

The Man from Ardara
(County Donegal Northern Ireland)
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In a hot minute two travelling Irish dancers, from North America, were challenging their fears from Commonly shared beliefs that the world is unsafe and hitchhiking - a thing of the past.

As descendants of emigrants of Northern Ireland, the dancers just arrived in the country of their ancestors. They were eagerly walking in search of a view from the water's edge when they met two men at a graveyard in the Town of Ardara.

One dancer asked "do you know the way to the shore?" The two men slyly pointed in different directions and one said, 'you can go this way or that but if you're walking, oh its a good 20 minutes or more'. It was time for the dancers to think fast so the same dancer asked, 'would you like to give us a lift?' She was not deterred by one man's single word answer of 'not'. She moved closer with a playful hook. "OK! Would you like to see my fishing vest'?

As the dancer flashed her knock-off fishing vest beneath her jacket, one man scoffed but the other grinned and took a few quick steps to his car. He opened the trunk to reveal well cared for fishing rod, waders and a vest.

"Fair play" says he, "I'll take you to the shore". He proceeded to open the car doors for his new passengers. The other man shook his head and vanished among the graves. The dancers climbed into the car and buckled-up for an adventure they could neither imagine or planned for.

After a few miles of driving, the light hearted conversation and laughter began to fade. The dancers were getting nervous with realization of how far from town they had gone. Sensing, yet knowing, that they were open to more than they bargained for, the man from Ardara gently began to sing (Sean nos song) about generations of Ireland's people of the North. Within moments, all sense of time seemed to evaporate and the four strangers settled into a space of connecting that, to this day, leaves them searching for ways to describe.

By the time they reached the sandy shore and the man opened the car doors, there was nothing more for him to do but wait. In silence, the dancers cast their eyes to the sea, took deep breaths and savoured the feelings of reverence for the beauty and their deep roots in history.

They returned the way they came but the man added some common songs in the traditional Gaelic Irish language. The man must have anticipated the dancers' knowledge and capabilities as he showed no surprise when one dancer began to sing along.

As the journey came to an end, the dancers felt their exhaustion from the miles of raw emotion. In humble whispers, they asked the man to join them for tea and biscuits. Their new friend declined. He knew their risks and how they needed time to absorb the sights, sounds and his good intentions.