
Eli's
First Fishing Trip
~ A short fishing journey ~
Captain

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A Short Fishing Journey

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Lunch Is Packed!

The sun wasn't up yet, but Eli was. Today was his very first fishing trip. On the OCEAN.

In the kitchen, Mom was packing the big blue cooler. Turkey sandwiches. Grapes. Pickles. And a bag of her famous oatmeal cookies.

"Extra mayo for Uncle Rick," Mom said. "Just the way he likes it."

Oreo the dog sniffed the cooler hopefully.

"Sorry, Oreo," said Dad. "This lunch is for the crew."

Honk! Honk!

Grandpa and Uncle Rick were here.

"Have fun," said Mom, kissing Eli on the head. "I want to hear EVERYTHING when you get home."



Lunch Is Packed!



Grandpa's Boat!

They drove through Eureka, California, to the marina on Woodley Island. The sky was bright blue, and a soft breeze tickled Eli's cheeks.

At the end of the dock floated a shiny white boat. Painted on the back were the words Reel Retired.

"I bought her the day I retired," said Grandpa proudly. "And I've kept her spotless ever since."

He handed out orange life jackets. "Rule one: life jackets on. Rule two: shoes off the seats. Rule three: NO messes on my deck."

Uncle Rick stepped aboard. His muddy boot squeaked across the clean floor.

Grandpa stared at the footprint.

Uncle Rick stared at the sky. "Nice weather, huh?"



Grandpa's Boat!



The Lighthouse That Moved!

Near the dock stood a little white lighthouse.

"That lighthouse is over 130 years old," said Grandpa. "It used to sit on a cliff by the ocean. People moved it here so it would be safe."

"You can MOVE a lighthouse?" asked Eli.

"You can move anything," said Grandpa, "if you have enough friends."



The Lighthouse That Moved!



Out of the Bay!

The Reel Retired puttered across Humboldt Bay. Sea lions barked from a floating dock. ARF! ARF! ARF!

"Sea lions can walk on their flippers," said Grandpa. "Seals have to scoot on their bellies."

One sea lion flopped right on top of another one.

"Hey, that's my spot!" said Dad in a grumpy sea lion voice.

Past the long rocky jetties, the waves got bigger.

Up... and down. Up... and down.

Dad could tell Eli looked a little worried.

"Don't worry," said Dad to Eli. "Everything's fine."



Out of the Bay!



Where Did the Land Go?

Eli looked back. The beach was getting smaller.

Then the houses got smaller.

Then the hills got smaller.

Then... the land was gone. All Eli could see was water. Water, water, and more water.

"How far out are we going?" he asked.

"About twenty miles," said Grandpa. "That's where the big fish live."

His tummy felt tight. "Grandpa," he whispered, "how will we find our way back?"

Grandpa put his arm around him. "You know, on my first trip, I was scared too. I held onto the railing the whole day."

"You did?"

Grandpa pointed to a screen with a tiny blinking dot. "That's us. And that line is the way home. My boat always knows where home is. Want to help me steer?"

Eli held the wheel. The Reel Retired listened to him, and his tummy didn't feel tight anymore.



Where Did the Land Go?



Uncle Rick's Excuses!

Uncle Rick did not look good. His face was the color of a pickle.

"I'm fine," he groaned. "My hat is just too tight."

Dad leaned over to Eli. "Uncle Rick gets seasick on EVERY fishing trip. And he always has an excuse."

"Like what?"

"One time, he said it was a bad hot dog. One time, he said it was his new shoes. And one time, he said it was because of a long night out."

Eli scrunched his nose. "What's a long night out?"

Dad patted his head. "I'll tell you when you're older."

"Seasickness happens when your eyes and ears don't agree," said Grandpa. "Your ears feel the rocking, but your eyes don't. Looking at the horizon helps."

Uncle Rick stared at the horizon. The horizon stared back.



Uncle Rick's Excuses!



Lines in the Water!

The engine went quiet. They had made it!

Grandpa showed Eli how to drop his line. Down, down, down it went, two hundred feet deep.

Uncle Rick's rod bent first. "I got one! A BIG one!"

He reeled and reeled. Up came... a giant clump of slimy seaweed.

"That's called kelp," said Grandpa, trying not to laugh.

Then Grandpa's rod bent. Up came a fish with spiky fins and bright orange scales.

"A rockfish!" said Grandpa. "Some rockfish can live more than one hundred years."

Eli's eyes went wide. "That's even older than you, Grandpa!"

"Barely," said Grandpa.



Lines in the Water!



Mayonnaise on the Deck!

By noon, everybody was hungry. They opened Mom's cooler. Sandwiches for everyone!

Uncle Rick took a GIANT bite.

A big glob of mayonnaise slid out of his sandwich.

It wobbled...

It jiggled...

PLOP! Right onto Grandpa's clean white deck.

Everybody froze.

Grandpa looked at the mayonnaise. Then he looked at Uncle Rick.

"Richard," he said slowly. "I worked for forty years to buy this boat." Uncle

Rick quickly wiped it up with his sock.



Mayonnaise on the Deck!



Uh-Oh, Uncle Rick!

Uncle Rick ate TWO sandwiches. And a pickle. And three cookies.

The boat went up... and down. Up... and down. Up... and DOWN.

Uncle Rick dashed to the side of the boat.

"BLEHHHHH!"

Mom's lunch went right back into the sea.

"EWWWWW!" said Eli.

"At least it went OVER the side," said Grandpa. "Good aim, son."

Then the water started to bubble. Up came a fish. Then two fish. Then a WHOLE crowd of fish, gobbling up the sandwich bits!

"Well, look at that," laughed Grandpa. "Your uncle just rang the dinner bell."

Uncle Rick wiped his mouth. "It was the egg salad," he said. "Your mom's egg salad gets me every time."

Grandpa raised one eyebrow. He didn't say a word.



Uh-Oh, Uncle Rick!



Fish Party!

Now the fish were EVERYWHERE.

Dad caught one. Grandpa caught one. Even Uncle Rick caught one.

Then Eli's line jerked. He reeled and reeled. Up came a long, spotted fish with a big mouth full of teeth.

"A lingcod!" said Grandpa. "It's not really a cod at all. And some lingcod are blue or green on the inside."



Fish Party!



The Big One!

Later, Eli's rod bent so hard it almost touched the water.

"Hold on!" shouted Grandpa.

Eli pulled. Dad held onto Eli. Grandpa held onto Dad. Uncle Rick held onto the railing.

Up, up, up came a huge flat fish, as big as a doormat.

"A HALIBUT!" cheered Grandpa.

The halibut had both eyes on the same side of its face.

"Halibut are born with one eye on each side," said Grandpa. "As they grow, one eye slowly moves over to join the other."

"That's so WEIRD," said Eli.



The Big One!



Heading Home!

The sun dipped low, painting the water gold.

Eli watched the front of the boat. First, a thin gray line. Then hills. Then houses. Then the little white lighthouse.

"There's home," said Eli. He wasn't scared one bit.

At the dock, Grandpa pulled a shiny silver fishing lure from his pocket.

"This was my lucky lure," he said. "Now it's yours, First Mate Eli."

Uncle Rick held out his hand. "Do I get one?"

Grandpa handed him a scrub brush.



Heading Home!



Home Again!

Oreo met them at the door, wagging his whole body.

"Well?" asked Mom. "How was the fishing trip?"

"I caught a lingcod AND a halibut!" said Eli. "I steered the boat! And Uncle Rick threw up and fed all the fish!"

Uncle Rick held up a finger. "That was your egg salad's fault."

Mom put her hands on her hips. "Rick," she said, "I packed TURKEY."

"With extra mayonnaise," grumbled Grandpa. "I'll be scrubbing my deck for a week."

Everybody burst out laughing. Even Uncle Rick.

"Next time," said Dad, "just blame the long night out."

"Mom," asked Eli, "what IS a long night out?"

Mom looked at Dad.

Dad looked at the ceiling.



Home Again!



Goodnight, Sea!

That night, Eli lay in bed with his lucky lure on the nightstand. Oreo snored at his feet.

He could still feel the boat going up... and down. Up... and down.

He thought about the barking sea lions, the hundred-year-old rockfish, and the halibut with two eyes on one side.

And he thought about how the land disappeared, and came back, just like Grandpa promised.

Twenty miles out was a long, long way.

But home was always waiting.

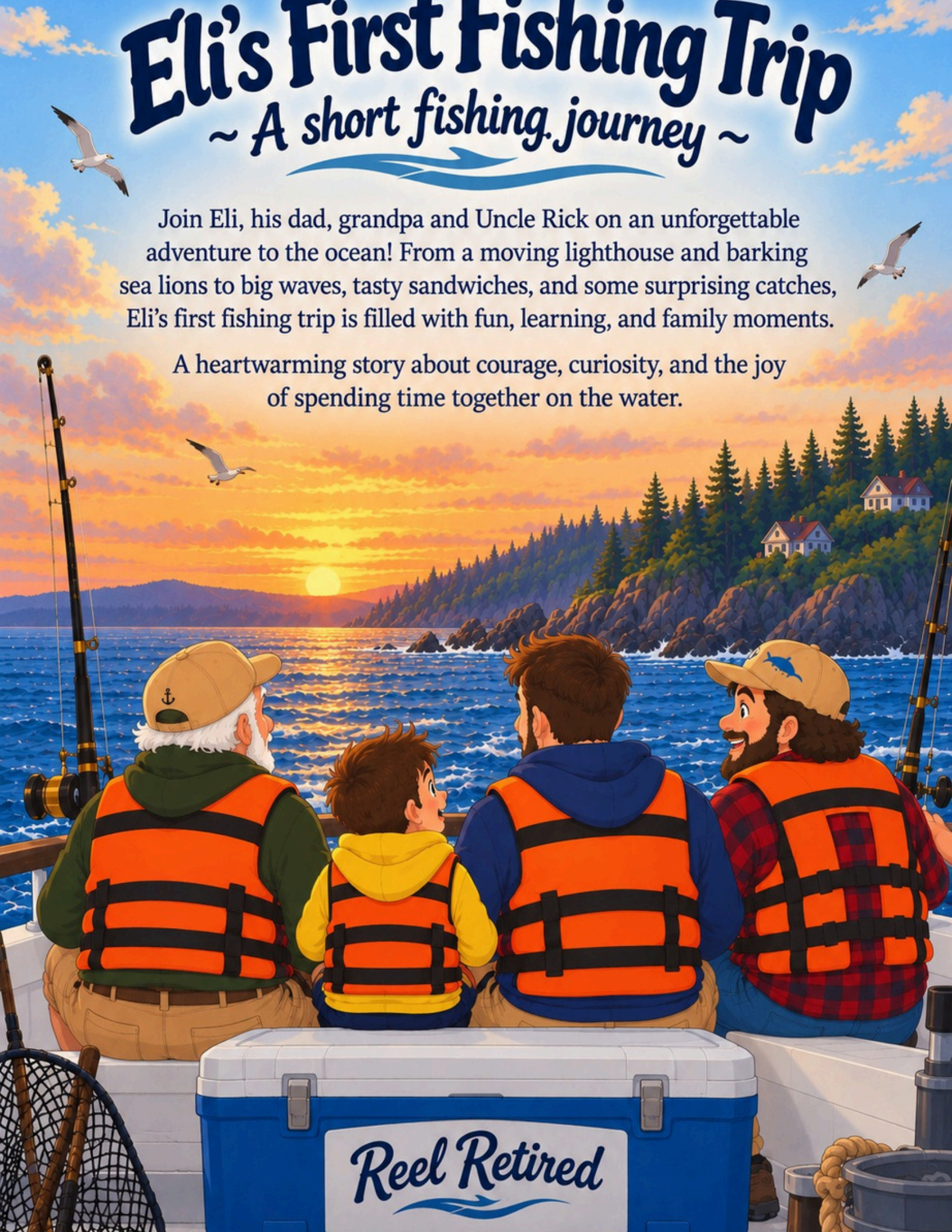


Goodnight, Sea!



Eli's First Fishing Trip

~ A short fishing journey ~



Join Eli, his dad, grandpa and Uncle Rick on an unforgettable adventure to the ocean! From a moving lighthouse and barking sea lions to big waves, tasty sandwiches, and some surprising catches, Eli's first fishing trip is filled with fun, learning, and family moments.

A heartwarming story about courage, curiosity, and the joy of spending time together on the water.