

Sing a Porpoise Home

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I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.
The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, TS Eliot

Teach me to hear mermaids singing
Song: Go and Catch a Falling Star, [John Donne](#)

*For whatever we lose (like a you or a me)
it's always ourselves we find at the sea*
Maggie and Milly and Molly and May, ee cummings

Synopsis

The ocean holds surprising secrets, just as it has always held great promise for Tamás' family. Here in a small island community, at the edge of the great ocean, Tamás wants to spend his birthday in a spot he loved to share with his Grampy. But the celebration is muted as Tamás' mother lovingly helps him deal with the recent death of his well-loved grandfather. Frank, Tamás' father, a man distant from wife and son, tries awkwardly to fill the gap. It is only through Tamás' unwitting discovery of an old family secret, that life for this little family starts to change in surprising, and potentially joyous, ways.

Characters

TAMÁS, an adolescent boy

DEELA, his mother

FRANK, his father

SEAGIRL, an adolescent porpoise/girl

Setting

An old, plain dock in a bushy area along the shore of a Pacific island. A portion of a large fish cannery dwarfs it, showing part of a sign reading, "Delightful Tuna: Kiss of the Sea." The sea is a strong presence.

Notes

Singing: The singing is imagined as a combination of intoning & whistling; a little bit whale and a little bit dolphin.

Costuming: The porpoise/girl is an undersea creature whose entire skin is more like that of a whale, rather than the traditional, cartoony fish-scale tail and clam shell top. When SeaGirl's tail comes off, it should be as if the character is still wearing a tightly-fit swimming or bicycle suit; a skin that transforms to new environments.

Scene One

A Pacific island. The sea is a strong presence. An uneven, slat-board dock reaches out to the water. A portion of a fish cannery dwarfs it. Part of a sign on the cannery shows; “Delightful Tuna: Kiss of the Sea.”

Deela enters carrying a folded fishing pole and a bag of worms. She quickly hides them. Turning to go, she hears something from the ocean. She searches the horizon.

TAMÁS (*off*)

Mom?

[Deela stays focused on the ocean.]

I counted. Mom, I finished counting. Mom?

DEELA (*still searching*)

Keep going as you go.

TAMÁS (*off*)

Can't I just uncover my eyes?

DEELA

Yes. (*switches attention*) I mean no. Not of now.

TAMÁS (*off*)

It feels like forever already.

DEELA

I am doing the surprising for you now. For my son on his day of days. Walk again, Tamas.

TAMÁS (*off*)

Mom?

DEELA

A righting turn to walk, please, Tamas. A right, please. Right!

[Sound of a collision. Tamas yelps in surprise and pain.]

Sorry, sorry, my boy of me.

TAMÁS (*off*)

I'm okay, Mom. But it hurt.

DEELA

Sorry. I am saying right, right to you.

TAMÁS (*off*)

Right into this stump of a tree here, Mom.

DEELA

Please, listening close to your Mother, me. To follow my voice only, Tamas. Not hit trees.

TAMÁS (*off*)

Are we going *somewhere*?

DEELA

We are finding the fun of the day time. Aren't you having the fun yet?

TAMÁS (*off*)

It would be fun to know where we're going

DEELA

Just straight now. Yes, like that. Straight, straight, straight.

[As Tamas enters Deela's excitement grows.]

Annnd stop!

[She turns him to face the ocean.]

(Expansively) Ah. Now you are standing in the here now. *(Breathes)* Oh, I am smelling such magical all around this place.

TAMÁS

Smelling magic?

DEELA

You smell.

TAMÁS

Mom, you crack me up sometimes.

DEELA (*instructing him*)

Smell, smell, smell, my son. You smell very much now.

TAMÁS

I'm smelling, I'm smelling.

DEELA

So you know, now, my magical.

TAMÁS

It smells like ocean, mostly.

DEELA (*pleased*)

Happy Birthday.

TAMÁS

I also smell (*smells*) wait, no, Mom, tell me it's not, Mom. I smell-

DEELA (*continues over Tamas, singing the correct tune, but own lyrics*)

Happy Birthday for you. Happy Birthday for you...

TAMÁS

-tunafish.

[Takes his blindfold off, He stands silent. Disappointed.]

DEELA (*continues singing*)

Happy, Happy, Happy Birthday. Happy Birthday for you.... You can be the singing, too, now.

[Tamas is silent. Beat.]

What is wrong, Tamas?

TAMÁS

I don't want to be here now. Today. You should of told me.

DEELA

A surprise pops up only from a secret.

TAMÁS

Well, you shouldn't keep secrets because maybe people won't like the surprise of it.

DEELA

You and Grampy always come to here so much before. Your 'favoritest' place, you said all of the times.

TAMÁS

Not now. Not today. Maybe it won't be never again.

DEELA

Keep your Grampy in your heart, my boy of me, always.

TAMÁS

He never finished the promise. Now I'll never know! I wish that... (*Chokes up*) I wish that he didn't... (*crying*)

DEELA

Die from us?

TAMÁS

Yeah. Die from us. *(beat)* He had a promise for me, right here, Mom. But now I will never know the promise. Never.

DEELA

Maybe, son to me, maybe today is a day of promise.

[Beat.]

TAMÁS

That's what Grampy said. Today. *(Still fighting tears)*

DEELA

Then maybe there is a surprise for you in this favoritist Grampy place.

TAMÁS

He talked like a, a, like he was telling a mystery. A, a, a great mystery to find out. His eyebrows bounced and then he talked so hush-hush to me. *(Like Grampy)* "Two trees." So many times, he told me. Just like that. "Two trees. One sits. A knee pointing to the sky." He said it. Like a promise of fantastic things. "And it has a lot of knees. The other tree bows. A big, swooping bow. Right to the knee tree. And there, between knee and bow, is the perfect sit for catching."

[Tamas cries.]

DEELA

You are sounding much like Grampy talking. It's good to listen.

TAMÁS

And then, and then, "Jam just half a coconut into the dirt, Tamas. That's the perfect sit, see? The perfectest place. My Great Ol' Granddaddy sat perfect, catching them, down there. My Grandpa and Papa, too. Grandpa could catch whatever you wanted. Like ordering in a fancy restaurant. Wahoo, please, Grandpa." *(Looks at Deela)* I thought... I was hoping that maybe... No, it's dumb.

DEELA

There is no dumb on your birthday day.

TAMÁS

I hoped Grampy was going to take me for real to the perfectest place. Today. 'Cause he said, 'Maybe that coming birthday, my boy...'

DEELA

Here is a favoritist place.

TAMÁS

Here? But where's the trees? Nothing's here but Dad's tuna company staring down at us.

DEELA

You are here.

[Tamas struggles with the urge to leave.]

You carry that perfectest place from him.

TAMÁS

But I want that perfect sit place for real!

DEELA

Okay. So you show me, now.

TAMÁS

Show what?

DEELA

Of the Grampy prefect promise.

TAMÁS

But...

DEELA

Don't tell me of your but.

TAMÁS

Not my butt, Mom.

DEELA

Then make the perfect, please.

TAMÁS

But there's no Grampy to share it with, no more. *(close to tears)*

DEELA

There's a mother.

[Tamas remains still.]

I am wondering where is the bending tree?

TAMÁS

Bowing.

DEELA

How does a tree do bowing, Tamas of me?

[Tamas hesitates. Deela waits.]

TAMÁS

One time? He shouted.

DEELA

For the bowing?

TAMÁS

‘Let’s be trees!’ He surprised me, he jumped up so fast. I almost fell in the water.

DEELA *(laughs)*

Grampy is a very loud, too.

TAMÁS

And he bowed.

DEELA

Like?

[Tamas hesitates. Does he relive a Grampy moment?]

Please, my son, for me?

[Tamas gently shapes his body into a bowing tree.]

And the other tree?

TAMÁS

Kneeling.

[With gentle joy and great feeling, Tamas shapes his body into a kneeling tree.]

DEELA

Very nice tree.

TAMÁS

Bow, please.

DEELA

Of course, my son of me.

[She starts to gently bow as Tamas did.]

TAMÁS

Wait. Over here, Mom. Me and him always sat here at the end of the dock. You go there, okay? *(a gentle whisper.)* Let's be trees.

[Together they shape their bodies into the trees with gentle artistry.]

DEELA

See, I said of this being my magical.

[Tamas sits.]

TAMÁS

I miss Grampy.

[Deela hugs Tamas. Tamas grabs a stick and starts peeling off little branches or dead leaves. NOTE: He is unknowingly starting a fishing pole.]

TAMÁS

Where's that perfect sit, Grampy? Why didn't you ever just tell me?

DEELA

You're Grampy so loved to be surprising to us all.

TAMÁS

He never answered my questions. Always he asked me more questions! *(Grampy's voice)* "If it ain't mysterious, it ain't no fun."

DEELA

You ask of your father. Maybe he is knowing part of the mysterious.

TAMÁS

Dad never liked any of Grampy's stories.

DEELA

Just ask when he comes.

TAMÁS

Dad's coming here?

DEELA

You wish for him to be coming.

TAMÁS

I never said that.

DEELA

Not said. Wished. For your birthday. He will come for the birthdaying.

TAMÁS

Yeah, but he's *really* coming? Not just saying it?

DEELA

Don't you want to see your father?

[Tamas pauses. More peeling of the stick.]

TAMÁS

I'm not ready. He's supposed to let me know first if he's coming. That's the rule we made. He's supposed to say. Let me know. So I can get...ready, you know. And stuff. I'm not ready.

DEELA

But he didn't come to see us for a long time.

TAMÁS

That's what I mean!

DEELA

You send him the phone texting.

TAMÁS

No way on that one. I can't. He won't be happy if I disturb him.

DEELA

He will be thanking you, that is the be he will be.

TAMÁS

He doesn't want me to call him when he's working.

DEELA

It will be a good time for the two of both of you.

TAMÁS *(as Frank)*

"Delightful Tuna: Kiss of the Sea doesn't run itself."

DEELA

You are taking out your phone.

TAMÁS

Mom, he'll just get all tight and mean and make you cry or something and I don't like it, I don't like it, I don't like it.

DEELA

Not of today. No way on that one. Today is that promise of a day, my son. He will be being happy on this son's birthday day.

TAMÁS

But...

DEELA

Don't show me your but. Touching on the numbers.

TAMÁS

Mom. *(Beat.)* I don't know what to text.

DEELA

You say that you are waiting for him to be birthdaying with you and wishing for him to be coming and ask when.

TAMÁS

I can't text all that.

DEELA

You are missing him, say.

TAMÁS

No. *(Beat)* I mean, I'm afraid to... you know *(beat, Difficult to say)* hope that Dad might really try...

DEELA

That's a good hoping. This is your father. You send to him.

[A beat. He types and sends]

TAMÁS

There.

[He stares at the phone.]

DEELA

It will take its time. Your Daddy will be for you. We will birthday together now, me and you.

[Tamas nervously peels at the branch again.]

TAMÁS

I don't think I ... I mean, if Dad's coming, I should make sure that I...I...

[She hands him a small bag.]

I'm not hungry, Mom.

DEELA

No, it's not eating. It's for opening, birthday son. I hear from the bag calling, "Tamas."

TAMÁS

Mom.

DEELA

"Why are you not opening me, Tamas?" I listened to that right now.

TAMÁS

Okay, Mom. Geez.

[Tamas opens the bag.]

DEELA

"Ooo, I am so happy to you. Happy to You!"

TAMÁS

Whoa, you caught all these?

DEELA

So you can caught so much over here.

TAMÁS

Catch.

DEELA

Okay, yes. Catch. Catch much, Tamas. Time for a happy birthday. *(Announcing)* Happy Birthday!

TAMÁS

Thanks, Mom.

DEELA

Don't thanks me. Thanks the little squigglers. I have bring this for you.

[She reveals his fishing pole.]

TAMÁS

My Grampy pole! How did you get it from my room?

DEELA

Your Mommy is of good ideas. And now you be hurrying now so you can do the fishing.

TAMÁS

AH! Shut-up, Mom.

DEELA

What?

TAMÁS

Sorrysorrysorry. But, shhh, Mom.

DEELA

Shh? Shhh of what?

TAMÁS

You know you can't say that here, by the water.

DEELA

Say of the fish?

TAMÁS

AH! Mom. Shut, ah, stop. That's bad luck, saying that.

DEELA

For who? You or the fis-

TAMÁS (*Sings loud*)

La la la la la! Not that word. Not so close to the water.

DEELA

So what am I to be saying over here?

[Tamas sets up his fishing pole.]

TAMÁS

Them, down there.

DEELA

Them down there?

TAMÁS

‘Them (*makes an ‘uh’ sound*) down there.’ With an (*the sound again*), Grampy always said like that.

DEELA

Them (*‘uh’*) down there.

TAMÁS

Then the them, down there don’t know.

DEELA

Oh, yes. This I know of, of course. People are always like to trick us, down there.

TAMÁS

Surprising.

DEELA

Yes. For me, it was a big surprise when I was first to coming here, so of long ago. Put one squiggler on the stick pole.

TAMÁS

Wait, wait. You just said ... you said...what? You came here first?

DEELA

First to this place, yes. Now maybe out there (*to ocean*) they are calling for you, “Tamas. Tamas. Where is my squiggler to eat, Tamas?”

TAMÁS

What do you mean you came first to this place?

DEELA

Oh, well, that is of a secret and your are not liking those very much.

TAMÁS

No, not fair. Tell me.

DEELA

First you hook the squiggler. And I will.

TAMÁS

Okay, okay. (*Tamas starts hooking a worm.*) I’m hooking, see? I’m hooking.

DEELA

Okay. I am not thinking of saying this to you, but maybe your Grampy is helping me to talk. (*to Grampy*) Am I saying something now, Grampy, to our Tamas? (*to Tamas*) Yes, Grampy and me believe you will wish to know something of my...secret. This is my first place to be.

TAMÁS

I don't get it. Like born here?

DEELA

That's a funny saying you are saying. I am not born of here...*(realizes)* Oh, but I am born one more time here, too, I think.

TAMÁS

Huh? What's that mean?

DEELA

That means, my son of me, that you are now knowing of a secret of your mother.

TAMÁS

I don't even know what you mean!

DEELA

A secret is a good one if you find it, not tell of it.

TAMÁS

That's not fair. You're teasing me.

DEELA

Like you are teasing the them, down there. You don't be telling the truth of it so they are surprised, yes?

TAMÁS

This is why I don't like surprises. *(Accidentally tabs self with hook)* Ow! Mom.

DEELA *(Laughs)*

You are a squiggler on the hook, now, my boy?

TAMÁS

No.

DEELA *(Sees worm)*

Oh, look. The squiggler one goes away.

TAMÁS *(a joke)*

Maybe looking for his Mom.

DEELA

Yes, and that mother is sad. I am sorry to her.

TAMÁS *(a little confused at her seriousness)*

Should I just let him go, then?

DEELA

Yes, because we feel sorry for him now.

TAMÁS

But all worms must have mothers.

DEELA

You will always remember that, too.

TAMÁS

What? Shoot, I can't put these little guys on the hook now.

DEELA

No, no. It is alright, because the mother knows. She knows sometimes you don't see your children anymore.

TAMÁS *(taken aback)*

Mom, what are you saying?

DEELA

Maybe I don't like to live here, but I have you and that is important to me. *(Points)* Try with the squiggler again.

TAMÁS

You don't want to be here?

[Tamas distractedly works on hooking a worm again.]

DEELA

No, no, no, I am wish to be here for the birthday of my boy.

TAMÁS *(unsettled)*

Wait, Mom, stop. You're saying that you want to... what?

DEELA

I am saying about family, Tamas. Family is to be together. So now is the time for your Daddy and you. Now is the time to make of you special again, to be caring of each other. It's not good to be separate from the family of you, I am saying.

TAMÁS

But Dad doesn't ever want to be with us. He never lived with us for so long.

DEELA

Tamas, please. We don't have to think on the bad parts.

TAMÁS

And most times he doesn't talk to you nice, like you're being mean to him and you're not being that. I hate that. I hate that. I hate that.

DEELA

Never be hating of your family like that, ever. Please. Maybe they will be gone from you and you don't want to still be hate.

TAMÁS

Why do you say it like that? Are you trying to go away? Did Dad say something to you?

DEELA

No, no, Tamas, listen please. I am saying for you and for us all to always be loving because when someone is gone, we have no more time to change any hating that we did.

TAMÁS

You mean because Dad didn't even come to Grampy's (*He chokes up a bit*)

DEELA

Tamas

TAMÁS

...to Grampy's (*hard to say*) funeral. I mean, that's his Dad!

DEELA

Hating makes us hurt. To you want to be hating of family?

[Tamas looks at Deela, realizing his hate.]

TAMÁS

No.

[Deela points to the hook.]

DEELA

Oh look. Now you has got the squiggler hooked.

TAMÁS

I do? (*He looks*) Oh yeah, I do.

DEELA

Put the string in, Tamas.

TAMÁS

‘Line,’ Mom.

DEELA

Yes, okay. You try the line. The squiggler are waiting for you.

[Tamas picks up his fishing pole and prepares.]

TAMÁS

It’s weird... *(Looks at Deela)* without Grampy.

DEELA

He will be seeing you. Throw the string.

[Tamas casts.]

TAMÁS

Line.

DEELA

Yes, okay, line.

[He starts a humming, softly.]

Do you have the catching yet?

[Tamas shakes his head.]

TAMÁS

Grampy says ‘think miraculous.’ That’s what he says, miraculous. I didn’t know the word. He said when you do it, you will know it.

DEELA

Then do miraculous, my birthday boy.

[Tamas continues to sing with a little more strength.]

The singing is miraculous for me, my son. You are make my heart fly. Today I am believing that this is a promise, yes, day. I think it is very of you, this day.

TAMÁS

I asked Grampy to teach me the whole song one time. Grampy just laughed. It’s singing, he said, not songing.

[Tamas’ singing continues to grow.]

DEELA

Maybe the squiggler should doing more of the squigglering.

[Deela wiggles the pole.]

TAMÁS

You never did this before, did you?

[Tamas' singing continues to grow.]

DEELA

Ah, you are trying to trick out the secret of me, I am thinking.

TAMÁS

Mom. Just tell me.

DEELA

Singing and catching, please.

[Tamas' singing continues.]

Oh. There! I am feel something now, at the line.

TAMÁS

Not. you're not even holding the pole-

[A tug]

Hey, hey.

DEELA

A catching now, yes?

TAMÁS

Yeah, yeah, I think maybe. How did you know?

[A tug]

DEELA

I am feeling very much of that now. Pull, pull.

TAMÁS

Wait, Mom. I got it, I think.

DEELA

This is too much to wait.

[She grabs the pole, too.]

TAMÁS

Careful, Mom. Not that fast.

DEELA

Whatever is it?

TAMÁS

Watch now. Watch!

[The line suddenly goes slack.]

Oh.

DEELA

What 'oh?' What?

TAMÁS

It's the bad luck word. I told you. Them, down there heard you say it. Bad Luck!

DEELA

Them, down there are playing with you. They know you are the birthdaying boy since we are say it out loud to them and this is a trick surprise they like to do to you. You try one more.

[Just as Tamas casts, his phone buzzes. Tamas checks.]

TAMÁS

Dad.

DEELA

What?

TAMÁS

He's *(nervous breath)* coming.

DEELA

Oh, I am loving this day of yours. It is so full of porpoise.

TAMÁS

Purpose, Mom.

DEELA

No, I am meaning of porpoise.

TAMÁS

A porpoise day. You crack me up sometimes.

DEELA

A day such as this day of yours, the porpoise are so enjoyable to swim and leap and call out to each other, like fun. Did you not see that ever?

TAMÁS

I never thought of them, down there having fun. I mean they're just kind of doing porpoisy things. Like eating and stuff.

DEELA

Oh, Tamas, they are of much fun, those of the porpoise.

TAMÁS

Grampy liked watching them. He liked whistling and waving to them sometimes.

DEELA

Like that, yes. They are of the waving, with tails into the sky and wiggling.

TAMÁS

They leap real beautiful. Yeah, it's kind of like a happy feeling. You know how you feel inside? I thought the leaping joy was just inside of me, not that the porpoises felt like that really.

DEELA

You should think always of the leaping being of joy to them. *(Abruptly pointing to the pole)* Oh! Oh! The squiggler is working again!

[The pole starts shaking and pulling]

TAMÁS

How do you keep knowing that?

DEELA

Make a miraculous!

[Tamas sings.]

You have a down there one?

[Tamas struggles hard, singing. He is pulled along the dock. .]

DEELA

Bring her up to here.

TAMÁS

Whoa, this is crazy. Help me here.

DEELA

Where?

TAMÁS

Just grab!

[Suddenly the pole yanks out of Tamas' hands and disappears into the water.]

Ah, what is that?

DEELA *(slightly proud)*

I am thinking that one down there is a very strong one. *(Calling)* Are you strong, down there one?

TAMÁS

Mom, that was my Grampy pole. I lost my Grampy pole. Oh, man, this will definitely make Dad upset.

DEELA

That's not the way to be saying. You say it like that and it is like that.

TAMÁS

Mom, it is like that. I make one little mistake and he gets all--

[Deela emits a long whistle.]

What was that?

DEELA

I didn't know I could be still doing of that.

TAMÁS

Doing what? What is that?

DEELA

Part of my secret telling.

TAMÁS

What? What's the secret? I gotta know now what this secret is. You gotta tell me.

DEELA

Maybe you watch.

[Pause.]

TAMÁS

Watch for what?

DEELA

Wait. I think maybe now.

[The pole suddenly pops out of the water and lands on the dock.]

Ah, yes. That.

TAMÁS

Whoa, whoa, whoa.

DEELA

There *was* one tricky little friend out there. Happy birthday.

TAMÁS

Wait, wait? *(Picks up pole)* Was one *what*?

DEELA

Them, down there can be of help sometime, if you want.

TAMÁS

Who did what?

DEELA

You did.

TAMÁS

Did what? This is like teasing me!

DEELA

This day is like magical, you see? I am of loving this day of yours, my one son.

TAMÁS

The pole just popped right up here.

DEELA

You have made me so more happy then for so long.

FRANK *(Off)*

Tom-tom?

DEELA

And now is your father here, too. All is happening for good.

TAMÁS

Hold on, Mom, hold on. You made the pole... *(He makes the noise of a pole flying through the air.)*

DEELA

Not just by the myself.

TAMÁS

How did it happen?

[Tamas starts searching to figure it out.]

DEELA

Now, you be a happy birthday boy. Promise.

[Deela exits.]

FRANK *(Off, searching)*

Tom-tom? Are you out here or what?

TAMÁS *(searching)*

No, Mom. How did you get this pole?

[Tamas tries looking under the dock.]

Is this that secret thing?

Scene Two

[Tamas is in a position that he doesn't see Frank enter. Frank enters, awkwardly holding an old tackle box. He pauses for a moment, staring at Tamas.]

FRANK *(almost a nervous breath, he speaks suddenly, quickly)*

Mom brought you out here, didn't she. Dragging you out here of all places, especially since your Grandpa is *(catches himself)*...well, not around anymore. How can you want to be out here? Isn't that right?

[Tamas doesn't answer.]

Tom-tom!

TAMÁS

Dad?

[Comes out of or off from the dock.]

FRANK

Was this your mother's idea?

TAMÁS

I'm pretty sure, but I don't know how she did it. It was wild.

[Tamas searches again.]

FRANK

Well, I can tell you that things will change now. We're just going to change the way this family is.

TAMÁS

It was wild. It fell in the water, this pole, here. It was an accident, I swear—but then Mom made a noise and, zoosh, the pole shot out of the water....

FRANK *(shaking his head like he's heard this before)*

Oh, Tom-tom, no. Don't start this today.

TAMÁS

I thought it would be lost, but it came flying—

FRANK

Tom-tom, this is just nonsense. Can't we just forget the nonsense for once?

TAMÁS

But I saw it with my own eyes. It popped right up out of the water over there. Mom said it was a kind of secret that I have to find.

FRANK

Secrets. That's this family. 'Secrets.'

TAMÁS

You know about it?

FRANK

I lived it, Tom-tom. It's impossible to know what the truth is with this family.

TAMÁS

Mom wouldn't lie.

FRANK

She and Grandpa, hiding the truth. Making you believe what THEY want you to believe. You can't trust them. That's how you chase people away.

TAMÁS

Is that why you didn't come to his funeral?

[Frank is taken aback. Beat.]

You didn't go to Grampy's funeral.

FRANK

No, I didn't go. And that's all you need to know

TAMÁS

Didn't you care about Grampy?

FRANK *(Changing the subject)*

I don't see what this has to do with how your mother is treating you.

TAMÁS

You didn't talk to him for a long time.

FRANK

I don't like this conversation.

TAMÁS

Why did you hate him?

FRANK

I never hated my father, Tom-tom. No matter what he made you believe.

TAMÁS

But you didn't love him.

FRANK *(angered)*

So since you don't like talking to me, you hate me.

[Taken aback, Tamas doesn't know how to respond. A beat.]

Look, Tom-tom, this isn't starting right.

TAMÁS

I don't hate.

[Tamas distractedly works on the branch pole again.]

FRANK

I didn't mean it like that, Tom-tom. (*Beat.*) This is supposed to be a day for you, you know? Full of promise. And things have been all kind of, well, you know, your Grandpa and everything. I was thinking that today is a day to make things kind of right. And then the two of us started in again with each other (*Pause. Almost an after-thought.*) Here.

[Hands Tamas an old tackle box.]

TAMÁS

Oh.

[Beat.]

FRANK

It's a joke.

TAMÁS

Huh?

FRANK

I found it the other day up in the rafters at the house. Its old. Been up there a long time, I think.

TAMÁS

Oh.

FRANK

It's a joke. You know, a joke birthday present.

TAMÁS

It is?

FRANK

To make you think your Dad forgot your birthday and messed things up.

TAMÁS

I wouldn't think like that.

FRANK

You're lying.

TAMÁS

I wouldn't.

FRANK

It's old, you know, so I thought it might be like a joke. Maybe your Grandpa gave it to me, I think, when he used to want me to ... *(doesn't finish)*

TAMÁS *(looking at it more seriously)*

Grampy's?

FRANK

Yeah. You know, it was a present. I forgot about that. For our wedding. Yeah. It felt like a weird joke. Anyway, it's been hiding for years, 'cause I didn't want it.

TAMÁS

I like it.

FRANK

Yeah, well, I do have something *real* to give to you.

TAMÁS

How about we do some catching. For my birthday.

FRANK *(before he realizes he's saying it)*

No.

TAMÁS

What?

FRANK

I mean, I have something to give to you. A present.

TAMÁS

But I got this from you *(tackle box)* Come on, Dad, we can. Right here. Right now.

FRANK

No, no. Not in Grandpa's place. The present is in my office, upstairs.

TAMÁS

Wait. You know about here?

FRANK

What, you don't think he brought me out here, too?

TAMÁS

Grampy and you? Came out here?

FRANK

It was so thick with trees you could hardly see out to the water.

TAMÁS

Trees? There were lots of trees? Here?

FRANK

Thick with them. You could just disappear.

TAMÁS

What happened, then?

FRANK

I couldn't really see. She just disappeared between the trees. Into the water. She never even looked back.

TAMÁS

Who disappeared?

FRANK

What?

TAMÁS

You said she disappeared.

FRANK

Nothing. It doesn't mean anything.

TAMÁS

Did somebody get lost or something?

FRANK

Look, let's go up to my office now, so I can give you—

TAMÁS

So why are all the trees gone now?

FRANK

A couple of friends helped me clean out all those trees and bushes. That's all. Let's go.

TAMÁS

Cleaned them out? You chopped down every tree here?

FRANK

You know about this.

TAMÁS

I never.

FRANK

How do you think we set up this old dock here?

TAMÁS

This is yours? But you never, ever come to here.

FRANK

This decrepit old thing wasn't enough once Delightful Tuna got going.

TAMÁS

You sat here? To go catching?

FRANK

My friends did the catching, yes. I did the selling. Started all of this (*points to the cannery*)

TAMÁS

Like a promise.

FRANK

It was certainly the right place to set up the cannery. We caught a lot here. And there's greater promise coming yet, if you'll just come with me.

TAMÁS (*realization*)

The perfect sit.

FRANK

Come on, this is the perfect present, I think.

TAMÁS

We can catch a lot right now, Dad. Together. I even made a pole already.

FRANK

Fishing?

TAMÁS

No, Dad. Sssh. That's bad luck.

FRANK

That's your Grandpa talking. We say fish-

TAMÁS

Dad!

FRANK

-fish all the time around here and Delightful Tuna Company is doing just fine.

TAMÁS *(not wanting to lose the momentum)*

Let's just do some catching right now, Dad. Together. I even got a pole started

[Tamas starts singing and fishing.]

FRANK *(gesturing to the factory)*

Right there is all the fish you'd ever want.

TAMÁS

But this is the perfect sit for catching, Grampy said.

FRANK

Grampy said. Of course.

TAMÁS

Grab the pole and sing, Dad.

FRANK

I am not going to *(cuts self off from saying 'sing')*

TAMÁS

For them, down there.

[Tamas sings.]

FRANK

That's just more nonsense.

TAMÁS

Grampy did like this.

FRANK

Sounds like him.

TAMÁS

I like the sounds of him.

FRANK

Look, Tom-tom, that idea you have, that your Grandfather was full of... magic. He told stories and loved making noises.

[Tamas begins singing.]

That's why you like him. But that's all that it was. Noise. I don't make noise.

[Tamas' singing grows in intensity.]

Look, Tom-tom, you miss your Grampy, I get it.

[Tamas' singing continues to grow.]

(Growls, upset) This is a little vexing.

[Tamas' singing continues to grow.]

I don't like your attitude, Tom-tom.

[Tamas' singing is at loudest. Frank grabs Tamas' pole and throws it to the ground. It breaks. Tamas stops singing. Pause]

TAMÁS

Tamas.

FRANK

What?

[Tamas picks up the pieces and walks to the end of the dock.]

TAMÁS

I like Tamas.

[Frank leaves toward the cannery.]

END OF EXCERPT – CONTACT AUTHOR FOR COMPLETE SCRIPT