

The King of the Fishes

Once upon a time, there was a poor fisherman called Li. Every morning, he went to the sea to fish and after lunch he sold his catch at the village market.

One day, he caught a huge fish. It had silver scales that sparkled in the sunlight, blood-red fins and a golden crown. The shiny fish was so beautiful that Li stood, stunned, admiring it as it thrashed in the net. Suddenly, he felt guilty. It was so beautiful, and surely it must have a family. So, he scooped it up out of the net and set it free. Then, to his amazement, it spoke to him. "Li, you have saved the King of the Fishes. I grant you one wish. When the moon is high in the sky, come back here and tell me your heart's desire." With a flick of his fin, the King of Fishes was gone.

Immediately, Li hurried home, wondering what he should wish for. There were so many things that his family needed. First, he asked his elderly father, "Father, if you had one wish, what would it be?"

"Why son, I would wish for new eyes, for I am blind and will never see again."

Next, he asked his mother, "Mother, if you had one wish, what would it be?"

"I would wish for money son, for the roof needs mending and the cold, winter winds make my bones shiver so."

Finally, he asked his beautiful wife, "Wife, if you had one wish, what would it be?"

"I would wish for a baby my love," she whispered, "For who will care for us when we are old?"

Poor Li could not make up his mind, they really needed the money, but his father was blind and that was a terrible thing. However, he also knew that a child would bring his family great joy. All evening, Li paced up and down trying to decide what his wish should be.

All at once, he stopped pacing and grinned. Yes, he had it! He rushed out of the house and down to the sea. The bright, silvery moon was high in the sky, so it was time to talk to the King of Fishes. Li stood on the wet, slippery rocks with the foam crashing about him and suddenly the King of the Fishes was there. "What do you wish for Li?" called the King.

"I wish for my father to see our son in a cradle made of gold," shouted Li. There was silence and the great fish disappeared. The waves calmed and then he heard a noise drifting down through the forest. It was a baby crying...

