



Learn English Through Stories

H Series

H17

**Adapted and modified by
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Kailash Chowdhary's Jewel

By Satyajit Ray

Part 3

The next day was Sunday. Feluda spent most of his time pacing in his room. At around four, I saw him change from his comfortable kurta-pyjama into trousers and a shirt.

'Are you going out?' I asked.

'Yes. I thought it might be a good idea to take a look at the lilies in the Victoria Memorial. You can come with me, if you like.'

We took a tram and got off at the crossing of Lower Circular Road. Then we walked slowly to the south gate of the Memorial. Not many people came here. In the evening, particularly, most people went to the front of the building, to the north gate.

We slipped in through the gate Twenty yards to the left, there stood rows of lilies. The blue beryl was supposed to be kept the next day under the first row of these. The sight of these flowers— beautiful though it was—suddenly gave me the creeps.

'Didn't your father have a pair of binoculars, which he'd taken to Darjeeling?' Feluda asked. 'Yes, he's still got them.'

'Good.'

We spent about fifteen minutes walking in the open ground surrounding the building. Then we took a taxi to the Lighthouse cinema. I got out with Feluda, feeling quite puzzled. Why did he suddenly want to see a film? But no, he was actually interested in a bookshop opposite the cinema. After leafing through a couple of other books, he picked up a fat stamp catalogue and began thumbing through its pages. I peered over his shoulder and whispered, 'Are you suspecting Abanish Babu?'

'Well, if he's so passionately fond of stamps, I'm sure he wouldn't mind laying his hands on some ready cash.'

'But. . . remember that phone call that came when we were still at Mr Chowdhury's? Abanish Babu could not have made it, surely?'

'No. That was made by Akbar Badshah. Or it may even have been Queen Victoria.'

This made me realize Feluda was no longer in the right mood to give straight answers to my questions, so I shut up.

It was eight o'clock by the time we got back home. Feluda took off his jacket and threw it on his bed. 'Look up Kailash Chowdhury's telephone number in the directory while I have a quick shower,' he said.

I sat down with the directory in my lap, but the phone started ringing before I could turn a single page. Considerably startled, I picked it up.

'Hello.'

'Who is speaking?'

What a strange voice! I had certainly never heard it before. 'Who would you like to speak to?' I asked. The answer came in the same harsh voice: 'Why does a young boy like you go around with a detective? Don't you fear for your life?'

I tried calling out to Feluda, but could not speak. My hands had started to tremble. Before I could replace the receiver, the man finished what he had to say, 'I am warning you— both of you. Lay off. Or the consequences will be . . . unhappy.'

I sat still in my chair, quite unable to move. Feluda walked into the room a few minutes later, and said, 'Hey, what's the matter? Why are you sitting in that corner so quietly? Who rang just now?'

I swallowed hard and told him what had happened. His face grew grave. Then he slapped my shoulder and said, 'Don't worry. The police have been informed. A few men in plain clothes will be there. We must be at Victoria Memorial tomorrow.'

I didn't find it easy to sleep that night. It wasn't just the telephone call that kept me awake. I kept thinking of Mr Chowdhury's house and all that I had seen in it: the staircase with the iron railing that went right up to the roof; the long, dark veranda with the marble floor on the first floor, and the old Mr Chowdhury peering out of a half-open door. Why was he staring at his son like that? And why had Kailash Babu gone to the roof carrying his gun? What kind of noise had he heard?

Feluda said only one thing before switching off his light, 'Did you know, Topshe, that people who send anonymous notes and threaten others on the telephone are basically cowards?' It was perhaps because of this remark that I finally fell asleep.

Feluda rang Kailash Chowdhury the following morning and told him to relax and stay at home. Feluda himself would take care of everything.

‘When will you go to Victoria Memorial?’ I asked him.

‘The same time as yesterday. By the way, do you have a sketch pad and pens and other drawing material?’

I felt totally taken aback. ‘Why? What do I need those for?’

‘Never mind. Have you got them or not?’

‘Yes, of course. I have my school drawing book.’

‘Good. Take it with you. I’d want you to stand at a little distance from the lilies, and draw something—the trees, the building, the flowers, anything. I shall be your drawing teacher.’

Feluda could draw very well. In fact, I knew he could draw a reasonable portrait of a man after seeing him only once. The role of a drawing teacher would suit him perfectly.

Since the days were short in winter, we reached the Victoria Memorial a few minutes before four o’clock. There were even fewer people around today. Three Nepali ayahs were roaming idly with their charges in perambulators. An Indian family—possibly Marwaris—and a couple of old men were strolling about, but there was no one else in sight. At some distance away from the gate, closer to the compound wall, stood two men under a tree. Feluda glanced at them, and then nudged me quietly. That meant those two were his friends from the police. They were in plain clothes, but were probably armed. Feluda knew quite a lot of people in the police.

I parked myself opposite the rows of lilies and began sketching, although I could hardly concentrate on what I was doing. Feluda moved around with a pair of binoculars in his hands, occasionally grabbing my pad to make corrections and scolding me for making mistakes. Then he would move away again, and peer through the binoculars.

The sun was about to set. The clock in a church nearby struck five. It would soon get cold. The Marwaris left in a big car. The ayahs, too, began to push their perambulators towards the gate. The traffic on Lower Circular Road had intensified. I could hear frequent horns from cars and buses, caught in the evening rush. Feluda returned to me and was about to sit down on the grass, when something near the gate seemed to attract his attention. I followed his gaze quickly, but could see no one except a man wrapped in a brown shawl, who was standing by the road outside, quite a long way away from the gate. Feluda placed the binoculars to his eyes, had a quick look, then passed them to me. ‘Take a look,’ he whispered.

‘You mean that man over there? The one wearing a shawl?’ ‘Hm.’

One glance through the binoculars brought the man clearly into view, as if he was standing only a few feet away. I gave an involuntary gasp. 'Why . . . this is Kailash Chowdhury himself!'

'Right. Perhaps he's come to look for us. Let's go.'

But the man began walking away just as we started to move. He was gone by the time we came out of the gate. 'Let's go to his house,' Feluda suggested, 'I don't think he saw us. He must have gone back feeling worried.'

There was no chance of finding a taxi at this hour, so we began walking towards Chowringhee in the hope of catching a tram. The road was heavily lined with cars. Soon, we found ourselves outside the Calcutta Club. What happened here was so unexpected and frightening that even as I write about it, I can feel myself break into a cold sweat. I was walking by Feluda's side when, without the slightest warning, he pulled me sharply away from the road. Then he leapt aside himself, as a speeding car missed him by inches.

'What the devil—!' Feluda exclaimed. 'I missed the number of that car.'

It was too late to do anything about that. Heaven knew where the car had come from, or what had possessed its driver to drive so fast in this traffic. But it had disappeared totally from sight. I had fallen on the pavement, my sketch pad and pencils had scattered in different directions. I picked myself up, without bothering to look for them. If Feluda hadn't seen that car coming and acted promptly, there was no doubt that both of us would have been crushed under its wheels.

Feluda did not utter a single word in the tram. He just sat looking grim. The first thing he said on reaching Mr Chowdhury's house was: 'Didn't you see us?'

Mr Chowdhury was sitting in a sofa in the drawing room. He seemed quite taken aback by our sudden arrival.

'See you?' he faltered.

'Where? What are you talking about?'

'You mean to say you didn't go to Victoria Memorial?'

'Who, me? Good heavens, no! I didn't leave the house at all. In fact, I spent all afternoon in my bedroom upstairs, feeling sick with worry. I've only just come down.'

'Well then, Mr Chowdhury, do you have an identical twin?'

Mr Chowdhury's jaw fell open. 'Oh God, didn't I tell you the other day?'

'Tell me what?'

‘About Kedar? He’s my twin.’

Feluda sat down quickly. Mr Chowdhury’s face seemed to have lost all colour.

‘Why, did you . . . did you see Kedar? Was he there?’ he asked anxiously.

‘Yes. It couldn’t possibly have been anyone else.’

‘My God!’

‘Why do you say that? Does your twin have a claim on that stone?’

Mr Chowdhury suddenly went limp, as though all the energy in his body had been drained out. He leant against the arm of his sofa, and sighed. ‘Yes,’ he said slowly, ‘yes, he does. You see, it was Kedar who found the stone first. I saw the temple, but Kedar was the one who noticed the stone fixed on the statue.’

‘What happened next?’

‘Well, I took it from him. I mean, I pestered and badgered him until he got fed up and gave it to me. In a way, it was the right thing to do, for Kedar would simply have sold it and wasted the money. When I learnt just how valuable the stone was, I did not tell Kedar. To be honest, when he left the country, I felt quite relieved. But now . . . perhaps he’s come back because he couldn’t find work abroad. Maybe he wants to sell the stone and start a business of his own.’

Feluda was silent for a few moments. Then he said, ‘Do you have any idea what he might do next?’ ‘No. But I do know this: he will come and meet me here. I have stopped going out of the house, and

I did not keep the stone where I was told to. There is no other way left for him now. If he wants the stone, he has to come here.’

‘Would you like me to stay here? I might be able to help.’

‘No, thank you. That will not be necessary. I have now made up my mind, Mr Mitter. If Kedar wants the stone, he can have it. I will simply hand it over to him. It’s simply a matter of waiting until he turns up. You have already done so much, putting your life at risk. I am most grateful to you. If you send me your bill, I will let you have a cheque.’

‘Thank you. You’re right about the risk. We nearly got run over by a car.’

I had realized a while ago that one of my elbows was rather badly grazed, but had been trying to keep it out of sight. As we rose to take our leave, Feluda’s eyes fell on it. ‘Hey, you’re hurt, aren’t you?’ he exclaimed, ‘your elbow is

bleeding! If you don't mind, Mr Chowdhury, I think Tapesesh should put some Dettol on the wound, or it might get septic. Do you—?’

‘Yes, yes,’ Mr Chowdhury got up quickly. ‘You are quite right. The streets are filthy, aren't they?’

Wait, let me ask Abanish.’

We followed Mr Chowdhury to Abanish Babu's room. ‘Do we have any Dettol in the house, Abanish?’ Mr Chowdhury asked. Abanish Babu gave him a startled glance.

‘Why, I saw you bring a new bottle only a week ago!’ he said. ‘Don't tell me it's finished already?’ Mr Chowdhury gave an embarrassed laugh. ‘Yes, of course. I totally forgot. I am going mad.’

Five minutes later, my elbow duly dabbed with Dettol, we came out of the house. Instead of going towards the main road where we might have caught a tram to go home, Feluda began walking in the opposite direction. Before I could ask him anything, he said, ‘My friend Ganapati lives nearby. He promised to get me a ticket for the Test match. I'd like to see him.’

Ganapati Chatterjee's house turned out to be only two houses away. I had heard of him, but had never met him before. He opened the door when Feluda knocked: a rather plump man, wearing a pullover and trousers.

‘Felu! What brings you here, my friend?’

‘Surely you can guess?’

‘Oh, I see. You needn't have come personally to remind me. I hadn't forgotten. I did promise, didn't I?’

‘Yes, I know. But that's not the only reason why I am here. I believe there's a wonderful view of north Calcutta from your roof.

I'd like to see it, if you don't mind. Someone I know in a film company told me to look around.

They're making a film on Calcutta.’

‘OK, no problem. That staircase over there goes right up to the roof. I'll see about getting us a cup of tea.’

The house had four storeys. We got to the top and discovered that there was a very good view of Mr Chowdhury's house on the right. The whole house—from the garden to the roof—was visible. A light was on in one of the rooms on the first floor, and a man was moving about in it. It was Kailash Chowdhury's

father. I could also see the attic on the roof. At least, I could see its window; its door was probably on the other side, hidden from view.

Another light on the second floor was switched on. It was the light on the staircase. Feluda took out the binoculars again and placed them before his eyes. A man was climbing the stairs. Who was it? Kailash Chowdhury. I could recognize his red silk dressing gown even from this distance. He disappeared from view for a few seconds, then suddenly appeared on the roof of his house. Feluda and I ducked promptly, and hid behind the wall that surrounded Ganapati Chatterjee's roof, peering cautiously over its edge.

Mr Chowdhury glanced around a couple of times, then went to the other side of the attic, presumably to go into it through the door we could not see. A second later, the light in the attic came on. Mr Chowdhury was now standing near its window with his back to us. My heart began beating faster. Mr Chowdhury stood still for a few moments, then bent down, possibly sitting on the ground. A little later, he stood up, switched the light off and went down the stairs once more.

Feluda put the binoculars away and said only one thing: 'Fishy. Very fishy.'

2. Grammar Page

Noun + Prepositions (1)

noun + for: need for, demand for, reason for, responsibility for, etc.

The company went out of business. There was no **demand for** its product any more.

There's no **excuse for** behaviour like that. There's no **need for** it.

The train was late, but nobody knew the **reason for** the delay.

What's the **reason for** your unhappiness? I don't know.

Nobody seems to have **responsibility for** the budget. The company is in a mess.

Noun + of: a cause, example, way

The **cause of** the explosion is unknown.

This is an **example of** international collaboration.

We need to find another **way of** doing things.

a picture / a photo / a photograph / a map / a plan / a drawing (etc.)

Reeta showed me some pictures of her family.

I had a **map of** the town, so I was able to find my way around.

She did a **drawing of** me. She traced out the **plan of** a house.

an advantage / a disadvantage of

The **advantage of** living alone is that you can do what you like.

One **disadvantage of** living in the town is the lack of safe places for the children to play.

One **disadvantage of** the drug is that it is very expensive.

Exercise

1. Complete the second sentence so that it has the same meaning as the first.

1. A: What caused the explosion?

B: What was the cause

2. A: We're trying to solve the problem.

B: We're trying to find a solution

3. A: Sue gets on well with her brother.

B: Sue has a good relationship

4. A: The cost of living has gone up a lot.

B: There has been a big increase

5. A: I don't know how to answer your question.

B: I can't think of an answer

6. A: I don't think that a new road is necessary.

B: I don't think there is any need

7. A: I think that living in a big city has many advantages.

B: I think that there are many advantages

8. A: Food prices fell last month.

B: Last month there was a fall

9. A: Nobody wants shoes like these any more.

B: There is no demand

10. A: In what way is your job different from mine?

B: What is the difference

Answers

1. Complete the second sentence so that it has the same meaning as the first.

1. A: What caused the explosion?

B: What was the cause **of the explosion?**

2. A: We're trying to solve the problem.

B: We're trying to find a solution **to the problem.**

3. A: Sue gets on well with her brother.

B: Sue has a good relationship **with her brother.**

4. A: The cost of living has gone up a lot.

B: There has been a big increase **in the cost of living.**

5. A: I don't know how to answer your question.

B: I can't think of an answer **to your question.**

6. A: I don't think that a new road is necessary.

B: I don't think there is any need **for a new road.**

7. A: I think that living in a big city has many advantages.

B: I think that there are many advantages **in / to living in a big city.**

8. A: Food prices fell last month.

B: Last month there was a fall **in food prices.**

9. A: Nobody wants shoes like these any more.

B: There is no demand **for shoes like these any more.**

10. A: In what way is your job different from mine?

B: What is the difference **between your job and mine.**