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An extract from

Far Away Across the Sea

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Published by

Boxer Books Limited

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One day, the pike swam upstream until he reached the waterfall. "This won't be easy," he thought. He pulled himself together and swam forward at full speed. At first he managed to make some progress, but after a while he felt tired and began to swim slower and slower. By the time he'd got halfway up the waterfall, he'd had enough. He yawned and fell asleep.

When he woke up the next morning, he tried to swim on, but he still felt tired and made no progress.

The elephant, who was strolling along the riverbank, heard him sigh.

"Do you need some help?" he enquired. He walked over to the waterfall, sucked up the pike with his trunk and spat him out a little way upstream. The pike fell into the river with a splash. "Now I'm even further from home," he moaned.

"Where do you want to go?" the elephant asked.

"That way," said the pike, pointing with his tail fin to the top of the mountain.

"Oh, that's not too far," said the elephant.



The spoonbill's birthday was the biggest celebration that the woods had ever seen, though no one really knew why. There was more honey and oak juice and nut drink than at any ordinary birthday. The spoonbill sat at the head of the table, filling plates and bowls and cups. Each new course was greeted by cries of "Ah!" and "Oh!" and "Yum!"

It was a warm summer's evening, and the half-moon cast a soft light across the clearing where the party was taking place.

Everyone sat next to their favourite neighbour, and everything tasted wonderful.

When everyone was half full, the spoonbill tapped his plate.

"Friends," he said.

Slowly the chewing and slurping stopped.

"Tonight we have a special performance," he continued.



One day it rained so hard that the river broke its banks. The water rose and rose, and before long most of the trees in the forest had water halfway up their trunks.

The carp didn't mind the rain. He swam out of the river and through the woods, and knocked on the squirrel's door. The squirrel was standing on his table.



The ant scrambled to his feet and tugged at the bumblebee's left wing. The bumblebee twisted one of the ant's antennae and the ant grabbed the bumblebee round the waist and squeezed as hard as he could.

"Ouch!" they both cried. "But you're right."

The bumblebee grabbed the tablecloth and the other animals watched as their delicacies began to slide down the table and tumble on to the ground.

"I . . . am . . . not . . . right!" shouted the ant.



"Yes . . . you . . . are!" cried the bumblebee, buzzing wildly. He pushed the ant under the table with all his might. "Lovely party," muttered the bear, who had only been able to save his spoon from falling to the floor, while the carp looked at the empty water around him, feeling disappointed.