

TAKE ME SWIMMING

Written by

Ailbhe Keogan

Shooting Draft

June 2017

1 EXT. WEST OF IRELAND - DAWN 1

THADY (40) sits in the back of a taxi as it drives past the village, the out-lying dwellings, the endless fields, the disappearing dunes, past all civilisation to an isolated but well-loved homestead by the sea.

2 EXT. BOTHAREEN - CONTINUOUS 2

Thady closes the door on the taxi and walks up a narrow bothareen.

3 EXT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS 3

Thady pauses as he opens the gate and inhales deeply. Readying himself. *

MARCUS (O.S.)

Thady!

In the yard, Thady finds MARCUS (75) and EILEEN (72) have come out to meet him. Both dressed in a rush; Marcus in a plaid shirt, Eileen in her painting smock. Both have faces that have been eroded by sea air and hair that is permanently wind-swept. Thady grins as he hugs Eileen.

THADY

Heya Mum.

EILEEN

(smiling)

Thadeus Star.

And then Marcus. Thady's love is unreserved and returned twice-fold. Theirs is a precious isosceles triangle.

4 INT. KITCHEN - SMALL TIME LATER 4

In the kitchen, Marcus and Eileen's morning routine unfolds. Stirring scrambled eggs, Thady's watching everything with a surveyor's eye. Marcus makes the tea and gives Eileen cutlery to put on the table.

Instead of setting the table, Eileen takes the cutlery and starts to lay it out on the stove top.

THADY

Mum?

He steps towards her but Marcus motions for Thady to keep stirring.

MARCUS

Leave her.

Marcus, completely unfazed, opens the cutlery drawer and takes a second set out and starts to set the table himself. Thady goes back to the eggs.

THADY

(scraping the pan)

Shit!

MARCUS

How's Abigail?

THADY

Great. She's training in a new horse. Wilful as the day is long but a one-off.

(plating up the eggs)

We've been offered the stable house. That's why I can't stay longer. We've to meet the landlord Monday.

MARCUS

(putting cups out)

What time are ya heading over to the wake?

THADY

(bringing the plates over to table)

Jimmy says hold off until tonight. He'll need some back-up then.

MARCUS

Tell Jimmy we'll be round to see him after the circus. There's a ham done for them in the utility. Don't forget it.

THADY

(surprised)

Did Mum cook a ham?

MARCUS

(putting bread out)

No. I did.

THADY

(even more surprised)

You did? Did Mum help?

MARCUS
 (smiling, sitting down)
 If you call throwing ten whole
 apples into the pot, then yeah she
 helped.

Thady tries to smile at the image but the smile is empty. He
 sits down at the table with his Dad.

THADY
 Breakfast is ready, Mum.

MARCUS
 There's also a stash of marmalade
 under your bed but I've given up
 reclaiming it.
 (looking for Eileen)
 Haven't I, Splinky?

Marcus finds Eileen looking around the room, distressed.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
 (getting up, going to her)
 Ya'll right, Eileen?

Eileen is searching the room desperately, wild-eyed.

EILEEN
 Where's Marcus?
 (looking straight at him)
 Where's Marcus?

The previously unfazed Marcus is obviously completely felled
 by her words.

MARCUS
 (finally)
 He's close enough to bite ya.

He gnashes his teeth playfully at her and Eileen laughs, a
 great, big, raucous cackle that Thady drinks in sadly. Marcus
 guides Eileen to his chair and he takes the one furthest
 away.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
 You can come with me to drop your
 Mum off to the day centre.

THADY
 I might just chill out if that's
 OK.

Eileen starts into her eggs straight away. Thady, hungry now, starts into his before noticing that Marcus is too distracted to eat. When Marcus sees Thady's eyes on him, he picks up his cutlery and starts.

5

INT. OUTHOUSE - LATER

5

Thady finds two familiar towel dressing gowns hanging up by the door. He lovingly smells them before turning his attentions to the rest of the space.

One half is where surfboards are shaped; the other half is where huge, immersive seascapes are painted. This could be home to the twin passions of one person but the evidence tells us it's a creative space shared by two - two mugs, two old armchairs, two piles of vinyls on either side of the player.

Thady spots a videotape peeping out of the old VHS player. It says Eileen on Art Review 2010. It's obviously been watched recently. Thady pushes it in. The mechanism kicks in and plays.

INTERVIEWER

Eileen, some critics have pointed to the fact that this body of work is simply retreading old ground.

EILEEN

(playfully)

You mean retreading old water? Yeah it's the same sea, the same Atlantic, but that's the point for me. It's never the same.

Thady leaves it play and her voice fills the workshop as he wanders around a space he remembers so well. Touching Eileen's easel and her painting gear, rubbing his hand down along a nearly finished surfboard.

EILEEN (V.O.)

I guess I am, to a large degree, a selfish artist. I don't honour an implicit contract between me and a perceived audience. I'm not trying to provide something new or evolved.

Thady puts on his Dad's dressing gown and sits in his armchair.

EILEEN (V.O.)
 You see, every time I paint the
 sea, I surrender to it. I drown in
 the work only to emerge reborn.

He reaches into its plump folds to find the packet of rollies he knows are stashed there. He deftly rolls one and reaches in for the lighter. No light. He checks the dressing gown pocket.

EILEEN (V.O.)
 If there is a contract it's between
 myself and an ever-emerging me.

Thady finds something else.

It's an informal contract between Marcus and Eileen, written on a folded record sleeve.

The day I don't know who you are, promise to 'take me swimming'. August 2013.

Marcus' signature is undeniable. Dated three years ago.

He understands exactly what his mother is asking and what his father has agreed to.

INTERVIEWER
 In this latest body of work, your
 precious horizon--

Thady pauses the VHS and reads it over and over again.

A car pulls up outside. He looks out the window to see his Dad has come back.

6 EXT. WORKSHOP - DAY 6

Thady hits an old tennis ball against the workshop with a hurley, over and over again. Marcus looks out at him from inside the workshop. They catch each other's eyes momentarily before both choose to go back to their respective activities.

7 INT. CAR - LATER 7

Thady makes no mention of the contract as he drives with Marcus to collect Eileen from the day centre. There's a loaded silence. All that can be heard is Eileen talking to herself in the back.

8 INT. ST. ITA'S DAY CARE CENTRE - DAY 8

A carefree Eileen sings and dances in a room full of Alzheimer patients. It's both heartening and heart-breaking. Marcus watches from the doorway.

MARCUS
(little half-smile)
She's channelling her Kate Bush
there.

Marcus turns to Thady but Thady is not smiling. He's working hard to suppress the tears. Unable to watch any longer, Thady leaves to find some breath outside. Marcus looks after him compassionately. He's fought for that self-same breath.

9 EXT. CAR - SMALL TIME LATER 9

Thady hears Marcus' laboured breaths as he coaxes a very unwilling Eileen back into the car.

10 INT. CREAN'S HOUSE - EVENING 10

The late DR. CREAN SENIOR is laid out on the kitchen table. A line of people pay their respects. Thady gets in line. He smiles when he sees a big old fashioned jar of lollipops placed beside the body. When he finds himself in front of JIMMY CREAN (40), the two old friends envelope each other in a huge hug. Extracting himself, Thady takes the obviously grief-stricken MRS CREAN into a gentler embrace.

MRS CREAN
(whispering)
My second son.

Thady just about keeps the tears down and moves on without looking back.

11 EXT. CREAN'S SHED - LATER 11

Jimmy swigs from a bottle of brandy. Thady is sucking a lollipop.

THADY
(looking on it)
The magic cure all. How many more
jars left in the shed?

JIMMY
Two. Best before 1997.
(beat)
(MORE)

JIMMY (CONT'D)

We toyed with putting one in his mouth but Mammy reckoned it was too dangerous.

THADY

He's hardly gonna choke now.

JIMMY

(grinning)

No, you shite! One of his old biddies mightn't see it and poke herself in the eye when she goes to kiss him.

THADY

Is it weird seeing people kiss your dead Dad?

JIMMY

(shaking his head)

Nope. It's lovely. I'm happy for him. Doctors make bad patients.

Rich silence.

THADY

You're lucky. I'd rather just put Mum in a box with all my good memories than watch her slip away bit by bit.

Jimmy nods and passes the bottle to Thady.

THADY (CONT'D)

It's getting harder and harder to remember her, like all my good memories of her are being buried under layers of this shit.

(growing distressed,
swallowing back tears)

What if I can't ever get to them again? What if I can't remember her?

JIMMY

How's your Dad doing?

THADY

(turning to Jimmy)

You tell me, Jimmy.

JIMMY

(long beat)

I didn't mean physically. I meant--

THADY
I hear him breathing hard.

JIMMY
(reluctantly)
He's under pressure.

THADY
What does that mean, Jim-Bob.

JIMMY
It means you might have to look
into long-term care options for
your Mum.

12 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT 12

Thady walks home by moonlight. TRISH (60) approaches him.

TRISH
Thady! Marcus said you were home.
Can you come look at a horse for
me? She's taken a turn. She's on
the last lap I'd say.

THADY
Heya Trish. I don't have my gear
though. Is Eamon not around?

TRISH
He's up at the wake. Legless.
Please, just have a look.

13 INT. STABLE - CONTINUOUS 13

A distressed horse is whining in the stable. Thady finishes up
the examination. He shakes his head and Trish hands him a
shotgun. Knowing she's right, Thady takes aim.

BANG. Silence.

14 INT. KITCHEN - LATER 14

Thady arrives home, late and disturbed. He pours himself a
whiskey and smokes a rollie up the chimney. He finds
something burned in the hearth. He recognizes the contract.

15 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT 15

Thady is on the phone to Abigail.

ABIGAIL
How're your folks doing?

THADY
I shot a horse an hour ago.

ABIGAIL
Wha? Where-

THADY
Would you put me out of my misery
if I asked?

ABIGAIL
It wouldn't be fair of you to ask--

THADY
(his voice breaking)
But would you? If you knew it's
what I wanted, could you shoot me?

ABIGAIL
(a loving whisper)
Oh Thady...

16 EXT. BEACH - NIGHT 16

The SLUSHY CLATTER of pebbles is heard as the sea washes
gently over the shoreline under a clear night sky.

17 INT. LANDING - LATER 17

Thady looks out his bedroom door.

MARCUS
(disappearing down the
stairs)
Your Mum's gone.

Thady follows after Marcus' laboured breaths.

18 EXT. DUNES - DAWN 18

Marcus and Thady breathlessly navigate the dunes by dawn's
new light. They reach the top. Below Eileen is walking into
the sea.

Marcus makes to run for her but Thady reaches out and grabs
his father by the arm, holding him back.

THADY
 (looking away, blurting it
 out,)
 Let her go, Dad!

Marcus stops. There is a huge charged moment.

MARCUS
 (looking for Thady,
 finding him)
 I have.

Finally, Thady lets go and Marcus runs in after Eileen.

19 EXT. SEA - CONTINUOUS 19

Marcus finds Eileen is not in need of saving. She's answering the call of the magical phosphorescence. Marcus takes in Eileen's luminescent smile.

20 EXT. DUNES - SIMULTANEOUS 20

Thady watches his Mum and Dad swimming, two creatures in their element. He walks away over the dunes.

21 EXT. SEA - SIMULTANEOUS 21

Marcus and Eileen tread water as dawn breaks over the horizon.

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)
 (warm, familiar)
 In this latest body of work, your precious horizon - that line that we've watched joyfully go up and down over the decades - seems to be fading somewhere near the centre. Eileen Chambers - have sky and sea finally become one?

EILEEN (V.O.)
 (teasing, playful)
 They've always been one. As are we, with our salty evaporated tears. What's happened is I've gotten old and banjaxed, Sean. The horizon - that boundary of what's what - is no longer mine to play with.

CUT TO VHS
 FOOTAGE

INTERVIEWER
(knowing, obviously moved)
So, you simply let it go?

EILEEN
(talking to him with her
eyes)
No, first I held onto to it for all
I was worth. I kicked and I
thrashed and I fought.
(beat, meaningful smile)
Then I let go.

CUT BACK TO
SCENE

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)
Eileen Chambers. Thank You.

22 EXT. DUNES - SMALL TIME LATER

22

Thady appears again over the dunes, two towel dressing-gowns
in hand.

He sits down and waits.

Finally, the tears come.