

THE FISH

by

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Beside a neat cottage, that nestled in a verdant valley, stood a small well; and next to the well, a man was bending over a wooden bucket and was washing two wooden bowls. It was a warm summer's day, and the surrounding fields spoke of careful cultivation. The ripening grain and fruit evidenced an abundant approaching harvest. The man's eyes sparkled with intelligence, and it was evident that he understood the ways of the soil. The barn, behind the cottage, boasted that there was enough and to spare.

He was a contented man.

The man looked up, and saw a stranger walking down the dusty road towards him.

As the stranger approached, he slowed and smiled a greeting at the man.

The man nodded a response and left his bowls in the bucket. He noticed the stranger was holding something long and silvery in his right hand, and the man became exceedingly curious.

After a pause, the man asked, "What is that thing you are holding?"

"It's a fish," answered the stranger.

"What's a fish?"

"It swims... in water... Like this," said the stranger, demonstrating with a waving motion of his hand.

"That's not possible," snorted the man. "There's not enough water all in one place for that to be. I know," he added emphatically, "because I've lived here all my life!"

The most water that the man had ever seen in one place was the water that sloshed in the wooden bucket that was used to wash his wife's and his wooden porridge bowls.

"If you come with me," the stranger replied, "I will show you a great lake of sparkling water that lies beyond yonder hill. In that great lake you will see many fish swimming. And some of the fish are even greater than this one."

The stranger held up the fish, for the man to inspect more closely.

"You lie! There is nothing beyond that hill... The priest told me that the world's end is there. And if we are so foolish as to approach... we shall surely die!"

"Have you ever ventured there yourself? To see, for yourself, what is really there?" asked the stranger gently.

"No... And I don't need to."

"I come from there, and there is truly a great and beautiful lake. Come with me, and you shall see it with your own eyes... And I promise you that you will not surely die. Then... you can return here with greater understanding, and a new reality worthy of the telling."

"No, stranger! I don't believe you. Show me these things here... and now."

"Come, and I will be pleased to show you," said the stranger. And with a smile he set off, with his fish, down the road towards the hill.

"I've been told... It's not possible... I don't believe you... I demand you show me NOW!" screamed the man.

However, by that time the stranger had passed from view over the brow of the hill.

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