

Fish Tales

Radtke, an avid angler, was fishing at 28-foot depths with a lead-head jig rigged with a twister tail and a stinger-hooked minnow on a four-pound line...

-Eric Sharp, *Detroit Free Press*

...and so Bob Radtke is surprised to find himself struggling with a five-foot sturgeon hooked while fishing for walleye on the Detroit River. It's a cold April day and he clasps the fish tight against his camouflage jacket before releasing it. It is slippery as love and his chest heaves for he's fought the fish for an hour, wearing it down slowly while buddy Todd managed the trolling motor to follow the biggest fish of Bob's life two miles upstream to a spot near Mud Island. And there's a picture to prove it because these are modest men not braggarts, not given to exaggeration, not like those characters on the fishing shows columnist Sharp calls Two-Bubbas-in-a-Boat. And if Stafford says writing is like fishing and if Simic says he believes in a soluble fish, I guess Radtke could tell us a thing or two about dropping a line into the depths for whatever might come and how easily a 4-pound test line can snap, the fish dissolving right in front of your eyes. I must admit I believe in fish stories—ice fishermen who stick their frozen catch upright in the snow to form a pike-and-perch picket fence around the shanty, a hint of home even in the wild. And how those fish, thawed, have been known to come to life in the very face of the filet knife. *Life will find a way*, says Goldblum in *Jurassic Park*. There's the bamboo shark in Motown's Belle Isle Aquarium, after years without a mate giving birth. Who knew? Fact is, I owe my very life to fish, to fish luck. Catch, and release. In '42 my not-yet-father on leave in Australia, the fish wild for the bait and he so keen on catching them that, unlike his buddy, he decides not to sign up for duty on the coveted new sub. On its maiden run, never again heard from. Old timers Will tell you it's all just fish luck. What lures you, hooks you, reels you in. What magnanimous hand lets you go.