

Transcript

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[introduction music]

Welcome to Easy Stories in English, the podcast that will take your English from OK to Good, and from Good to Great.

I am Ariel Goodbody, your host for this show. Today's story is for beginners. The name of the story is *Whose Child Is It?* You can find a transcript of the episode at [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Whose](https://www.EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Whose). That's [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Whose](https://www.EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Whose). There, you can also download the episode as a PDF.

Just a warning: today's story talks about some difficult topics. Specifically, it talks about babies dying. There is not a lot of detail, but some listeners might find this episode hard to listen to.

OK, I'll just explain some words that are in today's story.

Whose means 'belonging to who?'. It is a question word. For example, if you see a wallet on the floor, and it is not your wallet, you might say, 'Whose wallet is this?' If you don't find the person whose wallet it is, then you should take it to the police station, or lost and found.

When a person is pregnant, when they are carrying a child, after nine months they will **give birth**. Giving birth can take a long time and it hurts a lot. Some people give birth to just one child, and some give birth to many children.

A **midwife** is a person who helps people give birth. Midwives talk to the mother about the baby, and make sure that there are no problems with the baby. When the mother gives birth, the midwife helps them.

Babies drink milk from their mothers' breasts. This is called **breastfeeding**. Some babies find it hard to breastfeed, and drink milk from bottles instead. Breastfeeding usually stops after a year or two.

When you **lie**, you say something that isn't true. For example, if I tell you, 'Hi, I'm King Charles,' that's a lie, because it's not true. I am not King Charles. Children often lie when they don't want their parents to get angry at them. Sometimes people lie because it is very hard to say the truth.

If you cover someone's mouth so that they can't breathe, you **smother** them. Smothering is usually done with a pillow. Another way that smothering happens is when a parent is sleeping with their baby, and then they move in bed and lie on the baby, and the baby can't breathe. Of course, smothering is usually an accident, and it is very horrible.

An **adviser** is a person whose job it is to give advice. Kings and presidents always have advisers. Often, the adviser is more clever than the king or president.

When you **split something in two**, you break it into two parts. For example, if you are sharing a biscuit with someone, you might split it in two. In the past, the Czech Republic and Slovakia were one country, Czechoslovakia, but they are now split into two countries. There is a dessert called a banana split, where you split a banana in two and put ice cream in the middle.

If someone says they are the king, but they are not actually the king, then they are not the **real** king. The real king will probably be very unhappy when he hears that someone is calling themselves the king. But maybe the 'real king' killed the king before him... so does that mean he is actually the real king?

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A big thank-you to my new patrons. I'm recording this episode in advance, and I haven't had time to mention the new patrons here, but I will in the next episode.

And a special thank-you to my Teacher's Pet patrons: Vera Kaufmann and Rüdiger Richter.

OK, so listen and enjoy!

Whose Child Is It?

Once, there was a king. One day, two women came to the king. One of the women was holding a baby boy.

'O King,' said the woman without the child. 'We come to you because we have a problem. That woman has taken my child, and I want him back.'

'O King, it is not true!' said the woman with the child. 'This is my child, my baby boy.'

'Explain,' said the king. 'Why do you think the baby is yours?' he said to the woman without the child.

'Well,' she said. 'I live with this woman. We both **gave birth** on the same night, and nobody else was in the house.'

'Did you have no **midwives**?' the king said.

'We had no money for midwives,' the woman said. 'And our husbands died. That is why we live together. So we gave birth, but her child died, and my child lived. But I went to sleep, and when I woke up, she had taken my child and was **breastfeeding** it. When I told her to give my baby back, she said that it was her child, and that I was **lying**.'

'She *is* lying!' said the other woman. 'My son lived, but she **killed** hers. She turned in her bed and **smothered him**. And look, my son is breastfeeding now. If he wasn't my son, would he breastfeed?'

And it was true—the baby boy was breastfeeding.

'Hmm,' said the king. He looked at both women and at the baby. But he did not know whose child it was. Both of them could be lying. He could not believe that one of them had smothered her child, but he could also not believe that the other person had stolen a baby.

'I have an idea,' said the king's **adviser**. The adviser was a strange man, but he was very clever and always had good ideas.

'Yes?'

'Because we do not know which woman is lying, and we do not know whose child it is, we should **split the child in two**. We will give one half to each woman. They both gave birth, so they should both have a child.'

The woman with the baby said, 'What a great idea! Giving birth is so hard, so she should have half of the child as well. You are a very clever man, Mr. Adviser.'

But the woman without the baby said, 'No, you can't do that! Split my child in two? Oh, the idea is horrible! If you want to do that, then I will go. I would prefer that my baby lives, and she becomes his mother.'

'What do you think, O King?' said the adviser. 'I can use magic to split the baby. It will not be hurt... Well, it *probably* won't be hurt.'

'I think you must decide,' said the king.

'Very well,' said the adviser. 'It is clear who is the mother. A **real** mother would not want her baby to be hurt. Because you think it is OK for the child to be split in two, you cannot be the real mother.'

The woman holding the baby said, 'But I am a great mother! Look, he is breastfeeding.'

'Children will breastfeed from cows if they need to,' said the adviser. 'Give him back to his mother.'

'Do as he says,' said the king.

So the woman gave the baby back to his real mother, and the baby was happy.

'Thank you, O King!' said the baby's real mother.

The other woman looked angry, but she did not say anything.

'I think we might split *you* in two,' said the adviser, 'because you lied. You said that she smothered her baby, when actually, you stole *her* baby.'

The other woman went white. 'I, I am sorry, O King. I was just so sad...'

'She will live,' said the king. 'One death is enough for today.'

The two women said thank you and left, and the king and his adviser talked.

'It is good that you decided,' said the king. 'I thought like a king, but not like a mother. It is clear that the woman could not have smothered her child, because she was so sad when you said you would split it.'

'Do you think it matters which mother the child has?'

The king thought. 'I think it matters that the mother loves her child. But it is easier to love a child who you have given birth to yourself, I think. And the woman who stole the baby would have to lie to him all his life. Nobody can live happily with such a big lie. By the way, I think we should make sure that all women in the country have a midwife.'

'A very good idea, O King,' said the adviser. 'If all women have midwives, then we will have to split fewer babies in two.'

'Were you really going to split the child in two?' said the king.

'Oh no,' said the adviser. 'I do not know magic like that. Words are the best magic, usually.'

The king thought about it, and he agreed.

THE END

I hope you enjoyed today's story. I just looked at the list of stories I made during the past few months, and I realised that they are all sad stories! I hope you did not find them all too sad.

I think maybe I should try and write more happy stories. I think that, in general, people like to talk about sad things. It is very popular to be **miserable** these days. Miserable is when you are always **complaining**, always talking about how things are bad, and never want to talk about happy things. These days, people are often miserable online, and only want to talk about how the world is bad.

So actually, it can be quite difficult to talk about happy things sometimes. Sometimes, when we feel really happy, we don't share it with other people. But we should! Often when we see a friend, we complain about work, we complain about the weather, we complain about the government. But what if we talked about all the happy things in our life?

Life should be full of happy things! For example, right now I'm happy because it has rained, and the plants and trees needed it. I'm also happy that it rained *after* I went for a walk, and not while I was walking! I'm happy that I'm going to see my friend in Cambridge this weekend, and I'm happy that I have lots of energy today.

Why don't you try the same? Come over to [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Whose](https://www.EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Whose), go to the comments section at the bottom and tell me a few things you're happy about. I can't wait to read it!

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