

A Quandry

by stephen hastings-king

On the river he rows a dory. It is filling with water. There is a rectangular hole in the bottom.

The boat is elegantly designed, carefully crafted and painted white. He was entranced by it from the moment he saw it.

Then he looked inside.

He said: There is a hole in the bottom of this boat.

The Salesman said: Yes.

Won't it sink?

Not if it is in motion. Motion is the natural state of a boat in salt water. Think about it: the waves and tides...any boat on salt water is continuously in motion. Motion concentrates surface tension so the water cannot get in.

Theoretically, that seemed plausible.

And the boat is beautiful.

So he bought it.

Now he has stopped rowing and started bailing.

He thinks: Perhaps the hole is for a motor and was installed backward. Maybe if I reverse direction it won't scoop water into the bottom.

He begins to row in the opposite direction.

More water comes in.

He says to himself: When I row in this direction, it is now forward. Perhaps I have not thought this out.

He stops rowing to think.

More water comes in.

Each launch has come with a similar quandary.

