The Fisherman and His Wife

There was once a poor fisherman who lived with his wife in a hut near the shore. Neither the fisherman nor his wife cared much for housework and really the place was a disgrace. You could not go into the hut without falling over a pot or a bit of fishing line.

“What’s the point of trying to keep this place clean?” grumbled the fisherman’s wife. “It’s not as though it would look special, whatever we do to it.”

One day the fisherman went down to the sea and cast his line. Before long he felt a big tug on it and pulled and pulled until he had landed a huge carp. To his astonishment, the fish began to speak.

“Please, throw me back into the sea,” it said. “I am no use to you, for I am not a fish at all but an enchanted Prince.”
The fisherman was so amazed that he did not know what to say, but threw the fish back as it had asked. When he got home that night, the fisherman told his wife what had happened.

“You idiot!” she cried. “You should have asked it to grant a wish, not just let it go like that. Go back and ask for a pretty little cottage instead of this miserable hut that we live in.”

So the fisherman did as she said and went back to the seashore. He called out to the enchanted fish and sure enough it came swimming to the surface.

“Oh noble fish,” began the fisherman. “My wife has asked me to beg you to grant us a wish.”

The fish thrashed its tail and the waves frothed and swirled. “Very well,” it said. “Go home and you’ll find that your wish has been granted.”

The fisherman hurried home and found his wife sitting happily in the neatest little cottage he had seen in his life.

“Now we want for nothing,” said the fisherman happily.

“Mmmm, maybe,” replied his wife.
A few weeks later the fisherman's wife began to complain. "You know this cottage is really too small," she said. "I would much rather live in a castle. Go back and ask that fish. After all, you did save its life."

Reluctantly, the fisherman went back to the shore and called to the fish. "What do you want now?" it asked, its scales glittering in the sunshine.

The fisherman explained his wife's wish. The carp splashed angrily in the water. The sky grew dark and the waves crashed onto the beach. "Very well," said the fish. "Go home and you will find that your wish has been granted."

When the fisherman arrived home, he found his wife in gorgeous clothes ordering a whole army of servants around in a huge castle.

"Now our happiness is complete," said the fisherman. "We'll see," replied his wife. Only a few days later, she was complaining again. "I really think," she said, "as you saved the life of a Prince, that the least he can give us is a royal palace. He probably has dozens. It won't be a problem. I really think that you and I should have a kingdom to rule."

The fisherman argued but in the end he gave in. Against his better judgement he made his way down to the shore and called the fish.
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The fisherman explained his wife’s wish. The carp splashed angrily in the water. The sky grew dark and the waves crashed onto the beach. “Very well,” said the fish. “Go home and you will find that your wish has been granted.”

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This time, when the fish heard what the fisherman had to say, a great storm blew up. The fisherman could hardly stay on his feet in the gusts of wind and spray. But when he went home, he found his wife in a royal palace, with a crown on her head and subjects waiting to see her. “Now at least,” he said to himself, “she cannot want for anything more.”

All was well for a week or two, until the morning when the fisherman’s wife woke up with a new idea in her head. “Ruling a few thousand people like this is nothing,” she declared. “I want to be ruler of the world!”

The fisherman groaned and hid under the sheets. But his wife was not to be moved. With a heavy heart, he set off for the seashore.

When the fisherman told the fish what his wife wanted now, thunder rumbled overhead. Above the crashing of the waves, the fisherman heard the fish reply.

“Go home. Your wife has what she deserves.”

When the man arrived home, he found his wife back in the hut where they had started. And they are still living there to this day.