

CHRISTIAN DEATH METAL
"PILOT"

Written by

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INT. RITELIFE CHURCH - SANCTUARY - DAY

Modeled after the Reformed Church of America, the RiteLife Church is sterile and resembles more of a concert hall than a church. Older churchgoers line the pews.

PASTOR TYSON (60's, a very Midwestern white man) finishes addressing the congregation.

PASTOR TYSON

And now to play the Procession,
here is our local praise band,
STIGMATA.

JUSTIN (40's, on the tall side, a too-hip youth pastor with long hair and a goatee—he embodies the spirit of new wave Christianity), BILLY (28, a stout husky hick who looks like he wants to fight constantly), and VICKI (24, a real alternative smokeshow: dressed in a death metal band shirt) take the stage. Their look is alternative and out of place. SKULLFIRE (30's, overweight with long black hair and a beard, your typical Death Metal drummer) just appears behind the drums, like he was there the whole time.

Justin grabs the mic and gives the intro.

JUSTIN

Hello Ritelife Church! I'm Youth
Pastor Justin! And God is cool!
Praise Him!

The band launches into an average-sounding dirt rock song, "Touch Me Lord." The music is heavy and brutal. Justin fronts the band as the singer, and he is BAD. Like nasal and weak melody lines.

The rest of the Congregation groans and covers their ears.

CUT TO:

INT. RITELIFE CHURCH - ENTRANCE

GREG (26, long dirty blonde hair with a mustache—more of a grungy guy with an open flannel shirt—he's on the shorter side) opens the front door to the church. He holds it open for MRS. VANDEMINT (60's, a very Midwestern mom. She dresses in an Elizabeth Taylor dress and is very modest) who holds his hand as soon as she gets in. She pats his arm.

MRS. VANDEMINT

Now Greggy, I know it's been a
while. So if you don't like it then
we don't have to be here, okay?

GREG

Don't worry Mom, I want to be here.

Greg takes in the front of the church. A wall hanging of Jesus on the cross grabs his attention. This Jesus' wooden eyes are fixed on Greg. A crescendo of doom whooshes. At its climax-

CUT TO:

INT. RITELIFE CHURCH - SANCTUARY

Greg and Mrs. Vandemint take a seat in the back of the church. They're just catching the end of Stigmata's performance. A quick interstitial cut of each band member rocking out in their own way. The camera turns back to Greg, and his face lights up with delight, almost like it was destiny to be there.

Pastor Tyson cuts off the band mid-song.

PASTOR TYSON

Alright, thank you guys. And now, the Benediction blessing. Go in Peace, serve the Lord, Amen. Get out.

The Congregation gets up and mulls out. Mrs. Vandemint and Greg are trailing behind. Pastor Tyson greets people with handshakes and takes special notice Greg. He rushes over to introduce himself.

PASTOR TYSON (CONT'D)

Well, looks like we have a few new faces here today!

Pastor Tyson extends his hand to Mrs. Vandemint. She shakes it briefly.

MRS. VANDEMINT

Well, thank you Pastor! This is my son, Greg.

PASTOR TYSON

Well hello Greg! Nice to see some young people wanting to know the Lord more!

Pastor Tyson grasps Greg's hand. Greg locks eyes with the pastor in a grip of fear. Pastor Tyson smiles a toothy grin.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - ST. LUKE'S CONTEMPORARY CHURCH - DAYTON, OH

A FACELESS PRIEST pulls a 10-year-old Greg by the hand, leading him down a dark corridor. The priest speaks in a distorted, demonic voice.

FACELESS PRIEST
 Come on Greg, you will know the
 Lord more. You must do His
 Work...on me. Just a little farther
 now.

Greg looks to his left and the same wall hanging of Jesus on the cross is visible. The same whoosh of doom crescendos to-

CUT TO:

INT. MEN'S BATHROOM

Greg runs to the nearest stall and closes the door. He vomits into the porcelain. He searches in the bowl, about to have a mental break. Tears stream down his face as he gathers his energy.

CUT TO:

INT. OUTSIDE MEN'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Justin, Billy, Vicki and Skulltooth walk out of the Sanctuary.

JUSTIN
 Hey guys, that was really good! See
 you all at practice this Monday!

The rest of the band rolls their eyes and continues walking. Justin enters the bathroom.

BACK TO:

INT. MEN'S BATHROOM

Justin steps up to a urinal next to the stalls. He begins pissing. Greg, still searching, lets out the most brutal scream.

GREG
 Yrrrrraaahhhhh! Ahhhhh!

The screams pause, each time there's a pause Justin resumes pissing. Scream. Piss. Scream. Piss.

Greg lets out the longest scream and Justin rushes to the stall. He opens the door and sees Greg red-faced screaming into the toilet.

JUSTIN

Oh my Goodness, are you okay?

GREG

Yrrraahhh!

(breaking the daze)

Oh, my head! Yeah, I'll be okay.

JUSTIN

Hey man, that was some pretty brutal singing there. Are you a member of the church?

GREG

Um, I guess. This is my first time here.

JUSTIN

Well on behalf of the Ritelife Church, welcome! I'm Justin, I'm the youth pastor and leader of the praise band! Say, would you be interested in giving Him glory by joining the praise band?

GREG

Well, I don't sing, that's the first time I-

JUSTIN

-Righteous! We're having band rehearsal this Monday at 7 right here in the church! Stop on by!

Justin gives Greg a fist pound, zips up his fly and exits. Greg looks dumbfounded and goes back to the bowl to scream some more.

GREG

Yrrraahhh!

CUT TO:

INT. RITELIFE CHURCH - SANCTUARY - MONDAY

The band mulls around the space: Billy and Vicki are in the corner making out, Justin tunes his bass, and Skullfire goes a million miles an hour on the drums, quietly blastbeating.

Greg sheepishly enters the Sanctuary, taking everything in.

JUSTIN

Hey, there he is! Thanks for coming, brother. Here, let me introduce you to everyone.

(pointing to Vicki and Billy)

This is Vicki and Billy.

VICKI

Nice to meet you.

BILLY

Is this the guy who's gonna "blow us away?" Huh, I'd like to see it. Yep, been around the block a couple of times, you could say I'm a Veteran of the scene.

JUSTIN

And this is Steve!

GREG

Hey, great to meet everyone.

Greg goes over to the drumset and outstretches his hand to Skullfire. Skullfire pulls him in close.

SKULLFIRE

(whispering)

My name's actually Skullfire Maultooth.

Justin pulls Greg away.

JUSTIN

Don't mind Steve, he's a little quiet.

(addressing the band)

So, what do we say? Ready to kick things off for the Lord?

Everyone gets into position. Justin hands Greg a notepad.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

This is something I wrote for next week's Sermon interlude. Just have fun with it!

(to the band)

Alright guys, 1, 2, 3, 4...

The band starts playing "The Lord Moves Through Me". Greg timidly mumbles through the words.

GREG

Lord, please move in me, show me
the power of your love...

Justin cues the band to stop.

BILLY

I told ya! He's not it! He can
barely sing!

Vicki shoots Billy a look that Billy is oblivious to. Justin takes Greg aside.

JUSTIN

Hey, where's that guy I saw in the
bathroom, huh? Just relax. Let the
Lord into your heart and he will
move within you to deliver
something beautiful!

An eerie playback of the Faceless Priest's words echo in his head. Greg twitches with each remembrance. He's keyed up, ready to let loose.

GREG

(stone cold)
I'm ready to go again.

JUSTIN

Hey, alright!
(back to the band)
Okay guys, let's pick it up again!
1, 2, 3, 4...

Greg lets loose. This is the most brutal version of "The Lord Moves Through Me". Vicki, Billy, Skullfire and Justin all look at each other like "this is great." Greg is screaming his face off in a rage.

CUT TO:

INT. TOUR BUS - SIX MONTHS LATER

A typical "Starter" tour bus. Almost like a very cheap camper.

LARRY KILMARTIN (50's, greying black hair a thin build from all his nerves making him look like he's constantly shaking) paces back and forth in the tour bus. Billy and Vicki make out in the corner. Skullfire, Greg and Justin are the only ones paying attention.

LARRY

Look guys, this is a very big deal, okay? This is the big time! This is the Jacksonville county fair! And I have it on good word that someone from Virgin Mary Records will be in the audience.

JUSTIN

Don't worry Larry! The Lord will provide!

LARRY

Oh yeah? Can the Lord provide 70 percent in ticket sales? Because right now we have five tickets sold to a 200 seat event! This is miserable! They're going to cancel the show if we can't get more people there.

BILLY

Come on man! It's not our responsibility to get butts in the seats, that's your job!

LARRY

I'm sorry, who do you think I am? Metallica's manager? I'm Larry Kilmartin, I run local bands and Carrot Top's Florida tour. That's it. You pay to play in this harsh business of Christian music, my friend. Bottom line.

Skullfire quietly texts.

LARRY (CONT'D)

And what are you doing, huh? Pay attention! You guys are impossible.

Larry exits the bus. Skullfire finishes his text and presses send.

CUT TO:

INT. MYSTERIOUS LAIR

A Gothic study, full of skulls and taxidermy. A mysterious hand exposes itself from a high-backed chair.

A vibration noise and light from a phone on the rustic oak desk attracts the hand's attention. The hand grabs the phone, the owner looks at it and returns it to the desk.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTY FAIR STAGE

STAGEHANDS set up scaffolding and lighting for the upcoming show. Amongst those things is a giant LED cross. The LIGHT OP sits by a giant board.

LIGHT OP

Okay guys, I'm gonna test out the cross. Striking!

The Light Op brings up a level on the board and the LED cross goes nuts. It flashes like the most intense strobe.

STAGEHAND 1

Ahhh God! I'm blind!

STAGEHAND 2

Turn it off, turn it off! I'm getting sick!

The Light Op quickly brings down the level.

STAGEHAND 1

Jesus Christ, what's wrong with this thing?

LIGHT OP

I think that's how it's supposed to work.

STAGEHAND 2

God help anyone with epilepsy tonight.

CUT TO:

EXT. FUNNEL CAKE STAND

Skullfire walks away from the stand, funnel cake in mouth. As he turns around, VOLKAR SKOL (late 30's, dressed in a cape, top hat, and a cane with a skull for the handle) stands right in front of him. Skullfire drops the funnel cake, still a little powdered sugar in his beard.

VOLKAR

Hello, Skullfire Maultooth.

SKULLFIRE

Volkar. It is an honor.

Skullfire kneels and kisses Volkar's giant skull ring.

VOLKAR

This is a big favor you're asking of me. I hope it is not in vain.

SKULLFIRE

No, no! It's going to be the most brutal show ever!

VOLKAR

I hope it is. For your sake. Also the fairgrounds are like two minutes from my house.

Volkar stares down Skullfire. Skullfire slinks off. As Skullfire leaves the stand, Volkar turns to the FUNNEL CAKE ATTENDANT, and totally drops his intimidating visage for the most nerdy voice.

VOLKAR (CONT'D)

Hi yes, I'll have the Elephant Ear, but no powdered sugar please?

CUT TO:

INT. TOUR BUS - CONTINUOUS

Skullfire enters the tour bus to an argument between Billy and Justin.

BILLY

All's I'm saying is that if that Larry guy did his JOB, we wouldn't have to worry about ticket sales! And if he's going to pull us from the show, then I'm out of here!

VICKI

Babe. Babe, please. Please babe. Babe, look at me, look at me. Babe. Babe! Babe!

Billy looks at Vicki.

BILLY

WHAT BABE??

VICKI

Just calm down.

Greg gets up, as if to inspire.

GREG

Look guys, we did our best. The only thing we can do now is pray.

JUSTIN

Yes! The power of prayer! He works in mysterious ways!

GREG

Actually, it was more of a "desperation last-ditch effort" pray.

JUSTIN

God answers all!

GREG

Alright, everyone hold hands. Justin, would you care to lead us?

The group gathers around a cross hanging on the bus wall.

JUSTIN

Dear Lord, thank you for giving us this opportunity to touch millions of lives.

BILLY

Five lives according to pre-sales.

JUSTIN

...Five lives. We'd like to touch more, Lord. Please give us a sign.

CUT TO:

EXT. PORT-O-POTTYS NEXT TO THE TOUR BUS - CONTINUOUS

Stagehand 2 exits a stall, still rubbing his eyes from earlier.

STAGEHAND 2

Oh God, I think I'm getting sick. I just gotta take a little break.

He staggers to the side of the tour bus and slams his back against the bus, leaning against it.

CUT TO:

INT. TOUR BUS - CONTINUOUS

The cross on the tour bus wall turns upside-down. The group opens their eyes.

JUSTIN

The sign...THE SIGN! I TOLD YOU HE
WORKS IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS!

BILLY

I mean, I'll do anything at this
point.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTY FAIR STAGE - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

The band stands in performance attire, guitars slung. Larry stands in front of them.

LARRY

Okay, you guys BARELY made the
minimum attendance of ten people. I
don't know who those scary guys
are, or that weird steampunk guy in
the top hat, but you'd better thank
your lucky stars they're here. You
guys ready?

THE BAND

Ready!

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTY FAIR STAGE - LATER - NIGHT

A paltry five concertgoers stand close to the stage. Volkar and his Death Metal Cronies stand in the very back to silently judge. The band comes out and takes their positions. It's awkward silence the entire time. Justin gets on the mic.

JUSTIN

Hello Jacksonville! Thank you for
coming out to praise Him! As it is
said, "Come, let us sing for joy to
the LORD, let us shout aloud to the
Rock of our salvation!

VOLKAR (O.S.)

Pffft!

Justin turns back to the band.

JUSTIN

Alright, you guys ready? 1, 2, 3,
4!

The band starts to play "Offering". The giant sheet over the LED cross pulls back to reveal it's upside-down. Volkar and the Death Metal fans ooh in excitement. At the Chorus, the cross strobe flashes.

The normal Christian patrons fall down in a seizure-state, except for ERMA (80's, superfan, looks like a sweet old lady).

ERMA

Thank God for my cataracts! These
riffs are bitchin'!

Volkar types on his phone and puts it away. From seemingly out of the darkness, thousands of Death Metal fans in their various black band shirts flood the fairgrounds and it looks like a packed show.

Justin, Billy, and Vicki give each other a look. Skullfire beats the drums so hard. Greg screams his face out. This is truly a brutal show. The band is on their way!

END.