

THE HUMAN LIST

Written by

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INT. TELEVISION STUDIO

The well-dressed CLIFF COOPER (50s), stoic and serious, stands in the center of the room, addressing the camera. Behind him, screens read "The Cliff Side".

CLIFF

Good evening, I'm Cliff Cooper.
Welcome back to another installment
of The Cliff Side. Tonight we bring
you a special news report on the
story that's been rocking the world
for six months: The Human List.

A news jingle plays as the screen reads:
"The Cliff Side: An inside look at The Human List
Featuring an exclusive interview with #1"

Cliff's report continues as we cut to:

INT. PRESS ROOM - DAY

Cameras flash as REX LAZARUS (30s), a discount Steve Jobs, stands at a podium in front of a sign that reads "Humanity Magazine". His audio is cut off as Cliff narrates.

CLIFF (V.O.)

Yes, it's been half a year since
the annual magazine Humanity
debuted its first issue.

Rex's audio turns on.

REX

Humanity Magazine is proud to
announce The Human List. We've used
a complex algorithm to
systematically rank every human in
the world over the age of
seventeen. That's five billion four
hundred and sixty-seven million
people. Our first issue is
available now.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO

Cliff holds a copy of Humanity Magazine, a gigantic book. He struggles to lift it but remains stoic.

CLIFF

News of The Human List spread like
wildfire.

(MORE)

CLIFF (CONT'D)

The world plunged into chaos as the public got their hands on the first year's rankings.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO

A talking head with the professional BARBARA FLEMING (40s). Below her: "Barbara Fleming, Professor of Sociology, Princeton University. Ranking: 2,648,931,817".

BARBARA

It was absolutely remarkable how quickly things changed. Your ranking became like a part of you. I'd never seen anything like it. People started putting it on their résumés, their loan applications, their Instagram bios.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO

Cliff sits across from Rex for an interview. Below Rex: "Rex Lazarus, Editor-in-Chief, Humanity Magazine. Ranking: 4,218,090,673".

CLIFF

What inspired you to make this controversial list?

REX

Well I guess I got a bit sick of Time Magazine giving out person of the year and pretending the rest of us don't exist. The people deserve to know where they fall!

CLIFF

What about in 2006 when Time made everyone person of the year?

REX

Don't even get me started on 2006, Cliff. That was horseshit and we both know it.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO

Barbara talking head.

BARBARA

Life got pretty bad for the bottom of the list. I mean the bottom thousand people were killed within a week. Who knows the evil things those monsters must've done.

B-ROLL: Public executions and people protesting.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

And then there was the campaign to euthanize the bottom billion. I'm in the mid two billions so I can't really complain. But it's definitely not a good time to be a bad person.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The disheveled and depressed TIM FRIEDMAN (25) talks to the camera while standing on the sidewalk. Below him: "Tim Friedman. Ranking: 5,009,175,609".

TIM

I was becoming a teacher before the list came out. They fired me within a week. Didn't want someone in the bottom billion spending time with children. Then my girlfriend left me, I got evicted, and now I'm not allowed within 500 feet of a Barnes & Noble. I don't even know what I did to deserve this.

A car pulls up behind him. The DRIVER (20) yells to Tim.

DRIVER

Go to jail, you bottom billion bitch!

He throws an aluminum can at him and swerves off. Tim sighs.

TIM

That was my brother.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO

The Cliff and Rex interview continues.

REX

We honestly don't know how the algorithm works.

(MORE)

REX (CONT'D)

Essentially we just let it loose on the internet and it started building profiles on everyone.

CLIFF

And what about the billions of people who don't have access to the internet?

REX

I'm an ideas guy, Cliff. I let the algorithm figure that stuff out. If the rice farmers in Bangladesh want to complain they can get in line.

CLIFF

So you have no control over the algorithm whatsoever?

REX

Absolutely not. If I had control over it do you really think I'd get ranked in the four billions? In many ways I'm a victim of my own creation. But do I get sympathy? No. Just death threats.

CLIFF

Do you believe The Human List has caused damage to our species?

REX

All we did was hold a mirror to society. The way I see it people got what they deserved.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO

The camera follows Cliff as he slowly walks across the room.

CLIFF

As life got difficult for the bottom of the list, things got exciting at the top. And at number one? An accountant from Hartford, Connecticut named Jeremy Peterson.

Cliff approaches a screen with a picture of JEREMY PETERSON (30) wearing thick glasses and a bow tie.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO

The Cliff and Rex interview continues.

REX

Jeremy Peterson really threw us for a loop. Number two was the Dalai Lama, so I thought number one would be Tom Hanks. But this guy? I guess the algorithm doesn't lie, but man... what a weird pick.

EXT. JEREMY'S PORCH - DAY

A hand from behind the camera rings the doorbell.

CLIFF (V.O.)

The day the list was published, our reporters caught up to Jeremy to catch a glimpse of humanity's greatest man.

Jeremy opens the door, cheerfully greeting the reporters.

CLIFF (V.O.)

He invited them in for tea.

INT. JEREMY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Jeremy stands at the counter of his quaint kitchen brewing some tea while talking to the camera. His voice is soft and calming and his smile is warm. Below him: "Jeremy Peterson, Accountant. Ranking: 1".

JEREMY

Well gee, this whole thing really startled me. I was just down at the old folks home helping out when I heard I was on the news! Took me near fifteen minutes to find out what all the hullabaloo was about! You folks take sugar?

INT. JEREMY'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Jeremy sits at the kitchen table drinking some tea.

JEREMY

I guess I'm pretty flattered. But I can't for the life of me figure out why I'm number one.

(MORE)

JEREMY (CONT'D)

I do love charity, maybe that's it. How could I call myself a servant of the Lord if I don't lend a hand to those in need? Let me show you some photos.

INT. JEREMY'S LIVING ROOM

Jeremy sits on the couch, flipping through a photo album. He pulls out a photo of a cat and shows it to the camera.

JEREMY

That's my cat, Marmalade. He's at the domestic violence shelter for the day. They just adore him over there. Oh, and this here's my nana.

He holds up a picture of his nana.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

She'll be 95 next month. She always says the key to a long life is surrounding yourself with love. I believe I've done that in spades.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO

Cliff stands next to the TV screen, still showing Jeremy.

CLIFF

After the list was published life began to change for Jeremy. He rocketed into international fame, becoming a face for kindness.

A video of Jeremy standing with a little kid plays on screen.

JEREMY

Hi. I'm Jeremy Peterson for UNICEF. Donate now to help out the number ones of tomorrow.

CLIFF

Over time, Jeremy became attached to a wide range of products.

A video of Jeremy holding a glass of beer.

JEREMY

I'm Jeremy Peterson, and when I relax after a long day of saving the world, I only drink Budweiser.

He takes a sip of the beer.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Ahhh. Budweiser. The number one
beer for the number one man.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO

Barbara talking head. She's wearing a Jeremy Peterson shirt.

BARBARA

I'm a huge Jeremy fan girl. I even
have the limited edition Nike Air
Petersons. How could you not like
Jeremy? He's just so kind and down
to earth. And handsome, too. I bet
he's a gentle, compassionate lover.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO

Cliff addresses the camera.

CLIFF

Now, six months after the release
of The Human List, I traveled to
Jeremy's Beverly Hills home to see
how life has changed for him.

INT. JEREMY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jeremy sits in front of a large fireplace in a swanky living
room wearing a smoking jacket and sunglasses. His voice is
gruff and his hair is now slicked back.

CLIFF

Tell us Jeremy, how has your life
been since the list came out?

JEREMY

Pretty fucking sick, not gonna lie.
Hey, you want some coke?

CLIFF

Uh, no. Thank you.

Jeremy yells to someone off-screen.

JEREMY

HEY! CHARITY! BRING NUMBER ONE SOME
COKE!

The voice of Charity (20s) is heard.

CHARITY (O.S.)
Coming right up, J!

Cliff looks around uncomfortably.

CLIFF
Uh, is this a bad time?

JEREMY
Nah you're good. That's just
Charity. She may have ranked in the
four billions but that ass is
number one, you know what I'm
saying?

He laughs and reaches out for a fist bump. Cliff awkwardly
fist bumps him.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
Hell yeah brother.

CLIFF
So... how's your cat?

JEREMY
He's fuckin chillin. I got him his
own place next door. We're
neighbors now. I got enough pussy
in here as it is, am I right?

CLIFF
Do you think you're gonna be number
one again next year?

JEREMY
Honestly it's hard to say. A lot
has changed but could I still be
number one? I mean--

CHARITY (O.S.)
J! Come snort ketamine off my tits!

JEREMY
Does it matter?

FADE OUT.