

Born Again

or

Twenty-Seven Minutes

by

Joe Becker

contact:
+1.949.290.xxxx
info@joebeckerfilms.com
www.joebeckerfilms.com
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FADE IN:

EXT. BROOKLYN -- NIGHT

TITLE: Pelham Bay, Brooklyn. 1976

Fog. Low LIGHT from a hidden moon. Two TEENAGE GIRLS sit in an Oldsmobile, laughing.

FOOTSTEPS crush tree leaves as KILLER approaches the car, his back covered by a faded army jacket.

The passenger door opens. GIRL emerges, staring at Killer who holds a paper bag.

GIRL
(irritated)
Now what is this?

Killer pulls a handgun from the bag.

SLOW MOTION:

Killer squats, aims two handed, one elbow on his knee.

Girl's mouth opens, a SOUNDLESS scream as a bullet enters her forehead, driving her to the muddy floor, eyes wide open.

Killer turns his gun on the car and fires. The passenger window shatters.

Two more SHOTS.

END SLOW MOTION:

Killer walks quickly away. His work boots leave footprints in the heavy mud as the army jacket fades into the fog.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GREEN-WOOD CEMETERY -- DAY

TITLE: Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn. 1952

Snowy day. A 50's era, unmarked police car pulls up to the gothic gates. The driver's window is manually cranked down.

INT. CAR -- DAY

Detective BOBBY SULLIVAN, (45) cheap sport coat and tie, thick arms and neck, is greeted by an ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT
Hello, Professor Sullivan.

BOBBY
It's Detective Sullivan.

He flashes a badge.

ATTENDANT
Yes, Sir.

The attendant tries to hand over a parking pass, but Bobby stares instead at the biblical scene, "The Widow's Son" depicted in the ornate gate.

EXT. GRAVE SITE -- DAY

Bobby carries flowers from his car toward the grave. He removes his hat, despite bitter cold, wind and snow. Steam rises from his bald head.

The tombstone reads, "JEANNIE SULLIVAN. BELOVED WIFE AND EXPECTANT MOTHER. 1921 - 1947." A tiny Grave marker sits next to the larger stone: "ROBERT SULLIVAN JR. 1947."

Bobby's lip trembles. He places the flowers down gently.

EXT. ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL -- NIGHT -- 1972

SUPER: St. Patrick's Cathedral, 1972

Work boots move past 70's era cars along the sidewalk heading toward the church, dried dirt left in their wake.

The boots stop on the church steps. Killer, army jacket covering sloped shoulders, looks up at the tall church spires. A brilliant star field behind them.

He walks inside.

INT. ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL -- NIGHT

The large sanctuary is deserted, rows of empty pews. Killer stares at a huge cross on the wall bearing Jesus.

KILLER
I'm here.

His words ECHO, and Killer covers his ears, as if in pain.

KILLER (CONT'D)
I hear the bells.

FLICKERING CANDLELIGHT is reflected in Jesus' eyes.

KILLER (CONT'D)
Show me the way.

FATHER BURKE, a small man, obviously just awakened, puts on wire rimmed glasses as he emerges into the big space. He stares at Killer, smiling, several rows of pews between them.

BURKE

Can I help you, my son?

INT. CONFESSIONAL -- NIGHT

Killer's face is a SHADOW on the screen between him and Father Burke.

KILLER (O.S.)

Bless me, Father, for I have sinned.

BURKE

How long has it been since your last confession?

KILLER (O.S.)

It's been... It's been... since... since I was--

(realizing something)

Is that the answer? Is that where I am told to go? To where I am born? To be born.... Again?

BURKE

I don't understand. Of what sins do you accuse yourself, my son?

KILLER (O.S.)

Arson. Murder.

BURKE

These are serious sins.

KILLER (O.S.)

The devil speaks when the dog barks.

BURKE

The devil speaks to you?

KILLER (O.S.)

God's voice is in the bells. God commands me. He commands us both. We must kill the killer. Show me the way.

BURKE

I'm.... I'm afraid, I don't understand. Why don't you tell me about the people you claim to have killed--

INT. SANCTUARY -- NIGHT

Killer emerges from the confessional. He reaches in, drags Father Burke out, a knife at his throat.

KILLER

Show me. Show me the way. To be born again. You must know the way.

BURKE

I... I cannot.

KILLER

Then you know!

BURKE

No. No, it's not possible.

KILLER

He sent me to you.

Killer moves the knife up under father Burke's jaw, sinks it in a little, draws blood.

KILLER (CONT'D)

Show me. Now.

Burke is terrified.

EXT. SUNSET PARK, BROOKLYN -- NIGHT -- 1952

TITLE: Sunset Park, Brooklyn. 1952.

Sleazy bars, pawn shops, liquor stores. PROSTITUTES on the street. Bobby's car pulls up next to a fire hydrant. He gets out carrying a bottle in a paper bag.

The PEOPLE of the night notice Bobby, but go about selling drugs and sex without concern.

Bobby walks a few steps toward SAMANTHA, on the corner, separated from the other WORKING GIRLS. She's good looking, early thirties, thin, very high heels, long red hair.

Bobby eyes a nearby hotel, broken neon sign. He gives Samantha a nod. She nods slightly in return.

Bobby heads inside the hotel. Samantha looks up and down the street, then walks over to join him. She passes a beat-up Ford streaked with red paint on the passenger side fender. Killer's army jacket is VISIBLE on the car's driver.

INT. KILLER'S CAR -- NIGHT

Killer eyes the prostitutes on the corner. He pulls a news clipping from his shirt pocket, looks back and forth from the clipping to the activity on the street.

EXT. STREET CORNER -- NIGHT

SUZANNE, young, short brown hair, leans aggressively into a car window, competing for business with TWO OTHER GIRLS.

One of the other girls is chosen, and she gets into the car.

Suzanne goes back to the curb, looks up and down the street for another client, eventually meeting Killer's eyes.

He checks his news clipping again, then opens his car door.

EXT. PAWN SHOP -- NIGHT

Killer walks from the curb toward the shop as a BARKING DOG pulls on its leash, dragging a WOMAN toward Killer. He stares at the dog, inquisitive, listening.

The woman uses her weight to drag the BARKING dog away.

Killer walks into the shop.

INT. PAWN SHOP -- NIGHT

A CLERK, gun on his hip, tattoos, forearms like Popeye, eyes Killer from behind a glass counter filled with jewelry, guns.

CLERK

Looking for something in particular?

Killer points to a serrated hunting knife on display.

KILLER

I brought my gun. But I left my knife behind.

The clerk pulls the knife out, puts it on the counter.

KILLER (CONT'D)

How much?

CLERK

Ten. I'll need some I.D.

Killer pulls a wad of cash from his pocket.

KILLER

I'm a traveler. We only carry what's in our hands.

Killer lays a ten on the counter.

CLERK
 So you're just traveling. Not from
 around here then?
 (beat)
 Just passing through?

Killer puts another ten down.

KILLER
 Through time.

CLERK
 Huh?

Killer pushes the money toward him. The clerk eyes the bills.
 Killer puts down another ten.

The clerk looks both ways, then takes the money.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Bobby removes his gun and holster, loosens his tie, opens a
 bottle of whiskey, sits on the bed, pours two drinks, downs
 one, refills it, takes off his shoes.

Samantha enters, closes the door behind her, undresses.

SAMANTHA
 I'm short tonight. Can we make it
 quick?

Bobby offers her one of the glasses.

BOBBY
 You're the one with all the technique.
 Make it happen as fast as you like.

She's down to panties. Small, firm breasts, a hard, muscular
 body, well defined abs. She takes the glass from him. Sips.

SAMANTHA
 C'mon, Bobby, it's a slow night. I
 got rent to pay. And you got killers
 to catch, right? We're both busy.

She removes her red wig, shakes out short brown hair. Her
 face transforms. Without the shoes, hair and sexy clothes,
 she has a simple, sweet beauty framing warm eyes.

BOBBY
 Yeah, right. We're just a couple of
 bookends.

Samantha sits on the bed, strokes his face.

SAMANTHA

How about we be nice to each other.
Like old times. Isn't it better
that way?

He lifts his glass.

BOBBY

Cheers.

They both down the drinks.

She rubs his chest, unbuckles his pants, pulls them off,
smiles, looks up and meets his eye.

He pours more booze into each glass. She notices the gun,
picks it up.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

(firmly)
Put that down.

She takes the gun over to the dresser.

SAMANTHA

I hate having this damn thing so
close to us.

BOBBY

After what happened to you? I'd
keep a weapon handy at all times.

She comes back to bed, smiling. Strokes his face.

SAMANTHA

I don't need a gun, Bobby, I got
you. There's not a pimp in this
town that would put a bruise on me.

BOBBY

Then worry about your customers. Or
find another line of work.

Bobby downs another shot. Pours more.

SAMANTHA

Sure, I'll teach English in some
Manhattan prep school until the
phone call comes from Iowa City.
How many times can I start over,
Bobby? This is who I am now.

She holds her glass above him and slowly pours the contents
on his stomach and groin.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

And you like me this way, don't you?

She starts licking at the booze. Bobby's eyes close. He gets into it.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- LATER

Bobby, naked on the bed, takes the butt of a cigarette from his mouth and uses it to light a new one, then pours another drink. Samantha gets dressed, watching him.

SAMANTHA

You really should cut back on the self-destruction, Bobby.

BOBBY

You're a cock sucker, Betty, not a spiritual counselor. Stick to what you know.

He drinks. She puts her wig back on, climbs onto her high heels.

SAMANTHA

My name is Samantha. Betty blows little school boys, not big cops, isn't that right?

BOBBY

(apologetic)
I didn't say that.

SAMANTHA

Those buttons have been pushed so many times, Bobby. You'll have to work harder to start a fight.

He pouts. She's ready to go.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

That's not the satisfied smile I usually see.

BOBBY

I want to fuck you next time.

SAMANTHA

Stop it, Bobby. Don't be stupid. You know how good you got it? No strings.

BOBBY

Nothing's free from a whore.

She's angry for a split second, catches herself, and smiles.

SAMANTHA

That makes us both whores, doesn't it? Bookends, like you say.

He pours from the bottle into her glass, offers it to her.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

I have to get back to work. And
you've had enough.

BOBBY

I'm celebrating an anniversary.

She eyes the gun on the dresser, heads over and picks it up, carries it back to him, holding it by the barrel.

SAMANTHA

Five years now?

(beat)

Even if you could replace her, you
can't get the time back.

BOBBY

You think I don't know that?

SAMANTHA

Then find something to live for,
Bobby. Fucking me isn't it. We
both learned that.

She softens a bit, tries a warmer approach, strokes his face gently.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

You can't get where you want to go,
Bobby.

She hands him the butt of the gun.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Trust me on that.

He takes his gun, puts it back on the night stand, then downs the rest of his drink.

She opens the door, looks back.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Go beat up on a murderer, Bobby.
That's the only other thing in this
life that makes your dick hard.

As the door closes behind her, he downs another shot.

EXT. ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL -- DAY

The planted area at the side of the building is a crime scene. CROWDS gather on the sidewalk behind a police barricade.

Bobby's car pulls up and parks. He gets out and pushes through PEOPLE, flashes his badge, walks along in front of the church toward the hub of police activity.

DR. HARRIS (50), gray, overweight, examines the body. ARROW, tall and thin, and ZESKE short and fat, both in cheap suits, point to the top of the church spire and then point at the body. Each makes notes in a small book.

Bobby walks past the dirt on the sidewalk, notices it. Arrow sees him coming.

BOBBY

(irritated)

How is this a Brooklyn case?

ZESKE

Take a look at the stiff, Professor.
Marked up just like our dead
prostitute this morning.

Bobby pushes closer to the body and takes in Father Burke's crushed, bloody face, his collar visible, the rest of him inside a black bag.

BOBBY

The vic's a priest?

Arrow points to an OLD LADY holding a DOG on a leash, being interviewed by a UNIFORMED COP.

Bobby looks over. Next to the old lady is FATHER TIMMONS, salt and pepper hair, a very young 40, tall, thin, but solid, athletic, square shoulders and face, perfect posture.

ARROW

Old lady over there says she heard
the stiff fall from that window.

Arrow points up to a stained glass window in one of the spires. Bobby looks up, then back at the OLD LADY.

Zeske smiles at Bobby. He points to his ear.

ZESKE

Heard him fall.

He points to his ear again, laughing.

ZESKE (CONT'D)

Heard him.

Bobby looks closer at the old woman. He notices a big hearing aid in her ear, exposed wire leading to an amplification box in the pocket of her blouse.

ZESKE (CONT'D)

Her dog sniffed out the body. She must use him as a smelling aid.

Zeske and Arrow both laugh.

ARROW

Fucking mutt pissed all over the crime scene.

Arrow points at Father Timmons.

ARROW (CONT'D)

That Priest heard the old bat screaming. He called it in.

Father Timmons comforts the old woman, hand on her shoulder. Bobby moves his attention to the body.

BOBBY

(to Dr. Harris)

How long?

DR. HARRIS

Pretty recent based on rigor. I'll give you more at the lab.

BOBBY

Let's see the markings.

Dr. Harris pulls the zipper of the bag to reveal the entire body. On Burke's chest is a celestial chart, concentric circles, orbiting stars, burned into his flesh.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Hot wax?

ZESKE

Just like that hooker this morning. Same crazy drawing.

BOBBY

Pre-mortem?

DR. HARRIS

Yes.

BOBBY

The lab boys might get a print in that wax. Don't fuck it up.

Dr. Harris nods at Bobby who heads over to the old lady.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

(to the uniformed cop)

You get her particulars?

The cop nods.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Drive her home.

The cop leaves with the old lady and the dog.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
(to father Timmons)
I'm Detective Sullivan.

Timmons speaks with a slight Italian accent.

TIMMONS
Professor Sullivan, isn't that right?
You taught criminology at N.Y.U.

BOBBY
(surprised)
You know me?

TIMMONS
What happened to your wife was
reported in the news. I'm very sorry.

BOBBY
That was years ago.

TIMMONS
Some events transcend time.

Timmons extends his hand to shake.

TIMMONS (CONT'D)
I'm Reverend Monsignor Timmons, the
rector.

Bobby shakes.

BOBBY
Do you know the victim?

TIMMONS
He appears to be a man of the cloth,
but not a member of our pastoral
staff.

BOBBY
I asked if you know him.

TIMMONS
He's somewhat hard to recognize. I
don't believe we've met. And I do
have a way of remembering people.

BOBBY

Would you mind taking another look
at him? Just to be sure.

TIMMONS

Certainly. I'm here to help you.

BOBBY

Is that right?

Bobby locks eyes with Timmons, measuring. He leads him to
the body.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Doc.

Dr. Harris unzips the bag. The detectives and Timmons look
at the crushed, bloody face. Bobby watches Timmons reaction
which is matter of fact, no disgust or shock.

TIMMONS

You do agree, he's rather difficult
to recognize.

Bobby puts an arm on Timmons' shoulder, turns him away from
the body.

BOBBY

Do you have any idea how this
happened?

TIMMONS

I really can't say.

BOBBY

The woman who found him reports
hearing the body fall from the window
up there.

He points high in the church spire.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Appears that way, given his position
and the condition of his face.

TIMMONS

Appearances can be deceiving.

BOBBY

Can they?

Bobby is very suspicious.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Those markings on his chest, do you
recognize them?

TIMMONS

They're somewhat crude.

BOBBY

And that answer is somewhat vague.
You said you want to help me, father.

TIMMONS

Oh, very much so.

BOBBY

Well, the victim was a priest. He
was tortured and murdered. Quite
possibly inside your church. You
don't seem too shaken up by that.

TIMMONS

I'm extremely concerned, Professor
Sullivan. And I want to help you in
all ways that I can. That's why I'm
here.

BOBBY

It's Detective Sullivan.

Bobby holds out a business card.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

If you remember anything, anything
at all, give me a call.

Timmons looks at the card. Doesn't take it.

TIMMONS

I know how to reach you.

Timmons heads back into the church. Bobby watches him for a
long beat, then moves back to the other cops and Dr. Harris,
who stare at the body.

BOBBY

This had to make one hell of a mess.
Let's find out where it happened.

He points upward.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Start with the room behind that
window.

Arrow taps a couple of FORENSICS GUYS on the shoulder, points
to the window, heads into the church with them. They carry
equipment.

Bobby takes a last look at Father Burke's crushed face,
unrecognizable as the body bag zips closed over it.

EXT. VATICAN -- DAY -- 1976

Establishing.

INT. VATICAN -- DAY

TITLE: Vatican Library, Secure Research Section -- 1976

A mainframe computer in a glass walled room, cooling system, hi-tech for 1976. Outside the glass walls, the room is lined with 1970's-era CRTs.

Several READERS sit at the CRTs. Other READERS sit at microfiche stations, scanning articles. They all wear simple robes or black pants and white shirts, clean cut.

MONSIGNOR HALFORD, a long black robe, red skull cap, picks up a RINGING phone. Listens.

HALFORD
Was the key used?

His face shows shock.

HALFORD (CONT'D)
Thank you.

Halford hangs up, obviously shaken. He speaks to a SUPERVISING TECHNICIAN pacing behind the readers, observing.

HALFORD (CONT'D)
Every New York City archive. Police reports, newspapers, magazines, court transcripts, all public records.
(beat)
Find him.

The supervisor nods and Halford leaves the room.

INT. CORRIDOR -- DAY

Halford moves through a brightly lit corridor to a heavy metal door guarded by two SWISS GUARDS.

He goes through, closes it behind him and twists the lock handle like sealing a bank vault.

At the other end of the DIM corridor, an ornate, heavy wood door, thick and tall. Halford uses his weight to open it, revealing an elevator car.

INT. OBSERVATORY -- DAY

Illuminated manuscripts and celestial charts surround an antique wooden cabinet. Inside, behind glass, an ornate brass sextant sits under a SPOT LIGHT.

Walls are lined floor to ceiling with books, a library-like ladder system on wheels attached to a track running horizontally on the bookcases.

A stained glass window, narrow and tall is high on a wall surrounded by books. A full moon SHINES through.

The ROBED MAN sits at a polished wooden desk reading a huge, ancient text bound in leather, the pages filed with complex mathematical equations and geometric problems.

Next to the book is a "key" (a small, black box).

The Robed Man turns a page, then looks up as the elevator door slides open and Halford enters.

HALFORD

The numbers on the key do not match
the log. And...

(beat)

It was covered in blood.

The Robed Man picks up the "key" on his desk. It displays six numbers in a small window, like a slot machine. He puts it down next to an open log book.

INSERT: Book and key. The numbers displayed on the key match the last entry in the log.

BACK TO SCENE:

ROBED MAN

Would you care for tea, Monsignor
Halford?

The Robed Man pours tea from a brass pot. Halford picks up his cup and sips.

HALFORD

We're searching the archives now.
They'll find him. It's just a matter
of time.

ROBED MAN

It is always a matter of time.

A phone on the desk RINGS. Halford answers. Listens.

HALFORD

When?

Halford's face is ashen.

HALFORD (CONT'D)

Thank you.

He hangs up. The Robed Man looks up at him.

HALFORD (CONT'D)

1952. Dead.

The Robed Man looks back down at the book. He turns several pages.

He runs his finger down the page, then stops. He turns the book so Halford can see where he's pointing.

HALFORD (CONT'D)

Yes. That's the day.

ROBED MAN

Torture?

Halford points to a geometric diagram on the same page of the book.

HALFORD

The triangular geometry was burned into his chest.

ROBED MAN

Did police identify the killer?

HALFORD

A suspect in a series of murders.

The robbed man thinks for a beat.

ROBED MAN

Notify The Traveler.

HALFORD

Are you certain?

ROBED MAN

It's not our place to question the wisdom of this procedure.

HALFORD

But the killer. His own mission--

ROBED MAN

(interrupting)

Our path in this matter is written over centuries of time.

HALFORD

The killer had to know the observatory is a gateway.

ROBED MAN

We cannot know his mind.

HALFORD

If his path was chosen--

ROBED MAN
 (interrupting)
 Nor can we know the mind of God,
 Bishop Halford.

HALFORD
 Neither can The Traveler. But he
 makes a judgment.

ROBED MAN
 And he is chosen to do so.

The Robed Man stares at Halford until Halford picks up the phone.

The Robed Man stands, moves over to the cabinet, pulls a key hanging from a chain beneath his robe, kisses it, crosses himself, unlocks the cabinet and removes the sextant.

He places the sextant gently next to the "Key." The elevator door opens, and both men turn to look.

Father Timmons stands in the elevator car.

EXT. BROOKLYN -- MORNING

TITLE: Brooklyn, Marine Park. 1952.

UNIFORMED OFFICERS move barricades along a perimeter around a crime scene.

Bobby walks from his car toward a BEAT COP.

BEAT COP
 Detective Sullivan?

He nods, exposes his badge.

BEAT COP (CONT'D)
 I found the body. She's a hooker.
 I've seen her working the street the
 last couple of months.

They cross the barricade and head toward the body.

BOBBY
 You reported burn marks on the
 victim's chest.

BEAT COP
 Yeah. Like a map of the stars, you
 know? Constellations and all that.
 There's something else too. Pretty
 gruesome.

BOBBY

He cut up her insides, the female parts?

BEAT COP

Yeah. How'd you know?

Bobby and the cop pass a FORENSIC OFFICER photographing a footprint in the mud with a large frame camera.

They come upon a few OTHER COPS and FORENSICS OFFICERS working near a body in a bag, zipped closed.

BOBBY

Let's see it.

The bag is unzipped. EVERYONE on the scene reacts. The prostitute, Suzanne, lays naked, dead. A crude star chart is burned into her chest. Her pelvic area is bloody. A bullet in her head, shot at close range.