

Conversion
by
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FADE IN ON:

INT. RURAL CHURCH - DAY

CALVIN'S face glows with religious fervor. The intensity that makes orgasm seem tame.

A rakish forty-something, Calvin paces before his AUDIENCE. His flowing white robes skim the stage.

CALVIN

"For the devious are an abomination to the Lord. But he is *intimate* with the upright!" You know who is Devious these dark days?

Calvin whirls around to his congregation - moving with supernatural grace.

CALVIN

You do. Look deep into your hearts.

A hush descends on the packed crowd. Almost everyone - except the very sick - lean forward, eager to hear their pastor's words.

As does KEVIN - an awkward teen with pimples on his face. The Lord hasn't healed *those* yet. Backstage behind a velvet curtain, Kevin holds his breath.

Calvin's voice BOOMS - augmented by micro-speakers along his jaw, and amplifiers in his ear.

CALVIN

Devious is coveting powers not designed for mere mortals. Refusing to accept the proper place of man to be humbled before the Lord. None should dare take up the mantel of Gods, lest they crumble underneath the weight. Just as a woman should bow down before her man, thou shalt not suffer a witch to live!

Calvin storms to the front row. He snatches a discarded NEWSPAPER, and waves it in the air.

On the front page:

Congress Meets - Debate Over Mutant Problem Rages On:
Senator Liggand demands national registry, and construction of internment camps for Mutants deemed a Safety Risk. Representative Walsh objects.

INSERT: A picture of smiling Walsh alongside text.

Calvin dashes the paper to the ground. Despite his best efforts, it floats. The pastor grinds Walshes' photo under his shoe.

CALVIN

Make *no* mistake, dear friends. These mutants are not in truth human: rather, undercover demons in the flesh! And we know what's done with Demons, right?

Murmurs break out. One teen GIRL raises a timid hand.

TEEN GIRL

Burn them, Pastor Calvin?

Calvin's smile switches on - a handsome game show host.

CALVIN

100% correct! Darling, you win!

The girl blushes; she's in love. Behind the curtain, Kevin droops. He's jealous of Calvin's charms.

Calvin paces and preaches more.

CALVIN

All the pestilences the Faithful have suffered through the years: harlots, homosexuals, Muslim monsters - these were all just drills and training. For what, you ask? The day *Mutants* rain Hell upon the Earth. At that dark hour, we will rise up as one and smite them down; cast them lifeless from our world.

An OLD WOMAN waves her arm. Unlike the girl: very weak.

OLD WOMAN

Calvin, over here!

CALVIN

Preach, Old Woman!

OLD WOMAN

I have cancer, Pastor. Save me. I have a grandchild. I want to live!

Calvin freezes. The parish falls quiet. His answer:

CALVIN

No.

Half the church GASPS. The others don't move. Calvin pitches his voice to a more somber tone.

CALVIN

Do you know why that request is denied?

OLD WOMAN

Oh Dear. Because I sinned?

CALVIN

Well, there *is* that.

OLD WOMAN

Pastor, I've been pious throughout my life - mostly. Please: can't you forgive?

Calvin glides over, and rests a hand on her forehead.

CALVIN

Of course I do, good woman.

He pauses for effect.

CALVIN

But - God can't. Even *illness* is a blessing from Him. A blessed trial that makes us grow stronger. To ask it be taken away is a sin. A selfishness rebellion against His Will. Do we accept that, Children?

PARISHIONERS

No!!

99.99% of the church breaks out in applause. The only one NOT cheering is HENRY (70s). Slouched beside the old woman on a bench. Her husband, his arms are crossed.

Calvin notices Henry's lack of enthusiasm, calls him out.

CALVIN

You don't approve, Henry?

HENRY

(snorts)

I said no such thing. Please - go on.

CALVIN

Henry, your silence speaks stronger than words. Jesus has granted me the power to see into a man's soul. With your insolent attitude, everyone else sees it, too. When was the last time any of us saw you in church?

HENRY

Two years ago, I reckon. But who takes attendance these days?

CALVIN

I do. And the Lord himself!

HENRY

(mutters)

If there *was* a God, that is.

The old woman nervously grabs her husband's arm.

OLD WOMAN

Dear, don't start. Not here. Not *now*.

HENRY

Sweetheart, please. He shouldn't play with your emotions. You may like Pastor Calvin, but he's taking this too far.

Calvin leans forward, stares into Henry's eyes.

CALVIN

You're a non-believer? Do my ears deceive me? How can this be?

Henry shrugs. Everyone else - including Kevin - GASPS. Calvin innocently smiles.

CALVIN

That's fine. You'll learn soon. Behold!

With a practiced flourish, Calvin steps back. He moves like an angel; white robes flow.

CALVIN

For I have within me, the Power and the Glory - an incalculable gift from above!

With those words: CALVIN GLOWS.

No, not from a spotlight. The luminescence is internal. Electricity oozes from Calvin's skin, organs and bones. And most notably - his eyes.

They sparkle like diamonds. The audience watches in awe.

CALVIN

Bear witness to His undeniable Glory. I say to you now; venture out into the world and testify. Do not dally - Go!!

Behind the stage, Kevin CRANKS the microphone. So Calvin's last word really ROARS.

The teen girl from before nearly swoons.

Excited parishioners jump up. "Metaphorically" electrified, they flood en-mass towards the door.

As they exit, the DONATION BOX floods as well.

Once the last person leaves, Calvin collapses in a chair. Depleted of energy, he strips off his mini mike and drops it on the floor.

Calvin props his feet up on the PULPIT. Whips a SECURITY REMOTE out of his robes.

The front doors CLICK. Now locked.

CALVIN

Shit on a Sacramental Shingle. I thought they'd *never* go home.

Fishing in the pulpit, he pulls out a bottle of RED STAG.

The booze inside is depleted, too. Calvin GROANS, shoves it back. He bellows over his shoulder:

CALVIN

Kevin, you still there?

KEVIN

Yes, Pastor. At your beck and call.

CALVIN

Then don't stand there like a statue. Fetch me some water. Preaching is thirsty work. I'm parched!

Kevin scuttles over: glass and pitcher in hand.

CALVIN

(sniffs)

Is it Poland Spring?

KEVIN

We're out. I ordered more.

CALVIN

That too? Damn. I mean... darn.

KEVIN

But it's filtered. Like you - pure and clean.

CALVIN

If I must. Go on - pour.

Kevin bows and does as he's told. But his hand shakes -
in full view

CALVIN

Relax. I told you, filtered's fine.

KEVIN

It's not the water. Something more -

Kevin sucks in a breath. Tries to gather the courage to
face Calvin "man to man."

KEVIN

What you did on that stage today was -

CALVIN

The sermon was good today. No?

KEVIN

Good? You were magnificent!

Calvin takes a sip, studies Kevin's face.

CALVIN

What part did you fancy best?

KEVIN

Golly - what *didn't* I like?

CALVIN

Give me a list, Kev. And the hero worship
a rest. Just your honest impressions. No
particular order.

KEVIN

You want *my* opinion? I'm honored!

Calvin rolls his eyes.

CALVIN

Go on...

KEVIN

I guess what I liked most was the way you
communicated God's word to us simple
folk. And stood against the Sinful. You
were so -

CALVIN

Brave?

KEVIN

That's the word! Then God poured his energy into you. You were so bright. So beautiful...

Kevin's eyes drop; humbled by Calvin's holy presence. Which is why he misses Calvin's leer.

CALVIN

How about when I talked to that girl? I know how you look at her in Bible Class. You've got a crush on her. You fool!

KEVIN

You see everything, don't you?

Kevin shuffles a foot. Calvin ruffles the teen's hair.

CALVIN

Have faith, my boy. Eventually, she will perceive your value. Perhaps then, your souls and fates will be combined.

KEVIN

She'll like *me*? You're certain?

CALVIN

Well, only God can know for sure.

Kevin hesitates. Something more on his mind. A pro at body language, Calvin reads him like a book.

CALVIN

Something else weighs on your heart?

KEVIN

It does! How'd you know?

CALVIN

Is it a sin? If so, that can wait until tomorrow.

KEVIN

No - it's kind of different than that.

CALVIN

What is it, son?

KEVIN

I'm having a crisis of faith.

Calvin jumps up. Water splashes his pristine robes.

CALVIN

You, Kevin? Holy Mother, say it isn't so!

KEVIN

It's... hard to say at all, really. About those mutants in your sermon...

CALVIN

Those wicked demons? May they be damned!

KEVIN

Uh, the bad ones - sure. Like, the ones that turn into animals.

CALVIN

Disgusting black souled witches.

KEVIN

And the ones that kill people. They should be locked in a prison all their lives.

CALVIN

Or burn them at the stake, and be done.

KEVIN

But what about the harmless ones?

CALVIN

There's no such thing as a "harmless mutant", Kevin. Just like liberals babble about smart women or innocent Jews. They're *all* abominations in God's eyes.

KEVIN

Pastor, I've a confession. I'm a mutant, too.

Kevin cowers, shields his face from the expected blow.

KEVIN

But don't burn me. I swear, I'm fine!

Calvin stands over the teen, and looks down.

CALVIN

You're an honest boy, Kevin. Sincere. And God appreciates you for that. What powers has Satan given you?

KEVIN

It can't be Satan! Why would he give me -

CALVIN
Spit it out! What can you do?

KEVIN
I can - um - *change things*.

Calvin's eyes widen in sudden greed.

CALVIN
You mean, like wood into gold?

KEVIN
Anything solid's way too hard. I tried.
But the molecular bonds just won't move.

CALVIN
Is it gas? Generating oxygen in water.
That would be a wondrous talent, boy.

KEVIN
Gas is too slippery. I can't hold it
still in one place long enough.

CALVIN
Then what *can* you change: liquid?

KEVIN
Yeah. Nothing important, though. I found
out one day when Mom packed OJ in my
lunch. I told her I wanted Pepsi. I was
upset - thinking about how she never
listens to what I want. I accidentally
touched a drop. Then, blam. Pepsi: there
it was!

A grin grows on Calvin's face.

CALVIN
Lord All Mighty, that's a development!

KEVIN
You don't hate me?

CALVIN
Not at all. Have you tried other liquids?
Say, water into wine?

Kevin shrugs and sticks his pinky into Calvin's glass.
The water turns red. Voila!

Calvin grabs it and sips. Swishes the wine in his mouth.

CALVIN

Not California good - but tasty. Kevin, I
you've got a promotion in store.

KEVIN

I thought you hated mutants and would
smite me? If you want to, I promise I
won't fight.

CALVIN

The fact you told me's admirable. Not a
quality one just throws away. Kevin,
I'll let you in on a little secret. Just
for your ears and mine - swear to God?

KEVIN

Yeah?

CALVIN

(whispers)

I really don't hate mutants.

KEVIN

But you said -

CALVIN

Fuck that noise.

KEVIN

Pastor... that's a real bad word!!

CALVIN

(grins)

Damned right. And I'll swear more to make
a point. Fact is, I'm a mutant, too.

Kevin backs off.

KEVIN

No!

CALVIN

(chuckles)

Yes. Oh, indeed.

KEVIN

What can you do?

CALVIN

Isn't it obvious? I light up like a
firefly. Not a very useful talent. But it
gets my point across.

He points to the overflowing cash box at the door.

CALVIN
And brings in tons of green.

Kevin stares at his idol.

KEVIN
So - that's *not* God talking through you?

CALVIN
Just a parlor trick that pays the bills.

KEVIN
You couldn't save that Old Lady's life?
That's why you told her no?

CALVIN
I gave her attention and hope. That's a
worthy enough gift... I think.

KEVIN
Then why do you want other mutants dead?

CALVIN
That's just talk. And is there any use to
being special like us, if we let other
mutants run around God's Green Earth?
Whether Liggand and Walsh ultimately
succeed, it's win-win for us.

Calvin reaches down, helps Kevin up.

CALVIN
Partner - is it a deal? We could work
together. I'll keep your secret, you keep
mine. I'll put in the good word for you
with that girl. *You* save the parish
coffers by turning water into wine.

Calvin snakes an arm around Kevin, guides him away.

CALVIN
Kid: can you do that conversion trick
with Red Stag?

KEVIN
I guess.

CALVIN
I think it's a God-Damned miracle we
crossed paths. The start of a heavenly
friendship indeed...

FINAL FADE OUT: