

# Sea Fiction - Mates NC Trip

by J.R. Warnet

We left the vocational school parking lot slightly past 10:30 a.m., on a cloudy, soggy Friday morning. Our class was going on a trip to North Carolina as part of the Marine Biology Vocational Program. Everyone on board was extremely nervous, but happy to be going for a four-day "long weekend" trip. Most of us had never been this far from home without parental supervision, so it was sure to be a trip to remember. The three chaperones, two teachers and the bus driver were all standing in a semi-circle talking with concerned parents about the many questions they had. Actually, they only had the same one or two questions, which the chaperones and the teachers answered verbatim. My friend and I were all set: fishing gear, clothes and plenty of disposable cameras to take pictures of the trophies we were anticipating in the Outer Banks water.

After we had all our bags checked in and hurriedly tucked into the buses' cargo area, our parents waved goodbye to us as if we were off to boot camp for six weeks. The trip was scheduled over Mother's Day weekend, which to my surprise was going over quite easily with my mother. It wasn't until we hit the parkway that we all realized the trip was actually happening. Finally, we would get a chance to fish and be on vacation before we were even allowed to drive. This was big for Jake and me. We had always wanted to go to North Carolina and fish the famous Outer Banks where, we'd heard, the big marlin lurked.

"You think we'll hook into a blue marlin

right off the surf?" said a wide-eyed Jake.

"No way, man. You gotta be way offshore for that," I told him, which seemed to break his heart. He was waiting all year for this trip and I felt terrible telling him the bad news about the big ones.

"You know we might get hooked into a few false albacore or maybe even a shark that cruises by."

"Really? They do that! Oh, man, this is gonna be awesome!"



Our bus pulled into the Outer Banks and parked near the Pelican Cottages, just inside of Nags Head. The surf was rough, there were no lifeguards on duty, and an ominous red-and-black flag hung, taunting us with every flap. We flew off the bus and grabbed the poles and gear before the bus was turned off. Jake and I armed our nine-footers and reached for our favorite lures. Jake opted to use a 5-inch white shad with matching jig head. He never used the same one twice, some

kind of superstition that he had about the bait not looking right in the water. My lure, with rusty hooks and all, was a red-and-white wooden swimmer with a white buck tail: good Ol' Betsy. Just looking at this thing made you want to get a tetanus shot. I'd had it for about five years, but it had plenty of miles on it and I knew it would do the trick.

After practically bribing the chaperones, we were off to the beach with hopes of monsters lurking in the waves. We didn't care if the tide was coming in. It was just us out there watching the dark water swallow our lures. For two young anglers it was heaven, a sheer dream to be fishing and feeling truly alive doing what we loved to do.

I glanced over at Jake after 10 minutes and he had a smile on about a mile wide. I knew he would have been happy just being there, but he wanted that first fish; you could tell by the way he was anxiously casting and looking back at me.

The fishing turned from a happy outing to a grudge match as we moved around the surf, casting and retrieving in anticipation. I made a blind cast to my left and I watched him move farther down the shore, trying to get the perfect spot. As soon as my bail clicked over, his line screamed and the tip of his All Star Rod took a U-turn south. He was into something big, but his drag was too tight, causing the spool to spin.

"Loosen the drag, the line's gonna snap!" I

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