

SCIENTIST MEETS FISH

BY SUSAN KIM
(FOR CHRIS HANSEN, AGE 10)

The short play, *Scientist Meets Fish*, by Susan Kim was written for ten year-old Chris Hansen as part of The 52nd Street Project's One-on-One program. The 52nd Street Project brings New York City youngsters together with professional theater artists to create theater. The One-on-One program is designed to give each youngster the experience of success on stage. During one week stays in the country a youngster is paired with an adult theater professional who writes a one-act play for them to perform together. Each playwright writes a play specifically designed for the youngster with whom he or she is working, taking that young person's personal traits and capabilities into consideration. *Scientist Meets Fish* gave Chris a theatrical opportunity to shed his tough piranha exterior and become a true artist.

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1 Girl and 1 "Piranha" Eggfoot and Perry (any age)

(In darkness: generic jungle wulla and the sound of a turbulent river.)

(Lights up. Dr. Stephanie Eggfoot, wearing khaki shorts, t-shirt and pith helmet, stands atop a raft. Her footing looks pretty wobbly.)

Eggfoot

Oh, great. Here I am, up the Amazon River without a paddle—again. I don't even know where I am. Some explorer. Why does this always happen to me? Hello? Anyone out there? Maybe if I swam to shore over there... *(She dips her toe in)* Eeeyew! It's so slimy!

(Perry enters, swimming. He is a fish: dressed in greenish grey, maybe with flippers and goggles. If he could have little fangs, that would be great.)

Perry Well, well. If it isn't a human being.

Eggfoot Who's that?

Perry It's me. *(Eggfoot looks around)* Over here. In the water. *(He waves.)*

Eggfoot Merciful heavens! It's a talking fish!

Perry *(Swims on his back)* My name's Perry. What's yours?

Eggfoot Stephanie Eggfoot. Dr. Stephanie Eggfoot.

Perry Welcome to the Amazon, Dr. Eggfoot. Boy, we haven't had a doctor in years. *(To himself)* And he was pretty bland.

Eggfoot What was that?

Perry I said, isn't the weather grand?

Eggfoot I suppose. You see, I'm called Dr. Eggfoot, but I'm not a real doctor. Not like you go to when you're sick. I just happen to have a degree in bio-ecolepidopterology.

Perry Sounds cool.

Eggfoot *(Falsely modest)* Oh, it's nothing fancy. And you, Perry? What do you do for a living?

Perry Who, me? I'm just a piranha.

Eggfoot What was that?

Perry *(Louder)* I said, I just love bananas!

Eggfoot Well, they're all right, I suppose, although I prefer plantains...



Perry So. You look like you're about to go for a swim.

Eggfoot I was thinking of it.

Perry Don't let me stop you.

Eggfoot

Well—I'm lost, you see; and I thought the first stop would be to get to that shore over there. How's the water?

Perry It's great.

Eggfoot Not too chilly?

Perry Not to me. But I'm a fish.

Eggfoot Yes. That's true. Well, in that case, here goes. One for the money, two for the show, three to get ready, and four to... *(She gets ready to dive. She watches her intently, smacking his lips.)* Is something wrong?

Perry No.

Eggfoot Then what are you staring at?

Perry Nothing. Was I staring?

Eggfoot What are you hanging around waiting for?

Perry Dinner.

Eggfoot Oh. I see. *(Gets ready to dive and stops.)* I'm sorry. What kind of fish did you say you were again?

Perry ...a goldfish.

Eggfoot A goldfish? Then how come you're green?

Perry ...I rusted?

Eggfoot Gold doesn't rust.



Perry ...I'm seasick?

Eggfoot

Why do you do that?

Eggfoot That sounds highly unlikely...

Perry

I dunno. I guess I felt bad for them.

Perry I'm really jealous?

Eggfoot

But you're a piranha. Piranhas are professional killing machines.

Eggfoot Wait a minute... "you just love bananas"... I got it! Banana my foot! You're a *piranha!* And you want to eat me for dinner!

Perry

Some killing machine. You want to know a secret?

Perry Kind of. You don't mind, do you?

Eggfoot

What?

Eggfoot Mind? Of course I mind! My parents didn't raise me to be fish food for some...flounder!

Perry

I'm a vegetarian. But don't tell anyone.

Perry Look. I'm not crazy about the idea either—but I'm starving! I haven't eaten in days!

Eggfoot

Are you serious? Well, in that case...if you really are hungry...would you like some of my peanut butter sandwich?

Eggfoot Oh, thank you. I feel so much better knowing it's not personal.

Perry

Peanut butter sandwich? Who's he?

Perry I can't help being a cold-blooded killer. You know what they say about the rainforest...

Eggfoot

It's not a he. Here. (*She takes out a "sandwich" and gives him half. He "eats."*)

Eggfoot Don't say it!

Perry

Hey—this is pretty good!

Eggfoot & Perry "It's a jungle out here."

Eggfoot

You know what I think? I don't think you're a cold-blooded killer. Sure you're a piranha. But you're something *more* than just a scary fish with big teeth. Aren't you?

Eggfoot I *knew* you were going to say that!

Perry Besides, I'm not really a killer. I'm just food patrol!

Perry

Well. Can I tell you another secret?

Eggfoot What's that mean?

Eggfoot

Sure.

Perry I swim around until I find food for the rest of the guys. Only I keep messing up.

Eggfoot

I never wanted to be a piranha.

Eggfoot What do you do wrong?

Perry

Don't laugh. (*Eggfoot shakes her head "no."*) I always wanted to be...a painter.

Perry I let everything escape. Monkeys. Parrots. A guy from National Geographic.

Eggfoot

Really?



Perry Yeah. But it's tough when you live in a river. All that water, it's a real mess...

Eggfoot You could always use a pencil.

Perry I do. You wanna see some of my pictures? I hold them 'cause the guys always make fun of me. *(He swims to the wings and retrieves some big "pictures.")*

Eggfoot Hey—these are really good. *(She examines pictures of a fish.)* I like this one. Who's this?

Perry That's my brother.

Eggfoot *(Examining a picture of another fish.)* And who's this?

Perry That's my other brother.

Eggfoot Do they all really have three little hairs growing out of their heads?

Perry Naw. I just added those.

Eggfoot Hey, Perry—I think you should be an artist full time.

Perry Nawwww.

Eggfoot I'm serious. These are great. You could come with me.

Perry Really? And people wouldn't laugh?

Eggfoot No, are you kidding? A painting piranha? You could probably get federal funding and everything. Well...

Eggfoot Only problem is...I don't know how to get out of here. I dropped my map when my paddle fell in the water. I'm totally lost.

Perry

Well...would this be any help? *(He holds out a map.)*

Eggfoot

Good golly, Perry! It's a map! Where'd you get this?

Perry

I drew it.

Eggfoot

Wow! And it's accurate and everything?

Perry

Yep. It's to "scale."

Eggfoot

Well, in that case...how should we do this?

Perry

Can you swim?

Eggfoot

Sure! Only...is it safe?

Perry

With me around? No sweat! *(He holds out his arm for her to take.)* I'll be your escort.

Eggfoot

Well, okay. Here goes, I guess... *(She kicks off her shoes.)*

Perry

And Stephanie?

Eggfoot

Yes?

Perry

You're really serious about people not laughing?

Eggfoot

I'm totally serious. *(Starts to dive, then stops.)* And Perry?

Perry

Yes?

Eggfoot

You're really serious about being a vegetarian?

Perry

You bet. But maybe you should bring the rest of the sandwich—okay?

Eggfoot

Okay! *(She jumps in.)* Wow! It's nice and cool! Which way to Miami?

Perry

This way! To Miami!

Eggfoot

To art!

Perry

To art!

Eggfoot

Hey—wait up!

(They exit, swimming. Blackout.)

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