

# The Disappointing Son

## Setting.

A simple kitchen, with details, some realistic, some surreal. Action takes place in and around the kitchen table.

## Characters.

SON. Ages from 10 to 15 during the play. Naïve, but not stupid.

DAD. Middle-aged.

MOM. Looks older than she is.

*(The play opens. Dad is counting several large stacks of bills.)*

SON. Wow. Dad, where did you get all that money?

DAD. Oh, you know, a little saving here, a little mercenary work there... it adds up.

SON. What does it add up *to*?

DAD. A new, prettier mommy for you and me.

SON. Huh?!

DAD. Just kidding! I'm sure I'll blow this money at the cockfighting ring by the end of the week.

SON. But you have lots more saved up so I can go to Harvard, or Georgetown, or Kansas State, right?

DAD. *(looks guilty)* Uh, yes... of course I do... *(changing subject)* It's remarkable how many kids go to work at a young age these days.

SON. Huh

DAD. I know several of my colleagues who already have children in the mines.

SON. Wow, do they meet monsters?

DAD. Monsters! What a silly boy you are. Those young chaps die long before they reach the monsters.

SON. Darn.

DAD. If you really want to see a monster, know what you can do?

SON. *(excited)* What??

DAD. You can try waking up next to your mother every morning for 15 years. It's like medusa spawned with a ball of kelp and deposited the afterbirth at my bedside.

SON. Oh.

DAD. Don't worry, you'll understand our relationship someday, Son.

SON. I think I reached that point, Dad, when I watched mom burn all your socks, one by one, after painting little frowny faces on them.

DAD. That was just for show.

SON. So your marriage is just an act? A show?

DAD. No! Your mother and I would never do that to you.

SON. *(relieved)* Really?

DAD. Of course - we never do anything for your benefit.

SON. Was Mom ever beautiful, Dad?

DAD. Yes she was, son, until I sobered up. Who knew a Mexican marriage license was so tricky to escape? *(He looks offstage.)* Here comes your mother. Pretend we were talking about something else.

SON. Ok... uh, gee, Dad, thanks for talking me out of smoking! What an awful habit. What was I thinking.

*(Mom has entered during this line, visibly smoking a cigarette)*

DAD. *(whispering)* No! No! Now you've screwed us. Red Alert, Captain Witless! *(to Mom)* Hah! That son of ours, what a joker.

MOM. It's alright, go ahead and judge me. *(she takes a long drag)* I learned to stop caring what your father thought, it won't be that hard with you

SON. Mom! When did you start smoking?

MOM. As soon as I figured out that it would help you and your father die faster, dear.

DAD. Your mom's great, son. She's always thinking about our welfare.

SON. Do I get to join the make-a-wish-foundation?

DAD. What could you want besides a loving home and full childhood?

SON. Well... I guess that was my point, Dad.

DAD. *(taken aback)* Oh. *(For revenge)* Remember when your cherished baby blankie "disappeared"?

SON. Yeah...

DAD. That's because I put it in the food processor in a drunken stupor. Yes, you and that blanket were inseparable until I made it into a milkshake, which I later... deposited on our neighbor's porch.

SON. But the neighbor's house burned down 4 years ago. Wait, that's right when I lost my blankie.

MOM. Shh... we're still not sure the Arson Unit didn't bug the house.

DAD. Oh... right. Mum's the word!

SON. At least I still have my tiddlywinky doll! It laughs and jiggles, see! *(He turns the doll on, and it vibrates.)*

MOM. Awww. *(She takes the doll from him and puts her cigarette out on its face. It stops vibrating. She then hands it back.)*

SON. Tiddlywinky!

MOM. Where did you get that filthy heathen idol, anyhow?

DAD. It was my mistake. He got an A on a test, and I felt that I should reward him. It was a moment of weakness, it won't happen again.

MOM. An A, huh?

SON. Yeah. Here it is! The teacher even drew a smiley face.

MOM. Oh she did, did she? Let me take that.

SON. Are you gonna put it on the fridge, next to daddy's bail bond?

DAD. Now *that* deserves a smiley face.

MOM. No, no, I have a better place for it. *(She lights the cooking range.)* Burn, you smiling little bastard, burn.

SON. But... but...

MOM. Look at his little grin crinkle up as he dies his painful death.

SON. My A!

MOM. I guess it's an A+ now.

SON. Can I have the ashes, at least?

MOM. *(hands him the ashes)* Here. Put *that* on your fridge and smoke it.

SON. Maybe I will start smoking. *(gathers up ashes)* I'm going to put these in the urn that has Mr. Kitten's remains.

DAD. *(laughs)* That's not Mr. Kitten. That's a bunch of eggplants I burned for tax purposes.

SON. What? Where's Mr. Kitten?

DAD. In cat hell. He ate my prize rooster.

SON. Did you kill him?

DAD. Sure I did.

SON. Why?

DAD. So you would build character when I told you about it in a shocking scene, years later.  
Congratulations... you are now a man.

SON. But I'm only 10.

DAD. Whining already? Try not to be such a wimp, girlie man.

SON. Yes sir. I'll try to be more manly. *(He makes an attempt.)* So, woman, any meat for dinner?

MOM. We've got some Mr. Kitten pie left over in the fridge.

DAD. *(uncontrollably laughing)* Oh my dirty little ferret, I love it when you're sadistic.

MOM. There's more where that came from, if you can ditch the Mr. Whiny here.

DAD. Of course. *(thinks quickly)* Son, I believe it's time for you to go to your electroshock therapy.

SON. Awww, but Dad, I don't wanna *(twitches)* I don't wanna *(twitches)* I don't wanna go to my electroshock therapy.

DAD. Nonsense. It builds character.

SON. I do feel more prepared for the painful things in life... and life is pretty painful around here.

DAD. You should get better at wildly convulsing and flailing.

SON. Even if I hit people?

DAD. That's how you'll meet the girl of your dreams!

SON. How did you and Mom meet?

DAD. Well, that's a sad story. I was young, carefree, and had my whole life ahead of me. So, of course, I was playing the field. *Your mom got pregnant... and, well, when it became clear that there weren't any buyers for you, we bit the bullet and got married.*

SON. Wow, you changed your whole life for Mom? That sounds really hard.

DAD. Nah, I was drunk. Still am, really. So it's not too bad. I'd compare it too... being run over by a luxury cruise ship while hornet larvae simultaneously devour your brain.

SON. Am I the ship, or the hornets?

DAD. You're a little of everything, kid.

*(Lights down)*

A BOOMING VOICE. Five years later!

*(Lights up. Only a few things have changed – the positions of a few items, the color of the mother's wig, the son's hat. Dad and Son are now smoking as well.)*

SON. Man, I can't wait for dessert.

MOM. I guess laying all that concrete for our gazebo makes you hungry.

SON. Sure does.

MOM. You're so nice, to suffer for your mother's whims.

*(Suddenly, Dad slams his dinner plate aside)*

DAD. Let the Ritual of Dessert begin!

*(Mom sets out the pudding dishes. They gather around the table, holding hands.)*

DAD. Sing the carol of thanksgiving, son.

SON. *(singing to the tune of "Deck the Halls")*

Deck the Halls with Gasoline,  
Light a match and watch it gleam,  
See your school burn down in ashes  
Aren't you glad you played with matches?

DAD. That's enough. Sugarhighs, will you bless the pudding?

MOM. In the name of Hulk Hogan, The Rock, and the spirit Stone Cold Steve Austin, I pepper this pudding. *(She sprinkles some pepper on each pudding)*

DAD. Amen! Dig in, you filthy swine!

*(They all eat ravenously, smoking between bites. Suddenly, the son starts choking, and he spits out his pudding)*

DAD. No, no! Eat up son!

MOM. Yes, all that healthy vitamin C.

SON. *(between gagging)* Vitamin C makes you choke?

MOM. It does when the C stands for Cyanide!

SON. You poisoned my pudding? What in the name of macho man randy savage is going on here?

DAD. I can explain. If you'll just give me time to gather a rag and some chloroform, I can explain everything.

SON. No! I'm not spending another fortnight in the basement. This poisoned pudding is it. This family is too stupid to live in.

DAD. It was just a little joke, son. Totally harmless. Well, except for you dying.

SON. My death is a joke to you!

DAD. Your Mom and I had a bet to see which of us could off you first. Looks like my little sugarbum here almost won!

MOM. Darn it.

SON. *(suddenly calm)* ... Yes. May I be excused. I have some homework to do.

DAD. Sure.

SON. I need the key to your gun rack.

DAD. Why?

SON. Uh, I left my homework in it.

DAD. Dumb kid. Here ya go. *(He tosses him the keys.)*

SON. Thanks! *(He exits quickly.)*

MOM. Do you think we did the right thing?

DAD. Yes, my little parsnip. But it was a tremendously good thing that we got drunk before we did.

MOM. Maybe it's the Mezcal talking, but have you grown a foot taller and started to look like a Caucasian Antonio Banderas?

DAD. You noticed. I wanted to surprise you.

MOM. Come here, my great white Zorro.

*(They begin to canoodle.)*

DAD. Careful! You don't want to aggravate my hemorrhoids!

*(Canoodling continues. Son re-enters, carrying a shotgun.)*

DAD. By the spirit of stone cold Steve Austin, what are you doing?

SON. I'm becoming a man, like you always wanted me to be, Dad!

DAD. No! That's not true! I didn't want anything for you. I was just faking to get you to go away and stop bothering me.

SON. Well you had me fooled! And Mr. Kittens, too.

DAD. Mr. Kittens is here?

SON. Yeah, *(cocks shotgun)* remember what he did to your rooster? What til you see what he does with your other co- *(He is struck from behind).*

MOM. *(holding a big stick)* Got him!

DAD. Oh no! You've become a horrible stick monster!

*(Dad takes stick, strikes mom with it.)*

DAD. I feel positively emancipated. To the broom closet!

*(He picks up shotgun, cocks it, and leaves. Son groggily awakes.)*

SON. Where... what... Mr. Kittens...

*(Dad enters, his arm around a donkey. He is trying to sneak past the son.)*

SON. Is your arm around a donkey?

DONKEY. Hee-haw!

DAD. This is awkward.

SON. It does look uncomfortable.

DAD. No, no, not the donkey. He's actually quite plush. What's awkward is that I'm leaving.

SON. For the store?

DAD. For Mexico, Son.

SON. On a trip?

DAD. Yes!

SON. Oh, ok.

DAD. What I mean is, It's quite a trip that I'm leaving my old life behind to go live on a Mezcal farm in Guadalajara. Ha ha!

SON. So you're outta here, just like that. Leaving me and mom behind.

DAD. Oh, your mother's coming too! *(He hoists her up on the donkey.)* It's you we're leaving.

SON. No, you can't! I'm still making a stand. I'm still filled with a murderous rage. It's palpable. Feel it? *(Puts Dad's hand on his forehead)*

DAD. Hmm... seems to be just a slight fever. Maybe you came down with measles.

SON. It's palpable rage! I'm steaming with it. It's practically boiling off of my groin.

DAD. It's natural for a boy your age to go through periods of awkwardness. I wouldn't worry about it if I were you. Of course, if I were you, I would have killed me ages ago to get my priceless assortment of collectible screwdrivers and rickshaws. But I guess I didn't raise you well enough to take advantage of your situation.

SON. Raise me well enough to kill you, you mean?

DAD. Yes, son, to slay your father dead. It's every parent's dream.

SON. Actually, I did just try.

DAD. You call waving that loaded shotgun around in the kitchen an attempt to kill your parents? Try again, measlegroin.

SON. Your *donkey's* about to feel my awkward measles. (*makes threatening gestures*)

DONKEY. Hee haw?

DAD. It's ok, Mr. Honkeybutt. I won't let him touch you or your luscious, luscious donkey coat. (*strokes donkey very thoroughly*) Oh wow... now *that's* living.

MOM. (*waking up*) What, what's going on? Why am I riding this shag carpet? (*strokes donkey*) Ooooh... so plush.

DAD. You're riding our new son, dear. Let's be off, the flight for Cancun leaves in an hour.

MOM. Ok. Former son, take care of the house, or burn it down, or something. And abandon this donkey somewhere that I won't have to see it again.

DAD. I was going to take that donkey with me. To tequilatown.

MOM. Just leave them. We've almost shook the boy.

DAD. No... no, it's clear to me now. We'll have to stay, all of us: men, women, and beasts.

MOM. Are you crazy? I hate it here!

DAD. I hate it here too, sugarplum. But a man must stick to his decision.

MOM. You're not sticking to anything. You're waffling like a hungry minority outside of Denny's.

DAD. Look, we'll compromise. Let's take a vacation together.

MOM. Vacation! The last vacation you took us on, you drugged the boy and I and spent 3 days at an Indian casino.

SON. So I didn't have a vicious case of Alzheimer's that miraculously receded!

DAD. I was thinking of a more... wholesome trip. Maybe we can all stay awake this time.

SON. Then we can get to know each other.

DAD. (*turning to Mom*) Or, at least you and I can stay awake.

MOM. Let's go to the holy land.

DAD. I'll mount your temple mount.

MOM. I'll wail at your wall.

DAD. I'll...

MOM. I love it when you pray dirty.

SON. What about me?

DAD. Sit down, son.

SON. I am sitting down.



DAD. Well then sit down some more. *(Son tries to do this.)* You've been a good son to us.

MOM. Really, quite tolerable.

DAD. And you've learned a lot of useful skills. Times are tough, though, as you've seen firsthand.

SON. I'll say.

DAD. Say what?

SON. ... That times are tough.

DAD. I've already said that. Don't repeat things. It's annoying.

MOM. He's always doing annoying things like that, from wetting the bed to starting puberty! Growing all that hair... the nerve of this kid.

DAD. It's ok, my potato pie. I'm taking care of it. *(back to son)* I think it's best we moved on, son. All of us.

SON. So what you're saying is...

DAD. This is hard. You better sit down.

SON. *(scrunches down even more)* Ok.

DAD. Son... You're fired.

*(Lights down immediately.)*