

the
gruesomely funny
origin story
of a Minnesota fish



The muskellunge, who is also called the muskie, is one of the most powerful fish in the lakes of Minnesota. It has a wide tail fin that paddles back and forth to propel it forward. It has a sharp fin on its back that slices through the water, and it has two strong front fins that steer it in whatever direction it wants to go.

But the muskie was not always such a grand fish. In fact, it once had to live on the lake bottom, eating the garbage that fell from other fishes' meals. This was because in those days, the muskie had no wide tail fin, sharp back fin, or strong front fins. It just had six legs.



When strong fast fish sneaked up behind, the muskie had to turn around as quickly as it could, and scare them away with its teeth... sometimes it got bitten in the face. And when the muskie walked, it had to walk on its heels, with the toes flopping uselessly around.

That day, when the muskie ate, it had to pick up garbage out of the mud with its mouth, and it couldn't help eating some mud along with its meal.



So one night, the toes decided that they would not put up with their sad situation any more. "We are tired of being the lowest part of the lowest fish in the lake," they said. "We want a better life. And we refuse to work until we get it." The next morning, when the muskie woke up, its toes wouldn't move! They hung limply from all six legs, doing nothing at all. No matter how hard the muskie tried to use them, they would not be used.



When the muskellunge ate, the toes had to pick up garbage out of the mud and put it in the big toothy mouth. When strong fast fish sneaked up behind the muskellunge, the toes had to kick and scratch them, and sometimes get bitten. And when the muskellunge walked, the toes had to squish through the mud of the lake bottom, holding up the weight of the rest of the muskie's body. The muskellunge was the lowest fish in the lakes of Minnesota, and the toes were the lowest part of the muskellunge.

On the end of each leg were five toes. These toes were truly unlucky.



It had two front legs near its jaw... those were for picking up garbage and putting it in the big toothy mouth. It had two legs sticking out in back... those were for kicking and scratching the strong fast fish that might sneak up behind the lowly muskie. And it had two long legs that joined its body near the backbone... those were just for walking.

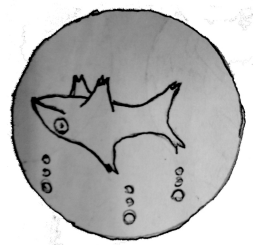
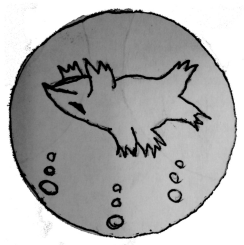


At the end of the day, the muskie was sick from eating mud with any food. "I can't stand things like this much. I must do something to help me!" and strong fast fish have bitten my face, and my feet hurt from holding me up. Can you do something to help me?" The king of the Minnesota lakes finally said, "I cannot make your toes work, poor muskie, but I can make Minnesota fishermen, carrying a fishing magical wand shaped like a fishing net on a long handle. "Why have you summoned me?" he demanded of the muskellunge.

The muskie told its sad story. "My toes will not work," it lamented, "and I am sick from eating mud with any food. I can't stand things like this much. I must do something to help me!" and strong fast fish have bitten my face, and my feet hurt from holding me up. Can you do something to help me?" The king of the Minnesota lakes finally said, "I cannot make your toes work, poor muskie, but I can make Minnesota fishermen, carrying a fishing magical wand shaped like a fishing net on a long handle. "Why have you summoned me?" he demanded of the muskellunge.

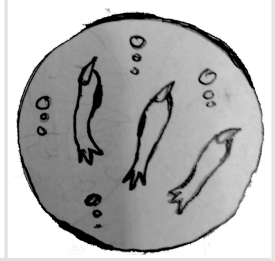


The toes were lying on the ground nearby, twitching around in the mud. And in a gigantic cloud of bubbles, the king was gone. The muskie lay on the lake bottom, disappointed. It could see no way it still could not pick up food, it still could not kick and scratch fish that sneaked up behind it, and it still could not walk comfortably. The inside of its legs drained out into the mud, small fish nibbled at other pieces away.



But the muskie soon found that the king was right.

And their insides drained out, and water washed pieces of them away, and small fish nibbled on other pieces.



The toes, however, were unhappy. Lying on the lake bottom, they were more miserable than when they had been the lowest part of the lowest fish in the lake. They could not move by themselves, without a muskie to control them. They could not swim around, or even catch their own food.

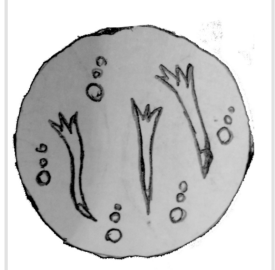


The muskie had become one of the most powerful fish in the Minnesota lakes! It no longer had to walk through the mud. It could swim fast enough to catch its own food, and did not need to eat garbage from the lake bottom. And it was now so strong and fast that no other fish dared to sneak up behind it.



When it paddled its rear end back and forth, the pieces of skin back there worked as a tail fin, propelling it forward. When it began to swim, the bit of skin on its back stood up sharply, slicing through the water. And when it wanted to turn a corner, the skin hanging near its jaw made a nice set of front fins, steering it in whatever direction it wanted to go.

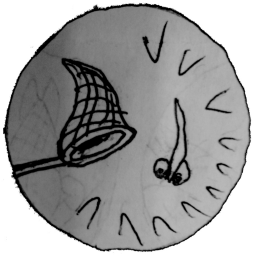
Soon they were almost nothing but empty toe-skins.



He came to them, switching his fish-tail and waving his magical net-wand. "Why have you summoned me?" he cried. "We have lost our muskie," they moaned. "We cannot catch by ourselves, and we cannot move no insides. What will become of us?" The King thought a good long while, and said at last, "I cannot bring you back to your muskie. But I can let you leave the Minnesota lake, and perhaps that will make your life better."



And he waved his magical net, and the toes began to change! Suddenly they had eyes!



And wings! And legs!

This book was written by Erika Hammerschmidt, who also makes jewelry and many other things! Visit her websites:



And that is why, sometimes, when you are near a Minnesota lake,

Unfortunately, they still had no insides of their own to stay full, they had to eat the insides of other creatures. They never ate enough to hurt the other creatures badly, only enough to fill their own tiny bodies.



From then on, the toes were happy. They flew around near the Minnesota lakes, and got to know all sorts of animals that lived on land.

