

Star Crossed Anglers

by Hugh Barlow

"Hey, Pop! I'm bored! Bored, bored, bored, bored, bored. Let's go out to your favorite spot and see what we can catch."

"Sure, son. Gimme a minute. I gotta get the gear together, and we need to hook the skiff up to the main rig. Got to cover some rough terrain to get to the hole, and you know it is a fair piece. Let's clear this trip with your mom. You know she worries when we don't tell her where we are going."

"Sure, Pop. I'll help with the tackle while you talk to Mom."

"Son, now that we are on the way, why don't you go take a nap for a while. It will be a bit before we get to our destination, and we both want to be fresh for the fun."

"OK, Pop. I'll just hop back to the cubby and strap in. See you on the other side!"

"I'll take a bit of a nap too when we get closer, boy. There's some tricky driving ahead, and I want to be ready for it. See you in a bit."

"Refreshed, boy? Gotta park the rig before we shove off. Got all the gear in the skiff?"

"Ready and rarin' to go, Pop! Got everything packed. Even got some extra snacks and brew. I know how you like the brew!"

"Ok, boy, cast loose! I'm headin' for my favorite rock. You know the one? The green one covered mostly by water. That place is teaming with all kinds of stuff. Got the finder? Good, point it over thisaway!"

At a Burger King, just after sundown in downtown Kansas City, a pile of birdseed mysteriously appears on an outside table. A squirrel hops onto the table and cautiously sniffs at the offering. Peering about and sensing no danger, the squirrel gingerly begins to peck at the pile.

"Damn! Wrong species, boy! This ain't nothin' we can use. It's simply a nuisance. Might be able to use it for bait somewhere else, but not in this area! Maybe we need to use different bait. What else do we have in the tackle box? Gimme some brew!"

Available online at *«<http://fictionaut.com/stories/hugh-barlow/star-crossed-anglers>»*

Copyright © 2011 Hugh Barlow. All rights reserved.

Crazy Bob is sitting in a park just outside of Kansas City. Being homeless, and out of money, he has no-where else to be. Pickings were slim at the dumpster, and Bob is hungry. He is alone in the park. He likes it that way. He hates living in the city and fighting with the other homeless people for the food, clothing and shelter they all need. The park is quiet, and he does not have to worry about people taking his stuff. The little fast food joint outside of the park entrance usually has leftovers that it throws away at night when they close up, but not tonight. Maybe tomorrow he will go into town and see what he can find at the mission if he can't beg his breakfast from some Good Samaritan. Suddenly, Bob smells ambrosia, and he stumbles off to one of the picnic tables to find a burger and fries just sitting there.

"Got a big one boy! He's movin' real fast! Don't think he has had time to eat the bait just yet, so we need to play him out. Let the hook set. Don't want to loose him! Get the net ready!"

"Aye, aye, Pop!"

Bob stumbles to his hiding place in the brush. While he did not see anyone come into the park, and he saw no-one leave, burgers and fries do not just show up from the sky. Figuring that there must be someone who left it behind, and that they were likely not far away, Bob decided to go to his special place to eat. He did not want to be caught by the previous owners at their table. After resting for a few minutes, and keeping an eye out for other people, Bob starts to nibble at his find.

"Here, boy! Feel that? Feel the tiny jerks on the line? He ain't taken the bait yet, but he's gettin' ready to! Just a bit more time. Let him get comfortable. A couple of hard tugs, and then we'll set the line and bring him in! Get ready with the net, boy!"

"Hey, Pop? How come they lay on the floor and gasp like that when we bring them on board?"

"Well, boy, when we bring them up, we take them out of the environment that they were designed for, and for a bit, there ain't any environment for them to breathe. When they get here to the

skiff, the air is wrong for them, so we have to put them in the container. Go put that one there in the container, and give him some brew. Don't want him dying before we can get him home. Be careful not to drop him!"

Bob finally bolts down the burger. The fries were quite tasty.

Suddenly there is a wrenching feeling in his gut. "Damn, not food poisoning again!" He doubles over and it feels like he is having an out of body experience. He wants to vomit, but seems unable to do so. As he floats up higher he begins to have difficulty breathing.

Bob feels like he is hallucinating as he stares at two amorphous blobs, one larger than the other. He is laying on his side, gasping for air when the smaller one approaches him and throws him into a small, clear walled room. A container is pressed to the side of the wall, and suddenly he is able to breath again. In the next room over, a squirrel is running laps in a panic and bouncing off the invisible walls.

"Boy, your mother is gonna love this one! LOOK at him, ain't he a beaut?"

