



Learn English Through Stories

G Series

G66

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1. Miss Youghal's Sais (Groom)

Proverb: When a man and woman love each other, no one can stop them.

Some people say there is no romance in India. They are wrong. Our lives in India are full of love and adventure. Sometimes, there is even more than we expect.

Strickland was a police officer. People did not understand him. They thought he was strange and avoided him. This was partly his fault. Strickland believed a police officer in India should know everything about the local people, called natives. He wanted to understand their lives as well as they did.

In all of Upper India, only one man could disguise himself as a Hindu, Muslim, or any other person. This man was respected and feared by the natives. They believed he could become invisible and control spirits. But the British government did not reward him. He never got to work in Simla, a beautiful hill station, and few English people knew his name.

Strickland admired this man. He followed his example and spent seven years learning about native life. He explored places no respectable Englishman would visit. He learned secret songs, dances, and even thieves' language. For example, he knew the Halli-Hukk dance, a religious dance that is very energetic. He helped at a secret ceremony called the Painting of the Death Bull, which no Englishman was allowed to see. He caught a horse thief alone near Attock and even led a prayer in a mosque like a Muslim priest.

His greatest success was solving the Nasiban Murder Case. He spent eleven days disguised as a faqir, a holy beggar, in Amritsar. But his bosses were not impressed. They said, "Why can't Strickland stay in his office, write reports, and behave like a normal officer?" So, the murder case did not help his career. Still, Strickland continued exploring native life. He loved it more than anything, even more than love itself.

Strickland was a quiet, dark-haired young man with black eyes. He was interesting to talk to when he wasn't thinking about his adventures. The natives disliked him because he knew too much, but they were afraid of him.

When the Youghal family arrived at the station, Strickland fell in love with Miss Youghal. She was young and beautiful. After some time, she loved him back because he was mysterious. Strickland told her parents about their love.

But Mrs. Youghal said, "The police department pays badly. I won't let my daughter marry you." Mr. Youghal, her father, did not trust Strickland. He told him, "Stop talking to my daughter." Strickland agreed because he did not want to make Miss Youghal's life difficult. He stopped contacting her.

In April, the Youghal family went to Simla, a cool hill station where British people escaped the heat. In July, Strickland took three months' leave for "urgent private affairs." He locked his house and went to Tarn Taran to visit an old friend, a dyer. After that, no one knew where he was.

One day, a *sai*—a man who looks after horses—met me on the Simla Mall. He gave me a note:

"Dear friend,

Please give the *sais* a box of cheroots—Supers, No. 1, from the Club. I'll pay you back when I return. Right now, I'm away from society.

Yours,

E. Strickland"

I bought two boxes of cheroots, which are cigars, and gave them to the *sais*. That *sai* was Strickland! He was disguised and working for Miss Youghal's family, taking care of her horse, an Arab. He missed English cigars and knew I would keep his secret.

Mrs. Youghal loved her servants. She told everyone about her amazing *sais*, named Dulloo. He woke up early to pick flowers for the breakfast table. He polished the horse's hooves until they shone, like a London coachman. Miss Youghal's horse and carriage looked perfect. Strickland, as Dulloo, enjoyed hearing Miss Youghal praise him when she rode her horse. Her parents were happy because she seemed to forget Strickland.

Strickland said those two months were very hard. Another *sai*'s wife fell in love with him and tried to poison him when he refused her. He had to stay quiet when Miss Youghal rode with men who flirted with her. He carried a blanket and followed her horse, listening to every word. Once, a policeman insulted him, and another time, a young officer called him a pig for not moving fast enough. Strickland controlled his anger.

But he learned a lot. He discovered how saises worked and even how some stole. He played knuckle-bones, a game saises played while waiting outside buildings like the Government House. He smoked cheap tobacco and listened to the wise words of an old sais leader. He saw Simla from a sais's perspective, which he said was the only way to truly understand it. He learned things that could get him in trouble if he wrote them down.

Strickland suffered on rainy nights. He stood outside in the cold, hearing music from a place called Benmore, where people danced. He wanted to join but had to stay disguised, wrapped in a horse blanket. He plans to write a book about his experiences one day. It will be exciting but might cause trouble.

Strickland worked hard, like a man in a story who served for years to marry his love. His leave was almost over when something happened. An old, important General took Miss Youghal riding. He flirted with her in a way that upset her. He said things like, "You're just a little girl," which was hard for her to respond to. Strickland, as Dulloo, could not stay quiet. He grabbed the General's horse and, in perfect English, told him to get off so he could throw him over a cliff.

Miss Youghal started crying. Strickland realized he had revealed his disguise. Everything was ruined. The General was shocked, and Miss Youghal told him about Strickland's disguise and their secret engagement. Strickland was angry at himself and the General. He wanted to hit the General but stayed calm.

The General, after understanding the story, laughed loudly. He almost fell off his horse. He said Strickland deserved a medal for his disguise. He called himself foolish and said he deserved a beating, but he was too old for that. He praised Miss Youghal for having such a clever lover. He did not care about the scandal because he liked flirting and thought it was funny. He told Strickland, "Old Youghal is foolish. I'll help you."

Strickland knew Mr. Youghal respected important people like the General. The General said, "This is like a funny play, but I'll talk to Mr. Youghal. Go home, change your clothes, and I'll meet you there." He told Miss Youghal to go home and wait.

At the Club, a sais with a blanket ran around asking for clothes. No one recognized Strickland, so it was chaotic. He got a bath, a shirt, trousers, and other items from different people. He rode a stranger's pony to the Youghal's house. The General was already there, dressed elegantly.

The General had spoken to Mr. Youghal. Strickland never learned what he said, but Mr. Youghal was polite, and Mrs. Youghal was kind, touched by Strickland's devotion. Miss Youghal arrived, and soon, Mr. Youghal agreed to the marriage. Strickland and Miss Youghal went to the Telegraph Office to send for his things. A stranger later asked Strickland about the stolen pony, which was embarrassing.

In the end, Strickland and Miss Youghal married. They agreed he would stop his adventures and focus on his police work, which paid better and could lead to a job in Simla. Strickland loved his wife and kept his promise, but it was hard. The streets, markets, and sounds of India called to him. He missed the secret words, signs, and stories of the people.

Years later, he broke his promise to help a friend, but that's another story. Now, he is almost too proper for his old adventures. He is forgetting the secret languages and ways of the natives. But he writes excellent police reports.

2. Grammar Page

Unit
66

to ... (afraid to do) and preposition + -ing (afraid of -ing)

A afraid to (do) and afraid of (do)ing

I am **afraid to do** something =

I don't want to do it because it is dangerous or the result could be bad.

- ☐ This part of town is dangerous. People are **afraid to walk** here at night.
(= they don't walk here at night because it is dangerous)
- ☐ James was **afraid to tell** his parents what had happened.
(= he didn't tell them because he thought they would be angry)

I am **afraid of** something **happening** =

I am afraid that something bad will happen.

- ☐ The path was icy, so we walked very carefully. We were **afraid of falling**.
(= we were afraid that we would fall – *not* afraid to fall)
- ☐ I don't like dogs. I'm always **afraid of being** bitten.
(= I'm afraid that I will be bitten – *not* afraid to be bitten)

So, you are **afraid to do something** because you are **afraid of something happening** as a result:

- ☐ I was **afraid to go** near the dog because I was **afraid of being** bitten.

B interested in (do)ing and interested to (do)

I'm **interested in doing** something = I'm thinking of doing it, I would like to do it:

- ☐ Let me know if you're **interested in joining** the club. (*not* to join)
- ☐ I tried to sell my car, but nobody was **interested in buying** it. (*not* to buy)

I was **interested to hear/see/know** something = it was interesting for me. For example:

- ☐ I was **interested to hear** that Tanya left her job.
(= I heard this and it was interesting for me)
- ☐ I'll ask Mike for his opinion. I would be **interested to know** what he thinks.
(= it would be interesting for me to know what he thinks)

This structure is the same as **surprised to ... / glad to ...** etc. (see Unit 65C):

- ☐ I was **surprised to hear** that Tanya left her job.

C sorry for ... and sorry to ...

We use **sorry for** (doing) to apologise for something:

- ☐ I'm **sorry for shouting** at you yesterday. (*not* sorry to shout)

You can also say:

- ☐ I'm **sorry I shouted** at you yesterday.

We use **sorry to ...** to say that we regret something that happens:

- ☐ I'm **sorry to hear** that Nicky lost her job. (*not* sorry for)
- ☐ I've enjoyed my stay here. I'll be **sorry to leave**.

We also say 'I'm **sorry to ...**' to apologise at the time we do something:

- ☐ I'm **sorry to bother** you, but I need to ask you a question.

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We say:

I want to (do), I'd like to (do)	but	I'm thinking of (do)ing
I hope to (do)		I dream of (do)ing
I failed to (do)		I succeeded in (do)ing
I allowed them to (do)		I prevented them from (do)ing
I plan to (do)		I'm looking forward to (do)ing
I promised to (do)		I insisted on (do)ing