

The Golden Fish – Transcript

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 *The Golden Fish*. You can find a transcript of the episode at EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Fish, where you can also download this episode as a PDF.

So in English, we have a phrase, 'be careful what you wish for'. It means to be careful about what you want, what you desire. If you wish for something, you think, Oh, I really want that thing. I wish I had that thing. But you should be careful what you wish for, because sometimes you think you want something, but if you get it, you realise you didn't actually want it.

For example, many people want to be famous. Many people sit there and wish they were famous. Oh, if I was famous, I would have money, everyone would like me, I would be on television, it would be amazing.

But let's say one day you wake up and you're famous. Oh, magic. Well, what happens? You go outside and everyone looks at you. They run at you. They say, Oh my God, give me an autograph. Oh my God, take a picture with me. Ah, I love you. And suddenly you can't walk down the street. You can't go to the shop.

Then maybe you go home and you read the news online and you find out that everyone is talking about you. And worse, they're telling lies. They're saying things that are not true. They're saying that you kissed this person, or you're in love with that person. Suddenly, you don't have a private life. Everyone knows everything about you, and they're telling lies, which is even worse.

So, at that point, you would probably realise that being famous is not so great. And that is why we say 'be careful what you wish for'. Okay?

So in this story, our main character doesn't actually wish for anything, but his family wishes for lots of things. And I think the phrase 'be careful what you wish for' is very relevant in this instance.

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

A **fisherman** is someone who catches fish. Fishermen work in boats, and they use nets to catch fish. Being a fisherman used to be very dangerous, but now fishermen use lots of machinery that makes catching fish easier.

A **hut** is a small building with just one room. Huts are very simple, so anyone can build one, but I won't be building a hut anytime soon! In poor areas, people build their own huts and live in them.

Stormy weather is weather that you get when a storm is coming, or there is a storm happening. So stormy weather is heavy rain, heavy wind and so on.

When weather is **calm**, it is not stormy. In fact, you often get calm weather after a storm. There is no wind and no rain.

When you **let something go**, you free it, you allow it to go. For example, maybe a policeman has caught a criminal, but then he realises that the person really did nothing wrong. Or he thinks, *Hmm, the real problem here is the rich people running all the companies and all those politicians who do a bad job*. So he lets the criminal go. This is a communist policeman, apparently! Or maybe you caught a bird in a net, but you think it's cruel to keep a bird, so you let it go.

When you **grant someone's wish**, you make their wish come true, you give them their wish. If you remember the example earlier, where you wake up and you're famous. Well, maybe God granted that wish so that you would see that being famous is not very good. Usually, we talk about 'granting a wish' for magic. For example, a genie is a magical blue man who grants you three wishes, such as in the Disney film, *Aladdin*. [sings]. I don't really remember the words to that song, but it was Robin Williams who did the voice of the genie in *Aladdin*, and he was very talented.

Nagging is when you keep criticising someone, you keep telling them why they are wrong. Traditionally, there is an idea that women always nag their husbands, for example saying, 'You never buy me flowers!' but this is quite a sexist idea. Men can also nag. There is the same idea for mothers nagging their children, for example saying, 'You need to do your homework!'

Education is when you go to school and study. Education is considered very important now. After school, many people continue their education at university.

Politics is the activities of the government, the people who run a country. For example, in the UK we just had a general election, and now, the Labour Party is running the government. Before it was the Conservative Party with Rishi Sunak, but now we have a Labour Prime Minister, Keir Starmer. So all of the news for the last month has just been politics, politics, politics. Some people are very interested in politics and read all about it, but some people are uninterested and don't even vote. And if you don't vote, then I'm going to nag you!

A **revolution** is a sudden change in how a country is run. Revolutions often happen because of crises such as war or famine, when there is not enough food for people to eat. Famous revolutions are the French Revolution of 1789, the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Chinese Communist Revolution of 1949.

OK, so listen and enjoy!

The Golden Fish

Once, there was a poor **fisherman**. The fisherman lived in a small **hut** by the sea with his wife, his son and his daughter. Their hut was only made of wood, and they didn't have expensive food or furniture, but they lived happily.

One day, when the weather was **calm**, the fisherman was fishing in the sea, and he caught a golden fish. The fisherman had never seen a golden fish before, and he thought, *Is it really alright to eat such a beautiful animal?*

And then the fish talked!

'Oh, fisherman!' said the fish. 'Please do not kill me. If you **let me go**, I will **grant you any wish**.'

The fisherman was afraid. He had never liked magic, and he didn't want to start now.

So he said, 'That's quite alright! I have everything I need!' And he threw the fish back into the sea.

Now, when the fisherman got home and told the story to his wife, she **nagged** him for hours.

'You might not like magic, but I do!' she said. 'It's not every day that you catch a golden fish that can grant wishes. I'm tired of living in this old hut. Tomorrow I want you to find that fish again and ask it for a nicer house! Yes, a big house with a garden and five bedrooms is what we need!'

'Yes, dear...'

The next day, the weather was not so calm. A strong wind blew. But the fisherman could still easily fish, and he did so for several hours until he caught the golden fish again.

'Oh, it is you!' said the golden fish. 'Funny seeing you here. If you let me go again, I will grant you another wish.'

'My wife wishes for a nicer house,' said the fisherman, 'with a garden and five bedrooms.'

'Your wish is granted,' said the fish.

The fisherman let the fish go, and sure enough, when he came home there was not a sad little hut, but a big house with a garden and five bedrooms. The fisherman's wife was happy, but that night at dinner, his son was the one who nagged him.

'You always do what Mother wants, but not what we want!' said the son. 'This house is nice, but what about my education? There are no schools around here. I want a teacher who will live here and teach me politics so that I don't have to be a fisherman when I grow up.'

'Yes, son,' said the fisherman sadly.

The next day, the weather was not calm at all. Fat clouds sat in the sky, and after a few hours it rained. Just when the fisherman was worrying that it was going to get stormy, he caught the golden fish.

'Oh, it's you again,' said the golden fish. 'I suppose you'd like me to grant another wish?'

'I'm so sorry, Mr Fish,' said the fisherman. 'But you see, my son wants an education. He'd like a teacher to live in our house and teach him politics.'

'Your wish is granted,' said the fish. 'Now please let me go.'

That evening, the fisherman returned to find another man in the house. It was a teacher who came from the capital city. In fact, he was quite a famous teacher.

'I just couldn't live in that city anymore,' he said. 'I decided to come and live by the sea, but I wanted to keep working. So here I am!'

The teacher was so happy that he didn't even want to be paid. And the fisherman's son was very happy to receive a good education in politics. The fisherman lay down happily in bed that night, thinking that all his family's problems had been solved. That was, until his daughter came in to nag him.

'Daaaaad!' she said. 'Why do Mum and Brother get their wishes granted but I don't? You never asked what I wanted!'

The fisherman sighed. 'And what do you want, dear?'

'I'm glad you asked,' she said. 'I would like to be queen.'

'OK, dear,' said the fisherman.

The fisherman thought that this wish was too much. Surely the fish's magic wouldn't be able to do it? When he went to fish the next day, it was very stormy, and it was hard to see or hear. It was going to be very difficult to catch fish in such stormy weather.

But the fisherman did his best, and after many hours of fishing, he finally caught the golden fish.

'More wishes?' said the fish.

'I am so sorry,' said the fisherman. 'But this will be my last wish.'

He had to shout to be heard through the stormy weather.

'My daughter wishes to become queen.'

'Your wish is granted,' said the fish. 'But she may find that being queen is not so great.'

The fisherman wasn't sure what the fish meant, but he let it go and went home.

In the house, everything was very quiet. He couldn't find his daughter, but he supposed that she lived in the capital city now, if she was queen. But then he found his wife crying alone in the kitchen.

'What happened?' said the fisherman.

'Oh, don't you know anything?' nagged his wife. 'There was a **revolution!** All the people in the capital ran into the castle and killed the queen. Our poor daughter! That is why the house is so empty. Our son has already left. The revolution will come here next – they will surely want to kill the family of the queen as well. Oh, it's too much!'

The fisherman had never been very interested in politics, so he hadn't known that for a year now, things had been stormy in the capital. People had been talking about a revolution for months, but the fisherman didn't know this. When his daughter suddenly became queen, it was too much for the people, and the revolution started.

'I wish I had listened to the news more...' he said.

But then the fisherman thought more, and he realised that he didn't think that. Really, he wished he had never listened to his wife, or his son or daughter. If he had let that fish go and never wished for anything, he would still have a hut made of wood and a happy family.

The next day, the sea was stormier than before. But the fisherman did not fish. He jumped in the water and swam, and he didn't stop until the storm ate him up.

THE END

Phew, it's been a while since we had a good old story where everyone dies at the end! If you're a long-time listener, you'll know that I love those kinds of stories. Anyway, just so you know, I have a series of books, and I think if you enjoyed this episode, you'll love these as well. They're a collection of short stories in four levels. So, just go to [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Book](https://www.EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Book) to find out where you can get them. Thanks for listening, and see you soon!