

THE CONFESSION

by

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SOUNDS OF HAMMERING - NAILS INTO BOARDS - DETERMINED THUMPS

EXT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - DUSK

On the outskirts of a small impoverished town perpetually bathed in gloom.

Dented and broken siding, rust, and rampant weed overgrowth.

SOUNDS OF HAMMERING grows louder as we go...

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - DUSK

Cobwebs and pigeon shit abound.

DAN - seen in quick glimpses, never perfectly clear - BUILDING SOMETHING with 2x4s, plywood, saw, hammer and nails.

He's mid-30s; shirtless lean & tatted torso covered in a sheen of sweat; scruffy cheeks; dark circles under his eyes; track marks on his arms...

We don't get a clear picture but the picture is clear... He's had a rough life.

Fleeting glimpses of what he's building... Looks like a large dog house.

After a final nail in the boards he sets down the hammer, takes a pull from a can of Pabst, then moves to an old METAL BARREL filled with PIECES OF STYROFOAM.

Picks up a gas can, pours GASOLINE into the garbage can.

As the styrofoam begins to dissolve...

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Small town, large church.

An old Buick cruises up, parks in a space beside the handicapped spots, marked 'RESERVED'. Out comes...

FATHER McCORMICK - 60s, tall, grey, pillar of the community.

Approaching the church he stiffens... FRONT DOOR AJAR. Lock clearly broken. Looks kicked in.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Expecting the worst, Father McCormick turns on the lights...

Nothing seems out of place, until his gaze fixes on the...

BACK WALL where an oversized NAIL protrudes. Around it, FADED PAINT in the shape of a LARGE CROSS.

A SLIP OF PAPER with handwriting on it skewered on the nail.

Father McCormick retrieves the slip of paper.

DAN (V.O.)

I'm in desperate need of confession
but can't come to church.

EXT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Father McCormick's Buick arrives at the warehouse. Headlights illuminate a large, rusted number '13' on its side.

DAN (V.O.)

13 Old Mill Road. 9 PM. Please
Father, I'm begging you. My soul is
on the line.

Father McCormick exits the car, notices...

Warehouse door open just enough to see FAINT LIGHT emanating from within.

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

MANY LIT TEA CANDLES flickering from a slight breeze cast a spooky glow on the structure they surround...

A HANDMADE CONFESSIONAL BOOTH.

No frills. Wood raw and unstained. More function than form.

Father McCormick walks around the structure, taking it in.

About to enter the cubicle he spots something on the wall...

A LARGE ANTIQUE WOODEN CROSS WITH JESUS CRUCIFIED ON IT.

Father McCormick frowns, enters the confessional, pulls the door closed.

INT. CONFESSIONAL BOOTH

Just enough light seeping in to see Father McCormick trying to get his large frame comfortable in the cramped confines. When he's finally settled...

Dead silence.

Just the breeze passing through the old warehouse. Both calming and eerie. Soon...

FOOTFALLS. Growing louder until...

DAN walks around the confessional - briefly visible through the gaps between boards - gets into the other side.

INTERCUT FATHER MCCORMICK AND...

DAN - kneeling in his side of the confessional.

A small FINE MESH SCREEN between the two cubicles.

DAN
Thanks for comin'.

FATHER MCCORMICK
You said your soul was on the line.

DAN
I take confession seriously.

FATHER MCCORMICK
Too seriously. That cross you stole is for *all* of God's children.

DAN
Yeah, well, Jesus owed me one.

FATHER MCCORMICK
Jesus died for our sins. He doesn't owe us anything.

DAN
You have your opinions, I have mine. Now can we get on with it?

FATHER MCCORMICK
By all means.

DAN
(crosses himself)
Bless me father for I have sinned.
(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)
It's been twenty-two years since my
last confession.

This hits Fathewr McCormick like a punch in the gut.

FATHER MCCORMICK
Twenty-two years? Did you lose your
faith?

DAN
No. It was taken from me.

FATHER MCCORMICK
I don't understand.

DAN
You should. You're the one who took
it.

Father McCormick reacts to this. Beyond uncomfortable now.

FATHER MCCORMICK
Who are you?

DAN
Were there that many?

No response.

DAN
That's what I thought.

The rise and fall of Father McCormick's chest has quickened.

FATHER MCCORMICK
(a bit frantic)
That was a long time ago. I'm a
different person now.

DAN
Leopards don't change their spots.

FATHER MCCORMICK
I've gotten help.

DAN
You've gotten older.

FATHER MCCORMICK
So this is revenge?

DAN
Relax, Father. This is about me,
not you.

(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)

I need to unburden myself but I don't want to go to prison. Figured our secret would keep you quiet.

FATHER MCCORMICK

The seal of the confessional is unwavering, regardless of our history.

DAN

History? That's a funny way of describing what you did.

Father McCormick is even more uncomfortable now than before.

FATHER MCCORMICK

As God is my witness, I am truly sorry for my actions and --

DAN

Yeah, whatever. I killed a man.

Father McCormick sucks in a breath.

FATHER MCCORMICK

Why?

DAN

Does it matter?

FATHER MCCORMICK

To God, murder is not only a physical act but the condition of one's heart towards another.

DAN

I hated him with all my heart. Guess I'm really screwed.

FATHER MCCORMICK

And the reason for your hatred?

DAN

You writing a book?

FATHER MCCORMICK

You asked me to hear your confession. Do you simply want me to hear your words, or do you want me to understand your actions?

DAN

He was a monster. Murdered a child. I was just returning the favor.

FATHER MCCORMICK
Lex talionis... Fracture for
fracture, eye for eye, tooth for
tooth. Is that it?

DAN
Sounds poetic when you put it that
way.

FATHER MCCORMICK
What happened to leaving vengeance
and wrath for God?

DAN
Couldn't find His contact info on
the 'Net. Figured I'd handle it
myself.

FATHER MCCORMICK
And now, what? You think confession
will absolve you of the guilt
you're feeling?

DAN
That's just it. I don't feel
guilty. Hell, I don't feel
anything. That's what's so fucked
up. Just saw it as something I
needed to do, like taking out the
trash.

FATHER MCCORMICK
Equating murder with a basic chore
makes you sound like a monster.

DAN
(solemn)
I know. Spent years planning it,
down to the very last detail, but I
hoped that when it came time to
actually do it, I wouldn't be able
to go through with it.
That'd I'd suddenly find
forgiveness. Or that something
would prevent it. You know, like
divine intervention.

FATHER MCCORMICK
And what happened?

DAN
You showed up.

TIGHT ON FATHER MCCORMICK'S FACE

His eyes go wide. Tries to push open the door but...

DAN PULLS A STRING and...

EXT. CONFSSIONAL BOOTH

A TRIO OF 2x4s drop down into slats, IMPRISONING Father McCormick inside the confessional booth.

INT. CONFSSIONAL BOOTH

Father McCormick beats against the door, to no avail. Throws his body against it again and again.

Wood creaks but doesn't give.

EXT. CONFSSIONAL BOOTH

Dan is now standing outside the confessional booth, leaning against the 2x4-barred door to Father McCormick's cubicle.

He presses his mouth to a narrow gap in the boards...

DAN

(malevolent)

Not a good feeling, is it? That's how I felt all these years. Trapped inside myself, knowing the man I looked up to, the man I trusted, the man I revered could do something so horrible to me. Again. And again. And again. But I couldn't say anything because nobody would ever believe me.

(beat)

Not Father McCormick. He's a man of God. He's what every man should strive to be.

(laughs)

If they only knew.

FATHER MCCORMICK

Please, don't do this. I'm begging you.

DAN

That's not begging. That's groveling.

Father McCormick maneuvers in the tight space and, with some difficulty, gets onto his knees.

FATHER MCCORMICK
I'm asking for your forgiveness.

A long beat. We see the hope in Father McCormick's eyes. Finally...

DAN
Nope. Nothin'. Like I said, I don't feel a goddamn thing.

Father McCormick rages against his cubicle's interior, kicking and smashing his feet and hands against the boards, doing everything in his power to escape.

The boards hold.

After a full minute of frantic attempts at freedom, Father McCormick collapses back onto the narrow ledge-like seat and begins sobbing.

DAN
Looks like in your time of need, God ain't there for you. Just like he wasn't there for me. Bet that's a kick in the junk, huh Father?

Amid the sobbing...

FATHER MCCORMICK
(whispering)
I thank you, Lord, for all that you've given me, and I hope that you can forgive me for some of the things I've done...

DAN
Are you praying?

FATHER MCCORMICK
...And I hope you can forgive him for what he's going to do.

DAN
(amazed)
You're really praying.

FATHER MCCORMICK
I hope the world is a better place now that I've been here and that my service to you has brought some light to the darkness.

DAN

What a crock. How 'bout the
darkness you brought to others?

FATHER MCCORMICK

I ask you, my Lord, to accept and
embrace me into your loving arms.

DAN

Amen.

Dan walks to the wall where a TETHERED ROPE has been wrapped
around a nail.

Unhooks the rope from the nail, tugs on it...

Rope is connected to the METAL BARREL seen earlier, now
SUSPENDED IN RIGGING above the confessional booth.

Pulled rope FLIPS the barrel, DUMPING ITS CONTENTS...

MANY GALLONS OF JELLY-LIKE OOZE drops onto the confessional
booth.

INT. CONFESSIONAL BOOTH

Jelly-like ooze falls and drips through the gaps in the
boards, covering Father McCormick.

He SMELLS the ooze, gets an idea of what it is and what's
going to happen.

FATHER MCCORMICK

No. NO! Not like this!

Father McCormick attacks his enclosure with renewed vigor,
desperate to escape. But once again the boards hold.

Exhausted, he slides to the floor, crying - blubbering,
really - still beating against the door every now and then,
his hands now raw and bloody.

EXT. CONFESSIONAL BOOTH

Dan stares at his creation - reacting to the thump from
within that occurs every so often.

It's obvious he's torn... Torn between vengeance and
forgiveness.

Tears now flowing, the stream of tears increasing when he...

LIGHTS A CIGARETTE - deep drag - holding the still-lit match.

Dan exhales an acrid cloud and THROWS THE MATCH. Arcing towards the confessional booth...

Lands in a spreading pool of the jelly-like ooze and...

POOF!

ERUPTS IN FLAMES, the HOMEMADE NAPALM conducting the flames with lightning speed. Within moments virtually every inch of the confessional booth is a raging fireball, inside and out.

AGONIZING SCREAMS from Father McCormick as he spins and slams within the confessional, fire burning him alive.

Inescapable.

Finally - thankfully - the screaming, and the movement stops.

The confessional a raging bonfire which Dan watches, transfixed.

He throws his cigarette into the flames, walks over to the stolen crucifix hanging on the warehouse wall.

DAN

I'm sorry.

Crying harder now. From under his shirt he removes...

A REVOLVER.

TIGHT ON THE CROSS - JESUS'S FACE

A few beats and BANG!

BLOOD SPLATTERS the crucifix. Some hits Jesus's face...

Looks like BLOODY TEARS cascading down.

THE END