



Animal Stories

By Enid Blyton

The Little Lost Hen



One afternoon, when Harry was coming home from school, he saw a little red hen. That doesn't sound very surprising, but when I tell you that the hen was just about to cross the road in the busy street, all by itself, you will see why Harry was rather astonished.



‘Goodness!’ said Harry in surprise. ‘What is that hen doing in the middle of the town all by itself? It will get run over if it tries to cross this busy street. It must have escaped from somewhere and got lost.’



A car hooted at the hen and it ran back to the kerb, fluttering its red feathers and squawking loudly. Harry was worried. What was he to do? You couldn't tell a hen to go home, as you could tell a dog.



There's nothing to be done but to pick up the hen and take it home with me, thought Harry. I can put it into my nursery until I know who the owner is.



Now, Harry wasn't very good at picking up birds. Some people love picking up anything, and don't mind touching worms or spiders. It is good to be like that, but Harry wasn't. He shivered when he tried to pick up the hen. He didn't like it at all.



The hen was so frightened that she let herself be picked up without struggling a bit. Harry managed to get her under his left arm, and held her there with his right hand. She tried to peck him and he nearly dropped her. But he just managed to hold on, and off he went home, with the hen under his arm.



When he got home he called for his mother, but she was out. Jane, the maid, was in the garden hanging out some tea cloths. So Harry went into the house by himself, carrying the little lost hen.



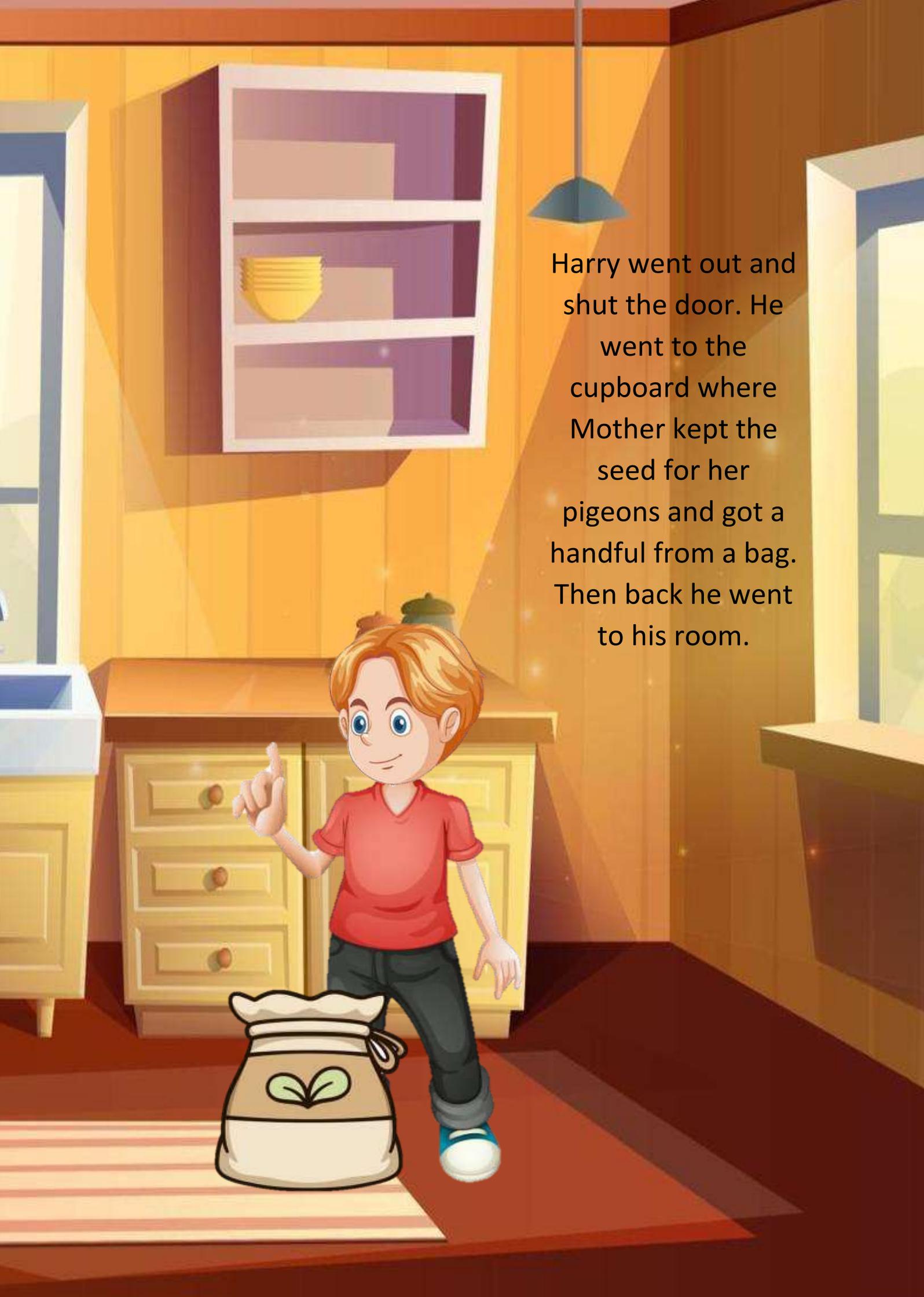
He went to his room and looked around. Where could he put the hen to make her comfortable? He saw his barrow there, and he carefully put the hen into it.



But she was out at once and ran clucking all around the room because she didn't know where she was.

'Oh, hen, don't be so silly,' said Harry. 'Are you hungry? Stop pecking at my soldiers, please!'





Harry went out and shut the door. He went to the cupboard where Mother kept the seed for her pigeons and got a handful from a bag. Then back he went to his room.

‘Kuk-kuk-kuk-kuk-kuk!’ said the hen, running to Harry.

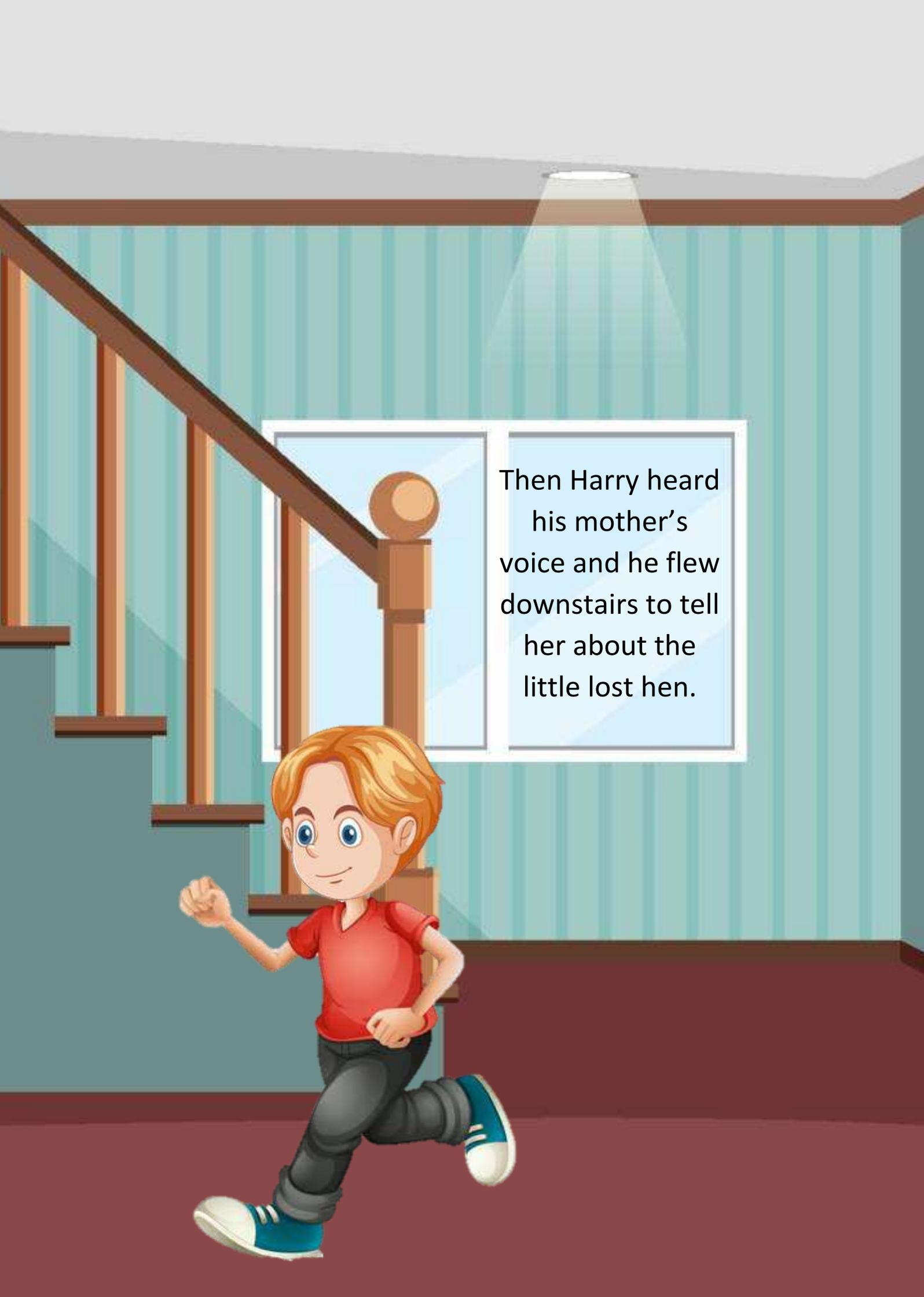
‘Kuk-kuk,’ answered the boy, and threw a handful of seed on the carpet. The hen pecked it up greedily. Then she cocked her bright-eyed head on one side and looked at Harry.



‘Kuk-kuk-kuk!’ she said in a very kindly tone.

Harry didn’t understand what she said, but what she meant was that she thought he was a very kind little boy. She began to peck up the rest of the seed.





Then Harry heard
his mother's
voice and he flew
downstairs to tell
her about the
little lost hen.



But Mother had a visitor with her, and Harry had to be quiet and not say a word except how do you do. Mother wouldn't let him talk when visitors were there, unless he was spoken to.



But after a while Mother heard a peculiar noise from Harry's room, and she frowned.

'I wonder what that funny noise upstairs is,' she said. 'It's very odd!'



Everybody listened – and they could hear the hen clucking loudly.
Then suddenly she cackled at the top of her voice!

‘Cackle-cackle-cackle, cluck-cluck-cuck!’

‘It sounds like a hen!’ said Mother in astonishment. ‘Well, I never!’



'It is a hen!' said Harry, and he told his mother all about the little hen he had found trying to cross the street.

'Harry! Do you really mean to say that you put the hen in your room?' said Mother. 'Oh, whatever will you do next?'



‘It must be Mrs White’s hen,’ said the visitor, Miss Brown. ‘She told me this morning that her favourite red hen had escaped, and she didn’t know where it had gone!’



‘Oh, then do you mind taking it back to her?’ cried Harry. ‘The poor little hen feels so strange in my room. It would be so pleased to go back home again to all its friends.’

‘Of course I will,’ said Miss Brown, and they all went upstairs.



There was the hen, scratching at the carpet and clucking softly to itself. It ran to Harry and pecked at a freckle on his legs.



Miss Brown picked it up.

‘Would you like a basket to take it home in?’ asked Harry’s mother.

‘Oh, no. I like the nice soft warm feeling of a hen,’ said Miss Brown, cuddling the little red hen to her.



'My words, won't Mrs White be pleased when she sees me walking in with her lost hen? It is her very favourite one, and lays her a big brown egg every day.'



'I love brown eggs,' said Harry.
'They taste much nicer than white
ones. I wish I had a hen that laid
me brown eggs.'



‘We haven’t room in our garden to keep hens,’ said Mother. ‘Well, goodbye, Miss Brown, and I do hope the hen will behave itself and not try get out of your arms!’

Miss Brown and the hen went away.



Harry felt quite lonely without the little red hen in his room. He wandered around by himself, wondering what to play with. He thought he would play with the soldiers in his toy fort.



So he went to the fort – but before he could pick up any of his soldiers he saw something that made him stare and stare!

In the very middle of his toy fort was a big brown egg! Yes, there it lay among the soldiers, big and brown and smooth.



Harry gave a scream of joy and picked it up. it was warm – as warm as toast!

‘Mother! Mother! Come and look here!’ yelled Harry. ‘Oh, quick do come!’



Mother came rushing in – and when she saw the egg she laughed and laughed.

‘Well, really, Harry, this is the funniest thing I ever heard of! You find a hen and bring it to your room and feed it – and it lays an egg in your toy fort! I will ring up Mrs White and tell her, and you can take the egg round to her in a basket.’



So Mother rang up Mrs White and told her. When she put down the telephone she turned to Harry.



‘Mrs White says that the hen must have meant the egg for you, Harry, in return for your kindness,’ said Mother. ‘She says you are to keep it and eat it for breakfast!’



‘Oh, Mother! What a surprise! And I do so like brown eggs!’ said Harry in delight. ‘How kind of the hen to think of me like that!’



So, Harry had the brown egg for his breakfast, and he told me that it was the very nicest one he had ever had in his life. Wasn't he lucky?





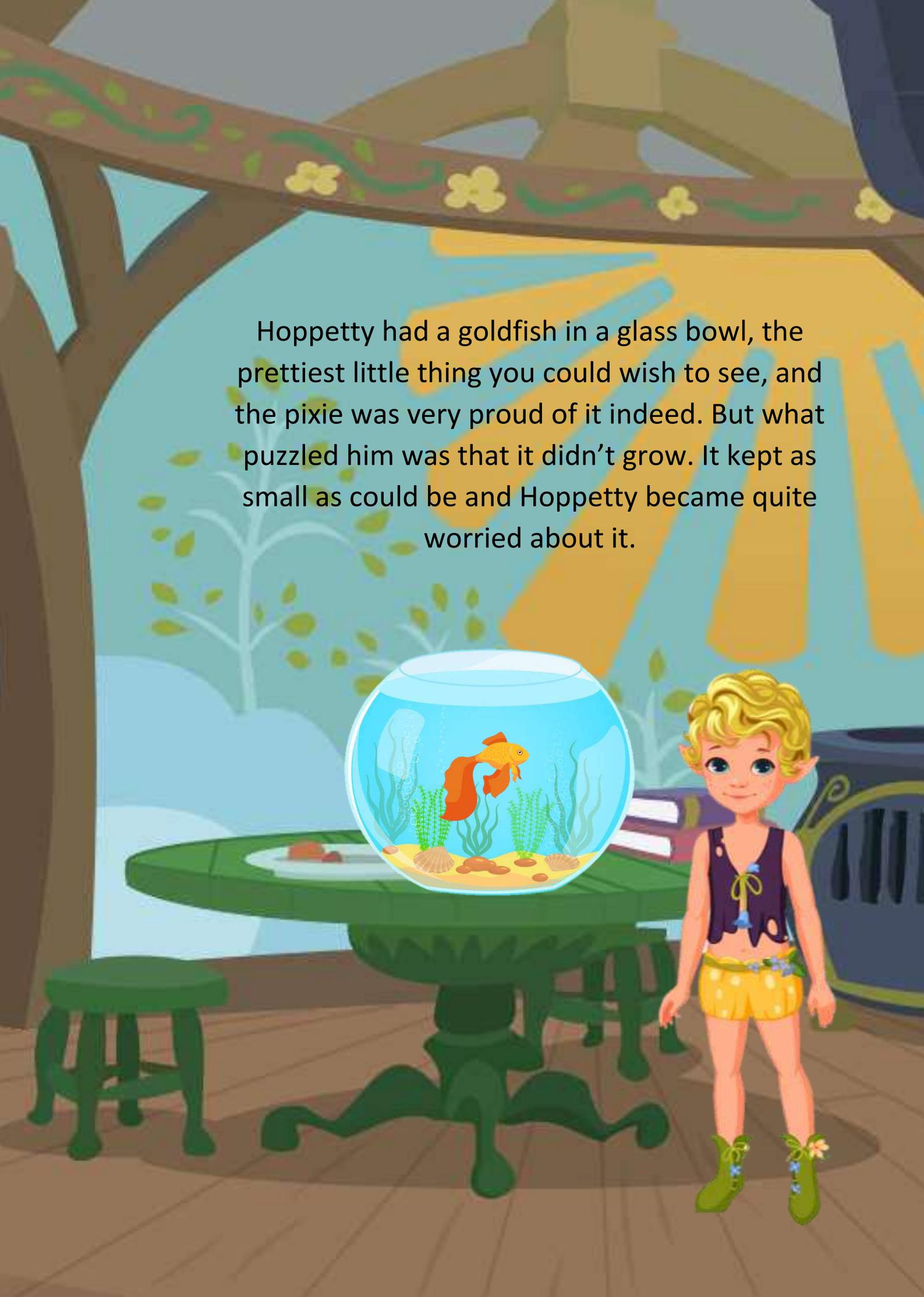
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The Goldfish That Grew



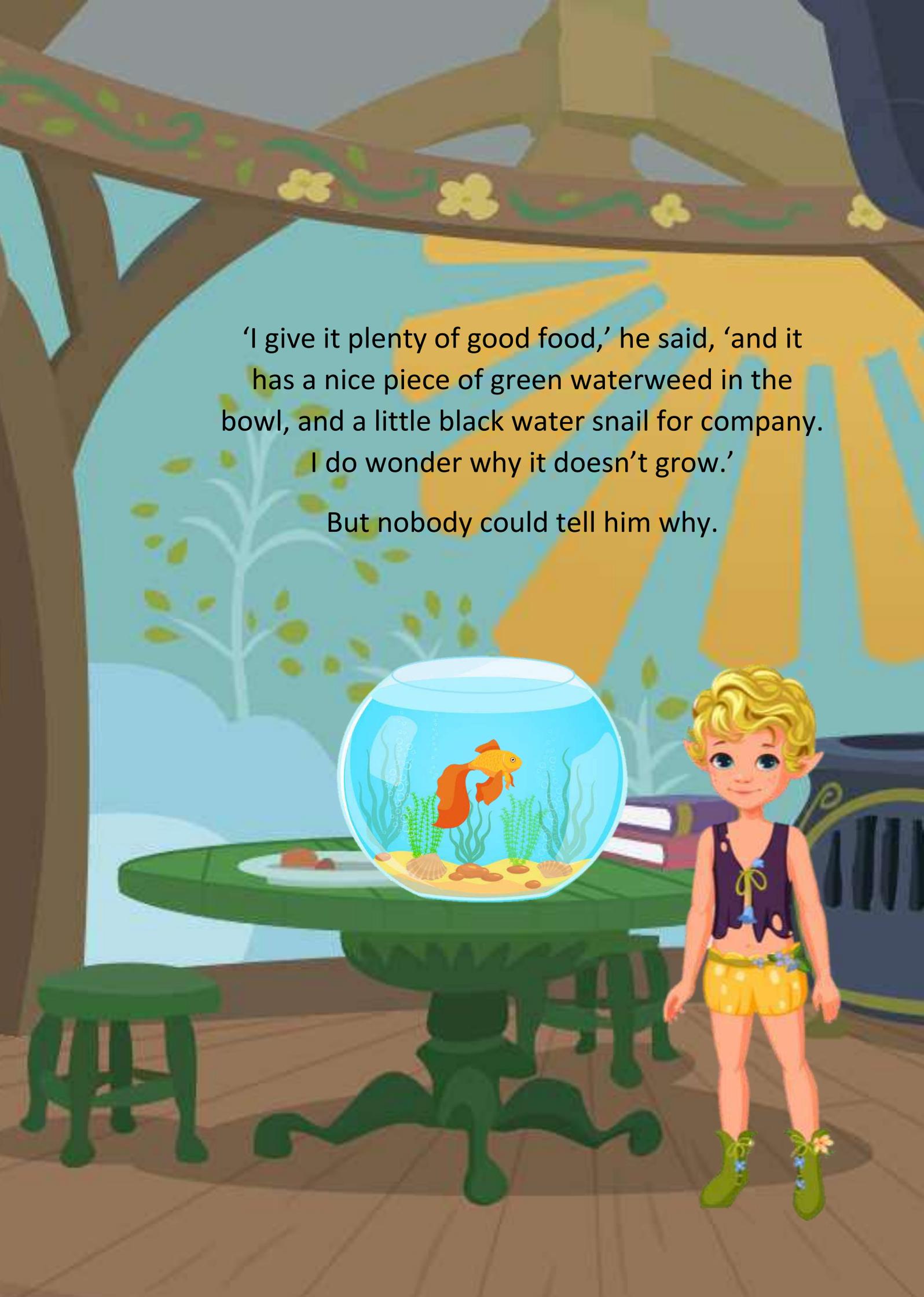
Hoppetty had a goldfish in a glass bowl, the prettiest little thing you could wish to see, and the pixie was very proud of it indeed. But what puzzled him was that it didn't grow. It kept as small as could be and Hoppetty became quite worried about it.



'I give it plenty of good food,' he said, 'and it has a nice piece of green waterweed in the bowl, and a little black water snail for company.

I do wonder why it doesn't grow.'

But nobody could tell him why.

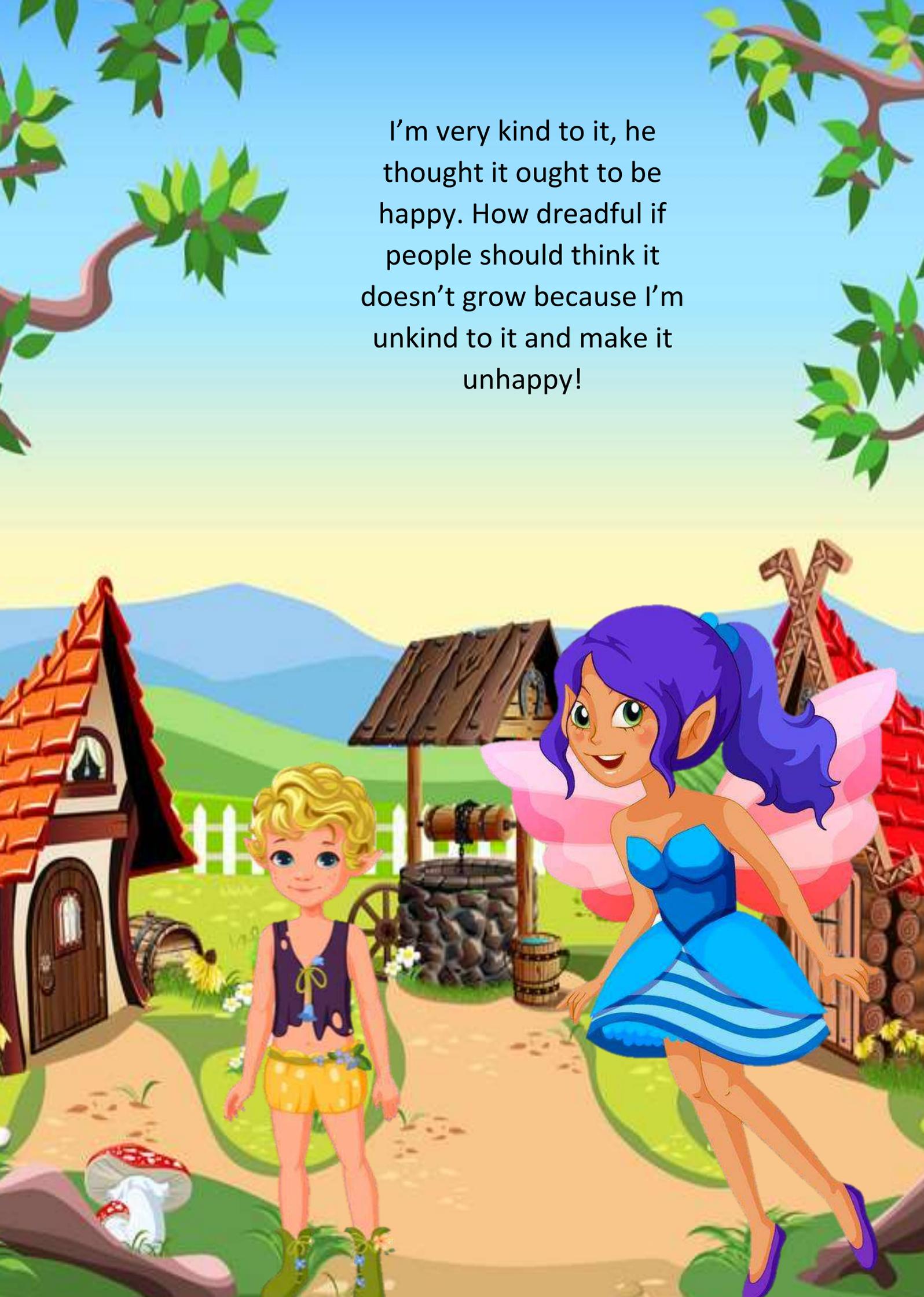


‘Perhaps it isn’t very happy,’ said Mrs Biscuit, the baker’s wife. ‘I’ve heard it said that unhappy creatures neve grow much.’

Hoppetty couldn’t bear to think that.

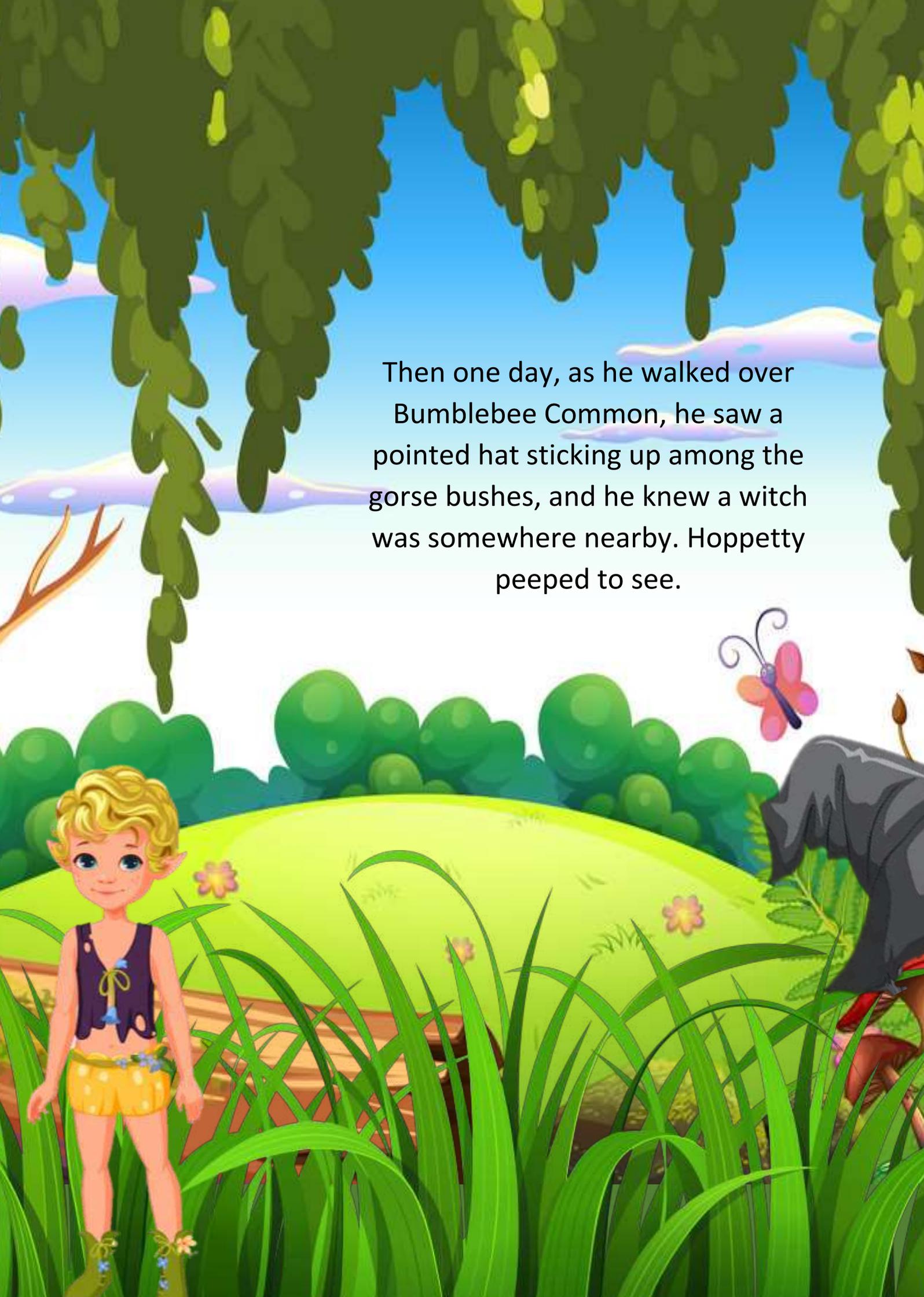


I'm very kind to it, he thought it ought to be happy. How dreadful if people should think it doesn't grow because I'm unkind to it and make it unhappy!



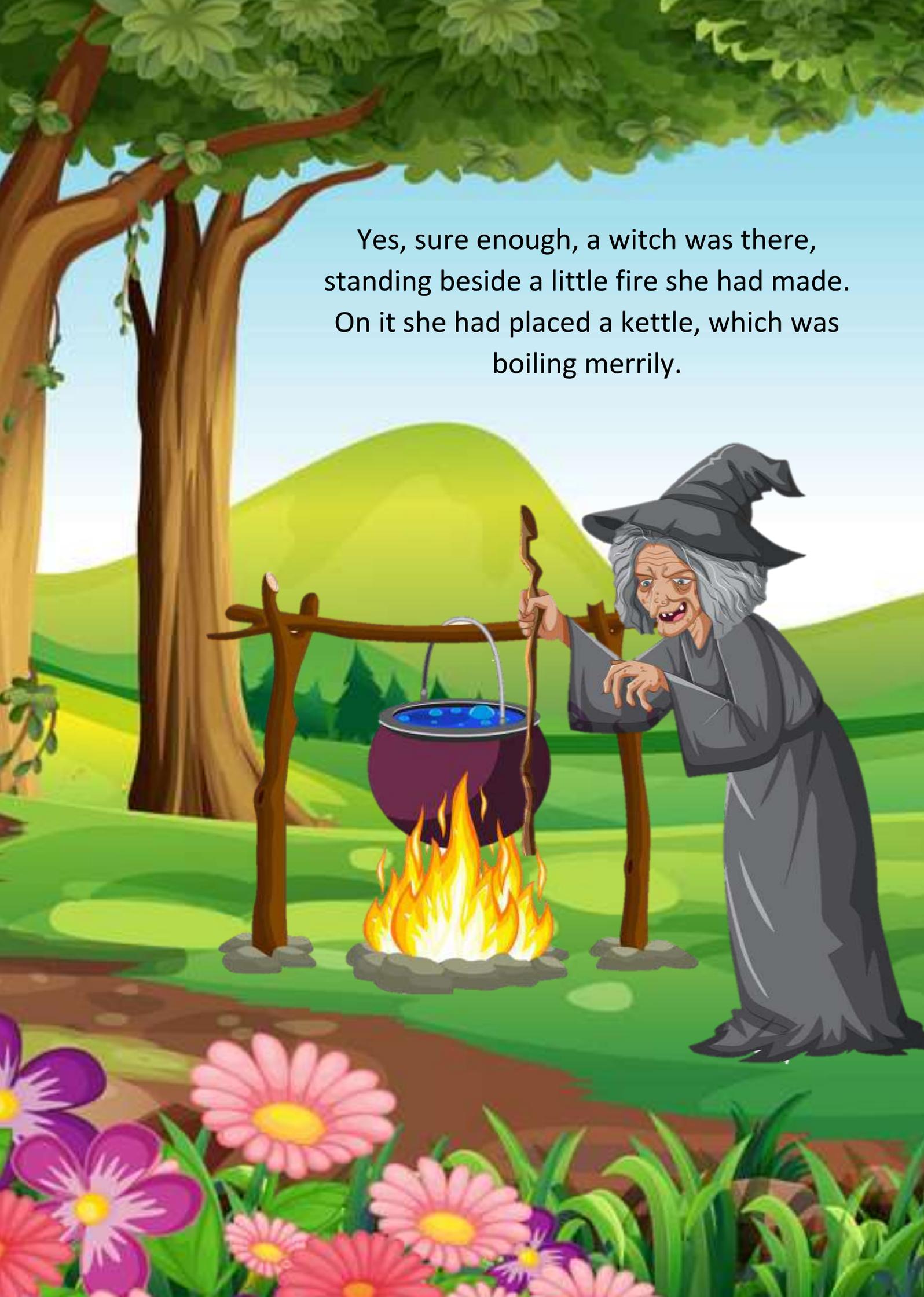
He gave the fish more food than ever, but it wouldn't eat it. The water snail feasted on it instead, and that made Hoppetty cross. He really didn't know what to do!





Then one day, as he walked over
Bumblebee Common, he saw a
pointed hat sticking up among the
gorse bushes, and he knew a witch
was somewhere nearby. Hoppetty
peeped to see.

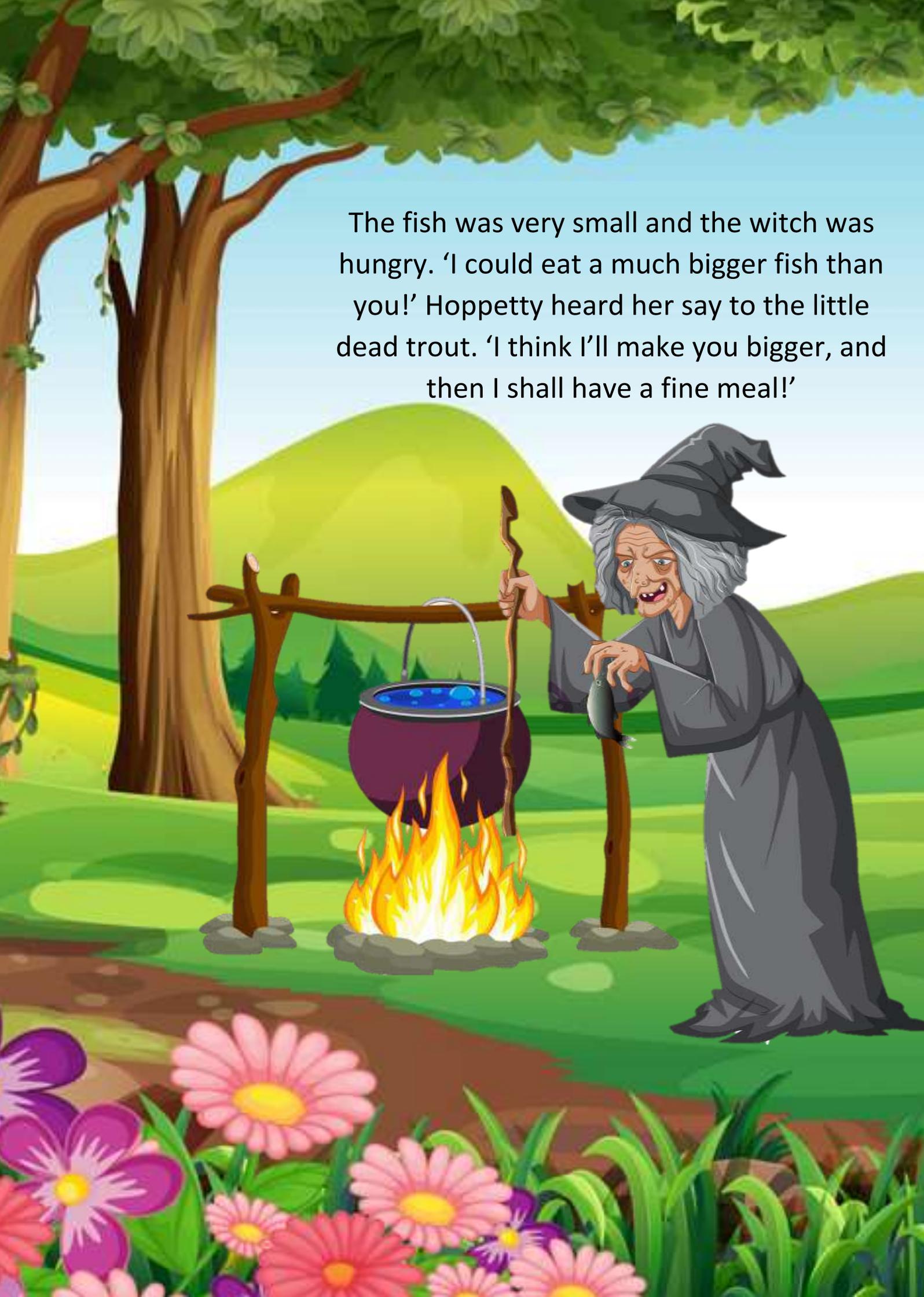
Yes, sure enough, a witch was there,
standing beside a little fire she had made.
On it she had placed a kettle, which was
boiling merrily.



She held over the pot a little fish she had caught in the river nearby. She meant to have it for her dinner.



The fish was very small and the witch was hungry. 'I could eat a much bigger fish than you!' Hoppetty heard her say to the little dead trout. 'I think I'll make you bigger, and then I shall have a fine meal!'



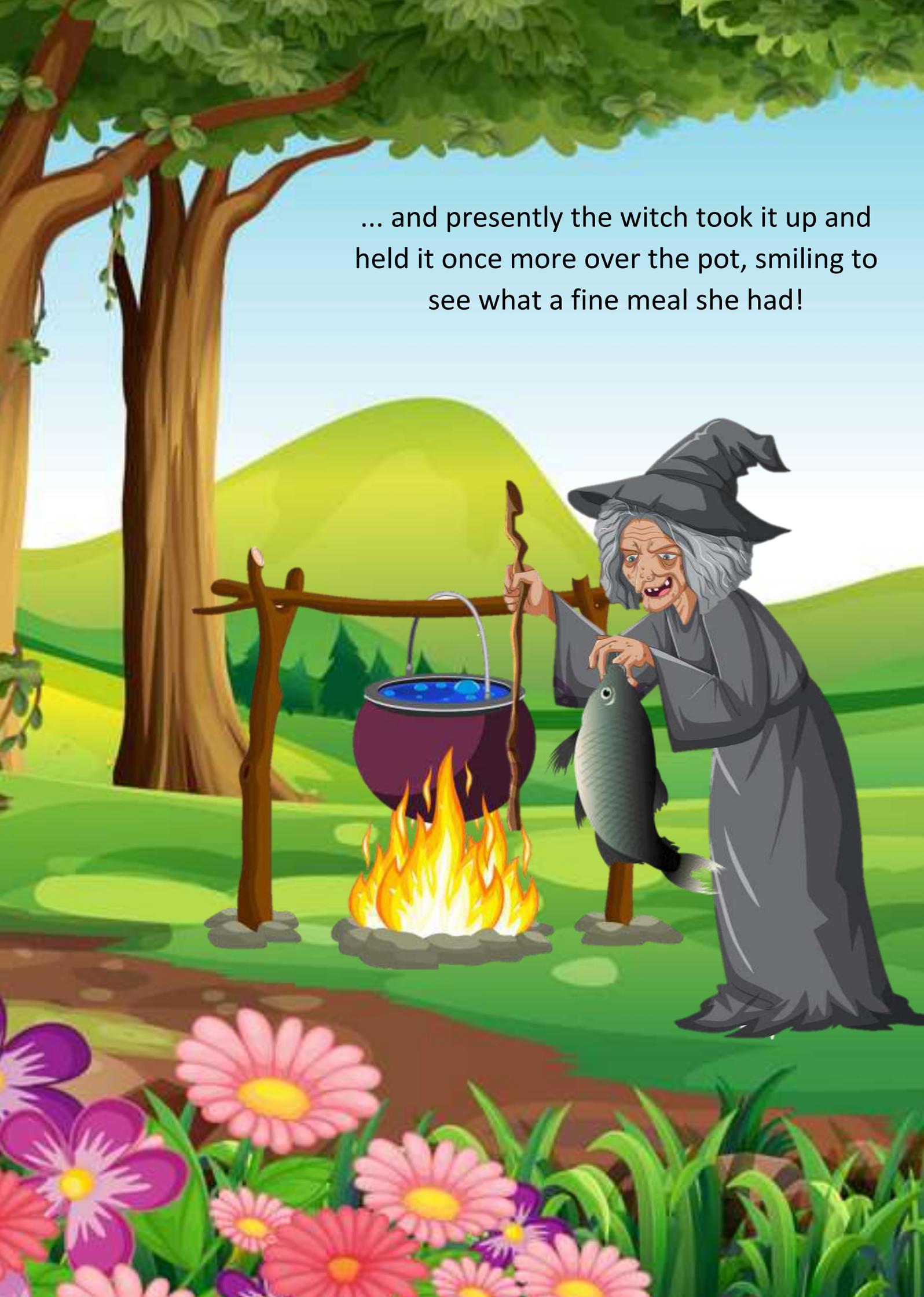
She laid the fish down on the grass and waved her hand over it twice. 'Little fish, bigger grow, I shall like you better so!' she chanted, and then she said a very magic word that made Hoppetty shiver and shake, it was so full of enchantment. But goodness! How he stared to see what happened next!

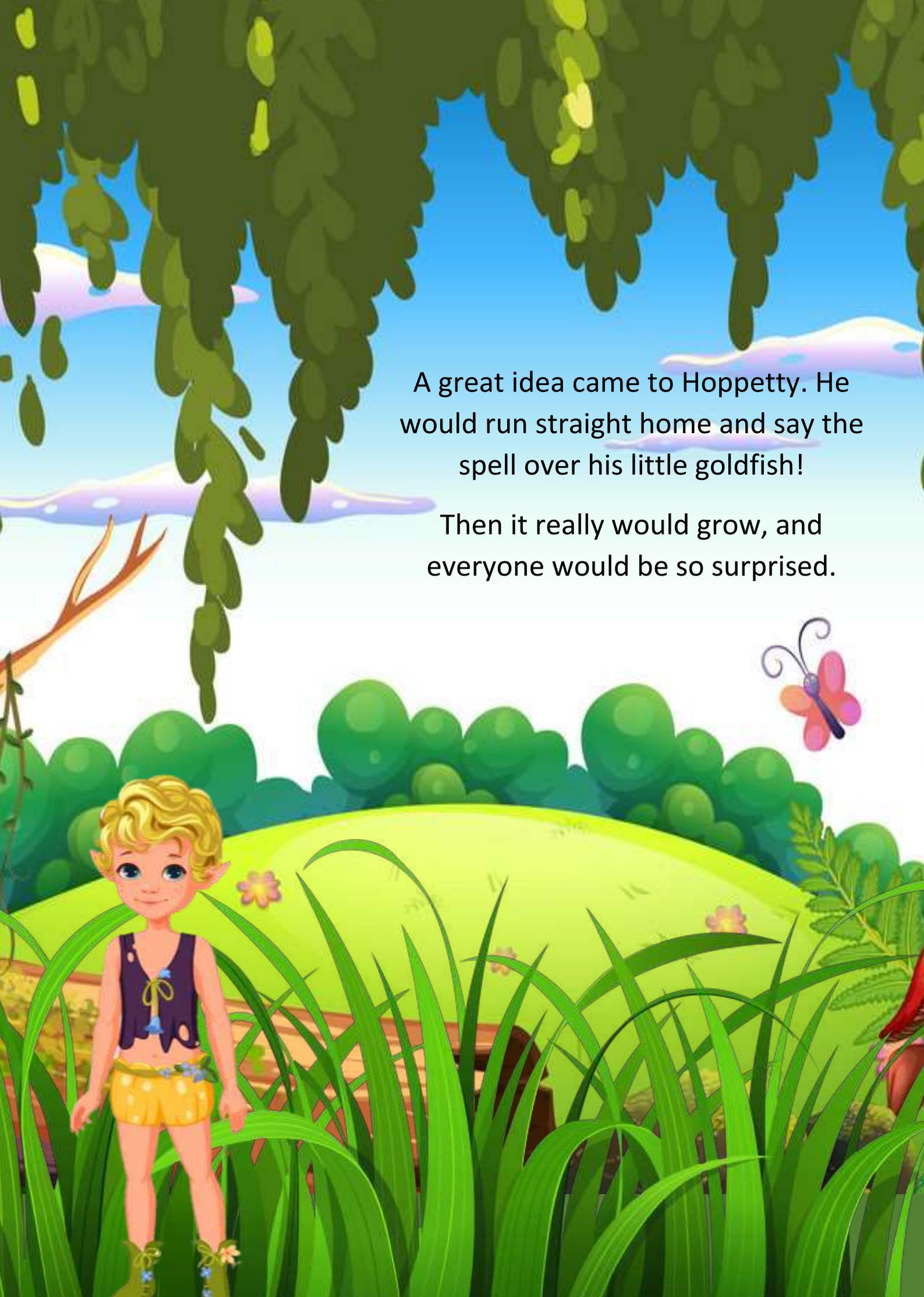


The little fish began to grow, and grow ...



... and presently the witch took it up and held it once more over the pot, smiling to see what a fine meal she had!

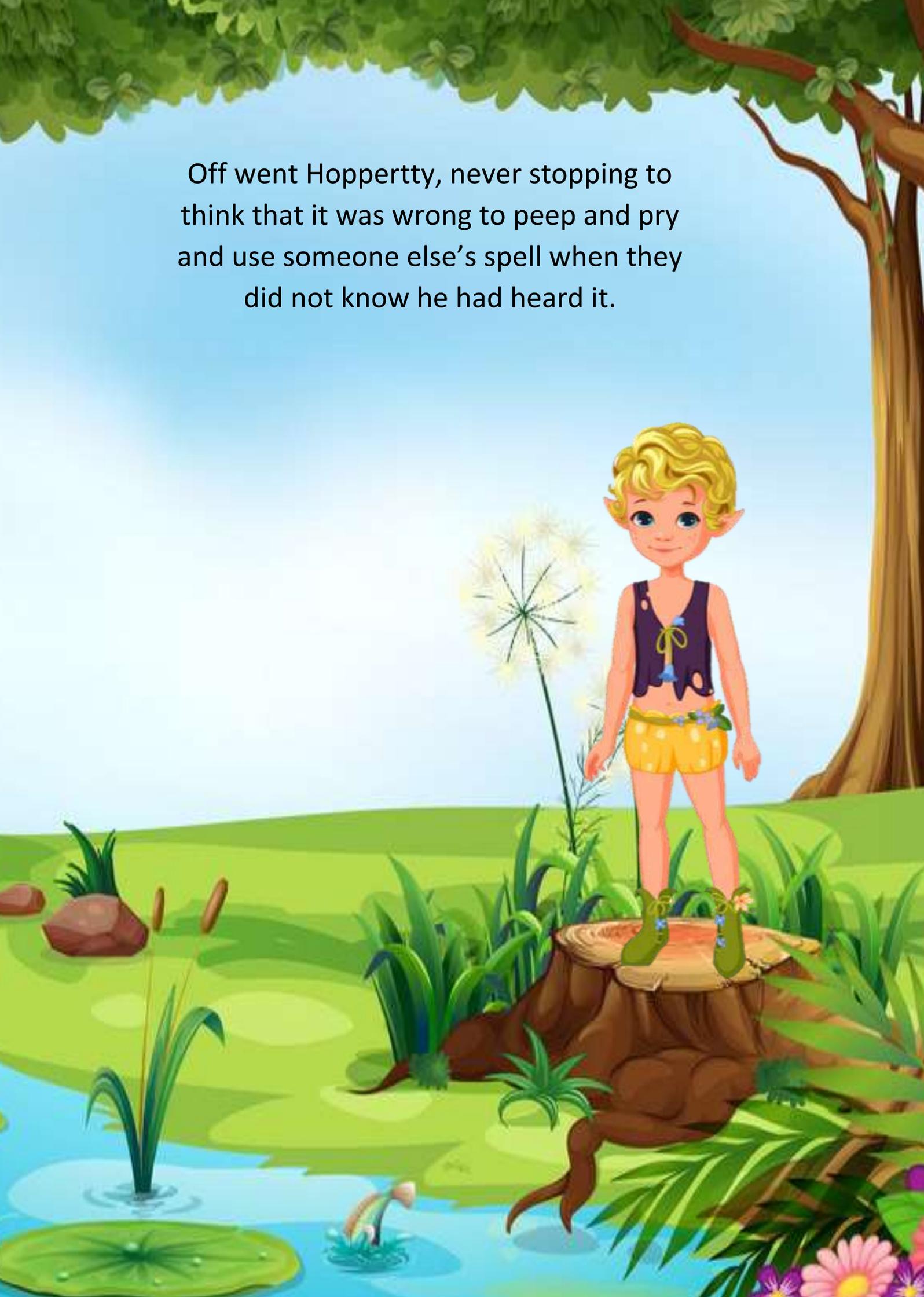




A great idea came to Hoppetty. He would run straight home and say the spell over his little goldfish!

Then it really would grow, and everyone would be so surprised.

Off went Hopperty, never stopping to think that it was wrong to peep and pry and use someone else's spell when they did not know he had heard it.



He didn't stop running until he got home and then he went straight to his little goldfish swimming about in its bowl.

He waved his hand over it twice. 'Little fish, bigger grow, I shall like you better so!' he chanted, and then he said the very magic word, though it made him shier and shake to do so.



All at once the goldfish gave a little leap in the water, and began to grow! How it grew! Hoppetty couldn't believe his eyes! It was soon twice as big as before, and still it went on growing!



‘You’re big enough now, little fish,’ said Hoppetty.
‘You can stop growing.’

But the fish didn’t! it went on and on getting bigger
and bigger, and soon it was too big for the bowl.

‘Oh dear!’ said Hoppetty in dismay. ‘This is very
awkward. I’d better fetch my washing-up bowl and
put you in that.’



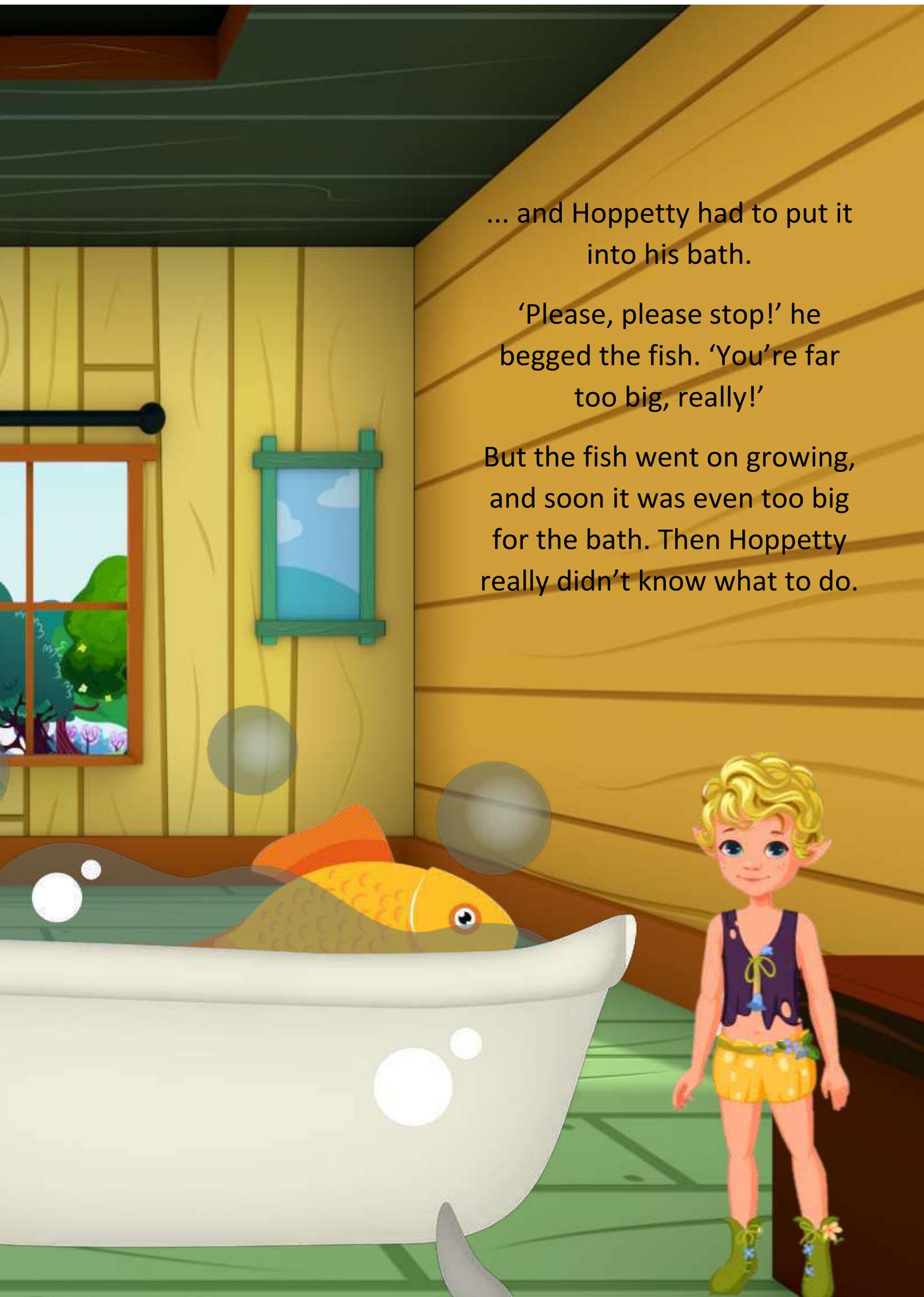
He popped the fish in his washing-up bowl,
but still it went on growing ...



... and Hoppetty had to put it into his bath.

‘Please, please stop!’ he begged the fish. ‘You’re far too big, really!’

But the fish went on growing, and soon it was even too big for the bath. Then Hoppetty really didn’t know what to do.



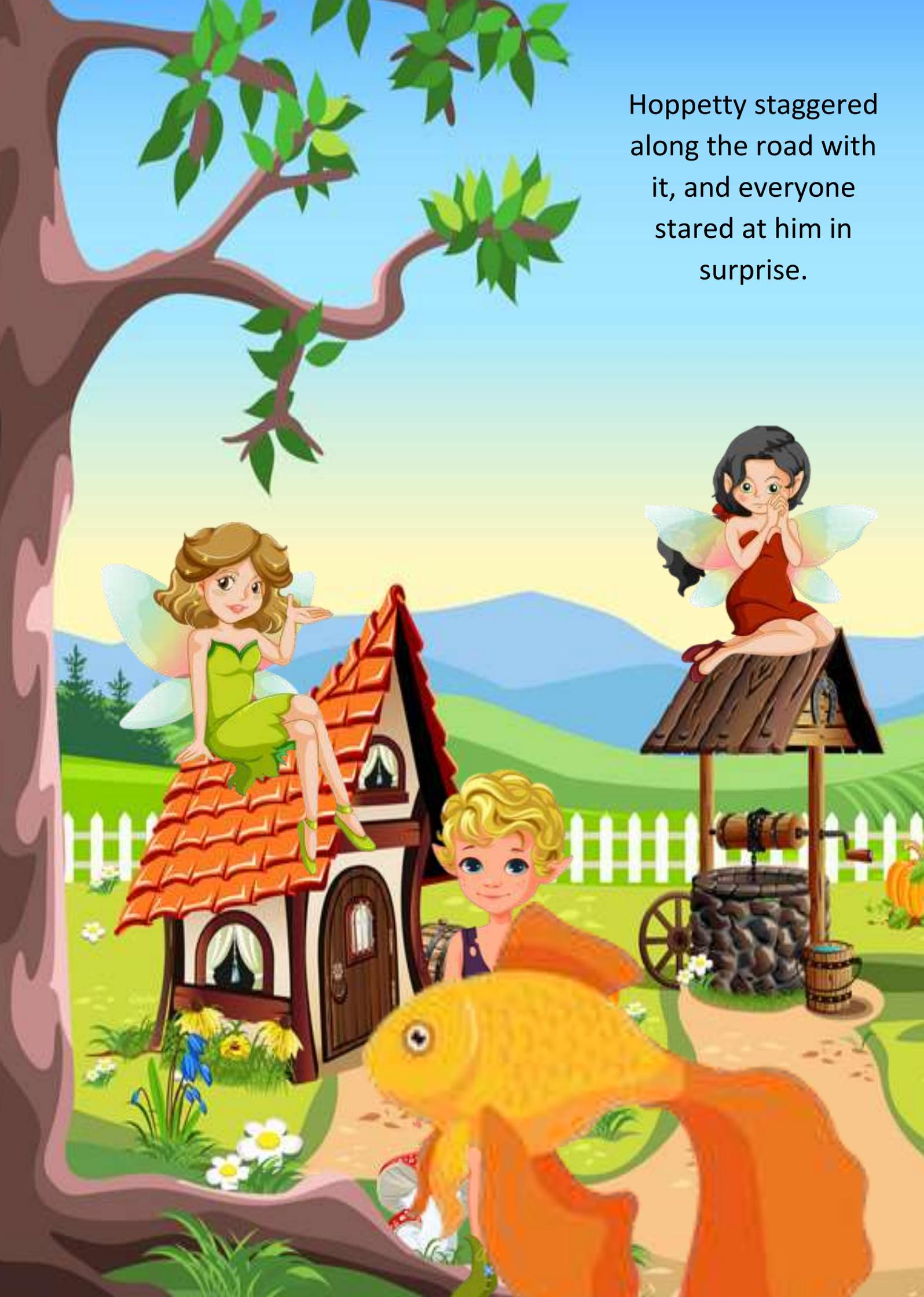
'I'd better take my fish under my arm and go and find that witch!' he said at last. 'She can tell me how to stop my goldfish from getting any bigger. Oh dear, I do hope she won't be cross!'



He picked the goldfish up, and set off to Bumblebee Common. How heavy the fish was! And it kept getting heavier and heavier too, because it went on growing.



Hoppetty staggered along the road with it, and everyone stared at him in surprise.



Then a gnome policeman stopped him.

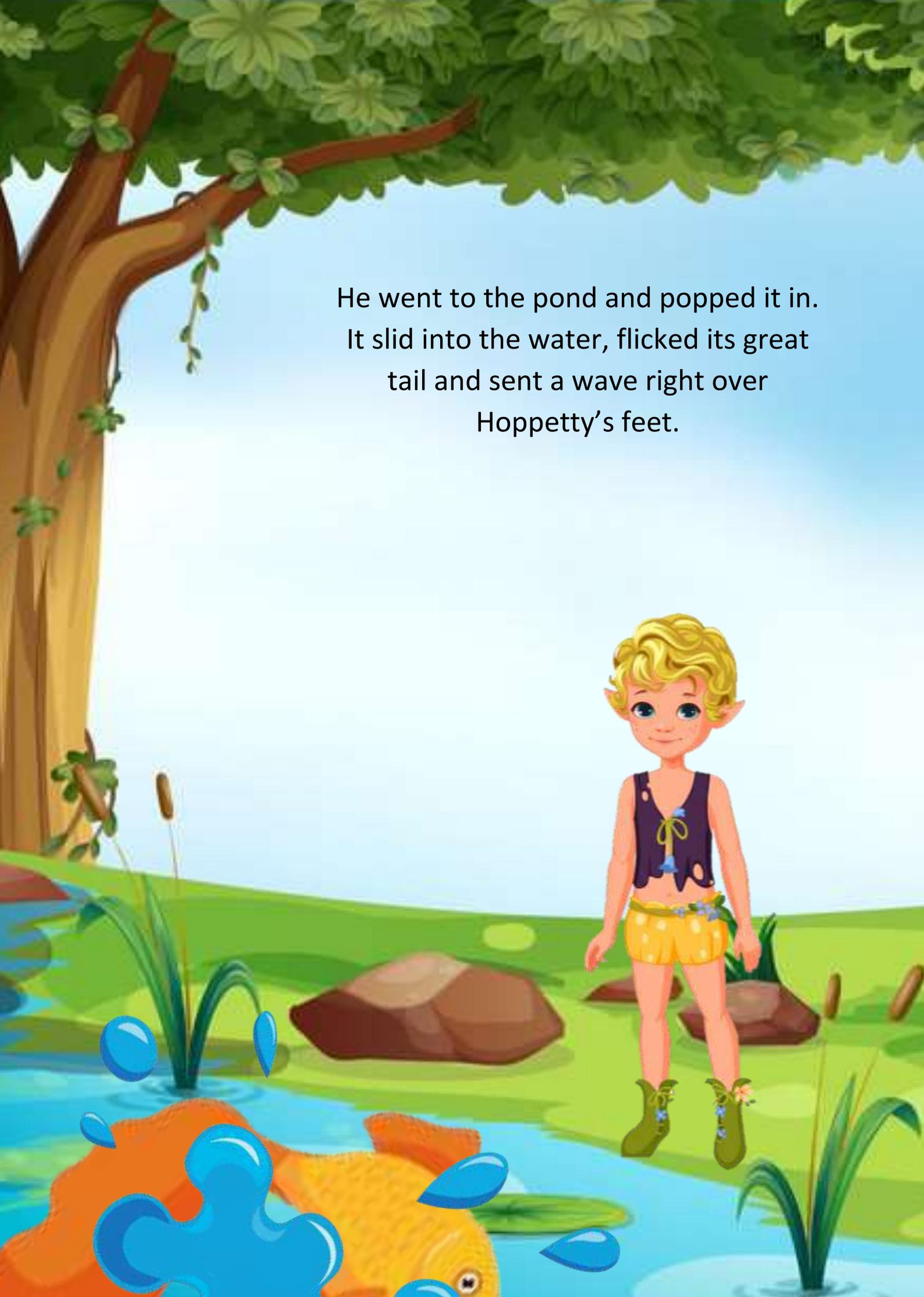
‘You are being cruel to that fish,’ he said. ‘He is panting for breath, poor thing. Put him in that pond over there at once.’



Sure enough, the fish was opening and shutting its mouth in despair. It wriggled and struggled, and Hoppetty could hardly hold it.



He went to the pond and popped it in.
It slid into the water, flicked its great
tail and sent a wave right over
Hoppetty's feet.



Then who should come by but that witch! Hoppetty ran to her and told her all that had happened, beginning her to forgive him for using her spell.



‘Do you mean to say that you were peeping and prying on me?’ said the witch in a rage. ‘Well, it just serves you right, you nasty little pixie! Your fish can go on growing till it’s bigger than the town itself, and that will be a fine punishment for you!’



‘Madam, tell the spell that will make the fish go back to its right size,’ said the policeman sternly. ‘Hoppetty has done wrong, but you cannot refuse his request now that he has asked your pardon.’



The witch had to obey. She went to the pond and waved her hand over it twice. 'Big fish, smaller grow, I shall like you better so!' she chanted, and then she said another magic word.



At once the great goldfish shrank smaller and smaller, and at last it was its own size again. Hoppetty cried out in delight, and ran to get a net to catch it.

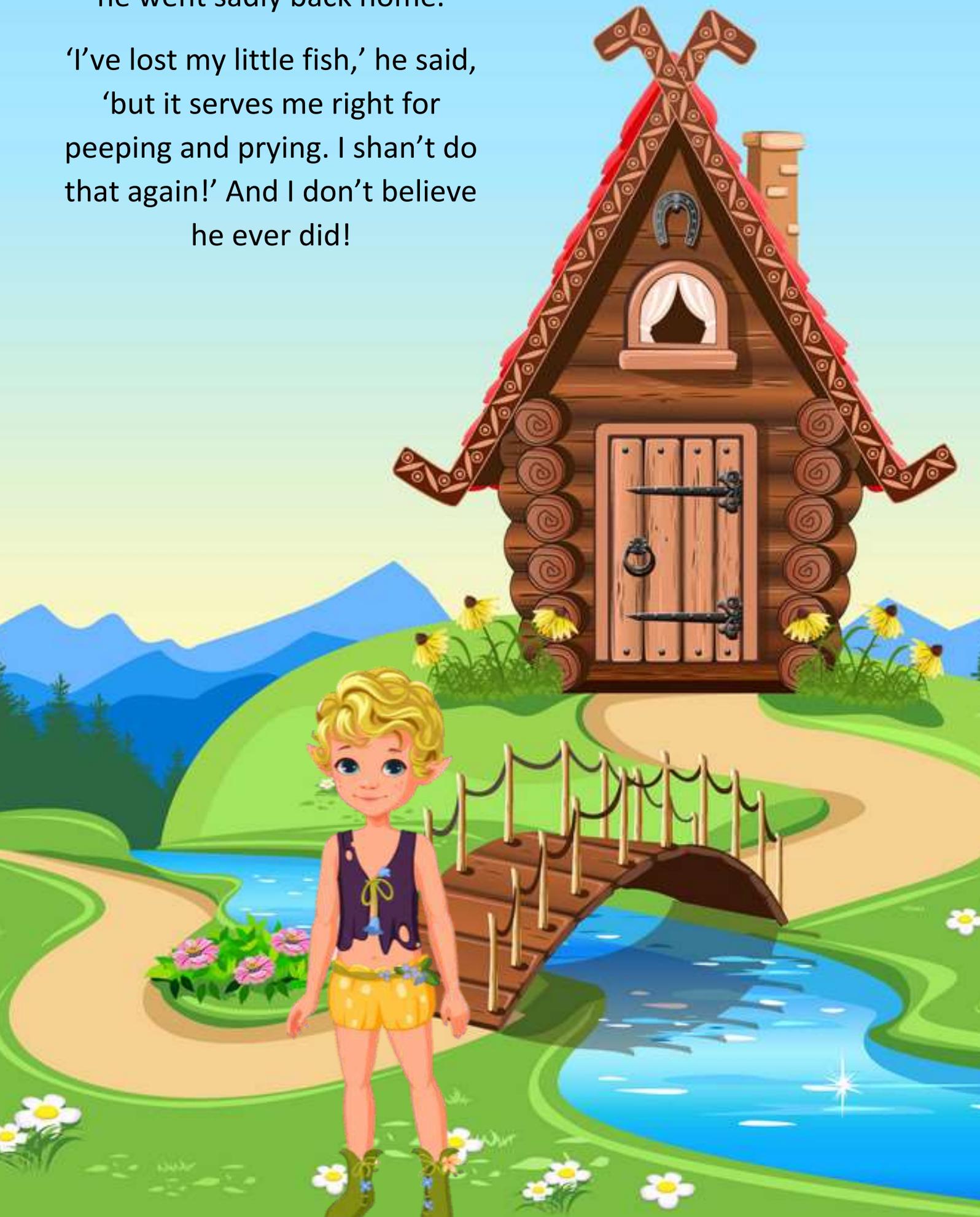


But that little fish wouldn't be caught! It wasn't going to go back into a tiny glass bowl again now that it had a whole pond to swim about in, and frogs and sticklebacks, snails and beetles to talk to. Oh, no!



Hoppetty had to give it up and
he went sadly back home.

‘I’ve lost my little fish,’ he said,
‘but it serves me right for
peeping and prying. I shan’t do
that again!’ And I don’t believe
he ever did!





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