



MISSING THE BOAT, SON

Ten Minute Play



JANUARY 2019

Missing The Boat, Son

Gilroy, CA. 1980's. A young man walks into the rural home office of a rancher. He is hesitant and a bit shaken, having just walked past a pack of dogs, many of whom are still barking in the background.

The rancher; a short, barrel-chested man sits behind a desk. He wears glasses which he slowly removes to shift his gaze from a ledger to the visitor.

YOUNG MAN

(Nervously holding a resume)

I'm early Mr. Rose. Hope it's okay.

ROSE

(Studying the young man)

Early's better'n late.

YOUNG MAN

Quite a pack of dogs you have. Those pit bulls?

ROSE

Mixed breeds. Rescues mostly. Work better'n any doorbell.

YOUNG MAN

I was afraid to get out of my car.

ROSE

Oh they won't bite (Beat) unless I want 'em to.

YOUNG MAN

(Extends his resume)

Brought a resume.

ROSE

(Accepts the paper but doesn't look at it)

Resume, huh? (Scoffs) You do understand what the job is, right?

YOUNG MAN

Yes sir. Your ad was clear.

ROSE

Ever done physical labor?

YOUNG MAN

Some.

ROSE

(Chuckling to himself)

A resume. That don't beat all.

YOUNG MAN

Thought you'd like to see my experiences.

ROSE

Doesn't take '*experiences*' to lay irrigation pipe.

YOUNG MAN

The ad implied it was a supervisory position.

ROSE

Ain't no supervisors here. Everybody works. Not gonna pay someone to stand around drinkin' coffee and pointin'.

YOUNG MAN

Alright. Guess I misunderstood--

ROSE

This job takes someone willing to stoop; squat in the hot Gilroy sun. Moving pipe over and over again. It's dirty; sweaty. Ever done any work like that?

YOUNG MAN

Well, no sir. I've had a lot of jobs though. (Points to his resume) They're on there.

ROSE

Let me see your hands.

(Hesitantly the YOUNG MAN holds out his hands.)

ROSE

(Inspects the YOUNG MAN'S hands front
and back, shaking his head disapprovingly)

Not a callous on 'em. (Nodding at the YOUNG MAN'S arm) What's that?

YOUNG MAN

(Admiring his own forearm)

This? (Proudly) A tatoo. It's an eagle snatchin'--

ROSE

(With disapproval)

Yeah I can see that.

YOUNG MAN

Thinkin' of gettin' another one that says--

ROSE

(Dismissing the topic with a wave)

Never had any use for tattoos. (Lifts the resume, begins perusing it and then looks up, puzzled) Says you been to college?

YOUNG MAN

Yes sir. Two years of English Lit.

ROSE

(Points to a seat and says a bit harshly)

Sit down. (Softening) Please, take a seat.

YOUNG MAN

(Sits)

Thank you. I never graduated, that is, I might go back. Just needed a break--

ROSE

How old are ya?

YOUNG MAN

Twenty-eight.

ROSE

Twenty-eight, hmm. (Beat) Now why is a guy with two years of college looking to work in the fields?

YOUNG MAN

Thought it would be interesting. Get to work outside. And your ad said you um, you supply room and board.

ROSE

Yeah, that's correct. It's included.

YOUNG MAN

Well that would be a welcome change from my current--

ROSE

(Leans forward with a stern look)

You runnin' from somethin'? Cause I'll do a background check. I don't need any more jailbirds workin' here.

YOUNG MAN

Oh no, nothing like that. I swear. Just tired of my current living situation.

ROSE

Got kids?

YOUNG MAN

No kids. (Nervous laugh) At least none that I know about.

ROSE

Twenty-eight and no kids, huh? Okay, so what's this livin' situation you're so anxious to get away from?

YOUNG MAN

Nothing bad. Living with my brother and his wife. It's gotten... uncomfortable.

ROSE

Then move out.

YOUNG MAN

I got nowhere to go and no money to get there.

ROSE

You realize what I'm paying, right?

YOUNG MAN

Don't need a lot of money. Figure if you're paying room and board, I'll get by.

ROSE

Get by, huh? That all you want in life? (Beat) Hard to believe a college-educated kid, nah, you're nearly thirty, not a kid any more, (Begins again) hard to believe someone with a college education would be content with this kind of work.

YOUNG MAN

I'm very interested in the job sir. That's why I drove from San Jose.

ROSE

You ah, you like gettin' up early?

YOUNG MAN

(Sheepish admission)

Not especially (Recovers) but I can if I have to.

ROSE

(Laughs)

This is a ranch son. Mornin' comes early. We wake the roosters. (Beat) Ever worked with horses or cattle?

YOUNG MAN

(Shakes his head no)

Not yet.

ROSE

What makes you think you can?

YOUNG MAN

I dunno. Figure I'm smarter than they are. (Attempt at humor) Like you keep pointing out, I've got two years of college.

ROSE

(Solemn rebuke)

Well there's book smarts and then there's common sense.

YOUNG MAN

(Looking around dreamily)

This place would be an adventure for me. (Beat) You know, like, like something out of a Steinbeck story.

ROSE

We're talkin' about doin' hard, physical work. Not interested in hirin' somebody just to have them quit in a week.

YOUNG MAN

I wouldn't do that sir. Once I commit to something, I'll follow through.

ROSE

You mean, like you done with college? (Beat) The whole reason I ran that ad is because Joe, the guy who used to do this job, got himself locked up.

YOUNG MAN

Locked up for what?

ROSE

Warned him before if it happens again--

YOUNG MAN

What was he locked up for?

ROSE

Drunk and disorderly. Blowin' off steam. That's another thing about this job, when the sun goes down, it's just crickets and the smell of manure. Can drive a man nuts.

YOUNG MAN

Honestly, I'm looking forward to the peace. My brother and his wife just had a baby--

ROSE

There's nothin' to do at night.

YOUNG MAN

Suits me fine. Sometimes I can hear that baby wailing from outside the apartment, even before I get out my car.

ROSE

Babies cry, (Beat) and bored men get themselves into trouble. (Somewhat righteously) Joe got himself locked up and he's been warned. (Muttering to himself) Don't care if he begs for his job back, it's a done deal.

YOUNG MAN

So then you need somebody. I'm here. I'm willing.

ROSE

When Joe's missing, or too hung-over to work, I've got to supervise the pipe laying myself. Tired of that. (Beat) You speak Spanish?

YOUNG MAN

I can learn.

ROSE

(Tight-lipped grimace)

None? Not a word?

YOUNG MAN

I'll communicate with hand gestures.

ROSE

(Scoffs)

Somethin' tells me you'll be gettin' a lot of hand gestures back in return. (Beat) Joe spoke Spanish -- the guys respected him.

YOUNG MAN

How many guys are there?

ROSE

This time of year, just two - Juan and Julio. But when the garlic is ready for harvestin'--

YOUNG MAN

Can I ask a question, umm, how come--

ROSE

--'cause the work is seasonal. Only need a small crew--

YOUNG MAN

--that wasn't what I was askin'. How come you're not offering this position to--

ROSE

To them? Neither of 'em are up to the task.

YOUNG MAN

Well I am. I'm capable.

ROSE

(Drumming his fingers)

Seen a lot of guys come and go. Joe was good. When he was focused; clear-headed, I was very happy with him. (Beat) Takes time to train a new guy and then he's gone. Aggravatin' as hell and a big waste of my time.

YOUNG MAN

Understood. But I'm not--

ROSE

Let me finish. Now I look at you - college educated. Tryin' to figger out where you belong in life. I get it. There was a time when I was younger and questionin' whether ranch life was for me. But this ranch (Tapping his desk for emphasis) has been in my family for generations. This is where I'm supposed to be. (Beat) I look at you, thirty years old--

YOUNG MAN

Twenty-eight sir. I'm only twenty-eight.

ROSE

(Annoyed with the correction)

Twenty-eight - thirty, no difference. Fact is, you're lost. Let me tell you when I was your age, was married, had two kids with a third on the way. And although my dad was still around, I *ran* this ranch. Did everything. Made all the decisions.

YOUNG MAN

Do your children live here?

ROSE

They chose not to. Mom's got 'em livin' in town. My oldest boy's about ready to go to college. Might surprise me but I don't think ranchin's in his future.

YOUNG MAN

Must be disappointing.

ROSE

Missin' the point. It's a hard life and it's not for everyone. (Slowly begins unbuttoning his shirt) Now when I was younger, not only was I runnin' the ranch but I also bought into a car dealership in town. Then on top of everything else, I was smokin' two packs a day. Workin' late every night. Wife warned me.

YOUNG MAN

I don't smoke-- if that's what you're getting at.

ROSE

(Finishes unbuttoning his shirt and pulls it open with a flourish)

Nearly killed me.

YOUNG MAN

(Gasps as his eyes lock on to the rancher's chest)

Jesus!

ROSE

(Fiendish grin)

Go on! Take a good long look. Triple bypass. Cracked me open like a lobster. Gruesome ain't it? (With disdain) Yeah, some men get tatoos and others, collect scars. The scars of livin'.

YOUNG MAN

(Having to avert his eyes)

Man, that's nasty.

ROSE

Doctors said the red would dull over time. Never did though. (Beat) The wife was right. It was all too much. Had to sell my stake in the dealership. Quit smokin'.

YOUNG MAN

(Still unwilling to return his eyes to the scar)

You okay now?

ROSE

(Rebuttoning his shirt)

'course. Try to keep the stress down. That's why this Joe problem is so upsetting. Not sure if I can forgive him.

YOUNG MAN

He screwed up. You warned him.

ROSE

Son, we've had our chat. Gotta break it to ya. You're twenty-eight years old and you're lost. Instead of livin', you're driftin'. You're gonna wake up soon and see that you're thirty-five, and then forty'll roll around, and you won't have accomplished a damned thing.

(The rancher rises and beckons for the young man to do likewise.)

YOUNG MAN

(Weakly Protesting)

Give me a chance. Let me prove myself.

ROSE

(Shaking his head no)

Com'on. I'll see you out. Walk you past the dogs. Go back to your brother's place. Figger out what it is you want to do with your life. Then get on with it. (Beat) You're missin' the boat. Seems to me like you're missin' the boat son.

The End