

'The Sins Of The Father'

By

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FADE IN:

INT. DEATH ROW PRISON CELL - DAY

Cold, stark, lonely, sanitized. White.

STEVIE JOHNSON (20'S) cruelly handsome sits on his bed, dressed in a regulation prison jumpsuit, manacled, hands clasped as if in prayer.

A tray of food lies next to him, untouched, congealing.

The suicide watch PRISON GUARD (40'S) approaches the cell.

GUARD

Stevie. Father Mannion's here.

Stevie looks up, annoyed.

STEVIE

What the f....I never asked for him to come.

FATHER MANNION (50's) tall, gaunt, dog-collared carrying a bible, steps from behind the guard. Speaks with a slight Irish brogue. Lilted, calming.

FATHER MANNION

I know you didn't Stevie, but I couldn't let you go without seeing you.

GUARD

You O.K. with this Stevie?

Stevie sighs, rests his head on one hand.

STEVIE

No, but he's here now....yeah, let him in.

The guard opens the cell door. Father Mannion enters.

FATHER MANNION

Thank you Stevie.

GUARD

I'll be right outside.

Father Mannion nods. Moves the food tray and sits next to Stevie.

FATHER MANNION
Not hungry?

Stevie looks disdainfully at the priest.

STEVIE
Come to save my soul? Absolution?

Stevie spits sarcastic laughter.

FATHER MANNION
Only you and God can do that. I'm
just here to give you support at
this difficult time.

STEVIE
This ain't difficult for me. Just
wanna get it over with now. I'm not
scared of dyin' but this waitin'
around is a friggin' killer, man

Father Mannion touches Stevie gently.

FATHER MANNION
You know there's something we need
to do.

Stevie recoils from the touch.

STEVIE
We?... Didn't you hear? I never
invited you.

Father Mannion shuffles a little, uncomfortable. He attempts
placation.

FATHER MANNION
I need to help you...help you make
peace with yourself and God.

Stevie jumps from the bed, animated, angry.

STEVIE
God? 'Scuse me Father, but you must
be fuckin' kiddin' me...God
deserted me long ago.

Father Mannion shakes his head slowly

FATHER MANNION
God never deserts us.

Stevie moves close to Mannion, almost threatening,
pressurised spittle squirting between clenched teeth.

STEVIE

Yeah, right. That's why I'm here wearin' a fuckin' diaper so's when I shit myself they can wrap it up and throw it away...disposable, just like good ol' Stevie!

Father Mannion continues calmly.

FATHER MANNION

Sometimes we move away from Him.

Stevie spins away, kicking the wall.

STEVIE

Crap! My Mom dies of cancer, my Dad gets killed in a drugs bust and I'm here, twenty two, waiting to die for something I never did.

(beat)

Oh, no, no, no, I didn't move away....I ran like shit!

Father Mannion places his bible on the bed rises and paces the cell. He considers holding Stevie. Rethinks and folds his arms instead.

FATHER MANNION

In my experience many folk have seen the light in their darkest hour.

Stevie now lies on the bed, nonchalant, insulting.

STEVIE

I was just fine....You brought the dark in here with you when you walked in.

(beat)

And the only light I'm gonna see is a medic's torch when they check if I'm dead!

Father Mannion stops pacing. Ponders.

FATHER MANNION

My son, I just wish you would, could ask for forgiveness.

Stevie sits up, spewing venom.

STEVIE

No one, not even your so-called God
can forgive me for somethin' I
never did!

FATHER MANNION

(quietly)

You were convicted.

Stevie is now back on the cell floor, shouting.

STEVIE

How long you known me? Years,
right?. The original bad boy. Stole
some cars, done a coupla break-ins,
but I ain't no killer.

The guard checks in on the noise. Father Mannion waves him
away.

FATHER MANNION

But Stevie, the DNA....

Stevie interrupts, beats his chest in frustration

STEVIE

Look, I never denied me and Bobbi
had sex, but I didn't rape her and
I sure as hell never killed her!

Stevie drops to his knees, frustration stepping aside for
tired emotion.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

Jeez. I banged her loadsa times. We
all did.

FATHER MANNION

All?

STEVIE

Yeah. All the fellas did. She was a
freak.

FATHER MANNION

In what way?

Stevie rises. Angered out.

STEVIE

She liked getting screwed a
lot.'Specially in the graveyard.
Got off on dead people.

FATHER MANNION
 (to himself)
 Oh Jesus Lord, necrophilia.

STEVIE
 What?

Father Mannion ignores the question. He looks deep into Stevie's eyes.

FATHER MANNION
 O.K. So that explains why she was
 found in my church yard... but
 then, why did you leave her?

Steve re-takes the bed. Round shouldered. Spent.

STEVIE
 She told me she was pregnant. Said
 it was mine. There's no way man...
 I was pissed... left her, left her
 there with her fuckin' corpses.

Again Father Mannion paces, stroking his chin.

FATHER MANNION
 So why didn't any of this come up
 at your trial?

Stevie laughs, mocking.

STEVIE
 You were there. Was a complete
 joke. My attorney was a drunk and
 the cops just wanted a sucker...me!
 ...bin after me for years!...didn't
 even get a chance to testify.

Father Mannion siezes his chance and takes Stevie's hands in his. Stevie offers no resistance.

FATHER MANNION
 So Stevie, in the presence of God,
 if it wasn't you....

Stevie shakes his head.

STEVIE
 I'll tell ya. Could've been anyone.
 Jealous, some nut watching, dunno.
 Maybe she told someone else she was
 pregnant an' it was his... Anyway,
 'stoo late now.

Stevie looks at the cell door and sees the guard returning with a fellow officer. They enter, embarrassed.

GUARD

Sorry Stevie, Father. Time to go.

Stevie slowly makes his way to the door, head bowed. He stops, looks at Father Mannion, throws him a slight grin.

STEVIE

Y'know What?. When I left her she was wearing a locket I gave her.. friendship thing...

Father Mannion raises his eyebrows, surprised.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

Yeah I know, kinda strange huh? But when they found her it was gone... find the locket and you've got the real killer.

Father Mannion gathers up his bible. Stevie turns to face the guards.

STEVIE

S'not your fault fellas. Must be tough for you, killing an innocent kid.

Stevie looks back at the priest.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

You wanna say a prayer? Say one for these guys. They gotta sleep tonite.

Stevie is escorted from the cell, cowed, fatalistic. Father Mannion lingers. He calls through the cell door.

FATHER MANNION

I'll say a prayer for us my son.

He Pauses. Falls to his knees. Looks Heavenward.

FATHER MANNION

Forgive me Father, for I have sinned.....

He stops, gags and coughs into his hand. He opens it to reveal...a locket.

FADE OUT:

THE END.