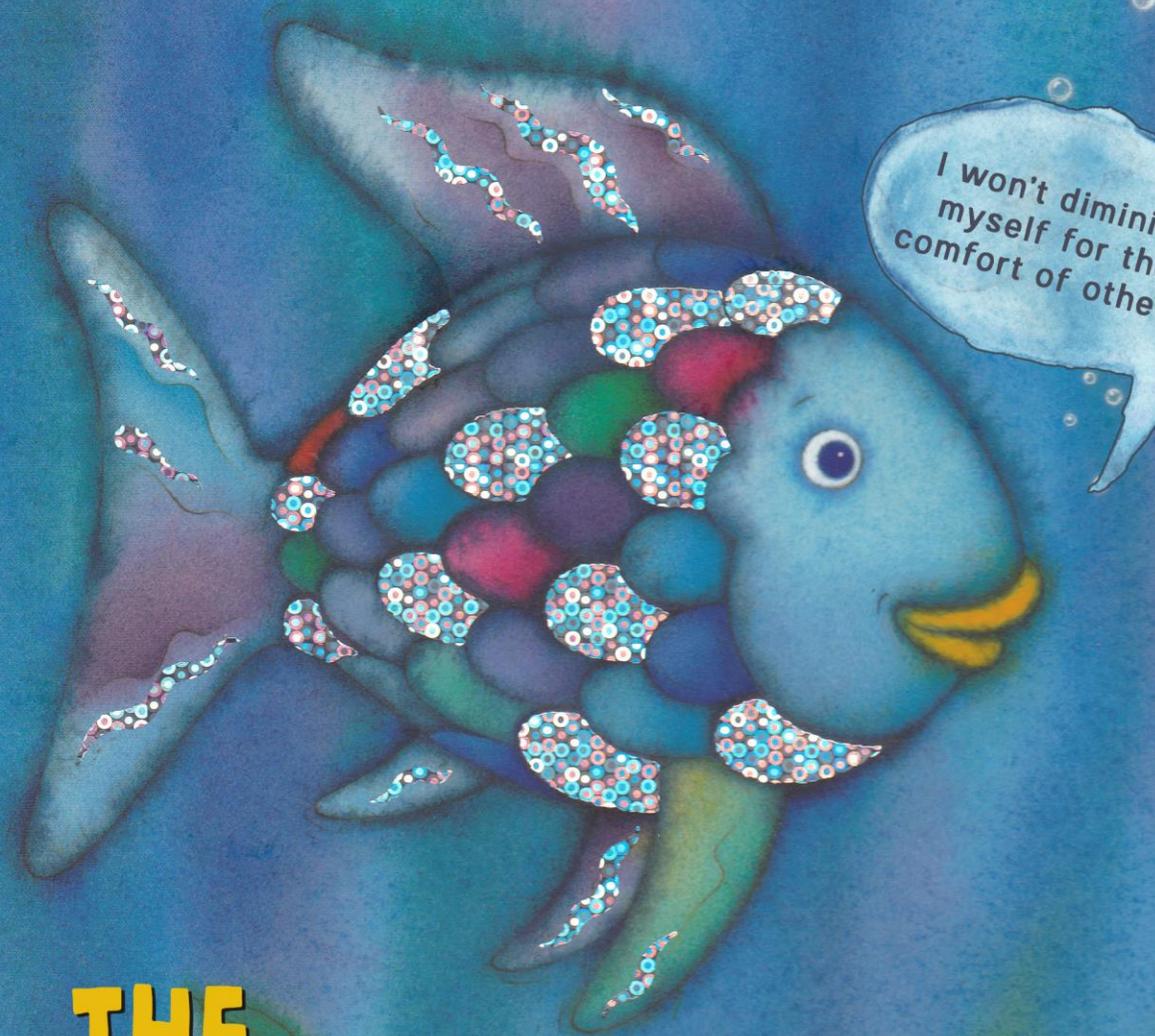


Topher Payne



# THE RAINBOW FISH KEEPS HIS SCALES

An alternate ending to the book by Marcus Pfister  
Created for The Atlanta Artist Relief Fund Story Time

For Rayme

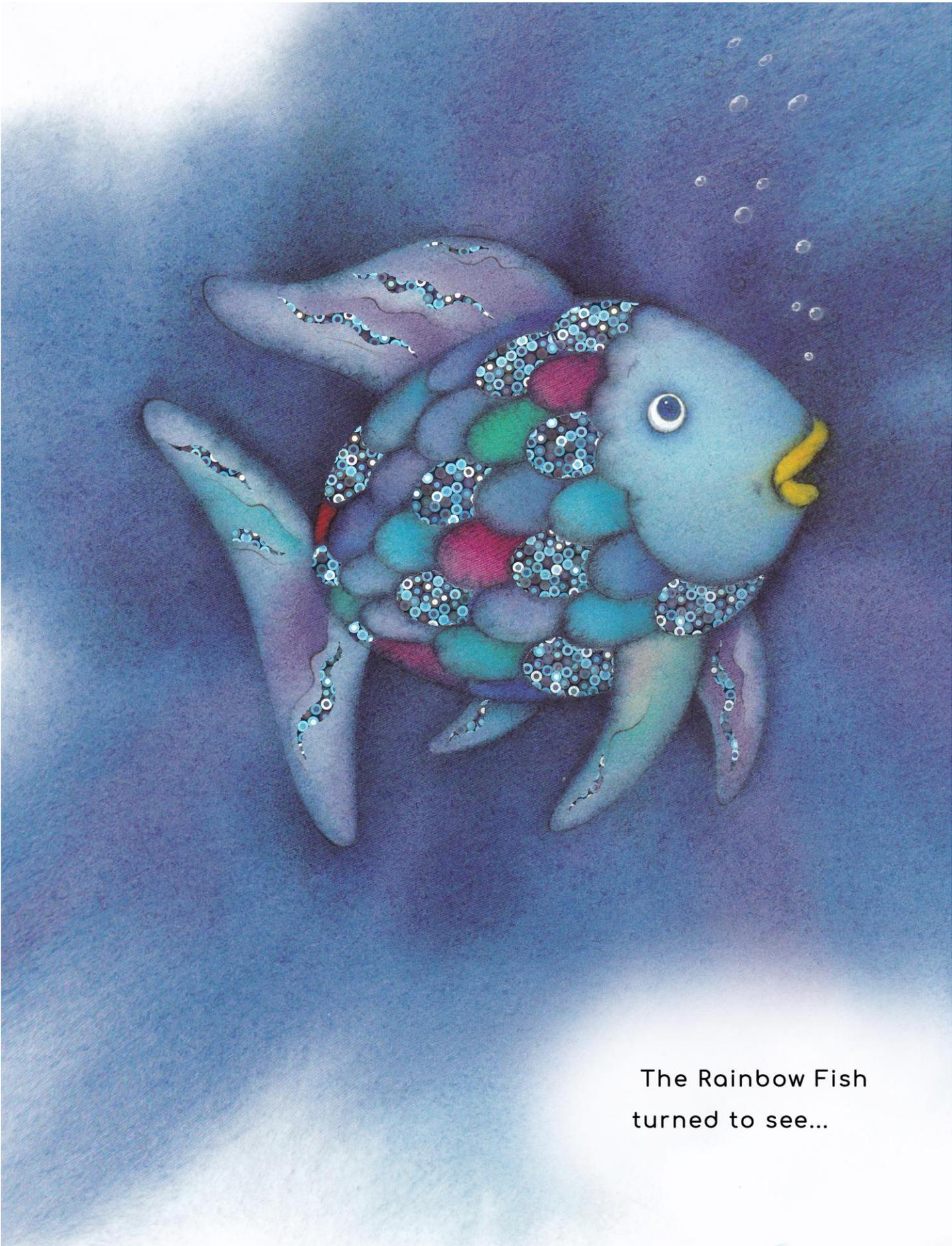


“I have been waiting for you,” said the octopus with a deep voice. “The waves have told me your story. This is my advice. Give a glittering scale to each of the other fish. You will no longer be the most beautiful fish in the sea, but you will discover how to be happy.”

“I can’t...” the Rainbow Fish started to say, but the octopus had already disappeared into a dark cloud of ink, which is the octopus version of hanging up on someone, and is a very abrupt and rude way to end a conversation.

Then, Rainbow Fish heard a voice from behind him.

“Excuse me? Little Rainbow Fish?”



The Rainbow Fish  
turned to see...



### The *Fabulous Catfish*.

The Fabulous Catfish was very popular. His dinner parties were legendary because his entire body was covered in taste buds, so he had a notably refined palate. He was also known for his charitable giving to nonprofit organizations.

"What did that octopus just say to you?" the Fabulous Catfish inquired, seeming a bit exasperated.

"The octopus told me to give away all my glittering scales, so that I could make friends," said the Rainbow Fish.

"Oh, give me strength," sighed the Fabulous Catfish.

"First of all, we do not take life advice from reclusive cephalopods who live alone in dark caves and only talk to waves. I bet that starfish sent you here, didn't she?"

"Yes," said the Rainbow Fish.

"And did you notice that starfish was all by herself?"

That girl has no friends, because she is *shady*.

Always has been. We were in school together.

Rainbow Fish, when someone tells you how to be, you've got to *consider the source*."





“Now, I’ve seen you around,” the Fabulous Catfish continued. “I’ve noticed you tend to swim solo these days. Why is that?”

“The other fish don’t want to play with me because they’re jealous of my glittering scales,” said the Rainbow Fish.

“Oh, is that the reason?” said the Fabulous Catfish, giving the fish equivalent of arching an eyebrow. “Or is it because you got a little full of yourself, and forgot to appreciate others?”

The Rainbow Fish considered this. He felt guilty.

“You need to understand, Rainbow Fish. Every creature in the sea has something that makes them special. Just as special as your scales. So when someone tells you that your scales are beautiful, instead of getting a big head about it, say thank you and give a compliment in return. Tell the lobster how strong her claws are. Tell the shark he has excellent teeth. Sharks love it when you notice their teeth.”

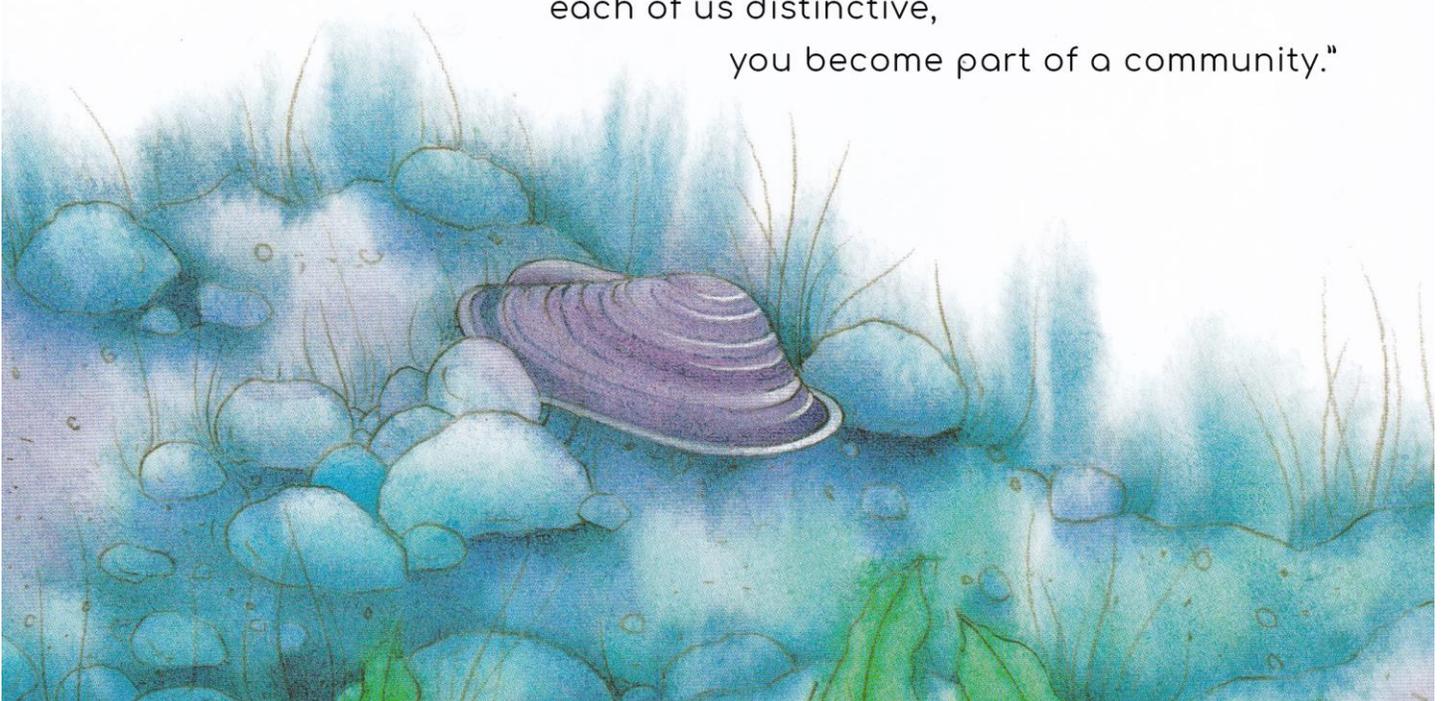
“You have very impressive whiskers,” said the Rainbow Fish, trying out an accolade.

“Thank you! And you have soulful eyes.”

No one had ever complimented Rainbow Fish’s eyes before. Compliments were fun!



“Now,” said the Fabulous Catfish. “I want you to look for what is exceptional in others. When you celebrate what makes each of us distinctive, you become part of a community.”

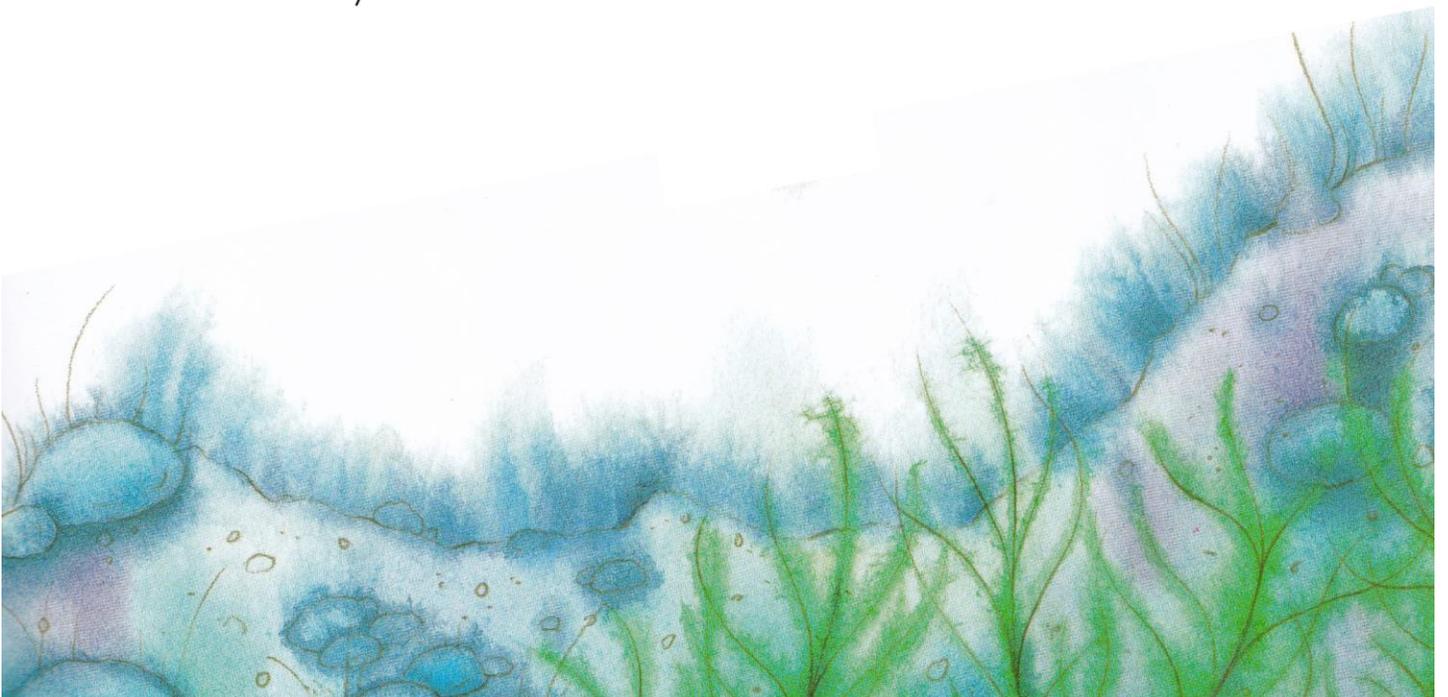


“Thank you, Fabulous Catfish,” said the Rainbow Fish, excited to begin his new approach.

“I’m sure glad I didn’t listen to that rude octopus!”

“I’m glad too, Rainbow Fish. Go out there and glitter. And remember: It’s important to consider the feelings of others, but you should never feel obligated to diminish yourself for someone else’s comfort.

There’s room enough in the sea for each of us to be amazing in our own way.”



The Rainbow Fish began the journey home,  
appreciating his wonderful neighbors as he traveled.



"Hello Mackerel!  
You're the fastest swimmer  
I've ever seen!"



"Hi there Squid!  
I heard you have  
three hearts!  
That's so cool!  
May I ask you  
a few follow-up  
questions?"



“What’s up, prawn?  
You can change colors.  
That’s awesome.  
Do you have a favorite?”



“Hello mussels!  
I appreciate that you  
have a wide range of  
viewpoints which you  
express without  
disparaging each  
other’s perspectives!”



“And hello, little blue fish.  
You don’t need one of my  
scales to be special.  
You’re a desert pupfish. You  
can thrive in water  
up to 113 degrees. That’s some  
superhero stuff.  
You are *awesome*.”





The most amazing thing began to happen. When the other creatures of the sea spoke of Rainbow Fish, his dazzling scales were no longer the first thing they mentioned.

It was his kindness and positivity, and how wonderful it was to spend time with him.

It didn't take long for others to follow his example.



The shady starfish even got over herself and joined in the fun.

The octopus came by every now and then, but he was really committed to doing his own thing. Some creatures are just naturally introverted, and that's totally fine as long as they feel comfortable reaching out when they need to.

At long last, Rainbow Fish was part of a community, where everyone felt appreciated and acknowledged for the things that made them unique.

And that's something far more beautiful than glittering scales.

*The End*

