

PROSE

# THE BIGGEST CATCH

CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOK

*Note: \*s indicate spots for illustrations.*

ONE WINTER NIGHT, WHILE THE NORTHERN LIGHTS hung like willow branches across the stars, Maggie awoke from a deep sleep and yawned.

She turned to her mother, who lay beside her, and whispered into her sleeping ear, "Your bravery makes me brave," and eyes closed, her mother smiled.

Maggie stayed awake a long while, wondering about her mother's dream and if she were in it.

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Earlier that day, Maggie sat at the ocean's edge and watched her mother fish for rainbow cod.

Time after time, her mother cast the line, and time after time, she drew the line back without a catch.

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By time the sun had dropped behind the hills, Maggie's mother had caught a single rainbow cod and laid it beside her on the ice. Its scales glistened with frost and all the colors of twilight.

At home, Maggie's mother prepared the fish for dinner. Without words, she laid the fish on the table, kissed her daughter on the cheek, and went off slowly to bed.

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Maggie knew that her mother had gone to bed hungry that night. And in the morning she would return to the water's edge with an empty stomach and fish again.

Mindful of the coming day and wishing her mother luck with her next catch, Maggie closed her eyes and slept.

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When Maggie opened her eyes, she was standing in a snow-covered world.

Maggie knew the North Wind always turned her in the right direction, so she followed the currents of snow that blew through the air.

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Soon, a distant shape appeared. As Maggie neared, she realized the shape to be a fisherman's boat.

Maggie approached the boat with curiosity.

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Maggie quickly realized that the strong North Wind had toppled the fisherman's boat and had thrown him overboard.

The fisherman swam towards land.

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Maggie looked angrily at the fisherman and said: "My mother said that you've taken all the rainbow cod from the ocean, and you're the reason there are no fish left for us."

"You do not understand," said the fisherman. "If I do not fish, my children can't eat. And I have many children to feed, so I must catch many fish."

Maggie was no longer angry with the fisherman. It was not his fault that there were only so many fish in the sea. It was nobody's fault.

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Maggie knew then that she would help the fisherman return home to his family who would be worried about him.

Maggie told the fisherman about the pine forest a few miles down the coast, where the fisherman could find a tree to build a raft to carry him home.

The North Wind, seeing their friendship, pointed them in the direction of the pine forest.

"Follow the wind," Maggie said. "The wind always leads you in the right direction."

The fisherman nodded. He knew this well.

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Seeing the pine forest ahead, the fisherman pulled a small hatchet from his backpack. Together, Maggie and the fisherman chose a tree of the correct height and cut it to make a raft.

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Maggie lined the wood panels on a clear spot of ground, and the fisherman bound the wood logs together with a rope.

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The fisherman smiled. "Almost there," he said, placing two sticks in the belly of the raft. "Now all we need is a sail."

Maggie thought for a moment, then began pulling a handkerchief from her coat pocket. The handkerchief seemed almost endless.

When the handkerchief was done unfurling, it was large enough to be the sail of a small ship.

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The fisherman thanked Maggie. Then he had a thought.

"I will catch for you the largest fish I have ever caught," the fisherman said. "And I will bring it to your mother and you as soon as I am able."

Maggie smiled and said to the fisherman, "But first you must see your family. They will be worried."

The fisherman stepped onto his raft. They waved goodbye to one another as the wind pushed the fisherman softly in the direction of home.

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When Maggie awoke from her dream, she was in bed with daylight shining on her pillow. There were footsteps in the kitchen.

Maggie ran to the kitchen and saw her mother drop something large on the floor. As her mother moved aside, Maggie realized it to be the biggest fish she had ever seen—a beautiful, silver halibut.

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“I went out early this morning,” the mother said. “There are many fish to be had early in the morning, and is the biggest catch I have ever had.”

Maggie helped her mother prepare the fish for breakfast.

Maggie told her mother of the dream, and of the fisherman who had promised her the biggest fish he had ever caught, and of how she helped return him home to his family who would be happy to see him.

Maggie’s mother thought for a moment. “I’m very proud that you would help the fisherman,” her mother said. “It was a kind thing to do. And kindness is a wonderful thing to have. Much better than a big fish.” ■