Six Foolish Fishermen

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Once there were six brothers
who decided to go fishing. So they
went to the river
and picked good spots
from which to fish.
“I will sit in this boat,”
said the first brother.
“And I will kneel on this raft,” said the second brother.
“And I will lean on this log,”
said the third brother.
“And I will stand on this bridge,” said the fourth brother.
“And I will lie on this rock,”
said the fifth brother.
“And I will walk on this bank,” said the sixth brother.
And that is exactly what they did. Each brother fished from the spot he had chosen, and each one had good luck.

But when it was time to go home, the brothers became a little worried.

“We have been near the river, and over the river, and on the river,” said the brother in the boat. “One of us might easily have fallen into the water and been drowned. I shall count all the brothers to be sure there are six of us.”

And he began to count:
"I see one brother on the raft,
That's one.

And another on the log.
That's two.

And another on the bridge.
That's three.
And another on the rock.
That’s four.

And another on the bank.
That’s five.

“Only five! Woe is me. We have lost a brother!” In his sorrow he didn’t even notice that he had forgotten to count himself.
“Can it really be?” cried the brother on the raft. “Has one of us been drowned, and have we really lost a brother?”

And he, too, began to count:
“I see one brother on the log. That’s one.

And another on the bridge. That’s two.

And another on the rock. That’s three.
And another on the bank.
That’s four.

And another in the boat.
That’s five.

“Only five. What will our dear mother say?”
And he, too, didn’t even notice that he had forgotten to count himself.
“Let me check from here!”
cried the brother
on the log.
“I see one brother on the bridge. That’s one.

“And another on the rock. That’s two.

“And another on the bank. That’s three.
“And another in the boat. That’s four.
“And another on the raft. That’s five. Five in all,
oh, unhappy day! Why did we ever come here, for one of us to be drowned!”
Then the fourth brother counted, and the fifth and the sixth—each one counted only five brothers because each forgot to include himself.

All the brothers went back to the shore and rushed sadly up and down the river’s edge, trying to see the body of their poor drowned brother.
Then along came a boy who had also been fishing, but who had not caught a single fish.

“What’s the matter?” he asked. “You seem to have plenty of fish. Why do you all look so sad?”

“Because six of us came here to fish, and now there are only five of us left. One of our dear brothers has been drowned!”

The boy looked puzzled. “What do you mean, only five left? How do you figure that?”
“Look, I’ll show you,” said the eldest brother, and he pointed to his brothers:
“One.
Two.
Three.
Four.
Five.

“Six of us came here, and now only five are going back. Sad is the day!”

The boy turned to hide his smile, and then he turned back. “I think I can help you find your lost brother,” he said. “When I squeeze your hand, I want you to count.”
As hard as he could, he squeezed the hand of each of the brothers, in turn.

“One!” yelled the first brother, and he rubbed his aching hand.

“Two!” cried the second brother, and he jumped up and down because of the hard squeeze.

“Three!” shouted the third brother.

“Four!” shrieked the fourth brother.

“Five!” screamed the fifth brother.

“Six!” roared the sixth brother.

SIX! The brothers looked at each other in delight.
There were six of them again!
They cheered for joy, and
slapped each other on the back.
Gratefully, they turned to the
boy. “Here,” they said, “We
insist that you take all of our
fish. We can never thank you
enough for finding our dear,
lost brother.”
As the boy happily accepted
their gift, the six foolish
fisherman went their merry way.