

FADE IN:

EXT. A REMOTE SCOTTISH CROFT - MORNING

Wind and rain lash a remote cottage clinging to the edge of sheer cliffs. A turbulent sea churns vivid crests of foam.

INT. THE DINING ROOM OF A REMOTE SCOTTISH CROFT - CONTINUOUS

A timid fire tries to spread warmth to a sparsely furnished room, bereft of any luxuries. Over the fireplace hangs a crude crucifix and a simple painting of the head of the household, FATHER EUAN MCBAIN, early 50s, a dour and severe preacher.

At the table his wife SHEENA MCBAIN, 40s, dressed simply with untamed hair and sunken eyes, tips grey, lumpen porridge into the bowls of MARY, 8, and DAVID, 11. Both children are clothed in drab, itchy tweed and stare morosely at their breakfast.

SHEENA

Such weather. The crops will be devastated.

DAVID

The Lord will provide. The Lord always provides.

Silence for a moment. Mary's eyes twinkle. She scoops a lump of the porridge onto her spoon and flicks it at David.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Mammy! Mary's flicking porridge!

SHEENA

(at the end of her tether)  
Mary! You will apologise to David immediately!

MARY

Naw... twas his faul'.

SHEENA

Mary?

MARY

(reluctantly)  
Sorry.

She twinkles at David and prepares another lump of porridge. Before she can let fly, loud banging at the door breaks the mood. Sheena looks out of the window at the driving rain.

SHEENA  
Who visits on a day like today?

DAVID  
Is Daddy back already?

Sheena shakes her head and cautiously makes her way to the door. The banging becomes more demanding.

INT. THE LOBBY OF THE CROFT - CONTINUOUS

Through the frosted glass of the door a hooded figure is silhouetted by the lightning that shocks the morning. A large scythe appears to be over his left shoulder.

SHEENA  
Who is it?

The response is more violent banging. Praying for a moment and summoning up her courage, Sheena opens the door.

A man stands drenched in the rain that drives horizontally across the doorway. The hood is dramatically thrown back to reveal BRAD KELVIN, late 20s. The 'scythe' is a broken umbrella. Brad beams a bright smile.

BRAD  
Hi, I'm Brad from Homeschool  
Helpers. Can I come in?

Without waiting for a reply, he sweeps past Sheena and drops his coat and umbrella on the tiled floor. He wears a lurid t-shirt with the motto 'if u kan reed ths, thankk a teecha'.

SHEENA  
There's a misunderstanding. We  
cancelled our subscription to...

INT. THE DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Brad bowls into the dining room and throws himself into a chair next to the children.

BRAD  
You must be Mary and David. I've  
heard so much about you! Such a  
bundle of livewires!

David is sullen and suspicious, Mary is intrigued. Sheena struggles to cut through his buoyant mood.

SHEENA

Perhaps you misheard me. We no longer require Homeschool...

BRAD

Company policy. It's in the contract. We never let our little treasures go without one final farewell meeting. It can be devastating for young minds to lose a trusted friend and mentor.

David glowers at Brad, incongruous in his electric energy.

DAVID

You're not our teacher.

BRAD

Ach, no. Well, Donald, he... it was an unfortunate accident. The roads are so treacherous round here. We're hoping he'll recover, but...

David is about to burst into tears but Brad continues.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Let's get cracking, then. Let's start with an exercise class. Can I use your DVD player?

SHEENA

We dinna have such frivolities here. Our time is spent on the Lord's work.

BRAD

Not to worry, I'm sure we can get round that.

He strides into the front room. The children are drawn behind him almost against their will.

SHEENA

I'd prefer it if ye didnae...

INT. THE FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Brad has already flicked the switch on the vintage black and white TV.

A church service is showing and from the pulpit an EPISCOPALIAN MINISTER thunders angrily at his congregation, apt for the apocalyptic weather howling around the croft.

EPISCOPALIAN MINISTER  
 ... and the sins of the flesh and  
 the sins of the world are upon ye  
 and ye are all as sheep...

Brad mutes the volume as the Minister continues to rant.

BRAD  
 We won't raise much of a sweat to  
 that, will we?

DAVID  
 Mr McIntosh never made us do  
 exercise.

BRAD  
 Donald and I have different styles.  
 The brain synapses fire faster when  
 you're energised. You know, mens  
 sana in corpore sano?

Mary squirms excitedly and puts her hand up.

MARY  
 A healthy mind in a healthy body!

Brad's flow is halted - but only for a second.

BRAD  
 Very good. Ars longa, vita brevis?

MARY  
 Art is long, life is short.

Brad kneels before her and looks deep into her eyes.

BRAD  
 You are one clever little Latin  
 scholar. Let's try one more. In  
 absentia lucis, tenebrae vincunt.

Mary leans in uncomfortably close to Brad and whispers.

MARY  
 In the absence of light, darkness  
 prevails.

A roll of thunder breaks the spell. Brad jerks upright.

BRAD  
(to Sheena)  
She's a bright little spark, isn't she? I wonder where she gets that Latin vocabulary from?

Sheena says nothing but looks uncomfortable.

BRAD (CONT'D)  
Right. Time to get this DVD going.

SHEENA  
I told you, we do not have modern amenities in this God fearing...

Brad takes a DVD case from his bag and flicks the DVD out, placing it on top of the TV. The screen bursts into technicolour life. A CHEERLEADER in bright pink and white clothing with pom-poms gyrates to pounding disco music, unnaturally loud for the tiny speakers on the TV.

CHEERLEADER  
And a one, two, three, four and again, two, three, four...

SHEENA  
She is barely dressed! I cannae...

BRAD  
Homeschool Helpers have only the best educational outcomes for your children at heart. Mary, David, upstairs and change into loose clothing. Mrs McBain, if you'll leave us, we have young minds to be cultivated.

Mary and David look at their mother as she and Brad eyeball each other. Brad raises his eyebrows and something in Sheena sags. She nods to the children and edges out of the room.

Alone in the room, Brad leans in to the screen and tenderly places his fingers on it. The cheerleader stops dancing and places her hands to touch his through the screen. Their glances lock and they smile at each other.

INT. THE LOBBY OF THE CROFT - CONTINUOUS

Sheena dials on an antiquated telephone.

SHEENA

Morag, it's me, Sheena McBain. Is Father Euan with you? D'ye ken where... aye, it's urgent.

INT. THE FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

David and Mary slide into the room in ill-fitting loose pyjamas. As they walk in, a gust of wind blows a window open and rain pelts in. Brad rushes to close it.

CHEERLEADER

Such terrible weather! Hi Mary and David, I'm Kirstie and I'm your exercise coach for today.

DAVID

How does she know our names?

BRAD

Modern technology. Bluetooth something or other. We'll explore that this afternoon. Keep up!

On screen, Kirstie is already touching her toes and swinging her pom-poms. Mary starts to jiggle.

EXT. CULVERNOON VILLAGE SQUARE - MORNING

Euan McBain, the dour and severe preacher from the painting in the dining room, turns his collar up to the penetrating rain. The POSTMISTRESS calls to him.

POSTMISTRESS

Father Euan! Sheena's been on the line. She has a visitor.

EUAN

Och, aye? We're expecting no-one.

POSTMISTRESS

A home tutor. Brad Kelvin. Wants to know if you cancelled the subscription.

EUAN

Brad... She said Brad Kelvin?

POSTMISTRESS

Aye. Ye ken him?

Father Euan doesn't answer. His fast walk breaks into a run as he heads to his car.

INT. THE FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A kaleidoscope of lights shimmer as Kirstie leads the children through a range of moves, increasingly suggestive. Mary is fluid and sinuous but David is gawky and wooden. Suddenly Sheena bursts in.

SHEENA

This really is not suitable...

A crack of lightning more spectacular than any so far splits the room and Kirstie's on screen face bleaches to a grinning skull for a split-second. David screams but Mary bursts into ecstatic laughter. The dancing grows ever more wild and ritualistic.

DAVID

Mammy, tell her to stop!

Sheena strides over to the TV and tries to turn it off. No matter what knob or dial she tries, the frenzy continues. Finally she pulls the plug from the socket.

For a second the room goes dark. Mary reaches out and takes Brad's hand. She looks up at him and whispers.

MARY

Flectere si nequeo superos,  
acheronta movebo.

BRAD

If I cannot move heaven, I will  
raise hell.

They fling their arms towards the TV which bursts back into life, louder and more vivid than before.

KIRSTIE

And a one, two, three, four,  
shoulders back, hip thrust...

Brad and Mary throw themselves into the dance and against his will, David dances too. Sheen hides her face and runs out.

EXT. EUAN MCBAIN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Father Euan drives, eyes staring, face almost pressed against the windscreen as rain makes it impossible to see. As he drives, puddles splash and sheep scatter in all directions.

EUAN

Brad Kelvin... it's not possible.  
Lord, help me in my hour of  
travail!

A lightning strike brings a tree down over the bonnet of his car. He slams into the windscreen and bounces back into his seat. Blood flows down his face.

INT. THE FRONT ROOM - LATER

The music has stopped. David presses himself against the wall, as if trying to escape through the heavy stone. Brad and Mary kneel close to the TV and their fingers reach out to Kirstie, who reaches back to them.

Sheena returns with an axe and turns to the TV. Before she can strike, Brad and Mary's fingers touch Kirstie's at the same moment that a flash of lightning hits the house. The TV screen bursts into shards of glass.

When the dust has settled, Kirstie is in the room with them, arms akimbo. She drawls as if mocking Sheena.

KIRSTIE

And a one, two, three, four...

Sheena raises the axe, ready to bring it down on the demon she sees. Suddenly the door bangs with a ferocious demand.

DAVID

The Lord provides! The Lord always  
provides.

He dashes from the room to the front door.

INT. THE LOBBY OF THE CROFT - CONTINUOUS

David opens the door to Euan, a horrific sight with blood mingling with the heavy rain and wild, staring eyes.

DAVID

Daddy!

INT. THE FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Euan staggers in and freezes at the sight of Brad. Sheena screams and drops the axe as Kirstie laughs.

KIRSTIE  
Euan McBain. What a pleasure after  
all these years.

SHEENA  
(to Kirstie)  
Who are you?

KIRSTIE  
Why don't you tell her, Euan?  
Preachers are always good with  
words.

EUAN  
(to Brad)  
You were dead. I saw the shroud  
pulled over your head.

BRAD  
I am dead. But now I'm back. Do you  
regret that August night fifteen  
years ago?

Sheena moves to Euan as if in a trance.

SHEENA  
What are they talking about, Euan?

EUAN  
(to Brad)  
They found me not guilty.

KIRSTIE  
At least they found you. They never  
found my body.

EUAN  
You were a temptress to drive me  
from the loving arms of our Lord.

KIRSTIE  
Imagine the scandal that would have  
emerged - cheerleader seduced by  
firebrand preacher.

EUAN  
Jezebel! Harlot!

KIRSTIE  
Who you decided to get rid of as  
soon as she told you she was  
carrying your baby.

Sheena, in a trance picks up the axe again and turns to Euan.

SHEENA

Is this true? Is this why we had to  
come to the island? To get away?

EUAN

(to Kirstie)  
What do you want?

KIRSTIE

Your Lord would tell you. An eye  
for an eye. My child died inside me  
that day. I think I'm owed a child,  
aren't I? Hello, Mary. Welcome  
home.

Mary walks over to Kirstie who picks her up. They cuddle.

MARY

Deus providebit.

KIRSTIE

The Lord will provide. I have  
taught you well, my child.

Sheena raises her axe to strike Sheena.

SHEENA

Mary!

BRAD

The axe is useless against the  
dead, Sheena.

KIRSTIE

(to Euan)  
My brother died trying to protect  
me. And you told them it was self-  
defence.

EUAN

It was self defence! He tried to...

Another bolt of lightning rips through the sky. When the  
light clears, Brad, Kirstie and Mary are all on-screen,  
brightly lit in the confines of the TV studio. Mary giggles  
and laughs hysterically.

The axe falls from Sheena's hand and she drops to her knees.

SHEENA

My child! My child!

KIRSTIE

And a one, two, three, four...

Euan stands as if dumbstruck. Mary dances to the front of the screen and calls out.

MARY

Factum fieri infectum non potest.

David staggers to the screen and kneels in front of it. He reaches out and his fingers touch Mary's.

DAVID

It is impossible for a deed to be undone.

Another lightning bolt shatters the moment and the screen goes blank for a second, before turning to the rabble-rousing Episcopalian minister.

EPISCOPALIAN MINISTER

... and the sins of the father will be visited unto the sons, for generation after generation...

Brad, Kirstie and Mary are gone forever. Sheena weeps as Euan stares in horror.

FADE OUT.