

The Fisherman and the Playwright
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CAST:

Fisher Sam (m); happiest fisherman ever

Willa (f); happiest playwright ever

Jeeves (m or f); a magical fish

PLACE: A very modest home with a river/creek nearby

TIME: Timeless

The Fisherman and the Playwright

AT RISE we see the dining room of a modest home. Just a table and two chairs. You may decorate with a potted plant or a plate – nothing too fancy. There are some pencils and yellow-lined writing tablets. Outside the home area, is a small body of water (creek, river, maybe a lake or pond) for fishing. WILLA is seated and writing away. SAM enters with a fishing pole or a net – or a lasso!

SAM

How beautiful our life is!

WILLA

We dwell in the land of happily ever after!

SAM

And always will. How wonderful it is that you are already writing!

WILLA

How grand it is that you are going fishing!

SAM

It's a glorious life!

WILLA

Amazing!

SAM

Stupendous! I love the pencil dust all over your hands!

WILLA

And I love the smell of fish oozing from your fingers!

SAM

We are the happiest of couples!

WILLA

Fish well, Sam!

SAM

Write well, Willa!

(And with hugs and angel kisses or some such affection, SAM exits to go outside and fish.)

WILLA

It was It was It was a dark and stormy night!

(WILLA furiously writes as the action switches over to SAM who begins to fish (by the edge of the stage? Into a blue blanket? A box?).

SAM

Come on little fishy, come to Sam. Come to Sam. A fish a day keeps the doctor away. A fish in time saves nine. Too many cooks spoil the fish. A fish is worth a thousand words. Never look a gift fish in the mouth ... The early bird catches the fish.... Catches the fish ... catches the –

JEEVES

Blimey!

(And JEEVES is caught.)

That's not very nice.

SAM

Wow! Big fish!

JEEVES

And I'm a nice fish. A well-brought up fish! A magical fish!

SAM

So ... you pull rabbits out of hats?

JEEVES

Really! Look at me. Let's have a chin-wag, shall we? How many fish talk to you? Clearly, I am enchanted!

SAM

That's nice.

JEEVES

It's exceedingly nice! Just let me go and I'll grant you a wish! Do you want to live in Buckingham Palace? Tea and scones for life?

SAM

Not into tea and scones. Like fish and chips.

JEEVES

Truly – fish and chips is not a wish that sits well with me. I would feel treasonous towards my fellow fish.

SAM

I don't want anything, I am happy. Deliriously happy.

JEEVES

You're off your trolley, dear fellow! Nobody is deliriously happy. It goes against the grain of being human. You must want something.

SAM

But I am happy. I mean - look at you! How large you are! You are dinner for a month!

JEEVES

I'm a fatty, oily, stringy, tough – not-very-tasty-fish. Dear chap: I'm magical! A wish granter, a make-a-your-dreams-come-true – I can give you your hearts desire. Wish something!

SAM

My wish came true – I caught you for dinner!

JEEVES

Surely you understand that that's the one wish I'm not interested in granting. Think! Gold! A castle! A wardrobe designed by Alexander McQueen – he fits the royals, you know – he could do wonders for you. You don't dress very well.

SAM

A little butter, a little wine, some herbs – maybe some lemon – I can make you tasty.

JEEVES

I can give you food for a year! Steak! Chicken! Turkey! Anything but fish! Give me a chance! I bet you I can make you happier than you are now!

SAM

So, you're a betting fish....

JEEVES

And I'm betting my life. Hey – what do you know dear fellow? That's a wedding ring! You have a wife!

SAM

The smartest, sweetest, prettiest woman that ever graced this earth. She's a playwright and she tells stories of unimaginable –

JEEVES

- wait! She's a playwright?

SAM

Yes, and her stories tell –

JEEVES

Bob's your uncle! Maybe *you* don't have a wish but I'm betting *she* does. All playwrights do. How many productions has she had?

SAM

None. Yet.

JEEVES

She needs a production. What's a playwright without a production? Really, in the artsy-fish-circles I move around in, I can assure you that a play is never finished until it has an audience. I can make that happen.

SAM

I don't think she cares.

JEEVES

Oh, she cares! She's sitting at home now thinking, if only Sam could catch a magical fish that would give me a production – then all of my dreams would come true.

SAM

Do you think?

JEEVES

Guaranteed.

SAM

Let's find out.

(JEEVES jumps up.)

SAM (cont'd)

Whoa! A two-legged fish.

JEEVES

Told you I was magical!

(And they enter the home where WILLA is still working away.)

SAM

Willa!

WILLA

Sam! Home so early! Look what I had the character do here – she changes into a pumpkin! Isn't that clever? Whoa! Look who's coming for dinner! A walking fish!

JEEVES

Indeed! A walking-talking, magical fish, dear Willa. Here to grant you your heart's desire.

WILLA

How sweet! But my heart has all its desires.

JEEVES

I can turn you into a playwright.

WILLA

But I'm already a playwright. I write plays. Therefore: I am a playwright.

JEEVES

But only a ten percent playwright lovely lady. You need readings, development, residencies, productions, awards, publication, royalties and of course the delicious Pulitzer Prize!

WILLA

I don't know what that is.

JEEVES

That's where I come in. I'm your magic-maker – your agent! And I don't even want a percentage of your earnings!

WILLA

I don't know –

JEEVES

I'm pleading for my life – my essence – my being! I can bring you a leg of mutton, four-and-twenty blackbirds baked in a pie!

WILLA

No, thank-you. I do like fish and chips though.

JEEVES

We need to get off the fish wagon. It unnerves me.

WILLA

But I like fish. That's why I married a fisherman.

JEEVES

Really! Think of how selfish you are! I'm trying to hand you your heart's desire and you don't want anything! Let me turn you into a proper playwright!

WILLA

I am proper. I am a playwright. Ergo – I already am a proper playwright!

JEEVES

All right then – you doubt my credentials. I should show you my resume. I have helped playwrights for hundreds of years and I can help you. Do the lines, “To be or not to be?” have any meaning?

WILLA

That’s Shakespeare! Surely you do not want to turn me into a plagiarizer?

JEEVES

Ha! Shakespeare was the plagiarizer! I wrote those lines. And many, many more. In his early days, Will was having a hard time of it – he had to send money back to Stratford - he had those family responsibilities and he had been sitting in his little flat for days with nary a word coming forth. Hungry and desolate, he went fishing in the Thames. And the rest is – as they say – history.

SAM

So ... you’re saying Shakespeare was a fisherman?

JEEVES

Apparently everyone is a fisherman if they’re hungry.

SAM

And he caught – you?

JEEVES

I was his lucky break.

WILLA

So Shakespeare didn’t write Shakespeare? Hard to believe.

JEEVES

I have the folios. They haven’t disappeared – I keep them under lock and key under the sea.

WILLA

Then the rumors that didn’t write Shakespeare are true!

JEEVES

True. But of course then they go on to give credit to this nobleman and that nobleman and never is there one word about the fish!

WILLA

That is so sad!

JEEVES

I know! It makes me miserable!

WILLA

I want to cry!

JEEVES

I want to die!

SAM

That can be arranged – still think you'd be tasty.

JEEVES

I want to metaphorically die! I want to actually live! Let me live! Let me grant you a wish – let me turn you into a true playwright – better than Shakespeare! Better than Wilkerson!

WILLA

Who?

JEEVES

Wilkerson – never mind – he never did go anywhere, did he? I am done pleading my case. If it were done when 'tis done, then t'were well it were done quickly... just realize that your dinner will be none other than the inspiration for Ariel in *The Tempest*. Feast on that!

WILLA

I love The Tempest!

JEEVES

Ariel was based on me! Ariel was supposed to be a magical fish - not the mundane tree sprite that evolved. A player convinced old Willy-boy that the Elizabethans would never believe in a magical fish. I was gobsmacked! Not accept a magical fish? After they accepted all the other nonsense Will set before them!

WILLA

You are free to go.

JEEVES

What?

SAM

Say, what?

WILLA
He's Ariel! I'm Ariel!

SAM
You're Willa! He's a fish!

WILLA
Remember when you rescued me from the tree, Sam?

SAM
Of course, but –

WILLA
You saved me from the witch who imprisoned me there. It's only fitting that we save him.

SAM
But ... dinner?

JEEVES
“Boil, boil, toil and trouble, fire burn and cauldron bubble.”

(JEEVES turns around.)

Look outside!

(And they do.)

WILLA
Why, it's a cauldron!

JEEVES
With a never-ending supply of proper suppers for as long as you both shall live.

SAM
But – I need to fish!

JEEVES
And so you shall. But from this day on – it's catch and release, dear chap – catch and release.

SAM
I don't think I'm getting the best deal here.

JEEVES

“If this fish has offended, think on this and all is mended – that you have but slumbered here while my vision did appear.....”

(WILLA and SAM fall asleep.)

“And this weak and idle theme no more yielding than a dream.”

(WILLA and SAM may snore. JEEVES starts to tiptoe or row himself out.)

JEEVES

“Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily – life is but a dream.” You didn’t think I’d let them eat me, did you?

(JEEVES exit as SAM and WILLA awaken.)

WILLA

Sam! I have had a most rare vision!

SAM

As have I! I thought I caught –

WILLA

I thought I saw –

SAM

You must make a play of it, dear Willa. We will write it together and it shall be called -

WILLA

Willa’s and Sam’s Dream!

SAM

How beautiful our life is!

WILLA

We dwell in the land of happily ever after.

SAM

And always will.

(They embrace as the lights fade to black.)