

THE RAINBOW TROUT

Jamie and his Grannie were walking along the path by the river. Jamie wasn't exactly walking – he was running, skipping, inspecting interesting things, and chattering non-stop about all sorts of important things, like snails and worms, and dinosaurs, and his new baby sister. Suddenly he was quiet, and came and walked next to Grannie.

She looked at him, and asked him what he was thinking about.

“Dougal said that when his new brother came, he gave him one of his toy engines. I haven't got any toy trains, and anyway, would a girl like a train? What shall I do, Grannie? I've only got two more sleeps with you until I go home.”

Grannie looked at him and smiled. Jamie had been her only grandchild until the arrival of Beth a few days ago, and she loved him dearly. He had been staying with her for a few days, until Beth and her mother were fit enough to go home. She enjoyed his company so much, and relished the times when they were together.

Just as she was about to reply, a movement in the water caught her eye.

“Jamie, look – a fish! Just down there! Can you see it?”

They squatted down to have a better look, and Jamie, used to looking for fish when out with his Grannie, soon spotted it. It lay quietly, lazily moving its tail from side to side. It seemed huge to Jamie, who usually only saw minnows. He was fascinated, and was about to whisper to Grannie when a loud booming voice from behind them broke the spell.

“Have you spotted something down there?”

Jamie jumped up, and pointed to the fish, which was still placidly lying in the shallow water.

“Yes – look! A monster!” he said excitedly.

“Would you like to try to catch it?” said the man, bringing a fishing rod into view.

Jamie nodded hard – he was too excited to speak, and the man knelt down next to him, and helped him to hold the rod so that the line with a hook on it dangled above the water. Together they gently lowered it so that it went into the water just above the fish, and suddenly the fish moved! To the man's astonishment, the fish took the fly, and acting instinctively, he struck, and with Jamie's hand still on the rod, he started to wind in the line. Within seconds the surprised fisherman had a fish on the bank. Jamie was speechless – and so was the man. Gently he took the hook out of the fish's mouth, and picked up the fish.

“Would you like to hold your fish?”

Jamie was mesmerised by the fish the man was holding out to him. It seemed to be covered with millions of microscopic jewels, all shimmering and sparkling in the sunlight.

“Oh yes please” he finally managed to whisper, and held out his hands.

He stood absolutely still, hardly breathing, as the fish lay quietly before him. He tilted it gently, watching enthralled as the colours of the rainbow danced in front of his eyes. He sighed deeply, and handed it back. The man gently slipped the trout back into the river, and they watched as at first it lay still, and then swiftly swam away out of sight.

“I’ve never seen anything so beautiful” said Jamie in a very quiet voice.

The man and Grannie smiled at each other, realising that they had been privileged to see a moment of true joy and wonder in the little boy’s life.

“Thank you - that was magical,” said Grannie softly, and the man smiled shyly, and bade them both goodbye.

Jamie was unusually quiet at bedtime that night, and then said suddenly:

“I’d like to give a fish like that to Beth – I’m sure she’d like it better than a train.”

So next day he and Grannie worked very hard. They found a book with lots of pictures of fish, and copied a rainbow trout onto a sheet of paper. Jamie tried very hard to get the fins into the right places, and also found it difficult to make the fish look happy, but together they managed. Then he got some glue, and carefully painted the fish so that it was sticky enough to hold the glitter that he poured liberally on top. It looked almost as beautiful as the real thing, and Jamie was so proud of it. While it was drying, he and Grannie talked about why the fish was called a rainbow trout, and Jamie rushed around looking for rainbow colours in the house and garden. He found all sorts of things, and then had another idea.

“Grannie, can we make a rainbow with some bits of material, and stick it onto the paper above the fish?”

While they were doing it, the sky outside grew dark and threatening, and heavy rain came, accompanied by lots of thunder and lightning. The noise and the flashes moved away, and the sun came out. Grannie took Jamie into the garden, to see the raindrops sparkling like diamonds, showing all the colours of the rainbow. Then Jamie gasped.

“Look, look Grannie!” he cried out excitedly, and he pointed at the retreating clouds. Curving exuberantly over the dark background, was a perfect arch of the richest colours imaginable.

He sighed contentedly. He and his Grannie had shared a very special time, and neither of them ever forgot it.

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