

New!

fish talk

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Yota Prokopi

Fish Talk

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The fish tank ## Fish talks

Index

The Tank

The Village

The High Dive

The Tank

A ray of sunlight tricked and slipped its way through the grey multi-storeys and rushed into Mr Pensatore's fifth floor window and lit up the lawyer's office. After a few moments the ray, after it had warmed the office and the water in the fish tank on the little table in front of the window, left in search of other windows. Before another ray of sunlight could reach the office, a set of keys could be heard unlocking the door of the empty office and the lawyer came into the room, shutting the door behind him. He went to switch on the light but before he pressed the button he looked at the window and realised he didn't need any more light than what was coming through the window. He went to his desk, put down his briefcase and knelt in front of the fish tank to look for his little fish. They were nowhere

to be seen. He looked behind the shipwreck where they kept their eggs and they weren't there either, so he tapped his finger on the tank, a sign of worry beginning to creep onto his face. "Where could they be?" he asked himself. He lifted the other hand and tapped with two fingers. Thankfully his beloved fish appeared at the door of the tower and the lawyer smiled at them. They went straight to his finger to say hello and then rushed back to their eggs.

"So my dear little fish, said Mr Pensatore as he stood up and the little fish looked upwards at him, I understand that today's the most important day of your life! You've been swimming together in the tank for three whole years, since you were little, and at long last the day has come where you become parents. I realise you must be really anxious so I'm going to treat you today," he said dropping food into the tank.

He continued to speak while they ate, "You know, I've never told you this but when I bought this tank I wanted to fill it with lots and lots of fish. But when I chose you and brought you here, first Artles and then you Bravado, I knew that you two would be enough for company and I forgot about bringing in any other fish. Ah!" Mr Pensatore sighed and sat at his desk to look at his cases.

In the tank!

"Look Bravado, poor Mr Pensatore is sad again! I think he's crying."

"Hmm! Humans! Let's check on the kids, it's

important weâ##re there when they hatch, I want to be one of the first faces they see.â##

â##Stop worrying, there are only three faces here anyway!â##

â##I want my kids to know that Iâ##ll never leave them unprotectedâ#; that Iâ##ll always be by their side and thatâ#!â##

â##Bravado, look!â##

â##Eh? What? Where? What happened?â##

â##Our first eggâ##s hatching!â##

â##Quick! Hurry! We might need to do something! We have to be there! said the excited father and ran to the egg that was moving determinedly. â##

â##Bravado, come back. They know very well what to do. They donâ##t need you getting in the way.â##

â##They donâ##t need meâ#! said Bravado, with the same sad look as Mr Pensatore, but how can they not need me when theyâ##re so small and vulnerableâ#! youâ##re saying it like that to get on my nerves arenâ##t you?â##

â##No Bravadoâ#! honestly, donâ##t you remember how we hatched?â##

â##You know I was in a fish bowl on my ownâ#! all alone, until I found you here thanks to Mr Pensatore.â##

â##Yes my dear but even when you were on your own you were fine!â##

â##Yes, sure. So thatâ##s why I thought that my parents where the parrot and hamster in the cages across from me! Well THEY WERE the first faces I sawâ#!â##

â##Yes, yes but our children have us, now lookâ#over thereâ# another egg is moving.â##

â##And the one behind it too, do you see it?â##

â##Do you think theyâ##ll all hatch at the same time?â##

â##Well letâ##s just hope these three hatch before some crazy client shows up that makes the tank shake with their annoyingly loud voice.â##

â##Shh stop talking and look! The first oneâ##s coming!â##

â##Come on! Letâ##s help!â##

Bravado rushed over to the new-born and sweet talked him out of his shell and into his welcoming arms. Artles looked at Mr Pensatore. He was deep in thought and hadnâ##t realised what was happening. The two fish loved Mr Pensatore dearly because he always spoke to them about the curiosities of life. They may have never been out into the world but through the lawyerâ##s words their every query had an answer. And so they hated to see him sad. Artles saw Bravado had his hands full with a new born and was encouraging a second one, so she swam up to the surface and tapped her fin against the glass. The lawyer looked over distractedly and rushed to the tank as he realised that she was trying to get his attention. He didnâ##t take his eyes off her and as he stood over the tank he saw that she was looking at something, so he followed a stream of bubbles leading to Bravadoâ##s arms. He already had two little ones in his arms and the third had just hatched. The proud father showed off his children and the lawyer began to well up.

â##Do you know what? Iâ##m going to take the rest of the day off. Iâ##m going to sit here next to you. Iâ##m going to share your happiness! True friends are there when their friends are happy and are happy with them. They donâ##t just want good things for them, they want to be there during the good things too!â##

He sat on the brown leather armchair closest to the fish tank and silently watched the two parents as they taught their children to swim and here and there they stole a glance at the ones still sleeping. It was midday now and Mr Pensatore felt lucky not to have been disturbed, not even his secretary had knocked on the door. He thought that today had proven that there was room for happiness in this world too, not just the sadness he saw in the courtrooms. As he sat enjoying this thought, someone knocked on the door. He stole one more glance at how many eggs were still sitting unhatched. Four little ones were swimming around their mother, one was in its fatherâ##s arms and two were on the way. Another one had already popped its head out of the egg and was looking at his father who was speaking to him.

â##Well little fish, looks like itâ##s time for a visitor!â## said the lawyer and he went to open the door.

â##Letâ##s hope this client wonâ##t be someone accused of illegal fishing and end up terrifying the babies with their stories!â## whispered Bravado to Artles.

â##Donâ##t be such a pessimist! And anyway our children are too young to understand humans.â##

All the fish looked over at the door, curiously wondering who would appear.

“Hello! Well, good afternoon I suppose!” said a high pitched voice coming from a slender woman in a grey skirt and black jacket standing at the door.

“Hello!” said Mr Pensatore awkwardly as he noticed the woman was still wearing sunglasses and her chin was shaking as she held back tears.

“Could I trouble you with the matter of my divorce?”

“Oh!” said the lawyer still distracted by the sunglasses, “Of course, please step into my office.” As she walked into the office Mr Pensatore shut the door behind her.

“My name’s Ticker Lont and I’m a designer. My husband decided to leave me so I was wondering if you could handle my divorce.”

“I understand. Please, take a seat.” The lawyer motioned towards the armchair that was furthest from the fish tank but she ignored him and sat where he was sitting before. As he couldn’t sit next to his precious little fish he sat at his desk. He reached over to a box for a fresh piece of paper and got his pen to note down any important information about the woman’s case.

“So, Mrs Lont, did you say you’re a designer?” asked Mrs Pensatore as he secretly tried to glance at the fish tank to see if the last egg had hatched.

“Yes, I design circus puppets. I have a workshop in the

village where I grew up, not far from here. I'm planning to go back there after we finish. You see Mr Pensatore I only came to the city for my husband, but now he's left me I have no reason to stay. You should understand that... she paused What? Mrs Lont had caught the lawyer looking at the fish tank and automatically looked over too.

Oh! what a pretty fish tank! and what beautiful fish! said Mrs Lont as she took off her sunglasses. You've just become a father!

Sorry for being distracted! These fish have been my company for three years and today is an amazing day for them.

Oh no, please don't apologise. I should be apologising to the fish for not noticing them when I came in. They're so impressive they don't deserve to be ignored by anyone! I've been so sad since my husband left me that I don't notice much around me. Mrs Lont looked at the lawyer and he frowned when he saw her red teary eyes.

Do you have fish Mrs Lont? he asked her to take her mind off the divorce.

Yes! In the village I have a small lake near my house and while I lived there I used to catch fish in the sea and take them to the lake. But at some point the lake got so full I had to stop bringing new fish because I didn't have time to feed them all!

In the tank!

Look Bravado, a smile has wiped away the lady's tears.

She mustâ##ve loved her fish a lot!â## said Artles looking at Mrs Lont.

â##Maybe if sheâ##d loved her husband like she loved her fish, he wouldnâ##t have left her,â## said Bravado, proud of thinking of such a clever comment.

â##Donâ##t forget that some fish...I meanâ##humansâ##are selfish!â## Artles had rushed to tell him off but sheâ##d mixed up her words so her comment went unanswered.

In the officeâ##

â##So tell me, how did you end up designing puppets?â## asked Mr Pensatore, â##I doubt Iâ##ve ever met a puppet designer before.â##

â##Wellâ##I like the way they look and theyâ##veâ##enchanted meâ##ever since I can remember! Where there are puppets there are always people laughing. And I love making people happy so I saw puppets as a way of doing that. Hang on; Iâ##ve got one in my bag.â## Mrs Lont looked into her bag and pulled out a long box. She opened the top and out poked a little piece of tissue paper. She unwrapped it and a puppet with gold clothes, a purple hat and pointy red shoes greeted Mr Pensatore.

â##Did you make this little guy?â##

â##Yes! Heâ##s the only one I brought with me from the village. Heâ##s the last one I made and I brought him here to the city to buy him some new fabrics and make him some new clothes. But because of the situation with my husband I

haven't been in the mood and he's been in his box until today. Today I took him out into the city for the first time. I took him with me to make sure the fabrics I buy match the colour of the wood he's made of.

"Can you stand him up so I can see him a little better?"

"Of course! Here you go!" she said unfolding the puppet and holding him up by the wood attached by strings to various parts of his body.

"There are so many strings! I've always wondered how puppeteers manage to move them so well!"

"It's actually not that hard. Look, this piece of wood breaks down into three smaller pieces and they eventually re-join and each piece controls different strings. Watch, the right piece controls the right side, the left one the left side and the one in the middle controls the body and the head. Remarkable isn't it?"

"It's like magic!" whispered Mr Pensatore who had now so mesmerised by the puppet he had forgotten about the last little egg. And he wasn't the only one engrossed in the puppet.

In the tank!

"Bravado!" exclaimed Artles.

"Yes my dear?" he replied.

"Look at our little one!"

"Yes, I can see. You're teaching them to swim, they're doing really well."

“Not them! There! The last one has hatched,” Bravado turned his gaze to the egg and shook his head in surprise when he saw the egg was empty.

“But! Where is he?” he asked Artles.

“Don’t move,” she told him, “he’s on your tail.”

“On my tail?” said Bravado and he arched his body to see.

The little one was also entranced by the puppet. He wasn’t paying attention to anything else. He hadn’t even noticed his mother. He stood still, staring at the puppet. Mr Pensatore was holding it now and Mrs Lont was trying to show him how to move it.

“Look Artles!”

The little one was moving his fins, his body, his tail and his face, exactly like the puppet. He was copying it so precisely that Bravado looked above him to see if he had puppet strings as well.

“Oh! Look! Look at that little fish Mr Pensatore!”

“Yes, they’ve all hatched now,” said the lawyer not taking his attention away from the puppet.

“Stop moving the puppet and look.”

“OK, OK, I’ve stopped.”

“Shh!. Look at the little fish in the tank.”

“I see it. It’s not moving. What’s so special about that Mrs Lont? Didn’t the fish in your lake ever stand still?”

“Keep your eyes on him and move the puppets hand.”

“Alright,” said the lawyer and pulled the corresponding string.

The little fish immediately moved his fin.

“Did you see that!? Move it again!”

But before Mr Pensatore could move the puppet again Bravado ran over and took the little fish in his arms, saying to Artles:

“I promised our little ones while they were still in their eggs, that I’d never leave them unprotected. And I’m not going to let these humans make fun of them either.”

“But Bravado you know very well that Mr Pensatore would never ever harm any of our children!”

“Yes but you saw for yourself Artles,” he whispered as he ushered the little ones towards her, “this little one is special.”

“Do you mean in an artistic way?”

“Shh, don’t speak too loud, he mustn’t know and neither should his brothers and sisters.”

“Fine honey! if you say so.”

“But I’m telling you Mr Pensatore! That little fish was copying the puppet’s movements!”

“I’m sure you must’ve been confused. Maybe the reflection of the puppet on the tank tricked you and you thought it was the fish that was moving. And you’re quite upset today which doesn’t help either.”

“Well! OK! I’m going to go now and I’ll book

another appointment with you about my divorce, but I'm going to leave my puppet here so please, investigate it for yourself, and keep an eye on that playful little fish." said Mrs Lont tying her belt around her coat and walking towards the door. "Goodbye Mr Pensatore!"

"Goodbye Mrs Lont, I'll expect your call! Oh how rude of me, I didn't even open the door for her, he said to himself as the door closed and he was left in silence looking from the puppet to the fish. "Ah! I'll not give any more thought to this today, it's been a long day for the fish, I'll let them rest and maybe look into it tomorrow," he said and wrapped the strings around the puppet and left it on his desk. He looked at the clock and as it was already midday he left for home so the fish could have some time to themselves.

In the tank!

"Ah my dear, aren't our little ones beautiful?"

"They've all got something unique! What do you think? Shall we name them?"

"Good idea. Seven little names for seven little fish!"

"The blue one with the white fins should be Cloud because his little hands look like clouds."

"And the green one with the orange tail should be called Star because in the dark his tail shines like a star."

"OK, five more to go!" counted Artles.

"The gold one with the red outline around his eyes should be Scarlet."

And the all black one should be Secret because he looks mysterious.

And then it's which one's next?

That one! The purple one with deep purple stripes.

They definitely copied all of our colours!

Any colours I'm missing you seem to have!

We're multi-coloured and beautiful!

So my beautiful man! what should we call the purple one?

Silky. Let's call her Silky because she looks so smooth.

And next is the silver one over there?

Yes the silver one! She looks like a spider princess. Let's call her Web.

That's six little names for six little fish. We've got one more.

Bravado and Artles looked at each other.

That little guy's colours make him look like he's wearing a costume! Half silver, half red with blue fins. Would you look at that? His one side is silver and the other's red. And he keeps staring at the puppet on the desk instead of playing with his brothers and sisters. Also he's got a few black scales which look like buttons on a shirt. He looks like he's borrowed some clothes from Mr Pensatore.

Maybe he likes to experiment with different looks! Or maybe he wants to be a toy like the puppet!

Bravado sighed. He looked at the little fish sitting alone in the corner of the tank waiting for the puppet to move. Eventually he looked at Artles.

“So, what do you think we should name him?”

“Well as he likes to play”

“Let’s call him ‘Toy’”

“Toy! It’s pretty and it suits him. Toy it is!”

Mr Pensatore left the office and the sun left through the window. It wasn’t yet dark though and all the little fish were playing with their parents except for Toy who was hiding behind the castle in a small tower, looking up at the sky. It looked as if he was anxiously waiting for something but the sun went down and his view didn’t change.

“Bravado my dear we’ve been so busy playing with our little ones that we’ve forgotten about Toy!”

“That’s true, I haven’t seen him for a while now, but don’t worry, I’m sure he’s just asleep behind one of the plants.”

“I’m going to go and find him; it’s a shame for him to be on his own. You keep an eye on the rest of them, OK?”

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