

Beached
By
Clay Robeson

28 Plays Later

Day 9

February 9, 2018

ACT I

SCENE 1

IN DARKNESS, the sounds of the ocean begin. The lights fade up on a beach setting. A cyclorama for the sky, beach chairs, which have been collapsed and thrown aside litter one side of the stage. Center stage stands ADAM, a father in his early thirties, and Christopher, his seven year old son. They stand on the stage right side of police tape looking at the carcass of a whale, that takes up a good portion of stage left.

CHRISTOPHER: I thought it would smell bad.

ADAM: Oh, give it time. He's only been here a day.

CHRISTOPHER: She.

ADAM: She?

CHRISTOPHER: That's what the news guy said. She.

ADAM: Okay then. She's only been here a day.

CHRISTOPHER: What are they going to do with her?

ADAM: (Shrugging) Probably get some heavy equipment and push her back into the ocean.

CHRISTOPHER: But... she's dead. She can't swim away. They know she's dead, right?

ADAM: Yeah, they do.

CHRISTOPHER: So why push her back into the ocean? Why not bury her?

ADAM: It would have to be an awfully big hole.

CHRISTOPHER: That's true. (pause) Are there whale cemeteries?

ADAM: No, I'm pretty sure there aren't. Whales are usually buried at sea. That's why they'll push her back in, eventually.

CHRISTOPHER: But that's silly. Water doesn't work like dirt.

ADAM: You are correct, Christopher. It does not.

CHRISTOPHER: So she'll just float around forever?

ADAM: No, she becomes food for the other fish, and the birds.

CHRISTOPHER MAKES A FACE.

ADAM: It's the circle of life, kid. We've talked about this before. In nature, when something dies, it becomes food for something else.

CHRISTOPHER: Like worms.

ADAM: Sure, I guess. But sea worms... aren't... usually... yeah, I guess. If she sinks to the bottom.

CHRISTOPHER: Worm food. That's all we are.

ADAM: (surprised) Where did you hear THAT?!

CHRISTOPHER: Grandma.

ADAM: (sighing) I should have guessed.

CHRISTOPHER: She was sad.

ADAM: (sympathetically) Yeah, she's sad a lot.

CHRISTOPHER: Was the whale sad? Is that why she left the water?

ADAM: I don't know. Maybe? Sometimes whales die in the water and wash ashore. Sometimes they come close to shore when they're sick, and get stuck when the tide goes out. And maybe sometimes they just leave the water when they're sad.

CHRISTOPHER: I hope she wasn't sad.

ADAM: Me too, kid. Me too.

CHRISTOPHER: What would a whale even have to be sad about?

ADAM VERY VISIBLY WEIGHS SEVERAL ANSWERS TO
THIS QUESTION.

CHRISTOPHER: Probably pollution. Pollution is a big problem in the ocean. There is a floating mass of garbage the size of TEXAS in the ocean, daddy. Did you know that?

ADAM: I did. But I didn't know YOU did.

CHRISTOPHER: We are studying recycling and the environment, and how we should take care of the planet.

ADAM: Wow! That's great!

CHRISTOPHER: She could have been sad about global warming.

ADAM: Also a possibility.

CHRISTOPHER: Scott says his dad says global warming isn't real. But my bedroom was super hot last night. I slept on top of my blankets after you tucked me in.

ADAM: I can turn down the thermostat.

CHRISTOPHER: It's okay. (pause) Hopefully she wasn't sad at all.

ADAM: She could be an old whale. Maybe it was her time.

CHRISTOPHER: Can whales have aneurysms?

ADAM LOOKS HORRIFIED.

CHRISTOPHER: They have brains, like us, right?

ADAM: (cautiously) They do.

CHRISTOPHER: And they have blood, right?

ADAM: They do...

CHRISTOPHER: So a blood vessel in her brain could have--

ADAM: Yep. Yep. It's possible.

CHRISTOPHER: I hope she wasn't sad.

ADAM: Me too.

CHRISTOPHER: (looking out towards the ocean) But I bet her family is sad.

ADAM: They say that whales mourn just like we do when one of their family dies.

CHRISTOPHER: That's good.

ADAM: How so?

CHRISTOPHER: Scrappy never cared when Bucktooth died.

ADAM: Hamsters aren't quite as smart as whales.

CHRISTOPHER: Yeah...

ADAM: Yeah.

CHRISTOPHER: Do you think...

ADAM: What?

CHRISTOPHER: Do you think... maybe...

ADAM: What's up, buddy? You can ask me anything.

CHRISTOPHER: Could we get some flowers and stop by the cemetery on the way home?

ADAM PULLS CHRISTOPHER IN TO HIS SIDE, AND
THEY BEGIN TO EXIT RIGHT.

ADAM: Of course we can.

CHRISTOPHER: Thanks, daddy.

ADAM: I love you, Christopher.

CHRISTOPHER: I love you, too.