

Project Beatitude

By

One Who Watches

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FADE IN:

INT. ROCKFIELD BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

Signs of a packed house are still readily evident.

One FAMILY, the THOMPSONS, MAMA (late 20s), DAD (late 20s) and SIS (12), excitedly hug their son, BILLY (7).

DAD

You did it, Billy. You made your  
First Holy Communion.

Bill happily nods at his accomplishment.

MOM

Those who are called are willing to  
do anything for him, even die.

Billy's happy-go-lucky demeanor quickly fades.

BILLY

Die?

DAD

Only if chosen.

BILLY

But, Dad, I don't wanna die.

Billy begins crying.

BILLY

Take it back. I don't wanna die.

MOM

It's just an expression, dear.

Billy's cries become louder as he becomes inconsolable.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

INSERT: THREE YEARS LATER.

Billy (now 10), big for his age, plays with the other KIDS in the class. They are divided between the swings, slides, and the uneven bars.

Billy stands next in line on the slide. He watches the BOY in front of him go down head-first, do a deft handstand, summersault, then stands up to a loud ovation.

Billy considers doing a trick.

He looks around, hesitates. The others behind him stare impatiently at him.

He takes a deep breath. Several kids take notice.

Some of his classmates clap and egg him on.

The classmates behind him are annoyed.

CLASSMATE 1

Come on Billy, hurry up.

He takes a deep breath. Sits down on the slide, goes down in the "normal" style. The class groans.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL OUTDOOR GYM CLASS- DAY

INSERT: FIVE YEARS LATER.

Billy (15), huge for his age, walks around gym class looking for something that gets his attention.

He watches others run the mile, play basketball, soccer, hockey, even lacrosse.

He strolls around the school building, and in the space between two buildings, stops dead as he witnesses TWO KIDS, both barely half his size, beat up on another KID.

Kid 1 stops as kid 2 holds down the kid 3.

KID 1

What's you looking at, Billy?

BILLY

No-nothing.

KID 3

Please help me.

KID 1

I'll fuck you up, boy.

Billy quickly turns around and runs away.

INT. GENERAL HOSPITAL - NIGHT

INSERT: TWELVE YEARS LATER

Billy (27), big but showing signs of flab, sits in a chair in a hospital room while his GIRLFRIEND (25), lays in a hospital bed with tubes hooked up to her.

Barely able to contain her excitement, she grabs his arm.

GIRLFRIEND  
How much longer?

BILLY  
I don't know, hun. Soon.

GIRLFRIEND  
I gotta see her.

Billy looks terrified. She gently caresses his face.

GIRLFRIEND  
You'll be great.

A NURSE walks in with a crying NEWBORN BABY.

NURSE  
Here's your bundle of joy.

The nurse hands the newborn to his girlfriend. The nurse looks at her, then him. She smiles at him.

NURSE  
Ring if you need anything.

She walks out.

GIRLFRIEND  
Here, hold our daughter.

Billy looks terrified, as usual.

But, as his baby gets closer to him, she makes eye contact with her dad, stops crying, and coos.

A magical moment happens as they touch fingers.

INT. SHTRIGA LABORATORIES -NIGHT

BREAK ROOM

INSERT: THREE YEARS LATER.

Billy, (30), big but flabby, wears a shirt with a tapir-like creature on it. On the back of the chair hangs a janitor's outfit. He sits reading a newspaper.

INSERT HEADLINE: Worldwide epidemic worsens as scientists baffled by billions who never wake up.

INSERT SMALLER HEADLINE: Six months later, still no answers of any kind forthcoming.

One of his coworkers, SALLY, (mid 20s), cleans the table.

SALLY

I've heard that people are outright  
killing themselves instead of  
waiting for "it" to happen.

He lowers the paper.

BILLY

Can't blame them. This is truly  
horrible. Just waiting for the  
next person to never wake up.

SALLY

Once you fall into the coma,  
there's nothing left of your brain,  
at all. It's the end of humanity.

He stands up, walks to the adjacent table where another  
JANITOR rests. He tries to wake him.

BILLY

Fred, Fred, wake up.

Nothing. Billy shakes him, violently. The rest of the  
people in the breakroom stare at Fred's comatose body.

MANAGER

All of you, back away. Now.

They look up to see the MANAGER motioning them off.

MANAGER

Unless you want to be quarantined.

Billy quickly raises his hands and backs away.

MANAGER

Go back to work.

Billy puts on his janitor's outfit then leaves.

INT. SHTRIGA LABORATORIES -NIGHT

SHTRIGA MAIN CONSOLE VAULTED COMPUTER ROOM

To the left of the door sits a large computer with water  
coolants attached to extra mainframe computing power.

The back wall has bathrooms, fountain, and a rest area.

Thousands of tiny TV-like devices line the right wall. Each  
one has a person in it.

Billy's key card opens the door. He knocks on the door as he enters.

BILLY

I'm here to clean the office.

He knocks on the door again. Nothing. The lights are on, but, there doesn't seem to be anyone around.

BILLY

Hello? Dr. Shtriga.

Billy looks around the office. His eyes get drawn to the thousands of tiny TVs. He stares at them.

He gasps and puts his hand up to his mouth.

REVEAL: The janitor from the break room sits on the TV, silently screaming away.

The bathroom door opens. Out walks Dr. JETON SHTRIGA, dark-skinned ALBANIAN, (LATE 50S), thin frame, sees Billy.

JETON

What are you doing?

BILLY

I thought something happened.

JETON

I'm fine, leave.

Jeton walks to the control panel.

BILLY

I'm here to clean the office, sir.

JETON

Then do your job.

Billy looks back at his friend.

BILLY

Sir, I saw my co-worker on one of those screens. Is he okay?

Jeton studies him, slowly walks to him.

JETON

It's none of your concern.

Billy pulls out his cell phone.

JETON  
Okay, okay. If I explain this to  
you, you MUST keep it quiet.

Jeton turns to his controls.

JETON  
Your friend is fine. Better than  
fine, actually. He's gonna live  
forever.

BILLY  
But, he's comatose.

Jeton types on the computer.

JETON  
Only his body. His consciousness  
is here, on this tiny screen.

BILLY  
But...

JETON  
How, right? Basically, the human  
brain is a computer. With the  
advances of the internet, we're  
able to upload a person from their  
body and preserve them.

BILLY  
That's evil.

Jeton brings up Billy's profile.

JETON  
Evil? We are preserving them.  
They will live forever in bliss.  
No more wars, disease, death.  
Nothing but blissful dreams.

BILLY  
But, who decides?

Jeton makes eye contact with Billy.

JETON  
We all do. You think I'm doing  
this alone?

BILLY  
I'm sure others workers help you.

JETON

Here? The world's governments submitted a list of people they wanted eliminated. Only the smartest stay.

BILLY

But, what gives you the right?

Jeton gets off his seat, walks menacingly over to Billy.

JETON

We have a right to make our world the best it can be. No more wars, terrorism, nothing. They get to dream, forever. It's more than most deserve.

BILLY

This is wrong.

JETON

You foolish idiot.

He flicks the return button on the computer.

JETON

I won't let you ruin our progress. You won't last a minute until you pass out, forever.

BILLY

If these are to be my last words, then I have one question.

JETON

Go on.

BILLY

If everyone is supposed to be in a "heaven-like" setting, then why do they all scream?

JETON

They don't.

Billy blinks his heavy eyelids, stumbles. It's begun.

BILLY

Look closer.

Jeton walks up to the monitors, studies each of them.

REVEAL: All of the people exhibit signs of intense terror.

Jeton wipes that batch to look at another batch. The same faces of terror. He looks at another batch.

Billy double blinks, then drops to one knee.

JETON  
Why? W-what is...

He looks at another batch. He stops Billy's upload.

Billy rises back to his feet.

Jeton looks at him.

JETON  
They're supposed to be in heaven.  
I have to stop...

Jeton coughs. He tries to clear his throat, but, the coughing gets worse.

Billy walks to him.

Jeton collapses to the floor, convulses violently. Extreme terror erupts across his face. His chest rises.

Higher.

Higher.

Something bursts through his chest. A being crawls out of the bloodied mess.

Billy backs away, but, doesn't run away.

The being stands over eight feet tall, thin, extremely ugly, with red-piercing eyes and pointed teeth and ears.

BEING  
Couldn't have him shutting off my  
greatest achievement, right?

BILLY  
What are you?

BEING  
I have many names, but, you can  
call me NIGHTMARE.

Billy backs to the door, reaches for the handle.

NIGHTMARE

I'll kill you before you open that door, Billy boy.

BILLY

How do you know...

NIGHTMARE

I know everyone. I watch every wretched person dream each night.

BILLY

How?

NIGHTMARE

I'm a god. The god of fear and bad dreams. How else, you moron?

BILLY

Did you do this?

Billy points to the monitors.

NIGHTMARE

Of course. I whisper to everyone deep in their sleep. Some, like Jeton, listen more.

Nightmare runs his talon-like nails across the lower monitors as he walks towards Billy.

NIGHTMARE

He thought he was building something wonderful. But, he was really building the means to allow me to walk in your world.

He towers over Billy.

NIGHTMARE

All those people, screaming for months, giving me power.

Billy shakes his head, side to side.

NIGHTMARE

Oh yes. Billions of terrified people begging for help.

BILLY

Someone has to stop you.

NIGHTMARE

Oh please. It's too late. More than half your population has been taken by me. The rest I will herd like cattle.

BILLY

We're more than that.

NIGHTMARE

Not really. Humanity's fears are my food. And I need people to keep the machine running. I can put you in charge. I can give you anything you want.

BILLY

No.

NIGHTMARE

Really? Scardie Billy's gonna grow a backbone now? You're the same Billy that couldn't even go down a slide just a few years ago.

Billy ducks under Nightmare as he backs away from him.

BILLY

That isn't who I am.

NIGHTMARE

Of course, it is. You're the boy who turned away from God because you were terrified he'd call you to die for him. You're the same boy who let that kid get beaten up.

BILLY

I'm not.

NIGHTMARE

That boy killed himself ten years ago. You could have made a difference in his life.

Billy's eyes swell with tears.

BILLY

I can't do anything about that, but, I can do something about you.

NIGHTMARE

You're a coward, period. Take the offer or I will make you suffer.

Nightmare grabs Billy by the arm.

NIGHTMARE

If you think they're scared, imagine what I'd do to you. Last chance to accept my offer.

Billy jerks his arm free.

BILLY

I was that way before I had my daughter.

NIGHTMARE

She can live too.

BILLY

I'd die for her.

NIGHTMARE

Or you can watch her die.

BILLY

I'd die to stop you.

The tapir on Billy's shirt glows.

BILLY

You had enemies eons ago. The Baku, they were called.

NIGHTMARE

How do you know that name?

BILLY

Saw them in a dream. They asked me if I'd die to protect her?

Billy touches the tapir.

BILLY

Let their light shine through me. Let me keep you at bay.

NIGHTMARE

You fool.

Flames explode from Nightmares' fingers.

Billy's tapir jumps off his shirt and absorbs the flames.

Hundreds of other tapir-shaped BAKU appear. They shine blinding purifying lights as Nightmare shrieks in agony.

Nightmare collapses. The Baku turn towards Billy.

BILLY

I understand.

The Baku's lights increase dramatically, destroying the machine, releasing the victims.

BILLY

Return home those of you who can.  
Rest in peace those who can't.

Billy looks at the Baku that came from his shirt.

BILLY

Please tell her that I did this for  
her, for all of them.

The Baku speaks telepathically.

BAKU

Everyone will know your deed. She  
will be cared for by the world.

Billy looks at Nightmare, who scowls at him.

Chains appear in Billy's hands.

BILLY

With these chains, I bound you.  
For all eternity.

Billy, the chains, Nightmare and the Baku all vanish.

Security forces burst through the door.

SECURITY GUARD 1

We're too late.

They remove their caps to honor him.

THE END.