

# **Magic Dad and the Dreams I Don't Remember**

By

**Jim Shankman**  
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Characters:

Simon: A vital man in his forties

Donny: Simon's son as a young man and as a boy of thirteen.

Celia: Simon's wife, a match for him in a more subtle feminine way.

Time: The 1960's.

Place: A city by a great lake.

Note: All elements of the play's design should contribute towards the feeling of a series of dreams.

Scene One

(The shore of a very large lake. It is midwinter. Late in the day. The jetties are completely encased in ice, hulking ice sculptures, dripping, crusty, glowing in the pale light. A man is standing in the sand. He is freezing cold. He is looking out to sea. He has a small box in his hands. He takes a sailor's cap out of his pocket. He examines it. He starts to put it on his head but doesn't. He puts it back in his pocket. He looks out at the water.)

DONNY

Jesus Christ on a crutch. Could we bring up the wind a little bit more? It may be freezing cold but at least it's windy. Oh yeah, that's.... Oh, come on. Why don't you just blow me right off the beach?

(He stops. He seems to be looking at something or thinking about something.)

Enough. All right. Enough already. I can't hear myself....

(He stops again. Is he looking at something?)

Ok. Well I feel like I really ought to say something here. But uh.... I don't know. It would be helpful if anybody had shown up. I can't believe nobody showed up. Am I at the right...?

(He stops again. He is looking at something on the lake.)

Hey! Hey! Holy christ. Hey! Are you...? Hey! Are you...? What the ...? Are you ok? What are you doing out there? Are you ok out there?

(An indistinct voice comes from the lake.)

What? What?

(A man comes out of the lake in a bathing suit. He is dripping wet.)

SIMON

Wow. Incredible. Wow. Look at those waves, will ya?

DONNY

You. Are you out of your mind?

SIMON

What, you never saw a man swimming in the lake?

In the middle of winter? DONNY

Hey, it's polar bear weather. SIMON

Ever heard of hypothermia? DONNY

No, never heard of it. SIMON

Aren't you a little old for this stuff? DONNY

Yeah, you always said that. SIMON

You never learn. DONNY

A little late for new tricks. What's in the box? SIMON

You. DONNY

Oh shit. You're kidding me. SIMON

That's why I'm here. I gotta get rid of it. I can't keep it anymore. DONNY

What's that? SIMON

Where? DONNY

In your pocket? SIMON  
(Donny takes the hat out of his pocket.)

That's my hat.

DONNY

Was your hat.

SIMON

Is my hat. Is.

(Donny opens the box and pours the contents of the box into the hat.)

Oh, very clever. Very nice. I like that.

DONNY

Yeah, it just came to me.

SIMON

Nice touch. Now what are you going to do with it?

DONNY

You take it.

SIMON

Me?

DONNY

You.

SIMON

No you take it. Take it out there. Go on. Out in the lake.

DONNY

Why should I?

SIMON

You know goddamn well why.

DONNY

No, that's not why I'm here. I didn't come her for that. Not today.

SIMON

Go on, Donny. You know it's out there lying on the bottom like an old sea dog. What the hell are you waiting for?

DONNY

What difference does it make? This is a dream, it must be. I'll wake up and it'll be gone.

SIMON

Then give it to me. I can't stand looking at it.

(Simon takes the hat.)

DONNY

You just can't give it up, can you? Even when you're dead.

SIMON

No I guess not. What about you? Still with the painting?

(Donny reaches for Simon and puts a hand on his face. There is a strange musical sound. When he takes his hand away Simon's face is streaked with paint.)

Goddammit. Don't do that. You know I hate that.

DONNY

Yeah I know.

(Simon heads back into the sea.)

DONNY

Haven't you had enough? When the hell is it enough?

(Blackout.)

## Scene Two

(At the beach. It's summer now. Midday. Very warm and muggy. There is an unlit log fire on the beach. Simon comes walking out of the surf. He is wearing the sailor's cap from the first scene. The hat is dripping with fish hooks, flies, bobs, etc. He is covered with netting, more fish hooks and paraphernalia. Fish on lines are draped across his chest.. A water buoy is tied to his waist and trailing behind him. There's a big seabird sitting on his hat. He is tired but happy. He shoos the bird.)

SIMON

Shooo. Go 'way. You're a pest.

(The bird flies off.)

Ah. Ahhhhhh. Oh yes. Oh my god. Oh, baby.

(He reaches for a pack of cigarettes in his pocket. Lights one.)

Oh god that tastes good. Makes it all worthwhile. Best part of the day. Ok, time to eat. You little bastards. Who's first, huh? Oh, you look very good. Very tasty.

(He throws a match on the fire. It leaps into flame. He squats and starts to cut off the fish's head.)

Heh, heh. I was gonna cut off your head. But I think not. I am gonna skin you and eat you and I am gonna feel about a million years old. Like an ape or something. Prehistoric.

(He starts to scale the fish with a fishknife.)

You're in good hands. I'm very good at this. By the time I get your scales off, the fire will be just about perfect. Yeah. You watch. And then I'm going to eat you with my bare hands. Probably not even dead yet. Won't really be dead till you start cooking. Way it goes, baby. Yeah, it's a little cruel. But I mean that is the ocean (well, lake) and you are a fish. I mean you're food. You eat what you kill. It's very enlightening. Very ennobling. And shit it really tastes good. Yeah, and a good cigarette when you're done. I mean what is better than that? Sex? Well, maybe every once in awhile. Love? Love has it's moments. Getting drunk? Yeah. That's a close call. Yeah. I might grant you that one. Oh, yeah. Looks like it's time to cook you, you sweet little bastard. Put you out of your misery.

(He holds up the skinned fish.)

Poor little skinned bastard.

(Lights fade.)

Scene Three

(Sounds of the seashore. Lights rise. Celia is standing at the water's edge. She is nervous.)

CELIA

Ohhh Simon. Isn't it lovely? It's just like I always imagined it. I've never seen so much water. I didn't know there was this much water in the whole wide world. I haven't been here since I was a little girl. Or was I? Or was it a dream? We used to build sandcastles and dig trenches and bury things and people. My father. We buried my father in the sand and then we ran away. Oh it's so lovely. It almost makes you want to dive in and swim around. Oooh. Can you imagine? With all that seaweed and all the little swimmy things and the big swimmy things and the things that crawl around on the bottom, everything eating everything, oooh, it gives me the willies. Jimminy christmas. I'm so glad we came. Are we ready to go? I think I'm getting hungry.

(Simon comes in with a rowboat. He drags it down to the waters' edge.)

Oh my god. Where did you get that? Where did that come from? Simon, be careful. You'll hurt your back.

SIMON

Ceil.

CELIA

Can't you get somebody to do that for you?

SIMON

Ceil.

CELIA

Why on earth are you dragging that boat around?

SIMON

Come on, get in the boat. I'll shove off.

CELIA

Simon, no!

SIMON

Oh come on. Just get in. You're gonna love it.

CELIA

It's too choppy.

SIMON



Choppy? No, it's not. It's like glass. Very calm.

CELIA

That's not calm. It's very choppy. And those are white caps.

SIMON

That's just a little sea foam. We get past that. See out there past the shore? It's very calm. Come on, Ceil. You get out there and you can just say Fuck You to the whole wide world. Come on. Get in.

CELIA

Simon, I don't want to do this. Why can't we just spread a blanket or something and sit here.

SIMON

Sit here? On the sand? Ceil, there's a great big lake out there.

CELIA

I will not get in that boat, not in this kind of weather.

SIMON

What kind of weather. There is no weather.

CELIA

No, Simon.

SIMON

Ceil, there is something out there I want to show you.

CELIA

What could you possibly show me out there? It's water. Nothing but water.

SIMON

No, you're wrong. There is something out there. Just put one foot in the boat. One foot.

CELIA

Why?

SIMON

Why not? One foot in the boat. You can't drown on dry land with one foot in a boat. Come on.

CELIA

Oh all right.

(She puts a foot in the boat.)

SIMON

Now the other.

CELIA

No.

SIMON

Ceil, the other foot. Just stand in the boat and then I'll show you something you won't believe your eyes.

CELIA

What?

SIMON

You have to stand in the boat.

CELIA

Simon, you are a crazy goddamn loon.

SIMON

I know, so stand in the boat.

(She steps all the way in.)

Don't sit.

(She sits.)

Don't sit!

CELIA

I'm sitting. You're supposed to sit in a boat.

SIMON

Fine, sit.

CELIA

Now what is it?

(Simon shoves off.)

Simon! No! Simon. Stop. No. Simon, goddammit, take me back. Simon. You bastard. Simon!

(Simon hops in. He starts rowing.)

Simon, take me back to the shore.

SIMON

Nope. I have to show you something.

CELIA

There is nothing out here, Oh shit. I feel dizzy.

SIMON

Deep breath. Deep breath.  
(She takes a deep breath.)

CELIA

Simon. Oh shit I'm going to faint. Oh my god I feel dizzy.

SIMON

Just breathe, Ceil, just breathe. And don't fall overboard. I can't swim.

CELIA

Simon, goddammit! Turn this thing around. Oh my god. Simon, I'm scared.

SIMON

What?

CELIA

The waves. This is dangerous.  
(They sway back and forth as the waves toss the boat.)  
Simon, do you know what you're doing?

SIMON

Ceil, I can't even swim and I feel completely safe. Relax, honey.

CELIA

I can't relax.  
( A big wave.)

SIMON

Whoa. Whoa.

CELIA

I'm sopping wet. I don't like this. There is nothing out here.

SIMON

Oh yes. Oh yes there is.

CELIA

What?

SIMON

Us. We are out here in a boat on the lake.

CELIA

And I hate it.  
(Another wave. She falls back.)

There is water in the boat. I'm soaking wet and we're going to sink.

(Another wave rocks them.)

Simon I am soaked to the bone.

(She starts to cry.)

Goddammit.

SIMON

Ceil, honey, don't cry. Please don't cry. Look. See? We're out past the surf now. See, it's fine. See, it's much calmer.

CELIA

My topsiders are full of water. They're ruined.

SIMON

No, no, no. Nothing's ruined. Everything's great. Now take a deep breath. And listen.

CELIA

Listen to what?

SIMON

Shhhh. Just listen.

CELIA

I don't hear anything.

SIMON

Listen.

(A deep animal sound.)

CELIA

What the hell is that sound?

SIMON

Listen. Listen.

CELIA

What is that?

SIMON

Listen..... Listen..... Look!!!

CELIA

Oh my god.

SIMON

Look at that!

Oh my god in heaven. CELIA

See that! SIMON

Yes. Yes. Here it comes again. Simon! Simon! CELIA.

Do you believe that? SIMON  
(A spout of water rains down on them.)

It's blowing water. CELIA

It's venting. That's how they breathe. SIMON

Oh my god, it's beautiful. CELIA

That is fantastic. SIMON

Simon, it's tipping the boat. Simon, do something. CELIA

Hold on. Sit tight. Grab the gunwale. SIMON

What is the gunwale? CELIA

Hold on to your seat. SIMON

Simon! Help! Help! We're going over. CELIA

No, we aren't. He's just playing with us. SIMON

Tale me back. You don't understand. CELIA

Ceil, relax. SIMON

You just don't get it. Look at me. CELIA

What do you mean? I'm looking at you. SIMON

Look. At me. CELIA

Oh my god. Ceil? Are you pregnant? SIMON

I'm going to have a baby. CELIA

Celia! SIMON

(Spray, rocking, aquatic roar.)

That goddamn thing is scaring me to death. CELIA

It's all right. It's ok. SIMON

It is not ok. I am pregnant, you idiot. Now row me back to shore. You're scaring me to death. CELIA

I have to ask you a question first. Here. SIMON  
(He hands her a pomegranate that has been sitting in the boat.)

Oh no. Not a pomegranate CELIA

Yes, a pomegranate. SIMON

No, not a pomegranate. No no no. CELIA

Yes, why not? SIMON

I don't want a pomegranate. CELIA

Yes, you do. SIMON

No, I don't. CELIA

Just hold it. I have to ask you a question. SIMON.

What? CELIA

I brought you out here to ask you something very important. SIMON

You brought me out here to ask me a question? CELIA

Yes. SIMON

Well what? CELIA

Will you marry me? SIMON

What? CELIA

Will you marry me. SIMON

Simon? CELIA

Will you? SIMON

Oh my god. CELIA

Marry me, please. SIMON

Are you out of your mind? CELIA

Celia, Please. SIMON

You bring me out here and nearly drown me? CELIA

Aw, Ceil. SIMON

And then you ask me this? CELIA

I do. I do. I ask you this. SIMON

(There is a big spray of water, an animal sound. The boat is tipping.)

Simon, the boat. We're going over. CELIA

No, he's playing. SIMON

How do you know that? CELIA

I know when he's playing. I know when he's serious. SIMON

(A splintering sound.)

Is that the boat? It's breaking up. CELIA

He's just nudging us. Celia, please. SIMON



CELIA

(She clutches Simon.)  
Simon, we're going to drown out here.

SIMON

We're not going to drown. I can swim like a fish.

CELIA

You said you couldn't.

SIMON

I was kidding you, Ceil.

(Another aquatic roar and spray as the boat tips.)

Marry me, Ceil. I love you.

CELIA

I will not marry you. We are going to drown.

SIMON

We're not going to drown. I can swim like a fish.

CELIA

(She has one oar.)  
Shut up and row. Come on. Row.

SIMON

You're having a baby. You have to marry me.

CELIA

The hell I do.

SIMON

You're having my boy? You have to marry me.

CELIA

Who says it's yours? Who says it's a boy?

SIMON

I say it's mine. And I know it's a boy.

(Noises and water and boat come to a climax.)

CELIA

You better row, Simon, or you won't have your wife, and you won't have your son.

WILL YOU MARRY ME!

SIMON

Row me back and I will give you my answer.

CELIA

And what will it be?

SIMON

You will find out when I am standing still on dry land.

CELIA

I think it will be yes.

SIMON

It may very well be. But you will never find out if you don't start rowing.

CELIA

All right! Good.

SIMON

(Roaring stops. Spray stops. Sea calms. The boat is still.)

I love you, Ceil. My darling wife.

(He takes her in his arms and kisses her.)

Ok ok. I love you too. Now pick up a goddamn oar and row.

CELIA

(Blackout.)

## Scene Four

(Simon is standing on the shore. He is in full fishing regalia. He has a line in the sea. The line is pulled taught. There is something fighting on the other end of the line. The line reaches into the air as if the thing on the other end is something huge. A fierce wind is howling. The surf is booming. He is shouting and roaring and drinking whiskey straight from the bottle.)

### SIMON

Come on, goddammit. I got you. I got you. Come on you heartless bastard. You ain't getting away now. No way, baby. I got you. Got you clean clear through.

(There is a huge tug on the line. Simon fights to keep his footing.)

Come on. Is that the best you can do? Takes more than that, you ----

(Another huge tug.)

Goddammit. Goddammit.

(Simon yanks back with all his might on the line.)

Come on, behemoth. Put up a fight. Let me know you're out there.

(Another huge tug.)

Ya, that a baby. There you go. Fight me, you bastard. I ain't even breaking a sweat. I ain't even licked up, yet.

(Simon takes a big hit off the whiskey bottle. As he does, the line yanks him again.)

This ain't for you. It's all for me. You got the whole great big goddamn sea out there. I got the bottle. I got the bottle, baby. It ain't a fair fight, and you might as well face it.

(Another yank. He falls, but gets back up. Still has the fishing rod.)

Behold, Leviathan. I will break you.

(Another hit off the whiskey bottle.)

Don't make me mad. Don't make me come in there. I need a cigar. That's what I need.

Come on, fight me, you creature of the deep.

(With one hand he reaches into a pocket and pulls out a lit cigar. Smokes it.)

Oh baby you are making me mad. You have made me mad.

(He walks down to the edge of the surf.)

Come on. I dare you. I double dog dare you, you scaly gaping beast.

(A tug of war at the edge of the surf. Simon appears to be winning, moving back away from the water's edge, reeling something in.)

Who is greater than me? Who is greater than me?

(Donny appears at the far end of the beach.)

### DONNY

Dad. Dad. What are you doing?

### SIMON

Fishing, Don. I'm doing a little fishing.

(The line yanks Simon to the ground. The whiskey spills.)  
That was my best whiskey, you greedy stinking sea freak .  
(He struggles to his feet. Falls again. Gets back up. He is wound up in  
the line. He is being pulled into the sea.  
No. No. I am the god of this sea. I decide who lives and dies. I decide who eats and  
who is eaten.  
(Donny comes running.)

DONNY

Dad. Dad. Let go. Let it go.

SIMON

I won't let go. I have got him by the throat.

DONNY

Dad let go. It's pulling you in. Dad, let go.  
(Donny tries to pull Simon back on shore.)

SIMON

Get back, Don. It's my fight. It's my fish. It's mine.

DONNY

Let go. Please let go. Let go, Dad.

SIMON

I can't let go. I'm all tied up. Christ in heaven I'm all wound up, Donny.

(He is being dragged to the water.)

You'll never get me, you bastard. You never will.

DONNY

Cut the line, Dad. Cut it.

SIMON

I can't Donny. I can't let him get away.

DONNY

Please cut the line.

SIMON

I have him, Donny. I've almost got him.

DONNY

Cut the line. Please cut it.  
(Donny pulls a knife from a sheath on Simon's hip.)

SIMON

No, Donny, don't do it.

DONNY

I have to cut it. I have to.

SIMON

I've got him right where I want him.

(At the last moment, Donny cuts the line and Simon falls back on the sand.)

Oh my god. I had him, Donny. So close. So goddamn close. I could taste him in my mouth. I thought I had him that time.

(Blackout.)

Scene Five

(Donny is sitting at a table with drawing supplies and a very large white poster board. Celia is watching.)

CELIA

Yes, honey. There you go. See, it's all white. Just a great big white blank and it's waiting.

DONNY

What's it waiting for?

CELIA

For you, honey. Go ahead. Pick one up. Any one. Oh yes. That's a beautiful one. Go ahead. Go on.

(He starts to draw.)

DONNY

Like that?

CELIA

Any way you want to. Whatever you want to. Yes, that's good. That's lovely.

DONNY

No it 's not.

(He roughly crosses out what he's drawn.)

CELIA

No, honey. Don't do that. It was so beautiful. Don't get discouraged. Here.

(She turns the paper over.)

Now start again. And don't think about it. Just draw. Whatever comes to your mind. Any color you want. There you go.

(He starts to draw.)

That's right. Oh, Donny. That's lovely.

DONNY

Shhhh. Quiet.

CELIA

Sorry. You go right ahead. I'll be quiet.

(She watches as he draws.)

Oh, look at that.

Shhhhhh.

DONNY

Sorry. Keep going.

CELIA

I am.

DONNY

(As he draws he gets more and more excited. He moves all around the table drawing. His drawing gets more and more excited almost furious.)

Keep going. Oh the colors.

CELIA

Mom!

DONNY

Don't stop.

CELIA

I'm not. I'm trying to concentrate.

DONNY

Yes. Concentrate. Good. Yes, Donny.

CELIA

More. I need more colors.

DONNY

Keep going, Donny. It's fantastic. It's so rich. The colors.

CELIA

Mom, I'm running out of colors. I need more.

DONNY

Ok. I'll get some more. Keep going. Don't stop. It's so gorgeous.

CELIA

(She goes out. Donny draws in a frenzy, running around the table, drawing with his whole body.)

DONNY

There. Yes. Yes! Oh yes! Oh yeah! Oh my god. Yeah. Yeah. Yes! Yes!

(Celia comes back in with a big box.)

CELIA

Here, Donny. Here's some more. This is all I've got. Use them. We can always get more. Oh my god. It's gorgeous. It's stunning. It's so beautiful. Oh my god. I'm going to cry. It makes me want to cry. Oh Donny. It's brilliant, absolutely brilliant.

(He stops. He is exhausted. He sits down.)

Donny. This is just incredible. You are so talented. What is it, honey? What does it represent. Can you tell me?

DONNY

It's a fish. A monster fish.

CELIA

What?

DONNY

A monster fish. It's a monster. See? Ahhhh.

CELIA

(She grabs the drawing.)

That is not a fish.

DONNY

Yes it is. Be careful.

CELIA

It is not. It doesn't look remotely like a fish.

DONNY

What does it look like?

CELIA

(She takes the drawing and starts to walk out.)

Something else entirely.

DONNY

(Donny grabs her by the hand and stops her.)

No!

(Blackout.)