

## **The Holiday**

**by Susan Feary**

Bridlington, a fishing port and seaside resort, was a perfect place for a family holiday. In the morning we walked around the harbour and watched the fishing boats coming in with their catches, which were unloaded and stacked on the harbour wall. Buyers would crowd round, eager to see the catch. Big healthy-looking cod, and haddock, which would end up on someone's table that evening after visiting the fish and chip shop. My two girls loved to watch the wriggly fish, and were fascinated at the size of the catches.

Around the harbour as well as the large fishing fleet were little boats, and pleasure cruisers plying their trade. Notices on bill boards stood on the quay saying, 'Trips to Seal Island,' 'Harbour Cruises,' and the one that caught Emrys' eye, 'Deep Sea Fishing, Day trips - £4.00 per person.' I knew he really wanted to go. It was something he had wanted to do for ages but money was tight, and I kept putting him off. "Not today, lets see how the money goes."

Emrys' face fell, his passion was fishing even if only from a bank or beach. "I know it's expensive, but I'm happy to forgo a few ice creams! What about you girls?" He grabbed their hands and ran down to the beach, the girls squealing with joy as they ran to meet the surf, jumping and laughing, while I found a deck chair and settle down to read.

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It had been a wonderful week. The kids had enjoyed the sand and sea, and I'd enjoyed the rest. Emrys, my husband, relished spending more time with his family. The girls loved being with their Daddy. He had time to play, making elaborate castles, moats and tunnels in the sand. Emma told anyone nearby who would listen how clever her Daddy was!

We hadn't much money. I'd scrimped and saved for this all year, but we didn't need much, especially when the sun shone every day, and we were staying in a boarding house on half board. The only thing we needed was money for lunch, an ice cream, or for the kids to go on the fun fair a couple of times.

The end of the week came quickly, and the last full day dawned bright and clear.

After a hearty breakfast we loaded the pushchair with the paraphernalia we needed for two young children and headed towards the harbour.

The boats bobbed up and down in their moorings. The water glittered in the early morning sunshine.

"How about a trip deep sea fishing sir?" A boatman in nautical gear gripped Emrys' arm. "Just the day for it, and we're bound to catch lots of fish!" He had twinkling eyes and a weather beaten face. His rolling gait reminded me of Popeye!

Emrys looked at me. "I know it's a lot to ask but it's the last day and....."

Amanda hopped up and down on one foot, "Go on, Mummy, let Daddy go, he can catch lots of fish for our tea!" I looked at the children, and my husband, they were so excited.

The boat captain egged the girls on. "You'd like Daddy to catch some big fish wouldn't you?"

Emrys was prepared to go along with this. "Yes girls, then Mrs. Bright can cook them for our tea!" He took hold of my arm. "Come on love, I know it's expensive, but it is the last day. I really want to go."

Emma the little one squealed with delight. “We’re going to have Daddy’s fish for tea. One, two, three, four, five, Daddy caught a fish alive!” She clung to me. “Mummy do let him!”

My heart began to melt, and looking in my purse I counted the cash carefully. “Go on then, we can afford it. I can take the kids on the beach, and we’ll meet you here when you get back.”

His eyes lit up, and I gave him a peck on the cheek as he paid up. Rather unsteadily he clambered down the gang plank into the belly of the little boat. Where several other would be fishermen were gathered. Sitting among a conglomeration of deep sea fishing equipment.

The skipper threw the mooring ropes onto the deck and jumped aboard. We waved the little craft off. I with trepidation, as Emrys had never been deep sea fishing before, preferring to cast a line off the jetty or the bank. The girls with pride at their Daddy going on such a big adventure.

“He’ll catch lots of fish Mum, just wait and see!” Amanda reassured me, as we walked off the quay.

We spent the day on the beach. I caught up with a bit of reading, in between making sand castles with the girls, and paddling in the sea. The weather was beautiful, although a slight wind had blown up, which made the waves dance. I gazed out to sea, wondering just how Emrys was faring. I hoped he was enjoying the trip, he deserved it.

Every so often one of the girls asked, “How many fish do you think Daddy has caught, Mummy?” or “When can we go meet the boat?” They could hardly contain themselves, and their excitement started to rub off on me! I kept looking at my watch and imagining the plate of fresh caught fish our landlady would cooked especially for us. Emrys looking on with pride as his little family ate the fruits of his labours!

“Come on girls. Lets go meet Dad and see how many fish he caught!” I said, gathering the buckets, spades, shoes and other things we had scattered on the sand.

Standing on the quay side we could see the little fishing boat chugging into the Harbour. The men were standing in the bow, some holding their catches high as they saw their families eagerly waiting. The wives shouted, “Look at the fish Daddy has caught. Isn’t he clever?” The men seemed to grow taller at their prowess, but where was my husband? Where was his catch? Then I spotted him sitting dejectedly in the bottom of the boat, his face a nasty shade of green.

“Look it’s Daddy!” Amanda shouted, hopping up and down on one foot with excitement. He pulled himself up, head lowered, his hair falling over his brow. Eventually, when the boat had moored and everyone else had disembarked he staggered off. Standing in front of me, he hissed through tight lips, “Don’t say a word, I have had a dreadful day!”

“Why, what happened? Where are all the fish you were going to catch?” I asked with trepidation.

He grabbed the girls hands and marched off, with me running to keep up.

“I was sick..... seasick!” glaring at me as I caught up. “Don’t you dare laugh. I was so sick that I lost my false teeth in the sea, and even though I could see them floating past me, I felt so bad that I couldn’t be bothered to scoop them up, so they’re gone!” I tried to swallow a giggle that threatened to engulf me. Not only had he not landed any fish but had also not been able to catch his teeth!

“Mummy, what’s wrong with Daddy? Why is he so cross?” Little Emma couldn’t understand her Daddy’s temper! “We want to see the fish, where are they?” She skipped round her father, her little piping voice growing higher. “One, two, three, four, five, Daddy caught a fish alive!”

Emrys’ face changed from anger to sorrow. “No, sweetie, not now. Daddy was ill, and now I’ve ...” His voice faltered, “My teeth are gone!” He looked as if he would burst into tears. Emma, sensing he wanted to be left alone, fell back and held my hand as our very subdued family walked along the sea front to the boarding house.

We eventually got back to the guesthouse, just in time for late dinner.

“You go, “ he said. “I can’t eat with no teeth.”

I tried to sound sympathetic, “Come on it’ll be alright, maybe it’s something that you can suck!”

He looked at me with a wry smile. “Your right, maybe it’ll be soup! Worse things happen at sea! Come on girls. Let’s go.” Holding his head high he led us into the dining room.

I picked up the menu, oh no, you’ve guessed it, fish and chips! The other guests looked up as we slipped into our seats.

“Don’t say a word girls!” Emrys whispered. Giving me a little smile.

As if on cue Emma jumped down from her seat. She marched to the middle of the room where she could be seen by everyone. Placing her hands on her hips, chin jutting out in defiance. She announced to the whole assembly, her voice rising with excitement. “My Daddy’s lost his teeth in the sea, and he can’t get them back!” Everyone gasped, someone stifled a laugh.

Thank goodness we are going home tomorrow!