

# THE FROGMAN'S LILY

a fantasy adventure film grounded in reality

by Matt Raudsepp

Told from Lily's perspective - a child's vast and imaginative world - dangerous when left unchecked. The story centres on the girl's relationship to her grandpa, and their escape to the sea. Grandpa was a diver in WWII for the British Royal Navy. Referred to as a "frogman" by the child's father. Tonally like a Jim Henson world crossed with the movie *Big Fish*, and the love letter heartache of Dylan Thomas' *A Child's Christmas in Wales*.

~ Outline ~

Open on grandpa (think Ian Bannen from *Waking Ned Devine* - wistful and mischievous) and his granddaughter, Lily (6 years old with a serious imagination). They play in a cozy living room - telling stories. Grandpa is charming, a natural storyteller - in wheelchair, blanket covered legs - but clearly not as sharp as he once was. He talks about Mercedes Gleitze, woman who swam the English Channel - referred to as a real-life mermaid. Lily is in awe, absorbed by everything he says. Grandpa talks about losing the use of his legs, he used to jump so high, and could swim forever. He gets Lily to jump and swim around the living room - they make splashing and bubble sounds. Mom enters and announces dinnertime - abruptly cutting the moment short.

At dinner, grandpa acts strange, forgetful, anxious - Alzheimer's. Grandpa says one of them took his diving watch. Lily's dad tells her how "grandpa was a frogman in the war." Lily is fascinated, asks grandpa a million questions - she believes that grandpa is half frog, half man. Mom and dad talk guardedly about grandpa, implying bad health, options ahead of them, etc. - subtle, so as not to alarm grandpa or Lily. Meanwhile, grandpa is entertaining the child - both being mischievous, trying not to be seen by mom and dad. They are eating fish for dinner. Grandpa slips a fish skin from the table and shows the child his scaly knee - his frogman legs - proof for the child. Her eyes go wide. Grandpa burps, sounds like a frog's ribbit, they laugh, ribbiting.

Time for bed - it's hard for mom to separate Lily from grandpa. Mom says it's bath time for grandpa. The child is tucked in to bed. Lily has her eyes absentmindedly fixed on her

stuffed animals - we notice a stuffed frog. Lily hears the sounds of grandpa's bath - the door to the bathroom is ajar.

Lily sneaks towards the bathroom, she witnesses her mom pouring water over grandpa's head and back and shoulders through the crack in the door. Mom is hushing grandpa who is agitated - Alzheimer's or dementia - "hush, feel the water. Remember swimming at the old house? You were a great swimmer, teaching me to swim, always in the water. I miss that, the ocean..." dialogue that Lily interprets as proof that the frogman needs water - grandpa grew up in the water.

Days later, mom and dad talk to Lily and tell her "grandpa is getting sick and needs to go to a place that will help him." Lily says "he needs to go to the ocean" - mom and dad think "that's cute, how did our child know about the old house by the sea?" They tell her that someone is coming to take grandpa away tomorrow. Parents ask how she feels about that? The child is upset and runs to the next room to grandpa, he is napping. A fly buzzes around the room. The child tries to catch the fly. Mom and dad try to calm the child. Grandpa wakes up. He is upset by all the commotion. Lily shouts that grandpa needs water.

In the middle of the night, grandpa is in his bed. Lily wakes him up. The child tells grandpa "mom and dad want you to leave, not me." They talk about the ocean, the sea - grandpa's home. Lost in memories, grandpa begins to revert back to his youth. He is excited and references things from his boyhood. Both grandpa and Lily want to go to the sea. They agree to leave together, to go to the ocean.

Early morning. Lily struggles with the wheelchair and the front door - a ramp had been installed in the past. Grandpa helps as much as he can. They are as silent as possible, flashes of wild eyes. Serious fun - this is an important adventure.

On the road - Lily and grandpa wait for a bus. Grandpa finishes the story about Mercedes Gleitze. She never swam the entire Channel. Her trainer pulled her out near the end. But her celebrity was cemented with advertising - notably a picture of her with her wrist and a watch submerged in a full fish bowl. The bus pulls up and lowers its hydraulics for wheelchair access. Lily pays both of their fare. They reach their stop. A kind teenager helps them off the bus.

On the road - Lily pushes grandpa in his wheel chair. Grandpa is babbling about his youth – odd, fun things about swimming, the past, and the war – all mixed up in his memory – he believes he is the same age as the child. They laugh and smile a lot. Grandpa talks about the feeling of swimming underwater and floating in near-zero gravity – losing sense of up and down – complete freedom of the body. Natural wonder.

Oceanside - rocky beach. Lily pushes the wheelchair to a place overlooking the beach. There is an old beach house, the home he grew up in. Grandpa wants to swim. It's windy and the water choppy. Lily has a lot of difficulty pushing the wheelchair towards the ocean. Lily positions the wheelchair in the surf. Grandpa smiles, is calm and satisfied - lucid. He tells Lily to go back to mom and dad, "grandpa's going to jump in for a long swim." She steps back onto the dry beach and watches grandpa.

From a distance, the waves are crashing above grandpa's chair. Slowly, grandpa is absorbed by the sea, wheelchair et al. The child loses sight of grandpa in the waves. His blanket washes up on shore. Lily wraps herself in the wet wool.