

You're Killing Me

By

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Cast of Characters

THE DAD:

THE SON:

THE FISHERMAN:

Scene

The Shore of an Artificial Lake... this "lake", which characters will cast their imaginary fishing lines out into is the audience, and the "shallow end" characters will sometimes wade into is the aisle of the front row...

Time

Present Day; Any given Saturday...

Scene 1

(The SON sits with his fishing pole,
bored, as the FISHERMAN walks onstage)

FISHERMAN

Come on, come on... aha!

(He walks downstage, into the "shallow
end", scooping up "fish" with his net)

FISHERMAN

There we go, come to papa! Oh baby!
(looks up and sees the SON)
Oh, sorry. I didn't realize you were... well, come on down,
what're you waiting for? This is your spot, ain't it?

SON

Dad said to wait for him.

FISHERMAN

He didn't show you how to...?

SON

I'm not supposed to bother him when he has important
business.

FISHERMAN

Important...?

(SON shrugs)

Well, come on grab your net! Come on down here in the
shallow end and you can-

SON

Dad told me not to touch anything.

FISHERMAN

Oh well, I'm sorry to intrude.
(tosses him a fish)
Here you go, kid.

SON

(struggling awkwardly with the fish)

But...

FISHERMAN

Gotta pay the rent! You have a good time now.

(he goes offstage. The SON just sits

(CONTINUED)

there, confused, for a few moment until
we hear the DAD offstage)

DAD

Ok, look Larry I don't know what more I can tell you right
now. This is my day off, you know that...

(coming onstage)

Look Larry, you handle it... Larry... Larry... I'm with my
son now, Larry... Larry... GOODBYE, LARRY!

(hangs up and walks to the SON)

I'm sorry... you doin' okay, big guy?

SON

Yeah.

DAD

Hey, you didn't...?

(sees the fish)

I told you to wait for me.

SON

I did.

DAD

What, did that one just fall out of the sky? Oh well, guess
your uncle musta shown you this before.

(slaps him on the back)

Way to go, big guy! I guess you can go ahead and get
started, don't need me to show you-

SON

I do...

DAD

What?

SON

I didn't catch it...

DAD

What are you saying? It did just fall out of-

SON

It was just floating there in the water.

DAD

What?

SON

(points)

Out there... it was just...

DAD

Oh yeah, when the stocking machine was here a few hours ago, it musta... well, here let me show you...

(he messes with the fishing rods)

SON

Dad, what's a stocking machine?

DAD

Now, the first thing you've got to remember is... what?

SON

What's a stocking machine?

DAD

Oh... you remember that truck that came by just after we got here?

SON

Yeah.

DAD

Well, that was carrying the fish.

SON

I thought the fish were in the lake.

DAD

Well, they are...

SON

You just said...

DAD

Well, they are now... the truck puts that ramp down... and in go the fish!

SON

I thought this was supposed to be...

DAD

What?

SON

What you said about nature... when I asked if we could go bowling again, you said we should-

DAD

Son, this is returning to nature!

(CONTINUED)

SON

But...

DAD

Look, son. First off, whenever we go bowling they always have to give us those bumpers... all the cheats! It's Recreational Socialism! Just like all the other crap we've got to deal with whenever...

(pause)

What were you asking me, again, son?

SON

The machine...

DAD

Oh yes, of course... Well, anyway, what they do is they raise the fish in what they call a hatchery, and then release them into the water to supplement the existing population.

SON

So then how is that returning to...?

DAD

It is nature! Restoring nature to the way it was. See, they wouldn't be doing this if the species weren't already endangered.

SON

The fish are endangered, and so we're going to catch them and eat them?

DAD

And then we replace their population through the stocking process!! Look son, you're gonna see how truly alive you feel when you're out in the wild, creating your own destiny... just like the men who built this country, built their businesses up out of nothing! You remember what I told you about fishing?

SON

(sotto voice)

"Give a man a fish, and he eats today. Teach the man how to fish, and he eats for life."

DAD

Exactly!

(hands him a pole)

Now come on, you're gonna see how fun this is... two men fending for themselves, just like it was in the old days when man first learned to live off of the land-

(CONTINUED)

(sound of an approaching truck)

SON

Dad, what's that?

FISHERMAN

(offstage)

Well, lookie here!

DAD

Just the stocking truck I was telling you about... Ok, now you remember how I showed you to do this?

SON

Yeah.

DAD

Ok, well then- Oh, hello.

(The FISHERMAN has reemerged, still "wading" along the shallow end)

FISHERMAN

Hello.

(sees they're about to cast)

Oh no, don't mind me. I'll just go around.

DAD

No, go ahead...

FISHERMAN

You two just starting now?

DAD

Oh, you know... we're just a couple of union workers here, working at our own speed.

FISHERMAN

(laughs)

Well, this is Saturday, you know! Have a good one!

(he crosses in front of them and exits)

DAD

Take care... This guy is killing me. He's going around, scooping up the ones that got stunned by the machine when it unloaded... I don't know how you think you can call that "fishing".

(CONTINUED)

SON
Yeah.

DAD
Ok, so are you ready?

SON
Yeah.

DAD
Ok, go for it!
(the SON cast his imaginary line)
There you go!

SON
Cool... now what?

DAD
What?

SON
What do we do now?

DAD
What do we do? We wait! Go ahead and have a seat, make yourself comfortable. You want a soda?

SON
Sure.

(SON sits down while DAD goes for the ice chest and takes out two sodas. He opens one, take a big drink, then hands it to his SON)

SON
Hey!

DAD
What?

SON
That's the one you drank from!

DAD
Right! That was for the government's share. Get used to that, son... that's your second lesson for the day!

SON
Okay...
(DAD sits and gets out his phone)
Aren't you going to cast yours too now, Dad?

(CONTINUED)

DAD

In a minute, Son. You just go on yourself for a minute...

(SON stares off, bored, and DAD starts texting as the light fade on them)

Scene 2

(A few hours later. The SON is onstage alone with no fish in front of him. The whole area is littered with soda cans that have been torn to pieces. He is tearing up his latest can while playing in the sand with it. The DAD comes onstage, on his phone)

DAD

Ok Larry, just tell them that, then. Look, they'll buy it, you know how these people are. Now don't call me again, I mean it...

(hangs up and sits with the SON)

How's it goin', big guy?

(sees what he's doing)

You know, son, you are really doin' a number!

SON

Can we go home now?

DAD

Son, what is the matter with you?

SON

Nothing, everything's great.

DAD

Look... I know you're mad I made you give that fish back, but you've got to understand that's not what this is about.

SON

What's it about, Dad?

DAD

I told you... Providing for yourself, just like in the old days! Yeah, that weirdo over there may have a big pile of fish by now, but you remember what I told you about cheaters, don't you?

SON

(sotto voice)

"Cheaters never prosper"... "When you cheat, you're only cheating yourself"

(CONTINUED)

DAD
You'll understand when you're older.

SON
Sure, Dad.

DAD
I'm telling you, some day you're gonna look back and...
(sighs)
Look son, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have tried to force this
on you... next Saturday, we can do whatever you want.

SON
I thought you said this was the last Saturday you were gonna
have off for a long time.

DAD
I'll figure something out, I promise. We can go bowling,
like you wanted... Heck, we'll even throw in a couple extra
bucks for those silly bumpers if that's // what you want.

SON
(overlapping)
// I don't need the bumpers.

DAD
We've got plenty of time for... what?

SON
We don't need to use the bumpers if you don't want to.

DAD
Are you sure?

SON
Yeah.

DAD
(smiles)
I'm proud of you, son... So is it a date?

SON
Sure.

DAD
Shake on it?

(the SON timidly extends his hand, to
which the DAD just laughs and instead
throws his arms around him in a big hug)

DAD
I love you, big guy!

SON
I love you too, Dad.

DAD
(getting up to pick up his pole)
Why don't we give it one last try before we head home, the both of us?

SON
Sure, Dad.

DAD
That's the spirit!

(They both cast their "lines" then sit there for a moment)

SON
Dad?

DAD
Yes?

SON
What's the big deal about those bumpers, anyway?

DAD
I thought you said you didn't want them.

SON
I don't. I was just wondering what was so wrong about them.

DAD
It's just not the way the system's supposed to work!

SON
What do you mean? Why not?

DAD
Look... life doesn't work that way! If you can't hit the pins, or catch the fish on your own, without some kinda outside assistance then you don't get to... Look son, I know what you're thinking. Anyone can have a bad day, and then when you do, you look around the lake at all the people who were... well, just a little luckier than you were, and you think... well, you wish the system was set up to let us all take home a few fish, no matter what.

SON

What's wrong with that?

DAD

(chuckles)

Yeah, that's what I used to think when I was your age. But remember... everywhere they've thought like that, every country they've tried it that way... they wrecked the place! Where the government's strong enough to give you everything you want, it's also strong enough to take everything you've earned. Never forget that!!

SON

Right, Dad.

(Sound of the approaching truck, which gets the SON's attention, as the DAD rambles on)

DAD

We'd all be a bunch of mindless automatons... have to say "yes sir!", "yes ma'am!" to every order coming down from Big Brother. No longer independent, free thinking individuals who control their own-

(his phone rings)

Hold on... Look Larry, I told you not to bother me here. Tell Wang that if he wants to... Oh. Hello, Mr. Wang. No, no sir, it's not a bad time at all.

(DAD walks away and talks, unheard. The SON gets up, picks up a net, and looks into th shallow end of the lake, then back at DAD)

FISHERMAN

(offstage)

Oh boy, here they come again!!

DAD

Yes, sir. Yes, of course we're serious about this deal... as Mr. Jenkins was explaining to you... Right, I didn't see why it would be necessary to fly to Beijing personally to... No, sir, of course that's not a problem. When would you like to... Next Saturday? Well, actually...

(glances at the SON, considers, then...)

No, no sir, that will be fine...

(the SON turns away and now wades into the shallow end, scooping up fish as the lights begin to fade)

(CONTINUED)

SON

Come on, come on...

DAD

Yes, of course... that will be fine... Yes sir...

SON

Well, lookie here!! There we go, come to papa! Oh baby!

DAD

Yes sir.

END OF PLAY