

This is my papa. And this is his backyard workshop, where he spends his days thinking... tinkering... and inventing things.

Sometimes Papa tries inventing helpful things, like collapsible coat hangers. Sometimes he tries inventing unusual things, like edible socks. Sometimes he tries inventing playful things like steam-powered roller skates.

But not once has Papa invented anything that works perfectly. "I will someday", Papa says, "All I need is a fantastic idea. Enough thinking! Who wants to go fishing?"

"I do", I holler. "Me too" says Cyril. "Don't forget me" adds Mary. "Woof" barks Rex.

We all troop out to the pier and start to fish. "Papa", I say, "have you ever wondered what it's like to be a fish?" "A fish?" he mutters. He leaps to his feet. He whirls me around. "You're brilliant" he whoops. Then he's gone, racing to his workshop.

Clink! Clankety-bang! Thump-whirr!! "Ta-Da" cries Papa, a few weeks later. He reveals his "mechanical fish." It is so small he barely fits inside. It has a tube sticking out the top so he can breathe and a pole sticking out the bottom so he can push himself along the lake floor. Will it work?

We keep our fingers crossed. "Goodbye, Papa." We wave. "Farewell, family." He waves back. Then the *Whitefish* is launched. *Sploosh!* But...

Glub-glub-glub. Papa swims back to the pier. "It almost worked," he says.

"Almost", I agree. I think, then ask: "Papa, how do fish move through the water?" "With their tails?" asks Cyril. "With their fins?" says Mary. Papa is deep in thought.

Clink! Clankety-bang! Thump-whirr!! "Behold the *Whitefish 2*." It is big enough for two people to sit in. It has a wooden fin on top and a wooden propeller in back. Papa pedals it like a bicycle to make it go. "Goodbye, Papa!" we wave. "Farewell family", he waves back. Then the *Whitefish 2* is launched. *Sploosh!* It dives below the surface. *Swoosh!* But...

Crack-drip-splinter-rip! Papa bobs to the surface. "It almost worked", he hollers. "Almost," I holler back. I think, then ask: "Papa, how do fish stay dry?" "With special skin?" asks Cyril. "With scales?" says Mary. Papa is deep in thought.

Clink! Clankety-bang! Thump-whirr!! "Behold the Whitefish 3." It is big enough for three people to sit in. It has a plunger to make it go up and down. It has a steering wheel to go left and right. It is covered in waterproof copper. "Goodbye, Papa!" we wave. "Farewell family", he waves back. Then the *Whitefish 3* is launched. *Sploosh!* It dives. *Swoosh!* It chugs beneath the waves. *Clacketa-clacketa-clacketa!* But...

Crummmppp! Papa clings to a buoy. "It almost worked", he says. "Almost," I say. I think some more, then ask "Papa, how do fish know where they're going?" "Can they see underwater?" asks Cyril. "Do they have good eyes?" says Mary. Papa is deep in thought.

Clink! Clankety-bang! Thump-whirr!! He does not come out. *Thunk-clunk-whack!* He covers the windows so we can't peek in. *Clink! Clankety-bang! Thump-whirr!!* At last, he flings wide the workshop doors. "Surprise!!" "Oooh," we gasp. "Aahh...."

The Whitefish 4 is big enough for seven people. It has an air-cooling system, and an air purifying system. It was a steam boiler to run the engine and a battery to run the headlights. It has velvet carpeting and comfortable chairs. Along its length are a dozen port-holes. Papa grins "Want to go for a ride?"

One by one, we drop down through the hatch. Then Papa seals it, takes his place at the controls, and... *Sploosh! Swoosh! Clacketa-clacketa-clacketa!* "Wow!" we shout.

Hours later, we rise to the surface. We glide to the beach. We spread out a blanket and have a picnic lunch. "Papa," I say. "That idea was absolutely, positively fantastic!" "Brilliant!" says Cyril. "Clever" says Mary. "Woof" barks Rex. Then a seagull flies overhead. I say "Have you ever wondered what it's like to be a bird?" I ask. "A bird?" Papa mutters. "A bird?" "Uh-oh" says Mama.

Clink! Clankety-bang! Thump-whirr!!