

UNDERSTANDING FISHING

by Bruce Cameron

Fishing is the act of sitting in a boat for hours and hours waiting for something to happen. It can be an exciting sport if you enjoy watching water evaporate one molecule at a time. And sometimes, given the right rhythm to the waves, there's the added attraction of throwing up.



My father and I go fishing occasionally, though we've never explained to each other why. Holding a rod in my hands, I'm struck by the idea that fishing is sort of like kite flying, except the kite is very small and you can't see it. I mention this to my father, who doesn't respond, either because he finds my comment unmanly or because he has fallen into a stupor.

We're trolling, meaning that the boat is moving ahead slowly, dragging behind it a barbed lure in hopes some hapless fish will come across it. To me, trolling is a bit like firing a shotgun out your kitchen window, hoping you'll hit a chicken.

"Catch anything yet?" I ask my father, hoping to amuse at least one of us.

He's still not talking.

My dad bought a fish-finder in order to, well, find fish. We stared at the schools of huge fish on the small screen for two awestruck years before we realised we had it in 'demo' mode. Now we don't pay much attention to it, but we leave it in demo because we find the images comforting.

Our lures are made of metal and plastic, substances that fish apparently find very appetising. And my father has a new net. It's large enough to net a human cannonball. "Why don't we forget the lures and just drag the net through the water?" I suggest. "Maybe we'll catch Flipper."

Finally my father speaks. "What's HE doing?" he says.

I look where he indicates. A boat with a solitary fisherman approaches dead ahead, apparently planning to ram us at 5kph. My father stands up and makes a nautical hand signal that means "You Are An Idiot." The captain of the opposing vessel shakes his fist, but makes no effort to change course.

We're going to crash and sink because neither boat thought to bring along a woman to point out how stupid we're acting.

"I've been fishing this lake for 60 years," my father calls to our enemy, establishing who has proprietary rights to this stretch of water. The guy in the other boat smells like he's been fishing even longer.

"I've been here all morning," he counters as he slips past, missing us by the narrowest of margins.

"Well, you won *that* debate," I praise my father.

Moments later my rod dips and I'm fighting what feels like the biggest fish of my life. With every tug it pulls back, as if it's trying to catch *me*.

With a sound like a bow firing an arrow, my line pops out of the water – I've hooked the lure of the enemy boat guy. Our lures dance in the air for a moment while we strain against each other and then there's a snap and we both fall back. His line has broken, and I reel in his lure while he shakes his fist.

My father's disgusted. But I'm happy – I went fishing and finally caught something!

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CARTOONZ



"Well, good night, sleep tight, don't let the bed-bugs bite ..."



"We just got this from Social Welfare: 'Dear Mr & Mrs Bailey. You are no longer known as Jim and Lisa. Due to your age, your names will now be Helga and Ebenezzer' ..."



"You absolutely must try one of my freshly-baked cookies!"

THE DIRTIER THE NAPPY IS, THE ITCHIER YOUR NOSE GETS WHILE CHANGING IT.