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WAS IT A DREAM?

Rita grew quite tired of gathering wildflowers while her brother Frank sat by the water busy with his fishing-rod.

"He must be tired of it by this time! He has been fishing for two hours!" she said, and, swinging her bunch of flowers, she walked to where her brother was sitting.

"Do leave off fishing for a while, Frank!" she pleaded, leaning against the tree beside him. "There is such a funny-looking animal running about over there in the grass. Come and look!"

Frank laughed.

"I know your funny-looking animals, Rita!" he said.

"Aren't you really tired of sitting quite still?" went on Rita wonderingly.

"I don't think about it," answered her brother. "I want to catch the fish, and to do that I must sit still."

Rita knew she must be contented to wait, so she walked a little way from him and threw herself down upon the bank.

As she lay looking into the water she suddenly felt herself grow very sleepy. A little while after, the water began to get so clear that she could see right through it. It grew more and more so until it became just like glass. Rita could see the very bottom of the pond and the fish swimming quickly backwards and forwards.

Then she heard some very funny little voices coming up from the water. This made her look closer, and she soon discovered a small group of fishes who seemed to be speaking very eagerly together. She saw they were gathered round Frank's line, on the end of which hung a tempting piece of bait.

"I tell you, my son," Rita heard the largest fish say to one of the smaller ones, "that is a trap. I have seen hundreds of poor fishes try to swallow that worm, and they have been pulled up out of the water and I have never seen them any more!"

"But, mother!" cried the smaller fish, "if I only had just one bite! Look what a beauty it is! I am sure there can be nothing to harm me!"

"Inside that worm," continued, the big fish, "there is a hook which will catch into your gills, and you will not be able to get away. Then the man at the top will pull you up and up, and you will be killed and eaten by him!"

Still the little fish looked longingly at the bait. Rita wanted to call out and tell him what his mother said was quite true; but somehow her voice refused to come.

The other fishes who were gathered round listening did not say anything, but Rita saw that some of the smaller ones looked at the worm just as longingly as the little one who had spoken.

For a few minutes there was silence in the water; then all at once, at a moment when it thought its mother was looking the other way, the little fish made a dart forward and tried to swallow the bait. The next moment it was wriggling about in a most pitiable manner and giving faint little cries for help. Its mother swam towards it in great distress.

"Come and help!" she called, in a trembling voice.

All the other fishes surrounded the line, and some caught hold of the little fish's tail and held on.

Just as Rita was getting very excited indeed she gave a great start and jumped up from the bank.

"What was that?" she exclaimed aloud.

"Why, I've got a splendid catch. It must be a monster! The line is so heavy I can hardly pull it in!"

It was Frank's voice. Rita suddenly remembered where she was and that she must have fallen asleep. She walked slowly to Frank, thinking about her strange dream.

She had only stood by him a minute when—splash!—out flew the line from the water and over went Frank on his back.

It was so funny that Rita could not help laughing heartily—especially as Frank was not at all hurt.

"It's all very well for you to laugh!" he said, when he had got up again; "but that was the best catch I've ever had, and the wretched fish must have got off the hook!"

Rita grew very thoughtful. Could her dream have been true? It really did seem

strange. Anyway, although she felt sorry for Frank, she could not help feeling very pleased that the poor little fish had got free!