

No Rest for a Soul

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A Fifteen-Minute Play

by

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An aging, one-hit-wonder rock star has recently taken his own life. Now, as a Soul-in-Spirit, he is getting prepped to meet his maker, with the help of a Spirit Guide, known only as the Second Keeper of the Records.

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Cast of Characters

SECOND KEEPER OF THE RECORDS: Any age, race, gender.

CLIFF BENJAMIN: A man in his early 50s.

Scene

A place on the Other Side where Souls-in-Spirit go.

Time

The present

No Rest for a Soul

SETTING: A conference room, with a desk, two chairs, and a computer.

AT RISE: SECOND KEEPER OF THE RECORDS is sitting at a desk, dressed in a monk-style robe, staring intently at a computer screen.

CLIFF BENJAMIN looks like an aging rock star. Long hair, tight black jeans, black shirt, black boots, with a rope around his neck.

SECOND KEEPER OF THE RECORDS

(Looking up from the computer)

Hello, Mr. Benjamin. I'm Second Keeper of the Records.

CLIFF BENJAMIN

Doesn't anyone up here have a real name? I just met with some uptight chick before who said her name was First Keeper of the Records.

SECOND KEEPER OF THE RECORDS

(Staring back at the computer screen)

The longer you stay in spirit, the less likely you are to hold onto a name from a past life. I can see that First Keeper of the Records did quite an extensive interview with you, but it doesn't look like you were very cooperative. That chip on your shoulder you had all your life is about to be chiseled off Michelangelo-style. OK, it says here that you were a rock star. That's cool. Let me see, back in the nineties, you even won a Grammy for Best New Artist. Impressive. But wait! Oh, I'm beginning to get it now. You were one of those, what do they call it down on earth ... a...a...

CLIFF BENJAMIN

One-hit wonder.

SECOND KEEPER OF THE RECORDS

Kind of like Bobby McFerrin with "Don't Worry Be Happy!" Only God really liked that song, with its upbeat, positive message. Your hit, "I'm Gonna Drink, Drank, Drug Like There's No Tomorrow," not so much! God had hoped, with a musical gift like yours, that you would have used it to lift humanity, not drag it into the gutter.

CLIFF BENJAMIN

From what I've seen so far, celestial civil servants are very judgmental.

## SECOND KEEPER OF THE RECORDS

It's our job to evaluate who you were and what you did during the fifty years you walked the earth. We're not judging you. We're judging your actions. Weighing of the soul if you will, to see if you did more right than wrong, more good than bad. Moving right along here. After your big Grammy win, you cut a deal with another major record label, but you never came through with that album. It says here that you didn't like the direction your record producer was taking your music in, so you told him to –

CLIFF BENJAMIN

– Shove it up his corporate ass!

## SECOND KEEPER OF THE RECORDS

No wonder, you were blackballed across the industry. Then...you tried your hand at movies, but you couldn't seem to learn your lines. When First Keeper of the Records asked why you think that was, you said, "Cause the dialogue sucked." Are you sure it didn't have anything to do with the fact that you were courting Ms. Marijuana and hanging out with Mr. Cocaine for two decades?

CLIFF BENJAMIN

Hey, I'm starting to think you don't like me very much, and I'm not going to get a fair trial.

## SECOND KEEPER OF THE RECORDS

You're not on trial, Mr. Benjamin. I'm trying to get you to take some accountability for your less than stellar actions on earth. This way, when you go to Third Keeper of the Records, maybe, just maybe, she'll cut you some slack. Therefore, it would be best if you would work with me. We really need to smooth out some of the rough edges of your life and find valid reasons for your actions. The fact that you threw away a relatively good body, well...that's a hard one to gloss over. It's amazing your body held up so well, considering all your substance abuse.

CLIFF BENJAMIN

Hold it right there! I had a relatively healthy body because I was a vegan, practiced yoga every day, and went on a detox retreat three times a year.

## SECOND KEEPER OF THE RECORDS

I will put in a good word for you on that one. But, still, taking your own life, when you still had another twenty-five years allotted to you, is a serious no-no.

CLIFF BENJAMIN

In my defense, I really think the deck was stacked against me from day one. I mean, look at the facts. I had an alcoholic father who beat me, a bi-polar mother who hated me, a big brother who tortured me, and an alphabet soup of mental challenges, including ADHD, OCD, and PTSD.

## SECOND KEEPER OF THE RECORDS

Anything else you'd like to add to that?

## CLIFF BENJAMIN

When I was in my twenties, my psychiatrist put me on Prozac for my depression, Adderall for my attention deficit, and Xanax because she was probably getting a kickback. To my credit, I weaned myself off that pharmacology cocktail in 2000. I thought a new millennium deserves a new Cliff Benjamin, but after a while, I found the anxiety and panic attacks returning with a vengeance. That's when I started smoking a little pot again, and a little pot became a lot of pot, and that made me sleepy, so I had to use a little coke to get me through the day.

## SECOND KEEPER OF THE RECORDS

It says here that in the last twenty years you had five rounds of rehab, and a year-long stint in a psychiatric hospital.

## CLIFF BENJAMIN

Doesn't that prove that I really tried? I've seen a ton of therapists, done month-long spiritual retreats, been to witches, shamans, voodoo men, Reiki masters, and every other New Age healer I could get my hands on, but it never helped. My mind was like a torture chamber. Day and night ... recurring, obsessive, irrational, tormenting thoughts.

## SECOND KEEPER OF THE RECORDS

So that's why you decided to off yourself two nights ago?

## CLIFF BENJAMIN

I had just turned fifty. I was running out of money, out of work, and hooked on drugs again. I didn't really want to die. I just didn't want to live that way anymore. I wanted to hit the reset button. Go to God. Start over.

## SECOND KEEPER OF THE RECORDS

God sees to your intention, and I need to be sure that we word your intention properly. That might help Third Keeper of the Records go a little easier on you. So, your intention wasn't to hurt anyone?

## CLIFF BENJAMIN

Of course not!

## SECOND KEEPER OF THE RECORDS

You do realize that your death has caused a great deal of needless pain?

## CLIFF BENJAMIN

... I just couldn't deal with my own demons anymore. It was more of a mercy killing. Euthanasia.

SECOND KEEPER OF THE RECORDS

Now, let me take a look at your suicide note. Hmmm, you did write, "I'm truly sorry for any and all suffering my action may have caused." That definitely works in your favor. I'm sorry to have to be the one to tell you this, but while you're up here in spirit, you'll have to witness, a few hours a day, the pain your so-called "mercy killing" caused others. You'll have to see them cry, process guilt as to why they didn't see this coming and watch them agonize over what they could have or should have done to stop this.

CLIFF BENJAMIN

Fair enough.

SECOND KEEPER OF THE RECORDS

Now I'm supposed to give you a small sampling of how painful those few hours a day are going to be for you. A good place to start with that process is to look at your Facebook page. Let me get that up on the screen. My, there's a lot of Cliff Benjamins. Oh, here you are. Let's look at a few of the comments people posted on your fan page. This one is from your sister: "Why didn't you talk to me? Why? I keep racking my brain over this. I would have tried to help. My heart is broken. What more can I say other than ...? I will be in agony all the rest of my days. RIP, my dear, sweet, baby brother, Cliff."

CLIFF BENJAMIN

She was the only one in my family that ever cared about me. Damn, I'm sorry I hurt her.

SECOND KEEPER OF THE RECORDS

This one was from one of your fans: "A one-hit wonder they called him, but his one hit was the theme song for me and my buds throughout our college days. He was a visionary, manic, and totally misunderstood. RIP, Cliff. I hope you're soaring with the angels."

CLIFF BENJAMIN

My fans were the best ... I guess I let them down.

SECOND KEEPER OF THE RECORDS

This one is from one of your ex-girlfriends, Nina Rossi: "My heart is heavy tonight. I just learned of the passing of a most beautiful soul, Cliff Benjamin. To those of us who knew and loved him, he was fierce, unpredictable, and wild. He was troubled, tormented, and totally screwed up, but never once did I imagine...he would take his own life. Rest in Peace, Cliff. You were the love of my life."

CLIFF BENJAMIN

(He appears visibly shaken.)

She was a good woman, but I really screwed up that relationship. I was high all the time and cheated on her with anyone with a pulse. I would have thought she'd be happy I was dead. I made her life a living hell.

### THE SECOND KEEPER OF THE RECORDS

This one is from an old band member: “Just got a call about my friend and fellow band member, Cliff Benjamin. I am gutted with emotion. Cliff was a musical genius, a splintered soul, with the most fragile of hearts, and I loved him. When I was at the lowest point in my life last year, Cliff would check in on me once a week to make sure I was OK. He will be missed by me and millions of his fans. RIP, Cliff.” Notice how each one said some variation of “RIP, Cliff.” Rest in peace. A nice theory, but dead wrong. There is no rest for a soul. There is reset. Redo. Reset again. Redo. You know, the endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. But rest, no, there is no rest for a soul. A soul, by its very nature has to keep on learning, and aching, and doing, and expanding, and evolving. So, if you came here to rest, Mr. Benjamin, you’ve come to the wrong place. Now, when you go to Third Keeper of the Records, and more importantly, when you go to God, I would advise you to gracefully accept the realm that you are to inhabit while here in spirit. Agree to the year that you will reincarnate again, whether that’s a week from next Tuesday or a hundred years from tomorrow. And whatever you do: do not object to the kind of body that you’ll be given in your next incarnation. I have recommended in my report that God be kind to you and give you the same body you had in your most recent lifetime. I’m sure you would like that.

#### CLIFF BENJAMIN

I had no objection to my physical body. It served me well.

### SECOND KEEPER OF THE RECORDS

It sure did! It says here, that in 1996, *Persons Magazine* named you, “The Sexiest Man Alive.” Now we’re both in agreement that you had one hell of a body in your last lifetime. I have to warn you though, I doubt that will happen. You may reincarnate with a major physical disability, be born with an incurable disease, or get hurt or maimed early on in your life. After all, as I have mentioned before – you threw away a relatively healthy body. Again, we can only hope for the best. With God, you can never really know beforehand how these things will go. And just for your edification, many good people choose, of their own volition, to reincarnate with all kinds of disabilities, physical, mental, psychological, and emotional ones to help them learn their karmic lessons.

#### CLIFF BENJAMIN

Wait a second. Are you trying to tell me that I chose the mental disabilities I had in my last lifetime to learn some kind of karmic lessons?

### SECOND KEEPER OF THE RECORDS

No, I wasn’t implying that at all, but I could check on that for you. Just a minute. Oh! Ohhhh, this is bad news! You are a very old soul, and the last time you were a Soul-in-Spirit, God let you choose your body, your creative talent, and your disabilities, and look what you did with that! Back then you told God that you hoped to learn fortitude,

**SECOND KEEPER OF THE RECORDS (Cont.)**

gratitude, perseverance, endurance, and sobriety. I don't believe you reached any of those goals. On a positive note, it doesn't look like you've ever intentionally hurt anyone in your entire life. Now that's good. Very good, indeed. However, since you didn't do so hot with the lot you chose for yourself, Third Keeper of the Records and God will choose all those things for you this go around. We can't defy the Law of Karma, you know ... what goes around comes around and all that jazz. But rest assured. God is fair. Infinitely fair.

**CLIFF BENJAMIN**

I was just hoping to get a rest....

**SECOND KEEPER OF THE RECORDS**

Like I said before, "There is no rest for a soul." Good luck, Mr. Benjamin. Third Keeper of the Records is waiting for you. When you finish there, your work with the Holy Trinity of Record Keepers is completed. Then, you, all by your lonesome, will meet Your Maker. Ultimately, God's Will trumps us all. Godspeed, Mr. Benjamin. Godspeed!

**CURTAIN**