



Learn English Through Stories

B1 Novels and Stories

Pre-Intermediate Level

**Adopted and modified by
Kulwant Singh Sandhu**

<https://learn-by-reading.co.uk>



Thinking Yourself Rich

By O Henry

My real name's Jeff Peters. But when I visited Fisher Hill, Arkansas, I went there as Doctor Waugh-Hoo, the famous Indian medicine man.

I had only five dollars in my pocket, so I got fifty medicine bottles from the drugstore, and went straight to my hotel room. The other things that I needed were in my bag.

At the hotel I put water, purple colouring, and a little Chinchona - real medicine that comes from a Peruvian tree - into every bottle. Then I put labels on them saying: 'DR WAUGH-HOO'S INDIAN POTION - SURF TO BRING THE DEAD TO LIFE!' I was ready for business.

I started that night on a street in the centre of town. After selling twenty-five bottles at twenty cents each, I felt a hand on my arm. It was a policeman.

'Do you have a licence to sell medicine here?' he asked.

'No, I don't.' I replied.

'Well, you'll have to stop, then.'

I stopped, went back to my hotel at once, and spoke to the landlord.

'You'll never get a licence,' he said. 'Doctor Hoskins is the only doctor here, and his wife's the Mayor's sister. A fake doctor has no chance.'

'I'm not a doctor. I'm a travelling salesman. And I'll get a licence tomorrow.'

I went to the Mayor's office early the next day, but he wasn't there. So I went back to my hotel, sat in a chair, had a smoke, and waited.

Soon a young man in a blue suit sat down next to me and asked me the time.

'It's ten o'clock,' I said, 'And you're Andy Tucker. I remember you.'

Andy was a good street salesman, and I needed a partner. So we agreed to go outside.

He was just off the train, and had plans to ask people in Fisher Hill for money to build a new bath house at Eureka Springs. I told him how things were in Fisher Hill, and we sat and talked.

Next morning, at eleven o'clock, an old black man came looking for me at the hotel, where I sat alone.

'You must come, sir,' he said. 'The Mayor's terribly ill. He needs your help.'

'Get Dr Hoskins,' I replied.

'He can't come, sir. He's in the country. But the Mayor's nearly dying. He needs help right now!'

'OK,' I said, 'I can't leave a man in need. I'll come.'

When I arrived, I found the Mayor in bed, looking bad. A young man stood near him holding a cup of water.

'Doctor, can you help me? It's terrible,' said the Mayor.

'Well, I'm not here as a doctor,' I said, 'but as a friend.'

'Thank you, Doctor Waugh-hoo,' he replied. 'This young man is my nephew, Mr Biddle. He's tried to help, but it's no good. Ooooh, it hurts!'

I nodded at Biddle, and sat on the bed. I looked at the Mayor's eyes, tongue and ears, and listened to his heart and chest.

'What's the matter with me?' he asked.

'Mr Mayor,' I said, 'I'm sorry to say that you have a dangerous pneumonia of the circular dandelion in the upper right vegetable of your heart.'

'Can you give me something for it?'

'Medicine won't touch it, I'm afraid,' I said. 'Your only hope is hypnosis!'

'Hypno- what?' said the Mayor.

'It means me helping you to think yourself well again,' I explained helpfully.

'Can you do that?' asked the Mayor.

'Well, I'm not a doctor, you understand, but to save your life I'm more than ready to do some hypnosis on you - if you forget the licence question.'

'Of course,' he said. 'And please can you start now. It's hurting a lot!'

'Hypnosis costs two hundred and fifty dollars for two visits,' I said.

'That's not much to pay for my life,' said the Mayor.

So I began. Looking him in the eye, I said: 'Look into my eyes. You're sleepy. Your upper right vegetable isn't hurting now. The circular dandelion's going. You have no upper right vegetable, no heart, no body. Your eyes are closing.'

I left him sleeping and went back to the hotel. The next day I went back to his house early.

'How is he?' I asked Mr Biddle at the bedroom door.

'A lot better,' said the young man.

I did some more hypnosis on the Mayor, and he said that nothing hurt him after that.

'Stay in bed, rest for two days, and you'll be fine. You were very lucky that I was in town yesterday,' I said. 'And now for my money.'

'Here it is,' said the Mayor, taking the bills from the table by his bed and giving them to me. 'And put your name on this,' he went on, giving me a paper that said:

For two visits by Dr Waugh-Hoo to the Mayor of Fisher Hill

Two hundred and fifty dollars

I wrote Dr Waugh-Hoo at the bottom of the paper and gave it back to him.

'Now do your work, officer,' said the Mayor with a big smile on his face. Suddenly he didn't look ill at all.

Mr Biddle put his hand on my arm.

'I arrest you Dr Waugh-Hoo - or Jeff Peters, to give you your usual name - for selling fake medicine without a licence,' he said.

'Who are you?' I cried.

'He's a detective,' said the Mayor, 'working for the Arkansas Medical Society. He's followed you all over Arkansas for weeks. He came to me yesterday, and told me all about you, and we made a plan to catch you. You won't sell your fake medicine around here any more.'

'A detective!' I said.

'That's right. And now we're going to see the sheriff,' said the young man.

'Oh, no we're not,' I cried, taking his neck in my hands and nearly pushing him through the window.

Then he pulled out a gun, and put it to my head. I stood still. After that, he put handcuffs on me, and took the money out of my pocket.

'I'll need to take this to the sheriff, sir. I'll be sure to tell him that these were your bills with my marks on them. You'll get it all back once the criminal is in jail.'

'That's fine by me, Mr Biddle,' said the Mayor. Then he turned to me, laughing.

'Well Dr Waugh-hoo. Show us your famous hypnosis now. Make those handcuffs go away by thinking yourself free again!'

'Come on, officer,' I said. 'I'll go quietly.'

At the door, I shook my handcuffs at the Mayor, saying, 'The time will come when you understand that hypnosis works, and that it worked very well for me here today, too.'

And in a way that was true. When we arrived out on the street, I said to Mr Biddle, 'Somebody could see us. Take the handcuffs off now, Andy.' And he did.

Biddle was really my old friend Andy Tucker, you see, and it was all his idea. And that's how we started in business together.

- THE END -