

Transcript

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[introduction music]

Welcome to Easy Stories in English, the podcast that will take your English from OK to Good, and from Good to Great.

I am Ariel Goodbody, your host for this show. Today's story is for beginners. The name of the story is *Hector the Snail*. You can find a transcript of the episode at EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Snail. That's EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Snail. There, you can also download the episode as a PDF.

OK, I'll just explain some words that are in today's story.

A **snail** is a small animal that has a shell on its back. Snails move very slowly, and they leave bits of slime or mud behind them. This slime is called a **snail trail**. Generally, people do not like snails because they do not look nice and they eat the vegetables in your garden. However, sometimes people step on snails because they do not see them, and then they feel very sad. Personally, I like snails. Snails are nice because they carry their houses on their backs!

A **wizard** is a man who does magic. Some famous wizards are Gandalf from *Lord of the Rings*, Dumbledore from *Harry Potter* and Merlin from English legends. Wizards usually wear long purple clothes with stars on them, they have big white beards and pointy hats, and they are very old.

Swap means to trade or to change things with someone. For example, maybe you are sitting in a restaurant, but you don't like where you are sat. You want to sit where your friend is. So you say to your friend, 'Can we swap places?' If your friend is nice, you can swap places—you will sit where they were sitting, and they will sit where you are sitting.

An **ostrich** is a very big bird that does not fly. However, ostriches can run very fast. They are the fastest birds on land. There is an idea that ostriches put their head in the sand. However, this is not actually true. Ostriches do lay eggs in the sand, though, and they often look at their eggs.

A **human** is a person. A human is not an animal, insect or alien. Humans live on the planet Earth. I am a human, and you are a human. Another name for human is 'homo sapiens'.

A **cave** is a place under the ground that you can walk around in. Before humans had cities and societies, we lived in caves. We often painted on cave walls to make art. In France, there is a cave called Lascaux which has cave paintings in it which could be 17,000 years old. Wow!

Solve a problem means to fix a problem, to stop a problem. For example, maybe you have a problem that you cannot get to work. Your car is broken, and the busses are not

running today. How can you solve this problem? Well, your friend could drive you to work, or you could get a taxi. These would both solve the problem.

When you **ride** an animal, you sit on its back and it moves. These days, people usually ride the train more than animals. However, some people still ride horses or camels for fun. Personally, I have never ridden a horse or a camel, but I want to try!

Kick means to hit something with your foot. If you kick someone, it is not very nice. Many games use kicking. For example, to play football, you have to kick the football. You cannot touch the football with your hands, unless you are the goalkeeper.

Free means to make someone free. If an animal is in a cage, they are not free. But if you open the cage and the animal can get out, then you have freed them.

All over means everywhere. Maybe you have a very messy bedroom—there are clothes all over your bedroom. Or maybe you made a mistake while baking, and now there is flour all over your kitchen. I definitely don't do these things. No way!

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A big thank-you to my new patrons. I'm recording this episode in advance, and I haven't had time to mention the new patrons here, but I will in the next episode.

And a special thank-you to my Teacher's Pet patrons: Vera Kaufmann and Rüdiger Richter.

OK, so listen and enjoy!

Hector the Snail

Once, there was a **snail** who wanted to be fast. But of course, snails are very slow. They don't have long legs to run with, and they're too small to move quickly. They can't even jump.

But this snail, whose name was Hector, had an idea. He decided he would go to a **wizard** and ask him to **swap** bodies with a faster animal. If he could swap bodies with an **ostrich**, then he'd be really fast!

So Hector the snail travelled to find a wizard. He had to travel very far. He went through towns, where people said, 'Eww, a snail!' Sometimes, people almost stood on him. He went through deserts, where he became very dry and found it hard to move. He went through **caves**, where it was very wet and birds tried to eat him.

In one of these caves, he found a wizard without a name. Hector the snail had always thought that wizards were very important people. They had nice clothes, and long, clean beards, so of *course* they had names. But this wizard was very short, had no clothes, and when Hector asked what his name was, he said, 'I don't need a name!'

'Are you really a wizard?' said Hector.

'Of course! Are *you* really a snail? I'm not like the wizards you find in books. Bah! Who wants to be like them? Then everyone comes to you and asks you to **solve** all their problems.'

'Oh,' said Hector. He wanted the wizard to solve his problem.

'Oh, go on, tell me what it is,' said the wizard. 'I like snails more than people, so I *might* solve your problem. If I feel like it.'

So Hector explained his problem.

'Huh,' said the wizard. 'Well that's new. But there's just one small problem. I can only swap you with another animal if that animal *wants* to swap bodies.'

'Really?'

'Yes. I'm a good wizard, see? If I swapped your body with an ostrich, I don't think that ostrich would be very happy. And you're not going to find *any* ostrich who wants to swap bodies with a snail, I think. Anyway, you don't know how to move like an ostrich. You would look very stupid.'

'Oh,' said Hector.

'Oh dear,' said the wizard. 'Am I really getting sad because of a *snail*? Look, I can help you in another way.'

'I don't think you can,' said Hector. 'All I really want is to be fast.'

'Well, yes, I can't make you fast,' said the wizard. 'But why don't you just... **ride** on an ostrich's back? It'll be easier to find an ostrich who will let you ride on their back than an ostrich who will let you swap bodies with them.'

'What a good idea!' said Hector. 'Thank you, Mr. Wizard.'

'Please, call me Bartholomew. I do have a name, actually. I just don't like telling most people.'

So Hector went to find a friendly ostrich so that he could ride on its back. But the ostriches lived in hot places, and they had never seen a snail before. They thought he was a horrible thing, and when he asked if he could ride on their back, they tried to eat him. Hector was afraid, because he thought the ostriches might take his house off his back, so he ran away.

Finally, Hector found a farm with many horses on it. He stopped to take a drink of water, but the horses were not happy.

'Hey, that's our water!' they said. 'Go away, you horrible snail.'

'He's not a problem,' said one of the horses. 'Look, he's so small and thirsty! Let him drink.'

So the other horses left, and Hector talked to the nice horse.

'I'm Chestnut,' said the horse. 'We don't have a lot of snails around here. Are you new?'

'Yes,' said the snail. 'But I probably won't stay long. I left home looking for a wizard, because I wanted to swap bodies with a faster animal. But I couldn't do that, so I tried to ride on an ostrich's back. But they didn't want that, so now I'm here. And the other horses don't like me, either...'

'If you want to ride on an animal's back,' said the horse, 'then ride on mine.'

'Oh!' said Hector. 'If it's OK, I would love to. But you probably have **humans** who want to ride you as well. I couldn't ride your back very often.'

'I hate the humans,' said Chestnut. '*Children*. I can never run fast when they're on my back, because they get afraid, and some of them **kick** me.'

'Kick you? But you're so beautiful!'

'I know!' said Chestnut. 'I'll tell you what. If you can find a way to **free** me, then you can ride on my back for the rest of your life.'

So Chestnut and Hector thought, and Hector had an idea.

In the night, Hector ran **all over** Chestnut's body. Actually, it took him a very long time. Chestnut laughed, because it felt very strange to have the snail move all over his body.

In the morning, the horse looked different. He had **snail trails** all over him! When the humans saw him, they were very surprised.

'Oh no, is he sick?' asked one of the girls.

Chestnut **coughed**, and lay down on the ground.

‘We’ll have to take him to the doctor,’ said a human man.

So they took Chestnut out, and when the humans weren’t looking, he ran! Hector was on his back, and they ran far away from the farm.

Because Hector had travelled this way before, he knew where to go. He took Chestnut to a forest where the humans would never find them.

‘Oh, I’m free!’ said Chestnut.

‘That was so much fun!’ said Hector. ‘You were so fast... I felt like I was flying!’

And so from that day on, Hector and Chestnut were best friends. Every day, Chestnut went for a run with Hector on his back. When the humans tried to take Chestnut back to the farm, Hector made clever plans to stop them, so the horse was always free.

They lived happily ever after.

THE END

In the last episode, I told you about going to Bristol Pride. After Bristol Pride, I went and spent a week in London. I saw some friends, did some shopping and had a lovely time.

But unfortunately, it was not all lovely. On the Friday of my week in London, I tested positive for coronavirus. I had never had coronavirus before, so I knew I would probably get it in London. Still, I was not happy to have COVID!

The main problem was, I was staying in a very bad hotel. It was a budget hotel, which means that it is cheap, but it is not very good. My hotel did not allow me to have guests, which I think is very strange. The quality of the bedroom was not good—the sheets on my bed were thin, the TV didn’t work properly, the WiFi often broke, the shower doors didn’t close properly...

One time, when they gave me a clean towel, it had a **false eyelash** on it! False eyelashes are those things that you can glue onto your eye to look like you have very long eyelashes. I think someone must have dropped their false eyelashes into the washing machine with the towels. Oh, and one time I came back to the hotel room and the key card to my room stopped working. I had to sit downstairs and wait for over an hour while they fixed my key card.

But the worst part about the hotel was the heat. London gets very hot, and my hotel room did not have air conditioning. It did have a fan, but the fan didn’t work very well. So I got COVID and had a fever, and I had to sit in my horrible hot hotel room. Eugh!

Luckily, I went home a few days later, and I could recover better at home. Our home is nice and cool, so I didn’t have to worry about the heat. Still, it took me a long time to recover from COVID. I didn’t have a bad cough, and I didn’t have trouble breathing, but COVID gave me a lot of fatigue—it made me feel very tired. Also, my heart beats much faster than before. But I went to the doctor’s to get my heart tested, so I think it will be OK. Actually, after recording this episode, I’ll be going back to the doctor’s to talk about the results of the heart test. So you’ll probably find out next episode what’s happening with my heart! Yay. I really don’t want to catch COVID again, so I’m going to be very careful when travelling to London in future.

If you enjoyed the story and want to say thank you, you can buy me a coffee on [Ko-Fi](#). Just go to [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com](#) and click the orange button that says [Buy me a coffee!](#) Or you can write me a nice review on Apple Podcasts, or follow me on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), [@arielgoodbody](#). Thank you for listening, and see you in two weeks!