



**Learn English Through
Stories**
E Series

E21

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1. Tiger My Friend Part 2

By Ruskin Bond

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The herdsmen were naturally very upset when they discovered that a buffalo was missing. And next day, when Nandu and Chottu came running home to say that they had found the half-eaten carcass near the marsh, the men of the village grew angry. They knew that once the tiger realised how easy it was to kill their animals, he would make a habit of doing so.

Kundan Singh, Nandu's father, who owned the buffalo, said he would go after the tiger himself.

"It's too late now," said his wife. "You should never have let the buffalo roam on its own."

"He had been on his own before. This is the first time the tiger has attacked one of our animals."

"He must have been hungry," said Chottu.

"Well, we are hungry too," said Kundan Singh. "Our best buffalo – the only male in the herd. It will cost me at least two thousand rupees to buy another."

"The tiger will kill again," said Chottu's father. "Many years ago there was a tiger who did the same thing. He became a cattle-killer."

"Should we send for the hunters?"

"No, they are clumsy fools. The tiger will return to the carcass for another meal. You have a gun?"

Kundan Singh smiled proudly and, going to a cupboard, brought out a double-barrelled gun. It looked ancient!

"My father bought it from an Englishman," he said. "How long ago was that?"

"About the time I was born."

“And have you ever used it?” asked Chottu’s father, looking at the old gun with distrust.

“A few years ago I let it off at some bandits. Don’t you remember? When I fired, they did not stop running until they had crossed the river.”

“Yes, but did you hit anyone?”

“I would have, if someone’s goat hadn’t got in the way.”

“We had roast meat that night,” said Nandu.

Accompanied by Chottu’s father and several others, Kundan set out for the marsh, where, without shifting the buffalo’s carcass – for they knew the tiger would not come near them if he suspected a trap – they made another tree-platform in the branches of a tall tree some thirty feet from the kill.

Late that evening, Kundan Singh and Chottu’s father settled down for the night on their rough platform.

Several hours passed and nothing but a jackal was seen by the watchers. And then, just as the moon came up over the distant hills, the two men were startled by a low “A- oonh”, followed by a suppressed, rumbling growl.

Kundan tightened his grip on the old gun. There was complete silence for a minute or two, then the sound of stealthy footfalls on the dead leaves beneath the tree.

A moment later the tiger walked out into the moonlight and stood over his kill.

At first Kundan could do nothing. He was completely taken aback by the size of the tiger. Chottu’s father had to nudge him, and then Kundan quickly put the gun to his shoulder, aimed at the tiger’s head, and pressed the trigger.

The gun went off with a flash and two loud bangs, as Kundan fired both barrels. There was a tremendous roar. The tiger rushed at the tree and tried to leap into the branches. Fortunately, the platform had been built at a good height, and the tiger was unable to reach it.

He roared again and then bounded off into the forest.

“What a tiger!” exclaimed Kundan, half in fear and half in admiration.

“You missed him completely,” said Chottu’s father.

“I did not,” said Kundan. “You heard him roar! Would he have been so angry if he had not been hit?”

“Well, if you have only wounded him, he will turn into a man-eater – and where will that leave us?”

“He won’t be back,” said Kundan. “He will leave this area.”

During the next few days the tiger lay low. He did not go near the marsh except when it was very dark and he was very thirsty. The herdsmen and villagers decided that the tiger had gone away. Nandu and Chottu – usually accompanied by other village youths, and always carrying their small hand-axes – began bringing the buffaloes to the marsh again during the day; they were careful not to let any of them stray far from the herd.

But one day, while the boys were taking the herd home, one of the buffaloes lagged behind. Nandu did not realise that an animal was missing until he heard an agonised bellow behind him. He glanced over his shoulder just in time to see the tiger dragging the buffalo into a clump of bamboo. The herd sensed the danger, and the buffaloes snorted with fear as they hurried along the forest path. To urge them forward and to warn his friends, Nandu cupped his hands to his mouth and gave a yodelling call.

The buffaloes bellowed, the boys shouted, and the birds flew shrieking from the trees. Together they stampeded out of the forest. The villagers heard the thunder of hoofs, and saw the herd coming home amidst clouds of dust.

“The tiger!” called Nandu. “He is back! He has taken another buffalo!”

“He is afraid of us no longer,” thought Chottu. And now everyone will hate him and do their best to kill him.

“Did you see where he went?” asked Kundan Singh, hurrying up

to them. 'I remember the place,' said Nandu.

"Then there is no time to lose," said Kundan. "I will take my gun and a few men, and wait near the bridge. The rest of you must beat the jungle from this side and drive the tiger towards me. He will not escape this time, unless he swims across the river!"

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Kundan took his men and headed for the suspension bridge over the river, while the others, guided by Nandu and Chottu, went to the spot where the tiger had seized the buffalo.

The tiger was still eating when he heard the men coming. He had not expected to be disturbed so soon. With an angry 'Whoof!' he bounded into the jungle, and watched the men – there were some twenty of them – through a screen of leaves and tall grass.

The men carried hand drums slung from their shoulders, and some carried sticks and spears. After a hurried consultation, they strung out in a line and entered the jungle beating their drums.

The tiger did not like the noise. He went deeper into the jungle. But the men came after him, banging away on their drums and shouting at the top of their voices. They advanced singly or in pairs, but nowhere were they more than fifteen yards apart.

The tiger could easily have broken through this slowly advancing semi-circle of men – one swift blow from his paw would have felled the strongest of them – but his main object was to get away from the noise. He hated and feared the noise made by humans.

He was not a man-eater and he would not attack a man unless he was very angry or very frightened; and as yet he was neither. He had eaten well, and he would have liked to rest – but there would be no rest for him until the men ceased their tremendous clatter and din.

Nandu and Chottu kept close to their elders, knowing it wouldn't be safe to go back on their own. Chottu felt sorry for the tiger.

“Do they have to kill the tiger?” he asked. “If they drive him across the river he won’t come back, will he?”

“Who knows?” said Nandu. “He has found it’s easy to kill our buffaloes, and when he’s hungry he’ll come again. We have to live too.”

Chottu was silent. He could see no way out for the tiger.

For an hour the villagers beat the jungle, shouting, drumming, and trampling the undergrowth.

The tiger had no rest. Whenever he was able to put some distance between himself and the men, he would sink down in some shady spot to rest; but, within a few minutes, the trampling and drumming would come nearer, and with an angry snarl he would get up again and pad northwards, along the narrowing strip of jungle, towards the bridge across the river.

It was about noon when the tiger finally came into the open. The boys had a clear view of him as he moved slowly along, now in the open with the sun glinting on his glossy side, now in the shade or passing through the shorter grass. He was still out of range of Kundan Singh’s gun, but there was no way in which he could retreat.

He disappeared among some bushes but soon reappeared to retrace his steps. The beaters had done their work well. The tiger was now only about a hundred-and-fifty yards from the place where Kundan Singh waited.

The beat had closed in, the men were now bunched together. They were making a great noise, but nothing moved.

Chottu, watching from a distance, wondered: Has he slipped through the beaters?

And in his heart he hoped so.

Tins clashed, drums beat, and some of the men poked into the reeds along the river bank with their spears or bamboo sticks. Perhaps one of these thrusts found its mark, because at last the tiger was roused, and with an angry, desperate snarl he charged out of the reeds, splashing his way through an inlet of mud and water.

Kundan Singh fired and missed.

The tiger rushed forward, making straight for the only way across the river – the suspension bridge that crossed it, providing a route into the hills beyond.

The suspension bridge swayed and trembled as the big tiger lurched across it.

Kundan fired again, and this time the bullet grazed the tiger's shoulder.

The tiger bounded forward, lost his footing on the unfamiliar, slippery planks of the swaying bridge, and went over the side, falling headlong into the swirling water of the river.

He rose to the surface once, but the current took him under and away, and before long he was lost to view.

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At first the villagers were glad – they felt their buffaloes were safe. Then they began to feel that something had gone out of their lives, out of the life of the forest. The forest had been shrinking year by year, as more people had moved into the area; but as long as the tiger had been there and they had heard him roar at night, they had known there was still some distance between them and the ever-spreading towns and cities. Now that the tiger had gone, it was as though a protector had gone.

The boys lay flat on their stomachs on their little mud island, and watched the monsoon clouds gathering overhead.

“The king of the jungle is dead,” said Nandu. “There are no more tigers”

“There have to be tigers,” said Chottu. “Can there be an India without tigers?”

The river had carried the tiger many miles away from his old home, from the forest he had always known, and brought him ashore on the opposite bank of the river, on a strip of warm yellow sand. Here he lay in the sun, quite still, breathing slowly.

Vultures gathered and waited at a distance, some of them perching on the branches of nearby trees. But the tiger was more drowned than hurt, and as the river water oozed out of his mouth, and the warm sun made new life throb through his body, he stirred and stretched, and his glazed eyes came into focus. Raising his head, he saw trees and tall grass.

Slowly he heaved himself off the ground and moved at a crouch to where the tall grass waved in the afternoon breeze. Would he be hunted again, and shot at? There was no smell of man. The tiger moved forward with greater confidence.

There was, however, another smell in the air, a smell that reached back to the time when he was young and fresh and full of vigour; a smell that he had almost forgotten but could never really forget – the smell of a tigress. He lifted his head, and new life surged through his limbs. He gave a deep roar, “A- oonh!” and moved purposefully through the tall grass. And the roar came back to him, calling him, urging him forward; a roar that meant there would be more tigers in the land!

That night, half asleep on his cot, Chottu heard the tigers roaring to each other across the river, and he recognised the roar of his own tiger. And from the vigour of its roar he knew that it was alive and safe; and he was glad.

“Let there be tigers forever,” he whispered into the darkness before he fell asleep.

2. Grammar Page

Verbs and Tenses Continue

Some verbs that end in **y** have a **vowel before the y**. Just add an **s** at the end of these words to make the third person singular form.

buy - buys	say - says	pray - prays
pay - pays	annoy - annoys	stay - stays

Mom **buys** bread at the supermarket.

Mr. Carter **pays** all his bills with a credit card.

My friend **says** he has a salt-water aquarium.

She **annoys** me with her silly jokes.

Anna **stays** with her aunt on weekends.

If the subject of a verb is a **plural noun**, such as “Mom and Dad” or “our teachers”, use a **plural verb**. Do not add **s**, **es** or **ies** to plural verbs. Plural verbs are also used with the pronouns **I**, **we**, **you** and **they**.

Mom and Dad **love** us.

My sisters **listen** to music a lot.

The stars **shine** brightly on a clear night.

Some people **drink** tea.

I **like** juicy hamburgers.

We **learn** interesting things at school.

You all **know** the words to this song, children.

They always **walk** home from school together.

Suppose the subject of a noun refers to a **group of people**. Depending on the meaning of the sentence, you may use either a singular or a plural verb.

The audience was enjoying the play.

The audience have all gone home.

The class has thirty students.

The class are handing in their papers.

The band is performing until midnight.

The band were arguing among themselves.

Notes

Words that refer to groups of people or animals are called **collective nouns**. Here are some more examples:

crowd	committee	herd
crew	litter	flock