



Learn English Through Stories

D Series

D11

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1. The Magic Tinderbox

A soldier came marching along the high road: “Left, right—left, right.” He had his rucksack on his back, and a sword at his side; he had been to the wars, and was now returning home.

As he walked on, he met a very frightful-looking old witch on the road. She stopped and said, “Good evening, soldier; you have a very fine sword, and a large rucksack, and you are a real soldier; so you shall have as much money as you wish.”

“Thank you, old witch,” said the soldier.

“Do you see that large tree,” said the witch, pointing to a tree which stood beside them. “Well, it is quite hollow inside, and you must climb to the top. When you are on the top you can see a large hole. Go down through that hole. I will tie a rope around your body. So, when you call out to me I will pull you up.”

“What do I have to do down there in the tree?” asked the soldier.

“Get money,” she replied.

“How do I get money?” asked the soldier.

The witch replied, “Listen carefully. When you reach the ground under the tree, you will find yourself in a large hall, lighted up by three hundred lamps; you will then see three doors, which can be easily opened because the keys are in all the locks. On entering the first of the chambers, to which these doors lead, you will see a large chest, standing in the middle of the floor, and on it a dog seated, with a pair of eyes as large as teacups. But you need not be at all afraid of him.



I will give you my blue checked apron, which you must spread on the floor, and then bravely grab the dog, and place him on it. You can then open the chest, and take from it as many pence as you please, they are only copper pence though.

But if you would rather have silver money, you must go into the second chamber. Here you will find another dog, with eyes as big as millwheels; but do not let that trouble you. Place him on my apron, and then take as much money as you please.

If, however, you like gold best, enter the third chamber, where there is another chest full of it. The dog who sits on this chest is very dreadful; his eyes are as big as a tower but do not mind him. If he also is placed on my apron, he cannot hurt you, and you may take from the chest whatever amount of gold you wish."

"This is not a bad story," said the soldier, "but what am I to give you, you old witch? Because, of course, you do not mean to tell me all this for nothing."

"No," said the witch, "but I do not ask for a single penny. Only promise to bring me an old tinderbox, which my grandmother left behind the last time she went down there."

"Very well; I promise. Now tie the rope around my body."

"Here it is," replied the witch; "and here is my blue checked apron."

As soon as the rope was tied, the soldier climbed up the tree. From the top, he looked at the hole and went down. When he reached the bottom he found everything as the witch had described. There was a large hall, in which many hundred lamps were all burning. Then he opened the first door. "Ah!" there sat the dog, with eyes as large as teacups, staring at him.

"You're a pretty fellow," said the soldier, seizing him, and placing him on the witch's apron, while he filled his pockets from the chest with as many pieces as they would hold. Then he closed the lid, seated the dog on it again, and walked into another chamber.

There sat the dog with eyes as big as millwheels.

"Hello Dog, you look bored, is everything okay?" said the soldier, "and then he seated him also on the apron, and opened the chest. But when he saw what a quantity of silver money it contained, he very quickly threw away all the coppers he had taken, and filled his pockets and his rucksack with nothing but silver.

Then he went into the third room, and there the dog was really hideous; his eyes were, truly, as big as towers, and they turned round and round in his head like wheels.

“Good morning,” said the soldier, touching his cap because he had never seen such a dog in his life. But after looking at him more closely, he thought he had been civil enough, so he placed him on the floor, and opened the chest. Good gracious, what a quantity of gold there was! There was enough gold to win the heart of any princess; enough gold to buy all shares of the London stock exchange. There was, indeed, an immense quantity. So the soldier now threw away all the silver money he had taken, and filled his pockets and his rucksack with gold instead; and not only his pockets and his rucksack but even his cap and boots, so that he could hardly walk.

He was really rich now; so he replaced the dog on the chest, closed the door, and called up through the tree, “Now pull me out, you old witch.”

“Have you got the tinder-box?” asked the witch.

“No; I admit I quite forgot it.” So he went back and fetched the tinderbox, and then the witch drew him up out of the tree, and he stood again in the high road, with his pockets, his rucksack, his cap, and his boots full of gold.

“What are you going to do with the tinder-box?” asked the soldier.

“That is nothing to do with you,” replied the witch; “you have the money, now give me the tinder-box.”

“I tell you what,” said the soldier, “if you don't tell me what you are going to do with it, I will draw my sword and cut off your head.”

“No,” said the witch.

The soldier immediately cut off her head, and there she lay on the ground.

Then he tied up all his money in her apron, and slung it on his back like a bundle, put the tinderbox in his pocket, and walked off to the nearest town. It was a very nice town, and he went to the best inn, and ordered a dinner of all his favourite dishes, for now, he was rich and had plenty of money.

The servant, who cleaned his boots, thought to himself, “How come? He is very rich but his boots are worse than mine,”

Obviously, these were the boots of a poor man.

The next day, however, he bought some good clothes and proper boots, so that our soldier soon became known as a fine gentleman. The people visited him, and told him all the good things to be seen in the town, and of the king's beautiful daughter, the princess.

"Where can I see her?" asked the soldier.

"She is not to be seen at all," they said, "she lives in a large copper castle, surrounded by walls and towers. Only the king can go in and out."

"Why cannot other people see her?" asked the soldier.

They explained, "An astrologer has predicted that she will marry a common soldier. And the king cannot accept such a marriage."

"I should like very much to see her," thought the soldier, but he could not obtain permission to do so. However, he passed a very pleasant time, went to the theatre, drove in the king's garden, and gave a great deal of money to the poor, which was very good of him; he remembered what it had been in olden times to be without a penny. Now he was rich, had fine clothes, and many friends, who all said he was a fine fellow and a real gentleman, and all this delighted him exceedingly. But his money would not last forever; and as he spent and gave away a great deal daily, and received none.

He found himself at last with only two pounds left. So he had to leave his elegant rooms, and live in a little room under the roof. Now he had no servants. He had to do everything himself: clean his boots; even mend them with a large needle; wash his clothes. None of his friends came to see him. There were too many stairs to climb up. Not enough nutrition in food.

One dark evening, he had not even a penny to buy a candle. Then all at once he remembered that there was a piece of candle stuck in the tinderbox. He found the tinderbox. He struck a few sparks from the flint and steel.

A door flew open and the dog with eyes as big as teacups, whom he had seen while down in the tree, stood before him, and said, "What orders, master?"

"Hello," said the soldier, "well this is a pleasant tinderbox if it brings me all I wish for."

"Bring me some money," said he to the dog.

Dog was gone in a moment, and quickly returned, carrying a large bag of coppers in his mouth.

The soldier very soon discovered after this the value of the tinderbox. If he struck the flint once, the dog who sat on the chest of copper money made his appearance; if twice, the dog came from the chest of silver; and if three times, the dog with eyes like towers, who watched over the gold.

The soldier had now plenty of money; he returned to his elegant rooms, and reappeared in his fine clothes, so that his friends knew him again directly, and liked him as before.

After a while, he began to think it was very strange that no one could get a look at the princess. "Everyone says she is very beautiful," thought he to himself, "but what is the use of that if she is to be shut up in a copper castle surrounded by so many towers?"

He thought a bit harder, "There must be a way to see her. Oh, I got the tinderbox."

Then he struck a light, and in a moment the dog, with eyes as big as teacups, stood before him.

"It is midnight," said the soldier, "yet I should very much like to see the princess, if only for a moment."

The dog disappeared instantly, and before the soldier could even look around, he returned with the princess. She was lying on the dog's back asleep, and looked so lovely. She was a real princess. The soldier could not help kissing her, true soldier as he was. Then the dog ran back with the princess.

In the morning, while at breakfast with the king and queen, she told them what a dream she had during the night, of a dog and a soldier, that she had ridden on the dog's back, and been kissed by the soldier.

"That is a very pretty story, indeed," said the queen. So the next night one of the old ladies of the court was set to watch by the princess's bed, to discover whether it really was a dream, or what else it might be.

The soldier longed very much to see the princess once more, so he sent for the dog again in the night to fetch her. The dog brought the princess as fast as he could. But the old lady put on water boots, and ran after him as quickly as he did. She found that he carried the princess into a large house. She thought it would help her to remember the place if she made a large cross on the door with a piece of chalk. Then she went home to bed. The dog dropped the princess back and came back.

He saw that a cross had been made on the door of the house, where the soldier lived. He took another piece of chalk and made crosses on all the doors in the town. So the lady-in-waiting might not be able to find out the right door.

Early the next morning the king and queen accompanied the lady and all the officers of the household, to see where the princess had been.

“Here it is,” said the king, when they came to the first door with a cross on it.

“No, my dear husband, it must be that one,” said the queen, pointing to a second door having a cross also.

“And here is one, and there is another!” they all exclaimed; for there were crosses on all the doors in every direction.

So they felt it would be useless to search any further. But the queen was a very clever woman; she could do a great deal more than merely ride in a carriage.

She took her large gold scissors, cut a piece of silk into squares, and made a neat little bag. This bag she filled with wheat flour, and tied it around the princess's neck. Then she cut a small hole in the bag so that the flour might be scattered on the ground as the princess went along. During the night, the dog came again and carried the princess on his back, and ran with her to the soldier. Now the soldier was deeply in love with the princess. He wished if I were a prince I would have married her.

However, the dog did not observe how the flour ran out of the bag from the castle wall to the soldier's house, and even up to the window, where he had climbed with the princess. Therefore in the morning the king and queen found out where their daughter had been, and the soldier was taken up and put in prison.

Oh, how dark and disagreeable it was as he sat there, and the people said to him, “Tomorrow you will be hanged.” It was not very pleasant news, and besides, he had left the tinderbox at the inn.

In the morning he could see through the tiny hole in the little window how the people were hastening out of the town to see him hanged. He heard the drums beating. He saw the soldiers marching. Everyone ran out to look at them. A shoemaker's boy was also running towards the crowd. He fell near the soldier's window. The soldier saw him and said, “Boy, can you help me?”

The boy said, “I am a poor cobbler's son, what can I do for you?”

The soldier said, "If you help me I will give you a coin of your choice: a copper, a silver or a gold."

The boy agreed and brought his tinderbox from his room and gave it to the soldier.

What happened next?

Outside the town, a large structure had been erected, around which stood the soldiers and several thousands of people. The king and the queen sat on splendid chairs opposite the judges and the whole council.

The soldier already stood on the ladder and was going to place the rope around the soldier's neck. When the soldier shouted, "I am prepared to die but I have my last wish, please grant my wish."

The wish was granted.

He wished very much to smoke a pipe, as it would be the last pipe he should ever smoke in the world. The king could not refuse this request, so the soldier took his tinderbox, and struck fire, once, twice, thrice, and there in a moment stood all the dogs: the one with eyes as big as teacups, the one with eyes as large as mill-wheels, and the third, whose eyes were like towers.

"Help me now, that I may not be hanged," cried the soldier.

And the dogs fell on the judges and all the councillors, seized one by the legs, and another by the nose, and tossed them many feet high in the air, so that they fell and were smashed to pieces.

"I will not be touched," said the king. But the largest dog seized him, as well as the queen, and threw them after the others. Then the king's soldiers and all the people were afraid, and cried, "Good soldier, you shall be our king, and you shall marry the beautiful princess."


So they placed the soldier in the king's carriage, and the three dogs ran on in front and cried "Hurrah!" and the little boys whistled through their fingers. The princess came out of the copper castle, and became queen, which was very pleasing to her. The wedding festivities lasted a whole week. People as well as dogs were served delicious food. A little cobbler, the shoemaker's son had six coins in his hand: two coppers, two silvers and two gold coins.

The astrologer was rewarded for his correct prediction: the princess would marry a common soldier.

Well, he was a common soldier if you ignore the tinderbox.

2. Grammar page

Here are some masculine and feminine nouns for male and female animals.



Animal	Male	Female
chicken	rooster	hen
cattle	bull	cow
deer	buck	doe
donkey	jack	jenny
duck	drake	duck
fox	fox	vixen
goose	gander	goose
horse	stallion	mare
lion	lion	lioness
sheep	ram	ewe
tiger	tiger	tigress



Nouns that end in **-ess** and **-ress** often belong to the feminine gender. For example:

actress
lioness
princess

stewardess
tigress
waitress

Many nouns are used for both males and females.



doctors



dancers



scientists



hairdressers

Word File

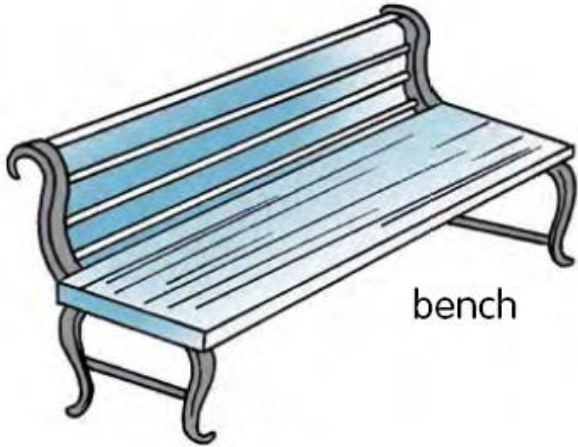
Nouns like these are used for both males and females:

accountants	parents
artists	managers
designers	pupils
engineers	singers
lawyers	teachers



We call these nouns **common-gender** nouns.

Words for things that are neither male nor female are called **neuter nouns**.



bench



leaves



mirror



fire



waterfall

Word File

Here are some neuter nouns:

ball	forest
building	gymnasium
broom	playground
cake	rock
computer	sky
card	socks
floor	wind