

Constance

written by

Niall Byrne

FADE IN:

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

A farmhouse, surrounded by fields.

ZOOM IN to a window.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

HAZEL, late 30s, sits on the toilet with a pregnancy test in her hand.

She shakes it. Waits.

Pink.

Pregnant.

Her eyes glow with delight.

INT. CAR - DAY

Hazel drives out to a field where JOACHIM, mid 40s, is pitching hay from a stack into a trailer hitched to a tractor.

He stops when he sees Hazel approaching.

She parks the car, gets out, goes to him.

POV stays from inside the car - we watch Hazel and Joachim from afar as they talk.

He shakes his head in disbelief. She takes out the pregnancy kit, shows him.

He drops the pitchfork, grabs her, swings her around.

They collapse laughing into the haystack.

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - DAY

A large farmhouse kitchen, rustic, big table, an old-fashioned range. A desk with a laptop, monitor, keyboard and headset set up for remote work, a wall-mounted TV, phone on the wall.

The phone rings.

Hazel and Joachim arrive in. Hazel runs to the phone, answering it.

HAZEL

Hello?

(Beat)

Constance.

(Beat)

How did you?....

(Beat)

But of course you'd know.

INT. CHILD'S BEDROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Joachim wanders into a bedroom. There are cartoon animals and rainbows painted on the wall.

In the middle is a half-finished crib.

He walks over, runs his fingers along the siderail that's been completed.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

An old white-walled cottage surrounded by woodland. It's set down an isolated rough track. Joachim and Hazel's car is parked outside.

INT. COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Joachim and Hazel sit on a couch in the clean cozy living room.

CONSTANCE, a sturdy woman in her 70s, drably dressed in work clothes, pours them some tea.

CONSTANCE

You'll have someone to help you  
around the farm when you're old  
now, Joachim.

JOACHIM

I wasn't really thinking that far  
ahead, Constance.

CONSTANCE

It goes quicker than you think. It  
doesn't seem that long ago I was  
courting fine fellows like you.

He smiles embarrassedly.

HAZEL

We can't thank you enough,  
Constance. We tried everything. So  
many doctors. Only you've been able  
to help us.

CONSTANCE

It's not me helping you. I'm just  
an instrument. It's all down to  
belief. Not many call upon my gift  
anymore. Not many believers left.

Joachim looks a bit nonplussed. Constance seems to notice.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

Maybe you had a moment of doubt  
yourselves?

HAZEL

No. Never.

Constance puts her hand to Hazel's stomach.

CONSTANCE

Our faith rewards us. It'll be a  
beautiful healthy child. A link in  
an eternal chain. They keep you  
young.

INT. COTTAGE - DAY - LATER

Joachim and Hazel are standing, preparing to leave.

Joachim observes a framed photograph on the mantelpiece.

CLOSE ON PHOTOGRAPH

Constance, dressed in Sunday best, standing between two well-dressed men - an older man her age, and a younger middle-aged man.

BACK TO SCENE

Constance hands off some plastic bags with plastic containers inside to Hazel.

CONSTANCE

Take these. This will keep you both  
healthy. I've written the recipes  
down as well.

HAZEL

Thank you so much. For everything.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Constance sees them out to their car.

CONSTANCE  
Have you been to a doctor since?

HAZEL  
You said not to.

CONSTANCE  
Good. You have to promise me one thing. Stay away from doctors.

JOACHIM  
Well, we should probably get a checkup.

CONSTANCE  
They didn't do anything for you, did they?  
(beat)  
I did. Respect me on that one.  
(looks at Hazel's stomach)  
You won't have any trouble with it. And if you do, call me. No point changing horses in mid stream.

HAZEL  
Of course. We'll come to you first. Won't we, Joachim?

JOACHIM  
Sure.

They get in the car. Constance watches them drive off.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

JOACHIM  
We should get a checkup.

HAZEL  
She said not to.

JOACHIM  
I'd really feel better getting some professionals involved.

HAZEL  
Joachim, neither of us really know how this happened.

HAZEL (CONT'D)  
We just know it's because of her.  
She's the expert on this. Let's  
trust her, okay?

He acquiesces with a sigh.

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Joachim is finishing cooking two steaks in a pan. He has a  
feed of potatoes and vegetables also prepared.

Hazel comes in with a plastic container, walks to the blender  
on the countertop.

She opens the plastic container - a kind of gelatinous paste  
inside.

JOACHIM  
I made dinner.

HAZEL  
I better stick to her recipe.

JOACHIM  
You don't have to stick to it all  
the time.

He takes her by the arm, leads her to the table.

JOACHIM (CONT'D)  
It's our baby, not hers.

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - LATER

They heartily lay into the steaks.

HAZEL  
She certainly seemed to think you  
were a fine fellow.

JOACHIM  
You know you've still got it when  
the ladies at bingo night can't get  
enough of you.

HAZEL  
Constance doesn't strike me as the  
type to play bingo.

JOACHIM

I wouldn't put it past her to play  
a few games.

HAZEL

What did she say when you paid her?

JOACHIM

I didn't.

HAZEL

(Annoyed)

Joachim, how could you forget?  
She's expecting payment...

JOACHIM

I didn't forget. I went to pay her.  
She refused. She said she couldn't  
take anything yet.

HAZEL

Keep it ready for her. I don't want  
her thinking we're not going to  
honour our debt.

Joachim wipes his mouth, rises and move over beside Hazel,  
looks into her eyes.

JOACHIM

Enough talking about Constance. We  
played our own part, remember?

She smiles.

He takes the signal, moves in for a long, passionate kiss.

INT. FARMHOUSE BEDROOM - NIGHT

They make love, moving around the bedsheets, groping,  
sucking, squeezing flesh.

FLASHBACK TO:

Hazel lies on her back, eyes closed, in a dark, candle-lit  
room. She is in her underwear. She is encircled by chalk line  
on the floor. Cracked egg shells have been placed around the  
chalk cordon.

Constance stands in the circle. She walks around Hazel  
shaking a bundle of tied branches over her. We see we are in  
CONSTANCE'S LIVING ROOM.

Smoke from incense burners drifts across the room. Constance recites a strange chant - no language we can recognize.

INTERCUT WITH

Hazel and Joachim, wrestling each other in the throes of passion.

BACK TO

Constance continues her ritual, circling Hazel, brushing the branch-ends against Hazel's torso, her loins, her legs. All the while chanting her strange recitation.

BACK TO

Joachim pins Hazel to the bed. He enters.

BACK TO

Constance stoops down, runs her hand flat across Hazel's belly. She presses into her belly, murmuring by a guttural refrain.

BACK TO

Interlocking, Joachim and Hazel thrust in unison, Hazel panting heavier, nearing climax.

BACK TO

Constant finishes her chanting, stands above Hazel. Behind her, we see in the corner of the dark room Joachim sits, observing the ritual curiously and cautiously.

BACK TO

Joachim collapses on top of Hazel. They lie still, breathing heavily each other's air.

DISSOLVE TO BLACK

EXT. FIELDS - DAY

Joachim herds cows into a field. He fills their troughs.

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - DAY

Hazel sits at her workstation staring at some spreadsheets. She is showing a large bump - about 5 MONTHS PREGNANT.



She gets up, goes to the kitchen counter, opens some cupboards. She starts to prepare some of Constance's recipes in a blender.

She hears a sound, a door creaking open.

She turns around.

HAZEL  
Joachim?

No reply.

Then the sound of something falling over.

She moves out to the corridor.

The door to the room with the crib is open.

She sees a shadow of a person on the wall in the room.

She stalls.

The shadow moves out of sight.

HAZEL (CONT'D)  
Hello?

No reply.

She stiffens her resolve, moves INTO THE ROOM.

No-one there.

Just the cot occupying the centre of the room.

The phone rings loudly, penetrating the silence, startling her.

She goes back out to answer it.

HAZEL (CONT'D)  
(Into phone)  
Hello?

No answer.

A click the other end.

She hangs up, presses her hand to her head anxiously.

Joachim walks in from outside. His clothes are work soiled.

HAZEL (CONT'D)  
Were you in here?

JOACHIM  
(Confused)  
I just came in.

He sees she's upset.

JOACHIM (CONT'D)  
What's the matter?

HAZEL  
I thought I heard someone in the house.

CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS

Joachim walks around checking each room in the house.

He goes into their bedroom. He checks the wardrobe. Nothing.

He stoops to look under the bed. Nothing.

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - DAY

Joachim returns to the kitchen, where Hazel is sitting looking worried.

JOACHIM  
There's no-one here. Relax.

HAZEL  
You must think I'm being foolish.

He goes to her, holds her.

HAZEL (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry. I'm having strange dreams as well.

JOACHIM  
Like what?

HAZEL  
Stupid stuff. Being in detention in school. Alone in the classroom. Sister Margaret making me write out lines on the blackboard.

JOACHIM  
All part of being pregnant I  
suppose.

HAZEL  
I suppose.

JOACHIM  
We can go to the hospital if you  
want. Get you checked out.

HAZEL  
No. it's all right.

He looks over at the paste she's being preparing in the  
blender. He goes over to it.

JOACHIM  
Maybe stay away from this stuff.

HAZEL  
Yeah, maybe.

He empties it into the bin.

INT. FARMHOUSE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hazel sleeps, lying on her back. Moonlight silhouettes her  
bump against the wall. Joachim is out for the count beside  
her.

We see the silhouette of a figure move onto the wall - a  
woman. The figure stands over Hazel's bump, reaches a hand  
out towards it. The shadows of the figure and Hazel blend  
into each other.

Hazel starts to toss and turn in her sleep.

She wakes suddenly, sits up.

She hears a sound in the darkness - like a fast scratching  
sound. It's all around her.

She reaches over, flicks on the bedside lamp, illuminating  
the room.

On the walls around her, rows upon row of the same lines, the  
same words:

Help me, help me, help me.....

Written by a STICK OF CHALK. The chalk drops to the ground when she flicks on the light.

She gasps in fright at what she sees.

The bedroom door creaks open. She turns to it, wide-eyed.

It opens out to the corridor.

Outside, a low wail, like a child's.

She gets out of bed, goes to the door.

Looks down the hallway.

She hears footsteps, coming up the stairs.

Then a shadow on the wall from the staircase - a looming figure, a woman.

She backs away from the door, slams it shut.

The bulb in the room blows. She's suddenly IN DARKNESS.

She turns around slowly, feels her way toward the bed.

Hands circle her ankle, jutting out from beneath the bed.

She screams.

She is upended, dragged to the floor.

Lying on her back, she looks underneath the bed. She sees hands with long nails grabbing her feet, nails pressing into her flesh.

Further back, in the darkness beneath the bed, RED EYES GLOWING.

She is pulled in.

She screams.

CLOSE ON

Joachim. His eyes snap open.

ANGLE LOOSENS

He looks around, sees Hazel isn't in the bed. He hears her screams.

He looks below, sees her lying on the floor, flailing and thrashing around.

He flicks on the bedside lamp. Bulb intact. Light illuminates the room.

He gets down to her, restrains her, shakes her by the shoulders.

JOACHIM

Hazel. Wake up. Wake up.

Her eyes open. She wakes, looks at him.

She calms down.

He holds her. She sobs in his arms.

HAZEL

It wanted to take him. It wanted him.

JOACHIM

You're going to have a checkup.  
This has gone on long enough.

EXT./INT. CLINIC - DAY

Joachim sits in a waiting area. A few other pregnant couples sit around.

A grey-haired older male DOCTOR comes out.

DOCTOR

Mr Kelly?

JOACHIM

Yes.

DOCTOR

Could I speak to you for a moment?

JOACHIM

Is she okay?

DOCTOR

She's fine. She's a little upset. I think it would be better if I could speak to you privately for a moment.

JOACHIM

Okay.

He gets up and follows the doctor into his office.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Joachim sits across a cluttered table from the doctor. He looks baffled.

JOACHIM  
I don't understand.

DOCTOR  
Our tests don't show any evidence  
of her ever being pregnant.

JOACHIM  
That can't be... You saw the size of  
her... she wasn't menstruating.

DOCTOR  
It's called a phantom pregnancy. It  
appears your wife has imagined this  
pregnancy.

JOACHIM  
She wouldn't make this up.

DOCTOR  
I'm not saying she did. Maybe she  
actually thought she was pregnant  
at one point. Her belief was so  
strong, she convinced her body she  
is pregnant. And her body adapted  
to that reality. And those physical  
changes reaffirmed her belief. It's  
a cycle.

JOACHIM  
I can't believe it. .

DOCTOR  
It's a rare phenomenon, but it does  
happen. I can recommend our  
counsellor talks to her.

JOACHIM  
How is she?

DOCTOR  
Upset. But we've a good counsellor.

JOACHIM  
I'm sorry.

DOCTOR  
You've nothing to be sorry about.  
Sometimes, when we want something  
really bad, we'll do anything.

INT. CAR - DAY

Joachim drives them home. The air is heavy with silence.

HAZEL  
We have to see her.

Joachim says nothing, keeps driving.

HAZEL (CONT'D)  
Joachim, we have to see her.

He lets out a sigh, pulls over to the side of the road.

JOACHIM  
What on earth do you want to see  
that charlatan again for?

HAZEL  
They've got it wrong. I was  
pregnant. I could feel it.

JOACHIM  
It was a con-job, Hazel. She  
screwed us over. Took us for a pair  
of desperate fools.

HAZEL  
They're the ones who are wrong. I'm  
pregnant, Joachim. I... was  
pregnant. I'm sure of it. I'm not  
making this up.  
(Beat)  
We have to see her.

INT. CONSTANCE'S COTTAGE - DAY

Inside the cottage. It's empty, furniture and items all gone.

We hear knocking. A pause. Then more knocking. Louder and  
louder. The door handle is tried.

Then in the window, Hazel, then Joachim's, face. Shielding  
the glass from from sun, trying to see what's inside.

EXT. COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Hazel tries the door again as Joachim peers in through the window, looking for signs of life.

JOACHIM  
Looks like there's no-one there.  
It's been cleaned out.

HAZEL  
I don't understand. Where is she?

JOACHIM  
We've been conned.

HAZEL  
She didn't take the money.

JOACHIM  
She got something else out of it.  
Just a sick game to her. We should  
never have come here.

Hazel sinks down hopelessly, face in hands.

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - DAY

They enter their kitchen, both looking disconsolate, foolish.

Hazel goes to the fridge, takes out some of Constance's food she'd prepared in tubs.

She brings it to the bin, empties it into it.

Joachim wanders through the house.

He passes the door to the ROOM WITH THE CRIB.

He looks inside at the crib. It's finished now, with a new paint job. Something snaps inside him.

He goes in, stares at the crib with venom.

He grabs it by the rails, lifts it up, flings it hard against the wall.

He stamps on it, smashing it to bits.

Hazel rushes in, alerted by the commotion.

HAZEL  
What are you doing?



Joachim stamps the last few boards into pieces.

He sinks down to his knees, starts to sob.

She goes to him, holds him.

Both of them tear up.

EXT. FIELDS - DAY

Joachim hammers a new fencing post into place. He unfurls a roll of wire and affixes it to the posts he's installed.

SUPERIMPOSE: 3 months later.

Hazel drives into the field. She gets out with sandwiches and a flask of tea, goes to him. She is looking slender, back to her normal weight.

HAZEL

I brought you lunch.

He hugs her. They sit down against the car, start to eat. It's nice and peaceful between them.

HAZEL (CONT'D)

You must be nearly finished the fencing.

JOACHIM

Another day I'd say.

HAZEL

I was thinking of buying some paint in town, doing up some of the rooms. It's been a while.

JOACHIM

Yeah. Might be nice.

They sit, eating in a languid, near-comfortable silence.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hazel lies alone in bed. She twitches in her sleep.

Joachim comes in, ready to turn in for the night.

Hazel wakes up. She sits up in bed, rubbing her head. Her face looks drained.

JOACHIM

You okay?

HAZEL

I had a dream. A little boy... my  
little boy, out there somewhere.  
(Beat)

HAZEL (CONT'D)

I was alone in a big dark house.  
And I heard crying. A baby boy. My  
baby boy. And I went searching  
through the house looking for him.  
But I couldn't find him.  
(beat)  
No matter where I went. And I could  
just hear the crying.

He goes to her, embraces her.

JOACHIM

It's in your head, Hazel. There's  
no baby boy crying. We conjured up  
a phantom, that's all.

She breaks down crying.

HAZEL

It felt so real.

He holds her as she sobs.

EXT. SHOPPING CENTRE - DAY

Joachim packs groceries from a trolley into the back of his  
car.

He gets in the car, is about to start it.

He sees something.

JOACHIM'S POV

Across the car park, an older man and a middle-aged man pack  
groceries into their car.

A glint of recognition crosses Joachim's face.

The two men from CONSTANCE'S PHOTOGRAPH.

He waits till they get in and drive off.

He pulls out after them, follows them.

CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS

He drives along a main road in the country. The two men's car is in the distance ahead.

Their car turns off the main road down a sideroad. Joachim turns after them, keeping a distance.

He drives along the sideroad, a hedge-lined boreen.

He passes a nice HOUSE with a front garden. He sees their car in the driveway.

He drives on past the house.

EXT. GATEWAY - DAY

He parks in a gateway, gets out, then walks back down the road.

He walks past the house, casually glancing up at it. No-one outside.

He opens the gate, walks into the grounds of the house.

He walks around the side to the back. He checks in the windows as he passes.

He comes around the corner to the back garden. He sees the middle-aged man exiting the back door.

Abruptly he ducks back behind the corner so as not to be seen. He peers out, sees the man go to a woodshed.

He looks, sees the back door is open. No-one else around.

He takes his chance. He hurries to the back door, ducks inside the house.

INT. HOUSE, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

He enters into a kitchen. No-one around. He looks out the window, sees the man coming back with some wood.

He hurries into the HALLWAY, walks down it, glancing into rooms as he passes.

He comes to an open door to a LIVING ROOM. He stands in the threshold, sees Constance with her back to him sitting in a chair by the window, sitting beside an unlit fireplace.

He walks in, his footsteps announcing him.

CONSTANCE  
Would you ever get that fire  
started?

He stands there.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)  
Well?

She turns in the chair to look.

He takes an involuntary step back when he sees her.

JOACHIM  
Oh my god...

His jaw drops. He can't stop staring at her.

At her STOMACH.

Her ROUND, EXTENDED, PROTRUDING, PREGNANT stomach.

CONSTANCE  
(Shouting)  
Martin!!! Henry!!!

The middle-aged man and the older man rush in. They grab Joachim's arms, restraining him.

He barely notices. He keeps looking at her stomach.

The two men start to drag Joachim out of the room.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - LATER

Joachim sits in a chair, flanked by Martin (middle-aged) and Henry (older).

Constance sits across from him. She slides her hand across the bump, rubbing it.

CONSTANCE  
You weren't meant to know about  
this.

JOACHIM

That....

(Pointing)

...is mine.

(Beat)

You've taken our child.

CONSTANCE

I never took. I only gave. My power needs fertile flesh to work its magic. We all played our part.

JOACHIM

That's my child.

CONSTANCE

Your son. And my son.

JOACHIM

No. No, that belongs to my wife.

CONSTANCE

Your wife will conceive again. She is fertile. I didn't lie to you. You will have what was promised you. And I will have my payment.

JOACHIM

That's too much to pay. A life is too much to pay.

CONSTANCE

You need never have known about it. You should never have tracked me down. All you had to do was carry on being husband and wife and you would have fallen pregnant again. And you would have forgotten all about me. Why couldn't you stick to that script, Joachim? Why did you have to come here?

JOACHIM

I've come for what's mine.

CONSTANCE

I like you, Joachim. You're part of me now. I don't want to hurt you.

(Beat)

It's not too late to forget what you've seen here today, to go back to your life, to start a family, to fulfil your dream. You've paid your dues, it's owed you.

JOACHIM  
And if I don't.

She exchanges a glance with Nartin and Henry. They exchange a glance with each other.

CONSTANCE  
If you don't, Hazel will not only  
never have a child, she will grow  
old alone.

She stares at him.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)  
What's it to be?

EXT./INT. CAR - NIGHT

Joachim drives along the narrow winding side-road away from the house, alone. Hedgerows file past in the beam of the headlights.

INT. FARMHOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hazel lies alone in bed, sleeping. She twitches in her sleep.

Joachim comes in.

She wakes, sits up.

HAZEL  
Where were you? I tried calling.

JOACHIM  
I met a guy I knew. Ended up going  
to look at some new machinery.

HAZEL  
You could have called.

JOACHIM  
Sorry.

HAZEL  
I had that dream again.  
(Beat)  
I could hear him crying. It was a  
boy, I'm sure of it.

JOACHIM  
Maybe that dream is telling us  
something.

HAZEL

What?

JOACHIM

We can try again?

HAZEL

We've tried everything. It's no use.

JOACHIM

We can't give up.

HAZEL

It's no use.

JOACHIM

I have a feeling it'll work this time.

HAZEL

You have a feeling?

JOACHIM

Yes.

He kisses her. Passionately. She's taken aback, not expecting it.

JOACHIM (CONT'D)

We can try again. Remember, our faith rewards us.

He kisses her, she kisses him back. She hugs him, cries over his shoulder.

JOACHIM (CONT'D)

We'll have our family. Trust me.

HAZEL

I have you. That's enough. I trust you totally.

As she hugs him, he stares conspiratorially over her shoulder out the window at the bright glowing full moon.

FADE TO BLACK