

FADE IN:

INT. CHURCH - DAY

CLOSE-UP - BABY

A baby in a white christening robe bawls as water teems over its head.

ANGLE LOOSENS

The proud parents ANGELA and CONOR - a respectable couple in their mid 30s - hold the baby over the christening basin as FATHER HANRAHAN - a chubby, red-cheeked priest about 50 - pours the water from a small jug.

FR HANRAHAN

David, I baptise you in the name of
the Father, the Son and the Holy
Spirit.

A small, smartly dressed crowd occupies the first few pews of the church. It is the typical mix of relatives and friends, old and young that you'd see at a christening.

We focus on EOGHAN, 30s, his head shaved to beat premature balding to the punch. He looks bored, glances at his phone to some sports results on a betting site. Beside him sits EIMEAR and DAN, a couple in their 30s.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Angela and Conor chat with Fr Hanrahan and their parents in the church yard, all attention on the little baby in Angela's arms.

A little ways off, Eoghan stands with Eimer and Dan. Eoghan smokes a cigarette,

EOGHAN

Got a nice 50 quid there. Good old
Liverpool.

DAN

Drinks on you then.

EOGHAN

You're on for a session then, are ya?

EIMEAR

I don't think this is the day for sessions, lads.

EOGHAN

(to Dan)

Jayses, she has you whipped.

(nods to indicate the baby in Angela's arms)

Wait till she gets one of them off you. It's curtains then.

Eimear and Dan share a look.

DAN

Yeah, well, I don't do much drinking anymore anyway.

EOGHAN

One of these fitness freaks now, are you? Jogging to work in your lycra.

Conor and Angela come over with the baby. Eimear goes over to Angela and dotes on David.

EIMEAR

Ah, he's only gorgeous.

The two of them talk. We focus on Eoghan, Conor and Dan.

CONOR

Aw'right, lads. You coming back to the house, yeah?

EOGHAN

Free bar, is it?

CONOR

We have a few refreshments for those so inclined.

EOGHAN

Liverpool won today.

CONOR

Yeah?

EOGHAN

Won me 50 quid, so they did.

CONOR

Great.

(beat)

Who were they playing?

CLOSE FOCUS on Eoghan. He looks incredulous.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - DAY

Eoghan is driving. Dan is in the passenger seat, Eimear in the back seat.

Eoghan

"Who are they playing?"

(shakes head in exasperation)

Jayses. He's fucked, man.

DAN

He's other priorities now, I suppose.

EOGHAN

She has him pussy-whipped. I knew it when they had the church wedding. That fucker never darkened the door of a church as long as I know him. Then he gets married and it's the church wedding, Mass every Sunday, the baptism.

They pass a car on the road. Eoghan glances over as they overtake and see Father Hanrahan is driving the other car.

EXT. CONOR AND ANGELA'S HOUSE - DAY

A fleet of cars colonizes the front drive of a typical modern country house.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Eoghan stands in a group with Conor, Angela (holding the baby), Dan, Eimear and Father Hanrahan. Some other friends and relatives hang around the garden. Eoghan swigs from a bottle of beer and smokes a cigarette. Fr Hanrahan sips a cup of tea as he holds court.

FR HANRAHAN

I had a good few funerals lately.
Nice to do a christening for a

change. It's great to bring new Christians into the world.

Eoghan is tearing into another bottle.

EOGHAN

How do you know he's a Christian?

FATHER

What?

EOGHAN

How do you know he's a Christian? He's only six months old, for feck's sake. He might be a buddhist, or a muslim. We don't know yet.

ANGELA

(Irritated)

Well, he's being brought up in a Christian home.

EOGHAN

He could be a Hindu. This could be his 10th time around the planet. He might be older than us.

Everyone does their best to ignore Eoghan's comments.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY - LATER

CLOSE ON

Eoghan talking to Father Hanrahan in the corner of the garden.

EOGHAN

It must be a good old racket, all the same. Being a priest. Good hours.

FR HANRAHAN

It's not a racket. It's a vocation.

EOGHAN

What do you do? Half hour mass in the morning, rest of the day off. The odd wedding and funeral.

FR HANRAHAN

You're never off duty when you're a servant of God. Believe me, there's plenty to do.

Beat. Eoghan glances around.

EOGHAN

You know half these people don't even believe in it, don't you? It's just a way to get into the local school, which you guys control. I'd call that a racket any day of the week.

FR HANRAHAN

People's faith runs a lot deeper than you think. It's not always that obvious.

EOGHAN

It's just a day out for them. A few photos.

FR HANRAHAN

There's an old saying I'm fond of: Behind every cynic there's a wounded romantic.

EOGHAN

Save it for the pulpit, father.

FR HANRAHAN

People will always need to find their path. Not everyone can do it on their own.

Conor comes over, interrupting them.

CONOR

Eoghan, come get a photo taken with David. We want the two bald heads together.

Conor moves off. Eoghan looks at Father Hanrahan.

EOGHAN

Photos. It's just a bunch of photos.

Eoghan follows Conor. The priest watches Eoghan go, shaking his head dismissively.

INT. CONOR AND ANGELA'S, KITCHEN - DAY

A salad and sandwich buffet has been laid out for the christening party. Eoghan stands drinking a beer, putting some food onto his plate. Beside him an attractive lively woman, MARY, 30s, piles some food on her plate. She eyes up some mixed salad in a bowl the far side of Eoghan.

MARY

Do you mind if I just reach across you there?

EOGHAN

Not at all. Rabbit food. Help yourself to it.

MARY

(grabbing the mixed salad)
Eoghan? Oh my god, I didn't recognize you there.

EOGHAN

Hi, Mary.

MARY

I thought you'd be at the fridge, not the salad bar.

EOGHAN

I'm driving. Have to take it easy on the refreshments.

MARY

Boring enough ould thing, isn't it? Not the same as Conor's parties in the old days.

EOGHAN

No. Not the same at all. Think I'll blow it off early, go for a proper drink.

MARY

Just the one?

EOGHAN

One at a time, like.

She laughs.

MARY

Jesus, a good session sounds tempting. It's been ages.

EOGHAN

Sure, come along. You know The Angler's Rest, don't' you?

She looks out the window towards a handsome bloke with a full head of hair talking with Conor and some other guests.

MARY

I'll ask Oliver. Maybe we'll stop off for one.

EOGHAN

Oliver?

MARY

My husband. I got married last year like a big fucking eejit.

Eoghan cracks a weak smile, but he looks crestfallen when he sees Oliver.

There is an awkward moment as they struggle to think of something to say.

MARY

The ceremony was lovely today, wasn't it?

EOGHAN

Beautiful. Absolutely.....
(Staring at her)
... beautiful.

EXT. CONOR AND ANGELA'S - EVENING

Conor sees Eoghan to the front door. Only a few cars are left in the drive now, the party winding down.

CONOR

Are you okay to drive?

EOGHAN

Yeah, I'd only three small ones.

(Beat)

I thought Dan and Eimear were coming with me.

CONOR

They got a lift with Mary and Oliver. The route suited them better.

EOGHAN

They could have said.

CONOR

They were in a bit of a hurry. They don't like staying out too late since they got the news.

EOGHAN

What news?

CONOR

They're pregnant.

Eoghan looks incredulous again.

CONOR

You knew, didn't you?

Eoghan composes himself again.

EOGHAN

Yeah, I did, yeah. I thought you were talking about something else. Right. Well, anyway, good luck.

Eoghan gets into his car. Conor waves him off, looking relieved when the car disappears from view. He closes the door.

EXT. BOG ROAD - EVENING

Eoghan drives along an old bog road. The grey tarmac has a wet sheen from an earlier shower, the potholes turned to puddles. The sky is a pencil-smudge grey, ominously overcast.

To either side of the straight narrow road flat expanses of machine-cut bog stretch out like a brown desert.

INT. CAR - EVENING

The engine sputters. Eoghan looks at the fuel gauge. Empty.

EOGHAN

Shite.

The car sputters some more before it comes to a stop.

Eoghan gets out and surveys his surroundings. To the front and back the road stretches off to distant horizons. To the sides nothing but brown bog as far as the eye can see. Overhead the clouds are forebodingly tinted with a palette of dark greys.

He takes a mobile from his pocket and dials.

INT. CONOR AND ANGELA'S, LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Conor sits in an armchair, the baby dozing on his chest. The lights in the room are turned low, only Conor and the baby in it.

Through a door to the conservatory we see a few people are left chatting to Angela. In his pocket his phone rings. He answers.

CONOR
(Into phone)
Eoghan?

INTECUT WITH EOGHAN

EOGHAN
(Into phone)
Conor, you won't believe this. I've
ran out of petrol. Can you give me a
lift?

CONOR
(Into phone)
I'm tied up here for a bit, Eoghan.

Father Hanrahan sticks his head into the living room and catches Conor's attention. Noting the sleeping baby and Conor being on the phone, he speaks softly.

FR HANRAHAN
I'm off, Conor. Thanks for
everything.

CONOR
Thanks, Adrian. Good luck.

Father Hanrahan disappears from the doorway.

EOGHAN
(Into phone)
Adrian? Who's Adrian?

CONOR
(Into phone)
Father Hanrahan.

EOGHAN
(Into phone)
You're on first name terms now?
They really have their hooks in
you, man. You'd want to be careful
bringing your child up in that
cult....

Conor puts the mobile flat to his chest and rolls his eyes. The sound of Eoghan's muffled patter continues from the speaker.

Angela comes in and takes the sleeping baby off Conor's chest. Conor puts the phone back to his ear.

CONOR
(Into phone)
Look, I've to finish up here,
Eoghan. You can hitch a lift.

EOGHAN
(Into phone)
Hitch? There's not a sinner about,
man. I'm on the old bog road.

CONOR
(Into phone)
The main road isn't far.

EOGHAN
(Into phone)
It's several very country miles.

CONOR
(Into phone)
(Exasperated)
There's always AA.

EOGHAN
(Into phone)
AA? Is that what it's come to now?

CONOR

(Into phone)
Look, I really can't go, Eoghan.
I've to finish up here. There'll be
someone along.

EOGHAN
(Into phone)
Right. Okay. Thanks anyway.

He hangs up. He looks up and down the road. He looks across the vast empty bogland. He looks up and sees the darkening clouds trundle overhead.

He buttons up his coat, braces himself and sets off up the road at a fast march.

EXT. BOG ROAD - EVENING - LATER

We see Eoghan approaching us along the empty bog road.

He arrives close to the camera, stands and checks behind him. Still no cars on the road.

He blows on his hands and rubs them for warmth. He turns and walks on ahead past the camera.

EXT. BOG ROAD - EVENING - LATER

Eoghan's dark silhouette traverses the frame, set against the looming greyness of the sky.

EXT. BOG ROAD - EVENING - LATER

Eoghan sits on a rock by the roadside. He has his hands tucked under his armpits and rocks back and forth to keep warm.

He looks back down along the road vainly for sign of a car. There is none.

He takes a packet of cigarettes out of his pocket. He opens the pack. Empty.

He crumples up the box, throws it into the ditch.

He looks down and watches his reflection in a roadside puddle glumly.

A beep sounds from his pocket. He takes out his phone and looks at the screen.

CLOSE-UP - MOBILE SCREEN

"Low battery"

The screen goes black, the power gone.

BACK TO SCENE

Eoghan puts the phone away, sighs.

He stands up and looks out over the flat monotonous bog. Everything a long way off. He seems wistful. The sky itself seems to be bearing down on him.

He swings his arms to get the circulation going, turns and marches on.

EXT. BOG ROAD - EVENING - LATER

Eoghan walks along the side of the road, approaching us. He passes by a long muddy puddle.

In the distance we see a car coming up the road behind him. Eoghan glances behind him. He does a double take when he sees the car, surprised.

He stops and watches it get closer.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Father Hanrahan drives along the bog road.

EXT. BOG ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Eoghan smiles when he recognizes the priest in the upcoming car. He rubs his hands gleefully in anticipation of his rescue.

EOGHAN

Good man, father.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Father Hanrahan sees Eoghan up ahead with his thumb out. He pulls in to the side of the road.

He parks short of where Eoghan is standing. The long stretch of puddle lies between the car and Eoghan.

EXT. BOG ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Eoghan looks momentarily puzzled the car doesn't draw nearer to him, but shrugs and walks towards it. He passes on the inside of the puddle.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Father Hanrahan makes the sign of the cross with his hands. Then he hits the accelerator and speeds forward.

EXT. BOG ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The car ploughs through the puddle, sending a massive spray of dirty water up and all over Eoghan. It drenches him from head to toe.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Father Hanrahan speeds off and away from his second christening of the day.

He tries vainly to suppress his mischievous chuckles as he makes his getaway but can't help himself. He gives in to hysterical laughter.

Through the back windscreen we see Eoghan standing drenched by the roadside.

EXT. BOG ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Eoghan stands staring after the car in disbelief. Muddy water runs off his bald pate, dripping from his ears, nose and chin.

He stares with a kind of numb resignation as the car recedes into the distance.

CUT TO BLACK