

The Fish Hook Story

By

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When I was sixteen my family went on a midsummer vacation in August. We usually went to Montauk Point, Long Island. Montauk was an old fishing village on the very tip of Long Island, which stretched out one hundred miles from New York City. We had gone there every summer since I can remember, but not this particular summer. Provincetown, Massachusetts was our new destination.

As soon as we got to our room at the Bed and Breakfast, I met a few other teenagers. There were two boys who were very cute. The three of us hit it off right away. That evening after dinner, we ran to the nearby beach bonfire.

Later that night my father announced we were going deep sea fishing off the Cape Cod docks. My father woke me up at 4 AM and told me to get dressed. I started to balk about going but my father urged me so vehemently that I relented and went along with him.

We took off quickly. The sun had yet to peak through the distant horizon. I felt the heavy roar of the ship's engine through my body as I sat down on the bench. I was sleepy. We traveled out into the Atlantic for an hour. The engine noise died down to a hush. Quickly and quietly the fishermen and my father got their poles ready. They checked on hooks of different sizes and started to slide worms and pieces of fish onto the hooks as bait. My father handed me a thin smaller pole. He told me where to stand and instructed me on how to tell if I had a fish on my line.

"You will feel a slight tug at first, if the fish bites onto the hook there will be a heavy tug on your line. Call me over if you get that first tug. Then we can jerk the pole up and see if we have a biter."

I was not interested in this but I did pretty well pretending. As the other people lowered their lines into the water, some would lean over to me and say encouraging things.

“Maybe you will get lucky. Is this your first time out? It gets better. Last time I was out here I held onto my pole for four hours, nothing! Then just as we were about to return to shore, I got me a big one! Yep, he weighed in at eighteen pounds. Got to have patience,” said an older man.

We went straight out in the Atlantic for at least another hour. We were lined up almost touching shoulders at one point. The more the fish fought to be free of the hooks, the more the people on the boat celebrated. I thought they looked happy and silly like schoolchildren at a birthday party.

I was just about to leave my post. I started to lift my pole up and reel in my fishing line and suddenly I felt a very sharp jerk on my line. My entire pole started to shake and bend like a U. I grabbed it harder but I felt I was losing strength to pull on it. I did not know what to do. I yelled out.

“Help me! I cannot hold this! It is pulling so hard. Why is it doing this?”

I must have yelled very loud because all the people on my side of the boat jerked up their lines at the same time. In an instant, all I saw was a bunch of hooks flying upwards simultaneously. The next thing I felt was heaviness on the side of my face. Then the blood flowed out like a river all down my face. I was hooked! The fish hook from another person’s line came raining down into the side of my nose. It came down fast, piercing the skin, and made its way out of the fleshy part of my nose. I screamed for my father. He was with the other people looking for the big fish they assumed they caught. When he turned around and took one look at all the blood on my face, he fainted.

I was standing on the deck of a fishing boat in the Atlantic three hours from shore not knowing what to do. No one seemed to notice me; they were huddled over my father. Maybe they thought he had a heart attack. Finally, a few people ran over to see why I was covered with blood. One man proclaimed to know what to do.

“Hold her down. We will have to pull the hook out. I hope her nose doesn’t come off.”

I panicked and prepared to die. Next thing I saw was a well-tanned tall man in a white clean shirt, telling me to relax and he was going to cut the end of the hook off and back out the rest of the hook. I braced myself but strangely, it did not hurt too much. I felt a very heavy sensation on the right side of my face. My father recovered and made his way over to me. He was talking to the captain. I could

hear in the distance people joking about how I caught the biggest fish of the day. It did not make me feel any better. After two more hours, my face began to swell on one side. I was more concerned about how I looked than any infection that might be developing. The pain was beginning to come in waves. When we got back to the docks the captain told my father I needed to go to the ship's doctor for a tetanus shot. We went over to the doctor's office only a few blocks away. He gave me the shot and penicillin. For the next few days I was the talk of the docks.

Postscript: To this day, the author has a scar on her nose.