

1st  
7/8/62

(Draft (2 copies - Orig & 1 copy))

TRUTH IS STRANGER....

Bob's  
The wire read: "Arriving in <sup>the</sup> morning  
for a few days <sup>of</sup> fishing and to go over Project A.  
Kelley."

What's <sup>this mysterious</sup> Project A? I thought,  
pondering <sup>his cryptic</sup> ~~the mysterious wire~~ <sup>telegram</sup>.

Life photographer Bob Kelley and I  
had met the summer before when he'd  
come to Ishpeming and taken the trout fishing  
pictures that <sup>later</sup> appeared around X-mas in the  
special outdoor edition of Life. During his  
stay he had fallen in love with my native Upper  
Peninsula of Michigan. We had also become friends.

Kelley arrived the next morning in <sup>the usual</sup> a blaze  
of cameras, <sup>trunks,</sup> rod cases and <sup>also</sup> <sup>after</sup> cartons of  
colored slides. I promptly surveyed all the cartons.

"Feeble pictures?" I leered hopefully.

"Nope. It's our Project A."

"Please explain."

Kelley explained. He pointed out that the  
magazine had used but a mere dozen of the over  
fourteen hundred pictures he had taken; ~~that to his~~  
of me and my pals going through our trout <sup>trout</sup> rituals.  
that there existed no picture books devoted <sup>solely</sup> to <sup>light</sup> <sup>time</sup>  
trout fishing and its <sup>most</sup> disciples; and that <sup>it</sup> he and I <sup>you</sup> <sup>thought</sup>  
were going to collaborate in doing one.

"Where do I come in?" I said dubiously.

"You write the captions."

"What's the title of our new opus?"

" 'Anatomy of a Fisherman' of course," he said. "Here, grab this slide viewer."

So Kelley and I spent the next <sup>debating,</sup> <sup>three</sup> few days <sup>slowly</sup> mixing slides and pasting our picture book together. Fishing was lousy and we were sunned out on our few attempts. "I think you caught the last trout in Michigan last summer," Kelley needled me.

The fourth day, Friday, June 29th, was my birthday and another fisherman, Art Flick of West Hill, New York, was due to arrive that afternoon. ~~That morning dawned with soft cloudy overcast skies.~~ Art was the author of the famous "The Streamside Guide" and we had become fishermen pals when I'd written him <sup>an eecotele</sup> fan letter. We were <sup>about to meet</sup> <sup>right before meeting</sup> to meet for the first time.

My birthday dawned with <sup>lovely</sup> cloudy overcast skies -- the first in <sup>many</sup> days -- and a soft southwesterly wind. Even Kelley's nostrils were dilated as we ~~sat~~ dawdled over breakfast and wondered whether we could <sup>get a slip out and fish for</sup> fish a few hours before Flick arrived. Our wonder <sup>moment</sup> turned to conviction as the clouds increased <sup>and</sup> I pinned a note on the kitchen door.

"Dear Art," it read. "It's a dreamy day for fishing so a pal and I are going out to catch your breakfast. The <sup>key</sup> keys under the mat if you arrive before we get back. There's beer in the ice box."

As we sped along in my <sup>trusty</sup> jeep, bound for Uncle Sam's Pond, Kelley and I ~~convicted~~ <sup>salved</sup> our guilty consciences by telling each other that we were really doing this <sup>all</sup> for Art -- we simply <sup>selflessly</sup> wanted him to have a meal of wild native Upper Peninsula brook

trout. Of course we did... <sup>plus a few clouds and</sup>

Halfway to Uncle's I had a <sup>creative</sup> brainstorm. "Kelley, I've got a great fishing story," I crowed exultantly. "Don't you see? -- a fisherman is expecting a guest but he sneaks off, just as we're doing."

"What then?" Kelley said, already getting his gear ready for our grand assault on Uncle Sam's Pond.

"Don't you see? The sloping host fisherman gets shanked -- not a bloody fish -- and arrives home to find <sup>still</sup> another note pinned to his kitchen door. It's from his guest -- he'd arrived, seen the same clouds, and sneaked up the road beyond the house <sup>to while away the time making</sup> ~~for a few~~ <sup>to make</sup> a few thousand casts."

"I don't quite follow," Kelley said.

"The <sup>guilty</sup> host barrels up the road in search of his neglected guest, 'see?' <sup>two miles from his kitchen door</sup>

"What then?"

"Why, he finds his guest <sup>wading up to his</sup> <sup>whistle - string</sup> fishing in an old slough -- one that even the birds ignore -- landing one beautiful specimen after another."

"Hm...." Kelley said, pondering my brainstorm.

By now we had turned off on our final dirt road and were <sup>foraging and</sup> <sup>idly</sup> <sup>humping</sup> along on the jeep kicking my new fishing string back and forth. Suddenly there was a thud, the jeep swerved, and I <sup>tramped</sup> on the brakes. "Oh Lord," I moaned, "we've got a flat, Flie's arriving, and already the clouds are thinning."

We got out and looked <sup>all around</sup> but all the tires were up. "Just swerved in the loose gravel," I said, leaping gaily back in the jeep. Kelley shook his head. "Come look, my friend," he said, pointing at the right rear wheel, <sup>which</sup> <sup>was</sup> <sup>titled</sup> <sup>at</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>45</sup> <sup>angle</sup>.

I looked up at the sky.

"Oh Lord," I moaned. "It's a broken apple."

then I <sup>philosophically</sup> got out the whiskey. The clouds were <sup>falling</sup> ~~blowing~~ like a snowstorm in May. "Bumps," we said morosely, drinking <sup>our</sup> tin cups and drowning our sorrows. Here our fishing trip was shot, the sun was emerging, <sup>fisher</sup> Flick was on his way - and ~~that~~ <sup>poor</sup> my <sup>stricken</sup> job had suffered a broken apple imptam miles from nowhere. Which one of us would hoof it back to phone the wrecker?

speaking

We sat and pondered <sup>and</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>our</sup> dilemma. <sup>Maybe a car would come along.</sup> <sup>from Uncle's way -</sup>

If we waited we drank. <sup>She came out of the distance.</sup>

<sup>slow</sup> Far down the road, <sup>emerging</sup> from the <sup>same</sup> a cloud of dust, <sup>came out of the distance</sup> like a genie emerging from a bottle.

"Our genie drove up and ground to a stop, turning into an old Finnish pulp-cutter driving an ancient Majordell.

"Hallo poyp," he said genially. "You got troubles?"

"Plenty - a <sup>near</sup> broken apple," I explained. "You wanna <sup>drink?</sup>"

The old Finn was studying me. "You dat Robert Raver?" he inquired. I nodded. "I see dose pitsons fishing pitsons in Life last 'Ristmas an' I cut dem out an' got dem <sup>photos</sup> on the wall."

"Small world," I murmured. "Here's the guy that took them," I added, <sup>pointing</sup> <sup>gesturing</sup> at Kelly. "You wanna drink?"

"No, tanks, Robert Raver," he said. "I be having dat <sup>little</sup> hangover - an' anyway I got <sup>close</sup> <sup>what you call</sup> ulcers. You wanna lift?"

to the job. Kelly went with the <sup>amiable</sup> old Finn to phone the wrecker, which nearly beat him on his long hot walk back. Edared Larson the wrecker man had forgotten the

steering tie off rope, so <sup>one of us had to drive.</sup> I had to return <sup>our caravan</sup> from ~~my~~ our further fishing trip riding backwards. <sup>On the way</sup> We stopped <sup>at</sup> ~~by~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~at~~ <sup>at</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~place~~ <sup>place</sup> and found Flick had arrived. "When I drove up to the garage in Ishpeming, he stepped forward and took ~~my~~ <sup>our</sup> picture -- <sup>me</sup> the mighty fisherman coming home backwards."

I alit from the job and shook his hand <sup>and Kelly,</sup> and introduced him to Kelly. "Brother Flick," I said, "I got a great idea for a fishing story." They looked at me inquiringly. "We tell this one exactly as it happened."

Notes

✓ Donna  
✓ seed up

2nd  
7/8/62

TRUTH IS STRANGER....

by  
Robert Traver

Donna:  
1 x 1 in  
draft,  
please.  
Jno.

Bob's wire read: "Ready or not I am  
arriving in the morning for a few days fishing and  
to discuss Project A. Kelly"

There was no doubt  
about it -- I was.

I was doubly delighted over the prospect of  
seeing Kelly because <sup>he'd been</sup> Grace <sup>was away</sup> was away visiting her  
children and <sup>for days</sup> <sup>watching alone</sup> ~~was~~ clanking around ~~there~~ in the house  
that "Anatomy" built ~~was out~~ <sup>was</sup> suffering <sup>acutely</sup> from  
instant coffee blues.

"Try to arrive yesterday," I promptly wired back.  
Meanwhile I pondered his mysterious telegram. What did  
<sup>the man</sup> ~~he~~ mean by this cryptic "Project A" business? I shook  
my head and sensibly went fishing.

Life photographer Bob Kelly and I had  
met last summer when he <sup>had</sup> came to Ishpeming and  
taken ~~took~~ the pictures <sup>of</sup> trout fishing pictures that ran later  
in his magazine's <sup>outdoor</sup> edition. During the process  
he had fallen in love with my native Upper Peninsula  
of Michigan. We had also become friends.

(extra lenses, light meters, folding

→ Kelly arrived the next morning, <sup>as usual</sup> staggering  
under <sup>a massive</sup> ~~two~~ <sup>usual</sup> array of photographic gear, bristling  
with cameras, tripods, little leather bags and satchels  
and still more cameras. In addition he had <sup>fetches with him</sup> ~~had~~ cartons  
after carton of colored slides. I surveyed ~~at~~ <sup>bulging</sup> ~~the~~ cartons.

"Fellthy pictures?" I enquired, <sup>hopefully</sup> ~~asking~~  
"Nope," <sup>Kelly said: "there's</sup> ~~he~~ <sup>no</sup> ~~our~~ Project A."  
"Tell me more."

the ritual <sup>antiquities</sup> ~~method~~ of

<sup>Just</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>day</sup> <sup>before</sup>

Kelley had had a <sup>sudden</sup> brainstorm. He explained to me that his magazine had used but twelve of the more than fourteen hundred fishing pictures he had taken of me and my <sup>fishing</sup> pals the year before, <sup>and</sup> that to his knowledge there existed no picture book devoted solely to the ~~the~~ trout fishing and ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~activities~~ of its <sup>or</sup> <sup>aged</sup> <sup>votaries</sup>. He ~~hoped~~ <sup>we</sup> <sup>were</sup> <sup>going</sup> to collaborate on one," he concluded.

"But <sup>can</sup> <sup>what</sup> <sup>do</sup> I do?" I said dubiously. "You've already done <sup>all</sup> the work."

"I'll <sup>will</sup> let you write the captions."

"Hm... What's <sup>the</sup> <sup>title</sup> of our new opus?"

"Anatomy of a Fisherman of course," he <sup>calmly</sup> announced. "Here, grab this slide viewer and let's get down to work."

Only <sup>torrid</sup> for So Kelley and I <sup>spent</sup> the next three days <sup>viewing</sup> slides, <sup>debating</sup> ~~what~~ pictures, and <sup>slowly</sup> <sup>pastorizing</sup> our <sup>book</sup> together. <sup>Heat</sup> and glare <sup>sun</sup> <sup>could</sup> <sup>have</sup> <sup>made</sup> this project <sup>endurable</sup> during the heights of the trout season, and we were <sup>sunned</sup> out and <sup>discouraged</sup> on our <sup>few</sup> <sup>attempts</sup> at <sup>trout</sup> fishing. "I <sup>think</sup> <sup>maybe</sup> you caught the <sup>last</sup> <sup>trout</sup> in Michigan <sup>last</sup> <sup>summer</sup>," Kelley <sup>needed</sup> me. "You should have been here next week," I <sup>loyally</sup> <sup>fought</sup> <sup>back</sup>.

made such a

The fourth day, June 28th, happened also to be my birthday. Still another fisherman, Art Glick from <sup>of</sup> West Hill, New York, was due to arrive that very afternoon. Art was the author of the famous "The Streamside Guide" -- famous among trout fishermen, that is -- which <sup>beautifully</sup> explained and coordinated <sup>the</sup> <sup>most</sup> <sup>important</sup> natural and artificial may fly patterns for ~~the~~ <sup>bewildered</sup> fly fishermen. We had become fisherman pen pals when I'd written him an <sup>ecstatic</sup> <sup>letter</sup> <sup>about</sup> <sup>this</sup> <sup>year</sup> and today, on my birthday, we <sup>were</sup> <sup>at</sup> <sup>last</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>meet</sup> <sup>for</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>first</sup> <sup>time</sup> and go fishing together.

at last to

My birthday <sup>had</sup> dawned cool, soft and lovely, with cloudy overcast skies -- the first in many days -- <sup>combined with a carrying</sup> ~~and a gentle~~ southwesterly wind. <sup>front-</sup> The day was simply made for fishing. Even Kelly's nostrils <sup>were</sup> dilated as we dawdled over breakfast, <sup>peering</sup> <sup>wistfully</sup> <sup>and wondering</sup> ~~and wondering~~ whether we couldn't slip out for a few hours <sup>fisherman</sup> of fishing before Fleck arrived. Finally we could stand it no longer and I hurriedly wrote and pinned a note to the kitchen door.

eye glazed and ~~to~~ <sup>one of those rare</sup> It was a days

"Dear Art," the note read. "It's a dreamy day for fishing so a pal and I are going out <sup>for an hour or so</sup> and try to catch your breakfast. The keys <sup>are</sup> under the mat and there's plenty of beer in the ice box. <sup>With that key</sup> ~~the keys~~ <sup>are</sup> fled to the woods."

As we sped along in my <sup>trusty</sup> jeep Kelly and I tried to <sup>sharpen</sup> <sup>our</sup> <sup>guiltily</sup> consciences by telling each other that Art would <sup>surely</sup> understand. How could any <sup>fisherman</sup> resist such a perfect day? <sup>And</sup> <sup>anyway</sup> <sup>one so rare during</sup> weren't we <sup>selflessly</sup> doing all this for <sup>good</sup> <sup>old</sup> Art himself so that he might be greeted with a fine meal of wild native Upper Pennsylvanian brook trout? Of course we were <sup>solemnly</sup> assured each other as we rolled <sup>smoothly</sup> toward Uncle Sam's Pond.

the fleeing police dogs of summer?

Kelly had had his creative brainstorm with ~~on~~ Project A and <sup>today</sup> ~~now~~ it was my turn. Halfway to Uncle's I slapped my leg and <sup>epultantly</sup> <sup>Bob</sup> <sup>I just</sup> got a great idea for a fishing story. Boy oh boy, <sup>this</sup> <sup>only</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>real</sup> <sup>pistol!</sup> "I'll tell all,"

"Confess," Kelly said, already <sup>assembling</sup> <sup>his</sup> <sup>trusty</sup> <sup>gear</sup> <sup>through</sup> <sup>down</sup> <sup>in</sup> <sup>my</sup> <sup>story</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>real</sup> <sup>gone</sup> <sup>fisherman</sup> <sup>is</sup> <sup>expecting</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>guest</sup> -- a guy his <sup>neighbor</sup> <sup>met</sup> -- and <sup>so</sup> <sup>helplessly</sup> <sup>fisherman</sup> <sup>is</sup> <sup>expecting</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>guest</sup> -- a guy his neighbor met -- and along comes a few clouds, <sup>and</sup> <sup>he</sup> <sup>sneaks</sup> <sup>off</sup> <sup>just</sup> as we're doing.

"Then what?"

"The eloping host fisherman gets



Naturally, naturally  
his comeback. ~~He~~ totally  
skunked -- not even one tiny fish -- and he <sup>finally</sup> arrives  
home to find a new note pinned to his kitchen  
door. <sup>neglected</sup> This guest has arrived, <sup>begging</sup> seen the same clouds,  
got the same fever, and has himself <sup>sneaked</sup> fled down  
the <sup>main</sup> road & behind the house to make a few  
thousand casts in the first <sup>water he finds</sup> point of the <sup>a doubting</sup>

"But where's the story?" Kelly put in.  
"I'm getting to <sup>that</sup> <sup>we</sup> <sup>go</sup> on." The guilty host then barrels down the  
road to find his <sup>found</sup> neglected <sup>wondering</sup> guest, <sup>and</sup>  
He finds him wading up to his <sup>all night</sup> whizle string in <sup>some</sup>  
an old malarial <sup>and</sup> fog slough -- one that even the <sup>best</sup>  
fishermen <sup>all</sup> ignore -- <sup>and</sup> landing one big lunking trout after the  
other. Poetic justice and all that, don't you see?"

"I'm..." Kelly said, pondering my <sup>latest</sup> literary  
brainstorm. "Sounds <sup>to me a bit like</sup> O. Henry in leaky waders."  
"You photographers don't like anything you can't snap."

By now we had turned off onto the last  
dirt road into Uncle's, and we bounced and jolted <sup>merrily</sup> along,  
<sup>hanging</sup> to get fishing <sup>precious</sup> before the clouds <sup>lifted</sup> and my <sup>deserted</sup> guest  
arrived. Suddenly <sup>following a super bounce</sup> there was a cracking <sup>metallic</sup> thud followed by  
a sharp swipe, and I tramped on the brakes. "Oh Lord,"  
I moaned, <sup>I think</sup> "we've got a flat tire, Flich's <sup>speeding</sup> on his way,  
and already <sup>our lovely</sup> the clouds are <sup>leaving</sup> the <sup>missing</sup>."

"Happy birthday," <sup>we were</sup> <sup>reprimed</sup>.  
But <sup>all</sup> the tires were up. <sup>Must</sup> have  
severed on loose gravel. "I sagely observed, leaping  
gaily back into the jeep. <sup>But</sup> Kelly <sup>still</sup> stood <sup>perching</sup> at the base of the  
jeep <sup>sadly</sup> shaking his head. "Come look my friend," he said,  
pointing at the <sup>right</sup> rear wheel. <sup>I looked and shook it</sup> It was tilted crazily at about a  
45° angle, <sup>hanging by a thread</sup>, "Happy birthday, comrade," Kelly <sup>repeated</sup>.  
"Oh Lord," <sup>I</sup> <sup>moaned</sup>, "a busted rear axle."

As we stood <sup>stupidly</sup> surveying <sup>the</sup> catastrophic  
the burning sun broke <sup>through</sup> the <sup>last</sup> burning clouds. <sup>I</sup> <sup>looked</sup> at  
By <sup>some</sup> a sort of consent by osmosis Kelly and I  
that <sup>had</sup> befallen us

Kelly and I looked at one another

There was nothing else to do.

~~waiting~~ → marooned

have the honor of hoofing

we got out the <sup>old</sup> red socks and <sup>the</sup> ice bucket and stoically  
 had <sup>ourselves a stiff</sup> drink. Here we were, <sup>compten</sup> miles from nowhere,  
 nursing <sup>with</sup> a broken apple, our fishing ruined, <sup>groaning</sup> in a glare  
 sun, a <sup>quest</sup> <sup>solely</sup> <sup>for us</sup>, ... <sup>to</sup> We sat and <sup>drank</sup> and  
 and <sup>pondered</sup> which <sup>lucky</sup> <sup>guy</sup> would <sup>drop</sup> it out to phone  
 the wrecker. <sup>We studied the blazing sky</sup> <sup>other</sup> <sup>crazy</sup> fisherman would happen  
 along and give us a lift. "Bumps," Kelley said, and we  
 clanked our <sup>tin</sup> cups. "Happy 104th birthday," he <sup>again</sup> <sup>comically</sup> added.

like Swedish bell-ringers

We waited, we boiled, we clinked <sup>our</sup> cups. Then  
 far down the lonely road we <sup>discerned</sup> an <sup>ambulant</sup> <sup>dust</sup> storm coming <sup>slowly</sup>  
 of the woods like a lazy genie emerging from a bottle. Our  
 genie drew close, stopped, and <sup>magically</sup> <sup>turned</sup> into an old Finnish  
 pulp-cutter driving an equally ancient Overland.

"Hallo boys," he <sup>amiably</sup> <sup>greeted</sup> us. "You got  
 troubles?"

"Plenty," I said. "One broken apple. You  
 wanna drink?"

The old Finn sat, <sup>studying</sup> me. "You dat  
 Robert Raver?" he inquired. I <sup>nodded</sup> <sup>unmashed</sup>, I <sup>nodded</sup>.  
 "I see dose fishing peters <sup>you</sup> in Life magazine last  
 'Ristmas," he went on, "an' I got dem pasted <sup>the</sup>  
 on wall <sup>of</sup> my s'ack. He <sup>spat</sup> <sup>on</sup> the dusty road. "Pretty good peters."

"Small world," I murmured, <sup>gesturing</sup>  
 toward Kelley. "Here's the guy that took them. You  
 wanna drink?"

"No tanks, Robert Raver," he <sup>said</sup>, <sup>gravely</sup> <sup>I</sup> <sup>am</sup> <sup>used</sup>  
 having dat little hangers on anyway I got dose what-  
 you-call-<sup>hem</sup> <sup>ulcers</sup>. You <sup>wanna</sup> <sup>left</sup>?" In nothing flat <sup>had</sup>  
 Kelley <sup>hambled</sup> <sup>into</sup> the old <sup>jeep</sup> <sup>the</sup> rear end of the jeep

and went to phone the wrecker and it, piloted by Eldred Larson,  
 almost beat him <sup>on</sup> <sup>his</sup> <sup>long</sup> <sup>trudge</sup> back to the jeep. Eldred had forgotten  
 his <sup>tie</sup> <sup>off</sup> gear for <sup>the</sup> <sup>steering</sup> front wheels so one  
 of us would have to <sup>ride</sup> <sup>home</sup> in reverse to <sup>steer</sup> the jeep.

wasn't able to find the wrecker.

and made an announcement.

On the way to Ishpeming we stopped <sup>while</sup> and I phoned my neighbor and secretary, Donna Snyder, and passed ~~gave~~ her the word "Is Flick there?" I <sup>bravely</sup> <sup>enquired</sup>.  
"There's <sup>been</sup> a strange man sitting <sup>out</sup> on <sup>your</sup> front porch for hours drinking a ~~batch~~ of beer," Donna said, and I <sup>shut</sup> my eyes.  
"Please meet us at the garage," I <sup>finally</sup> said, sighing and crawling back in the jeep. When our strange caravan drew up to the garage in Ishpeming Art Flick whipped out his Brownie and snapped an ignominious portrait of the great fisherman coming home <sup>both</sup> fishless and backwards. I crawled out of the <sup>stricken</sup> jeep and shook his head. "Brothers Flick and Kelley," I <sup>said</sup> in a hollow voice, "I've <sup>just</sup> got a great idea for a fishing story." They looked at me with polite curiosity. "Simply" "I'll <sup>of mine exactly</sup> simply tell about this haunted birthday <sup>just</sup> as it happened."

That night <sup>when all of us</sup> went fishing in <sup>Art Flick's</sup> new ~~convertible~~ convertible there wasn't a <sup>speck</sup> cloud in the <sup>cloudless</sup> sky. On the way home we bought a <sup>big</sup> pike from a <sup>brave</sup> <sup>small</sup> boy.

1st Type  
7/9/62

Written by:  
John D. Voelker  
Ishpeming, Mich.

TRUTH IS STRANGER....

by

Robert Traver

Bob's wire read: "Ready or not am arriving in the morning for a few days fishing and to discuss Project A. Kelley."

I was doubly delighted over the prospect of seeing Kelley because Grace was away visiting ~~our~~<sup>the</sup> children and for days I'd been batching alone, clanking around in the house that <sup>it</sup> "Anatomy" built. There was no doubt about it—I was suffering acutely from instant coffee blues.

"Try to arrive yesterday," I promptly wired back. Meanwhile I pondered his mysterious telegram. What did the man mean by this cryptic "Project A" business? I shook my head and sensibly went fishing.

Life photographer Bob Kelley and I had met last summer when he had come to Ishpeming and taken the trout fishing pictures that ran later in his magazine's outdoor edition. During the process he had fallen in love with my native Upper Peninsula of Michigan. We had also become friends.

Kelley arrived the next morning, as usual staggering under a massive array of photographic gear, bristling with cameras, light meters, folding tripods, <sup>mysterious</sup> little leather bags and satchels, and still more cameras. In addition he had fetched with him carton after carton of colored slides. I surveyed the bulging cartons.

"Feeelthy pictures?" I inquired, leering hopefully.

"Nope," Kelley said, <sup>dashing my hopes.</sup> "There sits our Project A."

"Tell me more."

Just the day before Kelley had had a sudden brainstorm, he explained. He reminded me that his magazine had used but twelve of the more than fourteen hundred fishing pictures he had taken of me and my fishing pals the year before, and that to his knowledge there existed no picture book devoted solely to trout fishing and the ritual antics of its crazed votaries.

"You and I are about to collaborate on one," he concluded.

"But what can I do?" I said dubiously. "You've already done all the work."

<sup>"You'll</sup>  
"You will write the captions."

"Hm.... What's to be the title of our new opus?"

"'Anatomy of a Fisherman' of course," he calmly announced. "Here, grab this slide viewer and let's get down to work."

So Kelley and I toiled for the next three days ~~reviewing~~ slides, debating pictures, and slowly pasting our lovely book together. Only heat and glare sun could have made such a project endurable during the height~~x~~ of the trout season, and even then we were sunned out and discouraged on our few brief ~~attempts~~<sup>attempts</sup> at trout fishing. "My theory is that last summer you caught the last surviving trout in Michigan," Kelley needled me.

"You should have been here next week," I loyally fought back.

The fourth day, June 29th, happened also to be my birthday. Still another fisherman, Art Flick of West Kill, New York, was due to arrive that ~~evening~~ afternoon. Art was the author of the famous "The Streamside Guide"—famous among trout fishermen, that is—which beautifully explains and coordinates the most

important natural and artificial May fly patterns for  
bewildered <sup>trout</sup> fishermen. We had become fishermen pen pals  
when I'd written him an ecstatic fan letter about his book and  
today, on my birthday, we were at last to meet and go fishing  
together.

My birthday had dawned cool, soft and lovely, with cloudy  
overcast skies—the first in many days—combined with a  
carressing southwesterly wind. It was one of those rare days  
simply made for trout fishing. Even Kelley's ~~max~~ eyes <sup>grew</sup> glazed  
and <sup>his</sup> nostrils dilated as we dawdled over breakfast, peering  
out wistfully at the lovely clouds, ~~and~~ wondering whether we  
couldn't slip out for a few hours of fishing before <sup>visiting</sup> fisherman  
Flick arrived. Finally we could stand it no longer and I  
hurriedly wrote and pinned a note to the kitchen door.

"Dear Art," the note read. "It's a dreamy day for fishing  
so a pal and I are going out for an hour or so and try to catch  
your breakfast. The ~~key~~ key's under the mat and there's plenty  
of beer in the ice box." With that we fled to the woods.

As we ~~two comrades~~ <sup>trusty</sup> /guiltily sped along in my ~~trout~~/jeep

Kelley and I tried to salve our smarting consciences by telling each other that Art would surely understand. How could any true fisherman resist such a perfect day, one so rare during the fleeting golden ~~days~~ <sup>months</sup> of summer? And anyway weren't we selflessly doing all this for good old Art himself so that he, lucky man, might be greeted with a ~~fine~~ <sup>royal</sup> meal of wild native Upper Peninsula brook trout? Of course we were, we solemnly assured each other as we rolled swiftly toward <sup>good old</sup> Uncle Sam's Pond.

Kelley had had his creative brainstorm with Project A and today it was my turn. Halfway to Uncle's I slapped my leg and crowed exultantly: "Bob, I just got a great idea for a fishing story. Boy oh boy, this one's a ~~real~~ pistol."

"Tell all," Kelley said, already pawing through his mounds of fishing gear.

"Don't you see?" I want on. "In my story a real gone fisherman is expecting a fisherman guest--a guy he's never met--and then along comes a few clouds, so he helplessly sneaks off fishing, just as we're doing."



"Then what?"

"The eloping host fisherman gets his comeuppance. Naturally he's totally skunked--not even one ~~fish~~ fish--and finally he sheepishly arrives home to find a new note pinned to his kitchen door. His neglected guest has arrived, seen the same beguiling <sup>o</sup> cluds, got the same fever, and has himself sneaked down the main road behind the house to make a few thousand casts in the first water he finds.

"But where's the point of the story?" a doubting Kelley put in.

"I'm getting to that," I went on. "The ~~gukky~~ guilty host then barrels down the road to find his wandering guest. He finds him, all right--wading up to his whizzle string in an old malarial slough--one that even the kid fishermen ~~all~~ ignore--and there he is, landing one big lunking trout after the other. Poetic justice and all that, don't you see?"

"Hm...." Kelley said, pondering my latest literary brainstorm.

"Sounds to me a bit like soggy O. Henry in leaky waders."

"You photographers are all alike—you <sup>hate</sup> ~~don't like~~ anything  
^ ^  
you can't snap."

By now we had turned off onto the last dirt road into  
Uncle's, and we bounced and jolted merrily along, <sup>g</sup> as we hurried  
to get fishing before the precious clouds lifted and my deserted  
guest arrived. ~~Suddenly~~ <sup>g</sup> following a super bounce there was a  
~~braking~~ <sup>shock</sup> metallic thud followed by a ~~sharp~~ <sup>sudden</sup> swerve, and I  
^ ^  
tramped on the brakes. "Oh Lord," I moaned, "I think we've got  
a flat tire, Flick's speeding on his way, and already our lovely  
clouds are thinning."

"Happy birthday," Kelley said softly.

But lo, all the tires were up. We were reprieved. "Must  
have swerved on loose gravel," I sagely observed, leaping gaily  
<sup>champing to get fishing.</sup>  
back into the jeep, ^ But Kelley still stood peering at the back  
of the jeep, sadly shaking his head. "Come look, my friend," he  
said, pointing at the right rear wheel. I looked and saw it was  
<sup>that</sup>  
tilted crazily at about a 45° angle, ~~obviously~~ hanging by a <sup>hair</sup> ~~metallic~~  
^ ^  
~~thread~~. "Happy birthday, comrade," Kelley repeated.

"Oh Lord," I wailed, "a busted rear axle!"

As we stood stupidly surveying ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> catastrophe that had befallen us the burning sun broke finally through the last of the thinning ~~the~~ clouds. I looked at Kelley and Kelley looked at me. By a sort of consent ~~we~~ <sup>by</sup> osmosis we got out the old red sock and the ice bucket and stoically had ourselves a stiff drink. There was nothing else to do. <sup>Time passed.</sup> Here we were, umpteen miles from nowhere, nursing a broken axle, our fishing ruined, broiling in a glare sun, a marooned guest surely <sup>already</sup> waiting for us.... We sat and weighed our woes and drank and pondered which lucky guy would have the honor of hoofing it out to phone the wrecker. <sup>More time passed.</sup> We studied the blue sky and blazing sun. Maybe some other crazy fisherman would happen along and give us a lift. "Bumps," Kelley said, and again we clinked our battered tin cups. "Happy 104th birthday," he cynically added.

We waited, we broiled, we clinked our cups like <sup>a couple of</sup> Swedish bell-ringers. Then far down the lonely road we discerned an ambulant dust storm coming slowly out of the woods like a lazy genie emerging from a bottle. Our genie drew closer, stopped,

and turned magically into an old Finnish pulp-cutter driving an equally ancient Overland.

"Hallo poys," he ~~f~~amiably greeted us. "You got troubles?"

"Plenty," I said. "One broken axle. You wanna drink?"

The old Finn sat studying me. "You dat Robert 'Raver?"

he inquired. Unmasked, I nodded. "I see dose fishing pitsers you in Life magazine last ~~Rix~~ 'Ristmas," he went on, "an' I got dem pasted on wall my s'ack." He spat thoughtfully on the dusty road. "Pretty good ~~pick~~ pitsers."

"Small world," I murmured, gesturing toward Kelley. "Here's the guy that took them. You wanna drink?"

"No tanks, Robert 'Raver," he said gravely. "I having dat little hangovers an any<sup>way</sup> I got dose what-you-call-him ulcers. You wanna lift?"

Kelley clambered into the ~~67~~ Overland with the old Finn and went to phone the wrecker~~s~~ and it, piloted by Eldred Larson, almost beat him on his long trudge back to the jeep. In nothing flat our rescuer had the rear end of the jeep suspended high

*He touched the <sup>dangling</sup> ~~stricken~~ wheel and it fell off.*

behind the wrecker. Eldred had forgotten his gear for tying off the front wheels so he pointed out that one of us would have to ride home in reverse to steer the rudderless jeep.

On the way to Ishpeming we stopped while I phoned my neighbor and secretary, Donna Snider, and passed her the word.

"Is Flick there?" I bravely inquired.

"There's been a strange man sitting out on your front lawn for hours drinking beer," Donna said, ~~and~~ I ~~quietly~~ shut my eyes. X

"Please meet us at the garage," I finally said, sighing and crawling back in the jeep. When our strange caravan drew up to the garage in Ishpeming Art / Flick whipped out his Brownie and ~~snapped~~ an ignominious portrait of the great fisherman coming home both fishless and backwards. I crawled out of the stricken jeep and shook his hand and made an announcement. "Brothers Flick and Kelley," I said in a hollow voice, "I've just got a great idea for a fishing story." They looked at me with polite curiosity. "I'll simply tell about ~~this~~ <sup>my</sup> haunted birthday ~~of mine~~ exactly as it happened. ))

*afternoon*  
~~evening~~  
That ~~night~~ when all of us went fishing in Art Flick's

brand new convertible there wasn't a speck in the cloudless

sky. On the way home we bought a *large* ~~big~~ pike from a small boy.