

Confessional
by
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INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

An alarm hits 6:30 a.m. and JIM (50's, unshaven, bed head) rises to the morning news.

REPORTER ON RADIO
Sad news today as a building caught
fire late last night with dozens
forced to flee their homes...

A SERIES OF CUTS:

Jim drawing the shades on an unkept bedroom while lighting a cigarette.

REPORTER ON RADIO
...one of the firefighters was
tragically killed after entering
the building...

A coffeemaker drips brown liquid as Jim irons.

REPORTER ON RADIO
...he was later identified by his
badge and leaves behind a...

Putting a razor down, Jim reveals a more presentable face, along with a WHITE COLLAR.

REPORTER ON RADIO
...cause of the fire remains
unknown but officials are
investigating.

INT. CHURCH - LATER

Father Jim walks down the aisle to "Shepherd Me O God" and a congregation as disinterested as he is. At the altar, he says it for the hundredth time.

JIM
In the name of the Father, the Son,
and the Holy Ghost...

INT. CHURCH - LATER

People wait outside a confessional with RED LIGHTS on.

CONFESSOR 1
No one rushes confession like
Father Jim. His footsteps beat
everyone's out of the confessional.

Quiet as Jim enters the confessional. The lights go GREEN.

INT. CONFESSIONAL - TIME CUTS

As seen from Father Jim's side of the mesh screen.

ANONYMOUS CONFESSOR 1
Bless me father for I have sinned.

JIM
What sins have you committed?

ANONYMOUS CONFESSOR 1
You know...the usual...

ANONYMOUS CONFESSOR 2
If taxes weren't so high, I'd pay.

ANONYMOUS CONFESSOR 3
I'm a man. I live alone. A lot.
Geez, Father, don't make me say it.

JIM
Can you avoid what leads to it?

ANONYMOUS CONFESSOR 2
I get taxed for breathing.

ANONYMOUS CONFESSOR 3
Everything leads to it! Everything!

JIM
Is that all?

A darker tone as Jim hears the more serious sins.

ANONYMOUS CONFESSOR 1
If my wife doesn't give it at home,
I'll buy it elsewhere.

ANONYMOUS CONFESSOR 2
And I dumped the money offshore
where they'll never find it.

ANONYMOUS CONFESSOR 4
No matter how much they cry for
their mommy, or beg me to stop, I
can't. It must be the devil.

Jim's eyes close in a helpless rage.

JIM
If it were the devil, you wouldn't
hide it--

ANONYMOUS CONFESSOR 4
Come on, Father. If anyone gets
why a child makes good company--

JIM
I can't grant you penance unless
you admit your sins to an
authority.

ANONYMOUS CONFESSOR 4
Oh, I will, Father.

Jim says his next lines more like a fast food worker...

JIM
Please say an Act of Contrition...
...I can give you the name of a
counselor who can help with that...
...go in peace to love and serve.

INT. CHURCH - LATER

LUCIA (17) and solemn, enters the confessional turning the
light RED.

INT. CONFESSIONAL - CONTINUOUS

Father Jim's watch shows almost 7:00.

LUCIA
Am I too late? Is anyone there?

JIM
When was your last confession?

LUCIA
This is my first.

JIM
What sins have you committed?

LUCIA
And my last.

It's enough to get his attention for the first time.

JIM
Last? Are you ill?

LUCIA
Probably. I don't know exactly how
the confession thing works...

JIM
It's far more serious than a thing.

LUCIA
I know. Sorry. I just won't be
able to confess after I'm done.

JIM
Done doing what?

LUCIA
You've never had a suicide before?

JIM
A what? If you're looking for
someone to tell you its okay to--

LUCIA
That's exactly what I've come for.

JIM
Child, I am not who you should
speak to...

He trails off as a red dot appears through the mesh screen.

LUCIA
Thought you might say that.

JIM
A confessional is a sacred place
not to be demeaned with toys.

BANG! A gun shot splinters the ceiling above. The dot goes
back to Jim. A sob from Lucia.

LUCIA
I've never been more serious.

JIM
Why would you do such a thing?

LUCIA
You listen to everyone's sins and
don't know the answer?

JIM

Those same people come here to
repent, to change...

LUCIA

To lie. As we both know you're
doing now. What is the penalty for
lying in a confessional?

JIM

I'm here to help those who come to
confess, not do it myself, child.

LUCIA

My name is Lucia. If you care.
How long since your last
confession, Father...?

JIM

Jim. And I can't help you with this.

The sound of the GUN COCKING silences him.

LUCIA

Haven't you figured this out?
There's no one in this world who
loves me enough to not lie. It was
stupid of me to think a priest in a
confessional would be different.

JIM

The details of my existence won't
comfort you.

LUCIA

Neither will mine. I've told it to
everyone who is supposed to help.
No one listens or will care when
I'm gone.

JIM

I can give you the name of a
counselor who can help with that.

A half laugh/sigh from Lucia.

LUCIA

It's always someone else's problem.

The red target comes off Jim, back into the other half of the
confessional, and is almost a red bulb under her chin.

LUCIA
So I have to fix it myself...

JIM
No! Wait!

LUCIA
I really can't hear another lie.

JIM
My last confession was in April.

LUCIA
What did you admit to?

JIM
Sins of vanity, impurity, pride.

LUCIA
Everyone does that.

JIM
Every week, a wealthy man comes in
late, leaves early, and puts
nothing in the basket.

LUCIA
And you hate him for it?

JIM
A priest hates no one.

LUCIA
Do you hate him for it?

JIM
I...I'm not supposed to.

LUCIA
Why not? He's the typical "let
someone else do it" jerk.

JIM
Lucia, who in your life is failing
you so greatly?

LUCIA
You name them, they do it. People
who raise me, teach me, even the ones
assigned to protect me. And yes: I
hate them, and I'm not sorry.

JIM

Hate is a cancer on the soul.

LUCIA

And you know all about that, don't
you, Jim?

(off silence)

Don't you?

JIM

I can't do this.

LUCIA

You do this every day! I see how
little you care. And here I am
literally about to die, and you
still don't! What if I took you
with me?

The red dot goes back to Jim.

JIM

No one needs to die.

LUCIA

But we all do. Wouldn't I just be
doing us both a favor?

Jim puts his face in his hands as the truth hits him.

JIM

Only to me, Lucia.

LUCIA

Since when have you known that?

JIM

I told myself when I transferred
here, it would get better. But I
realize more and more how that
won't happen. But you're young.
It doesn't have to be this way.

LUCIA

Prove it. If the truth shall set
you free, for the love of God,
don't keep me prisoner anymore.

JIM

I don't know what you want--

LUCIA
The truth. About every lie you
tell yourself.

Jim considers for a beat.

JIM
I count the days until retirement
thinking it will make me happy.

LUCIA
Not good enough.

JIM
I hope it will snow so for one day,
I don't have to see these people
not give a damn.

LUCIA
That's not even close!

JIM
I'd like to charge through this
screen to strangle that son of a
bitch and keep him from doing what
we all know he will!

A pause. The red target light disappears.

LUCIA
How often?

JIM
Too many to count.

LUCIA
Why haven't you?

JIM
It's not right.

LUCIA
Letting him do what he does to me is?

A beat as Jim looks into Lucia's face through the screen.

JIM
It's not for me to interfere.

LUCIA
Your silence on this isn't
interfering?

JIM
Yet you demand that I interfere
with your actions by gun point?

LUCIA
I don't want you to interfere
anymore. I want you to forgive me.

The red target light reappears at Lucia's chin. Her
sincerity is as palpable as his desperation.

LUCIA
Thank you for your honesty, Father.

JIM
No! This isn't your fault! I'm
the only one who should pay for
what I've done.

LUCIA
It's not for me to interfere.

Jim drops to his knees.

JIM
Please...

LUCIA
It's the only way they'll hear...

JIM
...if you must take someone...

LUCIA
I can't kill, especially a priest...

JIM
...then take me...

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

SLOW PAN AWAY FROM THE CONFESSIONAL.

A BANG!

A beat.

CLOSE ON: The confessional. A single door is opened. A
GREEN LIGHT comes on.

THE END.

ROLL CREDITS to "Make Me A Channel of Your Peace."