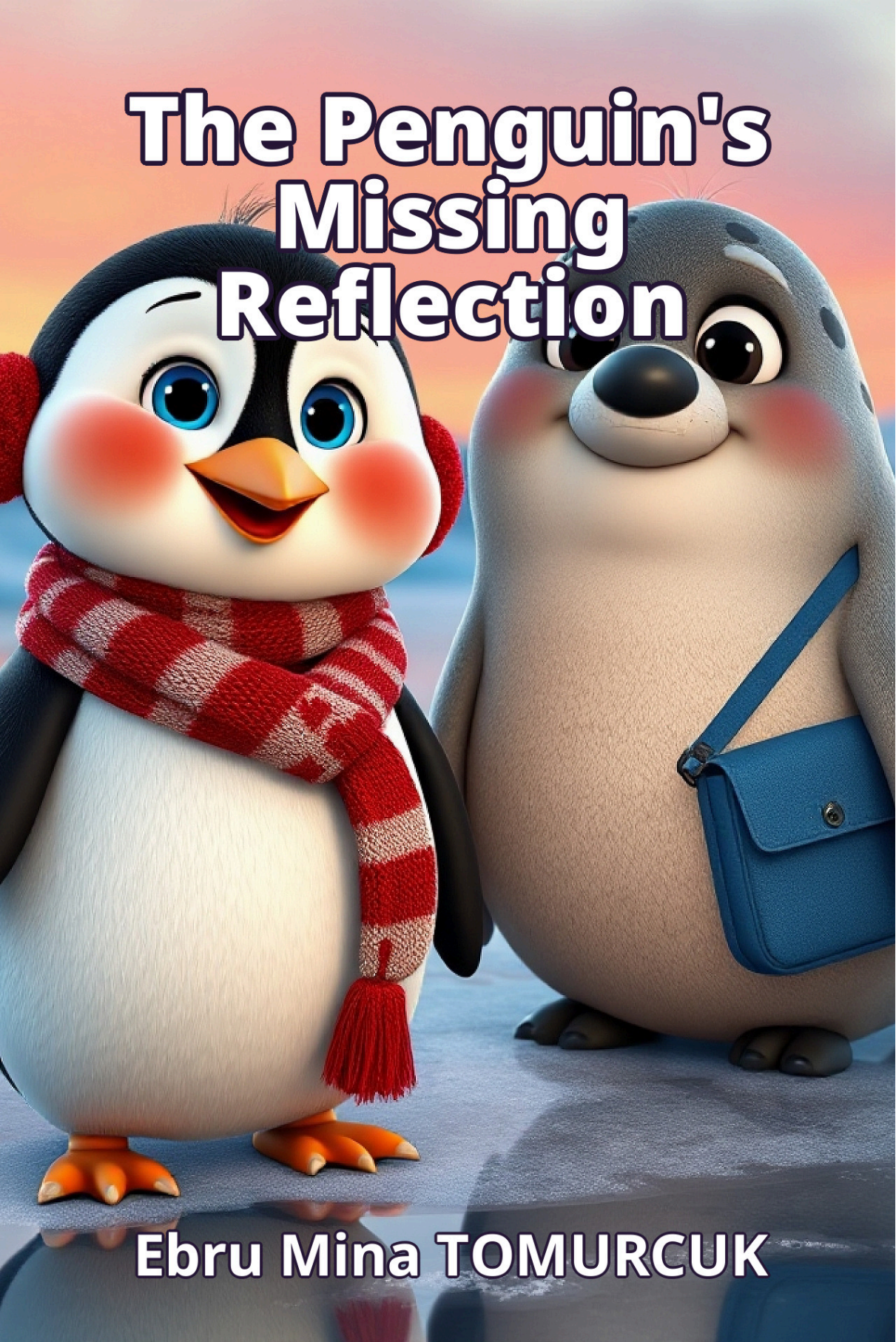
The Penguin's Missing Reflection
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On the edge of the frozen sea lived a small penguin named Percy. He had a sleek black back, a snowy white belly, and cheeks as soft as grey clouds. Every morning he wore his red knitted scarf with white stripes and matching red earmuffs. Percy loved to slide on the ice and laugh at the sky. Most of all, he loved saying good morning to his reflection in the pond.

Every day Percy waddled to the same shiny pond and peered down. There was his round face, his bright sky-blue eyes, and his little orange beak smiling back. "Good morning, Percy!" he would say, and the reflection would say it too. His best friend Suki the seal often watched, her whiskers twitching with a smile. "You two are quite a pair," she giggled.

One frosty morning, Percy hurried to the pond as usual. He leaned over the smooth, shining ice and looked down. But something was wrong. There was the sky, there was the snow, there were his orange feet. But there was no Percy looking back! He blinked and tapped the ice, feeling worried and unsure.

"Suki! Suki!" Percy called, his flippers flapping. Suki came bouncing over, her blue satchel bouncing at her side. "My reflection is gone!" Percy cried. Suki peered at the ice, then at Percy, then back at the ice. "Don't worry," she said gently. "We'll find it together. Reflections can't just vanish!"

So the two friends set off across the frozen world. They checked every pond they knew, peering into each glassy circle. Nothing. They checked the shiny ice near the big snow hill, where Percy usually slid on his belly. Nothing there either. Percy's hopeful face began to droop. "Maybe I lost it for good," he whispered.

Suki pulled a tiny fish cracker from her blue satchel and shared it with Percy. "Reflections don't get lost by accident," she said wisely. "My grandmother told me a story once. She said there's a secret mirror cave where lost reflections gather. Maybe yours is waiting there!" Percy's sky-blue eyes grew wide. "A mirror cave? Where?"

They followed a trail of glittering frost that sparkled like tiny stars. It wound past snowy rocks and frozen bushes and curled around a hill of blue ice. Suki kept her whiskered snout to the ground, sniffing and following. Percy waddled close behind, his red scarf flapping. "I hope my reflection isn't cold," he said. "I hope it isn't lonely."

At last the trail ended at a cave made all of shining ice. Its walls were smooth as glass, and they glowed with a soft, silvery light. Percy and Suki stepped inside, their footsteps soft and small. Everywhere they looked, reflections floated in the mirror walls. There were reflections of foxes, of snowy owls, of tiny mice. And every one of them looked a little sad.

"Look!" Suki whispered, pointing with her flipper. There, high in a mirror wall, was Percy's reflection. It was round and small, with blue eyes and a red scarf, just like always. But it looked dim and far away. Percy waved. The reflection did not wave back. It only turned its face away, as if it had forgotten him. "Why won't it come to me?" Percy asked sadly.

A gentle voice echoed through the mirror cave. "Reflections gather here when their owners forget to appreciate themselves," it said softly. "To bring a reflection home, its owner must remember what makes them special." Percy thought hard. He looked at his little flippers and his round belly and felt very small. "What if I can't remember?" he asked. Suki squeezed his flipper. "I know you can."

Percy closed his eyes and thought about his days. He thought about sharing fish crackers with Suki when she was hungry. "I am kind," he said out loud. The reflection in the mirror glowed a little brighter. He thought about sliding down big icy hills even when he felt nervous. "I am brave," he said. The reflection turned just a little. Suki cheered softly beside him.

"And I am a good friend," Percy said, opening his eyes. "I always help Suki, and I always say good morning, even to myself." The mirror cave filled with warm, golden light. Percy's reflection smiled, jumped from the wall, and floated gently down. It settled onto the ice and shimmered, bright and clear, looking just like Percy again.

Percy laughed and waved, and this time his reflection waved back. Suki clapped her soft flippers. "You found it!" she said. "No," Percy said, hugging her tight, "we found it. And I found out something important." He looked at his reflection, then at his friend. "I am more than just what I look like. I am who I am inside."

The two friends waddled home through the soft snow, with the mirror cave glowing behind them. Percy's reflection bounced along at his feet, as bright as ever. Suki pulled out two fish crackers from her blue satchel, and they crunched them happily. The sun set pink and gold over the frozen sea. Everything felt warm and right.

The next morning, Percy hurried to the pond again. His round face, sky-blue eyes, and little orange beak smiled up at him. "Good morning, Percy!" he said, and the reflection answered right back. Suki splashed nearby, her whiskers twitching. Percy knew now that his reflection would stay as long as he remembered his own worth. And he always would.

So if you ever lose your reflection, don't worry too much, little friend. Remember what makes you kind, brave, and a good friend. Look in the mirror and smile at yourself, because you are worth it. Percy the penguin learned that identity is more than appearance. And that is a very good thing to know.