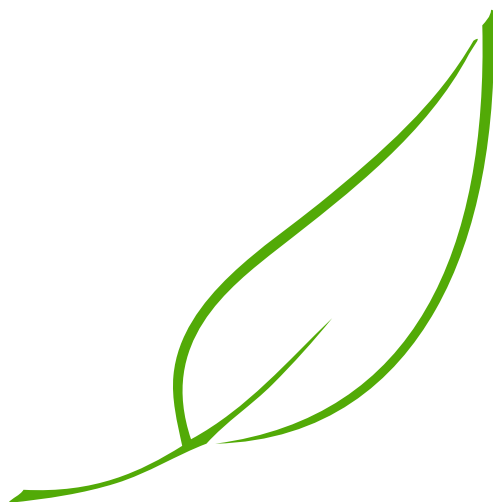


SOMETHING FISHY

by Ken Bradbury



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(Jonah enters, carefully. He opens an imaginary door, takes off his shoes, then begins to gingerly cross his kitchen floor. He stops to listen a moment, then continues on. Two chairs representing his bed are at the left of the playing area. He mimes taking off his shirt, then eases himself painfully onto “the couch” careful not to make a sound. Just as he’s about to tumble into slumber, we hear ...)

Joan: *(with a bellow designed to wake a dead fish)*
JONAH!!!!!!!

Jonah: *(sitting bolt upright, dazed and frightened)* Huh?

Joan: *(entering, his wife)* Jonah!!!!

Jonah: Here? *(still groggy)* Wh ... what?

Joan: Well, look who the tide dragged in!

Jonah: Good morning, sweetheart.

Joan: “Good morning, sweetheart.” That’s it? Six days ... no word ... you don’t call ... no email ... Just take off leaving me and kids for three days then you sneak back in here smelling like rotten seaweed and all I get is “Good morning, sweetheart?” That’s it. I’ve had it with you, sweet cheeks. I’m taking the kids and going to my mothers. Don’t forget to feed the cat. *(begins to exit)*

Jonah: Joan! *(the sound of his own shout sends a stabbing pain through his head)* Please! Wait a minute. There’s an explanation.

Joan: There’s always an explanation, isn’t there? I mean, God forbid you should just be honest with me for once. So? What was it this time, sailor boy? Another windstorm blow

you into Turkey? Get hung up again in the Greek Islands on a mission from God?

Jonah: Joan, don't talk like that. I have something very important to tell you.

Joan: Oh! The great father speaks! Jonah, who leaves his wife and kids for six days with no explanation then comes back and tells me he has something very important to tell me! Did you ever consider that maybe I have something important to tell you? Like the fact that little Rebecca had to play in the championship in the Saturday Soccer League with no daddy present? She scored the winning goal, Jonah! She was the hero of the game then she turned to the stands to look for her daddy's face and what did she find? Her Aunt Zelda, the most irritating woman who God ever made, who's so big that her lawn chair gets up with her when she stands to cheer, shouting "Home run! Home run! My Becky made a home run!" Can you imagine this sight, Jonah?

Jonah: Joan, there's an explanation. I had no control. Really.

Joan: And little Isaac. You want to go in and tell him why his daddy hasn't been to his last three violin recitals?

Jonah: That was this weekend?

Joan: I reminded you a dozen times, Jonah. He played the Mozart Fisherman's Concerto, just for you. And where was daddy? "Don't worry, Isaac," I told him. "By the time you get up to play, Daddy will be here." They announce his name and the little sucker plays his heart out.. for who? Aunt Zelda and me. We were the entire front row, Jonah. The lady takes up three chairs and cries every time she hears a violin. The boy's getting a complex. He thinks his violin hurts people. Zelda cries and his daddy runs away.

Jonah: I can explain. Please, just give me a minute. Is there any coffee on?

Joan: Coffee. Coffee? Your daughter is about to enter therapy, your son keeps trying to smash his new violin and you want coffee? How nice of you to care so much, Jonah. Your compassion breaks my heart.

Jonah: Joan, you're not going to believe what I'm about to tell you.

Joan: So what else is new?

Jonah: Sit down, honey. This won't be easy.

Joan: (*sitting*) Nothing is easy with you, Jonah.

Jonah: Okay. Here goes. I was swallowed by a huge fish.

(*A long "take" as this ridiculous bit of information sinks in then ...*)

Joan: (*bursts out in an explosion of laughter*)

Jonah: Joan, I'm serious! (*more laughter*) Joan! (*more laughter*) Joan, I don't think you're taking me seriously! (*she stops suddenly, looks at him "seriously" then again explodes in an avalanche of laughter*) (*to himself, walking away*) What am I going to do?

Joan: (*finally able to control herself a bit*) Carp? Catfish? What? Don't tell me ... it's one of those piranhas that people buy for pets then flush down the toilet ... they end up in the city sewer system and grow into garbage eating monsters? No! The Loch Ness Goldfish, right? Moby Dick saw you out surfing at Malibu and mistook for you a Taco Bell?

Jonah: A fish ate me, Joan.

Joan: This is getting hard to swallow, Jonah.

Jonah: It was God.

Joan: God? God is a fish?

Jonah: God caused the fish to swallow me.

Joan: Sweetheart, don't you think it's just a bit cheap to blame God every time you forget to come home for the weekend?

Jonah: He wanted me to go preach in Nineveh but I said, "No." I took a cruise ship to Tarshish to escape.

Joan: Tarshish? At the height of the cruise season? You really are crazy.

Jonah: Then there was this storm, Joan. It was awful.

Joan: I saw it on CNN.

Jonah: Huge waves! We were fighting for our lives! They ship was turned and tossed and ...

Joan: Don't tell me. They had to cancel the shuffleboard tournament.

Jonah: I knew I 'd caused it, Joan. God was angry with me.



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