

The Curse of Man

By

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INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY- DAY

The sanctuary of the church is nearly EMPTY. One man, ZAC sits towards the front.

ZAC (VO)
*Why am I here? Why did I let him
persuade me into doing this?*

Zac LEANS FORWARD over the back of the pew in front of him. His eyes are FIXED at the cross on the wall ahead.

ZAC (VO) (CONT'D)
*He is family but why should I give
him a second chance?*

Zac PICKS UP a bible and begins to FLIP through it aimlessly.

ZAC (VO) (CONT'D)
*He's a monster. And I'm not
obligated to make exceptions for
him.*

Zac TOSSES the Bible aside, in disgust. He folds his arms, leans back and ROLLS his eyss.

ZAC (VO) (CONT'D)
*And there's no way what he
deserved. He hasn't been changed
after four years.*

Zac GETS UP and begins to LEAVE.

ZAC (VO) (CONT'D)
*I shouldn't have to listen to his
BS. He's gonna ramble on and on
about how he's... God dammit.*

Zac STOPS near the door. His father, CARL, STANDS in the doorway. He HOLDS a Bible.

CARL
Hi Zac.

Zac AVOIDS eye contact

ZAC
Hi Dad.

CARL
Can we sit?

(CONTINUED)

ZAC
(rolling his eyes)
Sure.

Zac WALKS into a pew to his right. Carl sits down in the pew in front of Zac, and TURNS his body to talk. The two sit in silence for a bit.

ZAC
So... you said you wanted to talk.

CARL
Zac, I'm sorry.

Zac lets out a loud, sarcastic LAUGH.

ZAC
Really? Fifteen years of abuse,
and you think four years behind
bars makes up for all that? Tell
me, Dad, why should I forgive you?

Carl HOLDS UP the Bible he carries.

CARL
Because it's in the Bible. Zac,
Jesus died on the cross to forgive
us for our sins. Acts 13:38
"Therefore, my friends, I want you
to know that through Jesus the
forgiveness of sins is proclaimed
to you."

ZAC
Newsflash dad, I don't believe in
God. It's hard to believe in a
spirit "full of good" when it does
nothing.

CARL
Does nothing? The Bible is full of
good the Lord has done.

Zac LEAPS UP in anger.

ZAC
(yelling, angry)
I'm talking about my life
dad! Every night since I was 5 I
prayed. I *prayed* for the abuse to
stop. I *prayed* to be rescued from
you. I *prayed* for the Lord to do
good in MY LIFE! And you know what
happened?

(CONTINUED)

Carl SHAKES his head, SADDENED.

ZAC (CONT'D)
(yelling)
Mom left! For SIX YEARS I prayed
dad. And nothing good came. Where
was God, huh? Where was his
good? I'll tell you... no
where! Because it's all crap!

Zac FLOPS back down and COVERS his face.

CARL
I'm sorry you feel that way,
Zac. And truly, from the bottom of
my heart, whether you choose to
forgive me or not, I'm sorry...for
everything. I was a lousy father,
and I hurt you.

Zac looks at his dad, reluctantly.

CARL (CONT'D)
I can understand if you don't want
anything to do with me. But I'm
willing to fix this relationship if
you are. I've forgiven you for
your actions.

ZAC
(questioning)
My actions? You mean fighting you
and calling the cops in self
defense? I'm not sorry I did that.

CARL
Okay. Well like I said, for this
to work, it has to be both ways.

Zac BURIES his face, again.

ZAC
Just go away, Dad.

CARL
If you ever want to get a hold of
me, use this. Bye, Zac.

Carl sets a piece of paper by Zac.

Carl STANDS UP and LEAVES. Zac does not respond.

PASTOR MONROE walks into the sanctuary.

(CONTINUED)

MONROE

It wasn't my intention to eavesdrop, you were yelling after all but...

ZAC

(interrupting)

I'm sorry for the disruption. I didn't mean to yell, I'm just...

Zac doesn't finish his sentence. Pastor Monroe sits down where Carl sat.

MONROE

You're angry with your father. I heard what you said. It sounds like you're childhood...

ZAC

(interrupting again)

Sucked? Was rough? Yeah, no offense preacher, but I really don't need someone to tell me that.

MONROE

I'm sorry. I'm here to listen.

Zac looks at him, curiously.

ZAC

(anger building)

What do you want to know? How my dad hit me every night? How my mother just left without a word, leaving me in the hell hole I had to call home? How I should be so angry with that bastard?

MONROE

Should be? Are you not angry with him?

ZAC

(fighting back tears)

I don't know. I want to hate him, I really do. But for some reason, after he went to jail, I've never felt satisfied. I thought I'd be happy with him out of my life. No more bruises, no more insults. But thinking back, I was never truly happy.

(CONTINUED)

MONROE

Why?

ZAC

(emotionally)

I'm not sure. Maybe it's because he's family. Maybe it's because even though he hit me every night, he still provided for me unlike my worthless mother.

MONROE

Forgiveness is a strong virtue. You know, Jesus has forgiven all of us for our sins.

ZAC

Yeah, I know. My dad quoted some Bible verse. But I don't believe that crap. (pauses) No offense.

MONROE

None taken. Listen, son.

ZAC

My name's Zac.

MONROE

Alright, Zac. I'm not going to sit here and try to persuade you about His existence. All I'm going to say is that I believe he does exist. I believe he lives in all our hearts. And I believe he does work inside of us, to make us better people, to make us stronger people. That's why I believe you feel this way.

ZAC

Because you think He's in my heart? That's why you think I don't hate my dad?

MONROE

Yes, but of course you can believe what you want to.

Zac LOOKS DOWN at his father's note: a PHONE NUMBER.

ZAC (VO)

I shouldn't forgive him, but, I may give him a chance.

(CONTINUED)

Zac stands up and begins to WALK OUT. He stops and TURNS.

ZAC

Thank you.

MONROE

You're welcome.

Zac turns and walks out of the sanctuary.

ZAC (VO)

*Hopefully it'll finally make me
happy. Maybe this hate is an inner
demon I must defeat. All I know
is, hatred is the curse of man.*

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Zac stops on the front steps of the church. He looks at his paper again and pulls out his phone to dial the number.

FADE TO BLACK

Roll Credits

While credits roll...

A dial tone is heard. Zac's phone rings several times.

CARL (VO)

Hello?

End.