



**Learn English Through
Stories**
E Series

E17

**Adapted and modified by
Kulwant Singh Sandhu**

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1. Flirting

By Vinayak Nadkarni

“Has the bus E104 already left?” I breathlessly reached the bus stop and asked the man standing there.

He was taken by surprise, as if I asked him for his wallet. After a pause he replied, “No.”

I heaved a sigh of relief. As I returned to my normal breathing speed, I asked again, “I see your tag, do you also work for Reuters Software Solutions?”

He replied, “Yes, I do.”

His voice was strong yet polite. Dressed in neat formal clothes, he was clean-shaven and looked like a well-cultured man. I quickly glanced at his fingers. No rings. All this is fine but what’s with these short answers. I wondered if he was simply shy by nature or just plain arrogant. I was also not one of those who would give up easily. There’s something strange with women like me - when someone ignores us, we tend to get more attracted to them. It’s a classic flaw introduced by the naughty Almighty, but still I could not resist talking to him further.

“Hi, my name is Naina, I joined RSS recently.” I extended my right hand hoping to involve him in a conversation.

“Oh, that’s good to know, I am Abhishek.” He rendered a rather weak handshake and did not bother to extend the conversation.

“So which department you work for, Abhi? I guess I can call you that, right?” I continued, moving closer to him. Wow! He smelled great as well. I was hoping we at least end up having a couple of dates, if not more.

“I am in the training department; actually, I am one of the coordinators.” After a small pause, he continued, ‘And ya, Abhi is fine.’

With those words, he looked into my eyes for the first time. For me, that’s all it takes.

Once someone looks into my eyes, they get lost as if they are hypnotized by a magician. The eye contact lasted exactly five seconds before our brief, interesting little moment was abruptly ended by the arrival of the bus. Needless to say, I sat next to him.

After the brief quixotic moment at the bus stop, I was sure that he would be the one to restart the conversation.

“How about you, Naina? Which department do you work for and how do you find our RSS?”

There you go! It was the magic of my earthen-pot eyes and my charm that was putting those words in his mouth. I gave him more details than he asked for, talking about my department, work, colleagues - and I did not stop there. I also hinted that I am the girl to party with. He listened with great interest but I could also sense that he was a shy and quiet person.

Time is heartless. When you want it to move slower, it flies and when you are waiting for something important, it crawls. Though we travelled almost twelve kilometres for about thirty-five minutes, it felt like less than five minutes. We reached the office and went to our desks. For both of us, the day had started on a bright note.

After I reached the office, I went to my desk, checked my emails, had coffee with my colleagues and then returned to my desk. Being a new member, I had very few responsibilities to handle. I was almost through with my day's work within first couple of hours. My crazy mind was recollecting the time spent with Abhi and my logical mind was telling me it could take more effort from my side to make things work. My thought flow was disturbed by the loud voices I heard from the corner of the room. I put my head up to see what was happening. A muscular man, with his shirt torn, was walking out. Curiosity took over and I went to investigate. I learnt that he was involved in an argument with one of the staff members and had left the scene furious. I saw him going towards the men's room. I casually walked in that direction and he came out. He looked very confused as if he didn't know where he wanted to go. Being a responsible employee, I stepped in.

“Excuse me sir, may I help you?” I asked him.

“Er ... I don't know. I am not sure why I am here. Is there any artists' association or something like that?” he asked.

I was right, he was confused - but even more than I thought. There was no mention of the events that had transpired minutes earlier. I chose to carry on with the momentum.

“Yes, but not in this office. It's just a couple of blocks away. I can help you with that.”

“Oh! That's so sweet of you. I am Rohan, a columnist for one of the monthly magazines, called *The Impression*.” He introduced himself by extending his left hand.

“Hi, I am Naina. I... “But before I could complete my sentence, I was struck dumb by our handshake. What a firm handshake, strong and confident. I could see the veins distinctly visible on his strong forearm. Either he was very angry or he hits the gym regularly. I continued after returning to my senses. “I am glad to help you. I was going out for lunch anyway. So you are a columnist for *The Impression*? What do you write about, Rohan?” Unwillingly, I ended the handshake and walked with him towards the exit door. I had gently mentioned about having lunch as well. I was curious to see if he was sharp enough to catch it. I had heard that physically strong people are usually dumb.

“It’s mostly philosophy, Naina. We can talk about it more over the lunch,” he replied with his head slightly tilted towards left. His left hand stretched out to open the door for me and there was a smile on his face which read: *you are so gorgeous!*

It was hard to believe he was the same angry young man from a few minutes ago. He took me to a Bavarian restaurant. It was expensive but worth it. He asked me whether I was in a hurry to get back to office. I assured him that I was not. So we walked all the way back instead of hiring a taxi. I left him at the Vintage Artists’ Association and returned to office.

After a rather eventful day, I was sitting at my desk playing solitaire. The clock showed 6.10 p.m. I was waiting for my cellphone to buzz. Usually it beeps between 6 p.m. and 6.07 p.m. Just then, my phone beeped and the message appeared on the screen: *Cm out baby, I wil b there in 5 mins.*

Involuntarily, a smile appeared on my face and I gave a *blow-kiss* in reply. Within five minutes, the white Volkswagen arrived. I stepped in and kissed Gautam on his forehead.

“So how was your day, sweetheart?” he asked with the same enthusiasm, same undying love and same everlasting care as always.

“Wonderful, honey. Let’s grab some dinner on the way,” I replied.

“Yes, dear, we don’t have time to cook tonight, I am all excited about our big trip starting tomorrow. Finally you can meet my childhood friend!”

We stopped at McDonalds. He ordered two Happy Meals for takeaway. The person at the counter asked, “What would you like to have as a drink, sir?”

He replied, “I will take organic milk.” He turned to me and asked, “How about you, sweetie?”

I said, "Diet Coke."

He ordered, "So one organic milk for me and a Diet Coke for my *wife*."

We reached home and ate our dinner watching some sport I am barely interested in. My husband, Gautam, tried to explain to me how different rules apply in different formats. I acted as if I cared. I saw his face brighten with excitement when he thought one of the rules was particularly tricky. I nodded but hardly listened.

I love him. He doesn't know how much. After dinner, we finished packing and Gautam was as excited as a little kid whose summer holidays were about to start after long-and-hard exams. Once he slept, I poured myself a glass of red Bordeaux wine. It takes a lot out of you when you meet different people and try to connect with each of them emotionally. I opened the balcony door of our apartment and stood there staring at the dark sky. Even some of the stars which were usually visible were missing. It was completely dark. I took a couple of large sips and revisited my day in my mind. So it was a day of three persons. Usually it would be two, but today was three. I took one more sip and sat on the chair with my legs up on the table. A cold breeze had picked up. Unknowingly my eyes got moist. I gulped my sorrow along with my wine. Abhi, Rohan, Gautam - I am living a fake life but I chose it. Dr Reddy's words crossed my mind as I closed my eyes and took a deep breath.

"You have to make a choice, Naina. You can leave Gautam here and we will take care of him like any other patient, or you can take him with you." It sounded insensitive but doctors can't be diplomatic.

"He is the only one for me, I love him. I want to take him, doctor."

The doctor explained, 'I understand the emotions behind those words, Naina, but it's very complicated. We have observed him over a month now and clearly he has shown us two distinct personalities. Some days even three. The accident has made him develop an MPD. Though it was an accident, Gautam thinks he is responsible for the death of his childhood friend Abhishek. Every morning he wakes up thinking he is Abhishek. In some of the situations where he is put under stress, there is another angry personality, Rohan. As we discussed earlier, I have no idea where this personality has come from. The most important thing is that Gautam's memory is limited only to the day before the accident.'

“Yes, doctor, but multiple personality disorders have been successfully handled by treating every personality with equal respect and attention. Proper love and care make things work,” I argued with hope.

The doctor replied agitatedly, “Yeah, but you don’t know what you are signing up for, Naina. There can be more personalities than we have seen so far. Rohan can be more dangerous and destructive. It demands round-the-clock attention and, more than that, you are putting people around him in trouble as well. Naina, you are flirting dangerously with life!”

“I understand, doctor, but what’s life without an impossible challenge? I can do it. I will get the chance to meet two different persons every day. I will make sure he will get the attention that he needs,” I said.

“Naina,” the doctor warned, “you have to keep him engaged in every personality, and you have to care for him, make life interesting for him in each of them.”

“Doctor, I love Gautam - I love him in every form. I love the challenge of making him fall in love every day or rather twice a day.”

I knew it was not for a day or a month. It could take years, or worse - it might never end. Before taking Gautam with me from the hospital, I had to do a lot of preparation. I spoke to those in RSS to carry out this drama daily; I checked with the Vintage Artists’ Association about occasional visits whenever Rohan comes up. More than that, I had prepared my mind to act, to involve, to love.

The cold breeze had now become even colder and they broke my chain of thoughts and brought me back to the present. The tears had soaked my cheeks and the wine glass was empty. I went inside, washed my face and went to bed. I had to get ready again to meet Abhishek the following morning.

“Has the bus E104 already left?” I breathlessly reached the bus stop and asked the man, Abhishek, standing there.

2. Jokes

Sick Leave

I urgently needed a few days off work, but I knew the Boss would not allow me to take leave. I thought that maybe if I acted 'Crazy' then he would tell me to take a few days off. So I hung upside down on the ceiling and made funny noises. My co-worker (who's blonde) asked me what I was doing. I told her that I was pretending to be a light bulb, So that the Boss would think I was 'Crazy' and give me a few days off.

A few minutes later the Boss came into the office and asked, "What are you doing?"

"I am a light bulb," replied I.

He said, "You are clearly stressed out. Go home and recuperate for a couple of days." I jumped down and walked out of the office.

When my co-worker (the blonde) followed me,

The Boss asked her, "Where do you think you're going?"

She said, "I'm going home too; I can't work in the dark!"

Crazy not Equal to Stupid

One truck driver was doing his usual delivery to IMH (Institute of mental health).

He discovered a flat tyre when he was about to go home. He jacked up the truck and took the flat tyre down. When he was about to fix the spare tyre, he accidentally dropped all the bolts into the drain. As he can't fish the bolts out, he started to panic. One patient happened to walk past and asked the driver what happened. The driver thought to himself, since there's nothing much he can do; he told the patient the whole incident. The patient laughed at him and said, "Can't even fix such a simple problem.... no wonder you are destined to be a truck driver... Here's what you can do, take one bolt each from the other 3 tyres and fix it onto this tyre. Then drive to the nearest workshop and replace the missing ones, easy as that,"

The driver was very impressed and asked "You're so smart but why are you here at the IMH?"

Patient replied: "Hello, I stay here because I'm crazy not **stupid!**"

3. Grammar Page

Quantifying Determiners

Words such as **many**, **much** and **several** tell about quantity without giving an exact number. They are called **quantifying determiners**.

Some quantifying determiners are used only **with plural nouns**. They are **few**, **a few**, **fewer**, **many**, **several** and **both**.

Few people have been to the moon.	We went to Europe many years ago.
A few children are absent today.	Several friends went with me.
I have fewer CDs than you.	Both brothers have dark hair.

Some quantifying determiners can be used **with plural nouns and nouns that show no exact number**. They are **all**, **half**, **some**, **enough**, **a lot of**, **lots of**, **more**, **most**, **other** and **plenty of**.

All children seem to like chocolate.
We've eaten all the food in the refrigerator.
Half the balloons have burst already.
Jenny spends half her time watching television.
Some girls like to play football.
Can I have some water?
Do you have enough books to read?
I don't have enough material to make a dress.
A lot of people like burgers.
There's a lot of fruit in the bowl.
They went to a park with lots of animals in it.
You will gain weight if you eat lots of ice cream.
You've got more brothers than I have.
There's more space in my room than yours.
Most teachers enjoy teaching.
Most lemonade contains sugar.
He likes playing with other children.
They had never tasted other food.
Plenty of my friends have seen the Harry Potter movies.
Drink plenty of water every day.

Some determiners can be used only **with nouns of no exact number**. They are **little** (*meaning not much*), **a little** (*meaning some*), **much** and **less**.

We have little time to play.

There's a little rice left.

Does the teacher give you much homework?

I've got less ice cream than you.

Some quantifying determiners can only be used **with singular nouns**. They are **another**, **every** and **each**.

I need another pencil.

He likes every child in the class.

Each house is painted a different color.

The quantifying determiners **either** and **neither** refer to **two people or things**.

I don't like either drink.

Neither sister has long hair.

Some quantifying determiners are used **with singular, plural, or nouns of no exact quantity**. They are **any**, **no**, **no other** and **the other**.

Any dog will bite if it's afraid.

Are there any good books in the library?

There wasn't any space in the cupboard.

No child likes getting hurt.

There were no pencils in the drawer.

We've done no work today.

There is no other way of solving the problem.

She has no other friends.

We have no other food in the refrigerator.

Do you like this picture or the other picture?

The other boys laughed at him.

I like the other music better.

