

SHRIVEN

by

Norman Szabo

PO Box 7-262
Keelung, Taiwan ROC 20224

+886 (0)931 371 477
Szabo@DignityFilms.com

FADE IN:

EXT. ROCKY DESERT HIGHWAY -- DAY

Sun. Heat shimmers. An occasional vehicle SWISHES by.

GIL (25, white trash, sunburnt and sweaty, street clothes and a daypack) peeks out from behind roadside rocks. When the blacktop mirage swallows the last visible car, Gil dashes across the road, dives into cover.

He reaches for his pack: there's no water bottle.

GIL

Shit.

A plastic bottle of water lays in the middle of the road. Gil checks for traffic --

GIL (CONT)

Shit!

An 18-wheeler turns the bottled water into roadkill.

At Gil's feet a mangled roadsign: Warning! Rattlers!

Graffiti on the rocks: Satan lives!

GIL

Great company.

He trudges into the desert.

EXT. ROCKY DESERT -- DAY

It's a big desert. That tiny speck is Gil.

EXT. DESERT -- DUSK

Gil fit to drop. He picks a spot, sits. He looks uncomfortable.

A RATTLE!

He scrambles to the top of a boulder. Things slither in the shadows. Gil stands, clutches his pack, snivels.

GIL

Oh man, I can't do this. This ain't fair. What am I supposed to do?

A CHURCH BELL. Gil turns toward the sound.

EXT. DESERT CHURCH -- NIGHT

A simple white-washed adobe church. Light in the windows. A couple cars outside.

Gil checks the cars: both locked.

The front door of the church. Gil slips...

INT. CHURCH -- NIGHT

...inside. FOOTSTEPS, VOICES. The vestry door opens. Gil ducks behind a pew.

FATHER HARRY, 40's, walks matronly ARLENE to the door.

FATHER HARRY

Good night then, Arlene. Lovely playing as always. You did us proud tonight.

ARLENE

It's my pleasure, Father. Good night.

FATHER HARRY

Love to Edward and Eddie junior. I'll see you all at mass on Sunday.

He secures the door with padlock and chain, retires to the vestry.

Gil checks the hardware on the door. He's locked in.

GIL

Shit.

Father Harry returns with some prayer-books: Gil takes cover. The Father goes back to the vestry: Gil slips into the confessional.

INT. CHURCH, CONFSSIONAL -- NIGHT

Gil listens: The Father returns and busies himself with the books. Gil settles in for the night...

INT. CHURCH, CONFSSIONAL -- NIGHT, LATER

Gil drools in his sleep. Father Harry takes his place on the other side of the partition, speed-mumbles a Pater Noster. Gil's eyes snap open. The Father's prayer ends.

FATHER HARRY (OS)

I know you're there. I can hear you breathing. I can practically hear your heart beating.

GIL

Forgive me Father for I have sinned?

FATHER HARRY (OS)

How long has it been since your last confession?

GIL

I'm not a Catholic, Father.

FATHER HARRY

Mmm. Then how did you know what to say?

GIL

From the movies. TV and stuff. I got it right? I get credit for that? Two sins for the price of one?

FATHER HARRY

The confessional is not a joke, my son. We're here to save your soul. If you're not interested in the salvation of your soul, then please leave my church at once.

GIL

No, I'm sorry. I'm serious, Father.
I'm sorry, I'm just a little nervous.

FATHER HARRY

What do you have to be nervous about?

GIL

Well, I done some bad stuff...

FATHER HARRY

Tell me.

GIL

This is like a secret, right? If I
tell you, it don't go no further?

FATHER HARRY

There can be no secrets from God, my son.

GIL

No, well, I mean and God too, obviously.

Long beat.

FATHER HARRY

I'm waiting.

GIL

I killed a guy.

INT. STORE -- DAY (FLASHBACK)

An unsteady pointed gun. BANG! Shock on Gil's face.

GIL (VO)

I mean, I think I killed him. It was
an accident. Oh Jesus!

INT. CONFESSIONAL -- NIGHT

FATHER HARRY

Go on.

GIL

'Go on' what?

FATHER HARRY

You said it was an accident. Did you report it?

GIL

What, to the cops? Fuck no! Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to say that. But I mean, they'd never believe me.

FATHER HARRY

Why not? What happened?

GIL

I told you. It was an accident. Self defense.

FATHER HARRY

Which?

GIL

Which what?

FATHER HARRY

An accident or self defense?

GIL

I thought the guy had a gun.

FATHER HARRY

Did you have a gun?

GIL

Look it wasn't my idea to shoot him, OK?

FATHER HARRY

So it was his fault?

GIL

Look, do you have anything to drink? Water or...

FATHER HARRY

You're saying it was the other guy's fault? Am I right?

GIL

What is this? The third degree?

FATHER HARRY

Because if it was the other guy, and you did nothing wrong, then you have nothing on your conscience, nothing to confess. Do you have anything to confess?

GIL

I don't know. No.

FATHER HARRY

And yet here you are in my confessional.

GIL

Yes but...

FATHER HARRY

In hiding. On the run.

GIL

Yeah, but I told you: no one would...

FATHER HARRY

You're not a Catholic, but do you know the meaning of confession?

GIL

Sure, it's where you say what you done and say you're sorry.

FATHER HARRY

And why do you do that?

GIL

To be forgiven. But it only works if you're truly sorry though, right?

FATHER HARRY

You confess to wash clean your soul;
you confess to make your soul
acceptable in the sight of the Lord.
God turns His countenance away from
sinners with an unclean soul;
unshriven souls that bear the mark
of mortal sin are cast into the
outer darkness to burn and suffer
for all eternity.

GIL

All right, I'm sorry. I am really.

FATHER HARRY

A proud look, a lying tongue, hands
that shed innocent blood, an heart
that deviseth wickedness, feet that
are swift in running into mischief
-- these are abominations in the
sight of the Lord!

GIL

Yes, yes, all right. I have -- I did
-- all of those.

FATHER HARRY

All of them?

GIL

Yeah. Yes. All of them.

FATHER HARRY

Tell me.

GIL

What, *all* of them?

FATHER HARRY

(sighs)

Just the main ones then. They will
serve as proxy for all the others.

GIL

You can do that?

FATHER HARRY

Trust me.

GIL

All right. I was robbing a store...

INT. STORE -- DAY (FLASHBACK)

Gil selects bottled water from the cooler, takes it to the gangly CLERK.

GIL (VO)

...The place was empty, no cameras,
just the clerk. So I pulled my piece...

FATHER HARRY (VO)

Your 'piece'?

GIL (VO)

A gun, you know. I held it on him and
he put his hands up.

Two very nervous guys, Gil the one with the gun. The clerk's hands hit a rafter. Dust and promotional items tumble.

GIL (CONT) (VO)

He was a tall guy. He hit something.
It confused me. The gun went off.

BANG! Shock on Gil's face. A beat. Gil unfreezes, dumps the till, runs to the door dropping change, comes back, grabs the water and a handful of jerky/candy, flees the scene.

GIL (CONT) (VO)

It just went off. I was confused.
It was stupid, *stupid*...

INT. CONFESSIONAL -- NIGHT

Gil bangs his head against the wall.

GIL

...Stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid...

FATHER HARRY

So you lied?

GIL

Yes.

FATHER HARRY

And you shed innocent blood?

GIL

Yes.

FATHER HARRY

And you...

GIL

Yeah, I admit it. I admit all of them: the lying tongue, the devising of wickedness, the feet of mystery, all that.

FATHER HARRY

And are you now sorry?

GIL

What happens if I say no?

Father Harry sighs.

GIL (CONT)

OK: I'm sorry. Like that? Um. Truly sorry. In my heart? Look, what do I have to say?

FATHER HARRY

It's not *what* you say that counts, it's your sincerity.

GIL

Well how do you know if I have that?
Shit, -- sorry -- even *I* don't know if
I'm being sincere. I mean it was a
long day in the desert, Father, and
I'm a little fried, I haven't eaten
for like, since yesterday, I must be
like totally dehydrated by now and
frankly this whole episode is frankly
a little weird you know? So screw it,
I'm doing my best here. You tell *me*
if I'm sincere.

FATHER HARRY

Very well. Are you willing to do penance?

GIL

What kind of penance?

FATHER HARRY

Will you pray for forgiveness and will
you surrender your gun?

GIL

Oh man, not the gun!

FATHER HARRY

A gun has no place in this church.
Place it outside the door of the
confessional. Please.

Gil opens the door a crack, drops the gun on the floor.

GIL

OK. Now what?

FATHER HARRY

I'll accept that as a sincere sign
of a contrite heart, if you also
undertake to pray for forgiveness.

GIL

That's all I have to do?

FATHER HARRY

Do you undertake to do this?

GIL

I mean, in the movies -- I mean, you let everyone off this easy, Father?

FATHER HARRY

Do you accept your full penance?

GIL

Yes. OK sure. I do.

FATHER HARRY

Et ego te absolvo a peccatis tuis
in nomine Patris, et Filii, et
Spiritus Sancti.

GIL

Are we cool then? Is that it?

FATHER HARRY

My son, your soul is now shriven. You are ready to meet your Maker. Please leave the confessional now.

GIL

All right, sure. Listen, you don't mind if I...

INT. CHURCH -- NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Gil steps out of the confessional -- into a ring of twelve SATAN WORSHIPPERS. Goat heads, pentagrams, black candles, desecrations, ritual daggers, nudity... the works.

GIL (CONT)

Holy...!

Father Harry, in satanic red, places a finger on Gil's lips.

FATHER HARRY

No blasphemy please, or we'll have to start all over again.

Father Harry smiles, dons his hood.

FATHER HARRY (CONT)

May God have mercy on your soul.

The satanist with the dagger raises his arm to strike.

CUT TO BLACK

A blood curdling SCREAM.

THE END