

TEN THOUSAND SOULS

by

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FADE IN:

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)  
My name is Doctor Oliver Blackburn.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY - YEAR, 1900

Steam billows as passengers disembark onto the platform.

DR. BLACKBURN (V.O.)  
I've dedicated my life to caring for  
the terminally ill.

Through the steam appears DR. OLIVER BLACKBURN (40), dark hair, piercing brown eyes, kind and handsome face. He assists a WOMAN (30's) and LITTLE GIRL (5), off the train.

The woman smiles in appreciation and takes her daughter by the hand as they run toward a waiting MAN (30's).

Dr. Blackburn watches the family embrace, his eyes convey sadness.

DR. BLACKBURN (V.O.)  
A commitment that comes with a price.

He picks up his bags and walks away.

EXT. ST. MARY'S HOSPICE - DAY

Bags in tow, Dr. Blackburn enters the wrought iron gates and heads up the front walk.

INT. ST. MARY'S HOSPICE - NIGHT

Rows of hospital beds, separated by curtains, line both sides of this large, dimly lit room. Clipboard in hand, Dr. Blackburn walks up the aisle.

NURSE (O.S.)  
Doctor!

He quickens his pace then enters a

CURTAINED ROOM

On the bed lay a very frail, ELDERLY MAN (90's).

A NURSE (50's), sits at his bedside.

NURSE  
He's fading. Poor soul. Has no  
family, this one.

The man's breath shallow, his eyes open but glazed over.  
Dr. Blackburn puts his clipboard down.

DR. BLACKBURN  
Leave us. I shall sit with him till  
his time comes.

NURSE  
Bless you Doctor Blackburn.

The nurse stands, performs the sign of the cross then  
closes the curtains as she leaves.

Dr. Blackburn looks sympathetically at the dying man and  
tenderly holds his hand.

The man lets out a long breath. Dr. Blackburn leans in very  
close to his face and sucks it in.

As the Doctor inhales, the man's breath takes on a smoky  
appearance.

When the elderly man's breath finally expires, Dr.  
Blackburn falls back on the chair, exhausted.

He reaches over and shuts the man's eyes.

DR. BLACKBURN (V.O.)  
I wasn't always like this.

FLASHBACK

INT. MAKESHIFT HOSPICE - NIGHT - ENGLAND - YEAR, 1350

Without enough cots to accommodate the ill, the floor is  
covered with sick people laid out on filthy sheets.

MOANS and CRIES echo as they writhe in pain.

Lantern in hand, a man cautiously steps over bodies. A few  
people reach up and grab for him as he walks through.

The man is Dr. Blackburn (40's), clothes now fitting that era. He stands over the body of a dead boy.

The Doctor holds the lantern close to the boy's face, revealing several large black spots.

DR. BLACKBURN (V.O.)  
 Black death. We couldn't stop it.  
 There was no cure and people were  
 dying by the minute.

On the other side of the room, a dark figure glides slowly through the bodies. Dr. Blackburn raises his lantern to get a better look.

The figure is DEATH himself. Draped in a black hooded cloak, Death waves his skeleton hand over three sick people huddled together.

Simultaneously they let out a long breath. It turns smoky as it rises, swirls together then gets sucked into the opening of death's hood. The three people collapse, dead.

Dr. Blackburn gasps. Death quickly snaps toward his direction. Lantern still raised, now illuminates the horror on the Doctor's face. Death laughs.

DR. BLACKBURN (V.O.)  
 I made a deal with Death that day.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. OUR LADY OF MERCY HOSPICE - DAY - YEAR, 1970

Luggage in tow, Dr. Blackburn (40's), walks up the steps and rings the bell. A NUN (50's), opens the door.

NUN  
 Dr. Blackburn? We've been expecting  
 you.

The Doctor smiles kindly and enters.

INT. PATIENT ROOM - OUR LADY OF MERCY HOSPICE - NIGHT

Door closed, curtains drawn, lights dimmed and classical music softly plays in the background.

Dr. Blackburn leans over a frail, elderly woman (90's), in a hospital bed. He holds her hand in his as he inhales her last breath.

DR. BLACKBURN (V.O.)  
 He agreed to release the hold Black  
 Death had on England, if I agreed to  
 collect ten thousand souls for him.

The old woman's breath expires. Dr. Blackburn releases her hand and collapses on a chair.

He reaches over and closes her eyes.

DR. BLACKBURN (V.O.)  
 I only took the souls of those who  
 lived a full life. Lonely souls like  
 myself who had no one left to mourn  
 for them. Today my debt is paid.

The music continues as Dr. Blackburn closes his eyes. A tear falls down his cheek.

INT. TREASURED SOULS HOSPICE - NIGHT - YEAR, 2011

Classical music plays softly. A beautiful aquarium, home to several GOLDFISH, adds to the serene atmosphere.

A NURSE (40's) sits behind the large reception desk of this modern facility.

A plaque hangs on the wall behind her. Engraved in gold is Dr. Blackburn's face, under it reads, "TREASURED SOULS HOSPICE - FOUNDED BY DR. OLIVER BLACKBURN - 1980".

INT. PRIVATE ROOM - TREASURED SOULS HOSPICE - NIGHT

Lights are dim in this sparsely furnished room.

A nurse, HOLLY (30's), sits next to a frail, elderly man (80's), in a hospital bed. His eyes open but glazed over.

HOLLY  
 Doctor Blackburn?

She gently takes Dr. Blackburn's hand in hers.

The Nurse from the reception desk lightly taps on the door.

NURSE

Holly, could you watch the front desk  
a moment?

HOLLY

Sure. I'll be right there.

Holly slowly pulls her hand from Dr. Blackburn's, but he  
won't let go. She looks at him quizzically.

She tugs a little harder, this time with success. Holly  
heads out the door.

DR. BLACKBURN (V.O.)

I knew he was coming for me that night.

Immediately after she leaves, the room turns an eerie gray.

Death glides in.

DR. BLACKBURN (V.O.)

I just wanted one last feel of a warm  
hand before an eternity of Death's icy  
grip.

Death leans over Dr. Blackburn as he lets out one long,  
last breath. It turns smoky as it's pulled into Death's  
black hood.

DR. BLACKBURN (V.O.)

I suppose there's a special place in  
hell for me, with ten thousand souls  
awaiting my arrival.

His breath expires. Death waves his skeleton hand over the  
Doctor's face, shutting his eyes.

FADE OUT