

## Severen (Near Dark, 1987)

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AUTHOR: LEX VRANICK

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I was sixteen, and Halloween was right around the corner, when a friend brought a DVD copy of Kathryn Bigelow's *Near Dark* to movie night. I was a huge fan of 80s horror flicks, and was definitely surprised she'd dug up something I hadn't heard of before.

Before I go any further, let me set the scene. I watched *Buffy* when I was most definitely too young to watch *Buffy*. I worshiped Anne Rice, and my dream was to find a secret vampire brood in the suburbs of Santa Carla. I was also a teen in the vampire romance renaissance. It was Stephanie Meyer's world, and we were all living in it - whether we wanted to or not. No shade to the Cullen clan, but I've definitely always preferred my bloodsuckers a little more, for lack of a better word, bloody. I'm definitely not opposed to undead heartthrobs, but Meyer-pires just weren't my thing.

All of this was known to my friend, and she used this knowledge to deliver me the holy grail of underrated vampire films. *Near Dark* became an instant favorite, so much so that I hunted down my own copy that same weekend. And the character that cemented my love, my number one horror crush from that day on, was Severen.

Played by the late Bill Paxton, Severen was everything a 1980s vampire should be: a reckless, leather-clad wild card, usually covered in blood and never without his Wayfarers. The only character free of emotional strife, Severen has been described by Bigelow herself as "the perfect vampire" ([FSR](#)). He is a pure villain, but in a film that tackles heavy themes of family and what it means to be human, his role is actually refreshing. He exists to intimidate and terrify and, more often than not, to provide a healthy dose of comic relief. He does all of this with such devious charm that I couldn't help but feel drawn to him. As a young writer, this was the kind of character I wanted to create: scary, but fascinating; funny, and a touch nightmarish.

Paxton's charisma definitely bleeds into Severen's personality. In fact, I'd say charisma and chaos are the two words that describe Severen best. He steals every single scene he's in, from the moment he flies into frame to his lead in the infamous bar scene right down to his face-off against a semi.

Is Severen the kind of guy you want to bring home to your parents? Definitely not. But as far as characters go, he definitely solidified my "type". I'd be lying if I said I didn't model a character

or two (or three, or four) of my own after this incredible Bill Paxton performance, and each time I watch *Near Dark* I'm reminded again of the impact Severen had on my teenage self. I know that this character will forever be a favorite; he's the kind that grabs on, and never lets go.