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MINA HONARBAKHS

THE LITTLE FISH

Translated by
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She has translated several English and Farsi books, and at present is living in Tehran with her husband, an architect, and their two children.

TO MY PARENTS

THE LITTLE FISH

The sea wasn't the same that day. The sea wasn't the sea. It had changed. The fish were frantic.

An intruder had disturbed their peace. From everywhere schools of fish, dazed and terrified, approached this intruder.

A corpse, held down by weights tied to its ankles, had sunk into the depths of the sea. Its very presence disrupted the routine tranquility of the fish. No human being had as yet managed to last in these limpid waters – waters that belonged to the fish. This vexed them.

Finally, noticing the rope and the weights, they all set about trying to unfasten the rope. It gave.

Some time later, the corpse gradually rose to the surface of the water returning their lost tranquility to the fish. They were happy that the sea was theirs once again. After a while sealife returned to normal as if there had never been an intruder upsetting it.

Fish don't have time to think of the past. Even the recent past which had disrupted their calm was quickly forgotten. They rapidly regain peace and happiness.

Immediately with their habitual liveliness they set about swimming in the translucent waters of the sea.

However, the crisis had deeply disturbed a baby fish – the youngest fish of the sea – who had just learnt to swim two or three days earlier. Even though the thought of swimming filled Little Fish’s soul with pride and pleasure he could not forget the creature he had seen a few hours earlier.

He could still smell its stench.

The thought of that grotesque creature’s ugly bloated face filled Little Fish with a strange feeling. These thoughts prevented Little Fish from swimming and having fun with his friends. Instead he sat moping in a corner.

Shoals of fish swam past inviting him to join them, but he refused all their invitations.

“It’s a pity not to swim today, Little Fish. Your mother says you can swim as well as any one of us now,” said one fish.

“No, I just want to think today. To tell you the truth I’m not in the mood for swimming around” answered Little Fish.

“Think! what’s there to think about? You’re not still thinking of that bothersome creature that fell into the sea are you? Well, you can’t be blamed as it was the first human you’ve ever seen. Don’t worry, though, the sea only belongs to us fish. No human can ever live in it. Once in a blue moon something like that happens, but you mustn’t waste your time thinking about it. You know our lives are as short as the sea is wide, so we have to swim around and enjoy it as best we can. Come on, forget that creature.”

“No, replied Little Fish,” “I can’t come. I just don’t feel like swimming today.”

“Leave him alone,” said another fish, “he’s still very young. Well, Little Fish, if I see your mother I’ll send her to you. She probably thinks you’re swimming or else she’d never leave you like this. She told us you’d grown and didn’t really need her anymore. You can swim around, go anywhere you like, and enjoy the beauties of the sea.”

Little Fish was so lost in his thoughts that he couldn’t even bother to answer. He had a strange feeling – an overwhelming feeling. He had never thought much about anything. He knew he was a fish and mercifully - fish never had any worries. Though their lives were short they were full of interesting things to see – it was an exciting life. Yet, in spite of everything, he could not forget what he had seen. Even swimming, a newly acquired privilege, had lost its pleasure for him.

At last Mother Fish found him: “Why don’t you swim Little Fish? They tell me you’re thinking – waiting for me. They say you’ve refused all invitations to swim and have stayed back alone.”

On seeing his Mother and hearing her speak, Little Fish came to himself. He returned to his own life – the life of a fish. He thought it best not to speak to his Mother of what was on his mind. He thought of forgetting that creature and of foregoing his plans. He would go swimming with his mother right away. He stared uncertainly at the crystalline waters around him and said: “Mother, why did that disgusting creature who disturbed the quiet of the sea repel it so cruelly? Seeing that creature made me understand misery, Mother. It was bloated, it reeked – it was

totally wretched. Nothing in the sea has ever made me feel that way before. What did it want of us to force its way here like that?"

"You're mistaken, my silly little baby, it was a human being. He didn't want anything of us – other humans on land had thrown him into the sea. They probably just wanted to get rid of him. You see, the very existence of some humans is foul for others. People don't like one another – they don't want any help from us fish. They eat fish. They enjoy our meat and strengthen themselves on it. Recently, they even put some fish in glass bowls and sadistically enjoy watching their imprisonment. No, little one, you can be sure that the human being you saw didn't want anything of us. Humans think they know a lot. They think we don't understand anything – don't even feel anything. They've written books about us. They've even classified us just as they've classified each other: black people, white people...".

"But Mother", cut in Little Fish, "why don't we care about the lives of these human beings? Why have we so thoughtlessly set them aside? Maybe they'll stop eating us if we make friends with them. Maybe they'll stop judging us so rashly and stop throwing their extras into the bottom of the sea."

Little Fish's words worried and unsettled his Mother. The thought that they were wasting time discussing a barren subject while they could be swimming and enjoying themselves upset her. What had happened to Little Fish? He had totally abandoned the world of the fish.

His Mother sensed danger – maybe Little Fish wasn't

really a fish. Human life had never interested any one of them before. Never before had anyone uttered a word concerning those land-creatures. So, how could Little Fish say such things?

Pained and surprised Mother Fish exclaimed, "You ask me why we haven't befriended these people! Why should we become friends? When have we ever thrown a fish onto land the way they throw each other into the sea? The sight of it was enough to make us disregard such feeble, cruel beings. What else can we need when we have such a short life to enjoy such a vast expanse of water? A glimpse at these waters tells any fish how minute he is. Forget it. Let's go! If we hurry we'll catch up with the others in time. After a day's swim with them I'm sure you'll forget all this. Wait till you've understood the pleasures of a fish's life. You still haven't seen much little one – you've only just learnt how to swim. Come, dear, put an end to all this."

Little Fish set out with his Mother.

That day the water was thrillingly warm and the sea was evermore beautiful. Before long, however, Little Fish began talking about humans again.

He nagged and pestered his Mother with questions about them. Finally, Mother Fish lost all patience and turned on him: "You're going to antagonize everyone if you go on like this. You've plagued me with your talk of people ever since you set eyes on me today. I don't know any more than I've already told you. In fact, I've had enough of talking of these earthly creatures.

Go to Old Fish!

He knows more than I do. Maybe he can put an end to your ridiculous thoughts and convince you of what is right.”

The mention of Old Fish’s name filled Little Fish with pleasure. He thought he could speak freely to Old Fish of what was on his mind and learn more about human beings. He joyfully followed his Mother never mentioning another word. At last they reached the magnificent boulders where Old Fish lived.

Old Fish was pleased to see them. He had aged a great deal and rarely went to swim in the sea anymore. One look at Mother Fish told him that she was distressed and frightened.

Mother Fish explained the whole story to Old Fish. Then leaving the two together she went off alone. She had been sufficiently worn out by talk of people for one day and could not bear to hear any more.

With a sly laugh Old Fish began, “Well, Little Fish, I hear you have suddenly developed a keen interest in human beings. Your Mother tells me that you pity them and that you intend to help them. I suppose you will even want to go on land. I only hope that you don’t intend to become a Messiah, write books about humans, or bring about drastic changes on earth. You can choose any one of these measures to prove your existence to man. Then you will be famous. After a while you’ll stop being a fish. You’ll become human – there shall begin your misery.”

“A Messiah!” exclaimed Little Fish.

“Yes”, continued Old Fish”, a Messiah. You see,

humans have one hundred and twenty four thousand prophets. Unlike ours, human life is not aimed at living – it is an endeavor to prove its existence. People tirelessly discover talents in order to establish their subsistence. Then, they kill themselves to state their being. How? They write books, help others, find friends, give phony parties, and essentially do anything within their power to attest their existence in the eyes of the world. Mankind is terrified of mortality. It has a phobia of death, of obscurity, and of the fact that one day – like us – it will cease to be. Humans stand in awe of inexistence – inexistence with no trace of ever having been.

Yet, when the time comes they simply pass away. You see, Little Fish, man sees himself as the noblest of all creatures, so he must do something. I hope you don't want to do something because you're beginning to feel human. Maybe you're just curious – you want to make head or tail of human life."

"No, no," broke in Little Fish. "I have absolutely no such intentions. But, who said man is the noblest of all creatures? Who told him that he had to do something? Why do people want to find a way to prove their existence to each other?"

Old Fish laughed and answered "They themselves hold such claims. They say their prophets have told them that they are God's noblest creatures – that they must think. A human being has to accomplish many things before he dies. Humans are slaves – slaves to many things. As a fish you simply cannot understand such bondage. From the day he is born man grows with his enslavement.

He is enslaved by parental sacrifice, by friendly affections, by his society, by his history, by his prophet's commandments. Until the day he dies man must atone for all these bonds. A human being must prove worthy of all these sacrifices and affections. It is not easy to live on land and be the noblest of all creatures. What a preposterous idea – man is assuming perfection!

In spite of all these claims he has such shortcomings. If he doesn't bathe in our water man begins to smell. He needs so much more than just the air and the land that encompasses him. He needs water, clothes, laws... He needs unnatural and absurd upheavals. He needs to feign happiness. He needs lies. He needs insanely-hollow jealousies. He needs his past. You know Little Fish, people have divided the earth. These limpid waters belong to all the fish, but the earth doesn't belong to all human beings. They have divided the land and each group has made its own country. Each person belongs to a country. I told you they are captives.

You will never be able to befriend humans, live on land and remain a fish.

Humans are miserable restless beings. They have never been content on land so they have invaded the seas and the skies. Yet, in spite of all these imperfections they claim to be the noblest of all creatures. With one hundred and twenty four thousand prophets they still cannot claim a goal in life. They still do not know what is right and what is wrong. This is what they call progress – not internal agitation.”

Little Fish listened attentively. Doubtfully he said, “In

spite of what you've told me I've decided to go on land to try to communicate with people. I want to see their lives for myself. I really do pity them. Though their books and judgements of us have filled me with indignation I really do feel sorry for them. Considering how short their life span is it would be a pity if they never understood. It wouldn't hurt one fish to think of man considering the number of men who have thought of us."

"But they don't have anything better to do", cried Old Fish. "They are busy bodies. It's not that they are concerned about us. They pass their time exploding into the sea and the sky. They enjoy doing the unnatural, they stop being normal that way. They no longer enjoy nature. Now, they can only suffer all the monstrosities which they themselves have created. These stubborn beings don't even face what they have done. They have adopted themselves. To think that you, tiny as you are, want to go on land! If you do survive and if they do accept you, you won't have time to pity them. They will make so many plans that your short life will be filled to the brim. Just think you'll be the only fish on land. You'll have to move fast to make your propositions."

"My propositions! I only want to go because I sympathize with them."

"Yes, you will have to make a political statement somehow, meaning politically, you will have to support some powerful nation. You can't just say you're a fish you know. You will have to have a special name – a genuine name! Then you'll have to state precisely which part of the sea you come from, who your prophet is,

and above all, what mankind will gain through an alliance with you. Then, after all these explanations, which will take up the greater half of your life, they may not even believe that you've only gone there out of pity. Pure pity seems impossible to them. These people who scorn us don't think they need pity. So, they'll definitely doubt you and destroy you."

"Doubt what?"

"Doubt. Most people are liars – liars to such an extent that they even doubt themselves. They'll think you're also lying. I told you before Little Fish: these creatures have absurd notions. They also have strange characteristics.

Last year some people caught a little fish. After a while a little boy threw him back into the sea again. When he returned home he had some amazing stories to tell. His captors had put him in a glass bowl which they'd placed in a room. Anyone who came to that house would rush up to the bowl and watch him inside.

At nights the lady of the house, the boy's mother, would become sentimental. She'd turn out the lights, put on some music and stare at the fish. Then she'd begin to cry. I suppose she thought she was confiding in the fish as she couldn't trust anyone on earth. After drying her tears she'd quarrel with her husband. She was in love. It seemed her lost lover resembled the fish, because each time she looked at the fish in the bowl she would start crying again.

Some nights the woman and her husband went to parties. There they held hands in front of everyone. Once back home she would look at the fish and cry again. Of

course, she always put on some music before crying. So you see, people even need a suitably artificial atmosphere to cry in.

Then, one day the boy, who, like the fish, had grown tired of this masquerade threw the fish back into the sea.

The fish said the man and his wife always wore a smile and held hands before others – even before their son. They wanted everyone to envy their happiness. He said the little boy returned him to the sea just to spite his Mother.

Do you still want to go to the earth after hearing these stories of human lives Little Fish?."

Little Fish took a deep breath and said, "To tell the truth I've already made up my mind. Maybe I'm not all fish. As of tomorrow I'll practice swimming a few hours on the surface of the water. Once I adapt myself to the air I'll pick a sunny day to go on land. I won't think any further than that – what happens then is unimportant."

"It's your life after all, but I'm sure you're not all fish."

Little Fish didn't listen to the rest of what Old Fish had to say. He swam straight up to the surface of the water. At the top the sun hurt his eyes. He was forced down a little. The air at the top was warm and he could see it was summer.

Little Fish was a long way away from the shore and could not see what went on out there. He thought that in the days to come he would swim closer. Then he would be able to watch and learn what went on up there.

Little Fish swam until he was exhausted. It was getting

dark so he decided to go back. On the way home he saw some fish returning from their daily excursion, but he didn't pay any attention to them. He had made up his mind: he had to go on land to communicate with people; he had to practice to survive on land; he had to be able to breathe and to 'live' there. If only he could find another fish willing to practice with him. Then they could go on land together, and he wouldn't be so lonely.

He said to himself, "Yes, as of tomorrow I'll find a fellow traveller. I'll get another fish to come along with me. Then we'll practice together everyday and we will talk of people."

No matter how hard he tried he could not find another fish willing to go along with him. They all laughed at him and tried to dissuade him from going.

"We've heard you want to go on land to befriend the noblest of all creatures, Little Fish. So, you pity them! Do you want to write about them like they've written about us?" said one.

"We hear you've taken pity on humans. You're not a fish. People feel pity – fish don't possess such absurd feelings. We're so happy we can't pity each other", said another.

"So, you're off Little Fish, are you," continued a third. 'If you stay alive long enough they'll probably interview you. An interesting interview with the first fish to set foot on land. An exceptional fish: First Fish!

The others no longer saw Little Fish as a fish. He gradually became estranged to them – a rebel.

The day came when they rarely asked him to join in

their games. They spoke among themselves: "This rebel isn't going to bring man into our world to disrupt our peace is he?"

"No, after mingling with people he'll get so tied up in politics, interviews, parties, and earthly friends that he'll soon forget all about us."

"After trying for centuries these creatures can't stay down here without all their weird equipment."

"Little Fish has so little time and so much to do that he'll never get anything done at all. No, the sea belongs to us fish alone."

Everyday Little Fish swam for hours on the surface of the water. He tried staying at the top for a longer span of time. He practiced daily with growing hope and energy. He wanted to speak to all the fish about man, but in the depths of the sea none of the fish approached him anymore.

Little Fish's daily routine had thoroughly changed. He practiced all day long – each time closer to land.

The weather was hot now and the surface water held a pleasant warmth. Most days were sunny. The sea rarely carried strong waves.

One day Little Fish drew near land. He spent some time watching the beach. Soon people began to appear.

Though humans still frightened him, Little Fish swam towards the coast. In spite of his training he still could not tolerate being on the surface more than a few minutes at a time.

He could discern the people from where he was – some lay in the sun, some foolishly contorted their bodies,

and a few sat staring at an unknown spot in the sea. Little Fish could not grasp what these people were doing. What was all this dancing, this loneliness and this careless lying in the sun about? After a while he returned exhausted to the depths of the sea.

He wanted to go to his fellow fish. On his way home he met some, but they – like the others – ridiculed him.

“You’re not going to fall in love up there are you Little Fish?”

“Fall in love! With what?”

“In love with a human being – half of mankind is in love. People fall in love for lack of anything better to do. They spend their time brooding and making trouble for everyone else. Then they suddenly fall out of love again. Each person manages to fall in love at least a hundred times during his lifetime. Just like everything else their loves are also meaningless. These mechanical beings have lost all true emotions and cannot really fall in love. Who knows, maybe they fall in love to spite each other! They say love is an art. They’ve even classified it: platonic love, spring love, young love, old love, first love, last love... isn’t it absurd!

“But I’ve heard people hate each other,” interrupted Little Fish. “I’ve heard that they lie to each other, and that the existence of some is offensive to others”.

“That’s right. I mean each person falls in love with another. Once in love he simply ignores everyone else. This phony love permits him to do anything he wants. On land a lover has no obligations – he’s simply in love. Little Fish, you can’t imagine what ludicrous loves these people

create for themselves. They think it gives them the right to behave in the most perverted ways imaginable. As a fish I have never been able to understand the luxury of human love – it is the strangest, the most self-indulgent emotion they possess.

You see the lover's only aim in life is to attain his beloved; he will resort to any means to do so. His life is spent searching for the loved one. Yet, this self-sacrificing lover will not take a single step to help the hungry, the weak, or the needy. He's in love and love is blind – he can only see the object of his love.

The love of most earthly beings is their most self-centered sentiment. We fish love many things that do no harm to anyone or anything around us. We are born into the sea with our love and we die perfecting it. Our love is as real as we are. It lives as long as we are alive. It doesn't hurt anyone – it pacifies our souls. We love this sea, we love this short life, we love to swim, we love the tomorrow that is to come – even if it is our final tomorrow”.

Little Fish pitied man even more. He thought he should get to land as quickly as possible. He went to look for his mother.

When he found Mother Fish he could appreciate the peace and quiet which she enjoyed in the sea. He thought how he wished he had never seen that despicable creature! If only he had never heard of mankind. But, it was too late. He had spent too long wondering about man. He could not stop now.

Little Fish abruptly remembered Old Fish and asked his Mother to take him to his wise friend. Mother Fish

stared blankly into the waters and heaved a heavy sigh.

“Old Fish is dead. You’ve been so lost in your thoughts that you haven’t even noticed. He died the day we went to see him. He was very old. He told you our lives are extremely short. He said that we must take advantage of the time we have, but you exasperated him with all your talk of human beings.

So, you really are going to leave the sea now?”

The news of Old Fish’s death struck Little Fish: “He looked fine the day I saw him. He wasn’t about to die – he never even talked about it.”

Mother Fish gave her son a knowing look and answered “Wasn’t about to die! My foolish son, dying is just like swimming for us. It’s like these waters. It is as absolute as the tomorrows that are always there.

Fish welcome death like they welcome swimming in these infinite waters. They welcome all natural phenomena: youth, age, death. We aren’t afraid of dying Little Fish, but people are terrorized by death. They are even horrified of aging. That is why they struggle to keep their youth. Old age is but a chapter in the book of life – for us it is its most splendid chapter.

I’ve heard that nowadays the aged attempt to regain their youth by subjecting themselves to all kinds of surgery.

Still they die. You see Little Fish, mankind doesn’t even want to die the way the old naturally pass away – they need premature deaths.

Imagine what these creatures would do if death didn’t exist. What would they be up to! How unbearable their

lives would be. Man must always be held in awe of something – he is just too incompetent. He is incapable of understanding the magnificence of natural phenomena.

Now that you've decided to go on land you might as well know that man is unworthy of nature. That's why he distances himself from it the way he does. Man is at odds with nature – he has lost his soul."

"But, Mother, man has been able to reach into the sea yet we haven't been able to survive on land."

This was too much for Mother Fish, "What! They could and we couldn't! They have nothing better to do. They are imperfect. They are discontent on land. They are ignorant of what life is about. They have no conception of what they want. Their souls are bursting out of their frames. They can never find peace.

We haven't wanted to go on land. You must be able to realize the difference between not wanting to and not being able to. What do we lack other than misery, pain and evil? Why should we go on land?

Little Fish, I don't want to hear you say such things again. I know you're going, but as long as you're here I want you to talk and be like a fish. Don't think that we didn't go to the extremes that man did because we're unable to. We are happy as we are – our lives are meaningful. If you hadn't spent so much time thinking about man you would understand its meaning too."

Little Fish carefully listened to what his Mother had to say. Even though he had withdrawn from the others he could see their happiness. It crossed his mind to forget everything – he would live like a fish again. He had

estranged himself, but it still wasn't too late.

Then he thought of man – an invisible force drew him. Man! This proud pretentious being, this self-reliant self-centered animal, this affected, arrogant creature had dared judge the fish!

Man! He aspired to be the noblest of all creatures! Man! In spite of his one hundred and twenty four thousand prophets he desperately groped for the meaning of right and wrong.

This creature, intimidated by death, choked on his greed for life and youth. He had irrationally divided the earth, and yet in spite of his incompetence, he considered himself the most perfect being – “The Thinking Man!”.

He needed the fish's water to survive. He even needed it to prevent himself from reeking of filth and still, he dared to scorn the fish.

Yes, Little Fish better forget these complex creatures. What could a tiny little fish like him possibly do?

Those who ruthlessly devour fish to strengthen themselves in order to ruin each other would undoubtedly devour him too.

Those who pitilessly throw one another into the sea would never take pity on him.

They're happy the way they are.

He had better forget that such creatures exist before it was too late – before he made all the fish lose hope in him.

What could a small fish like him do alone on land? How could these skeptical creatures ever believe him? Could they who doubt their own nonentity and who aspire

to challenge mortality believe Little Fish?

They would definitely eat him on sight just to ascertain their feeling of superiority – what an insane feeling!

These thoughts streamed into Little Fish's mind, but he was too deeply involved.

He finally said to himself, "After all the training I'd better go – maybe I can be of some help. Even if I am wrong its better than nothing. The worst that could happen is that I'll either die breathing their poisoned air or I'll be killed at the hands of some human being. What difference does it make? I'm a fish, so I can accept death and mortality. What is there to keep me from going?"

Little Fish vowed never to change his mind again. He promised to try harder and to leave on a fine day.

The following day Little Fish resumed his training. Each time he stayed on the surface longer, he tried to adapt himself to breathing the air.

As he swam on the surface he witnessed strange scenes of human life. He noticed that the color of the people who lay on the beach gradually darkened. He thought how right the fish were in their judgement of these creatures – they weren't even happy with the natural color of their skin. How peculiar they were!

Little Fish saw the boats which set out daily to capture the fish of the sea. What troubles they went to!

He said to himself: "how good the fish are! They never pester others. They are concerned with eating their own sea food – they don't ravage the earth devouring humans." His Mother was right – fish never wanted to go on land.

Little Fish thought whales and sharks should eat these people. He could see it all now. It was Man who foolishly came into the sea. No whale or shark had ever gone on land to get anyone. It served them right to be gobbled up!

Little Fish felt proud of being a fish.

The days flew by.

Gradually Little Fish prepared to go on land. He had practiced extensively and could tolerate the air for a while. But he rarely saw any fish now.

He practiced all day long. The fish had more or less forgotten him. They were busy with their own lives.

One day, as he swam about, he came across some fish whom he longed to speak to. It had been so long since he had last been with other fish. He thought of what he could say. They were not interested in speaking of people, and Little Fish had not thought of anything else in so long – he had nothing to say to them. He was confused: the condition of Man, his crazed demeanor, his humiliation of fish, the silence the fish had adhered to – none of it made any sense.

Little Fish felt awkward with other fish. But that day the two fish did not run away from him. They approached him directly: “since you’ve decided to go on land, Little Fish, many of us feel that you may be endangering the tranquility of our lives. Even though we have never invaded their privacy, human beings have invaded ours before. I remember a time when they were at war. They weren’t content with fighting on land, they tore into the sea to destroy one another. You can’t imagine how awful it was. You weren’t around then, but more fish were

destroyed than humans.

While they fought each other we had no peace. Terrified, the fish fled to the bottom of the sea. I remember it all very well. We were petrified for so long. Each time they attacked, our hearts stood still. It was horrible. It was absurd.

Little Fish we're not against you. You're free to do anything you like with your life. You can spend your limited span of time anyway you see fit. But, please, if you do manage to make any friends don't ever speak of us to them. It may be interesting in the beginning – after all it is a change – but such a tremendous change will make you forget yourself. They will definitely trick you. One day they will come into the sea equipped with their strange gear to discover the secret of life in the sea-bed. The sense of discovery makes them feel the owners of everywhere. All we ask is for you to take care so they can't trick you, Little Fish.

Even now they've divided our sea among themselves – isn't it mad? They cannot understand that they don't own anything – not even themselves. They are a part of nature which will deal with their flesh, skin and bones in any way it sees fit. They are foolish because, in spite of their physical weakness, they still cling to ownership. Man, who is incapable of saving himself from disease and age, considers himself the lord of the seas and of the skies."

"That's right," answered Little Fish. "That's why I want to go on land. I may, somehow, be able to help them. I can tell them of the fish. So many people have thought of the fish, what is wrong with one fish concerning him-

self of people?"

"What! People thinking of fish! Nonsense! How could these selfish creatures think of anything that isn't advantageous to them? We don't owe them anything Little Fish. Whatever they have thought of us has only served to benefit them. They have nourished on our meat for years. They have used our oil to make vitamins and our fat to beautify themselves. In other words, they've profited from us to the utmost and you say they are concerned about us!

Don't forget, Little Fish, Man is only concerned about himself. In spite of everything, Man becomes weaker and more desperate daily. But he will continue thinking of profiting until he drives himself mad.

These brutal creatures don't even take pity on the tiny fish of the sea. Once they've profited on our meat, oil, and body they capture others to decorate their houses. They place fish in glass bowls, unfeelingly depriving them of their freedom, to beautify their homes.

"That's right," put in Little Fish, "That's why I'm going on land. If I survive I shall tell them about all this. I shall either convince them or they will convince me. I honestly don't think its important any more."

"What an idealistic fish!" exclaimed the two fish. "Well, Little Fish we hope you succeed. It's too bad we never hear what goes on up there. We're not very interested in the lies they have to tell. Well, there's nothing left here for us to do."

"No. I'm glad I'm a fish – I'm very proud".

Little Fish felt ready to go on land. His monotonous

daily routine bored him. He wanted to see his Mother one last time.

One day he went to look for her. He asked the fish he saw where she might be. Finally he found her. She was happy to see him after so long. Once she realized that he was about to leave she was saddened: "Little Fish, forget about going. Your presence here makes no difference in sea life, even if all the fish left the sea nothing would change, but I hate these creatures for whom you intend to leave this lovely sea. It's a waste little one. Even though I'm not sure you're all fish I don't want you to go.

"But, Mother, I want to go to understand something about the lives of these creatures. After all, in spite of their moral shortcomings, there must be something they believe in.

After a long silence Mother Fish answered, "Yes, there is. They sometimes believe in what they call God – Man's God. But they themselves have fashioned this God. They worship a Man-made God. At their convenience they remember and forget Him.

A mute obscure God to enslave humanity.

This is why Man permits himself to interfere with nature. This is the reason for Man's estrangement. He can think of changing the truths of nature because in reality he himself has created his Almighty.

"The ambiguous God of humanity."

"Yes", continued Mother Fish, "the ambiguous God of humanity". Little Fish, I know you want to leave the sea in spite of everything I've said. Once you've left the

sea you will no longer be a fish. You will have to live on land like everyone else. Before you leave take some of these sea stones with you."

"Aren't there any stones on land?" asked Little Fish. "Yes, there are. But the stones of the sea-bed are very precious on land. These stones we swim across daily are very valuable to people. They destroy one another for a few of our invaluable pearls. They are ecstatic at owning some of these stones which they hide from each other. The more of these stones you take with you, little one, the more welcome you'll be on land.

After all you are a fish. I only hope that once you've stayed there for a while you'll find people with fish personalities so that you don't feel too lonely. Do you remember Old Fish's story of the boy who threw a fish back into the sea? That little boy, though human, understood how a fish felt. Instead of getting rid of him in some other way he threw him back into the sea.

That story made us think there maybe people on land who have fish personalities. I'm sure there aren't many around, and you'll have to search hard to find them. If you ever tire of humans, little one, hope and search for one with fish traits like that boy to relieve you of your solitude."

Little Fish took heart at this. He asked his mother uncertainly: "how can someone with a fish personality live on land among those people? How can such people bear to live alongside the others?"

"People with fish personalities, like fish, enjoy the natural resources that exist on land. Their responsibility

is to go through their limited life as best they can. They were ignorant of this life prior to being born so they won't think of its end.

Like us they welcome every tomorrow – they will never mourn the last tomorrow as they never grieved the first. People with fish personalities don't fight nature. They seem to live beside others, but they flee every evil that could damage their valuable traits because, unlike others, they never attempt to attest their being.

These people, Little Fish, have a soul – a great soul. If a soul is truly great it has the strength to suffer pain. It can appreciate bliss. Don't ever pity those on land with fish personalities, for they are truly content. Like us, they simply live. They may miss the sea – where they actually belong – they may even grieve for others like themselves, but as I said their souls are so great that they can endure the pain on land.

Their God is also real, Little Fish. They always believe in Him, for they owe their souls to Him.”

Little Fish thought he might not be so lonely after all. Then he said good-bye to his Mother. “I'm going on land tomorrow. Tomorrow shall be a beautiful day.”

The next day was beautiful. The sun shone. The sea stood stone still.

Never before had the water been so blue, so fixed. A few feet from the water's edge the corpse of a little fish glittered on the beach.

A beautiful little fish had died on the sand. Gradually people filtered out to swim in the sea on this lovely day.

As they played by the sea some children found the

corpse of Little Fish.

“There’s a pretty little fish here, kids. A dead fish. It’s mine I found him first.”

“What’s a dead fish good for? You can’t eat it. You can’t even put it in a pool or a bowl. Just leave it alone!”