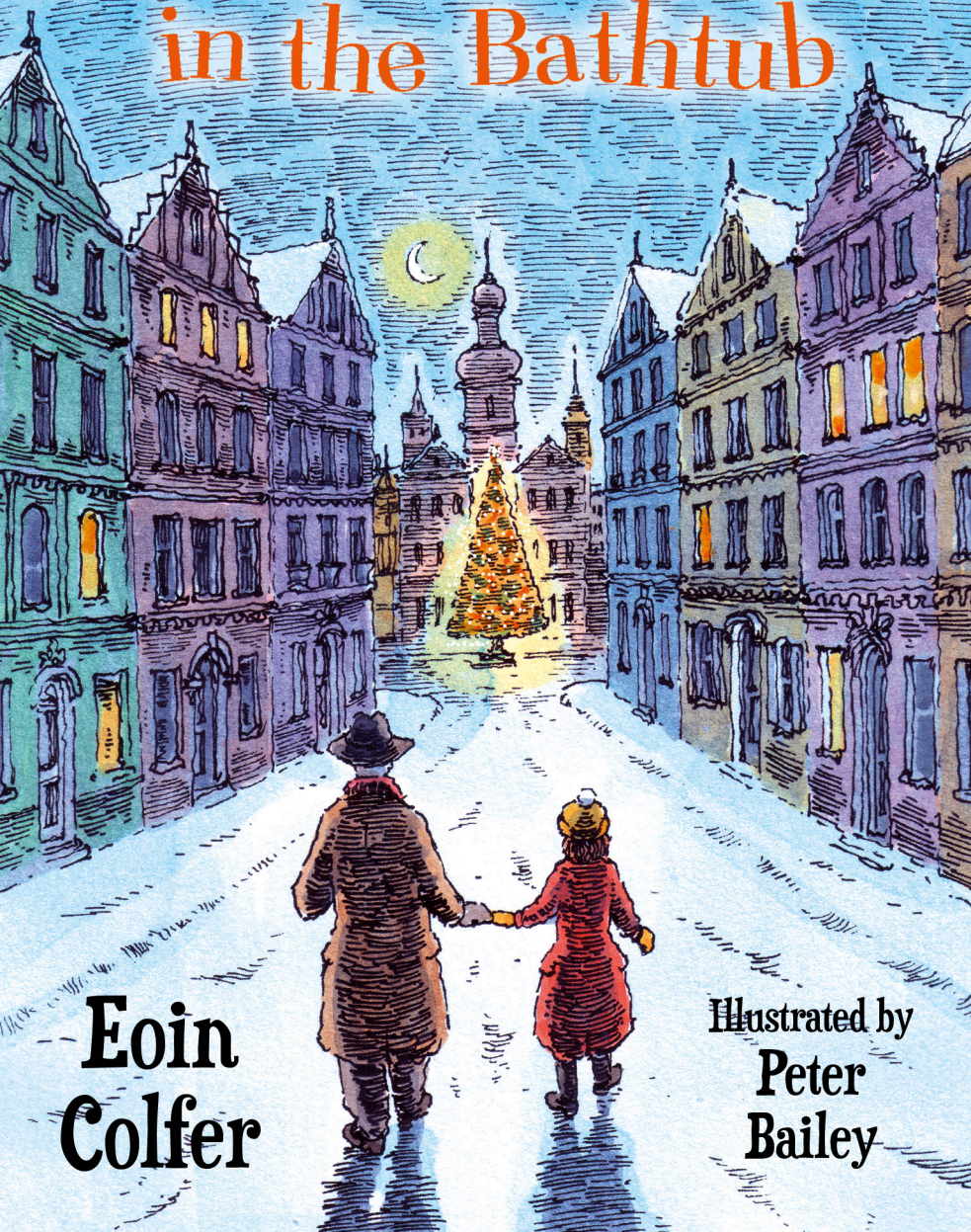


# The Fish in the Bathtub



**Eoin  
Colfer**

**Illustrated by  
Peter  
Bailey**



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*To Barbara, who told me about the fish*





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## CHAPTER 1

# Grandpa's Stories

Warsaw is an old city, but lots of the houses are new. The German army flattened it on their way home from Poland in 1945 at the end of the war. Grandpa Feliks told Lucja this many times each week.

Every time Grandpa told the story, Lucja saw a picture in her head of a big black boot stepping out of the sky and crushing the towers and bridges of the city.



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Sometimes this picture made Lucja giggle. It was funny, like a cartoon.

Grandpa Feliks did not like it when Lucja laughed at his story. Lucja didn't know why he got upset. It wasn't as if his stories were true.

“Warsaw is a city of people,” Grandpa said. “We have been here longer than the buildings.”





## CHAPTER 2

### Lucja

Lucja lived in a flat on Targowa Street with Grandpa Feliks and Mama Agata.

There were many other families in the building, and in these families there were at least 12 other girls like Lucja.

Lucja could only count to 12. She had never got past 12. In fact, 12 was her record. By the time she got that far, she was already bored.

Lucja got bored quickly, and this was why she was no good at standing in line. For the first ten seconds she was fine, but then questions would burst out of her like air from a popped balloon.

“Why is that woman so round?” she asked.

Or, “That man’s nose is red, Mama. Why is his nose so red?”



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The most embarrassing question of all was about Miss Jazinka. They were in the line for sausages. “Have the shops run out of tissues, Mama?” Lucja asked. “Because that woman just wiped her nose on her sleeve, then her sleeve on that boy’s head.”

Lucja’s mother took Lucja’s hand, and they walked away from where they had stood in line. They gave up on sausages. Instead they ate vegetables for a few days.



“You are like an American, Lucja!” Grandpa Feliks shouted. “Everything has to be ‘now’ with you. This is not New York City! Here, we stand in line. You must learn this in Warsaw.”

“Your button is loose,” said Lucja. She was always good at seeing things, and she always pointed out what she saw.

“And anyway,” Lucja told Grandpa Feliks. “Even when you stood in line last Christmas, there was no carp. I remember that.”

It was true. Last year, Grandpa Feliks had done the job of waiting in line for the fish for Christmas Eve dinner. He put newspapers in his shoes and stood in line for six hours outside the fish shop. But he came home with nothing.



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“That only happened once, you rude child,” Grandpa Feliks told Lucja. “And it will not happen again. Neither Germans nor Communists will keep me from a fish steak this Christmas Eve.”

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“What does a German look like?” Lucja asked.

“Like a Communist,” Grandpa Feliks said crossly. “But with better boots.”

