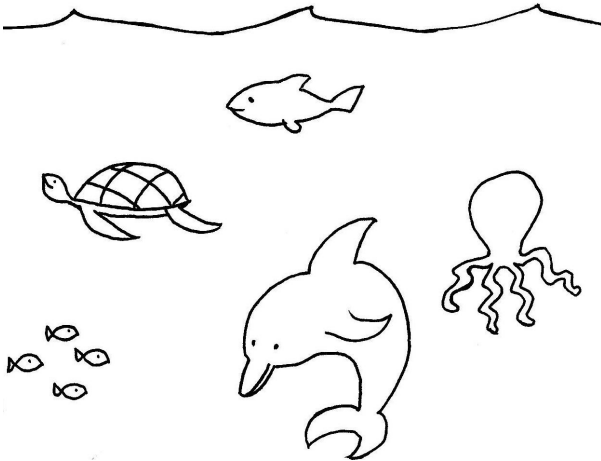




Little Creatures of the Sea

Imaginary Story

Little Creatures of the Sea



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(September 2020)

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Chapter 1—Zuzzie and Xurro

Zuzzie and Xurro (Shuro) were underwater pals. They spent their days in water. Occasionally they'd peek their tiny noses up for a taste of air, but that was enough, and down they went again.

Sometimes, for fun, they'd have underwater races. Of course everything they did each day was always under water. But they liked to practice their skill in swimming, and work up their speed too. It was a way to be friends. They could have done other things also, but this was something they enjoyed most.

Zuzzie was a small, nearly black coloured fish, and Xurro was a white and gold specked fish. Though they were different in colour, their basic size and shape and body type was quite the same. Sometimes they played a game called, "Same things".

They would go through a verbal list and say how many things were the same, between them both, and what things differed. For example, they both had eyes in the same position on their heads—unlike a flounder fish for example, that was flat and had both eyes on one side.

They both had scales covering their swimsuit, their body, unlike the eel for example which did not. Another thing in common was that they both had fins, although slightly different in size, shape and position.

One thing they did not have in common was their colouring, one was light, another was dark. But that didn't make any difference when they were racing along. It was what added to the beauty of the underwater world, with so much variety; it added personality and inspiration to have different types and different appearances.

There were other things they didn't have in common, and those were things that kept surprising them. One thought one way about a certain thing, and the other thought a different way. This is what added to a bit of tension in their relationship at times. But they learned to enjoy the game of finding what things they did have in common, rather than focusing on what was so very different.

One might ask the other: "Do you like blue water or greener water best?"

They might find out that they both liked different types of water. It was good to find this out, as then they'd know how to be thoughtful, and how to do things that the other one liked.

Today, after a good race around the rocks in their underwater playground, the question was:

"Do you prefer to swim higher up to the surface, or down lower?"

One said, they liked to swim as much as out of sight as possible from the world up there—birds, humans, boats, and such. He felt it was a much safer.

The other one liked to swim up higher, as it had more light and was warmer. He said if he was up higher he could then detect better if animals or people or things were getting near, and then he could warn others.

After discussing it they understood why the other one felt the way they did.

Zuzzie and Xurro swam past their friend the eel. He was sure longer than both of them put together. He even had teeth, which they did not. But one thing they did have in common was a need for water. They liked the freedom of being buoyed along in the gentle water currents, not having to be secured to one place, like the rocks they swam past.

But they were glad for those rocks. If it weren't for them, some other creatures wouldn't survive. They provided shelter, as well as something to hold on to, for those that needed to be anchored.

"How'z things going on this fine morning," Zuzzie ask Esty the eel.

"Not too bad, and you?" he replied.

Zuzzie said it was a delightful patch of sea and they were having fun exploring it.

However, there was one thing that brought them all a bit of concern.

"Heard about the storm making its way over? From what I understand it's even beaching many fish, tossing them like the wind up and on to the shore. When that type of storm comes, it's best to get down low and try to stay hidden somewhere," Xurro said to the two others.

They would enjoy the day as best as they could, but be ready to hide as soon as things started to get rough.

“You know there is a sunken ship not too far from here. It has all kinds of cabins and nooks and crannies in it. I think I’ll go check it out a bit more,” Esty the eel said, and off she swam.

Xurro thought, “Sounds like it’s got some good hiding spots, though I would be careful in case it’s housing other unfriendly creatures. Don’t want to escape one trouble only to fly into the arms of another. Gotta be wise now. Can’t just act on fear you know.”

Zuzzie agreed. They would make their way over in the direction of the ship, but slowly and carefully.

“Plunk! Splash!” all of a sudden the water was disrupted and swimming right beside them was the strangest living sea creature they’d ever seen.

Zuzzie started to describe it aloud. “Four fin type of things. No tail. Black and shiny. Doesn’t seem too interested in swimming far, but rather looking around right where it is.”

A large sliver fish swam past and commented, “Ever seen a creature like that before?”

The two of them just shook their heads and circled around this one.

“Oh!” said a flying fish.

“I’ve seen this type before. You’ve heard of them. This is no sea creature, just a temporary visitor. This is a man trying to see what life is like under the water.

“I’ve seen this kind before they enter the water. They are on the boats and leap in, sort of like how I like to leap out to see up there at times.”

Zuzzie and Xurro understood now. With all the gear on this diver it was a bit hard to make out what the actual shape was. Now they were starting to understand.

“I guess we are safe, if all he wants to do is look. As long as he has no nets or rods or hooks attached, or any fish catching devices, I guess we can swim and let him look us over, while we do the same for him,” Xurro suggested. Zuzzie agreed, but soon urged him to remember that they were on their way to check out the sunken ship.

Chapter 2—The Old Ship

“Ooh, this ship really is interesting!” Xurro exclaimed, but reminded himself to be cautious. “Never know what might be lurking in even the most attractive places. Can’t go by outward appearance, but by what is going on inside.” This was his motto for keeping safe from all kinds of dangers.

Zuzzie was the bolder type, and he liked to keep a look out for Xurro anyway, so he’d usually be the one to venture into some place. He’d rather put himself at risk if it helped to keep Xurro from an accident.

“Look’s safe in here,” he called out, after thoroughly checking out what used to be some sort of a cabinet. It was easily accessed through the huge hole in the bottom of the ship.

Xurro came to check it out. “Looks like it was where fishing gear was kept.”



He shuddered a bit, but knew there was nothing to worry about now.

“Let’s go over there,” he now suggested, feeling that at least this part of the ship was alright to be swimming in.

Just then a sound caught both their attention.

They knew exactly what it was.

“Dolphins!” they both chorused.

The dolphins’ sounds could be heard far away, but this time they sounded rather close by.

“Is it true, tell me if you know? Is it true that dolphins go up and help those in the boats, keeping them safe in rocky areas?” asked Xurro.

Zuzzie had heard the same, and more. “I’ve heard they have even been so brave as to protect humans who have been caught in dangerous waters

from the less than friendly creatures who have posed a threat to them.”

Xurro wished he was brave like that, though it was hard to imagine. First of all he was concerned about being caught in some kind of net, and he didn't want to swim too near some of the larger and more aggressive types of creatures.

“But I guess they are bigger,” he consoled himself, as to why he wasn't as brave to help humans as the dolphins were.

“You are being brave now, and safe too,” encouraged Zuzzie.

Maybe Xurro wasn't really the size or of the emotional temperament to go and be a hero to help save a ship from dashing against the rocks—like this sunken ship had done. Or brave enough to distract some other large creature from troubling a lost and sinking person. But he could do what was right for him.

Today he was exploring an unfamiliar area, where danger could be, so that they would be safe from the approaching storm they knew was coming.

“I guess when everyone does what they each can, and encourages others to do what they each can, then that’s all we can do!” Xurro summed it up.

“Did you hear that?” a rumble was coming through the water. And not just that. There was a song being sung as well. There was a lot going on.

First of all, as they found out, there was a ship going past overhead, that the dolphins were indeed helping to guide. The hidden rocks in this place would have been a danger to it, and rather than one ship, two would no doubt have been down here.

Then the song of whales was heard from far away, as they seemed to

respond to the storm above. The rumble of troubled water showed them the storm had moved closer.

Zuzzie and Xurro found the cosiest nook they could find, and hid there for quite some time, while the storm troubled the waters above. At last the storm had passed, and they swam out, glad that all was well.

Chapter 3—Fishermen

At the docks another boat was getting ready to set sail. But a look of concern crossed the fisherman's face.

He said to his companion, "You see that cloud way over there? It's not a regular one. I know those well. There is a storm brewing in that place, at the far beachhead. Let's not go too far out, lest we be unable to come back. We'll keep an eye on just what is going on."

His companion replied, "Isn't that the place of the great sunken ship, the one that went down in a storm?"

It was a spot of ocean to be troubled often by disturbances in the ocean and air. The men steered in the opposite direction, loaded with nets and fishing gear.

"Can't stop everything just because a storm might come, or waves might rock the boat. Be wise, yes, but if we only

went to work when there wasn't a ripple in the ocean, or a single trouble on life's horizon, we'd be goners by now. It's only in bravely facing life and being willing to work hard, even through tough times, that we can survive."

This is what the captain said as they set off in the somewhat chilly air, embraced by a bit of sea spray.

Once out moving over the waves the two felt free. Not free of possible danger; not free of the long hard work ahead of them; not free of their joys and responsibilities to their families back at home. But they were free to work and do what they felt called to do.

This was an exhilarating feeling: Freedom to do what they were gifted in and depended on to do.

Meanwhile, under the boat, also enjoying the ride, some barnacles had stuck like glue to the bottom of the old fishing boat. If you could have heard them speak, they might have said:

“It’s a good job we have, helping to cover the ship’s base. Seems we don’t do much, and rarely are we seen, but we provide just a little bit more protection for the boat.”

“Yes,” the other one might reply. “Remember that time there was a leak and water was getting into the boat, and we were called to help cover it? We slowed down the leaking, gave it a covering, until it could be fixed.”

“Yes, we do have an out-of-sight job, not much glamour in our appearance—rather despised—but when we help someone it does feel good.”

The fishermen kept a look out for trouble on the sea, but it seemed the storm was moving further away and they'd be safe. They weren't all that far out, and really did need to get to work. People were depending on them.

“There! Look over there!” said the captain to his crew of one man, his faithful fellow fisherman.

Just nearby was the biggest school of fish—the right kind—swimming. Quickly the nets were prepared and flung into the clear water. Maybe they wouldn't have to be out on this chilly evening for quite as long. It was always a wonderful thing when something special happened that saved them time.

The catch was unusual and plentiful indeed. The two men were in amazement. “You know, I'm pretty happy for this fast provision,” said the one fisherman to the captain.

“Why’s that?” he asked.

“Today was my dear Pablito’s birthday. And the only wish he had was that he’d get to have his daddy with him a bit more. I must say that tore at my feelings a bit. He doesn’t understand why I need to be gone working so much. But with this great catch, I think his wish just might come true.”

Both men were happy. They were weather worn and could manage a lot, but when a child’s tender heart needed to be cared for, it had a way of pulling on them.

“Well, then, let’s get back. There’ll be work to do yet, preparing this fish for storage and selling. But after that I think we’ll both have a bit more time on our hands for our families, our wives, and our children,” the Captain said, and off they went.

Chapter 4—Annie Bell (Part 1)

Angelina, a cute little girl, who lived in a house by the beach, was looking at her pet fish. She loved all kinds of fish. To her they were just really beautiful. The way they moved and swam in the water was something she could stand and watch for a long time.

“Angelina,” her mother called out. “Remember to do your writing. Perhaps you could write some words of names of the types of fish you have there in your fish tank,” her mother suggested.

It was a good idea. If it was about fish, she was more than happy to do it. So she sat down, and with the help of her mother, wrote out the names of these little swimming creatures.

As she was writing the words she thought, “Maybe if I learn to write real well, one of these days I can write a whole story book all about fish.”

And that is exactly what happened. And she didn't have to wait for too long either. Her first story idea came to her that night. For as she slept, she had the most beautiful dream. In the dream, she too was a fish.

Her older sister helped to illustrate it, and her mother helped to write out the words of this dream, as Angelina told it.

“One day when I am older,” she said, “I’m going to make this into a book, and share it with lots of other children.”

“That’s a great idea,” Mother encouraged. “It’s always good to have ideas for the future. That helps us to work on learning what we need to learn today.”

Two days later when their father had come back from an extended fishing trip, Angelina surprised him with this special story that she had written. Well, at least words that she had dictated

from a dream she had. She'd practiced reading it real well, so when the time was right, the girls sat one on each side of their fisherman father, and read him the story, showing him the pictures.

When Angelina was older she added more to the story, and changed some of the text to reflect her wider vocabulary. Her mother and sister helped her also.

So from the time she had the dream, until the time it was printed in a book, several years had passed. Now her fisherman father was having his birthday, and the family gathered to show him appreciation for all he had done to care for them all those years. And this is when Angelina, her sister Megan, and their mother presented him with the newly printed book, with lovely and colourful illustrations.

I think what the father most liked, besides how nice it all was, was the fact

that his family had worked together on a project. Everyone used the gifts that they each had, to make something pleasant for others. That was the best gift for his birthday. With a family willing to work together, they'd enjoy a long and happy life. They all needed each other. None of them could do it all on their own.

Father took out his glasses, mother stood behind him and rubbed his shoulders, while the girls read the new revised book to him. The smell of berry pie was in the air. Here is what it said:

Annie Bell went to a pet shop. It was her birthday request to get a small fish tank, and a few fish. Today was the delightful day.

“Can I have any fish I'd like?” she asked.

“Well, some fish do better in a small watery environment together with others, than some other fish do,” replied the shop owner.

“I may be able to suggest what types will swim nicely together, and hope they are the ones you also will like.”

Annie thought that was a better idea. Although the looks of the fish were important to her, it was more important that the fish were happily living together.

“Why don’t you point out the little fish that you like, and I’ll let you know if they might enjoy one another’s company,” the owner suggested.

And so she did. Four of the five of the ones she liked would make good company, but the other one was more of a loner. He liked to have lots of room to swim, without too many others around in a smaller tank of fish. So Annie asked the man for a different type.

At last all the fish were chosen, the tank and accessories bought, and away Annie and her family went—with fish food of course, as well. Annie could hardly wait to get it all set up.

Together they read the instructions of how to put it all together, as well as instructions on how and when to feed them.

Annie learned about what jobs she would need to do each day, and what could be done instead every week or two.

New jobs, ones that required responsibility, were good for her. It was fine to be playing with toys, and forgetting some rule of a game, or to miss putting away some toy once in a while, but with something alive, like these new little fish, she had to be ever so careful. She wanted them to live and last as long and as happily as possible.

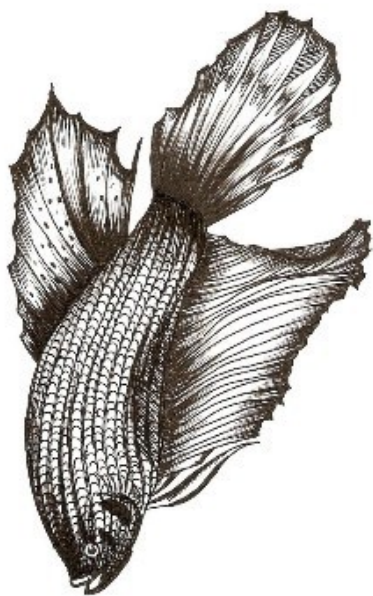
“Mama, I’m nearly out of fish food. Can we please get some more soon?” Annie asked. It was good she didn’t wait until the last moment, when the food was gone already, or the fish would go hungry, if for some reason it didn’t work out. It was good she gave her mother notice of it a few days in advance, so mother could choose what day it would work out best.

Annie looked at her jobs list and ticked off the things she was to do each day, or each week. “Clean the glass” her list stated for today. And so she did, with a damp cloth.

Next she pulled out some of the underwater ornaments, things the fish liked to hide inside or swim around. She carefully washed them in a bowl in the sink. The food sediment would build up and create a layer of soiling on these, which she didn’t want.

“I want sparkling clean water, so my fish can be as healthy as possible.”

She didn't need to spend lots of time on this choice of pet, and it sure looked nice at night to sit beside it, all lit up and watch the bubbles pumping air through the water, and the colourful fish moving around. It made her smile.



Zentgraf
1888



Chapter 5—Annie Bell (Part 2)

(Angelina's book continues:)

Sometimes Annie wondered what it might be like to be a fish, or at least to live underwater in some beautiful place in the sea, where so many colourful creatures lived and bred.

She fell asleep a bit early one night, while looking at the aquarium, thinking thoughts about living under the sea. This was the perfect time for an unusual dream.

In her dream she was a pink, fluffy fish, with wavy fins and very shiny scales.

“Oh!” she felt as the water rippled around her. “I never knew it felt quite like this before. I wonder who else lives here?”

Just then a diver came swimming on by, “Wow look at this beauty!”

Somehow Annie knew they were talking about her. She waved a fin and did a spin. She did wish she could say she was not really a fish, but was only in a dream—for somehow she knew that much. But since fish can't really say things, she just danced around in the water enjoying the feeling of weightlessness.

She didn't have to put one foot down and then the other, like she had to do on land. She could move up and down, back and forth, and go from side to side. It was pleasurable. But there was something she couldn't do—she couldn't firmly stand on a rock in the sea and just stay there until she chose to move. There was no strong gravity holding her, and the water and waves moved her at times whether she wanted it or not.

“I guess there are good things and fun things, and there are things I miss,” Annie thought.

“But while I’m here, I want to see all I can see.” And so she did, and started right away making her way over to a clam that she hoped would open and reveal a pearl inside. This didn’t happen right then, but because it was a dream, eventually she did get to see the pearl, when it opened to say hello.

“My, aren’t you lovely!” she said, enjoying the beauty of a newly finished pearl.

Then she swam off to make another discovery.

“What is that dark thing, so covered with a very rough substance?” Annie the pink fish thought, looking up towards the surface of the water.

Another fish came swimming by, “That’s a boat! An old rotten boat. But it’s heaps of fun to explore. Come on! Come and see!”

And so, as the dream continued, she did explore the boat, and did have lots of fun. She played hiding and seeking games with some of the others—fish of all colours, shapes and sizes. As Annie the fish swam away she thought:

“It’s best for me not to make an assumption, or think that something is either good or bad, without taking a closer look at it. I thought it was nothing but an ugly dark item, blocking the light and messing things up. But I found out that on closer inspection, there was more good to it than harm. I’ll remember that next time.”

“I’ll take you to see the octopus,” said a friendly angel fish.

“Oh, goodie!” Annie the fish said. And so they swam, this way and that way, under this and over that.

“There!” it was pointed out.

Annie watched for some time, seeing how this most unusual creature got around.

“I’m glad I don’t have eight legs to have to move. I think I would get mixed up and trip and fall,” Annie said.

“Looks like that won’t be a problem for you,” said the angel fish with a bit of a smile. “You don’t have any legs...”

Annie laughed. She’d forgotten that her appearance in this dream was very different than in normal life on earth.

Being somewhere new and experiencing what others did, helped her to appreciate even more what she usually had. It’s good to be without some things you normally depend on, for awhile. Then you are all the more thankful when you have them again.

The book reading ended, and their father fisherman agreed. That is what it had often been like for him out on the waves. He seldom had what he needed while working in the cold or dark nights, or even at stormy times trying to make his way back to shore.

“I sure appreciate all of you,” he said to his family.

Just then his fisherman companion came by to wish him a happy birthday, along with his son. His son and he were good friends. This fisherman had made some changes over the past few years that had provided him with more time to be with his son.

“How’s the fish farm doing?” the captain said to his visiting friend.

“Alive and well and swimming!” he replied.

Instead of going fishing out on the sea all the time, he and his family had worked on making the sea and fish come to them, sort of. They had set up a fish farm, not just for them, but for others as well. This was a project, a safe, at home and off the rough waves type of fishing project that he and his son could work on together.

“Why don’t you and Anita and your son Carlos come on over. We’re about to have some pie. It’d be great to have you. Is that okay Megan?” he asked his wife.

“It just so happens that the berries were bountiful this season, and we have more than enough. Please come on over,” she invited.

Chapter 6—

The Dolphins and a Disaster

Down in a dark part of the sea another couple of swimming creatures were talking.

“There’s a bit of a clean up to be done, did you hear? Something foul has been dumped not too far away, and there’s been plenty of life loss. It’s our job to take care of it. Not a pretty job, but neither are we. It’s what we were made to do. Let’s go, get it done and then we can relax.”

But as these two sharks made their way to the place of catastrophe, that is in the fish world, they bumped against something that shouldn’t have been there. At least they weren’t expecting it.

“What’s going on here?” one of them spoke.

“Looks like an over turned boat,” the other replied.

The first one, forgetting completely what they had set out to do started to sniff the water greedily. This was clearly something they weren't to be getting into, but it was a distraction that perhaps they welcomed. They wished to delay their given task and have a bit of investigation and wherever that led to.

“Help! Help!” a voice began to call out, while the person this voice belonged to was very wet and getting very cold.

“Where are you?” another voiced shouted out over the choppy waves, then saw the reason for the cries.

“Sharks are near! Oh dear, God please help us!”

A father had taken his grown daughter out for a spin on the waves,

but had hit something and caused their boat to capsize.

Just then, as if on cue, a couple of dolphins made their way over to the distressed team. Surrounding them like angels, giving them some protection until they could be rescued. In deed a rescue boat was on its way and it wouldn't be long before they were picked up, and their small boat tugged along.

“Come on. Let's get out of here,” said one shark to the other.

“Yeah, the propellers on that rescue boat don't look 'shark friendly', let's move on,” said the other. And so they did.

A very wet team was happily pulled out of the water, not without a bit of shock and very grateful to have survived.

“Looks like you brought a friend along with you,” one of the rescue team said to the girl.

“Oh!” she said as she looked down and saw a bit of sea life had stuck onto her, and there was even a small fish nestled in her draining hood. He and the rest were returned to the water, and a warm mug of water was given to each of them, along with blankets to be wrapped in.

Back to the action in the water:

“Boy this is sure a disaster!” one shark comment to the other.

“Yes,” replied the other, “but it looks like we are not alone in the clean up job.”

The whole clean up crew it seemed had been summoned, and it kept the lot of them quite occupied for some days.

It needed to be dealt with rather quickly, as the waters needed to remain as clean as possible.

“Hard keeping up with all the pollutants that keep getting dumped here,” said one cleaning fish. “What do the land-dwellers need all this stuff for anyway? Isn’t it harmful to anyone? Where do they get it from?”

“I hear they make it themselves from this and that. They like to make things; all kinds of things,” another larger sea creature responded.

“Well, I am glad that all that we need is right where we live—fully stocked and readily available. Unless, something or someone messes things up, of course,” another added.

“With a pair of hands, like humans come equipped with, comes also a heap of jobs to do.

“Gotta keep those hands busy. But I think the way they go about making stuff isn’t always the best for them or for us who have to live with the runoff and waste from the factories.”

Everyone cleaning up agreed that the closer to the natural way of doing things was better all around, for all involved.



Chapter 7—Angelina’s Aquarium

The little guppy was swimming happily in the aquarium that Angelina took care of. He had seen lots of things going on in the house. It was very different for him, looking out and there not being water and more water all around. Instead there was a glass wall, and outside of it humans were walking about, not swimming.

He liked the comfort of being in a safe place, but sometimes it did feel rather confining.

“If only I could swim and swim, far and wide and see new things!” the little guppy thought.

“But at least you are too small and pretty, to become... ah... dinner...” said his witty fish companion.

“Yes, I am glad for that. Thanks. It’s always better when I start thinking about what I am glad I don’t have; it makes me

glad for what I do have.”

Just then Angelina came up and dropped a pinch of fish food into the tank.

“Oh, yummy!” said the little guppy as he swam up right to the surface and nibbled it, and then zoomed down and all around, swirling in the water before coming up again for more of his meal.

“Oh, I am glad that I have a nice place. I never have to wonder about where my food will come from, or worry if a larger and less friendly fish will come to trouble me.”

Angelina liked to sit on the couch, with all the lights off in the room, with only the light in the fish tank on. She liked to hear the bubbling sound of the water pump. It was very relaxing.

“Mind if I join you here?” her mother said, as Angelina was alone in the relaxing stillness.

She smiled. Her mother had had a long day. This would be a nice way to unwind. Angelina then got an idea to make it as nice as she could. She had a nice album of slow relaxing music that she walked over and turned on. Then she brought a bowl of warm water over to let her mother soak her tired feet in.

“There, Mama, now you just rest a bit,” Angelina said while returning to sit beside her mother on the couch.

For a long while they just watched the beautiful and graceful fish who liked to just swim and swim, and yes eat as well.

“What makes it so relaxing to watch?” her mother asked aloud. “They are in nearly perpetual motion, yet it’s not tiring to see it.”

“I think it’s the water,” replied Angelina pensively.

“The water?” her mother wondered what she was thinking.

“It’s the water that carries them along. They don’t feel the weight of a strong pull, pulling them down. They aren’t sweating. They aren’t acting so very worn out. Instead they just move peacefully along, as the water holds much of their weight for them,” Angelina explained.

“I think you are right,” responded mother, getting up now and feeling much better.

“And thanks for the water,” she said to her daughter. “My feet, like two little fish, needed that.”

When mother left, she thought a bit more about the graceful appearance of the fish, although they are in constant movement most of the time.

“What can lift me, what can buoy me up when I get weary, like we all do? What can make me pleasant and enjoyable to be around?”

It was a good thought to think. Though she wasn't usually intense, there were times when she could be, if there were things that troubled her and she felt there wasn't much she could do about it.

As she lay on her pillow that night she offered a prayer that she might learn the art of gracefulness when things were pulling on her emotionally.

That night Angelina had another dream. This time she was as small as one of her fish in the tank, and was in fact inside that aquarium.

The fish she had faithfully cared for and admired as they swam were now giving her rides and playing water games with her. She felt it was their way of saying thank you to her for keeping them safe, and feeding them, and keeping their environment clean.

“You’re welcome!” Angelina said as she was leaving the fish tank, in her dream—even though the fish hadn’t really said anything, in words that is.

But she did actually want them to speak, as she had a question they could help her with. She went ahead and asked the little guppy:

“Why are you so carefree and swim with ease—you make us feel relaxed just watching you.”

The fish seemed to say back to her:

“Because I have you to look after me. I really don’t have to worry, do I?”

At that moment Angelina woke from her sleep, and found herself voicing those very words, but saying them to the one who she knew was looking after her.

“I have You to look after me. I don’t need to worry.”

It was with this peace-giving feeling that she rose to face the challenges of the day, and to swim, yes, kind of, swim through her day, with the weights and burdens of her own life not pulling on her.

She would smile as she moved from one task to the next. And a happy day it was for her.

Chapter 8—Creatures in the Sea

“Mama look at the pretty starfish!”
The girl and her family had come to this beach town for a weekend of fun. In a shallow pool in the somewhat flat rock there were all kinds of cute as well as colourful marine life and plants.

Her mother looked in.

“Oh, yes! Darling. Those do look lovely. Look at all their colours. It almost looks like each one has a different pattern and design. They are very pretty. We won't touch them, but they are so nice to look at.”

A seagull landed nearby, trying to find whatever snacks seagulls find on a beach. They helped to keep the place clean and fresh smelling.

A little shovel and bucket were given to the girl who then began a project while playing in the sand.

Nearby, her mother who liked to sculpt things out of sand, formed some pictures of all types of sea creatures. She made a sand fish, a sand starfish, a sand octopus, some large shells and such. It was her way of appreciating the place they were in.

Some people like to sing and talk and show enjoyment in this way. Others like to be still and listen and absorb the sights and sounds and smells. Others liked to use their hands and bodies to do things in active ways—like make things, or create things, or move and run, play and dance.

Her mother liked to make things to look at. The girl liked to do a bit of everything, as then she could learn in many ways.

When they walked back to the camp where they were staying, in the girl's bucket was a collection of various things she had found and thought were pretty.

Daddy was at the campground cooking up some fresh fish he had caught that day, together with the girl's older brother. The girl placed a beach towel on the sandy ground and started displaying her treasures from the beach. Daddy looked on and commented on each one as she did so.

She had various sized and shaped shells, of different colours.

She had a few rocks.

Some sea sponge.

And some charcoaled drift wood from a beach campfire.

“Very nice,” her daddy said and proceeded to remove the bones from the little piece of fish he was preparing for her dinner plate. He also had some sheets of dried seaweed from a package he'd got for this “seameal”.

A mug of soup went along with it, with a pinch of sea salt added to it of course, to represent the ocean filled with all kinds of things that came in all kinds of colours.

Later on, when she was settled down for the night in her little sleeping bag, that was placed next to her parent's camping mattress, she was ready for a good night story.

“Would you like to hear a story about a fish, a very big fish. This one was so big he was used to transport a certain important person safely through the water.”

The girl had never heard of such a creature. She was imagining that the man was able to ride on this big fish, though she wondered, and asked, just how he could manage holding on. She knew that fish were slippery. She had felt them in the bucket after her daddy had caught them before.

“Well, this fish had a spot right inside of it where the man could sit, or lie down. That way, even in the water, he could still breathe. That’s one of the things that are very different from people on the land, and fish down in the water,” her daddy began to explain.

“But first, let’s look at some pretty pictures of all sorts of sea creatures, shall we?”

He had brought a very colourful book showing very lovely creatures that all had one thing in common—their living quarters were in water.

Some were fresh water fish and other water dwellers, and others were sea animals and fish that lived in the big salty sea.

Some showed living creatures that looked nothing like fish, but still were alive and growing under the water.

“It’s hard to imagine that these creatures like to be under water all the time, and they survive, and can’t even manage not being there. They are made in such a way that they can manage lots of water, and even very salty water.”

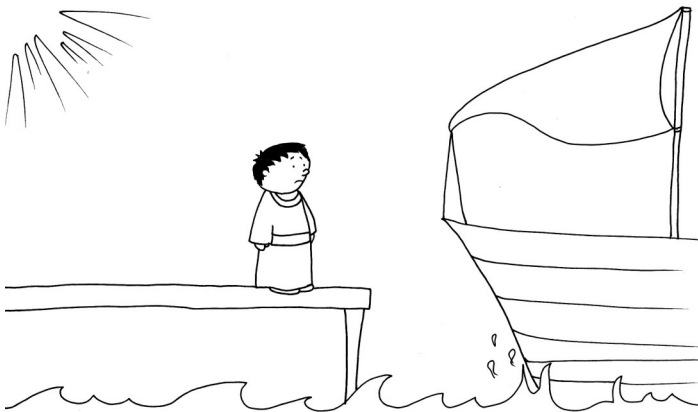
When the girl had gotten some water on her hand, she knew that it tasted salty. And she had learned, one sad time, that salty water from the ocean can be rather uncomfortable if it gets in your eyes. Yet in these pictures of the fish and sea creatures, they had eyes that were open and they seemed to be just fine.

“It is a very amazing wonder that they can happily go about living in these conditions that are very different to what we need,” her daddy said.

“Please tell me about the big fish and the man who took a ride in it.”

Daddy opened up a copy of “Little Bible Treasures” and began to read the story of Jonah.

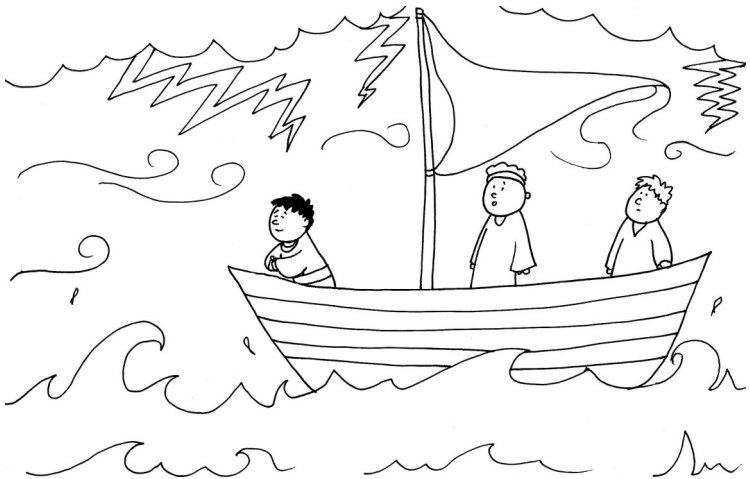
The Lord had a job for Jonah, one of His prophets, to do. He was to take a trip to a city called Nineveh, where the people had been doing a lot of wrong things. God wanted Jonah to tell them that He was very displeased with their hurtful and unkind deeds. But Jonah chose to take a trip to another place instead. He didn't go where God said to go.

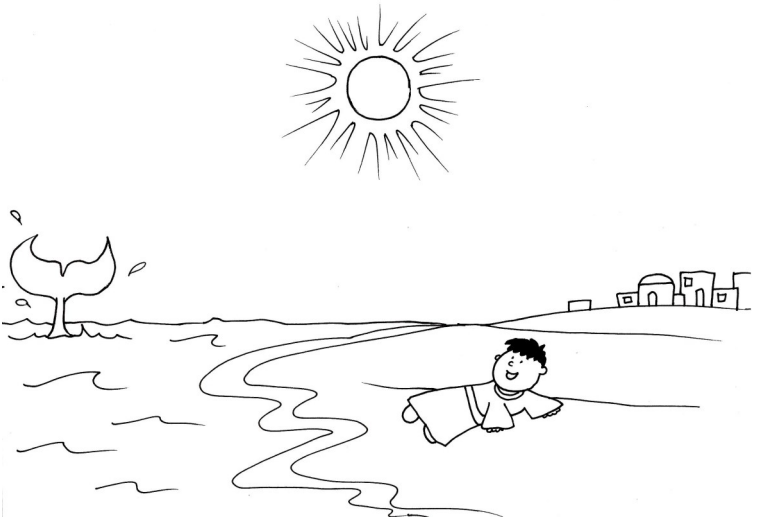


However, on his ship ride, the Lord sent a big storm to show Jonah that he was going the wrong way.

Jonah prayed and asked God to forgive him for disobeying. God said that Jonah was to get off the boat and swim in the stormy water.

Jonah bravely obeyed, and then God helped him to make it to land again.





A big fish helped to bring Jonah safely to the land, so he could travel to Nineveh and tell the people there the important message from God. Jonah finally obeyed and did what God needed him to do.

The story ended but the little girl wasn't tired yet, and was eager for more stories.

Chapter 9—Sea Surprises

“Do you want to hear about the fisherman who was sad he couldn’t catch any fish, all night long? And then something wonderful happened?”

The girl nodded. And so another fish story was read:

Jesus asked Simon Peter if He could use his boat for a while, so He could sit in it and talk to the people who were on the shore. Afterwards, Jesus asked if the fishermen had caught any fish that night. They hadn’t.

Jesus told them to take the boat out again to catch some fish. They obeyed, and lowered a net. Then all of a sudden the net was very full of fish!

Those in the boat had to call for their friends in another boat to come and help them bring the fish in!

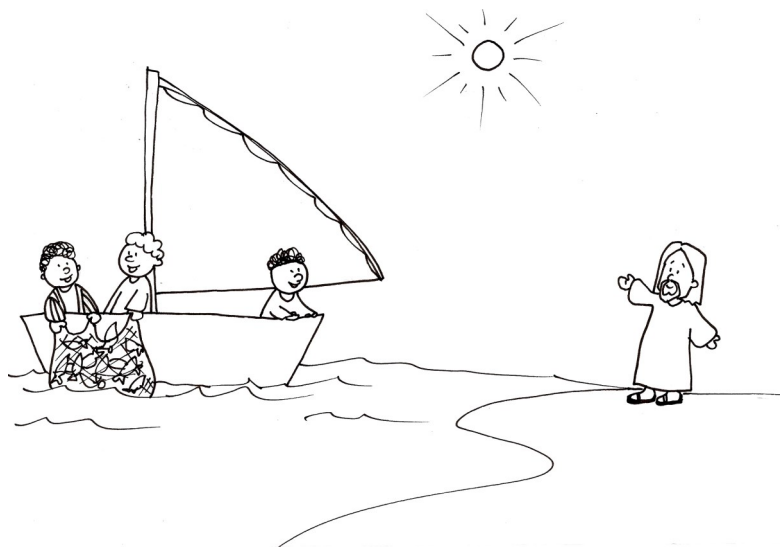


Then Jesus called the fishermen to come and follow Him. Jesus had a new job for them to do. Simon Peter and his brother Andrew, James and his brother John, were the fishermen that chose to follow Jesus and be His disciples.

After that story, her daddy said, “This happened again you know?” and read the next story to an eager listener:

Jesus appeared to His disciples several times with His new heavenly body. Thomas hadn't yet seen Him, and wondered if it was really true that Jesus had appeared to the disciples. The next time that Jesus appeared to His disciples, Thomas was there, and was glad to see Him again.

On a different day, Peter and some others had gone fishing, but didn't catch anything all night.





In the morning, Jesus was on the shore and told them to “Cast their net on the other side.” When the disciples did, their net was filled with plenty of fish!

They knew, all of a sudden, that it was Jesus. Peter quickly jumped into the water to go and see Jesus, and the others brought the fish to the shore and then went to talk with Him too.

They saw that Jesus had cooked some fish and bread over a warm fire, and they ate a nice morning breakfast with Jesus.

When the story was done, the little girl remembered how nice the fresh fish tasted that her daddy had cooked for dinner, and said,

“Thank you, daddy, for making me breakfast on the beach too. You had to go fishing with a fishing line, not a net.”

“Yes, that’s right. I caught the fish in a different way. But you know, Peter the fisherman also knew how to fish with a fishing line and hook. And one time he got a big surprise when he did. I’ll read you one last story about it, okay?”

She nodded.

Her daddy opened up to the story called, “A Coin in a fish.”

“A coin?” the girl sat up and exclaimed.

“Yes. It’s fun little story. Let’s see what happened, and why Peter needed a coin.”

When Peter was being asked for money by some temple tax collectors, he didn't know what to do. The tax collectors also wondered if Jesus was going to pay His tax. Peter spent all his time helping others and travelling with Jesus as His disciple, and didn't have any coins to give them on that day.

Jesus noticed Peter was feeling troubled about it, and said not to worry. Jesus would do a miracle to supply what was needed to cover the cost of both of their taxes. Jesus told Peter to go fishing with a line and a hook, and to pull up the first fish he caught. There was going to be a surprise in the fish's mouth.

“Was it a coin?” the girl asked.

“Yes,” her dad nodded with a smile, and then turned off the light for sleep.

Chapter 10—A Window into the Water

The glass bottom boat was a great attraction for those coming to enjoy the shore. This was a ride where you could see under the water without having to get wet—like the scuba divers did.

This was a great chance for children to go with their families and get to see what really went on under the surface of the water.

A boy and his family were the first to board this “big sailing ship” as the young boy called it. Really it was a fairly small vessel compared to most ships that sail, but he liked to think he was going on a very big and exciting journey.

The boy wasted no time at all, and as soon as he could, he was down on the floor, looking as closely as he could through the glass, and excitedly pointing out anything new that he noticed.

Once a large fish even seemed to come and swim right up to where his face was. It was saying hi, and made the boy laugh.

“The leaves are dancing! The plants are dancing!” he said. “How does the wind get to them under the water?”

It was the plant life and seaweed that he was seeing, and noticed how it swayed in the water.

“It’s just the water moving it,” mother said. “Just like when you and I stepped in to the beach waves yesterday, didn’t the water move you a bit?”

He kept watching to see if any more fish would pop out from the plants and swim past.

“Star fish!” he exclaimed. “There are stars up high in the sky, and down in the water too!”

“Ha, ha,” his father laughed at his joke. It was fun getting to see, nearly like watching a video but in real time, what was going on in the water.

It was far better than a video, because it was real, and happening right then. This made it relaxing for the eyes, and educational too.

After watching for some time the boy found his seat next to his mother and father and got his hands wiped off. It was time for a snack.

“What do the fish like to eat,” he asked his daddy.

“Well, each one likes to eat different things. But I’ll tell you that something many of them eat is something pretty small that we can hardly see it. It’s called plankton. And some whales like to eat something called krill.

“There are lots of very small creatures in the ocean, so small and not real colourful, so we can’t really see them well. But the fish know how to get it, and they have what they need. And while they eat, they help to clear the water and keep it fresher.”

The boy asked another question, “Why is there salt in the ocean? Do the fish need it to stay alive?”

“The salt is another reason why the ocean doesn’t get too smelly. It is a cleansing and preserving agent. If you were to take some sea creatures out of the water and bring them back home, without keeping them in salty water, you’d find they were actually very smelly!

“Remember we brought some shells back home one time and we forgot to wash them real well?”

“When we opened the container many days later it had a very strong odour that wasn’t pleasant at all. If we had kept them in clean water with a good batch of salt, it would have been a milder smell.”

Mother added,

“I use salt when I am preserving some of the veggies from our garden. If I didn’t use salt, the veggies would go bad and smell very bad too. But with salt and some other things I can make them last and be good to eat, for quite a while later.

“Salt helps to preserve things, because it stops bacteria from taking over and turning plants back into soil again, which is what will happen eventually. That’s what plants are made to do, the ones that aren’t still growing that is.”

“Why do we put salt on our food then, if we are eating it and it doesn’t need to last a lot longer?” the boy asked.

His daddy said, “A little good type of salt—the natural and fresh kind—can also be good for you. And it does help to bring out different flavours in food. “You don’t have to eat salt much, if you have a lot of fresh types of veggies. They have plenty of salt in them. Did you know that some types of salt are made from veggies?”

“When someone can’t eat regular salt, they can just sprinkle this other type made out of veggies. For example celery has lots of salt in it, and can add a salty flavour to the meal.

“Sometimes people do eat a bit much, maybe it’s a just habit, and it’s not good to overdo or it’s hard for the body.

“Salt as so many things it can do. One of the other jobs is to draw out liquid.

“So when your body needs more liquid to be healthy, it’s best not to have too much salt.

For example, some people’s hearts might not feel too good when they eat salt added to the food. They just need to eat lots of good and raw veggies, and this way they get what they really need—and need to drink plenty of water during the day.”

This boat ride was getting to be a bit of a science class, but the boy was enjoying learning all he could from his parents. This was a fun way to learn, while on the go and outside too.

Chapter 11—A Moonlit Boat Ride

“Girls are you ready? Your Dad’s ready to take us on a moonlit boat ride.”

Angelina and Megan said they were ready. With a container of warm water, a good sweater, and a sense of adventure, they team was off.

“The night is so still, so clear, so calm, and the moonlight is brightly reflecting off the water’s surface. What a wonderful night,” the fisherman said as he started up the boat. They wouldn’t be gone for long, but he didn’t want to miss this unusually lovely night.

One of the girls had brought an audio player that was battery powered. They played some of their dad’s favourite songs while the four of them gently paddled out in the bay. Occasionally a fish was seen leaping out of the water.

“Why do they do that?” mother wondered aloud.

“Maybe the same reason we sometimes like to jump in! Perhaps for a change and a bit of exercise,” their daddy said. And there is a good chance he was right.

“I’m glad we’re not jumping in tonight... at least I hope we won’t have to unexpectedly take a swim,” mother said with a chuckle.

“Why not?” said the man, with a twinkle in his eyes. And before they could stop him, he had carefully slipped off his coat and outer clothing, revealing swimwear.

“Always prepared!” he said as he got ready to lower himself into the water, in a way so as not to rock the boat too much.

The girls and their mother laughed.

He was a hardy man. Not one to shy away from cold and dark water. If he had, he wouldn't have been able to support and care for them all these years.

After a moment or two of swimming, he made his way back in to the boat. He instructed the girls just how to sit, and where to, so as to provide the right balance for his holding on and getting in. With a wet roll, he made his entry back in.

He always kept a towel under one of the seats, and used that to wrap himself for awhile, and placed his coat back on.

“Anyone else? Who's next?” he joked, knowing that the ladies were more than content to watch the water, not be freshly acquainted with it.

A mug of warm water was sipped on by each one, and they made their way

slowly around the bay and back to the shore. They had been so focused on their bit of fun that they didn't notice a pair of night divers were very near to their boat.

It was quite a surprise to see two heads suddenly pop up with a wave "hello".

Mother almost squealed! She didn't know what this sea creature was, but calmed down when she recognised it as her husband's fishing companion and his now teen son, Pablito. They had a good laugh.

"Caught any fish yet?" their dad said, jokingly. "Need a net?" and he offered them a little hand held one that was used when fishing with a rod on the boat.

The two must have smiled, but you couldn't see much as they had on their breathing apparatus. So they just

waved, and back down in to the water they went. The light on their heads revealed such interesting sights of the very different world of underwater.

Soon the family had made it back to the pier and tied up the boat for the night. It was a good night to have a bit of family fun.

On a distant beach, Mama turtle made her way, carefully at first, and then swiftly over the sand. She had just emerged from the water and had a job to complete.

“Yes,” she realised, “this is the very spot. I recognise it. Everything about it seems just right.”

In fact this had been the very place where she herself had hatched out of her shell and made her way into the ocean for the first time.

“What a day that was,” she remembered, as she dug a pit in the sand.

“It was hard enough getting out of that shell, but making it quickly over the sand and into the relatively safer water, was a feat not all turtles can complete. I really had to make a dash for it.”

As she laid the eggs in the sand and covered them up, hoping they would not be discovered, she also hoped that some of these ones would be brave enough and wise enough to do what they were meant to. If they stayed where they were, out of fear of other creatures, they would never get to do what they were designed to.

They would have to give it a try.

“Not everyone succeeds in all they set out to do,” the turtle mused, “but if we never try, then of course there will be no success, ever.”

It takes bravery to make an attempt when you know there is a good chance you won't make it. But then you are ever so glad when something good does come.

“Well, I made it,” thought the mother turtle, “so there is a chance they might too.”

As amazing as it is, those newly hatched turtles would not only need to make it safely in to the water, survive and feed themselves, but later on when it was time for laying eggs, they'd need to know just where to go to do it. And where was that? In the place where they were born of course! How they would manage to find that spot again was a secret of nature that only they knew.

The secrets of the sea, and things that only the water dwellers know, are many.

It's not something easy to find out, for much is in places, watery places where people can not go.

And even if they could, how would they communicate to the animals living and thriving in the water, a question that they'd like the answer to?

So there is much that remains and will yet remain as unsolved mysteries.



Chapter 12—Resident Fish

“You know, I’ve noticed...” started the cute colourful fish in the tank, “when the people in the house are happy, they come to look at us more. It’s just something I’ve seen.”

“Yes,” replied his fellow fish swimming alongside of him. “When they have too much on their mind, and too many words coming out of their mouth, there is little time or attention given to the world around them—to look at creatures and the plants growing in the room.”

“Another time they don’t seem to notice us much is when they are having a big celebration, or it’s a birthday party,” the first fish continued.

“Let’s see if we can guess what is going on tonight when they pass on their way to eat supper,” the second fish friend suggested.

So they swam around, as they always did, and waited patiently for the humans to make their way past.

When they did, there was laughter and loud speaking, but not a single look in the fish's direction.

One fish started the guessing:

“I say it's a party tonight; it's someone's birthday.”

And he was right. It was Angelina's birthday.

“Do you think she'll get any new fish today? We'll need to make sure we are really friendly to any new comers...”

Again the fish, who had watched the people almost as much as they had watched them, was right.

After hearing a song from the other room—indeed the “Happy Birthday” song—the family made their way into this room.

And just as expected, the gift for her wasn't one, but two new fish. Different types than she had before.

“Here you go, little fishes. In you go. And I hope you like your new home!” Angelina said. And soon was feeding them all, as well as placed one more gift into the tank, it was a porcelain model of a ship. It would look like a sunken ship on the seabed, one that the fish could explore in.

“Hello,” said one of the residents to the newcomers.

The new fish were a bit too taken by all the changes they had been through over the past days to say much, but they were grateful for a warm welcome into their new home.

There would be lots to talk about, and they could start the next day. They'd all seen much that went on, and learned much. It would be nice to have new

friends. A bit sudden it was, and unexpected, for all the fish to now be together, but they could learn to get along and make room in their little watery life for each other.

The next day the fish, slowly getting acquainted with each other, began by asking each other some questions to get the conversation going.

“What is it like living in a people house?” one of the newcomers asked the others who had been there for a long time.

A frilly tailed guppy replied, “Well, I suppose you’ll get to find this out for yourself, but you certainly get to hear more talking than you would when down in the ocean or in a river. Human’s might think the ocean is a quiet world, which of course it is not. Sound carries quickly down there, and many creatures make all kinds of sounds.

The noise here is different. Perhaps louder. The nearly constant sound of the pump in this tank to keep the water fresh and oxygen-filled is something we've all had to get use to."

"Motors and mouths..." thought the fish who'd asked the question. "Guess I'll get use to it. But is there anytime it is really quiet? I do like sense a of stillness."

Another of the older resident fish replied,

"When the people go out for the day, it gets quiet then, but then of course we have to wait for a while to be fed. With the clean tank comes the scarcity of natural means of food. But it is an easy life. All we need to do is swim, relax, and try to get along well so we can get to stay in here."

One other piped up, "Another time it gets quiet, and dark too, is when the

power, or the electricity goes out, which it sometimes does. Then all goes silent. All lights go out. Then it begins to feel rather natural. I guess one thing you'll have to get used to is that you are on constant display. It's like we are a living, moving picture frame to be looked at. Our every move could be being watched. And when we are happy and healthy and getting along nicely with each other, then Angelina is happy."

"Who's Angelina?" a newcomer asked.

"She's the one that brought you here, and she's the one you'll learn to be very glad to see. She feeds us faithfully every day," came the reply.

"Oh, and one thing about the food—eat it. It might be different than what you are used to, but if we don't eat it, then it tends to soil up the water, and Angelina thinks we aren't hungry and will wait

longer to feed us. She expects us to clean up by eating what food she has made available. It's better to eat it when it's fresh, then to let it get older. It tastes better and we are healthier when we eat it as fresh as possible."

"Okay," said the new fish. "So the happy living rules, I can see, might be this:

Be tolerant of the new noises and don't let them bother us.

Be nice to each other.

Swim and get good exercise, and keep active.

Take in the clean water and fresh oxygen to stay healthy.

Don't be wasteful with the food, but eat what is served.

Eat fresh food as much as possible. We'll be healthier that way.

Do our part to keep things clean, and not let the area get too mucked up.

Chapter 13—Discovering and Navigating in a New Year

It's funny that they would have been discussing these things, as just then in her room, while thinking about her new year ahead, Angelina also was making herself a list for a happy and healthy new year ahead.

Each year she learned new things, and liked to make plans for her new year to be the best yet, and do the best she could.

Sleep when I am tired.

Get enough exercise to stay fit and energetic.

Drink lots of clean drinking water; and drink nearly nothing else.

Eat the food that is served, if it's good for me; decline what is unhealthy; make better choices.

Have time feeding my mind every day, with the best types of reading material.

Keep my body and home clean, and do my part to make things tidy and looking nice—it's more relaxing then.

Write my worries down on paper, and leave them there; they shouldn't take up room in my mind after that, except to pray for God's help in my life's challenges.

Now she was ready to lie down and sleep, but first she went to have one last peek at the fish to see how they were getting along.

When she peered at the fish's tank they all seemed to be greeting each other.

Perhaps they were discussing plans for their new life together here.

“I hope they like each other. Having those I care for getting along happily is something that is really important to me.”

I think everyone on earth would agree with that.

When she went to sleep that night she had a dream about a pair of fish that were best of buddies.

They learned to get along by taking an interest in what each one liked or didn't like.

They tried to be courteous and considerate of each other's feelings.

They could do this because they took the time, each day, to find out what the other one felt about different things.

In her dream she saw these two fish, called Zuzzie and Xurro, swimming down to explore a sunken ship.

One was saying to the other:

“I hear there is a treasure somewhere on this old boat, something that humans value. But no one has been able to find it yet.

Maybe today we’ll be the ones to discover it,” Zuzzie said, giving Xurro a reason to be brave and look in to new places of the ship.

“Look over here,” Xurro said when examining a pile of seaweed that seemed to be covering a box of some sort.

“Well, well, that’s certainly a find!” Zuzzie said. “Let’s check it out more tomorrow. It’s getting late and I’m ready for some rest.”

So the two of them swam back to their usual place of rest for the night. There would be more adventures to enjoy the next day.

While they settled down to sleep, Zuzzie said to Xurro, “Say, what do you dream about at night?”

“Well, it’s crazy, I guess, but sometimes I do dream that I am a large dolphin, swimming alongside of the ships, keeping them from crashing into the hidden rocks. I would like to feel like I am a big help. I’d like to be admired by humans.

“Down here no one notices us much. And frankly I am very glad they don’t. Because when humans do, then they want to catch us. Maybe they just like to look at us. But I wish there was a way to be noticed and appreciated, and yet still be safe,” Xurro expressed.

Zuzzie said,

“You know I think such a thing exists. I’ve heard of it before. Humans get a tank of water and put it, of all things, in their own dwelling place.

Then they get fish that they like to look at and place them in there. There is some sort of food given to them. Nothing like what we get here, of course, but they can survive on it.”

Xurro asked, “What do they do that for?”

Zuzzie replied, “To look at them. They find us rather nice to just look at. We’re so different than they are, but pretty and all that.”

“Wow, can you believe it?” Xurro exclaimed. He didn’t know something like that really did exist. But then he thought about it.

“What would I rather, spend all day just being something others admire and look at, and say nice things about me; feed me and keep me safe—yet I have to stay just where they want me and can’t go exploring new places or meeting new fish?”

“Or would I rather the challenge of trying to stay safe, and finding food around, but having the freedom to swim and explore and learn and do new things every day? I guess different fish like different things. Maybe a tank life is for some. But I think I like being free, even if I’m not noticed. I’m happy to be in the natural environment I was born to live in.”

Xurro decided he was content to be where he was, though he didn’t get the attention and admiration of many others. At least he had a friend, and they could learn all kinds of things.

The next day, as the rays of the sun started to penetrate the deep and dark waters, Zuzzie and Xurro were off for another day of adventure.

“Say, should we check out that interesting box you found yesterday,” Zuzzie suggested and Xurro agreed.

“What do you think is in here?” Zuzzie asked, as Xurro peeked and prodded around.

“I think I see something white, like a whole bunch of... shells! Those shell living creatures made this their home some time back. Food must have been good; lots of plant growth around here,” Xurro said.

“Let’s see, anything else?” Zuzzie said, examining the other side. “Oh, looks like a pair of glasses, and some other useful tools. Must have been the captain’s box for keeping his things used in studying over maps and charting the sea.”

As the two swam away, happy that they’d found some new thing, they realised that they were glad for their skill of navigating the water, without the use of maps and such equipment.

“We are made just right for this watery living place. I think it’s great here!” Zuzzie said, and Xurro heartily agreed.

When Angelina woke the next morning, though she wasn’t a fish like the ones in her dreams, still she had a feeling as if she too was going to discover a box of things to explore.

Her whole new year ahead—every day—would hold so many new things to learn and to discover.

