

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Night Swimming

by Paul Andersen

EXTRACT

© 2001 Paul Andersen



This script is distributed by The Australian Script Centre
77 Salamanca Place Hobart 7004 Tasmania Australia
email admin@ozscript.org
www.ozscript.org
ph +61 3 6223 4675
fax +61 3 6223 4678

Synopsis

Jerome is blind, in love with a woman he's never seen. Their unborn child takes him back to revisit his past— when he was a championship swimmer, when he had eyes only for a mysterious girl he rescued from drowning.

A magical tale of blind love.

Voice qualities

MINN	Treble	young girl (7-10) / wide-eyed
MIRABEL	Soprano	airy / Irish*
WENDY	Alto	grounded / soothing
JEROME	Tenor	firm / resonant
COLUM	Bass	old pirate / Irish

(Also: bus driver)

* Mirabel's mother tongue is Gaeilge, and she's new to English (unlike Colum)

for CARLI

SILENCE

MINN (close mic) Can you hear me? Listen carefully. This is your story.

SX A SHIMMER; AN ATMOSPHERE OF VASTNESS, LIKE OUTER SPACE OR DEEPEST OCEAN, WITH TWINKLING STARS AND DEEP CURRENTS

MINN (close mic) You are a blind man. You're in love with a beautiful woman who you've never ever seen. And it's my story too. You see, you are my father. (Actually, I haven't been made yet.) But you're busy making me right now.

SX FADE TO BEDROOM; BEDSPRINGS & BREATHLESS LOVEMAKING: JEROME & WENDY; BUILDS TO CLIMAX

MINN (close mic) Listen—

JEROME (moan)

MINN (close mic) It's a bit naughty, but it's okay.

JEROME Yes—

MINN (close mic) You are my father—

WENDY Jerome—

MINN (close mic) —part of me is still a part of you—

WENDY I love you.

MINN (close mic) On your marks,

JEROME Yes—

MINN (close mic) Set—

JEROME Oh Mirabel!

SX BEDSPRINGS HALT; AMPLIFIED DROPLET TAKES US UNDERWATER; RUSHING WATER; HEARTBEAT; CROWD BUILDS—

MINN (close mic) And they're off! Racing up, into the night! Swirling in the current, seeking, wiggling. There you are— way ahead of the competition! Look, a natural!— wiggling up and IN— YES!

SX CROWD ROARS

MINN (close mic) We have a champion! And in record time!

SX FADE TO BEDROOM; BREATHING

JEROME (breathless) That was beautiful.

WENDY Yes. (beat) You said her name again.

JEROME Whose name?

WENDY "Mirabel".

JEROME Did I?

WENDY Yes.

JEROME (beat) I'm sorry.

WENDY It was three years ago Jerome. She's dead, can't you see that?

JEROME I'm blind.

WENDY Yes I know you're blind, that's not what I meant.

JEROME It's just, I can't—she's the only one I've got an image of, in my mind.

WENDY How am I meant to feel about that? Huh? We're trying to make a baby, and my husband's fantasising about some ex-girlfriend who died three years ago.

JEROME Wendy, don't.

WENDY You've got to deal with it Jerome. It's not as if you can go back and rescue her.

SX CUT; A WAVE CRASHES AGAINST THE ROCKS

MIRABEL (distant) *Tubhair cabhair dom!* [Help me!] Help!

COLUM (distant) Quick, somebody! She can't swim!

JEROME What's that?

MINN (close mic) It's five years ago, before you went blind.

COLUM (distant) Hurry!

JEROME (calls) I'm coming!

- SX RUNNING THROUGH ROCKPOOLS; WAVE CRASHES
- COLUM I'm too old, you have to rescue her.
- MIRABEL (less distant) *Duinéigin, ní féidir liom snábh níós mór. Tubhair cobhair dom, máis é do thoill é!* [Somebody, I don't know how to swim anymore. Help me, please!]
- JEROME (calls) Stay there! (heave)
- SX SHALLOW DIVE UNDERWATER; THEN SURFACE; WAVE CRASHES
- JEROME (effort)
- SX SWIMMING, BREATHING, HEARTBEAT, TURMOIL – HOLD
- MIRABEL No air! Help— (gurgle / goes under)
- JEROME No, hold on! (effort) Gotcha!
- MIRABEL (splutter;) *Go raibh maith agat, cathaith tú cabhrú liom ní féideir liom snábh.* [Thank you, you must help me, I can't swim.]
- JEROME Easy does it, I've got you. No, don't push!
- SX DUNK UNDERWATER; BUBBLES; AND WE'RE SUSPENDED IN TIME, HAUNTING VOICES SING VARIATIONS ON THE TUNE WHICH WILL BE MIRABEL'S LULLABY; IT LINGERS, THEN ABRUPTLY WE SURFACE
- MIRABEL (gasps)
- JEROME (gasps) Don't push me, I'm rescuing you!
- MIRABEL *Tóg amach as seo mé!* [Take me out of this!]
- JEROME Come on, in we go. Careful, the rocks.
- SX WAVE CRASHES
- JEROME Now use your legs.
- MIRABEL I cannot.
- JEROME Climb, hurry up!
- MIRABEL (heave)
- JEROME Hold on!
- SX WAVE CRASHES
- JEROME That was close (heave). Where'd that old bugger go? Here, let me carry you.