*Wok & Roll by Peter Kwong, (Frederic)*Inter-County Leader

**A midnight conversation with Bob, my pet fish**

For some reasons, I always like keeping a fish tank in my house. We’ve moved around the country a few times, and to keep my pet fish safe and sound during the move has always been top priority.

I can relate to other pet lovers who treat their dogs or cats like they are part of the family. Well, to each his own. I just love my fish, as they help keep my sanity. Ever since I started earning my allowance, I would save every penny and soon I started my own aquarium.

I love my fish because they don’t chew up the furniture and don’t pee or poop on the floor. All I have to do is feed them every day and clean the filter once every three to four months, and that’s it. No fuss, no mess; and they keep me company all the time.

I have all kinds of tropical fish — goldfish, angelfish, different tetras, bottom dwellers, catfish, algae eaters … you name it. It is fun to see that everyone will show up at feeding time, to socialize a bit; then disappear again until the next meal.

I usually sit in the loafer chair after the morning feeding, resting my aching bones while watching the activities of the bird feeders hanging right outside on the back porch. That reminds me of a story.

I remember that it was the night of a full moon. I think that I had way too much tea during the day, as I just couldn’t fall asleep, even though my body had given up a long time ago.

The bright moon not only lit up the whole sky, but everything that she could reach below. It was absolutely magnificent! I sat on my chair, eyes wide open, just enjoying the serenity of the surroundings.

All of a sudden, I heard a goggling sound of, “Hello, hello.” I looked around and saw nothing but the silver shadow from the full moon. One more time, I heard that quaint “Hello” again, and it came from my fish tank.

I raised my aching body out of the chair and investigated the aquarium, and there was Bob, my goldfish who loves to swim and stay with his belly up. Being curious and cautious, I pressed my head closer to the tank and said, “Is that you, Bob?”

All the lights in the house were off as it was past midnight. But from the moonlight I could see Bob’s face inside the tank. He was smiling at me and waving his fins, “Hi, it is me, 9o9. And how are you, my dear friend?”

It must be the tea talking, I thought. I made a double batch that morning as I love tea that has a strong profile and taste, and I had two pots before noon! “I thought your name was Bob, no!?” I asked.

“Yes, but I changed my name to 9o9 since I love to swim upside down. Is it right, flipping ‘bob’ upside down is ‘9o9’, no?”

I never thought a goldfish could reason, let alone talk! “Excuse me,” I said, “I didn’t know that goldfish could talk. That’s amazing!”

“No, all of us animals can talk, but only for a short time during the full moon, after midnight. If you want to have a conversation, you better talk fast.”

“So, how much time can I spend talking to you, 9o9”?

“Ahh, forget it, just call me Bob, OK?”

“Deal, Bob it is. Mind if I ask you why you always swim upside down? I thought you were dead and I was ready to give you a proper burial at the lake.”

“No, I just love to swim upside down as I can have a better view of what is going on around and beneath me. By the way, what is this proper burial at the lake?”

“Oh, I would just flush you down the toilet and sing the Navy’s fight song which I learned from my barbershop chorus.”

“That’s terrible, man.” For the first time, I sensed a little resentment in Bob’s voice. “Well, that’s what I’ve been doing with the other pet fish that didn’t make it in the past. No fuss, no mess. Simple and easy. Do you know how much it would cost for a spot in the pet cemetery?”

“No, let’s not talk about that right now. By the way, why are you still up when everyone is zonking?”

“Oh, I think I had too much tea today. Goodness, I think I drank two pots of my favorite jasmine tea before noon and now I’m paying the price.”

“Good,” said Bob, “Now we can chat for a while before the moon moves away.”

This is so strange, finding myself talking to Bob, a goldfish who loves to swim upside down in my aquarium. “I thought you were dead so many times, seeing you floating upside down, motionless. Then when I got close to pick you up for a burial, you just swam away. Why is that?”

“Ahh, Pete, life is not what it seems it is. By the way, I assume your name is Pete, right? As I’ve heard your wife calling you different names. By the way, I assume that she is your wife as she shows up every morning. And just how many names do you have?”

“Don’t mind about my names, Bob, let’s go back and talk business. So, what’s this swimming upside down business?”

“I don’t know, I just like to look at life from a different angle. I guess I got the best of both worlds. It is amazing, isn’t it? Can you imagine if you had eyes in the back of your head?”

Hmm, I never thought of that, I thought. Just what would the world look like if my eyes were in the back of my head instead?

Just then, I heard Bob say, “Oh no, the moon has moved, you’d better go.”

Before I could say another word, the room had turned dark and I couldn’t see Bob anymore. The next morning when I fed my fish, Bob was waving his fin, like he was excited seeing an old friend. I wondered what happened last night, was it the effect of the tea? The full moon? Did I have a conversation with Bob? He is still swimming upside down, and quickly swam away when I poked his belly. I guess he wasn’t ready for his burial at the lake yet.

I’d better cut back on my tea consumption; and I have to wait for the next full moon to find out if there is anything new with Bob. I hope he’ll make it till then.