

# THE SINKHOLE

Drama / 6 x 30

**Mirth and madness collide in a sinkhole of truth,  
fantasy, and imaginary horrors**



## THE SINKHOLE

*The Sinkhole* is a drama series about the fall and redemption of Milo O'Connor, inspired by the award-winning stage-play '*Milo's Wake*,' by Michael and Margery Forde.

As the first anniversary of his teenage son Liam's death approaches, Milo O'Connor is sick of shuffling safely towards death. Desperate, he decides to hold a wake for the livin' – his own wake - so his friends can sing his praises while he's still around to hear it! However, beneath his jovial veneer Milo is barely coping. His forced levity is pushing his wife, Tully, away, and Milo's young daughter, Mary, wonders where her Dad of old has gone. As a sinkhole appears in the O'Connor's back yard, seemingly intent on taking a sacrifice, Milo is forced to face his ghosts, do battle with the monsters of his daughter's imagination, and somehow confess to Tully his terrible part in Liam's death.

*The Sinkhole* taps into universal themes of loss and grief, and speaks to the current teen suicide korero in Aotearoa New Zealand, and globally.







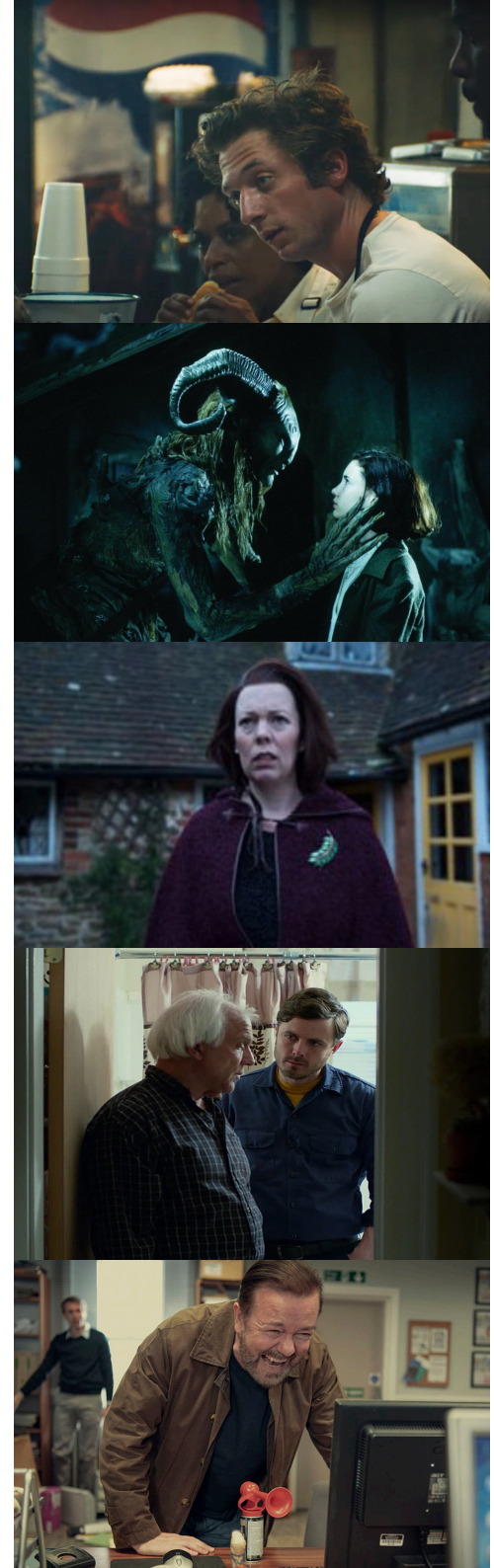
## tone & audience

Peppered with comedy and doses of imaginative fantasy, inhabited by vivid, working-class characters, *The Sinkhole*, like a pint of Guinness, is light and frothy on top, disguising the dark beneath. The audience is welcomed into the O'Connors orbit with humour, Milo's bonhomie - and intrigue. What is up with this family? Why are they walking on emotional eggshells? As in *After Life*, comedy leavens the mercilessly serious subject matter, lowering the audience's emotional guard, making the revelations of the latter episodes hit harder.

At the show's heart beats the love story of Milo and Tully, testament to the power of family both to harm and to repair. Their daughter Mary is a sister character to Ofelia in Guillermo Del Toro's masterpiece *Pan's Labyrinth*: her mythologically inspired fantasies allow her grief to find expression, and protect her from the implosion of unexpressed grief surrounding her. Like Ofelia, Mary's imaginative creations become entangled in the waking world, triggering horror, humour and healing.

The show shares the gentle whimsy and deep sadness indispensable to the comedy of *Detectorists*. Recent TV shows *Flowers* and *The Bear* also carry an undertow of sorrow and unfinished psychic business. In *The Sinkhole* this stalks the major characters, pulling the audience in and propelling them toward a second half season arc of cliff hangers and climactic reveals that are bold, challenging, and startling. Visually, the show resembles the sombre tones of *Manchester by the Sea* and the gritty working class vibe of *Mare of Easttown*. Like *Flowers*, *The Sinkhole* will be led by marquee cast and a mix of comic and serious talent. Ours is a premium drama, with high production values, helmed by acclaimed UK based, Kiwi born director Jonathan Brough.

While an ensemble show, the central character of *The Sinkhole*, is Irish; the inspiration for the story is the powerful Australian play 'Milo's Wake.' That play, and this TV, is a migrant story, no doubt. But Milo is not only Irish, he's a proud Kiwi too, his and Tully's marriage a combustible collision of Celtic and Māori world views. First and foremost *The Sinkhole* tells of the O'Connor's, a family under almost unbearable stress, who find a way to navigate their way out of the dark, their dignity and humour intact.





## DIRECTOR'S VISION

*The Sinkhole* is sophisticated, premium drama, that lives in the real world. It's crucial it feels confident, solid, and agile from the very first frame, to entice the viewers in, then shepherd them through a world they care about, inhabited by characters they love and understand – for all their flaws. A touchstone for this vision is *Mare of Easttown*. It combines naturalism, drama and genuine humour, comfortable as natural bedfellows. It's visually beautiful, but understatedly so, and has an extraordinarily potent sense of place. But I plan to go even further. The high-naturalistic tone will add drama and surprise to the fantasy elements, but they will live in the same world. The bog man should feel as real and plausible to us as he does to Mary - taking us into the realm of genuine magic realism - like the beautiful and haunting *Tales from the Loop*.

The performances in *The Sinkhole* must be flawless. In Peter's wonderful script, every character has their individual moment, but the ensemble remains the thing, as in his previous project *Blind Bitter Happiness*. The casting has to be top-of-the-game, unexpected and interesting. I've always had great results with casting comedians and musicians as dramatic actors. Very exciting things can happen, as they're fearless and not hampered by conventions. Even better collisions result when you put comedians and actors together - then things really start getting interesting. It's this very open-minded approach we'll take into the casting process, with performers as diverse as *Chis O'Dowd* and *Damian Dempsey* in our sights for Milo.

Visually, the show needs to bring us into a new world. The urban south of Aotearoa/New Zealand has rarely been seen on screen, so this is a chance to celebrate it with detailed, textured environments. The houses, clothes - and faces - all need to feel lived in. The landscapes are dramatic, but I also want us to revel in the fresh ordinariness of it all, offering audiences something familiar but different to latch on to and enjoy. We should feel the seasons as well, with the constant rain of Ep 1 and the dreary grey skies of Ep 2 contrasting with the shock, delight - and drought - as the sun bursts forth when Tully visits Northland.

*The Sinkhole* is about life and death, losing and finding. When we first meet our characters, they're deep in grief; still in the hole, if you will. Part of the visual approach will be to capture this grief through the characters' isolation in a frame, or their spatial relationships to one another. The images should be every bit as powerful as the words, enhancing the drama and humour. Every frame must earn its keep. Music is crucial too. Nothing evokes emotional response better than a song sung from the heart and *The Sinkhole* will throw an emotional punch like no other. The songs must be recorded live; the feeling of immediacy is crucial.

Through a sophisticated and heartfelt approach to sensitive subject material, *The Sinkhole* will make for memorable and arresting television.

## SEASON STORY

It's been almost a year since Liam's death. His dad, Milo O'Connor, is putting on a brave face. But his relentless positivity, at times alternately entertaining and infuriating, is holding at bay a sadness in his heart that threatens to swallow him whole, if he ever faces it.

Speaking of being swallowed whole, young Mary O'Connor is delighted when a sinkhole opens in her back yard, even after she falls into it. But she's beset with worries. Where did Liam go? Are her parents divorcing? What's wrong with dad? Searching for answers, Mary searches for meaning in her collection of totems, all stolen items, and becomes obsessed with the bog family she believes inhabits the sinkhole.

Tully wants them to attend a support group but Milo hits upon the idea of mending his psychic ills by hosting his own wake. How better to cheer himself up! Stricken with shame and frustration, and unable to grieve alongside him, Tully is forced to leave her husband. She seeks solace in Joel, a man she meets at the support group, the two pushed together by shared lived horrors.

As the stress piles upon Milo's emotional back, and he becomes less and less like the dad she once knew, Mary wonders if he's been somehow replaced by someone – or something. Determined to drive out the monster and turn the clock back to when everyone was happy, Mary makes her play, forcing Milo to look at a mirror and see himself as he really is. Unfortunately, perched on a wonky stool for this tricky manoeuvre, she falls mid-exorcism and knocks herself out. When Mary wakes, she proclaims that Milo has changed. But has he?

When the house he's working in collapses, Milo hasn't got much more to lose. He admits to Tully his childhood torment and secret guilt about Liam. Tully confesses about Joel. Tully makes the journey to her spiritual home to lay the ghost of Liam to rest, and connect Mary to her Ngāpuhi-tanga, her ancestral roots. Milo's wake turns into a remembrance for Liam. As the dead are toasted, the clock starts up again on the living.



## THE WORLD

Milo's house repiling and repair business has raised him up from the muck of his migrant origins. But the work also involves squirming in dirt and dark in claustrophobic spaces, invoking Milo's childhood trauma, as well as being symbolic of the weight of present grief bearing down on him. Meanwhile, the rain won't stop falling in the wettest spring on record, brewing a calamity at the latest O'Connor work site.

The muddy sinkhole that appears in the O'Connor's back yard becomes a symbol of the emotional mire that threatens to swallow the family whole. It's also a convenient dumping ground for Mary's secret stash, home to the creatures of her imagination, a muddy embrace awaiting anyone unfortunate enough to fall into it, a stand in for the bogs of Milo's Irish childhood, and – once the crack at the base widens enough – a life threatening peril.

Our distinctly damp take on Dunedin, with its neo-gothic grandeur, contrasted with down at heel suburbs, and recent history of catastrophic landslides, makes our oldest city a character in itself. The Sinkhole will put it on the filming map.



## MEET THE O'CONNORS

### MILO (50ish)

Milo has spent his life laughing in the face of adversity, and he's made an outward success of his life in his adopted country. A devoted dad and husband, he loves a pint and a good pub belter. But Milo's bonhomie is a cloaking device. His benevolent control keeps his greatest fear at bay: that life could spiral out of his control. He's long shed his Catholic faith, and although tethered to the stories, myths and ancient horrors of old Ireland, in his emotional core: he's lost. Milo must learn to bear the pain of being himself, something he's managed to dodge all his life, if he is to have any hope of keeping his family together. Can he also own up to his part in his son's death?

### TULLY (40s)

Tully, Te Rarawa/ Ngapuhi, has been with Milo since her early 20's. Milo is a force of nature, and till now Tully has been content to follow the path he's blazed. It's worked out well, starting with Milo's decision to move to Dunedin all those years ago. Tully wanted to raise her children away from the racism and lack of opportunity in Northland. But now she's feeling an intense loneliness in her grief, and is harbouring a growing rage at Milo's cheery denialism.

### MARY (10ish)

Mary is a hard case kleptomaniac and escape artist who finds comfort in the world of her imagination. She misses her dad of old. Milo still has the bad jokes and the smart alec answers to everything. But she can see through his act, sensing that now, under the bravado, something is broken. Mary misses Liam too. She can't save him, but she's determined to save her dad – and bring him and her Mum together again.





## LAURA

Tully's younger sister by just a year, Laura is holding on more tightly to her youth, and has an air of alternative lifestyle, which Mary finds fascinating. She has her own grief - she's just found out that her and her partner Amir can't have children - after exhausting all alternatives, and almost bankrupting themselves, with IVF. Laura has found a surrogate family through her work with special needs children and adults. She's also her sister's confidant, and she and Amir's house becomes a bolt hole for Tully when things get too tough with Milo.

## AMIR

Amir arrived in Dunedin in 2016 with the first wave of refugees from the Syrian conflict, following a two year stay in a Lebanese refugee camp. He's a qualified engineer working well beneath his pay scale for the O'Connors. He and Laura's failure to have offspring has hit hard at his sense of masculinity, and his sense of loss has been exacerbated by the death of his immediate family in the Syrian war. Gruff by nature, displaced and scarred by war, made bitter through circumstance, he's struggling to find his place in a strange new land - New Zealand.

## JOEL

Joel lost his wife to cancer, then his only son committed suicide on the anniversary of her death. He's been struggling since, and to cope he's trying the parent Support group. There he meets Tully, and their mutual need will lead to something more than just friendship.



## **MRS MARSHALL**

The O'Connor's neighbour, and Mary's babysitter, widower Mrs Marshall watches, alarmed, as the sinkhole appears in their back section, then grows, threatening to swallow the back fence. Her granny flat will be next! Mrs Marshall tolerates Mary's kleptomania, until it's one missing snow globe too many. Then she snaps...

## **SEAN**

Nearing retirement, Sean is also an Irish migrant, whose memories of old Ireland have seemingly ancient roots – and plant the seed for Mary's revelation that her dad is a 'Changeling.' Sean is a musician and gifted singer, who will appear at Milo's Wake, and works in the 'O'Connor Cladding' gang.

## **LIAM O'CONNOR**


Dead, but far from forgotten, 17-year-old Liam appears in Mary and Milo's dreams and is also a relentless presence in the O'Connor household, by virtue of his absence. How did he die, and why is it so hard to talk about him?











## CELTIC CULTURE AND MAORITANGA


Culture, imagination, and spirituality from both Celtic and Māori well-springs collide and combine to work a practical magic on the characters of *The Sinkhole*.

When their son died by his own hand, his grief-stricken father couldn't wait to get him in the ground. Denied taking his body home to her marae (spiritual home) in Northland, Tully wasn't allowed a proper farewell for Liam also. Despite the commonalities between the tangi and traditional Irish wake, Milo instead orchestrated the briefest of observances. As a result, we meet the O'Connors as valiant characters but spiritual zombies, forever haunted by Liam's ghost. When a yawning sinkhole appears in their back yard, it is as if the whenua, the earth, is speaking to this dysfunction and denial, demanding a spiritual course correction . . . or even better, a sacrifice. Yum.

Milo's renunciation of his Catholic faith, his difficult upbringing, and his migrant status, all combine to make him only loosely tethered to a sense of belonging. To a Māori world view he's exquisitely psychically vulnerable. Any spiritual ties for him lie in an almost primeval Irish world view. This opens the door for his daughter, Mary, to work her ancient magic on him. Her motley collection of grab-bags from both Celtic myth and Maori fable all serve to conjure up a potent spiritual cocktail that might just bring her father back from the brink.

Milo's obstinacy is fuelled by his sense of guilt around Liam's death and his fear of grieving - lest it lift the lid off his own stew of repressed emotional ills. But when he declares that he'll hold a wake for himself, Tully realises that her and Milo's strategies in this matter can never be reconciled.

Until now Tully has followed in Milo's path, but she finds her way back to her own personal anchorage on a physical journey to her tribal homeland. At Ahipara, she reconnects with her whanaungatanga, asserts her will in the face of established protocol, and awakens in her daughter Mary a curiosity about the mystery and power of tikanga Maori. In the end Tully's inner journey and growing confidence will force a reckoning with her husband that will save him from himself - and bring their family back to life.



## Ep 1: 'Milo's Wake'

*In a dark crawl space that initially resembles a coffin, a man half buried in brick, dust and timber awaits his fate.*

And so, in flash forward, we meet Irish born Milo O'Connor. He emerges into the cold light of present day at a worksite: cue mud, grey skies, and that rain that seems to never cease. Milo is a mass of contradictions: A man's man who loves a laugh, and casually carries deep sadness; a 'celebrity bogman,' in Dunedin anyway, thanks to his cut-price ad on the tele that's only just finished playing; a sleep-walker who suffers the same recurring nightmare; a 'prolapsed' Catholic who mocks the faith, and whose shoulder tattoo celebrates the pagan ritual, the hunting of the wren - yet uses his Scapular to clinch a job...

This is for a big repiling gig that Milo's long-suffering wife, Tully, has a bad feeling about. Meanwhile, Milo and Tully's daughter, Mary, fresh from some petty shoplifting, steals Rose's chocolates unashamedly from her babysitter, neighbour and eccentric pensioner Mrs Marshall. The old lady is the proud custodian of a large National Geographic magazine collection, and when Mary spies gruesome images of a primeval bog man in one of the precious magazines, Mrs Marshall will discover that she's ripped out and taken the pages. Into Mary's special 'Liquorice Allsorts' tin they go, along with a mobile phone in a distinctive case, and more stolen booty - including the long suffering Mrs Marshall's garage padlock.

There's magic in Mary's world. She marvels when Milo and Tully's team jack up the house they are repiling and all the cracks on the walls disappear. She's at ease with the 'specials' - Laura's special needs charges - who come along to see the fun. But she wonders why her parents don't dance anymore. They can barely look each other in the eye. And why does no one ever talk about Liam?

Milo stakes out a teenager, Theo, at his house. That's strange... Then, when Mary asks her parents if she can make a slide show of 'Liam,' Tully agrees, but Milo demurs. Again, when Tully announces she'd like to honour Liam on the anniversary of his death, Milo pores scorn on the idea. Over being sidelined, Tully takes the big step of crossing her husband and she decides to visit a 'Support' group on her own. The group is a nightmare, a quagmire of over-the-top grief, but there, fatally, Tully meets Joel. Milo seeks out his own version of therapy at the traditional night at the local Irish pub - where he surprises with sincere and heartfelt singing.

Mary is thrilled to discover a sinkhole in her backyard - until she falls into it. Searching for her Milo loses his phone down the hole. Mary finally turns up with a tut-tutting Mrs Marshall, but her absence shakes her parents profoundly, hinting at a deeper wound. They agree that Mary must never be left on her





own. But their anxiety spills into argument when Milo announces he's going to have a wake for himself – people can say some nice things while he's still around to hear them! Tully's response is to lament that they never held proper tangihanga for Liam.

It turns out, Mary does have a slide show of Liam. Watching it while her parents argue, she tells her brother how rubbish it is now that he's left. And so, we follow Milo's phone falling, end over end, into the sinkhole, deeper and deeper. There's no end to this...

## Ep 2: 'The Changeling'

*Ka nui taku mamae. Kua mate a... Taku maama, taku tungaane. Ka nui taku aroha. Kei te moe roa e whaea.*

Milo's phone sails off into the darkness, falling deeper and deeper into the sinkhole, over Laura's message: 'Milo. She's not answering. Get her to ring me... Ka nui taku aroha. Kei te moe roa e whaea.' Behind Laura stands Amir, and behind him sits a cot, gathering dust...

Dawn to a grey day – last week was all rain and more rain, but this week will be oppressively grey. Milo shaves over the kitchen sink with a small round bathroom mirror, steamed out of the bathroom by Tully's marathon shower. Mary click clacks on the wonky stool, inciting Milo to duel her, playing a mad accompaniment with two spoons, chanting 'Goodbye Mrs Durkin' all the while. Tully emerges to tell them off - cue her phone beeping crazily when she finally turns it on. Her Auntie Mary, who raised Tully and Laura, has died.

Like a wound that can't be healed, Milo boards up the sinkhole, but it expands, swallowing his planks whole. His elderly neighbours fret, fearing their brick and tile flats will be next. Milo calls the Council on repeat, but they just tell him they're busy and will get around to it in a week...

The gang commences work at the new worksite, in damp, mud, and the odd spot of rain. At the old one, Tully leads a cladding gang – the O'Connor's have both ends of the market covered! On his next stake out, Milo sees Theo leaving his house, and only just stops himself confronting him. He complains to Tully that he wishes they still had Liam's phone, where he's sure Theo's hateful messages still reside.

That evening Milo spies the light on in the sleep-out. Inside, Tully sits in what is clearly Liam's old bedroom, now a dusty museum, frozen in time: Scott's hut, minus any meaning. Tully holds a framed



photo of her late son in her hand. We cut to Joel, sitting at home. He has a photo album on his knee, a drink in his hand, tears in his eyes. He can't open the album.

Mary starts sketching versions of the bog man – complete with a noose. At Mrs Marshall's, she discovers another mighty collection – of snow globes. At the library with her Aunt Laura she discovers a book about the changeling, a creature from the bogs of old Ireland that inhabits the body of another. The changeling can only be exposed if it is forced to look at its own image in a mirror. Coincidentally, there's not that many mirrors in the O'Connor house right now - and one less after Milo accidentally smashes a replacement that he bought for the bathroom reno.

We find out that Mary has stolen the changeling book, adding it to her eclectic collection of pinched treasures, which now include a snow globe that shows a happy family of four... Her google research reveals the existence of 'Yde' girl; like the bog man, another human sacrifice from an ancient Danish swamp. In reconstruction the young red head looks about Mary's age. Mary flings stolen Rose's chocolates and \$2 shop toys, still in their packets, down the sinkhole, guessing that this new bog wants a sacrifice, but insisting to the bog people down there that sacrifices don't have to be human...

### Ep 3: 'The Tangi'

*Rain rain go away, come again another day...*

Rain rain, and grey skies - but now Tully and Laura blink in the BRIGHT SUNLIGHT of Northland. They travel to Ahipara for their Auntie's Tangihanga (wake). Tully observes Whānau pani (a bereaved family) carrying photos of the recently deceased ahead of them into the Marae: the far wall is festooned with the photos of the dead. There are overt expressions of grief – including from Laura, who cries while thanking Auntie for raising her and Tully like her own. Tully doesn't have a tear. When the whaikōrero (speeches) end, Laura is scandalised as she confronts her Auntie's body, telling her it was wrong to have not allowed Tully to bring Liam home. His bones should be here.

In Tully's absence Milo dreams that he is locked in a cupboard as a young boy. When he comes to, he's standing in his back section. Instead of his trademark scapular around his neck, he finds a plaited leather thong – the same as the Bog man's noose. In front of him he catches a flash of Liam, an extension cord wrapped around his neck. Startled Milo steps back - into the sinkhole, where he *really* wakes up. He was sleepwalking, and only narrowly escapes falling down the deep crack of the hole.





Muddy, slimy and stepping by to get to the shower, Milo is spied by Mary – looking a LOT like a Bog man...

Next morning Milo breaks his shaving mirror – and then blames Mary, for click clacking on the wonky stool and distracting him. On a play date Mary ignores the yellow tape strung around the sinkhole to show her friend how deep it is. Milo angrily tells her off. Mary starts to wonder – what's happened to her old, happy dad?

Joel attends the (dreadful) support group, hoping to spy Tully. But she's on a plane back from the tangi, where Laura shares her secret grief that she and Amir can never have a baby. Just as Mrs Marshall notices that one of her precious snow globes is missing, Mary is caught shoplifting at the mall. Milo thinks nothing of it, but upon her return Tully discovers a hoard of pilfered loot in Mary's bedroom – stolen toys aplenty, all still in their packaging, and a LOT of Roses' chocolates. Mary is made to apologize to Mrs Marshall but still stubbornly won't admit to stealing her snow globe or padlock, which remain, as yet undiscovered, in her 'Liquorice Allsorts' tin. Mrs Marshall draws a line in the suburban sand – Mary can't come for baby-sitting again till she returns all the items.

Theo's dad, Sam, spies Milo staking out their house. He phones Milo, warning him off. Milo ignores him. Tully pleads with Milo to open up more about Liam's death, but he can't see the point of wallowing. They have to move on! Tully is trapped, alone with her grief.

## **Ep 4: 'The Bog Man'**

*There's a gibberin' oul' bogman trapped down in them bog-holes. And if he gets a hold of ya, the peat will close over you like a tomb, and it'll be like you never existed!*

While Milo merrily sends emails and flyers inviting one and all to his imminent wake, Mary finds that, try as she might, she can't stop her shoplifting, or even explain to her mother why she does it. Scared of getting sprung again she flings the rest of her secret stash into the sinkhole





- the bog man pages, the padlock, and some toys her parents didn't find. But she can't bear to part with Liam's phone, the snow globe, and the changeling story book. All the while she happily chats to her new, imaginary, as yet unseen friend; bog girl, asking her: was she from a happy, snow globe family? And does she happen to know what was Milo doing down the bog hole?

Tully bumps into Joel. They hang for a time. Joel tells her he can't bear to look at the old family photo albums. All the photos progress in order, to the end – death. Tully shares that Milo is darkly obsessed with proving that one of Liam's circle, Theo, was somehow responsible for Liam's death. But, in the absence of Liam's phone, nothing can be proved. As they part, Tully advises Joel to take them out of the albums and mix the order of his photos up: put them on a wall, in random order. Take the inevitable conclusion out, and instead celebrate the memory.

In Tully's absence, Milo is forced to sneak Mary into the pub with him, where Mary hears Sean, an older member of the O'Connor crew, tell of his childhood cutting peat on the bogs back in Ireland. Sean's great childhood fear was of falling into one of the holes, a bog man pulling him down – and then taking his place in the real world.

Fresh from being actually able to talk about her grief (with Joel), Tully collides once more with Milo's denialism. She tells her husband how much Liam craved Milo's good opinion. That's why he never shared bad stuff; he didn't want to disappoint his Da. Milo thinks he's the light and soul of the party, but if a person can't ever be sad, or even angry... where's the life? Where's the real light? Milo struggles to open up to Tully – but it's beyond him. So, Mary is shocked to learn, when her mum picks her up from school next day, that she's going to have a break for a few days. To get her head together. She can't process all this stuff, here, with Milo. Enraged, Mary tells Liam over his phone that her Mum and dad are divorcing and it's ALL his fault. She deletes her slide show of him – and tells him to NEVER call her again.

The two of them now alone in the house, Milo wakes to find Mary in bed with him, staring at his tattoo. She asks her dad to tell her the story of the sacrificial wren. Again. Milo does so, and Mary concludes: it didn't make any difference, did it? Whether they sacrificed the wren or not? The sun would have come back anyway. Milo agrees: the poor little bird died for nothing. Cut to: Tully at work, laughing at a co-worker's joke; free as a bird.

Mary sits by the sinkhole. In the wide bog girl is revealed, really there, sitting next to Mary. She's not a scary bog creature, but human like, albeit a bit muddy, with very red hair. She tells Mary that her bog dad doesn't care about her. He only cares about Bog boy – the son he lost. Mary can relate to



that. She tells Bog girl that her dad pretends to be happy, but really, something's not right.

Milo sees Theo by chance and can't help but confront him about bullying Liam. Tully takes Mary for a night and Milo heads off to the pub to rehearse some songs and stories for his wake. But he's deeply upset when someone plays his cod Irish 'O'Connor cladding' TV ad. Liam comes alive on the big screen: 'Shure and begorah, I'd like to speak to Laura!' Leaving, Milo's attacked by Sam, Theo's dad. Sam tells Milo Theo is NOT the culprit Milo is looking for. If he is looking for reasons why Liam killed himself, perhaps Milo should look at himself... He's getting a good kicking when Amir intervenes, saving Milo, but then criticizing him, telling him he lost his whole family in Syria - a son, a daughter, and a wife - and how, with Laura, he can never make up for that loss with a new family. But Milo is still a father to Mary. He's blessed to have her: he needs to get his act together.

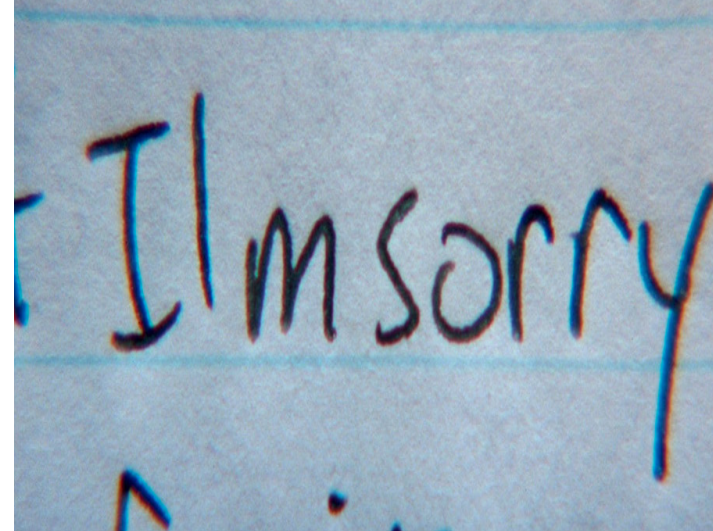
## Ep 5: 'The Exorcism'

*You've been off with the faeries for over a year ... and I've missed ya!*

Beaten black and blue, Milo crawls into his car where he calls his wife, leaving a message where he starts flippantly, but then does the one thing she's always begged him to do: talk truthfully about Liam. He tells her he failed Liam because he never expressed his deep love for him. He admits that he needs Tully back home - he's missing her terribly. This unique display of vulnerability will surely bear fruit! But hearing just the first part of the message, where the flippant Milo's speech is slurred, Tully skips the rest, thinking that he's just drunk.

A day passes. Mary and Milo watch Disney pictures, Milo puffed up and bruised himself, much like a beaten-up cartoon character. Come the evening Joel sits, smiling, drinking wine, staring at the wall opposite: it's covered with photos. Mary begs Milo to go Tully, who Milo thinks is at the support group - 'she just wants you to be with you daddy.' And so, Milo goes, but there's no Tully there, and when he does track her down, she's with Joel. Milo violently confronts Joel, Tully screams at him - and Milo flees. Joel and Tully retire to a bar, share war stories, and Joel opens up about the suicide of his son and then, a year to the day, the suicide of his wife. Drawn to his vulnerability, Tully goes in for a kiss.

On his return home Milo is harshly unsympathetic when Mary admits to him that she made a slide show of Liam, then deleted it - and now she wishes she hadn't. But he texts an apology to





Tully: he should never have suspected her of infidelity, especially with a drip like Joel. She receives the message at 3am – in Joel's bed.

At that very minute Mary wakes and sees Liam, standing in the hall. She follows him outside, arriving at the sinkhole where she at last confronts the bog man: slimy, greasy, and flattened by the weight of the bog. Yet the creature also resembles her own father, only instead of wearing Milo's Scapular around this next he sports Mrs Marshall's padlock. Ancient snow globes and odd \$2 shop toys decorate his body. Mary discovers the Bog man's crime, the reason he was chosen for sacrifice: he was directly responsible for the death of his son. At that very moment the friendly chat turns into a life and death combat, as the bog man tries to pull Mary down to the darkest depths of the sinkhole. The betrayal of bog girl consigns Mary to the abyss.

Mary wakes. It's 3am. Again. Mary's scared she's stuck in some kind of Groundhog Day dream loop. Seeking her dad for comfort a realisation hits Mary – there is not one mirror in the house! Her imaginative flashback shows Milo deliberately vandalising every single one. A quick scan of the library book confirms it – her dad is a changeling! But there's only one way to know for sure... Digging out the snow globe from its hiding place she trades it with Mrs Marshall for a large mirror. She then wakes her father up and confronts him, forcing him to look at the mirror, screaming – 'go and send my own father back to me!' Milo lunges at her, the wonky stool she's standing on breaks, and Mary falls. THUNK. Her head connects with the floor. Hard. Milo goes to Mary, tries to rouse her, but she's out. Gone. He picks her up, rocks her, talks to her, kisses her, cries out, screams. HOWLS.

## Ep6: 'Homecoming'

*The wren, oh the wren, he's the king of all birds, please give us somethin' for the little bird's wake, A big lump of puddin' or some Christmas cake...*

Milo rocks Mary's unconscious body and flashbacks to meeting Tully at their old house, just after she'd found Liam dead...

Dawn. In the cold light of day Tully wakes with, then breaks with, Joel. Her marriage is broken, but she's not ready for this.





Morning. Milo wakes. Mary is lying next to him in his bed, tracing her finger over his shoulder tattoo. She tells him she was trying to change him back to how he was before Liam died. Before everything became terrible in their hearts...

Mary goes to Milo's work to watch the house re-jacking. But the operation goes horribly wrong when the land slip Tully feared might happen, does occur. The earth shifts, the house starts to tilt, Sean is felled by a falling beam - and Milo saves him, but not himself, as the house collapses on him. Buried alive, Milo calls Tully, a voice (almost) from the other side of the grave, telling her: 'it's dark. So dark...' so that we are back at the flash forward that began our story. But Tully tells Milo that she won't be taking any death bed confessions over the phone - save it till they've rescued him. Losing consciousness, Milo dreams of being locked in a cupboard. This time his mother opens the door and asks him if he's ready to be a good boy. As young Milo blinks in the bright light, adult Milo comes to - in a hospital bed. He's concussed, bruised, and has some broken ribs - but has he had any sense knocked into him?

At Nicole's, Mary tells her mother that she stole things to feel scared. To feel alive. Like she felt when she and Tully played their favourite game: Witchy. Mary tries to convince Tully that Milo really has changed, thanks to her fine mirror work. When Tully goes, Mary pulls out his old phone and 'calls' Liam to apologise for saying she'd wished he'd never been born. Meanwhile Tully accidentally plays Milo's old phone message and hear him talk about his feelings about Liam. She confronts him, telling him she's ready now to hear his confession. Milo tells her that he saw Liam the day he killed himself. He could tell something wasn't right, but he had to get back to work. And he left him. Tully in turn describes the horror of finding Liam dead later that day and confesses about sleeping with Joel. FYI, Milo can't EVER give her a hard time about Joel: she was so lonely because Milo wouldn't talk to her. Not about the stuff that mattered. About the hell in all their heads. And in the end, it was squeezing the life out of her. Milo tells her he's missed her something terrible. He forgives her for Joel.

The two make love, tentatively discovering each other's new selves. Afterwards, Tully tells Milo that it wasn't his fault. If Liam hadn't killed himself that day, it would have been another. He was so good at hiding his feelings. Milo tells her that Liam got that from him. Milo's own mother couldn't handle him, couldn't handle his feelings. He never learnt to handle his feelings either. He just pushed them away.

The family make the trip to Tully's marae at Ahipara. As they drive through Kaikohe, Mary sees the young people, hanging about, bored out of their brains. Milo sees them too, and he's reminded why he left his dead-end hometown in Ireland. Tully performs the kawē mate (mourning ceremony), placing the large photo of Liam from the sleepout on the marae wall. At long last, she cries. Mary thinks, 'that's a bit over the top.' Then she's crying too.

The O'Connor's gather at the Sinkhole. Each tip in a thing of value - Mary, Liam's phone; Milo, his scapular; and Tully the Changeling book. Amir's digger fills the hole with boulders as they watch. Tully attends her first University lecture; the O'Connor business reopens. Milo, Tully and Mary stand in Liam's sleep out. It's empty. They make their farewells. On their way out, they walk by a 'For Sale' sign. It's time to move on - to Milo's Wake... except it isn't. It's a remembrance for Liam at the local. Tully and Mary sing a waiata. Milo speaks from the heart. Tully catches Milo's eye. They hold the connection. Then, as Mary watches, her parents dance.







**PETER FEENEY**  
**Creator / Writer**  
**IMDB**

A NZ Pakeha of Irish heritage, Peter is a well-established actor, writer, and acting coach. He has 60+ acting film and television credits to his name, including the feature films *Black Sheep*, *30 Days of Night* and telefeature *Abandoned*. A published author, Peter adapted his first novel, *Blind Bitter Happiness*, for television, taking on both directing and acting roles. He runs his own Actors studio and in 2020 his handbook on acting, *Acting and How to Survive It*, was published to great acclaim. In 2005 and 2006 Peter directed and played the title role in the Auckland Seasons and national tour of Michael and Margery Forde's stage play, *Milo's Wake*, the inspiration for the world and characters of *The Sinkhole*.



**JONATHAN BROUGH**  
**Director**  
**IMDB**

Jonathan is an Aotearoa/New Zealand-born multi-award winning director of film & television, based in Melbourne, Australia. His work includes the hit ABC comedy *Rosehaven* (now in its fifth season) and *Sammy J & Randy in Ricketts Lane*. Among his many credits, he has directed *Ronny Chieng: International Student*, currently available on Netflix. *The End*, a black comedy about assisted dying featuring Frances O'Connor & Harriet Walter, premiered on Showtime (US) in 2021, following acclaimed runs on Sky Atlantic (UK) and Foxtel (Aus). Jonathan has just completed filming on *Better* for Sister Pictures and the BBC. Jonathan is also VP (Television) of the Australian Directors' Guild.



**PITA TUREI**  
**Hungatiaki (Cultural Advisor)**

Pita Turei (Ngai Tai Ki Tamaki, Ngāti Pāoa, Ngā Rauru Kiitahi) is a multi-disciplinary artist, local iwi advocate, storyteller and orator. Turei began his career in theatre and dance, working for nationally and internationally acclaimed organisations including the Adelaide Ballet, Limbs Dance Company and Taiao Dance Theatre. He has since worked widely across the creative industries and spent many years in the film industry as a director, actor and photographer, while also being significantly involved with Ngā Aho Whakaari Māori On Screen. Turei has also produced several large-scale public art projects, is a member of Taumata-ā-Iwi, advising the Auckland War Memorial Museum, and he recently joined the Waitakere Arts and Cultural Development Trust Board.





# THE SINKHOLE