps timidly to the door and rings the bell. The camera picks up her plea for help.

WILMA

I can't find my mom!

Her frantic eyes dart in all directions. Her witch costume flutters in the breeze.

WILMA

I need help. She's gone.

After an agonizing wait, a voice blurts through the doorbell intercom. It's homeowner ALAN CLARK (40s).

ALAN (V.O.)

Can I help you?

WILMA

I can't find my...

ALAN (V.O.)

(interrupts)

Trick or treat is over. We're in bed, actually, because it's late.

WILMA

But I got lost. I can't find mama.

ALAN (V.O.)

Oh, crap.

Alan calls out to his wife, BECKY, and their conversation comes through loud and clear on the doorway intercom. Little Wilma shivers on the porch as the couple deliberates.

ALAN (V.O.)

(to Becky)

There's a lost kid on our porch.

BECKY (V.O.)

Seriously?

ALAN (V.O.)
Should we call someone?

BECKY (V.O.)
Totally. I'll reach out to the
police, and you go check on her.

ALAN (V.O.)
What kind of a parent loses a kid
on Halloween?

BECKY (V.O.)
Just get out there, Alan. Help her.

As Wilma hears this over the intercom, she starts to cry.

WILMA
I'm all alone.

BECKY (V.O.)
Someone's coming, sweetheart. Oh,
please don't worry.

Little Wilma continues to cry, but the sound gradually warps.

Intermixed with her sobs are the bleats of a goat: thick,
crude, straight out of a shit-covered barnyard.

Her moans are half girl, half goat, full abomination.

BECKY (V.O.)
Honey, are you okay? It'll be okay.

Becky calls the police. She taps her phone. The intercom
picks up these subtle sounds along with her voice.

One ring. Two. Three. Several more. No dispatcher picks up
the call. A recorded message from the police station blares:

RECORDED MESSAGE (V.O.)
This is the Mount Arlington Police
Department. All officers are
currently dead or dying. Please do
not leave a message.

The line goes dead.

Pure shock. A moment drags by.

BECKY (V.O.)
What the hell?

The doorbell camera glitches. Static. Wavy lines.

When the picture clears, Alan stands on the porch, with his disheveled hair, stripped pajama bottoms, and slippers. His skin is blue-toned in the doorbell camera footage.

Strangely, Wilma is gone. Completely out of the picture.

ALAN

I don't see the girl.

He whirls around, checks left and right.

BECKY (V.O.)

What do you mean? She was just there. I was talking to her.

Alan shrugs and continues to look.

He sets his face close to the doorbell camera.

ALAN

No sign of her. Maybe her mom came.

BECKY (V.O.)

I doubt that. Keep looking.

Alan grunts his displeasure but descends the steps in search of Wilma. In his absence, the porch is empty. A few dead leaves skitter across it in the night breeze.

As Alan searches, Becky can be heard dialing the police again. Her call, as before, goes directly to voicemail.

RECORDED MESSAGE (V.O.)

This is the Mount Arlington Police department. Bahhh-Bahhh-Buh-Ah.

These bleats go on unbearably until Becky hangs up the phone.

BECKY (V.O.)

Christ. What the fuck? Is everyone going insane?

Up the steps comes Alan without the missing girl.

ALAN

I looked everywhere. No luck.

BECKY (V.O.)

Come inside. I think we're getting pranked. Something weird is happening.

ALAN
 (sarcastically)
 Oh, do you think?

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT (LATER)

The time on the camera footage now registers at 11:40 p.m.

From the darkness comes a woman, REGINA CLOUD (30s). Her hair is roller-coaster wild. She wears a sweatshirt that says "World's Greatest Mom."

Up the stairs and to the door she goes. She rings the bell.

It takes Alan several moments to respond via intercom.

ALAN (V.O.)
 Hello?

REGINA
 My daughter's missing. Did you see a little girl tonight? Please, please help me. She was dressed like a witch.

A long pause from Alan.

ALAN (V.O.)
 Is this for real?

Regina's face twists in confusion. For real?

REGINA
 She's been gone for about an hour. She's only eight years old. I'm so scared. I'm losing my mind.

The intercom hisses softly as Alan chooses his words.

ALAN (V.O.)
 Ma'am, I suggest you call the police.

REGINA
 But have you seen my daughter?

ALAN (V.O.)
 Well, we aren't sure what we saw.

REGINA
 What does that mean? What are you unsure about?

ALAN (V.O.)
We think there's some sort
of...uh...pranking going on.

REGINA
You think this is a prank? You
think I'm joking? Shame on you!

ALAN (V.O.)
Just call the police. They can
handle this the best.

REGINA
I see you've got one of those
doorbell cameras. Can we check the
footage to see if my daughter has
been around here?

ALAN (V.O.)
No. Not tonight. I'm sorry.

Regina's expression turns sour.

REGINA
You don't want to help me find my
girl? What's wrong with you?

ALAN (V.O.)
I'm sorry, ma'am.

Regina gets very close to the camera. Her brow furrows. Her
hot, angry breath steams up the camera's lens.

REGINA
You know what? I'm beginning to
think that you took her! Did you
take her?

ALAN (V.O.)
That's insane.

Fists clenched, Regina shrieks.

REGINA
Give me back my daughter! Give her
back now!

Becky joins Alan on the intercom.

BECKY (V.O.)
Listen, we want to help you, but...

REGINA

I'm coming in there, you bitch! I'm gonna kill you both!

From inside her sweatshirt, Regina pulls a huge, gnarly hunting knife. She waves it in front of the camera.

REGINA

You're dead, do you hear me?

Regina rages. Thick rivulets of drool run down her face. She sputters with anger and whooshes her knife. She's crazy-wild.

BECKY (V.O.)

(nervously to Alan)

You locked the door didn't you?

ALAN (V.O.)

I'm pretty sure.

The doorbell footage glitches. Suddenly Regina disappears from view. The camera shows an empty porch. The couple's voices continue to flow out of the intercom.

BECKY (V.O.)

Crap. Where'd she go?

ALAN (V.O.)

Call the cops, Becky.

BECKY (V.O.)

I told you. They won't respond.

ALAN (V.O.)

Let me try. Jesus Christ.

He dials. His call, predictably, goes straight to voicemail.

RECORDED MESSAGE (V.O.)

This is the Mount Arlington Police Department. Stop fucking calling us, Becky and Alan. We know you took that girl, and her mother is in your house right now ready to slit your throats. And you deserve it...

The message ends. Dead air.

ALAN (V.O.)

Holy crap.

BECKY (V.O.)

I told you, didn't I?

ALAN (V.O.)
I'll check downstairs.

BECKY (V.O.)
No. Stay here with me.

ALAN (V.O.)
Let me grab the baseball bat.

BECKY (V.O.)
Alan? Alan?

His voice trails off, indicating that he's leaving the room.

Meanwhile, there's movement on the doorbell camera screen.

Little Wilma is back on the porch, bouncing around, slamming into the side of the house. Thud. Slam. Bam.

The source of her disorientation quickly becomes clear: She has no head. She's just a torso, legs, and arms.

Somehow, these appendages still function.

Becky screams. A complete freak-out.

The doorbell camera glitches again and Little Wilma disappears.

An instant later, Alan is on the front porch. He wields a baseball bat in search of Regina.

ALAN
Becky, can you hear me?

BECKY (V.O.)
Alan, get back inside! Lock the door!

ALAN
I looked everywhere. I didn't see that woman.

BECKY (V.O.)
Alan, I don't think we can trust our phones anymore. We can't believe our screens or our electronics.

ALAN
What? What do you mean?

BECKY (V.O.)
Just get back inside, okay. Right
now!

Alan brings his face close to the doorbell camera.

ALAN
What the hell are you talking
about, Becky? Why can't we trust
our screens?

Zap. Jolt. An electric spark from the doorbell camera hits Alan, causing him to shudder and sizzle like a man being fried in an electric chair.

Alan's eyes roll back, he bites off his tongue, and his skin singes and smokes. He collapses in a smoking heap onto the porch.

Miraculously, the camera keeps rolling.

BECKY (V.O.)
Alan!

It isn't long before Becky dashes onto the porch to help her husband. She tries desperately to revive him, but there are no signs of life.

She wails in agony.

Strangely, Becky's cries aren't the only ones in the neighborhood. From a few doors down come the screams of someone else.

Other neighbors are apparently being terrorized just like Becky and Alan.

Becky's cell phone rings. She's reluctant to answer it, but gives in.

Regina flashes onto her cell phone screen.

REGINA
(via Becky's phone)
You deserved that! I hope your
husband rots! I hope your rot!

Becky tosses her phone far away from her. She picks up the baseball bat and turns to the door camera.

BECKY
I know what this is.

She points at the camera with the bat.

BECKY

It's an artificial intelligence takeover, isn't it? Cameras, phones, electronics all turning against us.

On the street behind Becky, a car zooms by. The driver screams out the window.

DRIVER

I can't stop the car!

The car roars off and is quickly out of sight.

Becky maintains her stare at the doorbell camera.

BECKY

Well, I know how to pull the plug!

She starts to swing the bat at the camera, but there's a flash that obstructs the outcome. The screen goes dark.

This state of darkness lingers for a moment, but then the camera sputters back to life.

Becky lies dead on the porch alongside her husband. The wind whistles ominously.

The camera glitches a bit...

When the picture regains clarity, Regina Cloud and her headless daughter, Wilma, dance over the bodies on the porch.

Their movements are disjointed and artificial. They buzz with electric celebration, as if they were truly alive.

And they could go on like this forever.

FADE OUT: