

NOT FISHING*

A Vignettes from DREAMS FROM HOGBACK BRIDGE – TEEN VERSION

By Claudia Haas

Claudiahaas12@gmail.com

*Crappies – a mild-tasting fish pronounced “Kra-peeZ”

(MELISANDE is just outside the bridge – it looks like she’s fishing. Tom runs by. He sees MELISANDE and runs backwards to speak to her. He continues to run in place.)

TOM

You won’t catch anything this late in the day.

MELISANDE

It’s fine for my needs.

TOM

I’m telling you nothing’s down there. No bluegills, no bass, no crappies.

MELISANDE

Thanks for the unasked-for advice. Appreciated.

TOM

Just hate to see you wasting your time.

MELISANDE

Sitting by a covered bridge in late summer is never a waste of time.

TOM

You don’t want to waste your bait.

MELISANDE

I waste nothing. Isn’t that true, O’Leary?

(FISHING rod shakes. TOM stops running in place.)

TOM

You named your worm?

MELISANDE

No worms.

TOM

Leeches?

MELISANDE

No leeches.

TOM

How do you expect to catch a fish?

MELISANDE

Not fishing.

TOM

You're doing a good imitation of it – sitting here with a fishing rod and a bucket.

MELISANDE

You're not seeing the whole picture.

(Fishing rod shakes.)

Whoa, O'Leary, whoa! Success?

(She briefly lifts the rod and looks.)

That's all right. Keep trying.

(She leans over to listen.)

Really? Good. Yes. I can be patient.

TOM

Some people fish to relax. They don't really expect or even want to catch anything. They just want to get away.

MELISANDE

Not fishing.

TOM

There's this saying – maybe you know it – if it looks like a duck and quacks like a duck – it's probably a duck.

MELISANDE

I'm not a duck.

TOM

That's not what I meant –

MELISANDE

- You can go now. Do whatever it was you were doing.

TOM

I was just out for my run.

MELISANDE

Then run. Quickly. Before I unleash O'Leary on you.

TOM

Your worm?

MELISANDE

Think bigger. Think "snake." "Poison." "Death." That sort of thing.

TOM

Got it. I'm out of here.

(TOM starts to run off. And then runs backwards back.)

Please tell me what you're doing. I know I'm the obnoxious curious cat. I can't change my nature.

MELISANDE

Curiosity killed the cat.

TOM

But satisfaction brought it back.

MELISANDE

There is no way I am going to share my deepest, most private, innermost secret with a stranger.

TOM

"Hi!, I'm Tom. Can we be friends?"

MELISANDE

No. Friends share things. Friends have things in common. Friends know things - like each other's last name.

TOM

Tom Murphy. I think we have a lot in common. I'm Irish and ... your devil worm-snake is Irish.

MELISANDE

It's not *exactly* a snake.

TOM

Fine. It's a a I give up. What is it?

MELISANDE

Let's just say there's more here than heaven and earth that are dreamt of in your little world.

TOM

Expand my world.

MELISANDE

It's a "malarkey detector" and it will probably go off any minute now.

TOM

No malarkey here. Maybe a bit of the blarney.

MELISANDE

If you're aiming to charm me, it won't work.

TOM

Lepre...*can*!

MELISANDE

Lepre...*can*?! (Beat.) You should leave. I could start screaming at any moment and what would people think? That a creepy guy wouldn't leave a poor, innocent, young woman alone.

TOM

Everyone in town knows me. In fact, everyone in Iowa knows everyone. I'm harmless. You may be the interloper. The people of Iowa may find it strange that a woman without a fishing license is sitting by a covered bridge pretending not to fish.

MELISANDE

I'm not fishing! I'm ... wishing.

TOM

What are you wishing for?

MELISANDE

That you would leave.

TOM

I walked into that one. I promise I'll leave. Just tell me one fact about yourself. Seriously... Miss Ms...

MELISANDE

Melisande.

TOM

Melisande! That's a pretty name. Did you pick it out yourself?

MELISANDE

I have parents.

TOM

It's just sometimes people decide their given name doesn't suit them and you know they sort of decide –

MELISANDE

My parents named me. There's your fact. Bye.

(TOM hesitates then runs off. MELISANDE again leans into the water.)

O'Leary? How's it going? It's cracking? Already? Splendid! Yes, I'll be patient.

(From the other side of the bridge, TOM peers over. MELISANDE is all calm when suddenly the fishing pole starts shaking. MELISANDE has a hard time controlling it. At times it looks as if she may fall over into the water. It gets so bad that TOM can't stand it anymore and goes to help. MELISANDE is appalled.)

STOP! Don't help me!

TOM

I can't let you get dragged under the water!

MELISANDE

The water's six inches deep! I'll live! Don't touch the pole! You'll ruin the magic!

TOM

I can't let you drown! I'm from Iowa! We don't watch people drown!

(MELISANDE drops the pole.)

I'm sorry. I don't know what came over me. I just had a vision – what am I saying? I never have visions – but there you were face down in the water and I just couldn't let that happen.

(MELISANDE checks her pole.)

MELISANDE

Nooo! He's gone. O'Leary ran away – the little sneak. Never trust a leprechaun. I've been told that my entire life but do I listen? No. He said he was different. He said he could make my wish come true. He said -

TOM

Leprechaun?

MELISANDE

And he wasn't my first leprechaun. I should have known better.

TOM

You're saying you had a leprechaun attached to the fishing pole.

MELISANDE

Yes. And he was helping me make my wish come true. But only O'Leary could get it.

TOM

You believe in leprechauns?

MELISANDE

It's not a question of belief. It's a fact of life.

TOM

So you were hoping for a pot of gold or something?

MELISANDE

Oh no. Something much better.

TOM

I'd wish for a pot of gold. That would make my life easier. Wait! I can't believe I'm buying into this leprechaun stuff. First: leprechauns are not real and second: people can't catch them.

MELISANDE

I have a gift.

TOM

So even if I allow that you are the "leprechaun whisperer," why wouldn't you want the pot of gold? You'd never have to work for a living.

MELISANDE

But would it make me happier? I wished for something to make me happy.

TOM

I'm afraid to ask.

MELISANDE

A unicorn. A baby unicorn that I could raise to bring goodness into the world. She would create rainbow arches that would melt into the air bringing health and well-being to all. I thought about wishing for a dragon but I don't know about fire. It's tricky.

TOM

A pot of gold would come in handy when I finance my college education.

MELISANDE

- That's considered ill-gotten gains in my world.

TOM

And what world is that?

MELISANDE

It's a world that's "touched." Anyway, not getting touched today. Time to get my pole and leave.

TOM

Don't.

MELISANDE

What?

TOM

Leave.

MELISANDE

Why not?

TOM

Knock. Knock.

MELISANDE

Really?

TOM

Knock knock.

MELISANDE

I don't want to know who's there.

TOM

But Clover wants to talk to you.

TOM (cont'd)

(Silence.)

C'mon. Clover.

MELISANDE
Who the heck is Clover?

TOM
Clover here and I'll tell you.

(Beat.)

MELISANDE
(All right. He's starting to win her over.)
I'm Dublin over with laughter.

TOM
I have more.

MELISANDE
That's all right/

TOM
/What do you get when two leprechauns have a conversation? (Beat.) A lot of small talk!

MELISANDE
Are you done?

TOM
What do you call an Irish spider? Paddy long legs! When is an Irish potato not an Irish potato?
When it's a French fry. What do you call/

MELISANDE
Uncle! I give! I give! Please no more.

TOM
I have a hundred of them. My grandpa made me memorize 100 Irish jokes and we would tell
them over and over on St. Patrick's Day. But he never told me a leprechaun was real.

MELISANDE
Aren't you lucky you met me then? So I could set you straight. (Beat.) I have to go.

TOM
Watch out! There's an egg under your foot. Wouldn't want to step on it.

MELISANDE
It's cracked. Poor thing.

(SHE examines it.)

MELISANDE (cont'd)

No ... she's ... she's

TOM

Is that what I think it is? I didn't know they came in eggs.

MELISANDE

Unicorns come to us in a myriad of ways. I'd better get it home and nurse it. It's so tiny. O' Leary came through with my wish after all. (Beat.) And thanks Tom Murphy. It's been ...

TOM

Yes....

MELISANDE

Better than I expected...

TOM

Yes... Better than I hoped... who am I kidding? I didn't hope... I just ... I think ...I'd like...

MELISANDE

To know me?

TOM

Yes.

MELISANDE

Autumn is coming and I go with the wind.

TOM

I may ... care about you.

MELISANDE

I can't stay.

TOM

I can follow.

MELISANDE

None of this may be real.

TOM

I'm a dreamer.

(They add some grass to the fishing bucket with grasses and carefully lay the egg into it. They exit as the lights dim.)

END OF PLAY