



# Learn English Through Stories

K Series

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## Chapter 4: Flying

Last summer, we went on an aeroplane. I'd been on an aeroplane loads of times before of course, but for Charlie this was eye-poppingly exciting. 'Airlane!' he kept shouting at breakfast until Mum told him to "shhh" — and eat his Cheerios.

All the way to the airport Charlie wriggled and shuffled and shouted and moaned until even Dad said that if Charlie didn't shut up, we'd turn round and go home again. I knew he didn't mean it - he says that all the time - and maybe Charlie knew it too because he started blowing raspberries. We all ignored him and I looked out of the window.

The airport was busier than a supermarket after school. There were grown-ups everywhere but none of them looked happy about going on holiday. Children were running around, riding on suitcases and lying on trollies. Mum held on to the back of our jumpers and pulled us close.



We joined the back of a big queue that wriggled like a lumpy, grumpy snake towards desk number 68. In front of us were a big woman and a skinny man. The big woman was sitting on a little wheelee suitcase, her bottom curving down on both sides until it was nearly touching the floor. The case was squished and the zip was coming undone with a piece of red cloth was sticking out.

It reminded me of Magic Melvyn, the magician at my last birthday party. He had pulled a red hanky out of Charlie's ear, but Charlie doesn't like surprises so he thumped him. Magic Melvyn went really red then, just like his hanky, and Dad shouted so loud that some of my friends started crying, too.

But I was telling you about our trip on the aeroplane. In front of us, the skinny man took some money from the woman and walked off towards the shops.

Charlie couldn't stop staring. 'Mummy,' he said, pointing. 'Mummy. Mummy. Mummy!'

'For goodness sake. What is it, Charlie?'

'Dat suitcase is going, "Ow, ow, is hurting, peas don't sit on me!"'

The woman didn't turn round but she moved her head a bit and I could tell she was listening.

'Shh!' said Mum. 'That's a very rude thing to say about me, Charlie. We don't say things like that, it's not kind or polite.'

'Mum,' I said, 'he didn't mean you, he meant...'

'No he definitely meant me, Harry,' said Mum.

She turned to Charlie. 'Just wait nicely and you can have some crisps on the plane.'

'Cripps! Cripps! Cripps'' said Charlie, and he plonked his bottom on the floor. I told you he was a rude boy.

I tried to ignore him. I was just trying to get the wheels to all go in a straight line on our trolley when I heard a very loud, very angry voice.

'Look what your kid has done!'

I looked up. The big lady was standing up now with her hands on her hips. Her face was all crumpled and on her huge, purple bottom lip you could see a disgusting bubble of spit.

I looked down at Charlie and at first I thought he was sitting on a rug. Except that this one appeared to be made of knickers. Red pants, blue pants, black pants, stripy pants. Charlie had chosen a pair with spots on like a leopard and was stretching them over his head. Although he didn't need to stretch them much because they were enormous, like a big spotty tent. You could just see his grinning face through a leg hole.

'Charlie!' scolded Mum. 'Put those back!'

The big woman snatched her pants back and started to stuff them all through the broken zip.

'I'm so sorry,' said my Mum, 'I think he was just being curious. Charlie, say sorry to the lady.'

'Sorry lady,' said naughty Charlie, not sounding at all sorry.



'People like you need to keep your children under control,' said the woman.  
'Now hang on a second,' said Mum, 'he was only...'

But Dad put his hand on her arm and in a flash he stepped in front of Mum and scooped Charlie up into his arms.

'He's very sorry and we are too. Aren't we? Cheeky Charlie?' He smiled his Big Daddy smile and ruffled Charlie's hair.

Later on, as we walked across the tarmac towards the plane, we found ourselves behind the funny couple again. They headed for the front staircase; Mum steered us all towards the back.

On board, the seats were nearly full. It cost us fifteen quid to get on first,' grumbled Dad as we waited for people to sit down. 'Fat lot of good that turned out to be.'

'I explained as fast as I could,' replied Mum in the voice she uses when she's going to get really cross. 'If someone had been watching Charlie properly this morning, he wouldn't have put all those knives and forks into my handbag, would he?' And then Mummy wouldn't have had to answer all those questions when the security alarm went off? She pulled me to one side.

'Come on Harry, let's sit here.'

We sat down with Dad and Charlie finding a place several rows further forward. Mum gave me a sweet from her handbag.

'Shall I give one to the boys?' she asked me. I shook my head.

'No, I agree. These sweets are only for girls.'

The flight was very long and very boring. Later, after they'd given us our lunch, Mum nudged me. 'Look at that,' she said smiling. One of the pretty waitresses was talking to Charlie. Dad was looking at the waitress, grinning.

Just then she got up to let someone past - it was the big lady. Inside the aeroplane, she looked bigger than ever: her legs bish-bashed people's elbows and bumped shoulders. She was grabbing the top of each seat as if she was climbing a ladder.

She pushed her way past the waitress who nearly fell into Dad's lap but she didn't say sorry. 'What a vile woman,' I heard Mum mutter.

Charlie pulled on Dad's sleeve. He mouthed the word 'toilets' to us; Mum pointed towards the front of the plane and off they went.

Dad told us later what happened next. There was a queue for the toilet so while Dad chatted to another waitress Charlie had gone exploring and found the skinny man fast asleep with his mouth open, like he was at the dentist. The seat next to him was empty, but on the tray in front of it was the big woman's dinner, all ready to eat.

I bet you can guess what happened. You're right: Charlie plonked himself down and started eating. First he ate the chocolate pudding - but he was still hungry. Then he ate the biscuits - but he was still hungry. He even ate the carrots. Then he pushed all the mashed potato onto the tray with his fingers and tried to make a 'well' for the gravy, like Mum does for the egg when she's making a cake. But he must have left a gap because the gravy ran out when he poured it on top. Only the tray stopped it dribbling all over the seat.

I'll tell you one thing Charlie didn't eat: the lump of cheese. He doesn't like cheese but he thought the skinny man would. Or perhaps he thought it would give him funny dreams, like Mum says. Whatever he was thinking, Charlie plonked this big lump of smelly yellow cheese straight into the skinny man's mouth.



Has anyone ever dropped cheese into your mouth when you are asleep? Me neither, but I bet it's not nice. The skinny man didn't like it because he woke up, coughing and spluttering.

Other passengers around started to say 'There, there,' and offered him water. But then he started saying some very rude words so they said 'OK mate, calm down,' and 'I've got children here, do you mind?' and they went back to their dinners.

That's when Dad noticed Charlie, smeared with chocolate and mashed potato. Dad did that scoopy-uppy thing again with Charlie, and just in time because the big woman had just returned to her seat. Can you guess how happy she was to find that her dinner was gone?

Mum said later that the woman was 'apoplectic.'

'Can I have a popple lectic?' asked Charlie.

'What does it mean, Dad?' I asked.

'It means you are very, very angry,' said Dad.

'Very very very very very very very angry,' repeated Charlie. 'Very very very very -'

'That's enough, Charlie,' said Dad, ruffling his hair. 'You've got us into quite enough trouble already today, Your Cheekiness.'

Charlie wasn't listening. How do I know? Because he did one more very naughty thing I'll tell you about before I go and have my tea.

It happened when we were waiting for our bags. Dad said he was desperate for a wee so Mum, Charlie and I waited by the conveyor belt. Have you ever seen one? They're really cool; they go round and round with the luggage and if you're lucky some of the bags fall off at the corners.

This conveyor belt came out through a hole in the wall, went around a big loop, and then disappeared again. The holes were covered in long flaps, a bit like the doors at the back of supermarkets where you're not supposed to go.

I'll tell you about Charlie getting lost in the supermarket another time, but the important bit of that story is that they found him on the other side of the flaps, trying to open a packet of Wotsits.



Maybe he thought he'd find some more Wotsits in the airport? I looked up to see him lying on his tummy on a big blue suitcase, with his arms and legs stretched out like Superman. He disappeared through the flaps head first with his feet kicking a little bit as if he wanted to go faster.

'Mum! Look at Charlie!' And I pointed.

'What?' said Mum, who was reading her book.

'He went through the hole on a bag!' I explained. Mum told me not to move an inch and she started running towards the end of the belt.

Before she could get there, the flaps started to lift up to reveal a big black case... and on it sat Charlie! He was cross-legged, just like you have to do in assembly, and looked very pleased with himself. You must admit it was a clever trick to swap cases so quickly.



But as we watched, a big pair of hairy arms came through the flaps and pulled him back! I screamed. I heard Mum scream too, and she started climbing onto the conveyor belt.

'Mummy watch out, he'll get you too!' I yelled.

But Mum didn't go through the flaps. Instead she climbed right over the belt and was now in the middle of the loop, clambering over all the adverts.

She had one leg on each side of a woman holding a plate of salad when a door next to the belt opened. Through it came a giant man in blue overalls, carrying a grinning Charlie in his arms. The man pressed the big red button on the wall. The conveyor belt made a groaning noise and stopped.

Mum must have been quite tired from her climbing because she was really red and sweaty by the time she got back to me, just as Dad got back from the toilet.

'What's the matter with you?' asked Dad. 'Don't even go there,' said Mum.

I pointed at the hole in the wall to help Dad. 'Just don't even go there.'



'Charlie been playing up again, has he?' said Dad. Hair ruffle. 'What a Cheeky Charlie you are.'