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Fillets from Fidgeting

By Natalie Hahn

In the land of ten thousand lakes, a seven year-old version of me, and my father, sit in a boat that slowly bobs in the wake of Lake Sarah. The sun beats down on the two of us, and the glimmering water causes our eyes to squint despite the hats that we wear. We have been fishing for a few hours now, and my father has successfully caused the predicament that I often see to, a tangled line.

The winds cause the reeds and cattails to whisper and a distant train whistle is heard harmoniously with cicadas decreeing the heat. As the boat rolls slowly in the wake of other vessels, the water occasionally slaps the sides. I smell the sunscreen on my face, the life-vest smells of my garage, and the indescribable aroma of lake water surrounds. A few boats and houses can be seen in the distance, but otherwise, the lake is silent of men and their machines. My father sits with his tangled rod, hot and angry. He asks me to remain seated and quiet, which I must say is quite difficult for a young child. In my boredom, I take my Johnny Quest fishing rod and slowly dip the naked lure up and down into water, making quiet slaps and flicking sparkling water drops with the line. As my boredom waxes, I place the hook deeper into the water. I often play with the line in the water as my father fixes something, but on this occasion, a different result comes from the fidgeting. The red and white a bobber does not even have a chance to rest in the water before, out of my surprise, I pull up a shimmering fish.

I exclaim, "Look Dad! I caught a fish!"

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He is still intent on his work as he replies, “Natalie, please just sit and stay quiet. I’m trying to untangle this line and it is really difficult, especially if you continue to talk.” It is obvious that his patience is wearing thin, despite my enthusiasm.

“But I caught a fish!”

Still in disbelief, he then turns around to scold me, but the look on his face changes from anger to amazement as he sees the rod with a fish attached and squirming. Not long after, the exclamation that it is a crappie is heard and he inquires how I caught the fish. He places his work on the seat and walks over, causing the boat to slowly rock back and forth. Once the silver spectacle is taken off of the hook, he then requests that I do the exact same feat as before. In less than a minute, another fish inhales the empty hook that penetrates its mouth. For the next hour or so, we continued to angle in that spot, gaining a number of crappie and blue-gill. On the way back to the dock at the end of the day, I sit proudly as I look at the passing trees, birds, and cabins that lay near the edge.

When back home, my father is still amazed as I recount the day to my mother. Due to my joy, I do not even mind the bloody task of cleaning of the fish. My mother breads them, and the golden filets sizzle in the pan. My elation is highly visible to my parents as I sat down to eat the delicious catch that lay on my plate, golden brown. The only seasoning that was on the fish that night was salt and pepper, but the fish tasted better than ever due to a seven-year-old’s luck. I have an unforgettable memory in nature and a wonderful, true, fish-story thanks to that day in Minnesota.

Natalie Hahn is a Junior at Mills E. Godwin High School in Henrico. She is member of the Math, Science, and Innovations Center at her school, and therefore used to writing papers for science. She plays four instruments and is involved with the marching band during the fall, and the indoor drum line during the winter and early spring. She is a member of the National Honor Society. This summer she is a volunteer at MCV-VCU working with researchers in genetic studies involving small animals. She plans to study genetics, or bio-engineering in college upon graduation next year.