



**MICHAEL
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A fish in the flood

Your Free Edoc

MIKE FINLEY



Saturday night it rained. It rained a lot -- two and a half inches fell in two hours in Saint Paul. I was watching television when it began as a light mist, but had to switch the machine off because the storm's hammering caused the image onscreen to break up. Plus, the barrage of weather bureau messages made the program unintelligible.

After running through the house closing all the windows, Rachel and I sat in our front porch chairs, sheltered from all but the spray, watching the cascade in silence. One could sense the season passing, as summer's warmth gave way to something wetter and darker. Lightning did not jab down at us like pitchforks from the sky -- rather, it was like the clouds themselves were made of lightning, and every moment or so a different thunderhead would light up in its belly, like pinging bumpers in a game of pinball, or like laughter in a crowded theater.

In the attic, my son Jon had already switched his PC off -- we do drills to protect our electronics from lightning strikes -- and was standing at the big window, watching the raindrops pummel the glass. I stood behind him and saw his face reflected in the window -- all shadows and hollows. I could see the face of the man he was becoming.

In the basement, water seeped in through a dozen different chinks in the limestone walls and pooled on the cement floor. It quickly gathered around my daughter's drum kit. Tiptoeing upstairs, I imagined the water level rising, and the drums eventually rising like buoys and playing themselves against the basement walls. Bang, boom.

This morning I drove Beau down to Snelling State Park, by the airport. The signs of the storm were everywhere -- fallen branches, puddles, dazed creatures poking their heads out of bushes. Most noticeably, we saw a crow standing guard over a vanquished carp, lying on its side on wet sand.

Here's what happened. When the water rose, the river formed a new, higher corridor. The fish, thinking its domain had expanded, swam into the new stream. Within an hour, water levels dropped again, and the carp found itself without a home, trying to evolve a million years in a minute, flapping on the mud, and straining to suck oxygen from the air.

Beaugard trotted down to the fish, and the crow flew away. Beau poked the dead creature delicately, and looked up at me.

The dog glimpsing the fish out of water. My wife and I staring dumbstruck into the fury of the rain. My son's reflection in the window, watching another summer disappearing from his life, like a card from a deck, a youth, in royal raiment. The fish, puffing at a moon it had never before seen.

It is the look we get when opportunities arise, and our spirits soar, because we have not yet been told the price that must be paid.

Michael Finley writes about topics relating to culture and change. His book with Harvey Robbins, *The New Why Teams Don't Work*, won a Booz-Allen & Hamilton Global Business Book Award. Mike has also been named one of a handful of "Masters of the Wired World" by Financial Times Press. BH SmartDocs™ are published by BrownHerron Publishing and are sold exclusively on Amazon.com (www.amazon.com/brownherron).

