

To Catch a Fish

A Short Play

by

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CAST: JERRY, 13  
ALAN, 12  
JO, mother  
MAUREEN, security guard  
VAN, security guard

TIME: 1974

PLACE: Zayres department store, Brookpark, Ohio

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*Typical department store sounds are heard throughout. The security room is plain, a desk, chairs, a table, anti-shoplifting posters, a phone. At the desk sit ALAN, 12, and his older brother, JERRY, 13. They were caught stealing fishing gear, sinkers, hooks, bobbers by shoving them down their pants. The fishing gear sits on the table in front of them. They are frightened, pensive, and occasionally shoot a quick glance at their mother, JO, who sits at the table with them looking away with profound disgust and anger.*

*JERRY, who is nearest JO, looks at her for several moments in an ill-fated attempt to make eye-contact.*

JERRY

Mom?

*JO quickly turns and slaps JERRY full force on the face. The blow sends him reeling to the ground. ALAN attempts to help.*

JO

Don't you even...

*ALAN freezes. JERRY lies on the ground, touching his face, now turning bright crimson red. His eyes start to well up with tears.*

*VAN, the store security cop, enters, followed by MAUREEN, the store manager.*

VAN

Alright guys..., hey what happened here?

PAUSE

MAUREEN

(helping JERRY)

Are you okay?

JO

He's fine.

JERRY

I'm okay.

VAN

Your face is all red.

JO

He's fine.

MAUREEN

What were you doing on the ground?

JO

I told you he's fine. How many times do I got to tell you?

JERRY

I'm okay. I just fell out of the chair.

ALAN

Yeah. He fell out.

JO

So what's going to happen?

VAN

Well, it was a pretty serious thing your boys did.

JO

I know that.

VAN

A pretty serious thing. You boys understand that.

JERRY / ALAN

Yes.

VAN

Stealing is against the law. It's a crime. Do you guys know what a crime is?

JO

Of course they know what a crime is. Right? I said right!

*JERRY and ALAN nod.*

JO (CONT'D)

I can't hear you.

JERRY / ALAN

Yeah.

VAN

Why were you stealing this fishing equipment?

*JERRY and ALAN look to see who is going to answer.*

VAN (CONT'D)

It's okay to tell us.

MAUREEN

We need to know for the report.

JO

There's going to be a goddamn report?

MAUREEN

Yes, it's our policy.

JO

Goddamn it! And it's going to have my name in it! Goddamn it. See what you kids did! Goddamn it.

VAN

So why were you stealing?

*JERRY and ALAN look at each other.*

JO

Go ahead, answer him, goddamn it.

MAUREEN

Mrs. Downing, there's no need to swear.

JO

You're telling me how to talk to my kids.

MAUREEN

No.

JO

Good. Now answer him. Why were you stealing. Answer!

ALAN

Because we wanted to go fishing.

JERRY

Yeah.

ALAN

With the Gullasi's in the valley.

JERRY

We didn't have any money.

JO

The Gullasi's! Goddamn it. Was that Gary Werner involved? Huh? Did he tell you to steal? Huh! Because you can be sure as shit I didn't tell you to steal. I did not tell them steal. They didn't learn that from me. It's from that goddamn Gary Werner. That kid is no fucking good.

VAN

Mrs. Downing, please.

JO

I did not teach them to steal.

VAN

I know, I know.

JERRY

We just wanted to go fishing. And we needed the lures and sinkers.

ALAN

We didn't steal a lot.

JO

That's not the goddamn point, you idiot!

VAN

What your mother is saying guys is that even stealing something small, like even a pack of gum is against the law. You could be thrown in jail for something like this.

JO

Jail! Aw, Jesus fucking Christ.

JERRY  
Are we going to go to jail?

ALAN  
Are we, mom?

JO  
You should!

VAN  
We're not going to send you to jail.

MAUREEN  
But this is still very serious.

JO  
If it were up to me, I'd send you to jail. Shove you in there with all the goddamn niggers and queers. That would teach you.

MAUREEN  
What did you say?

JO  
I didn't mean you.

VAN  
Boys, what we're trying to find out is if anyone put you up to this. You know as a prank or a dare.

MAUREEN  
Yeah, did someone dare you to steal.

JERRY  
No

JO  
You're lying.

JERRY  
Nobody told us to do it!

ALAN  
We wanted to go fishing.

JO  
Who told you to do this!

JERRY  
Nobody!

JO  
Don't give me that crap!

I'm not! JERRY

What about you! JO

I didn't do anything. ALAN

Did your brother tell you to steal. JO

No. ALAN

I didn't. JERRY

Shut up. JO

But I didn't, mom! JERRY

I'm not talking to you. JO

Hold on, Mrs. Downing. Let's all settle down. VAN

Did your brother put you up to this? Answer me! JO

No! ALAN

You're lying. JO

No, I'm not. ALAN

We didn't have any money. JERRY

I'm sorry! ALAN

Yeah, we're sorry. JERRY

JO

Oh, so now you're sorry. Well it's too late for that now, goddammit!

VAN

Hold on, everybody. Just calm down.

JO

Calm down? You're telling me to calm dawn. How would you like it if your kids got caught shoplifting while they were with you? Huh? Getting hauled out in front of everyone. Everyone looking at you like a common criminal!

VAN

I understand, Mrs. Downing

JO

Wait til I get you kids home. Just wait.

JERRY

I'm sorry, mom.

ALAN

I'm sorry, too.

JERRY

We didn't mean to get caught.

ALAN

No.

JO

Well you did. Satisfied?!

MAUREEN

Is that all you boys were planning to take?

JERRY

Yes.

ALAN

We just wanted to go fishing.

MAUREEN

To go fishing.

ALAN

Yeah, in the valley with the Gullasi's.

JO

Well, you can forget that. You're grounded for a year!

JERRY

A year?

JO

That's what I said.

VAN

Just a couple of more questions, okay guys?

JO

How long is this going to take. We've been here over an hour.

VAN

Just a couple of more questions, Mrs. Downing. Now, nobody asked you to steal the lures, right? You just wanted to go fishing and you needed the equipment, right? That's this time, right? So, you guys know the difference between telling the truth and not telling the truth, right. So, I'm going to ask you a question and I want you to tell me the truth. Okay? Now, have you ever stolen anything from this store before?

*JERRY looks away. ALAN looks down.*

JO

Have you?

MAUREEN

It's okay, boys. We just want to know.

*JERRY and ALAN exchange glances.*

JO

Jesus fucking Christ, answer him.

JERRY

A car magazine.

ALAN

A Three Musketeers.

JO

Goddamn it!

MAUREEN

Is that all?

*JERRY and ALAN look down. JO leans over and smacks JERRY on the back of the head.*

**Wonder what happens next?**

For a copy of the full script, email me at:

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Thanks!