The Boy and the Golden Fish
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In a small village at the edge of the hills, there lived a boy named Sami. He had warm brown skin, short black hair with a little wave, and freckles across his nose. Every morning he ran barefoot down the dusty path to fetch water for his family. He wore a sky-blue tunic with the sleeves rolled up, and a small cloth pouch bounced at his waist as he ran.

Near the village was a quiet pond where Sami loved to play after his chores. He would skip stones and watch the dragonflies dance over the water. The pond was usually full and cool and green at the edges. But this summer the sun was fierce and the rain had not come for many weeks. Day by day, Sami noticed the water getting lower and lower.

One hot afternoon, Sami ran to the pond and stopped still. The water had shrunk to a small muddy puddle in the middle of cracked grey earth. Something bright flashed in the shallow water, like a spark of sunlight. Sami crept closer and gasped. A golden fish lay on its side, its gleaming scales dull with mud.

The fish was about as long as Sami's arm, with flowing translucent fins and round bright amber eyes. It looked up at him and moved its small elegant mouth, but no sound came out. Sami did not stop to think about rewards or wishes. He rolled up his sleeves, knelt in the mud, and gently scooped the fish into his hands.

The golden fish felt cool and smooth, and a faint sparkle trail dripped from its fins. Sami held it carefully against his chest and began to walk. He knew a deeper stream beyond the hill, where the water still ran clear and cold. His bare feet hurried over the hot path, and he whispered, "Hold on, little friend. Just a little farther."

At last he reached the stream and waded in up to his knees. He opened his hands and let the golden fish slide into the cool, flowing water. The fish swam a quick circle, then turned back and lifted its head. "Thank you, kind boy," it said in a soft, clear voice like ringing bells. "You gave freely and asked for nothing. I will remember."

Sami smiled and waved as the fish vanished into the sparkling depths. He walked home with muddy knees and a happy heart, humming all the way. His mother asked what had made him so cheerful, and he simply said, "I helped someone today." He never told anyone about the fish's promise. He did not need a reward. Helping was enough.

For a few weeks, life in the village went on as before. Then the hot days grew hotter, and the rain still did not come. The stream beyond the hill shrank to a trickle. The village wells dropped lower and lower, until buckets came up with nothing but dry brown mud. The people stood in the square, worried and quiet.

Sami's mother came home with an empty jar. "The wells are nearly dry," she said softly. "We must use every drop carefully." The villagers shared what little water remained, but everyone was thirsty. The goats bawled, the plants drooped, and the children stopped laughing in the dusty streets. Sami thought about the golden fish and wished he could help.

That night, Sami walked to the dried pond and stood in the moonlight. He remembered the bright amber eyes and the soft voice that had thanked him. He told his mother everything about the fish, and she listened with wide eyes. "Perhaps kindness truly is remembered," she said, and she held his hand in the dark.

The next morning, a shimmer of gold appeared over the empty wells. The golden fish rose from the dry earth, its scales gleaming like a small sun. It circled the square once, and where it passed, clear fresh water bubbled up from the ground. The wells filled to the brim, and the stream beyond the hill began to sing again.

The villagers came running, dropping their buckets in surprise. The golden fish danced above the water, its translucent fins sparkling, and a gentle rain of fresh droplets fell across the fields. People laughed and cheered, cupping the cool water in their hands. The children splashed and shouted with joy. Sami stood in the middle, grinning from ear to ear.

The fish swam one last circle around Sami and dipped its head. "Kindness given freely is never forgotten," it said softly, so only he could hear. Then it flicked its golden tail and vanished into the shining stream. Sami waved goodbye, his heart so full it felt like it might float away like a bubble on the water.

The village wells stayed full, and the stream ran clear all season long. People told the story of the golden fish and the boy who saved it. They brought Sami gifts of fruit and warm bread, but he always shared them. "I didn't help the fish for a reward," he told them. "I helped because it needed me."

From that day on, Sami visited the stream every morning to fetch water and watch for a flash of gold. Sometimes he thought he saw a shimmer beneath the surface, and he would smile. He learned that kindness given freely often brings the best surprises of all. And the village, full of cool fresh water, never forgot the boy in the sky-blue tunic.

On quiet evenings, Sami sat by the stream and told the younger children about the golden fish. He showed them how to carry a fish gently and how to share water fairly. "Kindness is like water," he said. "It flows to everyone." The children nodded, their eyes bright, and the stream sang softly beside them as the sun went down.