

Imagine you picked up a book and it told you, 'When you grow up, you're going to marry a pig.' Well, that's exactly what happens to the young princess in this story! But are things as they seem, or is there magic involved? Keep listening to find out!

The Curse of the Pig – 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 beginner-level story is called *The Curse of the Pig*. As always, the transcript and PDF are available at EasyStoriesInEnglish.com, and you can find the link in the description.

I'll just start by explaining some words that are in today's story. There is a lot of vocabulary to get through today, but it's all very useful, so let's get right into it.

A **curse** is bad magic. When you curse something, you change it. To make the thing normal again you have to break the curse. For example, a prince might get cursed and he will die on his eighteenth birthday. To break the curse, he has to kiss a woman he loves.

When you **forbid** someone from doing something, and the past tense is **forbade**, and the past participle is **forbidden**; you tell them that they can't do something. For example, parents might forbid their children to stay up late on a school day. Or you might forbid a friend from telling your secret to other people. In most places in the UK, it is forbidden to smoke indoors.

A **dragon** is a magical animal, an animal that is not real. However, we find stories of dragons in all cultures around the world. Dragons can breathe fire and fly, and they like to eat people. Dragons like to collect treasure, gold and jewels, and hide it in their home. In the TV series *Game of Thrones*, Daenerys had several dragons.

When you **tell the future**, you say what is going to happen in the future. People tell the future in many ways. Some people look at the lines on your hand to tell your future. Some people use tarot cards to tell the future. Personally, I don't believe that anyone can tell the future.

Mud is dirt that is wet. When it rains, the dirt, the ground, turns wet and becomes mud. Children love playing in mud, and pigs especially love playing in mud. If you get mud on your clothes then you'll need to wash them.

Pork is pig meat. In the religions of Judaism and Islam, it is forbidden to eat pork. In some parts of Christianity people also do not eat pork. Personally, I don't eat pork because I am vegetarian.

When something happens very quickly, we can say it **passes by in a blur**. When we don't see something clearly, it is blurry, which is why we say this. Usually, things pass by in a blur if they are very stressful.

When something changes into something else, it **transforms**. For example, when Clark Kent takes off his glasses and puts on his big blue suit, he transforms into Superman. The *Transformers* films are about alien robots that can walk and talk but also transform into cars.

Okay, we're about halfway through the vocabulary. Well done for making it this far, and let's keep going!

String is very thin rope. You use string to **tie** things together. For example, in the past, if you wanted to send a parcel, you wrapped it in brown paper and tied string around it. Now, you usually use sellotape. Or you might tie string around a bag of food to seal it, to stop air getting into it.

Cats particularly like to play with balls of string. Strings are also used for other things. For example, in the UK many bathrooms have light switches on strings for safety reasons. So you go into the bathroom and pull a string to turn on the light. Some children's toys have strings you can pull and then they make sounds.

When you **wear something out**, you wear it so much that it gets old and starts falling apart. For example, if you wear the same pair of shoes every day, you will wear out the shoes, and they will start getting holes. The shoes will be **worn out**. You might also wear out a mattress by using it for many years, or you might wear out a joke by telling it too many times.

Iron is a type of metal and an element. The chemical symbol for iron is 'Fe'. Iron is used to make steel, a stronger metal.

Bones are the hard, white things that we have inside our bodies. Bones are beneath our skin and muscles. If you hit yourself very hard, you might break a bone. It's important to have calcium in your diet, as calcium makes your bones healthy and strong.

When you **catch wind of something**, you hear about it. You usually catch wind of things that other people are trying to keep secret. For example, maybe your boss wants to fire you, and you catch wind of this from a coworker.

A **ladder** is like a staircase, but you use your hands and your legs to get up. Ladders are used to go upstairs when there is not much space. For example, ladders are used to get into attics. Ladders are also used to get high up on the outside of a house when building, for example. You have to be careful when climbing a ladder as it's easy to fall.

Well done for getting through all the vocabulary! So, listen and enjoy.

The **Curse** of the Pig

Once, there was a king with three daughters. One day, the king went on a long journey, but before he left, he **forbade** his daughters from one thing.

'My daughters,' said the king. 'While I am away, you can do what you want, but I forbid you to go into this room.'

He showed them a door to a room that they had never seen before.

'Yes, Father!' said the daughters, because they were good girls.

The king left, and the girls began living by themselves. Every day, they worked for a few hours, and then spent the rest of the time reading and playing games in the garden. They never went into the forbidden room. But after a few months, every day started to feel the same, and the girls got bored.

'I want to go into the forbidden room,' said the oldest sister one day. 'I know Father told us not to, but if we just look...'

'No!' said the youngest daughter, who always did what her father said. 'Father forbade us, and he never forbids us anything. It must be very important if he told us not to go there.'

'Well, we know it can't be dangerous,' said the second daughter. 'If there was a dog or a **dragon** in there, we would hear it. And Father won't know we've gone in.'

So finally, they went into the forbidden room. They were surprised to see it was very simple. All there was in the room was a table with a book on it.

'Is that all?' said the oldest sister.

She went and opened the book and read what she saw: 'The oldest daughter of the king will marry a man from the east.' Oh! It is a book that **tells the future**. How interesting. And how good for me!

'I want to know my future!' said the second daughter, so she went and read the book. 'The second daughter of the king will marry a man from the west.' Ooh, I've always liked the clothes in the west! Sister, do you want me to tell you your future?' she said to the youngest.

'No!' said the youngest daughter, and she closed the book. 'This book might have dangerous magic. I really don't think we should be here.'

But the two older sisters wouldn't let her leave. They kept telling her it was fine, that father wouldn't know. Finally, the youngest daughter opened the book just so that her sisters would stop talking.

'It says "The youngest daughter of the king will marry a pig from the north." Oh! Stop laughing!'

But her sisters couldn't stop laughing. They thought it was very funny. A pig from the north? But the youngest daughter was afraid. What if that really was her future?

They closed the book and left the room, and for several weeks the older daughters made oinking sounds at their younger sister, who got sadder and sadder.

'You can get married in the mud!' said the oldest daughter.

'And you can have mud for your wedding cake!' said the second daughter. 'I hear it's much cheaper!'

The king finally came home, but he knew something was wrong when he saw his youngest daughter.

'My love,' said the king. 'You did not go into the forbidden room, did you?'

The youngest daughter burst into tears. 'Oh, Father! We did! I did not want to, but my sisters did, and then they kept telling me to read the book, and then... you know... the pig!'

The king called his other two daughters into the room and talked to them. When the two older girls saw his face, they understood that they had done something very bad.

'You might think that this is all games, my girls, but it is not. I got that book as a present on my wedding day. We didn't know who it came from, and when I saw that it told the future, I thought it couldn't be true. The book said that my wife would die in a few years, and we thought that was stupid. She was young and she was healthy!'

The girls went quiet. They all knew what had happened. After giving birth to the youngest girl, their mother had died.

'So you see, I believe that this book tells the truth. I thought that maybe if we did not read it, the things in it would not happen... I should have burned it.'

'Then... then it's true?' said the youngest daughter. 'I am really going to marry a pig?!'

Now nobody was laughing.

'Shh, my child,' said her father, kissing her head. 'Perhaps it will not come true. And if a pig comes to marry you, we will just say "no".'

'I suppose...'

A few years passed, and when the king went travelling, the girls made sure to do what he said. Then, one day, a man from the east came and asked the oldest daughter to marry him. He was a good man, so the girl said yes, and they got married. This made the youngest daughter very sad, but her sister said, 'There are lots of men in the east! And Father wants our countries to work together. Yes, it said I would marry an eastern man in the book, but that does not mean the rest will happen.'

Then, a few months later, a man from the west came and asked the second daughter to marry him. He was rich and good-looking, so of course she said yes as well. Now the youngest sister was really worried, and she could not enjoy the wedding at all.

'Do not worry, Sister,' said the second daughter. 'If a pig comes and asks you to marry it, well, we can have pork for supper! Mm, I love pork.'

'Oh, you don't understand!'

The girl ran away to her room, and she stopped going out. If the cooks brought her pork, she cried and wouldn't eat it. Every night, she prayed that the pig would not come, and every morning she looked out of the window to make sure no pig was there.

And then, one morning, it happened: she looked out and saw a pig **knocking on the door**.

'No!'

She ran down to her father, but when she arrived, he was already talking to the pig-man. Yes, this was a pig, but he walked and talked like a man. The girl was so surprised that she could say nothing.

'Dear King,' said the pig-man, 'I would like to marry your beautiful daughter!'

'You would?' said the king. 'But you haven't met her yet. How do you know she is beautiful?'

'Ah, I have heard stories. And I can give your daughter a good life. I have lots of money and a big, big house.'

And it was true. The pig had arrived with fifty men, and they were all dressed in gold.

'Hmm,' said the king. 'I'm still not sure...'

The girl felt better. She was worried her father would say yes. But then one of the king's men came and said something to him, and the king got up and looked out the window.

The girl did the same, and what she saw made her feel sick.

The city was *full* of pigs. In every street, pigs were standing in a line, waiting to come into the castle. Their oinks were louder than an orchestra. And these weren't pig-men. These were actual *pigs*: they **oinked** instead of speaking, and they all had mud on them.

'So you see,' said the pig-man sadly. 'You must choose me, I'm afraid.'

The king saw his daughter then. His face said *I am sorry*. 'You will be good to my daughter, yes? If I hear about anything bad happening, I will go to the north myself and make you into pork.'

'Oh, yes,' said the pig-man. 'I will be the best husband a pig can be.'

'Well, then. I suppose you should meet her. Look, there she is.'

The girl could not believe it. She started crying, and wanted to run away. But the pig-man had already seen her, and was coming to say hello.

The next few days **passed by in a blur**. The girl thought she must be dreaming. They held a quick wedding, and all the time, she was thinking, *I'm getting married to a pig. I'm getting married to a pig*. The king made sure that nobody laughed at her, or they would be killed, but that was worse. The wedding was so quiet, it was like someone had died. Finally, the ring went on her finger, and it was real. She was married to a pig.

Just before they left to go to the pig-man's home, the king spoke to her.

'Listen, my love,' he said. 'I know this is not the future you wanted. But there is magic here. Things are not how they seem. If you love that pig and are a good wife to him, I am sure that things will end well.'

The daughter, who loved her father very much, said, 'I will do it for you, Father. But I do not think I could ever love a pig.'

Their journey would take all day, but just after a few hours, the pig stopped and went to play in the mud. *This is horrible*, thought the girl. But she watched him play in the mud, and she saw how happy he was, and she laughed. Actually, she had always loved animals, and he was sort of attractive... in a pig way.

Then he got up and said, 'Kiss me, my wife!'

The girl wanted to say 'no'. Watching someone play in mud was one thing, but kissing him? He was so muddy! But then she thought, *Well, I will have to kiss him more in the future...* So she cleaned his nose and gave him the smallest kiss she could.

'Don't like kissing, huh?' said the pig-man. 'Well, we can change that.'

They arrived at their new house and got into bed. The girl was worried about what would happen, but the pig-man was tired from the journey and wanted to sleep. The girl, however, couldn't sleep, so she sat and watched her husband. And what happened when he fell asleep? He **transformed** into a man!

So the girl's father was right. There was magic here, and things were not as they seemed. When the man woke up, he transformed back into a pig, which made the girl very sad. This happened every day and night: when the pig slept, he transformed into a man, and when he woke up, he transformed back into a pig.

How horrible! she thought. *To only be a man when you are dreaming...*

The girl decided that her husband must be cursed. Only a strong curse could do this. But who cursed him, and why? She tried asking her husband at breakfast.

'Are you cursed?' she said.

'Mmm,' he said.

'Just say "yes" or "no".'

But when he tried to answer, he could not move his body at all.

'Who cursed you?'

'Fffmf!'

She saw that this was not going to work. Clearly, the curse stopped him from talking about it.

Well, the pig-man's house was nice, and he let her do whatever she wanted. So she spent her days reading and making clothes. It was a very quiet place, though, so the girl got bored. Whenever she saw someone, she talked to them.

One day, an old woman came past the house. She had dark red skin and all her clothes were red, and she was carrying a bag of eggs or something like that. The girl thought this was strange, but people wore strange clothes in the north. She ran out and said hello to the old woman and they started talking. So little happened in the girl's life, and the old woman kept asking her how things were with her husband, so finally she talked about the curse.

'Oh, a pig curse? That's easy!' said the old woman. 'Just take this piece of golden **string** and **tie it around** his foot while he sleeps. Tie the string very well, my dear, or it won't work. The string will stop him from transforming into a pig. Presto!'

'Oh, wow!' said the girl. 'How lucky am I? I didn't think people knew about magic around here.'

'You *are* lucky, my dear.'

'How can I pay you?'

The old woman **laughed**. 'Seeing a young girl so happy is enough for me.'

So the girl did what the old woman said. She waited until her husband was sleeping, then she tied the golden string around his foot. She made sure to tie the string very well, but she tied it *too* well, and the string broke!

Her husband woke up and transformed back into a pig.

'W-what's going on?' He looked down and saw the broken string. 'No! What have you done?!'

'I got this string from an old woman!' she said. 'To break your curse.'

'I only had three more days of the curse!' said the pig. 'But now you have tied that magic string around me, the curse will be much longer. Oh, I can't believe this!'

The pig got up very quickly and took his things.

'Where are you going?' said the girl. She was crying. Marrying a pig was bad enough, but she didn't want to be left alone in this old house.

'I am very angry, Wife,' he said. 'I do not want to see you again.'

'Oh, *please!*' cried the girl. 'I love you, I really do!'

The pig's eyes were full of anger. 'I waited so long to be a man again, and now... I curse you! You will not find me again until you have worn out three pairs of iron shoes.'

And the pig ran into the night. The girl cried for a long time. Nobody wore shoes made of iron, and to wear out iron shoes would take forever...

But the next day, the girl woke up and knew what she had to do. She would not sit and wait for a book to tell her future; she would make her own future.

She went to the nearest town and paid someone to make three pairs of iron shoes. This was very strange, but they made the iron shoes for the girl, and she left for her journey.

After walking for ten weeks, the girl arrived at the House of the Moon.

'Hello?' said the girl.

The Moon looked at her for a minute, but said nothing. Then she went inside, but she left the door open, so the girl went inside as well.

'Oh, who are you then?' said a woman.

It was the mother of the Moon. She was very friendly, and she gave the girl food and asked her about her journey.

'You must stay here, child,' she said. 'I will look after you.'

The girl didn't want to stay for long, but the next day she felt quite sick, and she noticed that her stomach was getting bigger. She talked with the mother of the Moon, and the woman said, 'Ah, you are going to have a child! Well, you must stay here then.'

Nine months passed very quickly, and the girl gave birth to her child easily. She had a beautiful daughter, who was a girl and not a pig. She had told the mother of the Moon the story about her cursed husband, but the woman told her that the curse would not pass down onto the child. It seemed this was true.

'Now I must continue my journey,' said the girl.

'So soon?' said the mother of the Moon. 'But you have a baby now. Surely you can stay here for a while?'

'I must not,' said the girl. 'I told my father I would be a good wife, so I must find my husband. Do you think your daughter, the Moon, might know where he is? I am sure he is hiding in the night, and she is always watching the world at night.'

'Ah, my daughter cannot tell you that,' said the mother. 'She cannot talk, you see. The night is so dark, and she cannot see people well, so she never had anyone to talk to. Finally, she stopped speaking. She knows many things, but she says nothing. If you travel to the east, the Sun may be able to help you, though. Here, take this chicken. You will want some food for the journey. But make sure to keep the bones – the bones, my dear, the bones, they are important.'

The girl thanked her again, and went to the east, carrying her daughter on her back. She quickly saw that her iron shoes were worn out, so she changed to the second pair of iron shoes.

After walking for seven months, she arrived at the House of the Sun. The Sun was not at home when she arrived, but the mother of the Sun saw the poor girl and said, 'You and your child can stay here. I will make sure that the Sun does not see you. He is always so angry when he gets home.'

The girl thanked the woman and went to her room. A few hours later, when it was getting dark, the Sun came home.

STOMP. STOMP. STOMP. STOMP. STOMP.

‘MUM, WHERE’S MY DINNER?’ shouted the sun.

The girl couldn’t believe it. All her life, she had looked at the sky and thought the sun was very beautiful. But actually, the Sun was angry and horrible.

The next day, when the Sun was at work, the girl asked his mother why he was so angry.

‘Oh, that son of mine...’ she said. ‘Every morning he wakes up happy. He is so hopeful. But then he goes to work. He sits in the sky all day, and he sees *all* the bad things that people do. When the Moon comes to take his place, he tries to tell her about it, but she never sees the people. So when he comes home, he is angry. He wants people to be better, but he can do nothing.’

‘Ah,’ said the girl. ‘Then... do you think I could ask him for help? I have always tried to be a good person, and I just want to know where my husband is. He is half-pig half-man – he was cursed, I think. If your son can see him, then maybe he could tell me where to go.’

‘Of course, my dear. Let me ask him.’

So the girl waited in her room while the woman went downstairs. She heard bits of the conversation – mainly just the Sun’s shouting.

‘WHAT? HALF-PIG, HALF-MAN? THAT POOR WOMAN!’

A few minutes later, the mother of the Sun came upstairs and said, ‘He says he cannot help you. Yes, he can see everything, but there are so many people in the world. It would take him years to find one person. And if I ask him to do something like that he will get angry, I think. Oh, I am sorry. I wish I could help you... Ah! If you travel north the Wind may be able to tell you. Yes, go talk to the Wind, and take this for the road.’

She also gave the girl a roast chicken to eat and told her to look after the bones. The girl thanked her again and went to the north, carrying her daughter on her back. Her second pair of iron shoes was also worn out, so she changed to the third pair.

‘It’s a good thing you’re such a quiet girl,’ she said to her daughter. ‘But I hope you will be able to play with some other children soon.’

After walking for a year and a half, she arrived at the House of the Wind. This time, the mother of the Wind saw her coming from far away, and said, ‘Quick, child! Get in before the Wind comes.’

So the girl ran inside and the mother of the Wind shut the door.

‘The Wind is not angry like the Sun,’ she said. ‘But it does not like having guests. If it knew you were here, it would make you leave.’

‘Oh, well then I should not stay for long. I just wanted to know if the Wind knows where my husband is. He is half-pig, half-man –’

‘Ah,’ said the woman. ‘Yes, I’ve heard about this. You’ve been travelling the world wearing iron shoes, visiting the Sun and the Moon. Of course the Wind has heard about you. You’ve heard the expression “catch wind”, yes? Well, the Wind has caught wind of you, and it has an answer. One minute.’

The woman went and opened a drawer. She searched in the drawer for a while and then took out a little piece of paper.

‘The Wind says that your husband is living in a dark forest. He lives at the top of a big tree that is very difficult to get to, and he speaks to no other people.’

‘Oh, thank you!’

As the girl said that, she heard a loud sound: the wind was blowing.

'Quick, quick!' said the mother of the Wind. 'Get out, or you could be here for a long time.'

So the girl ran away, but as she left, the mother of the Wind threw a bag at her.

'Take this chicken!' she cried. 'And keep the bones!'

'Thank you!'

When the girl stopped to rest, she ate the chicken the mother of the Wind had given her. She put the bones in her bag, along with the bones from the other chickens. Then she saw that her third pair of iron shoes had worn out, so the girl took off her shoes and kissed her daughter.

'Do you see these worn out old shoes?' she said. 'That means we're almost there.'

The next morning, the girl started walking without any shoes. After just one day, she found the dark forest, and after just a few hours, she found the biggest tree. She could see a little house on the top, but how could she get up there? There were no stairs or **ladder** to climb.

She opened her bag to see if she had anything, but all she had were the old chicken bones.

Although... the mothers of the Sun, Wind and Moon had told her that they were important. Very important.

The girl pushed two bones against each other and CLICK! The bones fit together very well. The girl pushed another two bones together and CLICK! Those bones fit together, too.

So the girl put all the bones together and finally she made a ladder. The ladder was very strong. She put the ladder against the tree and climbed it, but when she got to the top she was tired. She had walked for three years now, and visited the Moon, the Sun and the Wind. She had a daughter. And now she had to talk to her husband who was a pig.

'Let's just have a rest,' she said to her daughter.

'Googoo,' said her daughter.

'Wow, you're starting to talk already...'

They lay down and slept outside the door of the house.

When the pig husband came home, he was very surprised to see a ladder of bones. When he climbed up it, he was even more surprised to see his wife and a little girl. Was that *his* daughter? She was so beautiful. He climbed up the ladder, and as he climbed, he felt a strong magic...

The girl woke up and saw something very strange. There was her husband. It was still night, so he was a man. The sun went to work in the sky, and she waited for him to transform... but he didn't. He stayed as a man!

'The curse has been broken!' she said. 'Oh, I'm so happy!'

The man looked at his body and laughed. 'Well done!' He hugged her. 'And now that the curse is broken, I can finally tell you what happened. When I was a child, my father killed a dragon. The mother of the dragon was very angry, so she cursed me. I was cursed to be a pig-man for twenty years, and if I did not find true love's kiss, then I would stay a pig forever.'

'Oh, that kiss...' She remembered how she had kissed him after he played in the mud. She didn't know it then, but it was love.

'The curse almost broke,' he continued, 'but then you tied that magic string around me. That old woman was the dragon's mother. She saw that the curse was almost broken, so she found a way to tie me again. Because of that, I had to be a pig for thirty more years. But because you wore out those iron shoes and made a ladder from magic bones, those thirty years became three. I am a man again, and I have a beautiful wife and daughter!'

They kissed and they hugged and they played with their child. The next day they went home to the woman's father, the king. The king was so happy to see his daughter and his granddaughter, and they threw a party that lasted weeks.

'You were right, Father,' said the woman. 'Magic books can tell me my future, but only I can change it.'

They lived happily ever after, they had lots more children, and they never ate pork for the rest of their lives.

THE END

Thank you so much for listening to this episode of *Easy Stories in English*. I hope you enjoyed it, and thank you to everyone who answered the survey that I talked about in the last few episodes. Just a reminder that if you want to stay up to date with everything *Easy Stories in English*, you can join my mailing list at EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Email, and you'll even get a free PDF with my top ten tips for language learning. Lovely to talk to you and see you soon!