

# Torge's Fish

By Rebecca Post

Date: March 2009

Genre: historical fiction

Age Group: 3-7 years

Words: Story: Ca. 850  
Epilogue: Ca. 290

## Torge's Fish

A long, long time ago, a little boy called Torge lived in a village built on tall stilts at the edge of a big lake. Ducks could swim right underneath his house and sometimes he would be woken in the morning by quacking from under his bed. There were no shops or supermarkets so the villagers provided everything for themselves. They made shoes, toys, baskets and string. They grew grain to make bread and gathered mushrooms, herbs and fruit. In the forest they hunted deer and wild pigs and in the lake they caught fish.

One sunny spring morning, the men and boys were loading big woven baskets filled with bait and lines and sharp, bone hooks into their boats made of hollowed out logs. Torge watched them from behind the little hut he shared with his parents, his grandmother and his baby sister.

He heard his father call. "Torge! Come on! We're going fishing!"

Torge knew the men were headed for the middle of the lake where the water looked cold and grey. *I'm not going!* Torge whispered to himself. *What if I fall in?* He shuddered at the thought; he'd only just learnt to swim and he was afraid of the deep water.

"Hurry up Torge!" His father sounded impatient.

"Well, we can't wait all day," he said. "We'll have to go without him."

Torge sighed with relief, although he knew he would be in trouble when his father came home. Lying down, so the men in the boats wouldn't see him as they paddled past, Torge could see the clear, sparkling water of the lake just below him. A school of tiny fish swam by, darting this

way and that, the sunlight flashing silver off their sides. *I wish I could swim that well*, thought Torge. *Then I wouldn't be afraid of the water.*

Suddenly, he heard a cry from inside the hut. Torge crawled over to a gap in the woven wall and peeped in. His baby sister, Ana, was wailing as his mother tied a long rope around her waist. The other end was fastened to a peg in the wall.

"We need some firewood," she said to the little girl. "I can't take you with me and there's no one here to watch you. "

Torge's mother gave Ana a big hug and handed her a wooden rattle.

"I'll be back soon," she smiled as she walked out the door.

"Waahh!" cried Ana, throwing the toy onto the floor.

Torge lay down on his back and felt the sun warm his face. He felt bad. He couldn't enjoy lazing around when everyone else was busy. Even his old grandmother was working in the fields with the other women and girls. There was always so much to do and now he was seven he could help a lot. He just wished his father wouldn't expect him to go fishing. It was very quiet. His sister had stopped crying. *Perhaps she's fallen asleep*, he thought. Torge sat up and looked again through the gap in the wall. *Where's Ana?* He went around to the doorway of the hut and peered in through the gloom. The toy was lying near the fireplace but his sister was nowhere to be seen. He frowned, thinking of the deep water under the huts.

"Ana!" he called, anxiously. "Ana, where are you? "

Suddenly, he heard a loud splash. Torge turned around, startled. *No!* he thought, *Not Ana! She can't swim!*

Quickly, he ran along the walkway between the huts and looked anxiously over the edge. There was Ana! His little sister was struggling helplessly in the deep water, the rope still tied around her waist. Torge looked around desperately.

“Help!” he shouted, “Ana’s fallen in!”

But no one came. Everyone was gone, fishing, working in the fields or collecting wood like his mother. Torge waited no longer. He leapt in to the water, grabbed the rope and swam as fast as he could to the shore. He pulled Ana out of the water and wrapped his arms tightly around her. She was safe.

He didn’t notice his mother return with the firewood. She gasped and dropped the wood when she saw Torge and Ana huddled together, wet and shivering.

“Torge, what happened?” she demanded, running over to the children.

“Ana fell in the water,” said Torge.

“And you jumped in and saved her?” continued his mother as she wrapped Ana in her warm shawl.

Torge nodded.

“Well done!” said his mother with pride. She wrapped her arms around her son, not caring that her tunic got soaked.

“Thank goodness you didn’t go with your father today!” she said.

“When he comes home I’ll tell him you caught the biggest fish of all!”

For the first time that day, Torge felt happy. And now he knew he could swim.

## Did you know...?

Lakeside dwellings built on poles were quite common in prehistoric days and around 100 pole house settlements have been discovered on the shores of Lake Constance since 1845. In 1888, the existence of prehistoric pole houses was revealed off the shores of Immenstaad, from the Strandbad at Kippenhorn eastwards past Tobelbach. Artifacts were found from the Bronze Age (2000-850 b.C.) and early Stone Age (from 3900 b.C.) and may be viewed in the museums in Überlingen, Friedrichshafen and Constance. In 1983, state sponsored divers and investigations revealed a further settlement along the west flank of Kippenhorn.

Around 7000 years ago, during the Stone Age, cultivation of these shores had begun to supplement the food supply that hunting, fishing and gathering wild foods had provided. Farming led to the need for more permanent accommodation. The land was still heavily forested but fluctuations of the water level resulted in treeless plains around the shore, which were ideal for settlements. Experiments have shown that two men can bore a pole into the soft ground relatively easily and pole dwellings allow for the spring thaw when the water level can rise up to three metres.

At Unteruhldingen, the Pfahlbau Museum allows first hand experience of life as it probably was in these settlements on stilts. Dwellings from the Stone Age and later Bronze Age have been reconstructed, complete with examples of clothing, tools and other implements of daily life.

With luck, more prehistoric artifacts will be discovered off the shores of Immenstaad and given to archaeologists for examination. If you find a shard of old pottery or an unusually cut stone whilst swimming, look at it closely; you may be holding a piece of our ancient history in your hands!

Literature:

“Immenstaad, Geschichte einer Seegemeinde” Gemeinde Immenstaad (“Archäologische Funde von der Steinzeit bis zur Merowingerzeit” von Helmut Schlichtherle)