

A Golden Fish

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This story takes place in a small pond. The pond was in the garden of a temple where an old Buddhist priest lived. He had a black cat. The black cat was good at hunting birds and fish, and he often gave the priest his game. The priest was surprised by the gift each time, but it always made him smile.

One day, a friend of the Buddhist priest came to the temple holding a goldfish bowl.

“Hello,” the friend greeted.

“Hello, what’s up?” the priest replied.

“Actually, I’ve decided to move in the near future, but I can’t have this in the new house. Please have it for your pond.” The friend showed him a golden fish.

“Wow, it’s a beautiful fish,” the priest said.

He loved watching the creatures in the pond. He thought if the golden fish was added to his pond, it would be better. He received the fish. It was a very beautiful girl. She had a big and perfect fin, a small pretty mouth and a beautiful orange body. In addition, she could swim elegantly.

The golden fish was happy in the pond. She went around speaking proudly of her good looks to her neighbors every day.

One day, the golden fish went to a frog after she woke up. The frog was a nice middle-aged man with long legs and big mouth which produced beautiful vocalizations. She put her mouth out of the water and spoke to him as he sat on a lotus leaf.

“Hi, Mr. frog! How are your big mouth and awkwardly long legs?” the golden fish said. “They are very different from mine. My small mouth is so cute, and the length of my tail fin is well balanced.”

“Good morning young lady,” the frog answered. “You are very beautiful today, as always. I like watching your beautiful swimming. But it’s difficult to catch your voice because it is too small when out of water, though you move your mouth very hard. I can sing pleasantly with a powerful voice from my big mouth. And my long legs are very important to live in or near this pond. They take me far away in a moment. When I jump one time, you won’t be able to find me.”

“I don’t need such a big voice! And my tail fin is not only well balanced but also large!” The golden fish got angry and left his house.

The golden fish’s next target was a *medaka*.

“Hi, It’s a nice morning! The sunlight is very beautiful, and it makes my big fins more beautiful too. How are you?” The golden fish said loudly.

“Hi, golden girl. I just woke up, thank you very much,” the small fish answered.

“You are a boring man as usual. Why are your fins so small? Look at mine. It’s very big and beautiful,” the golden fish said. She believed golden fish were greater than other fish. In fact, because the priest liked the elegant figure of her fins, he put food in the pond for her.

“My fins are small and surely they are not beautiful. However, small fins and a slim body make for a fast swimmer. Your fins are only beautiful and not useful to swim fast,” the *medaka* said.

“I don’t need a slim body! I like to swim elegantly in open water.” The golden fish swam far away swinging her big tail fin.

Thirdly the golden fish visited a loach. His house was in the mud. She looked into his home.

“Hello, are you in the house?” She asked.

The loach greeted. “H-h-hi, g-g-golden fish girl. W-w-welcome to my home!” Then he stirred up the mud with his tail fin.

“Cough-cough! Stop shaking your tail fin! Is this your house? Why do you live in such a dirty place? I could never!” the golden fish shouted. “We should swim in open water. We will look more beautiful in the dear water near the surface.”

The loach was afraid of her, but he answered. “M-m-my house was n-n-not beautiful surely. B-b-but it is cool in s-s-summer and warm in winter. In addition, it hides me from s-s-scary animals. In fact, animals, birds and big fish can’t distinguish me from mud due to this house. I can sleep peacefully in the house. It’s the best house! Why don’t you also live in my house?” He invited her with a smile.

“My beautiful orange scales would become dirty, if I entered such a house! I can’t understand you!” The golden fish shouted and swam away.

The golden fish swam away to a dragonfly larva’s house. His house was in a beautiful forest of water grasses. By the way most small fish didn’t approach him, because his face was a little fierce looking. However, she didn’t mind such things. She loved his beautiful house.

“Good morning! Your ‘house’ is very beautiful. I praise your house. My beautiful figure looks best in this beautiful place! My red cheeks and golden body are the most beautiful in this pond. You think so too, don’t you?” The golden fish told him without stopping to let the dragonfly larva get a word in. “On the other hand, your subdued brown body fits your strict face. If you were a more beautiful color, this area would look better!”

“Hi. You look full of vitality. Your golden scales are as energetic as yourself,” the dragonfly larva replied. “My body is dark brown, so I don’t look cheerful. However, it’s very difficult for animals or birds to find me due to the color. The human surely feeds you because you’re beautiful, but.... It’s not only humans who like beautiful colors!”

Just at that moment, a shadow fell on the water surface. The water shook violently, and something black disturbed the pond’s water. The black cat put his hand into the water to catch fish. The four animals other than the golden fish escaped quickly. The frog jumped away,

the *medaka* swam fast, the loach entered his house and the dragonfly larva hid in the forest of water grasses. The cat couldn't find the creatures.

Then the cat found a beautiful fish. It was the golden fish.

“Help! I'll be killed!” The golden fish tried to swim away fast, but her beautiful fins only tempted cat and weren't useful to swim fast. She also tried to hide somewhere, but neither the forest of water grasses nor mud could hide her because the color of her body was too beautiful. The cat caught her with his yellow eyes, in the next instant she was held in his mouth. The cat departed from the pond, taking her with him.

“Are you OK?” the dragonfly larva came out of his house.

“I'm O-O-OK, b-b-but—,” the loach stammered.

“The golden fish was caught,” the *medaka* continued.

Then the frog came back. “I'm glad that you are safe, but she was eaten by the fierce cat,” he said. “She went around speaking proudly everyday and made a fool of us. We told her about our figure, color and houses each time, but she didn't try to understand. Being too proud gave her bad luck. We have to be careful too.”

That night, the priest found a gift from his cat as usual.

“Oh my gosh! This is that golden fish!”

The sleeping face of the black cat looked very proud that night.