

The Killing Gene

FADE IN:

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY

A MALE NEWS ANCHOR, 30s, suit and tie, sits at a desk.  
Reads from a teleprompter.

NEWS ANCHOR

Joining us in the studio now is David  
Sullivan, author of the new book 'Born  
Bad: The Role of Genetics in Evil'.

DAVID SULLIVAN, 40s, thinning hair and goatee, sits next  
to the Anchor at the desk.

NEWS ANCHOR (CONT'D)

David, thankyou for joining us today.  
Your book is causing a lot of  
controversy, are you essentially saying  
that so-called evil people are born that  
way?

DAVID

What my book details is that genetics  
play an overwhelming factor in  
determining the likelihood of a person  
turning out to be a serious criminal.

NEWS ANCHOR

For years people have debated the role of  
nature versus nurture in these cases, are  
you claiming you have the definitive  
answer?

DAVID

The science of it is far too complex to  
delve into here, but my research details  
the different genetic makeup and brain  
chemistry of numerous serial killers and  
what we would class as 'evil' people. So  
yes, I believe we can put this debate to  
rest once and for all.

The two men completely freeze.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

The news program is paused on the screen of a crappy TV.

David sits on a couch, looks groggy.

The room is dark, small, minimalist.

DAVID  
How did I get here?

MALE VOICE (O.S.)  
How you got here is not important Mister  
Sullivan. Why you are here, is.

EDGAR, rough and weathered, 50s, unshaven, appears behind  
the couch. Makes his way over to the TV.

DAVID  
Who are you? Why am I here?

EDGAR  
You can call me Edgar. And you're here  
because your recent TV appearance and  
book publicity is causing some  
inconvenience for my employer.

David goes to get up from the couch, his legs wobble and  
he falls back down.

EDGAR (CONT'D)  
Help yourself to some water, it will make  
you feel better.

David picks up the jug of water off the table and pours  
himself a glass. Guzzles it.

DAVID  
Who is your employer?

EDGAR  
I represent a large corporate law firm.  
The specifics aren't important, but your  
research could prove very damaging to  
some of their most important cases.

DAVID  
How?

EDGAR  
A jury is not going to have much sympathy  
for a person who is supposedly born evil,  
Mister Sullivan. Part of their defence  
strategies hinge on convincing the jury  
that environmental factors contributed to  
the defendant's crimes. Unfortunately  
your book seems to contradict that.

DAVID  
So why am I here?

Edgar walks to a draw, opens it. Pulls out a gun. Makes his way over to David, points the gun at him. Spins it on his finger then sets it down on the table.

EDGAR

We need you to testify in court. To retract your conclusions in your book and to convince the jury that genetics are not the sole cause in the case of these crimes.

DAVID

But I can't do that, I have staked my whole career on this book. I'll be ruined.

Edgar stares David down, says nothing.

DAVID (CONT'D)

And if I refuse, I suppose you're going to shoot me?

EDGAR

Not at all, no one is going to harm you. You have a choice in this matter. And I don't want you to perjure yourself up on the stand, because you need to be believable. So I'm going to try to convince you that your way of thinking is wrong.

DAVID

I have spent years on this research, nothing you can say will change my mind.

Edgar grabs a stool, turns it around to sit facing David.

EDGAR

I believe people have the capacity for both good and evil. People will make decisions and take actions based on their current self-interest. There are dark places within all of us, just waiting to be unleashed to ensure our survival if need be.

DAVID

So you think everyone is like that? Look, murderers and rapists commit the crimes they do because they are genetically predisposed due to chemical --

EDGAR

There is a dead body in your house.

David shakes his head.

DAVID

What?

EDGAR

Right now there is a dead body in your house. A male, with a knife stuck in his back. Yours are the only fingerprints on the murder weapon.

DAVID

What the hell are you talking about?

Edgar picks up the gun and hands it to David.

EDGAR

You have one hour to take this gun, and use it to kill a random person of your choosing. If you fail to do so, the police will be called and sent to your home address. How long do you think it will be before you are arrested for murder?

DAVID

This is crazy. Is this some kind of a sick joke?

EDGAR

I assure you it is no joke Mister Sullivan.

Edgar takes out a small cell phone from his jacket, places it on the table.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

We will track your location via this phone. Once you have made the kill, hit redial and use the codeword 'albatross'. A clean-up team will make its way to your location to take care of the body, while another team will do the same for the body in your house.

DAVID

You're insane, why would you do this?

EDGAR

Sanity is highly overrated, my friend. Consider this a lesson into the dark and murky places the human mind can delve into when placed under the right circumstances.

David picks up the gun and points it at Edgar.

DAVID

Oh yeah? Well how about I just kill you right now?

Edgar CHUCKLES to himself, CLAPS his hands loudly.

EDGAR

Bravo, Mister Sullivan. You are quite the student. I didn't expect you to be quite such a fast learner. You can shoot me if you wish, as that would also prove my point. But if I don't make a call to my associates in five minutes time then the police will be called and sent to your house.

David keeps the gun pointed at Edgar.

DAVID

I'll just explain to the police what happened, that I was being set up.

EDGAR

And who will you tell them is setting you up? Do you have any proof of my identity?

DAVID

What about motive? I have no motive to kill some random stranger.

EDGAR

Perhaps not... but does the name William Henderson ring a bell?

David lowers the gun, looks sick.

DAVID

That's my ex-wife's new husband. You killed him?

EDGAR

That's up to you to decide. If I don't make this call the police are about to think you killed him.

David buries his head in his lap, gasps for air.

EDGAR (CONT'D)  
You have sixty seconds to decide.

DAVID  
But I can't murder someone. There must be some other way?

EDGAR  
This is the only way I can convince you that sometimes people do bad things because of circumstance, not genetics. My job is to do whatever it takes to get you up on the stand convincing the jury of that.

Edgar looks at his watch.

EDGAR (CONT'D)  
Fifteen seconds.

Sweat pours down David's brow.

DAVID  
Can't we just --

EDGAR  
Twelve, eleven, ten, nine...

DAVID  
Okay! Okay! I'll do it.

Edgar takes out a second phone from his jacket, presses a button.

EDGAR  
(into phone)  
He's in.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

David walks along the secluded street. The handle of the gun sticks out of his jacket pocket.

He rounds a corner and sees a convenience store in the distance.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - CONTINUOUS

A HOMELESS GUY, 60s, tattered clothes, shaggy hair and beard, scavenges through a dumpster.

David makes his way to the entrance of the store.

The homeless guy approaches him.

HOMELESS GUY

Excuse me, friend. Can you spare some change for a man in need?

David looks him up and down.

DAVID

Uh... sure. My car is parked just around the corner, come with me and I'll help you out.

HOMELESS GUY

Well thankyou son, that is very kind of you.

David leads the way as the homeless guy follows him around the street corner.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

David stops walking.

HOMELESS GUY

So whereabouts is this car of yours?

David says nothing, a blank expression on his face.

The homeless guy notices the gun handle sticking out of David's jacket. He backs up a few steps.

HOMELESS GUY (CONT'D)

I forgot I actually have somewhere to be, so I'll have to be go --

David pulls the gun on the homeless guy, points it at his head. His hand trembles.

DAVID

I'm really sorry, I don't want to have to do this.

HOMELESS GUY

Then don't! I'm just a harmless old man,  
what have I ever done to you?

DAVID

You don't understand what will happen if  
I don't do this. I'm sorry but you have  
to die.

A tear rolls down the homeless guy's cheek.

HOMELESS GUY

Isn't there anything I can do to change  
your --

BANG! A bullet hits him right between the eyes.

He drops to the ground like a sack of bricks.

David, a look of terror on his face, drops the gun.

DAVID

(whispers)

What have I done?

He inches his way slowly up to the body, looks to make  
sure the guy is dead.

David pulls out the cell phone that Edgar gave him.  
Presses a button. It RINGS.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

I'm sorry, the number you have dialled  
has been disconnected.

DAVID

What the hell?

David ends the call. Pushes re-dial.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

I'm sorry, the number you have dialled  
has been disconnected.

DAVID

(into phone)

Albatross.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

I'm sorry, the number you have dialled  
has been disconnected.

DAVID

Shit!

David looks at the dead body, then looks around to make sure nobody can see him. All clear.

Picks up the gun, gets the hell outta there.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

David makes his way down the stairs, holds the gun out ready to fire.

Edgar sits on the couch, his back to David.

EDGAR

Back so soon?

DAVID

Turn around!

Edgar turns to face David, a grin on his face.

EDGAR

So did you go through with it?

David moves closer to Edgar, gun levelled right at his forehead.

DAVID

I did what you asked. But when I dialled the number it was disconnected. Who's coming to clean up the body?

EDGAR

No one, Mister Sullivan.

DAVID

But why? What about the body in my house?

EDGAR

I'm afraid you're going to have to take care of your own mess.

DAVID

But you said --

EDGAR

I said what was necessary to give you an excuse to do what you have been longing for.

(MORE)

EDGAR (CONT'D)

After all those years of researching the worst kinds of people, you yearned to have a taste of it yourself. I simply illuminated the darkness you have in your own soul.

DAVID

That's not true.

David FIRES the gun point blank at Edgar.

The bullet hits the wall directly behind him.

Edgar stands there, unharmed.

David looks at the gun, taps the bottom of it a couple times.

FIRES two more shots right at Edgar.

The bullets fly straight into the wall.

EDGAR

Are you finished?

DAVID

But how? Who are you?

Edgar makes his way towards the basement steps. Climbs them.

EDGAR

I'll be seeing you, Mister Sullivan.

And he's gone.

David falls back on the couch, places the gun on the table.

Notices the TV remote right next to the gun. Picks it up. Unpauses the program on the old crappy TV.

ON TV

The news anchor leans forward in his chair.

NEWS ANCHOR

Have you been able to find any reasons as to why people commit these heinous crimes?

DAVID

Well in a large percentage of cases the perpetrator claimed to have had no choice in the matter. That they were forced to commit their horrible act.

NEWS ANCHOR

Forced? By who?

DAVID

Well this is where it differs. In some instances the offender claimed they were following direct orders from God. Or it might have been the voice of a loved one. Or some random apparition that they believed was actually real.

NEWS ANCHOR

So you're saying that voices in their head and imaginary visions have been responsible for countless killings?

DAVID

Absolutely. It all comes down to what I was saying about brain chemistry. These people have a psychological imbalance that causes them to create certain scenarios that only exist inside their minds as a way to justify their dark impulses.

NEWS ANCHOR

Well these conclusions sound very disturbing.

DAVID

And the worst part of it all? Who knows how many of these damaged people are out there lurking in society...

David turns to face the camera directly, an intense look on his face. The image pauses briefly. The screen flickers.

FADE OUT.