

“Goodbye”

Characters:

Michael, a boy of fourteen.

Cindy, Michael’s mother.

John, Michael’s father.

Anna, Michael’s sister.

Liam, Michael’s friend.

Assorted policemen, paramedics.

The screen opens as a black screen. Soon, a mouth fades into vision; nothing else. MICHAEL begins to speak.

MICHAEL: My name is Michael, and this is my story.

The screen very very slowly begins to fade to blurs of color that do not form an image.

MICHAEL: You see, I’ve always had this gift, or maybe it’s a curse. Whenever someone dies, I hear a noise to mark their death.

In the background, a constant chorus of snicks starts up, like chirping crickets, but much more quite. It performs a gradual crescendo.

MICHAEL: The closer they are to me when they die, the louder the noise. It never really affected my life that much though. It was like walking through the woods; you could smell the dirt and the trees and stuff, but you never consciously noticed it. That was what it was like for me.

There is a long pause, as the snicks keep growing in loudness. As they begin to near the volume of speech, they stop growing louder, but continue an irregular pattern.

MICHAEL: Until one day.

All this time the blurs of color have been very gradually coming into focus. It is a car driving along an empty highway. Soon a police car appears in the distance next to a car wreck.

CINDY: Oh my god! There’s a car wreck!

Cindy slows the car to a halt, and Michael’s family exits. They see that a car had swerved off the road and crashed into a tree. Paramedics are swarming over the crash scene, attempting to help five severely injured people lying on the ground and in stretchers.

POLICEMEN: Stay back, please. These people are in critical condition.

CINDY: We will, officer.

All of a sudden recognition dawns on John’s face.

JOHN: Doesn’t that car belong to the Helmans?

CINDY: It certainly... oh my god it does!

MICHAEL: Luke? No...

Just then a paramedic calls out to his comrades, and several rush over to him, by the side of a smaller figure.

MICHAEL: No!

A slow motion sequence begins. The snick sound that comes with a death is played much louder and slower than usual. It lasts over ten seconds, and gets slower and slower; about halfway through you can make out individual words:

TEENAGE VOICE: How long is it until... oh god we're aaaaaaaa... help... water... GOODBYE. *The last word is said forcefully and loudly. Upon its utterance Michael collapses into a coma, and the screen fades to black, and Michael's mouth reappears.*

MICHAEL: When I recovered, my life took a turn for the dark. I heard several more deaths from up close, and when I realized that they were words, I listened more closely. Every time the last word was "goodbye." This scared me and soon I was afraid of the sound, afraid of what I would hear if I listened. But the one that affected me most was the last.

The screen fades to a shot of Michael going to pick up a ringing phone. He hears his friend Liam's voice.

LIAM (in a downcast voice): hey, Michael.

MICHAEL: What's up, Liam?

LIAM: Can you come by my place? I want to talk to you.

MICHAEL: Sure, I'll be over in five.

A shot of Michael hanging up the phone is replaced by a shot of Michael walking to Liam's house. He arrives there and opens the back door, takes two steps in and stops short. Liam is sitting at the island in his kitchen, right arm leaning on the island and holding a gun to his temple.

MICHAEL (carefully): What are you doing, Liam?

LIAM: It has to be this way, dude. I needed a witness. I'm sorry it had to be you.

MICHAEL (carefully): Liam, think about it. This is a bad idea.

LIAM: I have. For years. I am ready to do this, and you can't stop me.

He pulls the trigger, and another slow motion snick is heard. At the end his end of the conversation is clearly heard, in exactly the same intonation; but eerily, the snick ends with a forceful "goodbye" just like the other. In regular speed, Michael falls backward against the countertop. The screen fades to black and Michael's mouth reappears again.

MICHAEL: I realized that Liam had never said "goodbye" at the end of our conversation, and I realized then that something beyond the usual weird was going on. A few days later, it happened.

Michael is sitting at his desk, alone in his room. The sun is going down, and the room is dim. The chorus of background snicks that has been going on continuously since the beginning of the film becomes irregular, and Michael starts. He glances around as if he thinks he is being watched. Then he starts again as he realizes that the pattern of very faint background snicks has become synced with his heartbeat. The new pattern of snicks grows louder as the nearer deaths fall in sync too, and faster as his heartbeat increases. Michael stands up quickly and faces the camera, his eyes wild. He stands there, stock still, like a hunted animal. The pattern of snicks continues to grow louder and faster. All of a sudden he sprints into his closet and slams the door behind him. The camera is now in his pitch-black closet, and all of a sudden the snicks cut off.

Everything is silent except for his ragged breathing, and he screams, a long, haunted scream. Meanwhile his mouth fades into view, frozen into the shape of a screaming mouth, and then the voiceover continues.

MICHAEL: I am still in the closet. I don't know how long I've been in here. I am scared... help? Is anyone there?

His voice trails off, and there is total silence.

MICHAEL: I'm afraid...

Long pause.

MICHAEL: GOODBYE.

CUT TO CREDITS

Notes for director and actors:

The snick is in fact every word that person has ever said, sped up to fit into less than a second (except for the two in slow motion).

Michael has in fact been in his closet narrating this the whole time.

This film is obviously very short but is meant that way; extension into a full-length feature would ruin it.

Yes, everyone in the world except Michael dies in the end. How? We don't know. But it wasn't anything natural. Make that clear.