

*About Sin.*

Writer's Choice-Drowning:

When he was younger, his father told him he must own the space he is in. It was and is necessary for a Dougherty to be the very pinnacle of his surroundings, everything else being subordinate and subject to his whims. Sin eagerly took the advice, looking up to his father with bright eyes. Seamus Dougherty was a man who practiced what he preached. His dealings with his business partners left no room for doubt as to who sat at the top of their little pyramid. He commanded rooms and Sin had no desire other than to prove himself his father's son.

When Sin was 13, he was what his father wanted him to be—a strong, determined young man, full of ambition and energy to do as he wished. At 13, Sin Patrick Dougherty was a champion among champions, a force to be reckoned with. His home had a special room, a shrine dedicated to the accomplishments of the scion of the Dougherty line, an extension of his father's glory. The room glittered with trophies and plaques declaiming the boy as no voice could. Swim team competitions won effortlessly. Sin, the outstanding high diver. Patrick Dougherty, the youngest captain of the rowing team. A mass of silver cups and golden medals to attest to his sporting prowess.

By the time Sin was 16, he had had enough to make him sick. Seamus continued to boast to anyone who was around about his son, the athlete. His son Sin, the achiever of goals. His boy Sin, someone to be proud of and to tell others about, whether they would listen or not. It did not matter to Sin, who was beginning to tire of standing on platform after podium, trying to be gracious to the maddening crowds. Where was the fun in always winning and no competition? Sin no longer wanted to be someone they could all look to. He wanted to be alone.

He started slipping out onto his little boat, letting the winds fill his sails and take him wherever they desired. His mother indulged him with lessons as the years passed until he could confidently sail without supervision. It was, he had to admit, freeing to only answer to himself. And when the wind was blowing just right, he had nothing on his mind about his father or the way he was supposed to act or any of the cares of home. There was a glorious freedom in only having himself and the waves.

Yet, one thing that never changed was the attitude his father had ingrained into his boy. Sin still fought to control everything around him. He continually fought with his sails to bring everything into what he thought was proper alignment. Time after time, he strained himself to the limit to make it home in one piece, the blustery winds buffeting him over and over. He was worn out when he walked into his home, but satisfied that he had taught the waves a lesson they would not soon forget.

When Sin was 17, the water and wind was against him. It was the last time he would be sailing on the Irish Sea, and the last time he would see Dublin again, thanks to the mandate of his father and the foolishness of his mother. He sighed and fought to control the elements more than he had at any time before. His eyes were clouded with angry

tears at having to leave, but resigned to his father's will. It was not the first time, but it certainly was not the best time to leave. Sin took another swig from the bottle in his hand and stared up at the windex on his main mast. The elements rough about him, he could not figure which way to turn. He stared at it for a long time, watching the storms brew above and around him blankly, as if there were nothing at all wrong.

And then he felt it. The rumble of rocks beneath him and the overpowering thunder of the wave coming for him. Sin's mind blanked with the soggy feel of alcohol slugging through his veins. There was something he should be doing now, he was sure of it. He just could not think of what. He struggled with the lines once more before submitting to the wave that toppled his boat mercilessly, punishing him for the months of mistreatment at his hands.

Darkness engulfed him, and he surrendered to it without a fight.

A guard found him much much later on the shore, washed up on the Burren with barely a movement left in him but the waves rocking him gently. He was nearly blue with cold and near to death. It was only a matter of time that dictated whether the boy lived or died.

Sin was 17 when his life changed. There was no more fighting the elements around him. There was no more forcing everything to submit to his will. When they moved to America, Sin had no desire to set foot on the water again. He took up dancing, which was a fluid motion in and of itself, and running. He excelled in that too, to his father's undying joy, though he never knew why his son refused to set foot in the water anymore. Sin seemed to be running from something that he could not explain and did not want to. It was, to his confusion, beyond words.

The water still called to him, like a lover that will not be forgot. He could not resist long. And as he learned to bend to the wind and the water, they accepted him back with open arms, teaching him their secrets as he had never thought were possible. Day by day, he gained confidence in his abilities, and sailing became his life again.

Some nights he dreams of what happened to him that day when he was 17, where the water broke him apart and put him back together again. He dreams that he died, and the water breathed life back into him, washing him up onto rocks where it knew he would be found. He wakes gasping for air, and knows that no matter how well he can sail, he cannot swim any more. He does not question it, but instead submits to the will of the wind and the waves that rescued him from his own folly.