

Samed Behrengi

The Little Black Fish



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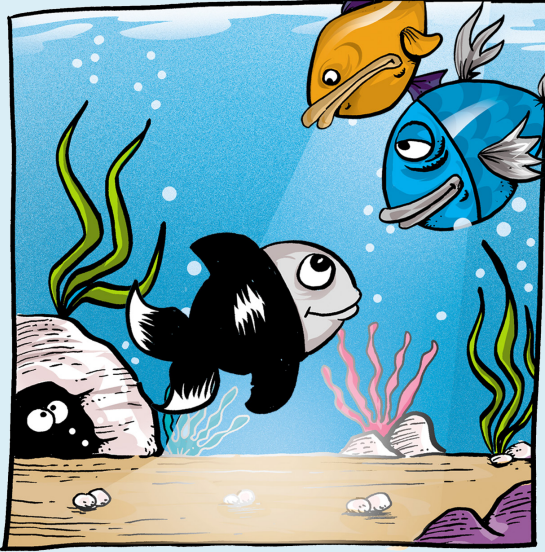
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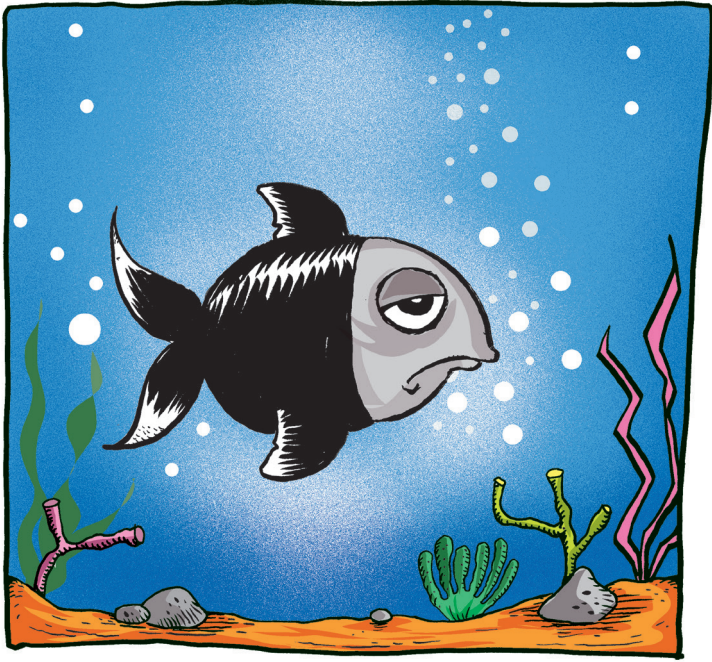


Samed Behrengi

The Little Black Fish

Translated By: Aslı Perker





It was a long and cold winter night. An old fish at the bottom of the sea had gathered around her twelve thousand children and grandchildren and told them this story:

Once upon a time, a little black fish lived with her mother in a river. They had a peaceful life in this clean river, which sprang from the heart of the mountains and ran among the rocks.

They were very happy together. Their home was behind a black, moss-covered rock, under which they both slept at night.

The little black fish was very sad that the moonlight never reached their home and longed to see the light. All daylong the little black fish and her mother swam after one another, and sometimes joined the other fish, but always stayed where they were.

Her mother loved the little black fish so very much, since she was her only child. For of the 10,000 eggs, which the mother had laid, only the little black fish had survived.

The little black fish seemed to be very quiet for some time though. She had been deep in thought and talked very little. She swam slowly behind her mother and even lost her sometimes. The mother knew something was wrong. But she thought the little black fish was sick and would soon be well. She didn't think much about it.

However, it wasn't that simple; the little black fish's sickness was something else.

Finally, one morning the little black fish woke her mother up before dawn and said:

“Mommy, mommy, please wake up. I have important things to tell you, please listen.”

Half asleep her mother said:

“What is going on so early in the day? Can’t it wait for later? We are not even fully awake yet! But since we’re up, let’s go for a swim.”

“No, mommy,” said the little black fish decisively. “I don’t want to swim around anymore. I need to go away.”

“Go away?” said the mother, surprised.

“Yes, mommy, I need to go away. I cannot stay here any longer.”

“But dear, where are you going to go this early?”

“I am going to look for the end of this stream. I am going to see where it takes me. For months, I’ve been thinking about where this stream goes. Whatever I do, I cannot stop thinking. I cannot even sleep. At last I made up my mind,

I'm going to see where this stream goes myself. What happens at other places, what other things there are, I want to know.”

The mother looked sadly into the little black fish's eyes and smiled a weak smile. As she looked far away she said:

“You know, when I was little like you, I thought the same. But my dear, there is neither a beginning nor an end to this stream... It just flows and never goes anywhere... Our life is what you see here. What do you intend seek for and what do you intend to find?”

“But mommy, how is that possible? How can a stream not have an end? Then why would it keep running? Everything comes to an end. Night comes to an end, so does the day. The week comes to an end, so does the month. And...”

Her mother didn't let her to go on and said imperiously:

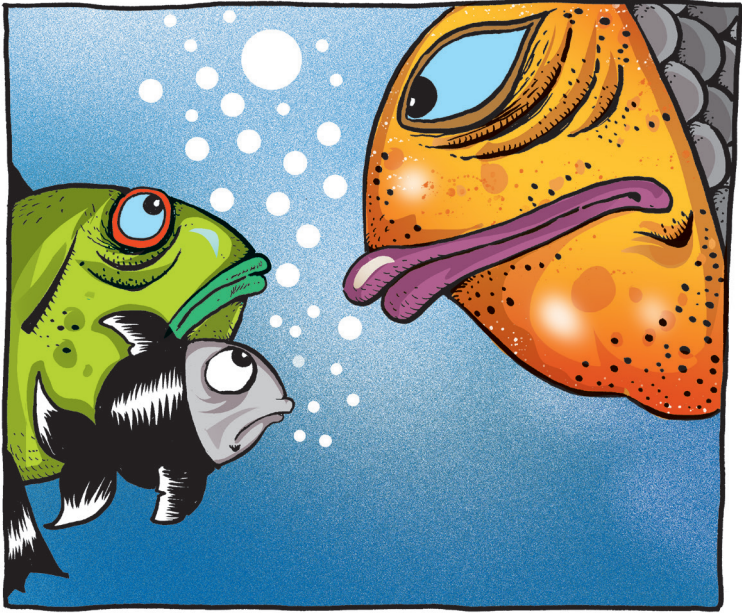
“Enough with these dreams. These are very

big words for you. Let's go and do what we always do, go on with our happy lives."

But the little black fish had made up her mind.

"No, mommy, I'm tired of swimming around like this. I want to go and see what's happening elsewhere. Maybe you think someone taught me these ideas but believe me I've been thinking about these for a long time. Of course, I've learned many things here and there. For instance, I know that when most fish get old, they complain about having spent their lives in vain. I want to know if life is simply about circling around in a small place until you become old and nothing else, or is there another way to live in the world?"

She'd talked quickly without taking a breath. So much had bottled up in her. Her mother listened to the little black fish carefully and said: "Oh dear, what happened to you? You keep saying another life, another world. What is world? This river, where we live happily is the world. The life we live is the truth. That's all that matters."



Just then, a large fish approached their home and said: “Neighbor, what are you arguing about with your child? Aren’t you planning to go swimming today?”

Hearing her neighbor’s voice, the mother came out of the house and said, “What’s the world coming to? Now children want to teach their mothers about life!”

“How so?” asked the neighbor.

“She is so little but she already talks about leaving. She wants to know if there is another kind of life somewhere else, another world... Can you believe?”

“Oh you” said the neighbor, “When did you grow up and had these big ideas? You are a philosopher now, huh?”

“I don’t know what you mean by philosopher,” answered the little black fish, “I’ve just gotten tired of swimming around. This has no meaning... I don’t want to spend my life like this anymore, I don’t want to fool myself and complain that I’ve spent my life in vain one day. Complaining is not for me.”

What little black fish said annoyed the neighbor, and she exclaimed:

“Nonsense!”

The little black fish’s mother was sad.

“Oh my dear little one, who put these thoughts in your mind? I would have never thought you’d say these things.”

“No one put anything in my mind,” said the little black fish. “I have a mind of my own and intelligence. I have eyes and I can see.”

The neighbor turned to the little black fish’s mother suddenly and said: “Maybe that twisted-up snail taught her these things?”

“Oh yes...” said the mother. “He never left my little one alone. I’m sure it was him! That evil snail!”

“No please mommy, please don’t say that” interrupted the little black fish, “He was my friend. How can you blame him like this?”

“Friendship between a fish and a snail is nothing heard of my dear” said the mother, “I have never heard of such a thing!”

“And I’ve never heard of a fish and a snail being enemies,” replied the little black fish sadly. “But you all were unfair to him and drowned him.”

“Let’s not bring up the past,” said the neighbor.

“But you brought up the past yourself,” complained the little fish.

“It served him right to be killed,” said the mother. “Have you forgotten all the things he used to say?”

“Then,” said the little fish, “Kill me as well since I’m saying all the same things.”

This argument between the little black fish, her mother and the neighbor attracted the other fish, now they came to listen too. The little black fish’s words angered all of them.

One of the old fish said with a threatening voice, “Look here little one, you’re crossing the line. We won’t take it. Do you think we’d pity you?”

“I think he has an itch” said another one, “Should we help him scratch?”

“No, do not touch my child, go away!” yelled the little black fish’s mother.

One of the fish scolded and said: “What

do you expect if you raise your child without manners? She can end up like the snail.”

And the neighbor said, “I’m ashamed to be your neighbor.”

The crowd was heated. Everybody provoked each other. One of them yelled, “Let’s send this little fish where the snail went to. Let’s punish her.”

All of a sudden there was turmoil and as they tried to grab the little black fish, her friends, who were much faster gathered around and took the fish away, to safety.

The black fish’s mother almost lost her mind, she cried uncontrollably, “Oh, my baby is leaving me. What am I going to do?”

Seeing this, the little black fish said “Mommy, don’t cry for me. Cry for these soulless old fish. They are more miserable than me.”

“Stop with your insults. Apologize!” shouted one of the fish from afar.

“You are not welcome here anymore,” said another, “Don’t you ever come back.”

The third one said, “Don’t give up everything for empty fantasies. You’ll regret it.”

And the fourth one talked, “What is wrong with this world that you go look for another one? You think you’re better than us?”

“There is no other world. The world is right here. Come back to your senses and apologize!” said a fifth.

“If you accept that you are mistaken and come live peacefully with your mother, there is a chance that you might be forgiven,” said a sixth.

And the seventh fish cautioned her: “After all, you belong here. Don’t you see how patient we are with you? You should appreciate it.”

The mother fish cried silently in a corner. She was very sad. “Please don’t go. For me! Don’t go if you love me a little,” she said.

The little fish didn’t have anything more to say to them. All of them had spilled out all the darkness inside. She left without looking back.

Several friends of the same age accompanied the little black fish as far as the waterfall.

As they parted, the fish said, “My friends, I hope to see you again. You won’t forget me, will you?”

“How could we forget you?” asked the friends. “You’ve awakened us from a deep sleep. You’ve taught us many things that we had not even thought about before. Always stay as courageous and smart. We hope to see you again.”

The little black fish swam down the waterfall and fell into a pond full of water without knowing where she went.

At first the fish lost its balance but after a while began to swim and circled around the pond. She didn’t know this place. The little black fish had never seen so much water collected in one place. Thousands of tadpoles were wriggling in the water. She looked at all of them carefully.

Gazing at the little black fish, one of them said: “Look at this! What a funny, ugly shape! What kind of a creature is this?”

The little black fish looked them over thoroughly and said, "Please don't insult me. My name is Little Black Fish. Tell me your names so that we'll get acquainted. I'm set out to see the world. What are you doing?"

"We call one another tadpole," replied one of the tadpoles.

"We come from nobility," said another.

"You can't find anyone prettier than us in the whole world," said another.

"We aren't shapeless and ugly-faced like you," said another one.

The fish said, "I never imagined you would be so conceited. That's all right. I'll forgive you since you're speaking out of ignorance."

The tadpoles did not expect to hear this; they were surprised first, then they were angry. In one voice they demanded, "Are you saying we're ignorant?"

"If you weren't ignorant," replied the fish, "you'd know that there are many others in the