

The Bittersweet Humor of “An Irish Goodbye” Sweetened Its Directors’ Journey to the Oscars

A Darkly Funny Tale of Brotherhood, Loss, and the Unexpected Sweetness of an Oscar Win

By Mona Khorsandi

March 2023

The bittersweet “An Irish Goodbye” sweetened the palate of its directors with an Academy Award

by Mona Khorsandi

March 2023

While many co-directors were present at the 95th Academy Awards, and the judges showed interest, especially in hybrid genres with humor, the black comedy *An Irish Goodbye*, written and directed by Tom Berkley and Ross White, won the Academy Award for Best Short Film, while *Ivalu* was a fierce competitor.

As in classic cinema, the movie begins with an extreme long shot, which is the Establishing shot. Irish music is played at a slow and interesting rhythm. The shot of the sheep shows the quiet, rural atmosphere of the setting, and the shot of the dead rabbit on the road with the sunset reminds us of the end of life.

Three men are driving on the road in a car. A beep interrupts the music. The beep seems to drive the rabbit off the road, but the warning is of no use to the dead rabbit.

As the car passes by the rabbit, the man sitting in the back seat looks at the rabbit with compassion. In the rest of the story, we find out that he has Down syndrome.

The driver's attire suggests that he is a priest, and the formal attire of the other two passengers reinforces their return from a funeral.

The man sitting in the back seat is holding a dish. As he removes the lid of the dish, the man sitting in front next to the driver gives him a scornful look from the corner of his eye, indicating a connection between the two. We find out in the rest of the story that these two men are brothers and that they are now mourning their deceased mother whose ashes are in a porcelain dish with blue designs.

Their journey ends when a shot of the house is shown.

The local priest, Father O’Shea, is seen inside the house talking to the man. He is worried about how the man’s Down syndrome brother is coping with their mother’s death. From the very beginning, the Father shows the humorous aspects of the movie, which, albeit, carries bitterness with it. He talks about everything from the warmth of the deceased’s ashes to the size of his aunt Margaret’s head, which was crushed under a cow’s foot.

Lorcan, a brother with Down syndrome, makes a joke about Christ. However, the Father says that there is no problem and confirms his words.

The Father says that their mother made a list to do before she died. He asks the two brothers if they would like to see the list. However, Turlough, the brother who returned from London, says that there is no need. The Father's sense of humor rekindles, and he tells Lorcan to be careful not to spill his mother's ashes on a potato and eat it by mistake. He then quickly realizes his inappropriate joke and apologizes.

The two brothers are eating in the red-themed dining room when Lorcan complains about the taste of the food cooked by his brother. The red color of the space shows a verbal fight between the two brothers. Lorcan wants to stay on the farm, but Turlough, who came from London, wants to leave his brother to his aunt and return to London after selling the farm. Lorcan makes a bet that he will leave the farm and go to his aunt's house after fulfilling his mother's wishes. He finally convinces his brother by resorting to crying and shouting.

In response to Turlough's question about how many wishes the mother has on the list, Lorcan answers: One hundred!

One by one, the two brothers begin to fulfill their mother's wish list, from learning Tai Chi to reading a classic novel and riding a hot air balloon, for which the inflation of helium balloons to be made is reminiscent of the animation 'Up' and the wish of the old man and his deceased wife.

Anyway, did the mother write this list for herself or her sons? The process of fulfilling the wish list finally ends with the ninety-ninth wish with the free fall of the dish containing the mother's ashes and breaking it.

We return to the red room again and see the verbal fight between the two brothers. Lorcan takes his own half from mother's ashes and leaves.

Turlough asks the Father for help to solve this problem and realizes here that this wish list did not belong to his mother but to his brother.

Lorcan, interestingly and honestly, admits his mistake in front of Christ at that moment and says that he has nothing to do with him until the next confession.

When Turlough asks him about the wish list and Lorcan wants to explain, Turlough says that there is still one last wish left. The 100th wish on the list is to go to space. The mother's ashes go up in a spectacular firework.

The two brothers are sitting side by side on a chair on a starry night, and the red light of the fire casts a shadow on them.

Lorcan writes the mother's 111th wish, which is his wish, on a piece of paper and gives it to Turlough. The mother wants the two brothers together, and Turlough accepts it.

The story ends with an Irish song and a stunning shot of the two brothers by the fire.

The monotonous pace, the absence of additional shots and dialogues in the film are commendable. The humor of the story is appropriate and sufficient. There is an acceptable cinematic atmosphere. We will have fun and enjoy the music during the story. Although the story should have such results as in a short movie at a certain time, outside it, how much possibility is it in the real world for a person in Turlough's position to make such a decision to change his life plans?