The Fisherman and the Giant

Once there was a poor fisherman. He never caught many fish and so he had no money. On some days he did not catch any fish. He couldn't buy food for his wife and three children. They only ate fish!

Usually he caught very small fish, but one day he caught a dead horse. 'Today is a bad day,' he thought.

Angrily, he began to fish again. This time he caught a bag of old cups. Sadly, he threw them back in the water. 'What can I do?' he said. 'I am a poor man. I want to sell fish. I want to buy food for my children.'

He tried again. This time he caught an old jar. It looked green, but then he looked again. It was dirty. So he washed it and it was gold. There were some words on the top of the jar, but he couldn't read.

The fisherman jumped up happily. 'I can sell this now,' he said.

'Today is a good day.'

He looked at the jar carefully. 'Perhaps there is something inside,' he thought. 'I'll open it.' So he opened the jar and looked inside. Suddenly white smoke came out of the jar and a great giant appeared. The fisherman was very afraid. The giant spoke.

'Now, fisherman. I am going to kill you.'

'Why?' cried the fisherman. 'What did I do?'

'You opened the jar. For that I am going to kill you. How do you want to die? I can kill you with my hands, or I can throw you into the sea.'

'But why do you have to kill me?'

'I will tell you,' said the giant. 'One day, the King of the Giants was very angry with me. I took his youngest and loveliest daughter for a walk by the sea and he didn't like it. So he put me in this jar. I could not get out because he wrote his name on the top of the jar. I could hear him from inside the jar. "Because you love the sea, you dog," he cried, "you can live in it!" And he threw me in the water.

'I was in the jar for days and weeks. "One day somebody will open this bottle," I thought. "And I will make them into a great king or queen." But after a hundred years, nobody opened the bottle. So I thought, "I will make them into a king or queen but not a great king or queen." After 200 years, I thought, "Where is this person? Now I will make them rich, but I will not make them a king or queen." After 300 years, I was very angry." When somebody opens the jar, I will kill them," I thought. You are that person, Fisherman. How do you want to die?'

'I have one question,' said the fisherman. 'Will you answer it?'

'I will,' said the giant, 'but ask quickly.'

'Were you in that jar?'

'Yes, I was,' answered the giant. 'You saw me.'

'But you are so big. Your hand is as big as the jar. Think before you speak. Is there nothing inside your head?'

The giant was not very clever. 'I will show you,' he said angrily. Suddenly he disappeared into white smoke again, and the smoke went inside the jar. 'You see!' he called from inside. The fisherman quickly put the top back on the jar.

'Hah! Now, Giant,' he said. 'I will throw the jar back into the sea. Perhaps somebody will find you in another 300 years.'

'Please open the jar,' called the Giant. 'I will make you a rich man.'

'No. You will kill me,' answered the fisherman.

'No, I won't,' said the giant. 'I won't. I'll make you very, very rich.'

The fisherman thought for a minute. 'All right, then,' he said, and opened the jar. White smoke came out of the jar and the giant appeared again. He quickly threw the jar into the sea.

'Thank you,' he said to the fisherman. 'I will not forget this. Come with me.' The fisherman followed the giant round the city walls and over a mountain. There they came to a great blue and gold sea. In the water there were many fish.

'Now, catch something. I will watch you,' said the giant. In no time, the fisherman caught three fish - three beautiful red, white and gold fish. 'Take these fish to your king,' said the giant. 'He will give you a lot of money for them.'

The giant disappeared, and blue and gold smoke went into the ground.

When the king saw the fish, he said to the fisherman, 'Those are beautiful fish! I will give you gold for them.' Then he said to his servant, 'Take these fish to the cook. We will eat them today.'

The fisherman took his gold home to his family. They ate a wonderful dinner of bread, meat, fruit, vegetables and no fish. For the first time in their lives, they were not hungry.

The king's cook put the fish over the fire. They started to cook. Suddenly, the smoke from the fire went blue and gold and a strange woman appeared in the kitchen. She spoke to the fish.

'Fish, fish! Are you doing your work?' The fish did not answer. Then their heads went up, and they said, 'We are, and we are happy.' The strange woman pushed the fish into the fire. The smoke from the fire went blue and gold and the woman disappeared into it.

The king and his servant came into the kitchen. 'I am waiting for the fish. Where are they?' he said to the cook. He saw that the fish were in the fire and he could not eat them. The cook told him about the strange woman. The king wanted to see the woman so he sent for the fisherman. 'Bring me three more fish!' he said.

When the fisherman came back with three more fish, the king gave him more gold. The cook put the fish over the fire. This time the smoke from the fire went red and gold and a big man with red hair appeared.

'Fish, fish! Are you doing your work?' The fish answered, 'We are, we are! And we are happy!' And the same thing happened. The man pushed the fish into the fire and disappeared into the red and gold smoke.

The king did not speak for a minute. This was magic! Then he turned to the fisherman. 'Where do you get these fish?' he asked.

'I get them from a sea of blue and gold water over the mountain.'

'Do you know this sea?' the king asked his servant.

'No. I often go across the mountain, but there is no blue and gold sea.'

'Will you take us there?' the king asked the fisherman.

The king and his men followed the fisherman over the mountain to the sea of blue and gold and there they saw the wonderful fish. The fish were jewels in the water.

'Wait here,' said the king. He took two men and went round the sea. There they came to a great house of red stone. All round the house were gardens of wonderful flowers. There was no answer at the door. But it was open so the king went in. He saw many beautiful rooms but no people. He came into a very large room with high windows. Somebody spoke: 'When will I die? I don't want to live.'

The king saw a young man at the other end of the room. He was on the floor with a coat over his feet.

'I know you are a king,' said the young man, 'but I cannot stand up.' The king took away the coat and saw that his feet were fine white stone.

'What is this?' cried the king. 'Why do you have stone feet? Why do the fish talk? Why does a man with red hair appear from nowhere in my kitchen? What is happening? Tell me.'

'I will tell you,' said the young man. 'Please sit down and listen. There was once a great city in this place. My father was king of that city, and I was a prince. Then my father died and I was the king. I married a beautiful woman. She was my queen but she did not love me. She loved a servant. When I learnt about him, I wanted to kill that servant. We had a fight. I hurt him but I didn't kill him. He could not use his legs.

'My wife was very angry. She can do magic and she changed my feet to white stone. Then I could not use my legs. That was not the end of it. Three mountains and a blue and gold sea appeared in place of the city. She changed the men and women of the city into fish.

'There is a little house of white stone in the garden of this house. The servant lives there. He cannot walk. My wife visits him every day.'

The king went into the garden and thought for some time. Then he went to the house of white stone. He found the servant inside and killed him. He put the servant under the bed and then climbed onto it. He pulled the servant's jacket over his face. Sometime later, the queen came in.

'Are you happy, my dearest servant?' she asked.

'No,' said the king. 'I cannot sleep. Somebody is crying. The young king is crying because of his stone feet.'

The queen went to the young king and threw some magic water over his feet. He stood up and walked.

Then she came back to the house of white stone. 'And I cannot sleep,' the king said, 'because the men and women of the city cry at night. They do not want to be fish.'

So the queen went to the blue and gold sea. She said some magic words. A great city appeared all round her. Men and women ran happily through the streets and in and out of the houses. Then the queen came back to the house of white stone.

'Are you happy now, my dear servant?' she asked.

'Yes, my love,' he said. 'Come near me.' She came near him. 'Come nearer. I want to put my arms round you.' She came nearer his bed. He put his arms round her. In one hand he had a knife, and he killed her.

He went back to the young king. 'Your queen is dead. The city and its people are living.'

The older king and the young king were friends after that. One city helped the other city. But nobody ate fish again.

The fisherman and his family were happy. The two kings sent them gold and beautiful things. They were never hungry again.

- THE END -

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