

The Parable of the Fisherman

Once upon a time a man took his small son to the wharf to fish in the warm, afternoon sunshine. He gave the boy a hand line, baited the hook and showed him how to throw it in the water. Then he baited his rod and cast far out into the harbour. Soon, the boy felt a tug on the line. “A fish!” he shouted. “Give a sharp pull, then pull it in,” his father said. So the boy tugged the line, pulled in a wriggling spottie and dumped it on the wharf. He was very excited. “I caught a fish!” he chanted.

Shortly, the man felt a tug on his line too, jerked it sharply, then began winding on his reel. The rod bent with the weight of a fish, which raced around the water in front of the wharf, trying to get off the hook. Then the man lifted his bent rod high in the air, and landed a fat snapper. People appeared from nowhere, commenting on the fish. “Kapai,” [good] they said.

When the little boy grew some more, his dad gave him a rod like his, so they both fished in the warm sunshine at high tide, and caught more snapper. Sometimes they caught other fish too, like yellowtails. The wharf quickly filled with people when there was a yellowtail on the line, and there was no shortage of willing helpers to pull it in with the hand net.

Some years passed, and the small boy grew big and strong. He often went fishing with his dad on the harbour, putting the boat out on the falling tide to pull in the net they had fixed between two buoys. They caught many fish that way—snapper, gurnard, even stingrays and sometimes an octopus. The boy loved fishing, so when he left school he got a job on a fishing boat. The best part for him was sorting the many kinds of fish and packing them with ice in flat boxes, even the small sharks that were bound for fish and chip shops.

Some years later, the young man’s uncle died and left him a lot of money. It didn’t take him long to decide what to do with it. He used it as a deposit on a fishing boat of his own, a trawler. He knew exactly where the fishing grounds were, thanks to experience and his GPS, and his echo sounder even showed him the schools of fish below the boat. Because he had grown up in the business, he knew about fish and caught many tonnes in his huge net.