

Transcript – The Light at the Bottom of the Sea

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 pre-intermediate learners. The name of the story is *The Light at the Bottom of the Sea*. You can find a transcript of the episode at [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Light](https://www.EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Light), where you can also download the episode as a PDF.

Just like the episodes [The Kind-Hearted Pea](#) and [The Emu and the Kangaroo](#), this story comes from the book *Storyworld*. I promise I have written some original stories for the rest of this year! It's just how the scheduling has worked out. This story was originally collected by Saviour Pirotta. It is a story from Malta, a small island south of Sicily. Because of Malta's location, it has a long history of piracy, which explains where this story comes from.

Of course, Malta today is a very different place! It is a popular holiday destination for Europeans and for people around the world to study English. I learned a lot about Malta from [an episode of English Learning for Curious Minds, where the host Alastair talks about his experience living in Malta](#). I'll leave a link in the transcript – I really recommend the episode.

By the way, I apologise that my voice sounds a bit hoarse, a bit dry, in this episode. I did a vocal warm up before this episode, as I always do, and then I tried singing some songs I like, and I noticed that my singing has really improved a lot over the last few months, from being in choir and doing more serious vocal warm ups.

So I got really excited and I sang loads of challenging Broadway music, lots of musicals with strong, um, belting. Belting is when you sing really loudly and you project your voice like, *laaaa*. That's belting. So yeah, really no good excuse for my voice being hoarse, other than I was just having fun.

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

A **portrait**, P O R T R A I T, is a painting or a picture of a person. In the past, before photography existed, portraits were the main way of making an image of someone, so rich and important people had many portraits painted of them. Mona Lisa, one of the most famous paintings in the world, is a portrait.

Faithful means someone who is, well, full of faith! That can be faith in the religious sense, as in believing deeply in your religion. Faithful can also mean loyal, or having unchanging beliefs. A faithful dog is a dog that will always love and support you. A faithful friend is similar, although some would argue that dogs are always more faithful than people! I don't know what I believe, personally, but yes.

A **saint**, S A I N T, is a person who has been recognised as being very holy, very close to God. Saints are usually people who have died, and the Church decides they were very good and holy people, so they make them saints. Some examples of famous saints are St Francis of Assisi, who founded the Franciscan Order of monks, and St Valentine, from whom we have Valentine's Day.

Kneel, K N E E L, and the past tense is **knelt**, K N E L T, is when you go down on your knees. You kneel when you pray in church. You might kneel down to talk to a child. You also kneel in front of a king or queen, to show respect. Kneeling can hurt your knees if you're not very active.

The **captain**, C A P T A I N, of a ship is the leader of a ship. The captain tells other people what to do and makes important decisions. In films and TV shows, we often see

pirate captains. Pirate captains have a wooden leg and an eyepatch, a piece of cloth over one eye, and they say, 'Arrrrr!' Unfortunately, real ship captains are not so interesting.

Treasure, T R E A S U R E, is money, gold, jewellery – basically, expensive things. But when we say 'treasure', we are usually thinking of fantasy and stories. For example, pirates put treasure in wooden boxes called chests and bury them under the ground. Kings sometimes give treasure to heroes. In many video games, you collect treasure.

A **basement**, B A S E M E N T, is a room underground in a house. You enter the house on the ground level, and go downstairs to the basement. People often store things like jars of food or old furniture in basements. You have to be careful, because basements can flood easily, and they can get very damp, very wet.

When you **tie something up**, you wrap string or rope around it to stop it moving. You might tie up a person if you don't want them to move, or you might tie a boat up to land so that it doesn't go into the water. If you have captured someone and taken them away to your basement, you might **untie** them so they can move freely. Or maybe you don't! I have no idea what you're getting up to down there.

The **horizon**, H O R I Z O N, is the line where the land, or sea, meets the sky. When the sun rises and sets, it goes over the horizon. There is nothing lovelier than going to the beach on a sunny day and watching the boats and swimmers, and even the sunset, on the horizon.

A **hoof**, H O O F, is the foot of a cow, a pig, a goat, and so on. These animals have hard feet – hooves – and when they walk it sounds like *clap clap*. When horses walk on the ground, they often leave **hoofprints**, H O O F P R I N T S. Just as humans leave footprints – marks of our feet or shoes in the ground – horses leave hoofprints. If you need to find a horse, you could follow its hoofprints. Honestly, I've never needed to find a horse, but you never know!

An **earthquake**, E A R T H Q U A K E, is when the ground shakes, or quakes. Earthquakes are measured in magnitude on the Richter scale. For example, in 2011 there was the Tōhoku earthquake in Japan, with a magnitude of 9.1, which caused the tsunami incident at the Fukushima nuclear reactor. And indeed, since Japan lies on a fault line, a place where two tectonic plates meet, there are many earthquakes there. There are extremely few earthquakes in the UK, but there was a 5.2 magnitude earthquake in Lincolnshire in 2008, which was strong enough to be felt in many parts of England and Wales. But I slept through it!

I tried to find a YouTube video of the earthquake happening, but I could only find news reports from after the earthquake. It happened when I was about 15, and that was before most people had smartphones, so I guess nobody recorded it while it was happening. It's kind of crazy to think of that now – these days, *anything* that happens gets recorded by a member of the public, but times change, huh?

OK, so listen and enjoy!

The Light at the Bottom of the Sea

Once upon a time, on a cliff by the sea there was a small church. Inside the church there was not much, only a few rows of seats and a **portrait** of St Demetrius on a white horse. But nearby lived an old woman called Žgugina, who was as **faithful** as a **saint**. Every day she brought flowers to the portrait of St Demetrius, and she **knelt** before the painting and prayed.

'Oh, brave St Demetrius!' she prayed. 'Keep my son Marku safe and strong.'

Most people did not come all the way to this church, because it was cold and far away, but Žgugina came and knelt every single day.

From the sea come many beautiful things, but unfortunately it is also the home of pirates. And so it happened that, one night, a pirate ship passing by saw the little church on the cliff. But what the **captain** was really interested in was not the church, but Žgugina's house next to it.

'That house is easy **treasure!**' he said. 'There are no other houses for miles around, so there's nobody to stop us.'

So the pirates came to shore in search of their treasure. Žgugina saw them coming – she had been unable to sleep that night and so had gone to kneel before the portrait of St Demetrius. When she saw the pirates, she ran to her house and said, 'Quick, Marku, hide in the **basement!**'

So her son climbed into the basement and shut the door behind him. She moved a table over the door and hoped that the pirates would not find it.

When they arrived, the captain said, 'Ah, it is only an old woman! Where's your treasure, hey?'

Žgugina was very scared, so she told them immediately where she kept her box of jewellery. The pirates **tied her up** and found the box, but they weren't happy.

'Is this it?' said the captain. 'Surely there is more!'

They searched through the whole house, breaking and opening things, but Žgugina was a simple woman, and her greatest treasure was her son. Just when she thought the pirates might give up, though, they found the door under the table.

'Aha!' said the captain. 'I knew you were hiding something from me!'

And so Žgugina had to watch as the pirates broke into the basement, tied up her son and took him away.

'No, please let my son go! He is a good boy!' she cried.

'And he'll make a better pirate,' said the captain.

Žgugina sat there tied up, crying as she watched the pirates leave and heard them sail away. It was many hours before anyone heard her cries – it was the priest who was going to the church early in the morning. When he found her, he quickly untied her and asked her what had happened.

But Žgugina wasted no time. She ran outside and looked out over the sea. She could just see the ship on the **horizon**, but it was almost out of view. She ran inside the church, knelt before St Demetrius and prayed.

'Oh, brave St Demetrius!' she said. 'If you save my son, I will... I will light a lamp that burns forever!'

And on this day, faithful Žgugina's prayers were answered. At that moment, St Demetrius and his horse jumped out of the portrait and landed in the church.

Žgugina couldn't believe it! The painting had come to life!

St Demetrius rode outside, leaving **hoofprints** on the grass, and jumped off the cliff. But instead of falling to a watery death, his horse landed on the water as if it were hard ground, and ran quickly across the sea. Žgugina and the priest watched as the saint rode under the rising sun and approached the ship on the horizon. The woman knelt down and kissed the hoofprint of the saint's horse, praying that he brought her son back.

It wasn't long before St Demetrius reached the ship. A few minutes passed, and then a figure returned from the horizon, carrying Marku on the back of his horse.

'My son!' cried Žgugina. 'You saved my son!'

St Demetrius' horse flew in the air and landed back on the cliff, and Marku returned safely to land, where Žgugina quickly untied him. While she cried and hugged her son, St Demetrius quietly returned to the church and climbed back inside his painting.

Žgugina never forgot what the saint did for her, and that same day, she went and bought a lamp and filled it with oil. She placed the lamp beneath the portrait of the saint, and every day she refilled the oil so that it burned day and night, all throughout the year. Žgugina remained faithful her entire life, and when she died, Marku took on the job, refilling the lamp whenever the oil ran low.

However, Marku did not live forever, and finally there was no one to watch the lamp. A few days after Marku's death, there was a strong **earthquake** in that region, and part of the cliff broke away and fell into the sea, along with most of the church. With the earthquake, Žgugina's lamp finally went out.

At least, that was what people thought. But soon stories started to come from local fishermen. Ever since that earthquake, there was a strange light seen at night, in the sea near the cliff...

One brave fisherman decided to swim down into the water and find out who it was. And there, lying at the bottom of the sea, was Žgugina's lamp, still burning faithfully.

It is said that the lamp still burns today, although the ruins of the church are long gone. But if you go to a certain cliff on the coast of Malta and look closely at the ground, you might just see some hoofprints.

THE END

Thank you so much for watching and/or listening to this episode of *Easy Stories in English*. If you didn't know, [you can now watch me performing the stories on YouTube](#). And on that note, I am now holding up some books to the camera. These are my books, collections of short stories for learners in four different levels. So, you can reread the same stories in beginner, pre-intermediate, intermediate and advanced level, which is a fantastic way to improve your English. So if you would like to get a copy of these – and aren't they beautiful? – go to EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Book. Bye!

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