

# *The Big Fish*

*by Frederick Wickert*

Corey climbed to the top of the big rock. He looked down into the water and froze. His heart began racing as the full impact of what he was seeing hit him.

"I can't believe it! That's the biggest doggone rainbow trout in the whole world. I've got to find a way to catch him. No one will ever believe me when I tell them about that fish."

It was one of those lazy, hazy afternoons of a nearly perfect kind of day. The air, warm and comfortable with a soft, light breeze blowing off the mountain on the other side of the creek, was carrying a light fragrance of cedar and pine. Only Pat, that nuisance kid sister tagging along could spoil it.

"There's the big rock," Corey said. "I'll lie upon it and watch the clouds." Corey often lay on that rock and watched all the different shapes the clouds made.

Pat, trying to be helpful offered, "You can tell them to ask me. I can tell them about it."

Girls believe even a small one is big. They just won't trust it."

"Well, suit yourself. I'm just trying to help."

Corey studied the situation. The water, gurgling musically as it turned the outward curve of the rock, slowed and became quieter as it neared the end. Then gushing around the corner to the downstream side, it began to whirl, making a small, deeper pool. When the light was just right he could see the bottom, and sometimes there would be a crawdad or two. On this day there was the most awesome rainbow trout Corey had ever seen.

"I can't reach far enough to catch him with my hands," Corey groaned. "I need to get some stuff, but that fish might go away before I get back.

A worried Corey took off his sneakers and socks. The water was shallow at the edge of the pool, and he carefully collected rocks from the streambed.

"What are you going to do?" Pat smirked. "Try to kill him with rocks?"

"No, stupid. Just like a girl to think that. I'm going to make a little dam around the pool so he can't come out before I get back."

"It won't work," offered Pat.

"And why won't it?"

"Because you can only put a dam on the downstream side. He can still swim out upstream, so there, smarty pants."

Looking at the situation, Corey said, "Yeah. I see what you mean. I guess you're right. Well, I sure hope that big old fish likes that pool and stays there. I'm going home and get some stuff. I'll be right back."

Pat climbed up the big rock and watched the fish as Corey ran home across the field. When he got there, Corey went in the garage where he found his dad's fishing pole, a tackle box full of lures, and a net. This should do it, Corey thought.

Panting out of breath when he returned, Corey looked around for some live bait. Under a rock, he found a worm, then found a cricket and was able to snatch a grasshopper flying through the air.

“These ought to do it,” he announced.

He tried the worm, but as it sank slowly to the bottom, the fish ignored it. The worm lay wriggling on the bottom, but the fish shunned it. Corey anxiously jiggled the worm up and down past the fish, but the fish just hung there without moving.

Corey heaved a sigh. “Well, I guess he don’t want worms today. Sometimes I’d rather have a pizza than a hamburger, so I’ll try something else.”

Corey put the grasshopper on the hook. It kicked and thrashed in a lively manner, but the fish wasn’t interested. Corey tried the cricket and then some of the lures in the box. He pleaded with the fish to take a bite of something, anything, but the fish was indifferent.

“What are you going to do now? You aren’t going to get him are you?” mocked Pat.

“I’m not giving up yet, I still might get him.”

Corey picked up the net. He lay on the rock as close to the edge as he could, and reached down with the net. The handle was too short. He took the hook off the line and removed the line from the reel. He wrapped the line around the pole and the end of the net handle, binding them together. He tied it tight and tested it. It felt strong enough.

When Dad finds out what you did with his fishing pole, you’re going to get it,” Pat giggled.

“When I come home with this big fish, he’ll be so proud he won’t even think about that,” bragged Corey. “He won’t be mad when he sees this fish. Nobody can say their kid caught a fish like this one.”

Again Corey lay on the big rock. He carefully lowered the net with the pole attached. He could reach all the way to the bottom of the pool now. Slowly, he raised the net directly under the fish. Suddenly he gave a mighty upward heave.

“I got him,” Corey shouted. “Dad will be some proud of me now, by gosh!”

Happily, Corey skipped home, holding the big fish up high as he went. Pat skipped along beside him, laughing gaily all the way. The fishing pole, net and tackle box lay forgotten in the grass.