

# STORY OF THE FISHERMAN

**This story uses ARCHAIC PRONOUNS such as 'thee', 'thou' and 'thy'. Archaic pronouns were used when speaking to someone who was close to you, like a wife, child or friend. They were also commonly used to show power over someone in an inferior position like a boss to an employee or a teacher to a student.**

There was once upon a time a fisherman so old and so poor that he could scarcely manage to support his wife and three children. He went every day to fish very early in the morning, and each day he made a rule not to throw his nets more than four times. He started out one morning by moonlight and came to the sea-shore. He undressed and threw his nets, and as he was drawing them towards the bank he felt a great weight. He thought he had caught a large fish, and he felt very pleased. But a moment afterwards, seeing that instead of a fish he only had in his nets the body of an old rotted donkey, and he was much disappointed. Upset with having such a bad haul, once he had mended his nets, which the carcass had broken in several places, he threw them a second time. In drawing them in, he again felt a great weight, so that he thought they were full of fish. But he only found a large basket full of rubbish. He was much annoyed.

"O Fortune," he cried, "do not trifle thus with me, a poor fisherman, who can hardly support his family!"

So saying, he threw away the rubbish, and after having washed his nets clean of the dirt, he threw them for the third time. But he only drew in stones, shells, and mud. He was almost in despair.

Then he threw his nets for the fourth time. When he thought he had a fish he drew them in with a great deal of

trouble. There was no fish however, but he found a golden container, which by its weight seemed to be full of something, and he noticed that it was fastened and sealed with lead, with the impression of a king's seal smashed into the top of it. He was delighted. "I will sell it to the metal foundry," he said; "with the money I shall get for it I shall buy a bushel of wheat."

He examined the jar on all sides; he shook it to see if it would rattle. But he heard nothing, and so, judging from the impression of the seal and the lid, he thought there must be something precious inside. To find out, he took his knife, and with a little trouble he opened it. He turned it upside down, but nothing came out, which surprised him very much. He set it in front of him, and while he was looking at it attentively, such a thick smoke came out that he had to step back a pace or two. This smoke rose up to the clouds, and stretching over the sea and the shore, formed a thick mist, which astonished the fisherman. When all the smoke was out of the jar it gathered itself together, and became a thick mass in which appeared a genie, twice as large as the largest giant. When he saw such a terrible-looking monster, the fisherman would like to have run away, but he trembled so much with fright that he could not move a step.

"Great king of the genii," cried the monster in front of him, "I will never again disobey you!"

At these words, the fisherman took courage.

"What is this you are saying, great genie? Tell me your history and how you came to be shut up in that vase."

At this, the genie looked at the fisherman haughtily. "Thou shalt speak to me more respectfully," he said, "before I kill thee."

"Alas! Why should you kill me?" cried the fisherman. "I have just freed you; have you already forgotten that?"

"No," answered the genie; "but that will not prevent thy death; and I am only going to grant thee one favor, and that is to choose the manner of thy death."

"But what have I done to you?" asked the fisherman.

"I cannot treat thee in any other way," said the genie, "and if thou would knowst why, listen to my story."

"I rebelled against the king of the genii. To punish me, he shut me up in this vase of copper, and he put on the leaden cover his seal, which is an enchantment powerful enough to prevent my coming out. Then he had the vase thrown into the sea."

"During the first period of my captivity I vowed that if anyone should free me before a hundred years were passed, I would make him so rich that even his grandchildren would not be able to spend all his wealth. But that century passed, and no one freed me.

In the second century I vowed that I would give all the treasures in the world to my deliverer; but he never came."

"In the third, I promised to make him a potent King, to be always near him, and to grant him three wishes every day; but that century passed away as the other two had done, and I remained in the same plight. At last I grew angry at being captive for so long, and I vowed that if anyone would release me I would kill him at once, and would only allow him to choose in what manner he should die. So you see, as you have freed me to-day, choose in what way you will die."

The fisherman was very unhappy. "What an unlucky man I am to have freed you! I implore you to spare my life."

"I have told thee," said the genie, "that it is impossible. Choose quickly; thou art wasting time."

The fisherman began to devise a scheme.

"Since I must die," he said, "before I choose the manner of my death, I ask you on your honor to answer me truly one question."

The genie, finding himself presented with such a positive response to his command trembled and replied, "Ask what thou wilt, but make it quick."

"I wish to know," said the fisherman, "if you really were in that vase this whole time? Dare you swear it by the name of the great God?"

"I do swear by that great name that I was" answered the genie.

"I really cannot believe it," said the fisherman.

"That vase could not even contain one of your feet; how could your whole body go in? I cannot believe it unless I see you do this incredible thing."

"Is it possible," replied the genie, "that thou dost not believe me after the solemn oath I have taken?"

"Truly not I," said the fisherman; "nor will I believe you, unless you go into the vessel again."

Then the genie began to change himself into smoke, which, as before, spread over the sea and the shore, and which, then collecting itself together, began to go back into the vase slowly and evenly till there was nothing left outside. Then a voice came from the vase which said to the fisherman, "Well, unbelieving fisherman, here I am in the vase; do you believe me now?"

The fisherman instead of answering took the lid of lead and shut it down quickly on the vase.

"O' genie," he cried, "now it is your turn to beg my favor; but I shall throw you into the sea from where I took you, and then I will build a house on the shore to warn fishermen who come to cast their nets here, against fishing up such a wicked genie as thou art, who vows to kill the man who frees thee."

At these words the genie did all he could to get out, but he could not, because of the enchantment of the lid.

Then he tried to get out by cunning.

"Open the vessel," said he, "give me my liberty, and I promise to satisfy thee till thy own happiness is fulfilled."

"Thou art a traitor," replied the fisherman; "I should deserve to lose my life if I were such a fool as to trust thee."

"If I trust myself to thee," continued the fisherman, "then I am sure you will surely betray me again in the future when it suits your needs. No, you shall forever remain encased in this tomb."