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The Climbing Perch

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Far away in Africa, a family of climbing perch lived happily in their river—until the river began to dry up.

They had watched it for weeks, hoping for rain. But one day the mud showed between the stones, and Granddaddy Climbing Perch slapped his tail down and said, "Well, if the river dries up completely, it won't trouble us in the least."

All the other fish trembled. Mother Climbing Perch looked at him in alarm. "Granddaddy, do you want the children to die?"

"I should say not!" said Granddaddy, his fins stiffening with offense. "The very idea. I am surprised. I am annoyed." His fins quivered. "Now—come around me, all of you, and I will tell you a true story about an adventure that is going to happen to us."

The whole family gathered close.

"Years and years ago," Granddaddy began, "our great-great-great-grandparents were caught in exactly this situation. The river dried up, and they had decided there was nothing to do but accept their fate—when the Fairy Queen appeared. 'I will name you the Climbing Perch,' she told them, 'and you will be able to travel from pond to pond in the dry seasons. Watch and see.' She waved her wand and disappeared—and sure enough, all the family climbed out of the dry riverbed, and with their gills—which work like saws—they scrambled overland to the next pond, where there was water. We will do the same."



And they did. Granddaddy led them out, across dry ground, and into the next pond.

But that pond dried up too.

So they moved again. And again. And again. They changed ponds five times before they found a home that held.

Today, of all the fish in the aquarium, the climbing perch are the proudest—because they have had such traveled lives. And they are very happy, at last, in a tank that looks as though it will never go dry.

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