

GRUESOME WORSHIP
by Rick Founds

There was blood all over the guy's face. It was like something out of a Friday the 13th movie.

It was a hot, sweaty Thursday evening, smack in the middle of one of the warmest summers on record. The sanctuary was filled to capacity, and the air conditioning wasn't working all that well. This was one of those periodic special nights of worship. We would exchange the normal time allotted for in-depth study, with an extended time of praise, worship and prayer. The Spirit of God was present in a very powerful way, despite the muggy conditions. Throughout the building, people were enthusiastically singing and worshipping the Lord. Most people had their eyes closed, some with hands raised, some standing in awe, some sitting, some quietly kneeling, as the worship team continued to lead with songs of gratitude and love to our Lord and Savior.

For the past few songs, I had been singing with my eyes closed, enjoying a particularly clear sense of the love and presence of Jesus. I became aware of a sound behind me, and slightly to my right. Turning my head in that direction, I opened my eyes. There was my drummer; head down, still quietly and sensitively keeping the beat, but his shoulders were trembling. Wow. I thought. He is really in tune with the presence of God tonight. There he is, gently weeping as he worships God with skillful praise. Then he looked up. He stared at me with pain in his eyes. The pain that only comes with trying to suppress extremely inappropriate laughter. He glanced toward the front row, just to my left. I followed his gaze.

The poor guy in the front row looked like he had just been pulled from a severe car accident! Blood in his hair. Blood smeared all over his forehead, cheeks and chin. Blood on what was once a nice blue shirt. Blood on one of the hands he had raised to the heavens. Oh no! I thought to myself. We've got one of those wacko cult weirdos. One of these people like the ancient prophets of Baal, who thinks he needs to mutilate himself in order to be heard by God. Great. Now what? My drummer had nearly bitten off his own tongue to keep from laughing, but he kept on playing. Miraculously, nobody else seemed to have noticed yet. I thought to myself, better do another "sing to the Lord with your eyes closed" type of song 'till I can get some help here.

Finally I began to understand what was happening. It was hot. It was sweaty. This guy had some kind of scab on his neck. Maybe from a cut or scrape. Maybe it was a giant zit, I don't know, but there it was, and it had been itching, and he'd been scratching. It was a morbidly fascinating thing to watch. I observed with great wonder, as I continued to sing the melody and lyric of the current song. (an interesting experience, kind of like juggling with your brain.) There he sat, with eyes closed and hands lifted. From all indications, his heart was comfortably situated before the throne of God. What he was completely unaware of, was the fact that as he would unconsciously respond to the itch on his neck, he would uncoagulate his wound, collect a fresh supply of blood on his palm and fingers, rub his hand across his face, through his hair, and finally across the front of his shirt. Then reverently lift his hand once again in honor to the God of Heaven.

I was able to get the attention of one of the other singers on stage. I indicated with my head in the direction of the activity in the front row. She read my mind and quietly slipped off stage and quickly made her way to the nearby kitchen area. She returned in a flash with a moistened dish towel and managed to graciously make the gentleman aware of his situation. His face took on that priceless expression of perplexed shock, as he opened his eyes to the sight of his own bloody hand. Fortunately, he had the presence of mind not to scream. He thankfully accepted the damp towel, and quietly disappeared. He slipped back into the sanctuary shortly thereafter. His face was scrubbed clean, he wore a lightweight windbreaker over his stained shirt, and a large bandaid on his neck. Our friend resumed worship as if nothing had happened.

"Let's all stand and sing" I said, "Open our eyes Lord, we want to see Jesus."

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