



Proudly Presents

# THE BIG ONE

**WRITTEN BY CELESTE LEBEAUX**

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## IMPORTANT: PLEASE READ

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When I was a little girl, I did everything indoors. I was such a Momma's girl. Then I turned five. Suddenly, the man, who was always on the road, got a promotion at work and didn't have to travel out of town anymore. He asked me to go fishing with him for the first time. Up to that point, I didn't even know my father went fishing. It's funny. My relationship with my father can be summed up by a series of fishing stories. So, are you ready to get hooked?

As a little girl, I had red, frizzy hair. Lots of it. In fact, some used to joke that I was a ringer for Annie, in well...Annie... you know, the musical about the little orphan girl? I don't really know, however, if part of that wasn't attributed to my father's bald head. He shaved it...on purpose. I don't think it was so he would look like Daddy Warbucks, although he did...I think it was more of a Bruce-Willis-thing... You know, from all those Die Hard movies?

Dad worked for an insurance company, but he very easily could have been a teacher. Dad loved kids, and he had more patience than anyone I know. In hindsight, that's probably why he was such a good fisherman. Dad taught me many lessons on our fishing trips. They are lessons I carry with me to this day.

The first time he took me fishing, Dad rented a small fishing boat. We were going to fish for catfish, but there were none to be caught. *(Laughs)* Dad said the dogs probably chased them all away... *(Proud)* But I caught 34 Perch that day! We, of course, didn't keep any of them, but we caught them nonetheless. Actually, I was the only one who caught any Perch. Dad spent all of his time merely unhooking them, releasing them, and baiting my hook for me. I think he got a kick out of watching me hoist the small fish out of the water. I remember giggling the entire day. I was amazed at the ease at which I caught these fish. I would barely have my hook in the water, and 'Bam!' I had hooked another one! We spent the

entire day finding new coves, eating deviled ham on Ritz crackers, drinking grape sodas, and talking softly...so as to not scare off the schools of fish underneath our boat in the shallow waters.

*(Pause for emotional transition.)*

My mother died later that year. It was a heart attack. It was hard...hard on both of us. It's always hard to lose someone you love, but for a young girl, I think it is especially difficult. About a month after the funeral, Dad took some of the life insurance money and bought a speedboat. He named it The Deborah...after Mom. And he started taking me fishing almost every weekend. It was our special... alone time.

Our return to the lakes yielded very little rewards. I think we probably scared the fish away with our fits of tears, but over time, we would just spend hours not saying anything. We would just sit in our assigned seats, hooks in the water, and wait for the big one. Dad would always say if we waited long enough, we were bound to catch the big one someday. So, we waited. Dozens of lost lures, buckets of worms, and can upon can of deviled ham, Ritz crackers, and gallons of grape soda later...we still had not caught the big one! We hadn't even seen the big one splash above the water's surface! I would have settled for something the size of Nemo at that point! *(Laughs)*. Despite the fact that we caught nothing, except the occasional buried tire, Dad would always end our trips by saying, "It was a good day."

He was right. It was a good day.

For my sixteenth birthday, Dad took me down to the coast for a little saltwater fishing. He was determined that we would bring home a trophy fish, like... a Blue Marlin, or at least a Swordfish.