

GONE FISHING

(A 40 minute Comedy)

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CHARACTERS

- Tim Raglan: A 21 year old unemployed graduate.
Jackie: Tim's girlfriend.
Actor 2: 1) Robert Raglan, Tim's father. A middle aged City solicitor.
2) A salesman in the aquarium shop.
Actress 2: 1) Kate Raglan. Tim's mother. A housewife.
2) Mrs De Silva. A family friend.
Actress 3: 1) Sharon. A MacDonald's employee.
2) Aquarium shop assistant.
3) Karen. A party guest.

SET/PROPS

An open-plan set where lighting and props convey most of the locations. Stage right there is a table and chairs to denote a kitchen/dining area. Down stage left is a bedroom area, raised slightly to indicate it is on a floor above the kitchen. The bedroom is represented by teenage paraphernalia, plus a door with door frame. Front of stage is kept free for a variety of locations.

An ironing board and breakfast food are needed in the first scene. Drinking glasses and bottles are used during the party scene. A fish tank is needed in some scenes. It may be conveyed by lighting, sound and mime, or be literally present. A hands-free phone is required, but doesn't have to be functional. A duvet, rucksack and electric kettle are required in the final scene.

SCENE ONE

The lights rise on Mr and Mrs Raglan at breakfast. Mr Raglan is sitting at the table reading the Daily Telegraph. He wears a smart jacket and tie, but no trousers. Mrs Raglan is busy sorting out the toast. Tim, wears pyjamas and slouches in his bedroom. The sound of sizzling bacon fades up.

Tim (aside to audience) Parents are so predictable.

Mum We're running low on bread, darling. Will one slice do?

Dad Isn't Tim down yet?

Mum Will one slice do?

Dad What?

Mum Bread, darling.

Tim (aside) It's the same every morning. Mum's forgotten to take a loaf out of the freezer. Dad never has a second slice anyway. But they still have to discuss it.

Dad (shouting upwards) Tim!

Tim (aside) And now they want an audience.

Dad (shouting upwards) What are you doing up there?

Tim (shouts down) Nothing!

Mum Don't shout, Robert.

Dad (to Mum) Did you hear that? (shouts up at Tim) It's 7.45!

Mum (suddenly remembers) Trousers. (rushes over to the ironing board to finish ironing Dad's trousers)

Dad (angry disbelief) Nothing.

Tim (aside) I'm under siege in this household. Always poking their nose into my things. I've had to put a bolt on my door. And a chain. (puts on his dressing gown and starts the journey down to the kitchen) They should treat me with more respect. I've attained the giddy heights of Tourism Studies (Bachelor of Arts) Third Class. What's more, the HSBC has a major financial stake in my future: to wit - a massive student loan.

Dad (shouting up) Come down NOW and have some breakfast!

Tim (Tim startles Dad by his sudden appearance) Morning.

Mum Ah, there you are, darling. (hands Tim a pair of boxer shorts) Clean pants.

Dad Sit down. It's best gammon. That'll pump some energy into you.

Tim Not hungry, Dad.

Mum Of course you're hungry.

Tim (aside) A cooked breakfast is his solution to everything. A nation marches on its stomach, according to Dad.

Dad A nation marches on its stomach, Timothy.

Mum Robert . . .

Dad Up and down the country, families sitting down together, talking to one another . . .

Mum Robert darl . . .

Dad Communicating. Have you any idea how important communication is?

Mum Ro . . .

Dad There's an article on just that point in yesterday's Telegraph. 'Youth delinquency and the decline of the cooked breakfast.'

Mum (thrusts the ironed trousers into his hand) Trousers.

Dad (takes them as if by rights and starts to put them on) Nobody has time for each other any more. Family values. Does that mean nothing to you?

Tim I'm not interested in your politics, Dad.

Dad I'm not talking politics. I'm talking sausages.

Tim (aside) Which is what he always talks, in my opinion. I don't know how Mum puts up with him. She must be on crystal meth, or something.

Mum (to Tim) Cornflakes?

Tim No thanks, Mum.

Mum I could do you a kipper.

Tim Not hungry.

Mum You must eat something.

Tim Why? Why must I eat something? What's the point?

Mum (stuck for an answer) Well, I . . . ?

Dad Don't answer him, Kate.

Mum (anxious) Oh Tim. You mustn't become anorexic.

Dad Don't be ridiculous. That's for girls. (to Tim) There's nothing wrong with you. You're just bone idle. Aren't you? Admit it. Bone idle!

Tim Yes.

Dad What?

Tim I'm bone idle. A no good, feckless scrounger.

Dad (enraged) What?

Tim (aside) If there's one thing parents can't stand, it's being robbed of a good fight. Completely freaks them out.

Dad How can you look me in the eye and tell me you're a feckless scrounger?

Tim I'm a feckless scrounger.

Dad (to Mum) Did you hear that?

Tim (aside) All they can do is repeat themselves.

Dad A feckless scrounger!

Tim (aside) Pathetic, isn't it?

Mum (cajoling) Timothy, darling, you know we only want what's best for you.

Tim (aside) And then Mum comes over all 'social services'.

Mum We were young once, you know. Even your father.

Dad (to Tim) And I suppose you call that a hair cut.

Tim There's nothing wrong with my hair.

Dad Ha. Try telling that to an interview panel.

Mum Timmy, darling. We were wondering about your room.

Tim What about my room?

Mum It's locked.

Tim So?

Mum Why don't you give me the key? I'll pop in and do a little tidy up.

Tim (aside) A little snoop, more like.

Dad Why should your mother clean your room? She's not your skivvy. You do it.

Tim Whatever.

Dad (checks watch) Seven fifty five. Must dash. (hands Tim the paper) I've ringed a few job adverts for you. The least you can do is apply. And while you're at it, take a look at the article on page five. A brilliant young entrepreneur who's just made his first million. And he's only got one leg.

Mum (encouragingly) You see.

Dad One leg. Just think what you could achieve with two.

Tim (aside) Some men say it with flowers. Dad says it with newsprint - ringing items in the Daily Telegraph in red biro. (mock quote) "Narrow-minded bigot, own teeth, no sense of humour, seeks ambitious son, two legs optional, with plans for world domination.

Mum (having fetched Dad's coat) Grey cloud with threat of rain.

Dad (hangs the coat on his arm) Thank you, Kate. (he picks up his brief case) Important hearing this afternoon. Stashcash versus Dosh Duccat and Dubloon. (a quick kiss) Be good.

Mum You too.

Dad As ever.

Mum Coc au vin for dinner.

Dad Any problems leave a message with Angela. (heads towards exit)

Mum Darling.

Dad (he stops) Another kiss?

Mum (handing it to him) Umbrella.

Dad (takes umbrella) Spot on. (exits)

Tim (aside) Cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck. (aside) Off he goes - the big brave rooster to his battery farm in the city. Wouldn't even notice if they lopped off his head. He'd still be running around, clucking on about the Footsie. Well Dad, take it from me, this chicken's going to stay free range. (he flaps around the stage, clucking, watched by his bemused mother)

(Black out)

SCENE TWO

Traffic noises. Jackie jogs across the stage, wearing shorts and a tee shirt, and exits. Tim enters from opposite direction, panting heavily.

Tim What I love best about jogging . . . is the moment it actually stops. (he grinds to a halt) So why do I do it? To get out of the house, I suppose. To prove I'm still alive. (he shouts heavenwards) I'm still alive! (jogs in a circle) If I go round and round long enough, I'll probably transnavigate the globe. I should have reached Calais by now. (looks around then shrugs) No sign of any gorgeous French girls, though.

(puffed out, he sinks to the ground) Peaceful, anyway. Sitting in the park, at one with nature. It's good being unemployed. It's really good. Yes. (pause) Sitting around . . . thinking . . . sitting, more thinking . . . thinking about sitting. A lot of sitting, really. A lot of unpaid sitting. I don't get a penny from the State for sitting in this park. Not even the minimum wage. There's no justice in the world. I mean, Dosh, Duccat and Dubloon reward Dad's buttocks with £260 an hour. £260! That's £130 per buttock. (he lies on his back and flexes his legs)

Jackie (jogs back on stage and observes him) Taking a break?

Tim (rapidly sits up) Eh? (aside) She looks nice. (to Jackie) Just a quick breather.

Jackie Been at it long?

Tim What?

Jackie Jogging.

Tim (leaps to his feet) I'm in training for the marathon.

Jackie (disbelief) Really?

Tim No shit.

Jackie Fancy working up a sweat together?

Tim What?

Jackie (laughs and races off) Race you to the High Road.

Tim Hey! Not so fast! (aside) The things you do for sex. (sets off after her)

Jackie (they both run in slow motion to the theme tune of Chariots of Fire. Jackie is ahead of him all the way) Come on, Usain Bolt. You can do it!

Tim (grimacing in pain) You're going too fast!

Jackie If I go much slower, I'll fall over.

Tim I've got a stone in my Nike.

Jackie (laughing) How many marathons have you run?

Tim Loads. (stumbles)

Jackie (stops, then walks back towards him) You should see your face. Like a turkey on vindaloo.

Tim (anxious) Am I?

Jackie (pulls him to his feet) Lean up against the wall, and breathe deeply.

Tim (catching his breath) I think I've pulled a muscle.

Jackie Let me have a look. (she feels his thigh) Quad or glut?

Tim A bit higher.

Jackie Glut.

Tim (aside) This is the life. (to Jackie, weakly) A bit higher still.

Jackie Does it hurt when I do this?

Tim (he yells in genuine pain) Aah!

Jackie (laughs) Good. That means you're o.k.

Tim (aside) Bitch.

Jackie What's your name?

Tim That hurt.

Jackie Touched a raw nerve, did I?

Tim Makes a change from dislocating my groin.

Jackie I'm Jackie.

Tim (aside) I wonder if she's this rough in bed. I could need major surgery.

Jackie Why aren't you at school?

Tim School?! I'm a graduate. I've got a BA in Tourism Studies.

Jackie Ooh, lah dee dah.

Tim (aside) She's fit though. No arguing with that. (to Jackie) I'm between jobs, right at the moment. But, you know. Feeling positive. What do you do?

Jackie At work, you mean?

Tim (aside) She means there's something else she does? At home. In the bedroom. In a thong.

Jackie I'm a chippy at McDonald's.

Tim A chippy?

Jackie When you've seen one McNugget you've seen them all. (she points into the audience) Oh look. Over there.

Tim What?

Jackie That aquarium shop.

Tim What about it?

Jackie I love tropical fish.

Tim I was thinking more like, a Latte or something.

Jackie I'm sure I was a fish in a previous life

Tim What? (aside) Nutter alert.

Jackie A conger eel. Or a man-eating shark.

Tim (aside) Of course, she might just be a sex addict. Let's not write her off straight away. (Jackie and Tim peer into the audience, as if into a shop window)

Jackie Wow.

Tim What a whopper.

Jackie It's huge. Look at its mouth.

Tim Do they breathe like that?

Jackie No, stupid! They breathe through their gills. Don't you know anything? Look. There. Those red slits where the ears should be.

Tim Oh.

Jackie He's a pompous old twat, isn't he?

Tim Reminds me of someone.

Jackie A big fat man with asthma.

Tim (clicks his fingers) My father.

Jackie (laughs) Really?

Tim When he's giving me one of his lectures. (imitates sound and appearance of a fish mouth opening and closing) Wob, wob, wob . . . you can't sleep all day. . . wob, wob . . . sleeping isn't a career. . . wob, wob . . .

Jackie (laughing) You should do stand-up.

Tim If that fish had a copy of the Daily Telegraph stuck under its fin, he'd be the spitting image. (imitates Dad) Spot on.

Jackie Let's buy him and grill him for tea.

Tim (aside) There's that S&M motiv again. She's probably got naked men handcuffed in her dungeon right now. Well. I'll try anything once. (pause) Jackie?

Jackie (looking into audience) Doesn't it make you feel kind of relaxed? All those fish just floating around. Sort of fluid and primitive and without inhibitions.

Tim (aside) I am so in there. (to Jackie) Let's buy a fish.

Jackie What?

Tim Er. . .

Jackie You're a nutter.

Tim Let's buy a fish.

Jackie Wow!

Tim Come on. (aside) Inspired, Tim. You are red hot.

Jackie I'm not allowed pets at home.

Tim No?

Jackie We can keep it at yours, though. I'll come over and visit.

Tim My room?

Jackie Sure.

Tim Cool. Me, you . . .

Jackie . . . and the fish.

Tim Of course. (blissfully, aside) Lying back in the bath, soft and sleek beneath me, all strength deserting her as she submits to my devastating sexual technique . . .

Jackie (snaps her fingers in his face) Hello.

Tim What?

Jackie (to Tim) Anyone at home?

Tim Oh.

Jackie (grabs his hand) Total nutter. Come on. Let's go in.

Tim (aside) The things you do for sex.

(Jackie leads him off stage. Lights dim and bubbling sounds fade up)

SCENE THREE

A mature salesman is instructing his new assistant as Tim and Jackie enter the shop.

Salesm. Right then. (he points out where everything is) You've got your piranha on your left. You've got your red-tailed sharks on your right. Your clown loaches. Your guppies. Your gold fish. (the assistant attempts to take all this in) You've got your large tanks. You've got your small tanks. You've got all your pumps down there. Books over there. Fish food. Gravel. Plastic weed. Any questions?

Assist. Er . . .

Salesm. Good. Get on with it.

(Jackie and Tim are browsing round the tanks. The Salesman observes them, while the assistant hovers behind him)

Jackie Oh, look at this one. Yuk. Isn't it ugly?

Salesm. A clown loach, miss. Ugly, but full of personality.

Tim (to Jackie) Takes one to know one.

Jackie Oh, look at these.

Salesm. The red-tailed black shark, miss.

Jackie They look evil.

Tim (aside) Fifty nine quid each. They should be evil at that price. (to Jackie) Don't you fancy one of these? They're beautiful.

Salesm. Goldfish. Always a popular choice, sir.

Jackie (mocking) You're not going to buy a goldfish?

Tim What's wrong with goldfish?

Salesm. A big hit with our younger buyers.

Tim (aside) Thanks, mate. (to Jackie) How about this lot over here? They're really exotic.

Salesm. Very attractive, the lion tail. Popular in Japan.

Tim To hell with the cost. I'll take four.

Salesm. That'll be sixty pounds, sir.

Tim Sixty pounds!

Salesm. Or was it the minnows at £3 you were after?

Tim (aside) Bastard. (aloud) No. We'll take a Lion Tail.

Salesm. Just the one, sir?

Tim Just the one.

Assist (timidly repeats) Just the one.

Tim And I'll have it gift wrapped.

Assist. Gift wrapped?

Salesm. Very droll, sir.

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