

FISHY

by
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FISHY

The kitchen of a modest home in a New England harbor town. The backdoor to the home is stage left. The doorway to the rest of the house is stage right.

It's twilight. Sitting at the table is MAE. Late forties. You could call her "long-suffering" but that would be projection.

(Off-Stage: the sound of a pick-up truck pulling up and parking. Footsteps slowly walking up the back stairs.)

The backdoor to the home opens and in limps JOE, Mae's husband, late forties. Calling him "long-suffering" would be accurate.

MAE

Where have you been?

JOE

You're never going to believe me.

MAE

That's not a good start.

JOE doesn't sit down so much as he collapses on to one of the kitchen chairs.

JOE

I had . . . It wasn't the worst day of my life. . . . It started out as the worst day . . .

MAE

You eat?

JOE

No.

Mae rises.

MAE

I kept it warm for you.

JOE

I . . . No . . . No, thank you.

MAE

You not hungry? You been gone all day.

JOE

I'm trying--

MAE

Okay. Yeah. Your day. Sorry.

MAE sities back down.

MAE

Go on. You---

MAE recoils as if from a horrible smell.

MAE

What in God's name?

JOE

Yeah, I'm getting to that.

MAE

You smell like you fell in a chum bucket.

JOE

It started out as the worst day of my life.

MAE

(still reeling)

Go on. I'm just . . . Go.

JOE

(rising to his feet)

So it was a regular day, right? Me and Mike T. and Jay all head out, like normal. Weather's fine. Wind's light, Sea's got a light chop. So we're heading out to Braxton's like we did last week, when we caught all those two-pounders.

MAE

Mm-hmm. I'm going to crack a window.

MAE moves toward a small window by the stove and cranks it open.

JOE

So, I get in my gear. Just like normal. Tank, regulator, mask, fins. All ready to make my dive.

MAE

Jay going in, too?

JOE

(with more animation)

Jay, Mike T. and me. All three.. We all go in and it's fine. Not great, but not bad. I'd brought in about six and was diving further down to see if there was any more.

MAE

That doesn't sound like the worst day ever.

JOE gives Mae a look that starts as a "fuck you" then fades into a "never mind."

JOE

Right. So I'm headed down, about one hundred twenty, thirty feet. Headed down, looking down. And then it all goes black.

JOE gives this a second to sink in with MAE. He has her attention.

JOE

(gesturing, in full story-teller mode)

But not shadow-black. Not like there's a shadow, over me, or there's another boat over me. Wicked black. And there's a whooshing. With bubbles, and water, and it's all dark. I didn't know what the fuck was happening.

MAE

Oh my god. I didn't mean to make fu--

MAE pinches her nose.

MAE

I am so sorry. I can't help it. You smell like the last day of Quahog Festival.

JOE takes a deep breath.

JOE

I'm sorry.

MAE

No, I'm sorry. Go ahead.

JOE

So I thought I was dead. It was all black, I didn't know what the fuck had happened. I feel like I'm moving, but I'm all locked . . . grabbed in . . . tight. Like a straitjacket. Can't move, but I can feel I'm still moving.

MAE

Did you think you were dead?

JOE

All these thoughts. That too. All these thoughts going through my head. "Am I dead?" No, I can still think, so I can't be dead.

MAE

Out of body experience?

JOE

Every thought. That. "Am I dead?" "Am I unconscious?" But how could I be any of those things and still think those thoughts?

MAE

Where were Mike T. and Jay?

JOE

That was my next thought. If I'm not dead, what the fuck is happening and where are the guys? But you have to understand, all of these thoughts are running through my head in a second. In a millisecond.

JOE looks to see if MAE understands.

JOE

So the next thing that happens. Is this force that's gripping me starts moving.

MAE

No. Shit.

JOE

It's like squeezing me and rolling me. And there's still this wooshing and water and bubbles.

MAE

So you realize you're not dead.

JOE

(fully gesticulating in service to the story)

Right. But then I think, I've got to stay alive. So I'm doing a gear check. Mouthpiece is still in, I can't move my arms but I can tell everything else is there. Mask, Tank. And moving. Still moving. Kind of rocking.

MAE

How long is all this taking?

JOE

Seconds. Can't even be more than a minute or two. . . And that's when I realize, "I'm inside something."

MAE

Obviously.

JOE

No. Something living.

(A beat. JOE looks at MAE, and MAE catches on right away.)

MAE

A shark? You were in a giant shark? Why didn't--

JOE

Not a shark. A whale.

MAE

Get. The. Fuck. Outta here!

JOE

I am not making this up.

MAE

I can tell by your smell.

JOE

And all I know about being in whales is what anyone knows about being in whales. From cartoons, right? Like me and Pinocchio and Geppetto have to make the whale sneeze, somehow.

MAE

(laughs)

Or Jonah.

JOE

I know. I've been thinking Jonah ever since. And believe me, I started praying. I'm praying my ass off. But at the same time, I'm still in a whale, and I'm not going to make it sneeze or anything. But then I think, "What can I do?" If I can grab my knife and poke it, or if I, like, elbow it or kick it, what's going to happen? Is it going to spit me out? Is it going to swallow me?

MAE

I thought they only eat krill and plankton and tiny creatures.

JOE

Sure. That's what they've got the filters for. For straining out the little plankton. But once you get past that filter, you are in a big-ass whale mouth.

MAE

So what did you do?

JOE

I figured: stab it. I'm not going to be subtle with the world's largest creature.

MAE

They're very intelligent.

JOE

Yes. I will give whales credit for that. They have songs and social structures, and culture, and probably philosophy and college and shit. But I am not about to start learning all that. I'm in a whale, and I need to get the hell out.

MAE

You didn't stab it? An endangered species?

JOE

I. Was. In. A. Whale's. Mouth! If they throw me in jail for killing an endangered species, so be it. So just as I'm reaching for my knife, all the whooshing all around me changes direction. It was first going this way, and now it's going this way. And the next thing I know, I'm out.

MAE

Out. Totally out.

JOE

Out. The whale spit me out.

MAE

Spit you out.

JOE

It may have been vomit.

MAE

That's that smell?

JOE

The smell is the smell. It don't matter what the source was. What we choose to call it.

MAE

Did you get a good look at it?

JOE

After it spit, vomited, whatever, me out? Just for a second or two. It spit me out, kinda like, "pleah." Not like a watermelon seed. More like how you'd spit out a hair you found in your food.

MAE

So it was intelligent enough to know you weren't food.

JOE

Apparently so.

MAE

You feel okay?

JOE

I feel fine. It's just. . . It was all over so quick. You never expect something like that would happen. I always wonder whether a shark is going to get me. But not a whale. But when it happened, it was all over so fast. No time to think, or reflect. Or get philosophical. It was just: Dark. Whooshing. "Shit, I'm in a whale. What the fuck? Maybe I should get my knife? Nope. Now I'm vomit."

MAE

You think you were going to die?

(Beat.)

JOE

I didn't think I was ever going to see you again. That I had enough time for.

JOE coughs a bit, embarrassed at his admission. Collects himself.

JOE

So I'm out, and getting my bearings. And I look over me and see it swim over and past.
And off it goes. It was beautiful.

(Beat.)

MAE

How far were you from the boat?

JOE

I surfaced and was only about little ways from the boat.

MAE

Did the guys see all this?

JOE

No.

MAE

They didn't wonder where you were?

JOE

I swam back to the boat and told them all about it.

MAE

They didn't believe you?

JOE

Look at me. There's not a scratch on me. I go down to catch lobsters, I'm down, for a while, and then I come back up and say I was in a whale?

MAE

Those fuckers.

JOE

But you believe me, right?

(MAE regards JOE. Should she believe him?
Why didn't the others?)

MAE

You have to admit. This is not normal.

JOE

(realizing)

You're right.

MAE

I believe you.

Joe opens his arms as if to say, "Can I get a hug?"

MAE

But I'm not touching you. Not until you wash that stink off.

JOE rises, makes for the kitchen door.

MAE

You go shower. I'll have dinner for you when you're done.

JOE

What's for dinner?

MAE

(after a long, long beat)

Fish.

JOE and MAE stare at each other. Eventually, MAE smiles, reassuringly.

MAE

I'll order a pizza.

END OF PLAY