

# ALONE

**T**HE NIGHT was drawing to a close and the moonbeams shimmered upon the lazy lake. Early morning stars blinked on and off like fireflies in the night. A wind was nudging the waves upon the smooth, sandy shore. The air was fresh and cool. Quietly, a red ball of fire stealthily crept into the horizon wakening the sprightly waves. All was ready to welcome the opening of another mysterious and challenging day.

He stood on the sandy shore awed by the quiet beauty of the dawn. Years of challenge and love for his profession showed in his craggy face. His eyes like live coals glowed with knowledge gained, probing for still more. Shabbily dressed, an obstinate fish smell clinging to him, he bent and picked up a work-worn fishing net. Fondly, he touched it. Humming a cheerful tune, he approached his fishing schooner, paused a moment and glanced aimlessly about him, searching for nothing in particular but receptive to anything new. Certain all was safe and sound, he climbed aboard his little schooner for the start of a new and profitable day.

The little boat sat in the middle of the lake, a mere speck. Slowly, he lowered the line of his prized fishing reel into the depths. It took him back to the very first time his great grandfather had allowed him to fish with him. This reminiscing brought with it a feeling of success as he thought of all the rewards that had come to him. A new sleek fishing vessel chugged by, jarring his peaceful mood. Its chrome glistening, the ropes shouting strength, and the crew—eager with anticipation, it sped past. Silently he cursed this monster that had invaded his secluded world. Livid with rage, his eyes shooting sparks, a mouth snarling in his rugged face, he cursed his fate.

Black thunderheads tumbled treacherously across the sky. Thunder rolled, screamed, beat. Lightning shot out its lean, long fingers of warning. The lake water slapped the sides of the boat and tossed it about. Quickly awakened from his dark thoughts, the fisherman saw that his sturdy little schooner was leaking profusely. He was too far from shore to return before the storm began its lashing. Viciously, the wind snatched the boat and threw it wildly across the lake. Threatening boulders lurked in its path. His breath had become shallow and shaky; he noticed his hands now trembling and useless at his side. The boat was flooding with the numbing rain.

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\* Freshman Writing.

Shivering in the little schooner he recalled a Biblical tale his great-grandfather had once recounted to him. It was the story of the disciples who were tossed about in their small boat on the tempestuous sea. How he longed that he too, like the Great Master, could calm the mighty winds and sea! But the boat was flooding with the chilling rain. The sands of time were slowly ebbing away. He silently prayed that the new, sleek fishing vessel would seek him out. He pushed once livid thoughts of this menace to the furthest corner of his mind and lay there hoping, longing, praying. Minutes ticked by, the storm's intensity increased. Wild winds shook through the limbs of the trees. In the gray distance, the schooner became a dim outline. A welcomed light cut through the carpet-of fog. The lone fisherman's hopes rose faintly. Painfully, he lifted himself up and tried desperately to shout, but not one sound could he utter. With beads of perspiration mixed with the salt water falling from above, he fell back. His dark, piercing eyes closed and two salty tears crept down his rough, windblown cheek. Hope deserted him.

Cries of anxious mariners, seeking out danger, echoed over the tossing current. There was great commotion aboard the sleek, modern vessel that had spotted the ancient seaman. From the deck, hope-filled men challenged the pelting rains as they lined against the rail. Their trained eyes scanned the whipping waters. Unexpectedly, the crew viewed the small schooner floundering in the destructive sea. Dashing to their positions, they set about to rescue this ancient mariner. Great, yet hurried, care began their mission. All the ropes ready, the rafts were lowered into the tossing current. They knew what they must do. Every second counted. Agilely, the husky seamen climbed into the rafts and rowed into the twisting, defying storm. A blustering wind attempted to overturn their own craft but they would not yield. Ahead of them lay the struggling schooner quivering in the lake. Quickly, they closed the gap between the two crafts.

Two young rescuers deftly boarded the sinking schooner, time racing against them. Sprawled across the flooded deck was the lone fisherman. Kneeling quickly, they lifted him up cautiously, carrying him to the raft. Approaching the sleek vessel, the haggard fisherman's eyes slowly unveiled themselves. He looked about him into the faces of the young seamen. Slowly, a knowing smile etched itself into the ancient mariner's rugged face. Arriving at the gleaming schooner, they gently lifted him aboard. Between each man passed a silent message of respect for this wise and wonderful man. He quietly turned his head to take one last glimpse at his little schooner plunging into the mysterious depths. An exciting part in his life was now ending but the once lonesome seaman turned back for he was no more alone. A new adventure had opened its door and was beckoning to him.

