

EE GADS...AND LITTLE FISHES

By David Burton

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EE-GADS...AND LITTLE FISHES

by
Carolyn West

CAST: YOUNG and OLD

YOUNG: Great sharks! Look out! Look out!

OLD: What?

YOUNG: Something struck the surface of the water. It's a bird. It has to be a bird. Probably one of them there pelican birds swooping down from the sky to gobble us up.

OLD: I don't think. . .

YOUNG: Shhh...Be quiet!

OLD: (**pause**) Relax. Nothing is happening. I think the danger has passed.

YOUNG: You can never be sure. That's what Mama tells us.

OLD: You're one of the new ones, aren't you? You're one of Mama Bradshaw's babies.

YOUNG: How did you know?

OLD: Weight and length, mainly. You were small enough that I knew you had crept into the world this year, yet you're still pretty good size for a baby. I remember Bradshaw had hers earlier than most.

YOUNG: I guess I *am* pretty big. Some of them crazy two year olds call me "Barely Eatin' Size". I'm not quite sure what it means, but I don't like the connotation. Seems to say I could be a good meal for some critter down here.

OLD: You catch on quickly.

YOUNG: Don't I know it. Mama teaches us all the fine points of livin'. She preaches to us daily, "Be wary of everything. Every mammal, reptile, and amphibian considers us delicious, so our species can afford to trust no one. You hear? No one!" She even has a saying...

BOTH: "Know your enemy."

YOUNG: How do you know what Mama says?

OLD: I've been around. I've heard Bradshaw preaching to baby fish for years. It's a small, small pond, after all.

YOUNG: I suppose you heard it all, but this is my first time. She teaches us everything. You know, 'bout life and love and little fishes'.

OLD: **(Laughs)** You listen to Bradshaw. She knows more than some of those big fish swimming in the ocean. She has to. They're not like we are, confined in a small area.

YOUNG: Mama is smart, all right, but don't think nobody in the pond is gonna dare eat me?

OLD: Oh, and why wouldn't they? I'm a fish same as you, and I've had plenty try to eat me up. We're almost at the bottom of the food chain, kid. Ya know that junk you were just nibbling on?

YOUNG: Yes?

OLD: That's the bottom of the food chain. And if you're eating it, that means you're nearly scrapin' bottom yourself.

YOUNG: I don't care. I possess a secret weapon...No, two secret weapons.

OLD: What weapons would a small fry like you possibly be concealing? I'm huge and my only asset is the wisdom of many years lived.

YOUNG: Let's just say my weapons will keep me alive.

OLD: Oh? Mighty sure of ourselves, aren't we?

YOUNG: Mama says I shouldn't be arrogant, but I say, "Why not beat your chest if you're the best."

OLD: The best? **(laughing)** Why, you're just a punk kid. You babes think you're practically inedible, while in reality, there's not an animal alive that wouldn't love to have you on his plate for supper. At least I'd be a main course. You'd just be a side dish.

YOUNG: Fat chance, Flipper. In my class at school, I'm the fastest swimmer and I have the sharpest eyes.

OLD: Congratulations. What a combination!

YOUNG: Isn't it, though? Now you can see why I lean a little toward the cocky side. I'm the largest of my brothers and sisters, and I can out swim any of them old turtles and snakes that come lookin' for a good meal. Them nasty turtles, they can eat every one of my dumb ole' brothers and sisters for all I care, but they ain't never gonna get me.

OLD: Aren't you a little young to be so brash?

YOUNG: I don't think so. I'm just who I am.

OLD: Dead is what you're gonna be if you don't stop acting so high and mighty. You young fry, you astound me with your stark ignorance.

YOUNG: Hey, watch it, Gramps! I know my way around a pond.

OLD: Do you, though? Have you perhaps heard of the surprise ambush? Speed doesn't help you there. A creature pounces out, and before you can move, it's taken a big bite out of your midsection, and you're just stuck there, mouth open, eyes bugging out, not even able to make a sound.

YOUNG: No...No...No! I don't want to hear this. It's too much like a nightmare I had once. Experienced the whole dream with my eyes open. I dreamt a great killer whale 'bout the size of this whole dangd pond swam out here and swallowed me up.

OLD: You shouldn't be having too much trouble with whales unless you somehow manage to swim down to the coast, and that would involve a heap of dry land as well.

YOUNG: I suppose I'll steer clear of them big whales. I can handle what's in this pond.

OLD: Can you? There happen to be plenty of creatures right here in this oversized mudhole that can kill you as dead as any killer whale could.

YOUNG: Nuh-uh. That's my other secret weapon...a sharp pair of eyes! Don't forget, it was me that warned you about the bird a few minutes ago. No bird or turtle or snake is gonna ambush me. I'm always watchin' close to see if any varmints are hangin' around. **(pauses, looks up)** Watch out! Incoming bird!

OLD: **(both duck down for a moment and pause, slowly rising again)** That's odd. The bird landed, but he didn't fly back up.

YOUNG: You suppose he drowned?

OLD: I doubt it. They thrash a lot before that ever happens. I can see it up there. It's pretty small, just floating on the water.

YOUNG: Hey, looky here...a worm danglin' right in front of me. Do you suppose it's my birthday?

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