

Title: *THE FIGHTING IRISH*

Genre: Coming of Age | Drama | Film-Within-A-Film

Taglines: "The hardest fights are the ones closest to home."

"Some traditions are worth fighting for."

Logline: A young Irish-American film student stumbles upon an obscure tradition where sons fight their fathers as a rite of passage, leading him on an unexpected journey to confront his own estranged father and uncover the true meaning of identity, legacy, and family.

Elevator Pitch: *The Fighting Irish* is a compelling coming-of-age drama that follows Sean O'Malley, a young Irish-American film student living in Ireland, who after failing miserably to complete his thesis film for graduation, stumbles upon a nearly forgotten tradition where sons fight their fathers as a rite of passage. Seizing the opportunity to shoot a documentary for his thesis film, Sean sets out to capture this obscure practice as he embarks on a deeply personal journey to find his estranged father and confront the complexities of identity, legacy, and family. Blending dark comedy with heartfelt drama, *The Fighting Irish* explores the lengths we go to reconcile with our past and the battles that shape who we are.

Synopsis: *The Fighting Irish* follows the journey of Sean O'Malley, a 20-year-old Irish-American film student, who stumbles across an obscure and nearly forgotten tradition called "Troid Athar"—the rite of passage where a son must fight his father on his 21st birthday. Determined to make this tradition the subject of his thesis film, Sean assembles a diverse and eccentric crew: Lukas, his Lithuanian sound operator; Leaf, an energetic Taiwanese producer; and Siobhan, a brilliant but difficult-to-work-with Irish cinematographer.

As they travel across Ireland, the team encounters a series of unique father-son (and in one case, daughter-father) duels, each offering a different perspective on the meaning of family, legacy, and masculinity. From the gritty industrial landscapes

of Wexford to the picturesque cliffs of Moher, Sean and his crew capture the raw, emotional, and sometimes absurd reality of Troid Athar. Along the way, Sean wrestles with his own personal mission: finding his estranged father, Donal, who abandoned him and his mother years ago.

The journey takes an emotional toll on Sean as he faces the painful truth about his father, a man who is far from the hero Sean had imagined. When the long-awaited reunion finally occurs in a Galway pub, it's not the heartfelt reconciliation Sean hoped for, but a confrontation that shatters his expectations and forces him to reevaluate his quest.

Despite the disappointment, Sean finds solace in the love and support of his mother, Bridget, and his stepfather, Sam, who offer a different kind of paternal connection. The documentary is completed and premiered to great success, but the celebration is marred by a final, drunken confrontation with Donal, which ends with Sean's mother delivering a knockout punch, both literally and metaphorically.

In the film's epilogue, Sean reunites with Siobhan in Sicily, where they work together on a new documentary project, cementing both their personal and professional partnership. *The Fighting Irish* is not just a film about fighting—it's a story about facing your past, understanding where you come from, and finding your own path forward.

Characters:

- **Sean O'Malley (20s):** A young Irish-American film student searching for identity and purpose. Sean is determined, curious, and driven by a desire to understand his roots and find closure with his estranged father.
- **Siobhan O'Reilly (20s):** A talented Irish cinematographer with a no-nonsense attitude. Siobhan is passionate about her work, deeply connected to her Irish heritage, and shares a growing romantic tension with Sean.
- **Lukas Baltrunas (20s):** A tall, gangly Lithuanian sound operator with a dry sense of humor. Lukas is pragmatic, loyal, and often provides a grounded perspective to balance Sean's idealism.

- **Leaf (20s):** A quirky and energetic Taiwanese producer who is passionate about film and culture. Leaf is the glue that holds the team together, managing logistics and keeping the crew's spirits high.
- **Donal O'Malley (50s):** Sean's estranged father, a bitter and broken man with a troubled past. Donal is haunted by his failures and struggles to connect with Sean when they finally meet.
- **Bridget Peterson (50s):** Sean's loving and supportive mother, who has raised him on her own after Donal left. Bridget is strong-willed, protective, and plays a crucial role in Sean's journey.
- **Sam Peterson (50s):** is Sean's good-natured stepfather from Chicago. He's warm, practical, and always eager to help, bringing a steady, supportive presence to Sean's life. Though he's not Irish, Sam embraces the family's traditions and tries his best to connect with Sean.
- **Dara Brennan (20s):** A young man from Cork who fights his father in a Troid Athar duel to gain acceptance of his sexuality. Dara's story adds depth to the film's exploration of identity and legacy.

Director's Vision: *The Fighting Irish* is a story about the search for identity in a world where tradition can both bind and suffocate. It's a tale of fathers and sons, the weight of legacy, and the struggle for acceptance. Through the lens of Troid Athar, the film explores the lengths we go to reconcile with our past and how the most meaningful battles are often fought within. The film's tone will blend drama, dark comedy, and cultural exploration to create a narrative that is as complex and layered as the characters it portrays.

Director's Statement: *The Fighting Irish* is a deeply personal project born from my passion for storytelling, shaped by years of living across different continents, each with its own rich traditions, histories, and myths. I've always been intrigued by the stories that define a culture, especially those that blur the lines between reality and fiction. This fascination was sparked during my time as a film student in Prague, when I first

encountered the fictional Irish tradition of *Troid Athar*—a ritualistic fight between father and son on the son's 21st birthday.

As a struggling film student, I often felt like an outsider, grappling with the challenge of creating meaningful work without the resources or connections that seemed to come so easily to others. This experience made me resonate deeply with Sean, the protagonist of *The Fighting Irish*. Like Sean, I was navigating the complexities of identity and ambition, and the story of *Troid Athar*, which I initially believed to be true, became a powerful metaphor for my own internal struggles—a fight to define myself in a world that often felt foreign and unwelcoming.

The Fighting Irish is a meta-comedy/drama, bordering on mockumentary, that serves both as a love letter to Ireland's rich cultural heritage and a satire on the lengths we go to define our identities—often through the most absurd and improbable traditions. Inspired by films like *Borat, What We Do in the Shadows*, and *This Is Spinal Tap*, my goal is to create a film that is as entertaining as it is thought-provoking, challenging viewers to question the authenticity of cultural narratives and reflect on the stories we tell ourselves about who we are.

Every location in this film holds personal significance for me. During my years in Ireland, I hitchhiked across the island, absorbing its landscapes and stories, both real and imagined. These experiences are woven into the fabric of the film, making it as much about a journey through Ireland's geography as it is an exploration of its cultural psyche.

This film also represents a full-circle moment for me. What began as a 48-hour film project in 2013—born from a playful myth—has grown into a reflection on fatherhood, identity, and the often humorous, sometimes painful, process of coming of age. In Sean's journey, I see my own, and I hope that through his eyes, the audience will see a bit of themselves as well.

Ultimately, *The Fighting Irish* is about the stories we inherit, the ones we create, and the ones that shape us, even if they're not entirely true. My hope is that audiences will be entertained, moved, and perhaps even inspired to question the narratives that define their own lives.

— David West

Themes :

- **Identity and Legacy:** The film explores how traditions shape personal identity and how the weight of family legacy can both empower and burden individuals.
- **Family Dynamics:** *The Fighting Irish* delves into the complexities of father-son relationships, the pain of estrangement, and the possibility of reconciliation or acceptance.
- **Cultural Exploration:** The film provides a deep dive into Irish culture, particularly the intersection of tradition, masculinity, and family.
- **Redemption and Acceptance:** Through characters like Dara and Sean, the story examines the need for acceptance, both from others and oneself, and the lengths to which people will go to achieve it.

Visual Style: *The Fighting Irish* will feature a mix of handheld, documentary-style footage to capture the raw, authentic feel of the Troid Athar duels, contrasted with more cinematic, composed shots to highlight the beauty of the Irish landscape. The film will have a muted color palette, reflecting the somber and introspective tone of the story, with occasional bursts of vibrant color during moments of emotional intensity or cultural significance.

The film's tone will shift fluidly between drama and dark comedy, using quick cuts and dynamic camera movements during the duels to emphasize the intensity of the fights, while slower, lingering shots will be used to capture the emotional weight of the characters' personal journeys.

Tone: A blend of dark comedy, heartfelt drama, and cultural exploration, *The Fighting Irish* captures the complexities of family relationships and the search for identity, all set against the backdrop of modern and traditional Ireland.

Target Audience: The target audience for *The Fighting Irish* would likely include the following groups:

- **Young Adults (18-35):** This age group is likely to connect with Sean's journey of self-discovery, identity, and the challenges of confronting family legacies. The film's blend of drama, comedy, and cultural exploration appeals to younger viewers who enjoy stories about personal growth and family dynamics.
- **Fans of Indie/Arthouse Films:** The film's focus on an obscure tradition, cultural identity, and a mix of dark comedy with heartfelt drama would attract audiences who appreciate independent cinema with strong character-driven narratives and unique cultural perspectives.
- **Irish and Irish-American Audiences:** Given the film's deep connection to Irish culture and traditions, it would resonate strongly with viewers who have an interest in or connection to Ireland. The exploration of family, legacy, and cultural identity is likely to appeal to this demographic.
- **Film and Media Students/Enthusiasts:** The story of a young filmmaker on a quest to document a forgotten tradition will resonate with aspiring filmmakers, film students, and cinephiles who are interested in the challenges and rewards of creating a meaningful film project.
- **Viewers Interested in Family Dynamics:** The film's exploration of father-son relationships, generational conflicts, and the impact of cultural traditions on family life would appeal to audiences who enjoy films that delve into the complexities of family dynamics.
- **LGBTQ+ Audiences:** The inclusion of LGBTQ+ themes, particularly through the character of Dara and his struggle for acceptance, would resonate with LGBTQ+ audiences and allies who appreciate stories about identity, acceptance, and overcoming adversity.

Overall, *The Fighting Irish* would likely attract a diverse audience that appreciates character-driven stories, cultural exploration, and films that tackle complex emotional and familial themes with a blend of drama and dark comedy

Comparable Films:

1. *Living in Oblivion* (1995):

Director: Tom DiCillo

Why it fits: A behind-the-scenes comedy that humorously tackles the struggles of filmmaking, blending reality and fiction. Its meta-narrative and exploration of the absurdities in filmmaking parallel the mockumentary style and satirical approach of *The Fighting Irish*.

2. *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001):

Director: Wes Anderson

Why it fits: Known for its unique storytelling style and richly developed characters, *The Royal Tenenbaums* offers a fictionalized narrative that explores complex family relationships, much like *The Fighting Irish's* exploration of a fictionalized Irish rite of passage. Both films use dark humor and whimsy to delve into themes of identity and family.

3. *What We Do in the Shadows* (2014):

Directors: Taika Waititi, Jemaine Clement

Why it fits: This mockumentary blends humor with a fantastical premise, much like *The Fighting Irish*. Both films take a satirical approach to their subject matter—*What We Do in the Shadows* with modern vampires, and *The Fighting Irish* with a fictionalized cultural tradition—creating a comedic exploration of identity in an absurd context.

4. *Lady Bird* (2017):

Director: Greta Gerwig

Why it fits: A coming-of-age story that delves deeply into themes of identity, family, and the quest for self-discovery. Like *The Fighting Irish*, *Lady Bird* balances humor and drama while exploring the complexities of growing up and finding one's place in the world.

5. *Sing Street* (2016):

Director: John Carney

Why it fits: A film that beautifully captures Irish youth, identity, and the pursuit of dreams through music. *Sing Street's* mix of humor, drama, and cultural exploration resonates with *The Fighting Irish's* themes of self-discovery and the importance of cultural heritage.

6. *The Guard* (2011):

Director: John Michael McDonagh

Why it fits: A dark comedy that merges Irish culture with sharp

humor. Like *The Fighting Irish*, *The Guard* uses satire and biting dialogue to explore cultural identity and individual character within an Irish context.

7. *Borat* (2006):

Director: Larry Charles

Why it fits: A satirical mockumentary that uses humor and shock to explore cultural differences and societal norms. *The Fighting Irish* shares a similar approach in its use of a fictionalized rite of passage to critique and explore cultural narratives with a comedic edge.

8. *The Commitments* (1991):

Director: Alan Parker

Why it fits: An iconic portrayal of Irish working-class culture through the lens of a Dublin soul band. The film's exploration of tradition, music, and cultural identity aligns with *The Fighting Irish*'s deep dive into Irish heritage and the absurdities of self-identity.

9. *Little Miss Sunshine* (2006):

Directors: Jonathan Dayton, Valerie Faris

Why it fits: A road-trip comedy-drama that delves into family dynamics and the pursuit of dreams. The mix of heartfelt moments with sharp, quirky humor in *Little Miss Sunshine* parallels the tone and emotional depth found in *The Fighting Irish*.

10. *Juno* (2007):

Director: Jason Reitman

Why it fits: A coming-of-age story with a sharp, witty script that balances humor and heart. *Juno*'s exploration of identity and the challenges of growing up resonates with the themes of self-discovery and family found in *The Fighting Irish*.

These films not only align with the cultural and thematic elements of *The Fighting Irish* but also share a similar blend of humor, drama, and deep cultural roots, making them strong comparables for the project.

Marketing Strategy:

- 1. Film Festivals:** Premiere *The Fighting Irish* at international film festivals such as Sundance, Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), and Tribeca to build buzz and attract distributors.
- 2. Cultural Screenings:** Host special screenings in cities with large Irish and Irish-American populations, as well as at Irish cultural centers and events like the Boston Irish Film Festival.
- 3. Social Media Campaign:** Leverage social media platforms to share behind-the-scenes footage, character profiles, and snippets of the film's breathtaking Irish landscapes. Engage with film and cultural communities online to generate interest.
- 4. Partnerships:** Collaborate with Irish cultural organizations, LGBTQ+ advocacy groups, and indie film networks to promote the film and its themes of identity, legacy, and family.
- 5. Merchandising:** Create and sell branded merchandise, such as posters, t-shirts, and coffee table books featuring stills from the film, quotes, and insights into the cultural significance of Troid Athar.

Budget Estimate:

- **Pre-production:** \$250,000
- **Production:** \$1,500,000
- **Post-production:** \$500,000
- **Marketing/Distribution:** \$750,000
- **Total Budget:** \$3,000,000

Potential Cast:

- **Sean O'Malley:** Barry Keoghan, Charlie Plummer, Alex Lawthor, Kylr Coffman
- **Siobhan O'Reilly:** Saoirse Ronan or Jessie Buckley

- **Leaf:** Elizabeth Yu or Kiawentiio
- **Lukas Baltrunas:** Paul Dano or Adam Vacula
- **Donal O'Malley:** Colin Farrel, Aidan Gillen, Liam Cunningham
- **Bridget O'Malley:** Fiona Shaw or Maria Doyle Kennedy
- **Sam Peterson:** Vince Vaughn, John Favreau, Josiah Overstreet
- **Dara O'Sullivan:** Paul Mescal or Fionn O'Shea

Conclusion:

The Fighting Irish is a powerful, character-driven film that delves into the complexities of family, tradition, and identity through the lens of a unique Irish rite of passage. With its mix of drama, dark comedy, and cultural exploration, it has the potential to resonate with a wide audience and make a significant impact on the indie film circuit. This film offers a fresh and authentic perspective on what it means to fight for who you are and where you come from.