

FISH
A SHORT FILM

Written by

Mike J. McAllister

03/22/2022

Address
Phone Number

OVER TITLE CARDS:

TED

Amen, brothers and sisters. Give to the lord and he will provide. Now, we have a very special treat for you today. You might remember him from the early 90s. He used to be America's favorite little minister.

INT. TV STATION - DAY

Ted, an older and well-dressed man speaks to the camera. He offers a warm and welcoming presence. He's dressed well. As he should be. His congregation paid for it.

TED

Back from an exciting donation drive. Please welcome back to the Wisdom Network fold, Marshall Beckman.

The camera pans over to Marshall. Early 30s. He looks like he could be handsome and well-put together. But he has a few scrapes. His hair is combed, albeit a little greasy. He wears make-up to cover some bruises. He looks at the camera. He looks eager to speak. But also like he's planning something. He smiles. But then stops to spit a little bit of blood onto the desk. Ted is trying to hide his disgust. Marshall notices. He doesn't care. He smiles at the camera.

TITLE CARD: FISH

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

SUBTITLE: YESTERDAY...

Marshall, looking much cleaner, stands next to a younger man, KEVIN (early 20s). They are well-dressed and are carrying Bibles in hand. Marshall rings the doorbell. The door opens. A child answers. The men put on their friendliest faces.

MARSHALL

Seasons greetings! My name is Marshall Beckman. This is my associate, Kevin Carmode.

KEVIN

Merry Christmas!

MARSHALL

We represent the Wisdom Point Church across town. Are you familiar with us? Or maybe our TV Station?

KEVIN

Are you a Morley and Friends fan, perhaps?

The kid doesn't know how to answer.

DAD (OC)

Who is it, sport?

KID

I don't know. Some Church guys?

DAD (O.C.)

Tell them to fuck off!

The kid shuts the door.

KEVIN

Maybe we should give up, Mister Beckman.

MARSHALL

Woah, why the sudden crisis of faith?

KEVIN

You were right. It's all bull. Nobody cares anymore. Nobody wants to be saved.

MARSHALL

Hey, man. This is only our third house. We're down but not out. You wanna get those donations right?

KEVIN

Yeah?

MARSHALL

You wanna get Bibles to underprivileged kids?

KEVIN

Of course I do!

MARSHALL

Then we keep going. Starting with that house over there.

He points a a shadier looking house. Loud music plays from inside.

KEVIN

I dunno, man.

MARSHALL

Oh, don't be so judgmental.

Marshall crosses the street with purpose. Kevin follows. Marshall makes it to the door and rings the doorbell. Nobody answers yet.

KEVIN

Maybe we should just go to the next house.

Kevin is interrupted when JIMMY, a gruff-looking older man, answers the door. He is wearing a sweater and a long wool coat, and a cigarette dangles from his mouth. The music continues to play.

JIMMY

What do you want?

MARSHALL

Hi. Uhm... I'm Marshall Beckman from the Wisdom Point Church. This is--

JIMMY

We don't want any.

He tries to shut the door. Marshall blocks it with his foot.

MARSHALL

Oh, we're not selling something.

KEVIN

Except maybe some salvation if you're interested!

Kevin smiles. Jimmy is unamused. Kevin clears his throat.

MARSHALL

We just wanted to talk about the Lord Jesus Christ.

KEVIN

His birthday is coming, you know.

JIMMY

Well, that's okay. We're good. We love Jesus here. Now goodbye.

MARSHALL

Look, sir, if you could help us out, we would really appreciate it.

JIMMY

I said piss off!

Suddenly, a door behind Jimmy BURSTS OPEN, and a WOMAN, arms tied together and gagged, charges for the door for dear life. She is screaming loudly in terror at what lies below. Behind her, a bald man, ACE, follows her and pulls out a handgun. He pulls the trigger and shoots the woman right in the back, in front of the boys. She falls to the floor in front of the terrified pair. Some blood spatters on their work clothes. Their mouths are agape at the horror they just witnessed.

Ace walks to the stereo and shuts off the music. Marshall looks down at the body, blood on him, and trying to catch his breath without letting the men smell his fear. He is failing horribly.

MARSHALL (SHAKEN)

Whhhhat the fuck...

ACE

Who the hell are these guys?

JIMMY

I don't know, man. They're some Mormons or something.

ACE

Well, bring them in here.

MARSHALL

We can just go. We didn't see anything.

Ace pulls a gun on them. Marshall and Kevin freeze.

ACE

You think I'm fucking with you, kid? I said get in here.

Ace cocks the gun. Jimmy grabs Marshall by the collar and yanks him inside. Marshall tries to run but Jimmy grabs him and drags him inside. Jimmy then tries to slam the door. The door fails to close. The body is still lying there.

ACE (CONT'D)
Pick the fucking body up, Jimmy!
Jesus Christ.

WIDE EXT SHOT: Jimmy drags the dead body back into the house. All that can be heard are the pleasant sounds of suburbia from a distance. Jimmy shuts the door.

INT. FERERRA HOUSE - DAY

Ace continues to point a gun at the boys. The boys turn around, facing the two men.

MARSHALL
Look, obviously we came here at a
bad time. We can just--

Ace punches Marshall in the face. Knocking him out COLD. Kevin SCREAMS before being knocked out, too.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Marshall is regaining consciousness. He hears the brothers muttering.

ACE
I can't even believe you.

JIMMY
It wasn't my fault!

ACE
Well, now Sullivan's pissed. You're
lucky I was able to reason with
him.

JIMMY
Okay, so you reasoned with him. Big
friggin' deal. So now what?

ACE
Just press the record button. I got
this.

JIMMY
Hold on. I wanna plug in the
lights.

ACE
Why?

JIMMY
Because.

ACE
The Christmas lights?

JIMMY
Yeah?

ACE
Are we a hipster bar in Austin?

JIMMY
No, I--

ACE
Are we making a festive snuff film?

JIMMY
No! Unless you want to. I got some
Santa hats.

ACE
Just shut the hell up and press
record. I got this.

Ace SLAPS Marshall awake.

ACE (CONT'D)
WAKE UP, assholes.

Ace sits down in his directors chair. Marshall looks around. Its a cold basement, barely lit with Christmas lights. He gets a good look at his assailants. Jimmy stands behind a camera. He does a long hit from an inhaler. Marshall looks down. A dead body lays before him.

MARSHALL
What the hell?

ACE
Alright, Jesus Freaks. My brother
here and I run a very lucrative
organization here. And you nearly
cost us one of our most valuable
customers. So since you ruined that
project, we're going to be making a
new one. You boys will either do
what I say, when I say it.

(MORE)

ACE (CONT'D)

Or Jimmy here will come over there
and blow a hole in your pious
little fuckin' heads. Comprende?

Marshall just glares at Ace, saying nothing. Ace sighs and gets up from his chair and gets face to face.

ACE (CONT'D)

Forget how to nod? Do we have an
understanding, or don't we?

Marshall spits a bloody glob in Ace's face. Ace wipes off the spit and is amused by Marshall's chutzpah.

ACE (CONT'D)

(to Jimmy)

You got that thing rolling, right?

Jimmy stands behind the camera, giving Ace a thumbs up.

ACE (CONT'D)

Great.

Ace fiercely chokes Marshall.

ACE (CONT'D)

You listen to me, you little prick.
You can try to escape, but we know
all about you, Marshall Beckman. We
have your ID. And your information.
So if you try anything stupid,
we'll find you. Your little pad on
Overlook Lane will burn to the
ground. Not just apartment 237. The
whole. Damn. Lot. And if we can't
find you, we'll pay someone who
will. And you won't want to be
found.

He lets go.

ACE (CONT'D)

Maybe we should ask your little
friend.

He goes over to Kevin OFF CAMERA, and we only hear some rustling and screaming.

MARSHALL

HEY, LEAVE HIM ALONE!

The screaming stops. Jimmy snickers at the action on camera. Ace returns to frame and gives Marshall an intense stare.

Marshall stares back, his face just screaming: "I'm going to kill you."

ACE

Alright then. So let's get to work.

Ace gets up and walks to his directors chair.

A beat.

ACE (CONT'D)

In this first scene, you're going to cut this body up for us.

KEVIN

Please don't.

ACE

Before we begin, how about you tell our benefactor why he's looking at your ugly mugs.

MARSHALL

I... I came here to talk about the Lord.

ACE

So, this is some sort of Christmas thing, right?

MARSHALL

And what if it was? You got the lights for it.

ACE

Kid's a comedian.

JIMMY

He likes the lights, though.

ACE

Shut up. Nobody likes the lights.

KEVIN

Please.

(trembling)

I just want to go home.

ACE

So you came here on a mission from God, huh?

JIMMY

Like the Blue's Brothers.

ACE
 (snickering, nodding)
 Like the fucking Blues Brothers.

ACE (CONT'D)
 Well, let's hear a prayer, then.

KEVIN
 If you just let us go, we won't
 tell anyone. I promise.

ACE
 Come on. Just one prayer. God's got
 your back, right? Come on, choir
 boy. Have the Lord give me a good
 smiting.

Ace spreads his arms: "I'm waiting..."

ACE (CONT'D)
 Alright. I think we're done playing
 with them. Let's just get started
 on cutting her up.

MARSHALL
 With what? A chainsaw?

ACE
 Yeah. That's what we wanna do, wake
 the fucking neighbors. You're using
 a saw.

He tosses a pair of hand-saws at the boys.

ACE (CONT'D)
 Sans chain.

The boys just stare at the saws. Jimmy pulls out a glock and
 cocks it, pointing it at the two frightened men. Not wanting
 to get shot, the duo hesitantly pick up the saws.

ECU: One saw is set against the dead flesh. Upon the first
 cut, a bit of blood SPURTS OUT. But the camera QUICKLY CUTS
 to a DOLLY SHOT of Jimmy and Ace watching the grim actions
 happenings off-camera. An unsettling score swells as they
 watch intently, almost gleefully. Kevin can barely contain
 his disgust at what he is forced to do. Finally, Jimmy taps
 ace on the shoulder.

JIMMY
 I'm gonna go get some coffee. You
 want some?

ACE
Sure.

JIMMY
Black as usual?

ACE
Yup.

JIMMY
Gotcha.

Jimmy heads out the door.

ACE
And a closed door this time!

JIMMY (O.S.)
Fuck you.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. BACK YARD- DAY

A pair of trash bags are dropped at the boys' feet. The camera pans up to the brothers. Ace is eating a cup of yogurt.

ACE
You boys ever do some gardening?

The boys are revealed to be covered in blood. Kevin's traumatized.

MARSHALL
A bit.

KEVIN
I used to volunteer.

ACE
Great. Well, then next you're going to be digging some holes for these bags. Got it?

MARSHALL
No.

ACE
Excuse me?

MARSHALL
I said no.

Ace takes out his gun.

ACE

I don't think you're in a position
to say no. Don't you?

MARSHALL

Burying a dead body in a suburban
neighborhood?

ACE

You think you're gonna get
somebodys attention?

MARSHALL

Gee. I don't know.
(looking any direction)
HELP! HEEEEELP! WE'VE BEEN KIDNAPPED
BY LUNATICS, HELP!

Jimmy takes a shovel and starts BEATING Marshall with it.

JIMMY

Shut your mouth!

He hits him again.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Dig the holes!

He hits him again.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

I swear to God, if we have to put a
hole in your heads we'll do it. Try
it.

Jimmy drops the shovel and leaves.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Pain in the ass.
(to Ace)
Is that the last yogurt?

ACE

Yes, it is!

JIMMY

I was gonna eat that.

ACE

Sucks to be you, then!

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Ace continues eating his yogurt.

ACE
Okay, I'm back.

JIMMY
Thank God. I really have to pee.

ACE
Well, go pee. And we'll wrap
picture when you're done.

JIMMY
Thanks, man.

Before he goes, Ace stops Jimmy and hugs him.

ACE
You're doing great, buddy. We're
almost done, here.

JIMMY
Thanks.

Ace pats Jimmy on the back and lets him go. He hurries out and into the bathroom. While in the bathroom, he realizes that urinating isn't the only thing he need to do. Meanwhile, Ace starts to feel ill.

ACE
Oh, God.

Kevin and Marshall notice the sudden change in Ace's demeanor.

ACE (CONT'D)
Damn it.

He races over to the boys to handcuff then before he runs out of the garage and shut the door. But not entirely. It's only slightly open.

KEVIN
What do you think is wrong?

MARSHALL I think he's sick.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
I'm scared, Mister Beckman.

MARSHALL

Just be cool, alright? I'm trying to think of something. Before I came back to the church, I've been in a few drug deals that went tits up. So...

Marshall sneezes and, by reflex, covers his mouth. He realizes that his hands are free.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

No way.

Marshall laughs.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

The dumb asshole didn't even cuff me properly!

KEVIN

I told you God was awesome! Help me next!

MARSHALL

I gotta leave you here.

KEVIN

Wait, what?

MARSHALL

Don't worry. I'll come back. I'm going upstairs and I'll take them out of commission. Or I'll just go to the guys house next door and call 911.

KEVIN

Why can't you take me with you?

MARSHALL

Can you still move that fast if you're still cuffed? Sorry, kid. You're a liability at this point.

KEVIN

Then what do I do?!

MARSHALL

Just be brave for me, okay? Pray if you really think it'll help.

KEVIN

Please, don't leave me here.

MARSHALL
I'll be back, I promise.

Marshall heads to the stairs.

KEVIN
Mister Beckman! Come back!

Marshall stops at the bottom of the stairs. He eyes the camera.

MARSHALL
Huh.

INT. LIVING ROOM- LATER

Marshall peaks out the door. He hears Ace and Jimmy arguing. Ace stands outside the bathroom and knocks on the door.

ACE
Jesus, Jimmy, how long are you going to be in there?

JIMMY
Why do you ask?

ACE
I think I ate some bad yogurt or something.

JIMMY
(slightly strained)
Well, you're going to be waiting a while!

ACE
For Gods sake.

JIMMY
Look, man. If you're gonna blow chunks, why don't you go to the backyard?

ACE
Well, I gotta brush my teeth afterwards.

JIMMY
Why?

ACE
Because I take pride in my smile?

JIMMY
It'll be a while, man.

ACE
Fine.

Ace goes around the corner and heads out the back door. Marshall takes that opportunity to run for the front door. He opens the front door, only to see a man in a Santa hat standing at the door.

CAROLER
Merry Christmas!
(singing)
Si-i-lent night... ho-o-ly...

MARSHALL
Shit!

Marshall closes to come up with Marshall thinks the door. He gets on his knees and attempts a plan. The caroler knocks on the door. He thinks it over and shrugs.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)
Fuck it.

He opens the door. He sees the same Caroler, who is heading to his car. He makes a run for it.

CAROLER
Hey! Change your mind?
(singing)
Silent night...

Marshall bumps into him and charges down the sidewalk.

CAROLER (CONT'D)
Hey! The heck you going?

Ace overhears the ruckus and runs to the front. By the time he gets there, Marshall is almost out of his eye view. He stops by the caroler.

CAROLER (CONT'D)
Friend of yours?

ACE
Shit. He's my junkie cousin. We're trying to get him to sober up.

CAROLER
Oh, no! I had a cousin like that.
It's really hard.

ACE
Can you help me get him?

CAROLER
Well sure, partner. My car's that way.

He leads the way.

ACE
Thank you very much.

EXT. THE NEIGHBORHOOD- NIGHT

Marshall is further down the block and tries to find a place to hide. He hides behind a car on the street and peers over the side. He sees an unrecognizable car. But loud music is blasting out of it. It sounds like the music he heard at the Ferrera house before. He stays hidden as the car passes. Marshall takes deep breaths.

Another car is heading his way. He knows he needs to get help somehow. And he won't make it far on foot. He takes a chance and goes for it.

He runs out in front of the car. He waves his hands up.

MARSHALL
Hey! Help! Stop!

The car slows down. The headlights blind Marshall as he makes way to the drivers window. The driver rolls down the window.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)
Oh, thank God, man. You gotta help me. It's--

From a wide shot: Ace grabs Marshall by his collar, takes out a taser, and tases Marshall. Marshall falls to the ground. Ace gets out of the car and drags him into the car.

FADE TO:

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Marshall is sitting by Kevin.

MARSHALL
I'm sorry, buddy. I tried.

KEVIN
I know you did, Mister Beckman.

Jimmy adjusts the camera.

ACE
Looking good?

JIMMY
Fincher would love it.

ACE
Good to hear.
(to boys)
You little bastards have been dancing on my last nerve today. But it'll be over soon enough. We should offer a round of applause, though, right? Give them a hand.

Jimmy claps.

ACE (CONT'D)
So for the climax, every movie needs a climax, right?

He picks up two switchblades and tosses them at the boys' knees.

ACE (CONT'D)
You two are going to fight for our clients amusement to the death.

KEVIN
(trembling, quietly sobbing)
Please, sir...

ACE
Oh, stop it now.

KEVIN
Just let us go!

ACE
Oh, give it a rest, will ya? I know you didn't want to be here. But you knocked on our door. You wrecked the shoot. So here we are. This is the ending. There's no version of this where you go home and spend Christmas with your families. This is it.

Ace goes back to his seat.

ACE (CONT'D)
Now... action.

The boys do nothing.

ACE (CONT'D)
I said, "ACTION!"

Still nothing. Ace pulls out his gun.

ACE (CONT'D)
I said action, goddamn it!

He tosses the gun to Jimmy. Jimmy stands by Kevin, pointing a gun at his head. Kevin grabs his knife and lunges at Marshall. Marshall punches Kevin in the face. He then has Marshall in a chokehold.

ACE (CONT'D)
There we go. THERE we go.

Marshall lets go of Kevin. Hugs him.

MARSHALL
I'm sorry, Kevin.

He then whispers something else in his ear. Something we can't make out. And then STABS Kevin in the side.

ACE
What a fight. What a SHOW! Alright, kid. Finish him off. The Voice is on in an hour.

MARSHALL
No.

ACE
Excuse me?

MARSHALL
I'm done. I'm not doing any more of this.

Ace takes out his gun and shoots Marshall in the thigh.

ACE
I don't think you have a choice, buddy.

MARSHALL
Well, I'm sorry. But it's pretty hard to do a fight scene. Since the camera isn't rolling.

A beat.

ACE

What?

Ace goes to the camera.

ACE (CONT'D)

Where's the red light?

He looks at the monitor.

ACE (CONT'D)

(to Jimmy)

You forgot to put the memory card
in?

JIMMY

What? No! I didn't!

ACE

It says it's missing, you idiot.

Marshall starts laughing.

MARSHALL

Wow. You two are the dumbest damn
criminals I've ever seen.

ACE

You shut up.

MARSHALL

How do you run a lucrative business
when you can't remember a memory
card?

ACE

I said shut up!

Kevin wakes up, grabs his knife and STABS Jimmy in the foot.
And then stabs him in the chest.

ACE (CONT'D)

No!

He runs to Marshall and attacks him.

MARSHALL

Kevin! The gun!

Kevin kicks the gun over to Marshall, who grabs it and
quickly shoots at Ace. A bullet hits Ace in the stomach, and
he falls over in pain.

Marshall, with all his strength, crawls over toward Ace, grabs the camera tripod and snaps the camera off of its mount. He then bludgeons Ace in the face with the camera over and over again. POV SHOT: The camera hitting Ace's face as the lens gets bloodier and bloodier. He then takes the gun and completely unloads the gun on Ace's face. He screams all of his anger and pain out of his system and drops the gun to the ground. It clatters. Marshall catches his breath. All he can hear are Jimmy's faint cries of pain. Until Marshall shoots Jimmy in the head. Kevin screams.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

(to Kevin)

You okay, buddy?

KEVIN

Yes, Mister Beckman.

MARSHALL

Good. You did good, kid.

KEVIN

Thanks.

He starts searching through Aces coat.

MARSHALL

Now if I can just find my keys, we can get us to a friendly face who can patch us right up.

KEVIN

What about the police?

MARSHALL

Let's worry about that later.

He then finds a cell phone. It's Ace's phone. He searches through Ace's call history and notices a familiar name.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

Let's see who this Sullivan guy is.

He hits the call button. After a few rings, it goes to voicemail.

SULLIVAN

Hello! You've reached the cellular voice mail of Morley Sullivan, head of Youth Programming at the Wisdom Network and host of Sully and Friends. I cannot take your call right now but leave a name--

Marshall quickly hangs up and is in shock.

MARSHALL
The puppet guy?

KEVIN
Oh, man. I used to love his show.

MARSHALL
Come on. We gotta go. Now.

FADE TO:

EXT. WISDOM POINT CHANNEL STUDIO - DAY

The next day, Marshall and Kevin pull up.

KEVIN
You sure this is a good idea?

MARSHALL
What better way to cancel a guy?
You're not chickening out, are you?

KEVIN
No. Let's get him.

Marshall opens the car door.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
And Marsh?

MARSHALL
Yeah, bud?

KEVIN
Please don't tell my Dad I wore
make-up.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Back to where we started. Ted introduces a battered-looking Marshall.

TED
Marshall Beckman! How you been
buddy?

MARSHALL
Oh, couldn't be better, Ted.
Couldn't be better. Just...
(MORE)

MARSHALL (CONT'D)
spreading the good word! The word
of the lord!

TED
Hallelujah. What a fine upstanding
Christian man you've become.

MARSHALL
Thanks, Ted.

TED
Well, we'd love to talk more about
your Tomes for Tots adventure this
week. But first, we got live from
the San Antonio Children's
Hospital, your favorite puppeteer
and mine. Morley Sullivan!

SULLIVAN (V.O.)
Morning Ted. Praise the Lord.

TED
Praise the Lord. You remember
Little Marshall.

SULLIVAN (V.O.)
I do! My, you've grown.

MARSHALL
Sully! You old son of a gun. How
the heck are you? Touching a lot of
lives over there?

SULLIVAN
I sure hope so. Everyone in San
Antonio has been just so wonderful
to me.

MARSHALL
I bet they're treating you well at
the hotel.

TED
Yes. We treat 'em well here at
TWN.

MARSHALL
We certainly do. Tell me, Sully: I
like to go to San An every once in
a while. Have you been taking in
some of that famous scenery? Having
some fun?

SULLIVAN

Oh, no. Nothing thrilling for me.

MARSHALL

Oh, that's too bad. You really should. When I'm out of town, I just like to cut loose and let my freak flag fly. You know what I'm saying?

SULLIVAN

Uhm.. you... you bet I am.

MARSHALL

Terrific. Terrific. Because I got something for you that you might find interesting. Tell me, are you familiar with Ace and Jimmy Ferrara?

A beat. Ted becomes suspicious of Marshalls intentions.

SULLIVAN

I've met so many people in my travels, my boy,

MARSHALL

I bet it. I met these gentlemen the other day and they claim to be such good friends of yours. They're quite the entrepreneurs. A real good ol' slice of Americana.

SULLIVAN

Good to know.

MARSHALL

I guess I better cut to the chase.

Marshall reaches into his pocket inside of his jacket. He pulls out Ace's cell phone.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

You know what this is?

SULLIVAN

Looks like an ordinary cell phone to me.

There is now a chill in the air.

MARSHALL

I can say why you'd say that. But there's something very interesting about this phone. Something I'd like to share with our friends at home.

TED

I don't know if this is the time, Marshall.

MARSHALL

Oh, I insist. I think these fine folks need to here it. They need to be inspired, right? We couldn't deprive our friends of a testament of Gods love, right?

SULLIVAN

No, please. There's no need-

It's no use. Marshall puts the phone on speaker and puts it up to a microphone. It's a voicemail from Sullivan to Ace.

SULLIVAN (VIA VOICEMAIL) (CONT'D)

Ace. It's Sully. Just calling in to check out how it's coming along. I want you to make sure that bitch is dead and untraceable. And put those two Jesus freaks in the ground while you're at it. Keep it on camera, and keep it bloody. Do so, and you will be paid very handsomely. Don't fuck it up.

The voicemail ends. Marshall puts the phone away in his pocket. There is a chill in the room. Marshall stares at the camera. He then cracks a smile.

CUT TO BLACK

CREDITS.