

My Father Never Takes Me Fishing

By Jane Kurtz • Illustrated by Sylvia Stone

"My father never takes me fishing.

Three months ago, when Grandpa went on a fishing trip to Alaska, my dad said he would take me fishing.

"Maybe Monday night when I get home," he said.

But Monday night he had a meeting and didn't get home until late. By then I couldn't even care about fish.

"Saturday, for sure," he said.

But on Saturday our dog ate something rotten, and we had to take her to the vet.

"Sunday a month from now, the twenty-first of June," he said.

But when that day came, he forgot.

And I forgot.

"Other people's fathers take them fishing," I said. "Other people catch thousands of fish."

"Don't get your hopes up," he said. "I'm not the world's greatest fisherman. I may be the worst."

The next Tuesday night my dad and I played checkers.

"Grandpa sent me a picture from Alaska," I said. "I'll show it to you at supper."

"Speaking of supper," he said, "what would taste good?"

"Fish," I said.

Dad pointed at the checker board. "Crown me," he said. "I think we have some fish sticks in the freezer."

"Grandpa says that fresh fish tastes better than fish sticks," I said.

"Crown me again," he said.

"Grandpa says, 'Give me a wild stream, some warm sun, and a fishing pole,'" I said. "Grandpa says that fishing makes your blood red and your eyes bright."

"Crown me," said Dad. "Who's playing checkers here, you or Grandpa?"

My dad will probably get to be the checkers champion of the world before he takes me fishing.

Dad's not like Grandpa. Last Saturday my dad played football with me, but my deluxe spiral Super-Bowl throw conked him on the side of the head and made him trip over a rosebush.

Once my dad ran a race with me, but his briefcase flew open and papers flapped all over the street.



My Father Never Takes Me Fishing *Continued*

Once my dad and the dog and I went camping. We popped popcorn over the fire. We told stories while he washed the dishes and I dried. We slept in our sleeping bags until the tent blew down on top of us. But we didn't go fishing.

My father never takes me fishing.

He'll probably be a hundred years old before he takes me fishing.

Wednesday night my dad came home and flopped on the couch.

"Can we go fishing this weekend?" I said. "I don't know," he said. "I have some work I really should get done."

"Grandpa says that work is only for people who don't know how to fish," I said.

"Well, maybe," Dad said. "Let me make some phone calls and think about it."

He always says he will, but my father never, never, never does take me fishing.

On Saturday my dad came into my room so early I could hardly make my eyes open.

"What are you waiting for?" he said. "Let's go fishing."

I leaped out of bed. I helped him pack the gear in the car. I shouted "Yahoo!" on the way to the lake.

When we got there, my dad got out of the car and looked at the water. I got out and stood beside him. "I'm not sure where to start," he said.

"Grandpa says that a good fisherman can feel in his heart where the fish are," I said.

"My heart's not talking," he said. "Is yours?"

"Nope," I said.

We picked a spot anyway. "Put a worm on your hook," Dad said.

"A worm?" I said.

My dad helped me.

"Cast your line in the water now," my dad said. He showed me how.

I sat in the sun until I felt like a piece of French toast. Then suddenly my dad yelled, "Yahoo! I got one!"

My dad and I stood and looked at the fish flopping on the bank. It shimmered green and blue and silver in the sun.

"What's going to happen to it?" I said.

"We could eat it for supper," he said.

"I don't know," I said. "Maybe we should just have fish sticks."

Then Dad and I looked at each other. Dad took the fish off the hook and tossed it back into the lake.

My father never takes me fishing. But that's all right. We do lots of other things together. Besides, we're practicing checkers all the time.

Someday I bet we're going to be checkers champions of the world.

