Marlie Blue and the Lights in the Night



A very little beginning

A very little beginning

Before Marlie Blue ever rode a big wave, she was small enough to fit in a hand.

A little bill.
A wiggly tail.
A tall fin like a tiny sail.

And a whole ocean of wondering inside her.

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Did the stars fall in?

Did the stars fall in?

One dark night, something sparkled in the water.

Marlie looked up.
Then down.

“Did the stars fall in?”

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Just a peek

Just a peek

Swish, swish.
A little closer.

Wiggle, wiggle.

Just a peek.

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A little ocean mystery

A little ocean mystery

The lights belonged to a great big fishing boat. Beneath them, the water shimmered—and so did Marlie.

Someone spotted her.

“A baby sailfish?” a fisherman wondered.

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Our little secret

Our little secret

Her tall little fin certainly looked like a sail.

But you know who she is, don’t you?

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A little wiggle

A little wiggle

The fisherman scooped her up with his hands and placed her in a bucket of seawater.

Marlie wiggled.

Oh, how she wiggled.

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Where was her ocean?

Where was her ocean?

She swam a little circle.
Then another.

Where was the rest of her ocean?

Faces leaned close.

“What a little wonder.”

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A picture to remember

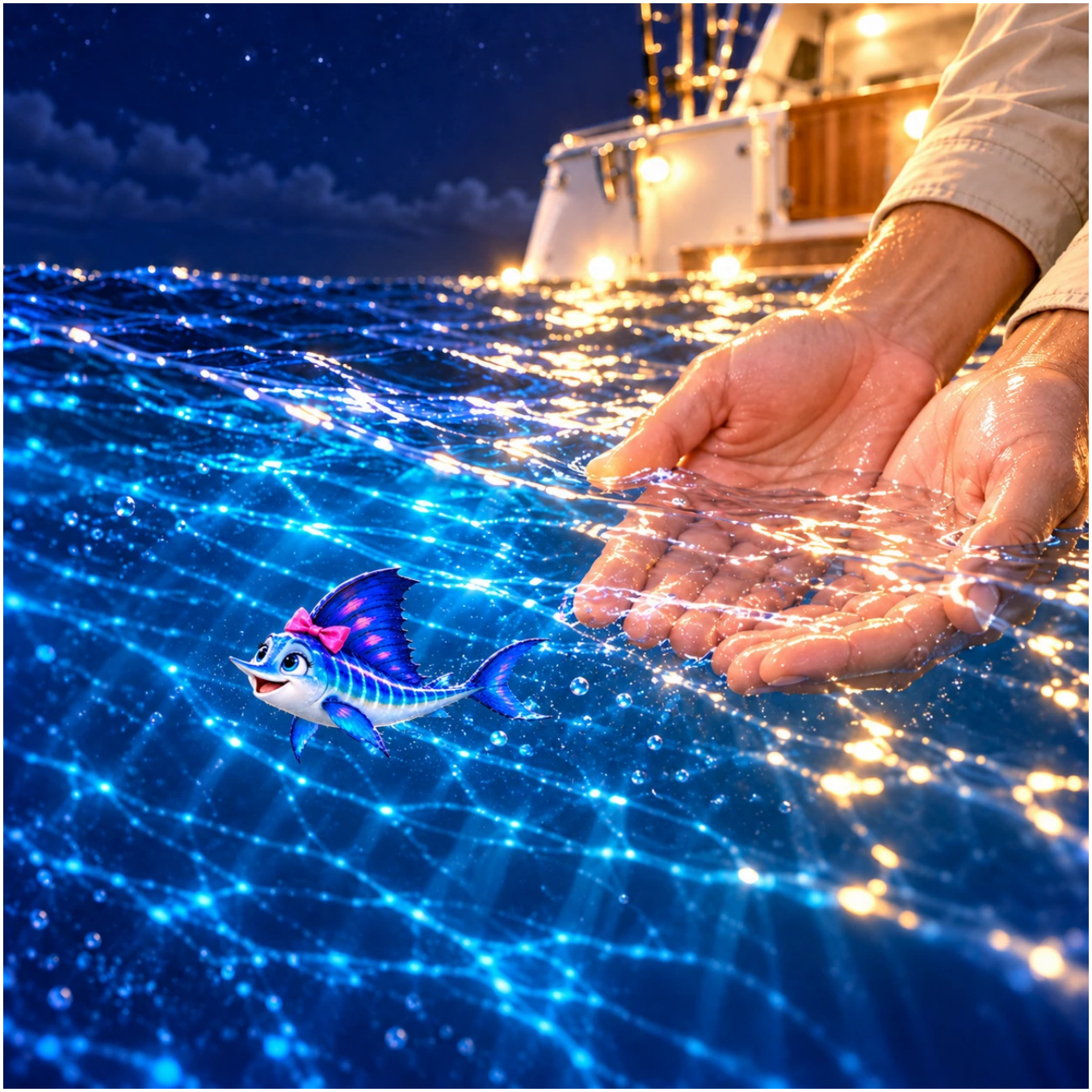
A picture to remember

One fisherman held her carefully for a quick photograph.

Click.

“We can keep her picture,” he said. “Her home is the sea.”

Marlie Blue and the Lights in the Night



Back to the sea

Back to the sea

And back she went.

Splish.

Marlie stretched her fins.

Room to turn.
Room to swim.
Room to grow.

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Wide and wonderful

Wide and wonderful

She flicked her little tail.

Swish!

There was her ocean—wide and wonderful, all around her.

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The real little fish who inspired Marlie Blue.

Original photo courtesy of Richard Brackett.
Shared with Marlie Blue by Joey Cagle.

The photograph’s surprise

Later, when the fishermen shared the photograph, they learned the surprise.

Their little “sailfish” was a baby blue marlin.

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Marlie all along

Marlie all along

Her big baby fin had fooled them.

She had been Marlie all along.

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Adventures for another day

Adventures for another day

By then, Marlie was swimming beneath the stars.
The boat lights grew smaller behind her.

There would be waves to ride.
Friends to meet.
And so many little tries.

But those were adventures for another day.

Tonight, the water moved softly around her.

Marlie Blue and the Lights in the Night



A little lesson to remember

A little lesson to remember

The fishermen kept a little picture.

Marlie kept a whole ocean.

And that night gave us a little lesson to remember:

You can love something without keeping it.

Swish…
Hush…
Goodnight, little Marlie.

Inspired by a real encounter. Dialogue and thoughts are imagined.
Story and illustrations created with AI tools under Joey Cagle's direction.