

Saving Skippy

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INT. MR. SONNENFELD'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

CHRIS (19) enters the home in a hurry, phone held up to his face. As he talks to TY (24) on speaker chat, he slides off his backpack.

TY
(From the phone)
You sure you got this bro?

CHRIS
(Defensively)
Yeeah?

TY
Alright, alright. But I can come over if you need me to.

CHRIS
Seriously? He comes back in like...

Chris checks a wall clock. It's 10:30.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
...a half hour.

Chris hurries over to the fish tank and inspects the fish.

TY
Then, do you really need to be there? Can't he feed it today?

CHRIS
(Sighing)
Mr. Sonnenfeld was very specific. The can has to be empty today or else "I didn't do my job".

TY
Wow. He sounds like a dick.

CHRIS
Mm.

TY
You know bro, knowing your track record, I'd just toss the food. He won't know, you'll get your check, and there's no chance of disaster.

CHRIS
You really think I can't do this?

Chris opens the cabinet near the tank and reaches in.

TY

No! Yes. I mean, you remember what happened to Mr.Snowball.

Chris snaps his attention to the phone just as his hand nears the green can labeled "Fish Food."

CHRIS

That wasn't my fault! And I'm like 90% sure a fish can't go into diabetic shock.

TY

Uh huh. Did your wiki research teach you that?

Chris grabs the similarly colored can right next to the food.

CHRIS

And working two months at PetSmart makes you the fish expert?

TY

Yeah.

CHRIS

Oh, okay. Well Ty-

He absentmindedly shakes it into the tank.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

-guess what? I'm about to make your week's paycheck, and I didn't need any of your "professional experience". So you can kiss my-

Chris returns the can to the cabinet, but then he notices the label. *Comet*. A cleaning product. He spots the other can with a taped label over it: "Fish Food."

Chris looks to the tank. Horror comes over his face.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

-*Shnookerdookies!*

TY

I don't even know what to say to that.

CHRIS

No-no-no!

TY

Chris? What happened?

CHRIS
I bleached Skippy!

TY
What?

Chris taps the video chat option on the phone, and turns the phone camera over to the tank so Ty can see the fish.

TY (CONT'D)
 (Beat)
 You know, not to say "I told you so" but-

CHRIS
 Ty!

TY
 Alright, I'm sorry. Look, it's a fish. Just buy him a new one.

CHRIS
 This isn't a goldfish! It's a...it's a *rich guy's* fish and it's going to put me into debt until I'm 50!

TY
 Okay! Okay. I get it. Calm down. It's going to be alright, bro. The fish expert is here to help.

Chris squeezes his eyes shut and shakes his head slightly.

TY (CONT'D)
 Man, the clock's ticking fast. Unless you already know how to save it...I think you need me.

CHRIS
 God...crap, fine! What do I need to do?

INT. MR. SONNENFELD'S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Chris sets down a bowl of cold water on a nearby table and drops the fish in. He has the phone propped up by a book next to the tank, so Ty can see the action.

TY
 Now just kinda push the cold water over the fish. Let it flow over its gills. Got it?

Chris nods and rapidly splashes water over it.

TY (CONT'D)
Whoa, whoa, damn! Slow down. Keep
it at an easy rhythm, alright?

Chris nods and eases the pace of his splashes.

TY (CONT'D)
Easy. That's it. You're not trying
to assault Skippy. You just wanna
keep him alive. You're not trying
to kill this one.

CHRIS
(Clearly uncomfortable)
Stop talking, Ty.

Chris continues splashing. He eyes the clock. 10:45.

Chris more aggressively splashes the water on the fish. He
uses both hands in the last couple of splashes.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
It's not working!
(Beat)
Ty?

TY
You told me to stop talking.

CHRIS
Seriously!?

TY
Alright, alright. Chill. Try the
other way. The Snowball method.

Chris nods. He lays the fish down on a nearby paper towel and
then turns the fish on its side. He puts two fingers just
behind the gills and gives it gentle compressions.

CHRIS
Come on, buddy. Come on. Don't go
into the light. Swim away from the
light.

He eyes the clock again.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Please, Skippy. Work with me here!

He presses harder into the fish. He listens for a heartbeat. He then gives the fish mouth-to-mouth and immediately spits out the taste. He resumes the compressions.

He puts his head against it and listens for a heartbeat.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

It's not working! He's gone cold!

TY

Time for the PetSmart special.

CHRIS

(Nodding)

Right.

Chris hoists up a car battery with jumper cables already attached, and he sets it down on the table.

TY

Now this is really simple. You just attach the clamps to him. But when the second clamp goes on, don't wait more than a second to take it off. Got it?

CHRIS

Yeah. I got it...

Chris gently attaches a cable to the back fin on the fish. He holds the other cable, hesitating to clamp it on. He checks the clock again. He exhales.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Alright, little buddy. Time to bring you home.

Chris clamps the other cable onto the fish. Skippy instantly lights up in a terrific spark, and Chris's expression turns to horror as smoke rises from the fish.

TY

(Beat)

You know, now that I think about it, we probably should've...used a smaller battery...

(Beat)

...Bro, I'm really sorry. I'm sure Mom and Dad will let you do chores or something to cover it. How expensive was it?

CHRIS

A few grand.

TY
 Oh. So, a lot of chores. A lot, a
 lot of chores...You sure it's not
 too late to buy a new fish?

Chris's eyes light up.

CHRIS
 I'll call you back.

Chris rushes out of the room.

INT. MR. SONNENFELD'S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A luxury car pulls up outside. Chris eyes the door nervously as MR.SONNENFELD (65) approaches the door. The car drives away without the man. Mr. Sonnenfeld struggles with the doorknob. Chris hesitates and opens the door for him, revealing a well-dressed man in sunglasses.

CHRIS
 Mr. Sonnenfeld!

MR. SONNENFELD
Christ! Who the hell are you!?

CHRIS
 Chris! Chris Ellison? You hired me
 to take care of your fish!

MR. SONNENFELD
 (With irritation)
 Oh. Right.

Mr. Sonnenfeld brushes past him.

CHRIS
 (Nervously)
 How are you?

MR. SONNENFELD
 Dandy. How's my little Skipper?

Chris rushes in front of him, trying to cut him off.

CHRIS
 Oh, fine, fine.
 (Beat.)
 Alive. Could I get you something to
 drink? Wine, whiskey, vodka?

MR. SONNENFELD
 No.

Sonnenfeld walks past him and towards the tank. Chris desperately tries to keep up.

CHRIS
What about a cocktail?

Mr. Sonnenfeld approaches the tank. He looks inside it. A paper cut-out of the fish is taped to the back side.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
(Extremely nervous.)
And your surgery went okay?

Mr. Sonnenfeld lifts up his sunglasses and squints. His eyes can't quite make out the blurry image in front of him.

MR. SONNENFELD
It sure as hell wasn't worth the
airfare.

Mr. Sonnenfeld walks away from the tank. He pulls out a checkbook from his pocket. He writes the check for 200 and hands it to Chris.

MR. SONNENFELD (CONT'D)
There. You can leave.

CHRIS
(Bewildered)
Thank you.

Mr. Sonnenfeld nods. Chris makes his way to the door with his backpack as Sonnenfeld opens the cabinet above the tank. Sonnenfeld grabs the can of Comet, puts his ear against it, and shakes it. He frowns.

MR. SONNENFELD
I told you I wanted him fed today.

Chris stops.

CHRIS
I did.

Mr. Sonnenfeld shakes the can for Chris to hear.

MR. SONNENFELD
Not according to this you didn't.

Sonnenfeld promptly shakes some of the cleaner into the tank. He gives Chris a reprimanding look and walks out of the room. Chris looks at the tank for moment. He quickly retrieves the real fish from the trash, drops it into the tank, strips the picture from the tank, and runs out.