

MARYLAND

A three-part drama coming soon to ITV and ITVX



Introduction

Synopses

Cast Interviews -

Suranne Jones is Becca

Eve Best is Rosaline

Writer – Anne-Marie O’Connor

Cast & Crew

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MARYLAND

Maryland is a three-part relationship drama created by BAFTA and RTS award winning actress, Suranne Jones, and screenwriter Anne-Marie O'Connor, about two sisters who have grown apart over the years, but through tragic events learn to love and respect one another all over again.

Acclaimed actor Eve Best (*House of the Dragon, Nurse Jackie*) and Oscar nominated Stockard Channing (*The Good Wife, The West Wing*) are among the stellar cast joining Jones (*Gentleman Jack, Save Me, Vigil*). Leading production company, Monumental Television (*Harlots, Ghosts, Murder in Provence*), an ITV Studios label, produced the drama in association with Jones' company TeamAkers Productions and ITV Studios.

Becca (Jones) and Rosaline (Best) have forged ahead with their lives, growing distant through time and circumstance, until the discovery of their mother's body on the Isle of Man reunites them. Arriving in a place they have never visited and with no idea why their mother was there, the sisters begin to unravel the long-held secrets of a woman they thought they knew, whilst keeping their own secrets from each other. Confined on the island and forced to face the life-changing consequences of their mother's decisions, can Becca and Rosaline learn to love and respect one another all over again?

Maryland also stars George Costigan (*Gentleman Jack, Happy Valley*) as their father Richard, Hugh Quarshie (*Stephen, Riches*), Dean Lennox Kelly (*Tom Jones, Jamestown*) and Andrew Knott (*Ackley Bridge, Tin Star*). Channing plays Cathy, their mum's larger-than-life friend on the island.

Sue Tully (*Strike, Line of Duty, Too Close*) directs, and the producer is Emma Burge (*Wolfe, The Village, Shameless*). Suranne Jones also executive produces the drama. Maryland is screenwriter Anne-Marie O'Connor's first UK drama commission, and she also executive produces the project. Anne-Marie, creator of the comedy series *Trollied* is also the writer and executive producer of C4 comedy *Hullraisers*.

How much do we really know about the people we call our own? A moving, funny and, at times, difficult exploration of family dynamics, Maryland is an intricately observed relationship drama with a love story between two sisters at its heart.

Monumental executive producer Alison Owen says: "When Suranne and Anne-Marie approached us with the idea of a story about two sisters rebuilding their relationship as they uncover their mother's secret life, we barely drew breath before saying that we'd love to develop it with them. As huge fans of both, it felt to us like a match made in heaven. The chance to really dig down into the relationship between sisters is not often seen on screen, and we felt so lucky that Anne-Marie's terrific writing attracted Eve Best to join us, along

with the brilliant Sue Tully as director, to head our formidable team of women. We hope that audiences will be as captivated by Becca and Rosaline's story as we were from the very beginning."

The drama is executive produced by Alison Owen (Saving Mr Banks, Suffragette), Debra Hayward (Bridget Jones's Baby, How to Build a Girl), Alison Carpenter (Ghosts, Harlots), Katie Kelly (Maryland) and Pat Tookey-Dickson (1899, Ghosts) on behalf of Monumental Television.

MARYLAND SYNOPSES

Episode One

Becca and Rosaline, two sisters living worlds apart in Manchester and London, receive the worst news imaginable about their mother, Mary. The pair are forced to fly to the Isle of Man, where unbeknownst to them, their mother had been living a secret, second life. The sisters have taken separate roads in life and found themselves further away from each other than ever before. As they navigate shock and grief over their mother's clandestine decisions, old wounds are re-opened and tensions surface.

With the news about their mother weighing heavily on them, the sisters continue to fight their own private battles. Becca's marriage to her husband Jim is an institution, but like any institution it has become subject to wear and tear. Not to mention their daughter Molly who is pushing her parents to the edge. Meanwhile Rosaline must deal with the stress of another health scare, which reawakens deeply held fears. Neither sister can share pieces of themselves with the other as they desperately attempt to maintain face.

Episode Two

Becca and Rosaline wake up to their new reality in Mary's home on the Isle of Man, reeling from the shock of learning of their mother's infidelity and cause of death. The sisters go looking for more answers from Pete and Cathy, the former revealing that Mary planned on moving to the island permanently. Both paint a picture of a woman the sisters don't recognise. Rosaline is able to get closer to local cabbie Jacob following an emotional wobble, but efforts to connect with her father fall on deaf ears as Richard refuses to engage with Mary's cause of death.

Meanwhile Becca and Jim continue to struggle to connect emotionally. Jim keeps Molly's behaviour from Becca, and Becca struggles to be open about what she has learned about Mary. When Cathy reveals that Mary was sick the sisters are overwhelmed. Uncharacteristically Rosaline wants to talk it out but Becca stonewalls. This dynamic reaches its peak as the pair have a night out at a club and Becca's embarrassing antics make Rosaline leave in protest. Rosaline seeks support from Jacob and the two open up to each other further. It's the morning after the night before, and Becca must face the music... and her sister.

Episode Three

Everything comes to a head as Richard and Jim descend on Bayview, Mary's house in the Isle of Man. Whilst the family tries to heal and reconnect, the fallout from Mary's actions continue to reverberate...

Suranne Jones is Becca

How did this project come about?

I had an initial idea and I wrote a treatment. It was basically about two sisters finding out their mother was leading a double life, with the premise being 'How well do you really know your family?' I think the attraction for me was this was a 60-something-year-old woman – and while we're used to seeing men leading double lives in drama all the time, we never see women. So I wanted to explore how she'd do that. Also it was important to have prominent characters that were in their 40s, 50s, 60s, and 70s. These people have lived, they have experience and I think people forget that.

My agents The Artists Partnership, look after a lot of writers too, and they teamed me up with Anne-Marie (O'Connor). I knew Anne-Marie socially but hadn't worked with her in a creative or professional capacity. So, we got together two and a half years ago and we got the first episode in really good shape. Then Monumental Television came onboard and really got behind our vision. ITV loved the idea and they commissioned it – it was pretty quick for TV. ITV just wanted us to write a family piece rather than anything else, something that would resonate with the viewers and it turned into a real characterful piece. Over my career, I've loved playing the real characters, so this was my own chance to do this.

Executive producing isn't new to me, but creating an original story and developing it with a writer in a writers' room, and being there throughout all the stages is. And of course, it's TeamAkers' (our company's) first drama co-production.

And do you find it gives you a new kind of buzz, seeing those relationships that you first imagined coming alive on the screen?

On the first day of filming when Eve [Best] was there, and Dean [Lennox Kelly], Andy [Knott] and George [Costigan], I was just like, "Oh! We have invented these people, and here they are." So that's definitely a new buzz... I'm not a writer. I've tried, but I think there are better writers out there. I definitely enjoy being a creator and a creative producer. That's what I'm loving.

I've realised that the way I want to work is to, almost organically, put people together that are really good to work with. If you do that, you can let people be totally free with their talents. You know they can do it, so you don't have to be on top of them or micromanage them. It's lovely and just really nice to encourage people to do their thing.

And this is a very female-led production. How does that translate on the ground? Does that change environment?

We've had a really blissful experience with Monumental. I think Alison and her team are amazing. The team in the writers' room were just beautiful to be around. Katharine Rosser and Katie Kelly particularly. And Chloe and Polly at ITV were brilliant. Anne-Marie was on set with us a lot of the time because it's a character piece and she wanted to be able to talk to us about little nuanced things that we could add in or take away, that were either helping or hindering. There were no attitudes, no one was being precious... we were all mucking in. And I think that's the beauty of women, being able to talk things through. We all picked up the phone and said, "Right, how can we help with this?" I just loved it. I thought it was beautiful. Ireland was beautiful too of course. I loved

being by the water, that was just gorgeous. So yes, I had a great experience. I'd work with Monumental again in a heartbeat. They were brilliant.

Tell me about your character, Becca.

I had the choice of playing either sister and I wanted to play someone recognisable in a very ordinary way. She has two kids, a husband, and she's a busy mum. The Beccas of this world are perhaps not represented on screen as much as other people – that person who a little bit is stuck, works really hard, but doesn't think too much about herself. It's a bit of a commentary on a life of caring. You know, she's had to care for her sister, she's had to care for her mum, she's had to care for her family and she's in that kind of comfortable rut. Then suddenly she gets a lightning bolt of information and she discovers her mother isn't her mother. The person whose footsteps she's followed in, isn't that person at all and her life becomes slightly unravelled and nonsensical because of that.

She almost loses herself in that. If her mother had just died under normal circumstances, at home in Manchester – that would have been different. Everything that she knows about her mother and herself has been blown apart and it brings up a lot of questions about how happy she is with her life. At the centre of this is her relationship with her sister, they're not close and Becca would really love to be. but her sister has kind of pushed her away. So, she's our everywoman, you know? She doesn't really care much for herself - it's always been about everybody else and she just gets on with it. Anne-Marie and I really wanted to bring out the Becca who was underneath all that and explore how she discovers herself through this unpleasant experience.

And how did you and Eve (Best) go about creating that chemistry needed to show the journey they're on?

I didn't know Eve before Maryland, but I loved *Nurse Jackie*, and I loved her in *The Honourable Woman* so when she agreed to it, I was like, "Argh!"

We just had lots of fun, the chemistry just sort of happened when we were doing the readthroughs and trying costumes on and stuff. I kept saying, "Oh my God, you look gorgeous, you look beautiful." Because all her stuff is cashmere, and beautiful designer coats and bags and sunglasses. And then I went, "Right, now it's my turn!" and we had to rustle up something for Becca straight off the High Street so, the costume envy I had with Eve translates in some ways to the characters (laughs).

Eve was very supportive right from the off and there were lots of cuddles. I think when you start like that, you're able to then just play the opposite to it. So yes, we kind of knew our characters inside out, and we knew what we wanted to do with them, and how we wanted to bring them together. I just love the way that it becomes a love story about them. They're just ordinary women, and they've had a lot to deal with in their lives. And with all this stuff going on, it's a slow burner of their love story. I just love the way it makes me cry. They love each other and it's sweet to see two women, two sisters, find that little bit of a bond again, because a lot of families don't have it because throughout life they go in their separate directions.

I don't have a sister, Anne-Marie does so this family is an amalgamation of conversations we've had about our own families and about other people's families. I think most people, if you have conversations with them, will say, "Well, my auntie found out such-and-such a thing." Everyone has this kind of story within their family, a secret, a bombshell, a tragedy. I know grief – I've lost both my parents. I know sickness and I know care. And so these sisters arrived from lots of conversations between myself, Anne-Marie and our team. So it was a lovely experience... I'd never had a sister

before so that made it even lovelier!

You have an amazing supporting cast including Stockard Channing...

I always had George (Costigan) in mind just because, I love George. I've done about five jobs with him now. Anne-Marie said, "Oh my God, are you going to get George." He's so brilliant because towards the end, he's so angry. But at the beginning, you don't know what's happened, what he knew and how much he knew about what was going on so you feel sorry for him – but he also shows his true colours.

With these characters... they're just very normal people but with a lot of complications. Stockard we actually manifested! Basically, every day in the writers' room we'd say, "Stockard Channing is going to play Cathy." And then she did! We still can't quite believe that but we absolutely loved her. I think she's brilliant, a total rock 'n' roll star!

Did you enjoy playing Becca?

I loved playing Becca. I loved playing someone who was being dragged along by the story, because obviously coming off the back of say, *Vigil*, (of which I'm about to start filming season 2), or *Gentlemen Jack*, they're characters who very much lead the story. They're at the forefront whereas Becca's very unsure of her steps, and really doesn't know where she's going... Until she gets drunk and goes to the karaoke, obviously. But she feels a very different kind of character for me after the ones I've recently played.

Eve Best is Rosaline

Tell us about your character Rosaline and her relationship with Becca (Suranne Jones's character).

She's the sister of Becca, they have polar opposite lives, as often happens with siblings. She has a high-flying career in London. She's single, she doesn't have children. She's very devoted to and very good at her job. She's driven, focused, and efficient.

What happened with her health when she was younger had a major effect. The illness and the trauma of that gave her strength and resilience. But also a huge vulnerability, and a kind of inner closing – a need for self-preservation, almost like she doesn't want to open the floodgates. Because if she does, it will be overwhelming.

It's something that I think she's struggled with all her life – a deep sense of separation from her mother (partly because of the illness, and an awareness as a result of that) – there was a bond between her mother and Becca that she could never tap into.

I think she found herself feeling very isolated. For somebody who's so competent, so intelligent, so ferociously able, to have been so vulnerable at such a young age, and again later on in her life, was very hard. Hating that she had to be "cared for," hating the moral high ground that she felt Becca and her mother had over her, hating feeling that she was somehow failing and inadequate because she needed to be looked after. She's shut herself off from Becca in particular, while at the same time craving, her whole life, craving that closeness with her mother and the love of her sister.

They deal with things very differently on the Isle of Man...

In the initial fallout from their mother's death, the more Becca is emotional, the more controlled Rosaline becomes. Not because there isn't equal pain, it's a form of self-protection. It seems to confirm, again, Rosaline's alone-ness. It's like a muscle that she's forgotten how to use. While witnessing Becca's very fluent grief, she's numb – feeling like the tin man without a heart, which is another dagger into her.

And then when Becca starts to unravel more and more, it's Rosaline who becomes the carer, the responsible one. Her strength shines through for both of them.

You and Suranne have an amazing chemistry. How did that come about?

Suranne is phenomenal. I think we immediately felt very connected and easy with each other. It was sort of automatic.

Luck is part of it; some of those things you can't predict. It's like meeting a tennis partner that you feel very comfortable with. That energetic balance felt quite natural without much discussion or investigation really into the nitty gritty of being sisters. I think because of the writing and the situation, and the atmosphere set by Sue (Tully - director), that it was a very supportive and flowing dynamic – and fun.

What were your feelings when you first read the script? Did you connect instantly?

I was really intrigued by it. I loved the fact that it was a project that had been led, driven, and created by, Suranne and Anne-Marie, and that the production was female-led. I knew that Sue was involved, of whom I have always been a massive fan, and even more so now, having worked with her as a director. And it's always exciting when you are presented with these rare jewels, character pieces, led by women, investigating their stories, their relationships, their losses & their journeys - it's the kind of work I love.

My only reservation with the whole thing was when I first met Sue she said, "So how do you feel about dunking yourself in freezing cold water?" That was my only moment of slight pause.

Rosaline's friendship with Dean Lennox Kelly's character, Jacob is a joy...

Yes it was. I loved that about the script – that through all the chaos it feels like a huge blossoming happens for Rosaline. It's a love story. She goes from feeling closed and isolated and frozen to having her heart opened. And that's partly her relationship with Becca, and partly her connection with this man, who does the wonderful thing of giving her permission to be entirely herself. It takes her completely by surprise I think. Jacob seems to see her and accept her so that she suddenly feels safe and can start to unravel and soften.

I loved my scenes with Dean - who is not only astonishingly brilliant but who also made me laugh, especially when we were plunging into that freezing cold lake.

And how was filming in Ireland?

Love it, love it, love it. It was just so beautiful to be able to be there on location rather than in a studio. The Irish crew were also central to that. And being by the sea. Some of the others did go for a lot of sea swimming. I didn't, the lake was quite enough for me. But just the presence of the sea itself at the end of a hard day is very soothing. It was a lovely place to be and a lovely team to work with. I found myself looking in a lot of real estate windows.

Anne-Marie O'Connor

Writer

How did you end up working with Suranne on Maryland?

It was strangely fortuitous. We got put together by our agency. I did know Suranne previously, but through friends. But we got put together on the project and then just started talking about it and actually, when we really started exploring it, it became clear that we both had loads of things in common that we wanted to discuss and put in a show. And because we've both come with this sort of framework for this idea that had been totally separate but very similar, it really worked. Those initial conversations were like, "Yes, we know what we want this show to be." So that's how it was.

And what was the process like?

I found it incredibly useful. And I wouldn't say it's always incredibly useful, to collaborate like this. I usually write on my own. But as a creative, Suranne is so bright and clever and understands character and story intrinsically, so it was never a chore. She's really hard working, and will always go the extra mile. We spent so much time on this making sure that it was nuanced and said everything we wanted it to say, so it was really a joy. It's just been a really collaborative experience. So all of the things that have gone in about the story are from both of us. And then I go away and write it. So that's how we worked. And we've gone straight on to another project together because it worked so well!

And where did you get the inspiration from for this story?

I'm slightly obsessed with family relationships, and what goes unsaid in families, and how a lot of the time in TV world, people say exactly what they're thinking. But families do not operate like that. The way that I see families, and I think this is the world over, is that a lot of the time, people just do not want to say what's going on, people do not want to name the game. One of the things that this is based on is from my own experiences. My grandma, who I was very close to, we found out after she died that she had a child that she never told anybody about. And he wrote a letter to my mum, and all of these things that were hidden, because for various reasons – shame, Catholicism, whatever. So that's from a bird's eye view. But then I've got a sister, I've got a brother, I am very close to my family.

There's a line in the drama where Rosaline says, "My therapist says we were forged in the same fire." And somebody once said something about being forged in the same fire, and it just made me laugh because it just meant you grew up in the same house. You grow up together, but you have wildly different experiences, and I wanted to put that on the screen. But I also wanted to talk about the female experience, which is different to the male experience.

How do you feel when you see the characters that you've created on paper come alive?

This definitely gives me a buzz because it's my first commissioned drama. This is something that I've written and feels very personal to me because it's about things I really care about. The shows that I love are characterful shows where it feels like a conversation that somebody would actually have. That's what I really like, when it feels like there's real truth in this. So it's been a real buzz for me to see Suranne (Jones) and Eve (Best), who are totally at the top of their game, Stockard Channing, and George Costigan, who for me personally is a hero because he was Bob in *Rita, Sue and Bob Too*, to have those people saying out loud the things that I've had in my head for ages, and just bringing it to life and doing it so beautifully, and understanding what we wanted to do, is just a real thrill.

It's a dream cast really, for me as a writer it's brilliant. And, of course, having Suranne as creator and exec on it, her pedigree as an actor has brought that. Obviously, what's on the page helps, but knowing that she's involved has really helped with all of that. I'm just really proud of it.

Tell me about the relationship between the two sisters and their mother...

The sisters grew up somewhere where it's quite a nice, working class, area of Manchester, they would have had a very "normal" upbringing. The idea that someone might go to university is not beyond the realms of possibility, and that's what Rosaline did. But then their lives were derailed because Rosaline had cancer when she was younger, and she became ill. The focus shifted from Becca, who was younger than her, on to Rosaline because she was sick. And then she felt like a victim within her family and didn't want to be a victim at a time when she should have been doing GCSEs and going out but actually, when she got better and it was time for her to leave home, she left and then her mum had a breakdown. And this all comes out in a big argument that they have, and you realise that Becca got left behind as somebody who had been in the slipstream of her sister, and then the mum went to pieces when Rosaline went away, because she could, and Becca was left to pick up the pieces at home. And she's kept this secret, they've all kept secrets from one another.

So when they find out that their mum has had a double life on the Isle of Man, and has had some freedom towards the end of her life, it's such a shock to Suranne's character, Becca, because she's like, "Hang on a minute. I've been told all my life that the right way to do things is to do what you and dad did, and yet here you are. it was all a lie." So that's why the wheels come off Becca in the time that we chart her through *Maryland*. And then for Rosaline, the impact has made her the black sheep, because she didn't want to just be a victim to everybody, she just went away, and she got herself educated. And then she always felt because she hadn't followed the traditional route of her family, she was never quite included. Their mum, she never felt she was doing any harm to the girls, she was just getting on with life. But one of the biggest influences is the negative charge of the dad. He's a king in a crumbling castle, it's his way or the highway.

How was filming in Ireland?

I lived in Ireland for a time. I went to university in Galway for a year, all my family are from Tipperary. My writing career started there; I wrote two novels in Ireland when I was younger. Not only did I go to university there, when I was in my mid-20s, I moved back and lived in Dublin, and worked, in a previous life, as a PA in Dublin city centre. So, I've got such

a kinship with Ireland, and I go there all the time. All the family are there. So yes, I love Ireland although I was really disappointed not be able to use the Isle of Man. I would have loved to film there. There's a real specificity to the island. But I think we've done a really good job of selling the Isle of Man with Ireland and the locations that we found.

I really enjoy being on set. I've been on set on other projects I've worked on, and I think more and more writers are spending more time on set. I think it should be useful to have the writer on set because there's a reason sometimes that something is written a certain way, and the actors can ask what you meant by a thing. And to just watch Sue (Tully) watch the whole process of it, Suranne and I were both exec producing on it, so it felt really, really important to be there.

Cast List

Core Cast:

Becca..... Suranne Jones
Rosaline..... Eve Best
Cathy..... Stockard Channing
Pete..... Hugh Quarshie
Jim Andrew Knott
Jacob Dean Lennox Kelly
Richard George Costigan
Lauren Rhiannon Clements
Molly Yasmin Davies
Mary Judy Clifton

Crew List

Executive Producers (Monumental) Alison Owen, Debra Haywood, Alison Carpenter, Katie Kelly and Pat Tookey-Dickson
Created for television and executive produced by Suranne Jones
Written, co-created and executive produced by Anne-Marie O'Connor
Director Sue Tully
Producer..... Emma Burge
Director of Photography..... Richard Kendrick
Production Designer..... Lucy Van Lonkhuyzen
Costume Designer..... Louise Stanton
Hair & Make-Up Designer..... Lin Davie
Casting Director Andy Pryor
Location Manager Karl King
Editor Tamsin Jeffrey
Composer..... Samuel Sim