




Animal Stories

By Enid Blyton

The Kitten That Disappeared





John and Rosie had a kitten of their own. It was three months old, as black as coal, with eyes as green as a cucumber. It was the merriest, lovingest, warmest little kitten you can imagine, and the two children loved it with all their hearts.

It was called Fluffy, and it always came when it heard its name. It was very mischievous, and loved to hide under the beds or under the chairs and pounce out at people's toes. Fluffy loved everyone and everyone loved Fluffy.



And then one day she disappeared. It was the most extraordinary thing. One minute she was playing with the two children in the kitchen and the next minute she was gone!



Mother was busy. It was Monday morning and she had a lot to do.

She has washed up. she had done the laundry and put the dirty sheets and towels into the big basket for the laundry man to collect.

She had made the beds and peeled some potatoes for dinner.



And all the time Fluffy had played about with the children, sometimes jumping up at Mother, sometimes trying to catch her slippers as she whisked here and there. Then she was gone!



‘Mother, where is Fluffy?’ said Rosie, looking around.

‘Hiding somewhere, I expect,’ said Mother, fastening up the laundry bag in a hurry because she heard the laundry man coming down the passage.



‘Fluffy, Fluffy!’ called John – and there came an answering mew from somewhere, very tiny. ‘MiiiaOOOW!’

‘She’s somewhere!’ said John, and the children began to look under the dresser and under the stove.



The laundry man rang the bell, and
Mother gave him the laundry bag.
She shut the door so that Fluffy
shouldn't run out if she were
hiding somewhere.



John called again. 'Fluffy! Fluffy!'

But no matter how he listened he couldn't hear another mew.
No, Fluffy didn't answer at all.



Rosie hunted under the bottom shelf of the bedroom cupboard, and then in the cupboard where the newspapers were kept. But Fluffy wasn't anywhere to be found!



‘Oh, Mother, Fluffy has quite disappeared!’ said Rosie, almost crying.

‘Don’t be silly, darling,’ said Mother. ‘She must be somewhere about. She is hiding. Perhaps she has slipped upstairs and gone under one of the beds’



“But, Mother, the kitchen door has been shut all the time,’ said John. ‘She simply must be in the kitchen if she is anywhere.’



‘Well, she’ll turn up all right,’ said Mother. ‘Don’t worry. I haven’t time to help you hunt now, but when I’ve finished making this pudding for your dinner I will have a look around. But I expect by that time that Fluffy will come dancing out from somewhere!’



But, do you know, she didn't! so when Mother had finished making the pudding and popped it into the oven to cook, she had a look around for Fluffy too. She put down the saucer of milk and fish for the kitten, and called her.



'Fluffy, Fluffy, Fluffy! Puss, puss, puss! Dinner, dinner, dinner!'

But still no Fluffy came dancing out on black velvety paws!



Rosie cried big tears. 'Mother, it's magic! Some fairy has taken Fluffy away!'

'Nonsense, darling!' said Mother, laughing. 'The fairies never do unkind things. Fluffy may be in the garden.'



So they ran outside and hunted all around the garden. No Fluffy.



They went to the house next door, but Mrs Brown hadn't seen their kitten at all.



They went to Mrs White's too – but she hadn't seen Fluffy since the day before.



Well, the children hunted and called all morning, but Fluffy was not found. They had their dinner, and then hunted again.

‘Never mind,’ said Mother. ‘Fluffy will come in when she is hungry.’



‘Mother, I don’t think she ever went out,’ said John. ‘I don’t really. One minute she was playing hide-and-seek with us, and the kitchen door was shut, I know – and the next minute she had disappeared.’



Although Mother put out a saucer of fish and milk in the garden as well as in the kitchen, no Fluffy came to eat it – and Mother began to get worried too. She was very fond of the little black kitten and she could not think where it had got to.



But at last she knew!

There came a ring as the kitchen door.
Mother went to open it – and there was the
laundry man, grinning all over his red cheerful
face. In his hand he held a box.



‘Good afternoon, Mrs Jones,’ he said. ‘I just wanted to tell you that you had sent this to the laundry, but as it seems quite clean we wondered if you really did want it washed!’



He opened up the little box he carried – and
in it, curled up, was Fluffy!



How the children shouted and danced for joy!
Mother stared at Fluffy in astonishment.

‘Whatever do you mean? She asked the man.

‘Well, madam, when we opened your
laundry basket at the laundry, we found this
little black kitten fast asleep inside!’



‘Good gracious!’ said Mother. ‘She must have jumped inside when she was playing hide-and-seek with the children – and I didn’t notice her – and shut down the lid! Then you took the basket away with Fluffy inside! We did hear a faint mew from somewhere – she must have been in the basket then!’



How glad Fluffy was to see the children again!

How she pranced and danced on her four paddy-paws!

How she licked up her fish and milk! How she mewed and purred! What a fuss was made of her!



‘Oh, Mother! Fancy sending out kitten to the laundry!’ said Rosie. ‘Suppose she had been washed and ironed, whatever would she have thought!’

It’s a good thing the laundry didn’t wash and iron Fluffy, isn’t it? She did have a narrow escape!





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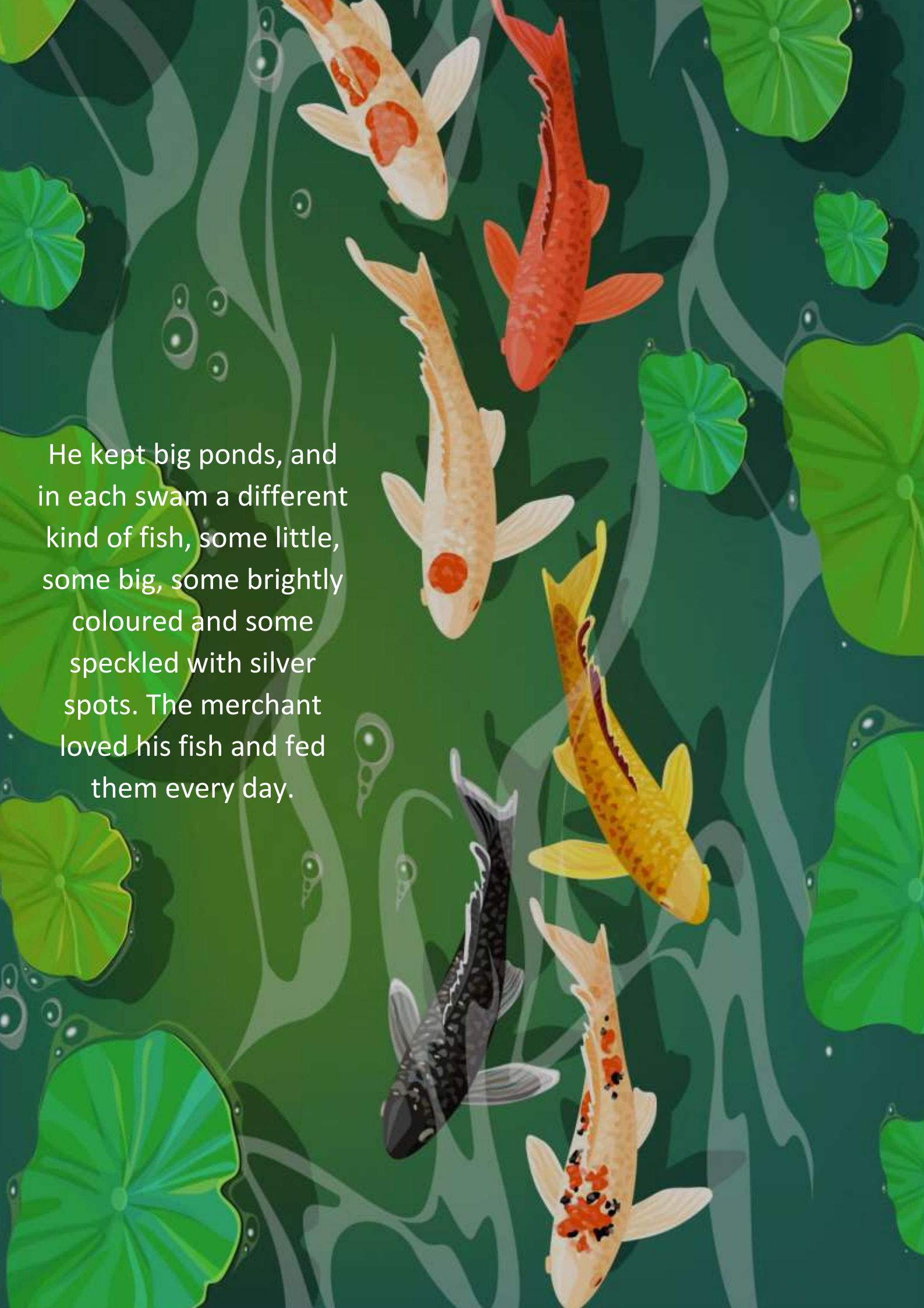
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The Tale of the Goldfish



Once upon a time, thousands of years ago, there lived in China a merchant who was very fond of fishes.

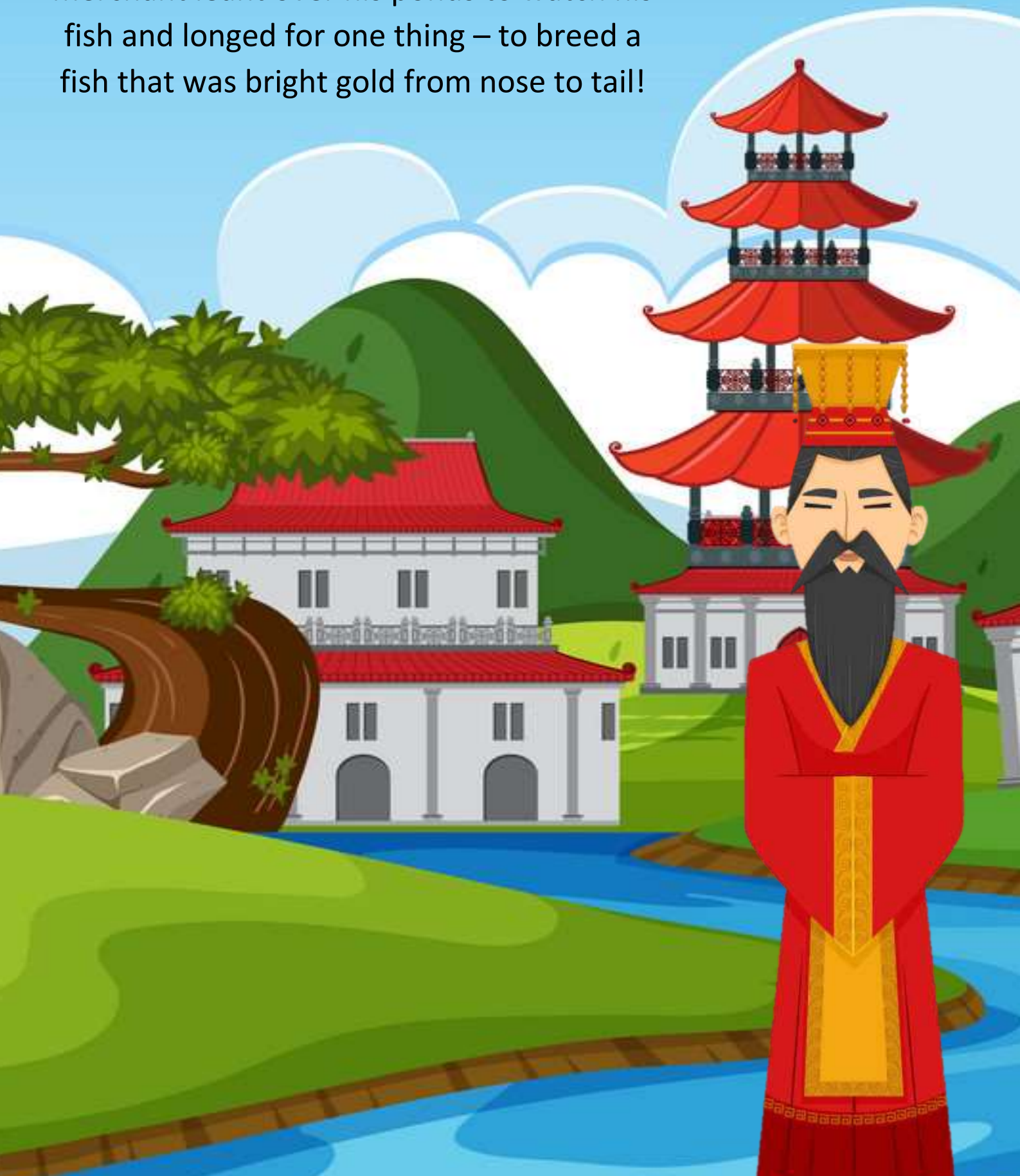




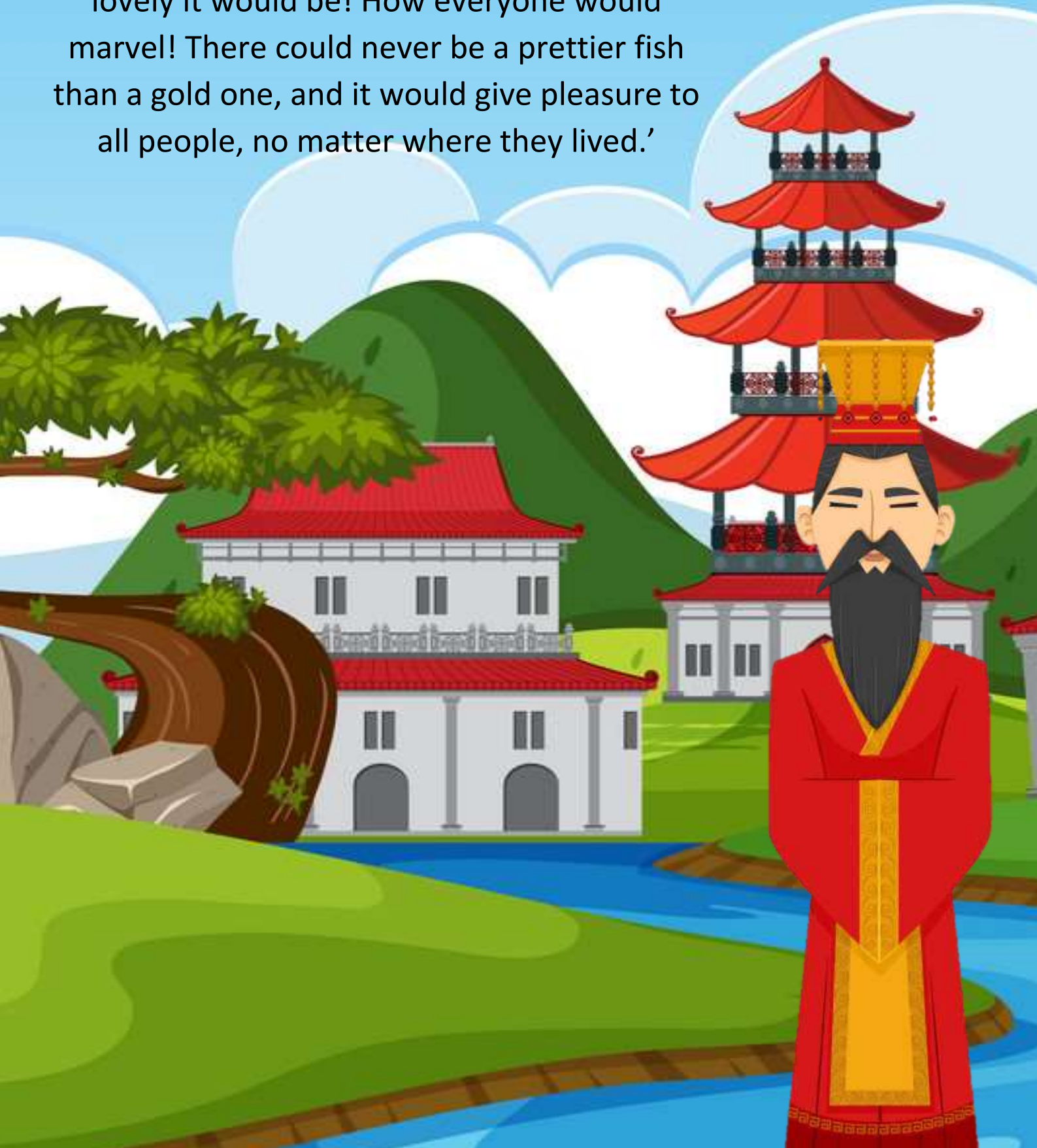
He kept big ponds, and in each swam a different kind of fish, some little, some big, some brightly coloured and some speckled with silver spots. The merchant loved his fish and fed them every day.


He liked his bright-coloured fish the best.

There were some that had blue streaks down their sides, and others that seemed to have caught a rainbow in their tails. The merchant leant over his ponds to watch his fish and longed for one thing – to breed a fish that was bright gold from nose to tail!



‘There are plenty of silver fish,’ he said to himself. ‘There are many rainbow-coloured fish, and others that are spotted and speckled with brilliance. But no one in the whole world has ever had a fish that was all gold. How lovely it would be! How everyone would marvel! There could never be a prettier fish than a gold one, and it would give pleasure to all people, no matter where they lived.’





So he tried very hard to rear a fish that all gold. But he found it was impossible. Some fish had bright yellow spots on them. Some had orange-coloured streaks. But none was all gold from tip to tail.

'The merchant fell on bad times. He lost a great deal of his money, and became poor and shabby.



He shut up his large house and lived in a small corner of it, without servants to wait on him.



But he did not forget to feed his fish.



He became an old man, and gave up the idea of rearing a fish of gold. He found that he was happy even though he was poor, and when his little grandchildren came to see him and climbed on his knees to listen to his stories he wished for nothing better.



One night a strange traveller came to the old merchant's house. The great ball outside the gate jangled to and fro as it had not done for years, and the merchant heard it in surprise. Who could be coming to his house now? He had no rich friends; they had all forsaken him.



He went through the long passage that led to the front gate and unbarred it. Outside stood an old man in a robe, his visitor beside him.

‘Does Wong Fu, the great merchant, live here?’ asked the visitor in a deep voice.



‘Honourable sir, it is Wong Fu you see before you,’ said the merchant, bowing, ‘but I am no longer great. I am a poor man, and my house is empty. Enter, I pray you, for I will find you shelter and food, though it will not be of grand quality.’



The visitor stepped inside. The merchant took him to a great marble basin where he might wash, and then slipped out to see to the horse. He stabled it in the empty stable, gave it food to eat and then went to prepare a meal for his unexpected guest.



In an old chest he had a few dainties stored away, and these he took out. Soon he had a meal ready and went to call his visitor. He found him leaning over the ponds, looking at the fish in the moonlight.

‘You are fond of your fish, I see,’ said the visitor, raising his head. ‘They come swimming up to my hand, tame and friendly.’



‘Yes,’ said the merchant. ‘It has always been the dream of my life to breed a fish all gold from head to tail – but I have never done so. Come, honourable sir, your supper is prepared.’



They went inside to eat, and at last the visitor told the old merchant who he was and why he had come.

‘I am Sing Fu,’ he said, ‘the son of the old washerman you had many years ago.’

‘But you are wealthy man, well favoured and wise,’ said the old merchant in astonishment.



'It is so,' said the visitor. 'My mother put me in the service of Lai Tu the famous magician, and I found favour in his sight so that he made me like a son to him. Now Lai Tu is dead, and I have his wealth and much of his learning.'



The merchant bowed himself to the ground, until his forehead touched the floor. He was in great awe of enchanters, and he trembled to think that he has one in his shabby house.

‘Rise,’ said the visitor. ‘Do not kneel to me. My mother would not have you do that.’



‘And is your honourable mother still alive and well?’ asked the merchant, rising again, but still trembling in his surprise and excitement.

‘She is well and happy,’ said the enchanter gravely. ‘It is by her request that I have come to see you. Do you remember her, honourable host?’



‘Yes,’ said the merchant at once. ‘She was kind and jolly. She washed my linen better than anyone else.’

‘And do you remember when she fell ill and could not work for five weeks?’ asked the visitor.

The merchant felt uncomfortable. Had he treated the old washerwoman kindly? He could not remember. It would be dreadful if she had sent her son to punish him for an unkindness done to her years ago.



‘No, I do not remember her illness,’ he said at last.

‘My mother remembers,’ said the magician. ‘You picked her up and carried her up to bed. You sent a doctor to make her well again, and you paid her wages all the weeks that she could not work. She has never forgotten. And now that she has a son who is wealthy and powerful she has asked me to go to all those who were once kind to her and reward them.’



So I have come to you.'

The old merchant was amazed.

'And do you also visit those who treated your mother ill?' he asked. 'Do you punish as well as reward?'

'No, for such is not my mother's wish,' said the enchanter gravely. 'She has forgotten her enemies, but not her well-doers. Now, honourable friend, you are poor and shabby. I bring you riches and honour, and they will bring you happiness.'



‘There you are wrong,’ said the merchant quietly.

‘Neither riches nor honour bring happiness. I am happy now without them. I do not want gold, nor do I want servants, rich food, embroidered clothes. I am old and tired, but I am happy. Leave me as I am.’



The magician looked at the old man in wonder. Never before had he met anyone who refused what he had to offer. He said nothing more, and, bidding the merchant goodnight, lay down on a mat to sleep.



But in the middle of the night he went to his horse and took a sack from its back. In this sack were great bars of gold, which he had brought as a present for the old man. Now they would not be wanted. But the magician had thought of something splendid to do with them.



He took them to one of the ponds, where pretty grey-green fish were swimming, and one by one he slid the bars of gold into the water, murmuring magic words as he did so. Each bar dissolved into a cloud of orange-gold, and, behold, the fishes were attracted by the strange mist in the water and swam up in shoals to see what it was.



And when morning came
each fish was bright orange-
gold from head to tail!



The old merchant saw them when searching for his midnight visitor, who had strangely disappeared. He stood by the pond, amazed and delighted. His dream had come true at last! Here were goldfish – bright gold from nose to tail!



And when you see a
gleaming goldfish remember
the kind-hearted merchant
and his old washerman, and
be kind to others yourself.
You never know what magic
you may start!





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