

KIT

Jesus, Eddie Flynn. Of course I remember. Way back, the dreams where I'd be stuck in a room with him, and the doors had no handles. Or at the park, Eddie stalking out of the trees like Tarzan in burgundy Sta-Prest. Just leave him the ball and run home.

BEN

But that's the art of Eddie. You wouldn't see him for six months and you'd forget he ever existed, but when he was back you couldn't escape.

KIT

A dark star, sucking in the light.

BEN

Like he'd turn up and you wouldn't know the story. All by himself. Like the night of the seven dares, Kit, that was - [He stops and gapes.] Shit, this was it, Kit. The very same table. [He pats the table.]

KIT

I was gonna say.

BEN

We were in here, what, 17, 18?

CUT TO:

**INT. THE SAVAGE BELL - 10PM**

This is eleven years earlier. The pub is now full, noisy and smoky. KIT and BEN are sitting on high stools at the bar, telling the story aloud (i.e. not a voice-over). They are the same age as in the present-day scene, and wearing the same clothes.

Background music at half volume ('I Can't Explain' - the David Bowie version).

KIT

Must've been. I was part-time at the all-night and you were on your A levels. You'd have been at uni I guess, Vig.

BEN

You hadn't met Vig then.

KIT

Suppose I hadn't. That night was the end of a heavy day session. We'd skewered our gonads at Plumpton.

BEN

You did your 'nads, Kit, I had Queer Dose in the bumper at twelves.

KIT

[Incredulous.] You remember that?

BEN

I remember it.

KIT

Well we were keeping things tidy through to last orders, but the bar was buzzing with Eddie Flynn talk.

BEN

You could hear him in the whispers, the name in every conversation, and everyone had one eye on him.

A slow pan around the bar. There are groups of two, three, four and more, engaged in drinking and conversation. As the camera moves we slowly realise that all the groups are looking in the same direction.

BEN

They were saying how he burst through the doors at midday like a showdown cowboy, poured himself a pint of cider without a word, took the table-seat against the wall [he points off-screen]. At two minutes past his head hit the table and he hadn't moved since.

KIT

All afternoon, while we were donating pay-cheques to Honest John, the Bell was filling up with spectators. They were drawn to see him but they wouldn't get too close, which made for a kind of circle around him, like an

aura. They were all transfixed, but repelled at the same time, and all the while he's dead to the world. Just these low growls and gurgles every so often.

CUT TO:

The camera rises behind EDDIE FLYNN, face forward on the table. The background music rises to full volume (at Mick Ronson's guitar solo). You see EDDIE's broad back, slowly rising and falling, and the back of his head. You don't see his face. The camera tilts back, looking out towards the rest of the bar.

BEN

He had his arms outstretched, greasy hair everywhere, and he was clinging to the far side of the table like it's a joke rock-face and he's trying not to fall off. He had these godawful black sagging eyes. Not black eyes [he makes a fist] but... you know, wear and tear, and lots of it.

He looks around the room.

BEN

They were drawing straws for who was going to go up and prod him in the ribs, the crowd of them passing this great dare around, like he's a tiger asleep in a cage. We were looking on but trying not to look like we were, in case he's only toying with the lot of us and he's really taking it all in, making a list for retribution. We weren't going to be a part of it, but it went on for hours. Eager watching and waiting. Who could ignore him?

CUT TO:

Three separate conversations in different areas of the bar, all in extreme close-up.

ANON VOICE 1

He sprayed swastikas on the wall of the Community Centre. And wrote "cripple" on the disabled ramp.

ANON VOICE 2

Eddie calls it as he sees it.

ANON VOICE 3

He put a policeman in a coma.

ANON VOICE 4

He rode his bike down the aisles at  
Somersetfield.

After some goading from friends a YOUNG LAD, with a fearful grin, steps gingerly towards EDDIE. He is going to break the circle and make contact. KIT and BEN, in the background, watch curiously. The YOUNG LAD reaches a hand slowly forward, the rest of the bar watching now. He is going to touch EDDIE, his hand about to -

CUT TO:

**INT. THE SAVAGE BELL - 7.40PM**

Snap back to the present day, the five friends sitting around the same table (the cut matching the position of the table).

ANDY

So what was he? Having some sort of overdose?

BEN

Something like that, you get what you pay for. I know for sure he was a fierce junkie back then.

KIT

Dead now I guess.

BEN

I heard he croaked of pneumonia or something in a hospice somewhere. Like, they scraped him off the streets to give him an easy death.

ANDY

Strange to think. How big he was. The muscle wasting away to nothing. Would you even recognise him?

PAUL

Yeah Bollock, he's working behind the bar here, didn't you notice? Of course

you'd fucking recognise him. It's Eddie Flynn.

BEN

Chris Tanner told me he once saw him bite the ear off a dog, over on the Rec.

ANDY

My mum said he robbed a blind man's charity tin, out here on the High Street. Just walked up and took it from his hand with everyone looking, and no one did a thing.

KIT

That's nothing. I heard he stuck his own mum's hand under the grill and held it there till the skin bubbled like cheese on toast.

VIG

You heard what? Think what you're saying, Kit. He mutilated his mother and they let him walk the street?

KIT

Well he's done time for something, I know that. It's what I heard, that's all.

VIG

Nice and reliable, Kit. Never reveal your sources.

BEN

Imagine that. It's 1990. You get banged up for not paying your poll tax, locked in a cell with Eddie Flynn. Every night when the lights go out, yeah buddy, let's hear your protest song again. The wonder of Eddie turned to account, like, Maggie's revenge on the marchers.

VIG

[Laughs.] Eddie the government agent. Eddie the enforcer. A hammer to break the enemies of the state.

BEN

The army gave him a route from the slammer. Covert operations. They ran him through indoctrination, turned him into a killing machine. [Mimes firing a rifle.] Now he takes out noted commies and towel-head agitators behind enemy lines.

VIG

A second ago you didn't know whether the man was alive or dead.

BEN

That's what they want you to think. The Military Intelligence smokescreen.

VIG

[Laughs drily.] Must be fun to be a moron.

BEN mimes hurling a grenade through the window behind his shoulder. He covers his ears from the blast.

BEN

What do you want him to be, Vig?

VIG

Anyone can play that game. It isn't hard.

VIG flicks his cigarette butt out of the same window. BEN doesn't flinch, he only grins. VIG tells the points out on his fingers.

VIG

He joined the circus... He became a porn legend... They cut him up for medical science... They use him to test the strength of concrete... He became a pirate... He shipped guns to Nicaragua... He won a Nobel prize... He's the lead singer of Boyz Alive... A nice bunch of punchlines but where's the joke, Ben? It's a man's life. Why make it more than it is?

BEN

[Sarcastic.] I don't know, Vig. For a joke maybe?

VIG

But we know what he is, what he's become. He'll be up at Briar Rose, cesspit of the city, because that's where all the winos and junkies and old-time bogeymen reside. Fulfilling his pre-ordained societal role and making you feel better about your lack of consequence, despite the fact you still wake up in the small hours screaming his name. You thought he was something grand when he had the power but you could never see that this was always what he had in store. There's no other path for Eddie, no other means. He's nothing special, a sad story. Let it go.

A deflated pause. VIG is spoiling their fun. PAUL glances at his watch.

PAUL

Bingo to Vig. It's the right answer. Eddie sleeps in shit. Briar Rose, or more precisely the car park on Gedge Street, up beyond the estate. That's where Eddie hangs his hat. You can do what you like with him. Eddie wouldn't scare a spastic these days.

KIT

[Wistful, to himself.] The power he had.

PAUL

A sack of bones held together by cold sores and scar tissue. You'd pass him on the street with his cap out and you wouldn't stop to spit on him.

KIT

Oh I think I might still spit on him. For old times. [Smiling.]

BEN

Stick a boot in the kidneys too, if you're making the effort.

KIT

[Grins.] A boot on the windpipe.  
Squeeze the foot down till his eyes  
burst like ripe plums.

BEN

His brains out his ears. [Laughs.] One  
of the traders at work, he told me how  
one day, one lunchtime, he was walking  
across Blackfriars Bridge, coming back  
from the gym.

CUT TO:

**EXT. BLACKFRIARS BRIDGE - 1.30PM**

The shot stays close behind the shoulders of a SMART MAN in a business suit as he strides forcefully over the bridge, with a slight confident sway. He quickly mounts the small incline of the bridge. A couple comes into view ahead of him, coming in his direction. They are both shabbily dressed with straggly hair and piercings, and they are dawdling and giggling.

BEN (VOICE-OVER)

And he was feeling pumped up and all-fucking-powerful, and seeing this benefit-case on the bridge grinning at life, as if he had anything to be happy about squatting in his dog-hole bedsit with his rancid missus, this geezer just instinctively and without any ceremony laid one on the twat.

The SMART MAN lands a powerful punch on the other man's chin. The other man doesn't see it coming and is knocked flying against his girlfriend. The shot follows the SMART MAN as he keeps walking across the bridge - he doesn't slow down or speed up. A woman's angry screaming is heard in the background.

BEN

Before he knew what he'd done, he said, and without even breaking stride. Just shook his knuckles clean and back to work.



CUT TO:

**INT. THE SAVAGE BELL - 7.45PM**

VIG

And this is a friend of yours?

BEN

It's not your problem, Vig.

VIG

You two laugh about this over  
cocktails?

BEN

[Singing, like Fagin.] *Oh, you, got to  
twat a hippy or two, boys...*

Awkward laughter from the others. PAUL finds it amusing.  
VIG does not.

BEN

No?

KIT gulps from his pint-glass, pondering.

KIT

You could work him over and no one  
would ever know.

BEN

And what's he going to do about it?

KIT

Take turns to break his ribs.  
[Laughs.]

BEN

Track him down to Briar Rose.

KIT

Puncture a lung. [Laughs.]

VIG

You're very gung-ho, Kit, all of a  
sudden.

KIT

[Smiles.] You saying he doesn't  
deserve it?

VIG

[Indulgently.] Not at all.

More laughter. PAUL throws a told-you-so look towards BEN.

KIT

I'm just saying. It's a new kind of entertainment. No chance of comeback. He can't go to the police. He's in no state to get back at you himself.

BEN

Kick the living shit out of him.  
Whatever shit that's left in him.

VIG

[Chuckling and stroking a cigarette.]  
No Kit, I see it. A delayed rite of passage for stunted middle-class boys. The last inarguable proof that you're the man in charge and not the little shit you once were. All you need do is find your childhood demon and show him you rule the grown-up world, as if you could rewrite history and wipe out the fact that you were ever scared and helpless and small.

BEN

Speak for yourself, Vig.

VIG

I'm speaking for you, Ben, and don't you deny it. Scared and small. You want to take revenge for your poor little injured childhood soul, your cry-baby days. The sad memories you can't escape when you're all alone. [His eyes light up.] You could sell tickets. The new urban bloodsport. It'd sure knock paintballing into a cocked hat for the whining hordes of bitter repressed yuppies. Who wants to go into business?

VIG spreads his long hands wide and the scene changes.

CUT TO:

**EXT. A CITY STREET - DAYLIGHT**

Close-up of a poster stuck to a wall:

URBAN VENGEANCE PROMOTIONS  
presents  
EDDIE FLYNN

*You hated him... now hunt him!*  
(Weaponry not included)

As the shot pulls back we see a desk on the pavement in front of the poster. VIG is sitting at the desk looking insufferably smug, a clipboard in front of him.

VIG

[Sarcastic.] We'd deck them out in goggles and combat fatigues. Give them each a map to his lair, the route marked in red. Here's a rag with his scent. You've got till nightfall to find him, chaps. It won't be hard, he doesn't move around much any more. Once you've got him he's yours to punish as you desire, if you'll just sign this brief disclaimer.

A line of men in their late-twenties to early-thirties is standing before the desk. BEN and KIT are standing behind VIG, handing out goggles and maps.

VIG

They'll be queuing round the block, the endless run of tragic morons. What do you think? A hundred quid a shot? We'll turn up with a camera at the *coup de grâce*. Give you a souvenir to keep in your wallet, something close by to remind you, just don't let the wife find it. The bloody remains of the homeless man you battered. We can syndicate the idea around the country. Everyone's got an Eddie.

CUT TO:

**INT. THE SAVAGE BELL - 7.50PM**

Back to the pub.

PAUL

You've struck gold there, Vig.

VIG

You think? You don't figure the Tourist Board might have beaten us to it?

PAUL

So you wanted something to do, boys, not sit around drinking all night.

BEN

You're saying Eddie's a bigger draw than a titty bar?

PAUL

Maybe not, Ben, but all the same.

BEN

Better sup up then. Hit the city.

KIT

[Stunned.] For real?

VIG

[Laughing.] You want to poke around the gutter until we turn up Eddie Flynn. And then what?

PAUL

As the man said.

VIG

So. Five of us against one dissipated tramp? And thereby underline our moral superiority.

PAUL

What are you worried about, Vig? Are you scared of the city or what, you're scared of a ghost?

VIG

And what's Eddie ever done to you?

PAUL

You're missing the point.

VIG

Am I?

PAUL

It's not what he's done. It's what he is.

VIG

Or was.

ANDY is visibly uncomfortable, looking to VIG for help. KIT is similarly nervous, looking at the floor. VIG starts to speak and then checks himself. He has another thought, one that restores his calm.

VIG

It's not for you to say, Paul. Kit's the man of the hour. He should decide.

KIT squirms in the silence. They all wait for his response.

CUT TO:

A wider shot of the whole pub. The man with the *Racing Post* is still staring at nothing. The MIDDLE-AGED BARMAID yawns and adjusts her bra-strap.

CUT TO:

KIT is still thinking and drinking his pint.

KIT

I wouldn't... [Pause.] I'd rather not stay here all night.

VIG

Kit?

PAUL

Casting vote. Let's motor.

CLOSE-UP: Hands sweep phones and bunches of keys off the table and stuff them into pockets. The ashtray is overflowing.

PAUL and BEN are standing. KIT and ANDY then follow. VIG is the last to rise.

VIG

You want to run with the joke? OK, I can run with the joke.