



*'Twas the Night
Before Fishmas*

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Poem by Jennifer Tatelman


Illustrated by Josh May

For my adoring children.
May your fish be as big as your dreams.
Love always,
Mom

Twas the night before Fishmas, when upon the water,
Not a trout was stirring, not even an otter,
The rods were hung by the chimney with care,
Counting down the days that the fish would be there.



The children were settled all snug in their beds,
While visions of rising trout danced in their heads,
And mamma in her boots, and I in my waders,
Had settled our thoughts on the adventure to come later.



When out on the river there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the sack to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and grabbed the fishing stash.

The river hatched like a dream I once had,
I stood there in awe, what a miracle to be glad,
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
A big brown trout jumped so very near.

With my rod in hand and my fly at the ready,
I dead drifted the run, my stick so very steady,
More rapid than eagles more risers they came,
As I mended, and hook set, the more excited I became.

Now brookies! Now brownies! Now cutties and bows!
On buggers, on midges, on dries and minnows!
To the top of the water and every column in between,
Now cast away, cast away, cast away the fly seen.



As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When the big one came back, soaring into the sky,
With a strong hook set and a line that was tight,
A smile so big, what a magical night.



And then, in a twinkling, I heard a splash,
Without a good fight he'd be gone in a flash,
As I drew in my rod, and was turning around,
To the net he came, a new friend I had found.



He was dressed in red spots from his head to his tail,
With blue halos glowing and such beautiful scales,
He rest in the net ready to return to the river,
So soon he'd be off with just a moment's slither.

His eyes—how they twinkled! His jaw how strong!
I could study its simple beauty all day long,
His droll little mouth was drawn up with a grin,
And with a quick release he swiftly went back in.



He was chubby and plump, a good one at best,
And I chuckled when I thought of just how obsessed,
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,
Its presence reminded me I had nothing to dread.

I sat there dreaming of it's ripple on the water,
With only hints of brown and red flashes left to ponder,
He had a broad face and a little round belly,
That shook when he wiggled, like a bowlful of jelly.

He spoke not a word, but will stay with me forever,
A fishmas miracle, I will always remember,
No better way spend to the days,
A tale so big it will live far beyond the holidays.



He sprang to his feet, to the moon gave a whistle,
And away the fish went like the down of a thistle,
But I heard him holler, as he swam out of sight,
“Merry Fishmas to all, and to all a good-night.”



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