

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 pre-intermediate learners. The name of the story is *The Spider's Thread*. You can find a transcript of the episode at EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/SpiderL2. That's EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/SpiderL2. There, you can also download the episode as a PDF.

Today's episode is technically a levelled-up version of one of the first episodes I did on the podcast. However, my writing skills have improved a lot since then, and I have got better at writing easy beginner stories. In the original version of [The Spider's Thread](#), there were some really difficult words and sentences for beginners.

So this episode is more of a rewritten version of the story. I have changed quite a lot. Actually, it was interesting to see how much my writing style has changed. After all, I started the podcast in January 2019, so it has been quite a long time!

The original story was written by Ryuunosuke Akutagawa, a Japanese author. However, this time I **took quite a few liberties** with the story. When you say you took some liberties doing something, it means you used a lot of your own ideas and creativity. So my version is quite different from the original. I took quite a few liberties.

Anyway, this is the second-to-last episode of the podcast for 2022—the next episode will be the last episode of the year. It's been very interesting returning to the podcast after my break earlier this year. I've found that, by having an episode only every two weeks, I have been able to write better stories with more detail. I also think my voice performances on some of the episodes have been really great.

The less frequent episodes also means I have been able to write and record them in advance. Actually, as I'm writing this it's September—you can see how far ahead I got! I think that, continuing the podcast into the new year, I will focus on doing episodes by quarter, that is, every three months. That means I can work on the podcast for a while, and then switch to other projects once I have prepared all the episodes.

Of course, there is a disadvantage in preparing the episodes so far in advance. I know a lot of you like hearing about my life, and I have had to keep the conversation sections quite general, because otherwise I would be talking about things that happened months ago. If you do want to hear more about my personal life, you can follow me on Instagram and Twitter [@arielgoodbody](#). Although, to be honest, I don't post that much on either platform. If you [join the Patreon](#), I think my monthly videos get quite personal, and I also put a lot of effort into them, so you might find that interesting.

Anyway, if you have any feedback on how the podcast has been since my return, I'd love to hear it. Come over to the transcript at [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/SpiderL2](#) and leave a comment.

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

Thread is a long, thin thing that you use to make clothes. You sew threads together to make clothes. You put the thread through a sharp thing called a needle to sew with it. Spiders can naturally make their own thread.

A **needle** is a small, sharp metal thing that you use to make clothes. You put thread through a needle and put the needle through material, such as cotton, to join it together. Getting the thread into the needle can be quite difficult, and you have to be careful when using a needle because they are very sharp.

Heaven is the place where good people go when they die. There is Heaven in most religions. Heaven is where God lives, and it is a very happy place.

Buddha was the man who created the religion Buddhism. Famously, Buddha sat underneath a tree and meditated for 49 days. Buddha appears in many stories and folk tales, but of course he did not really do all these things.

Hell is the place bad people go when they die. In many religions, there is the idea of Hell. If you are bad during your life, after you die you go to Hell. In Christianity, Hell is full of fire.

When something very bad happens to you, you **suffer**. You feel very bad. You might suffer because your body hurts a lot, or because people are not nice to you. Buddhism teaches that everyone suffers, but we can meditate to help us understand our suffering.

A **demon** is a type of monster that is in all religions. Demons usually live underground, or in hell, and they like to hurt humans. In some stories, people can summon demons, they can call the demons up from hell. Then the demons use magic for the person who summoned them. In Christianity, Satan, or the Devil, is the king of the demons.

Truly means 'really' or 'actually'. For example, if you went to the theatre with someone, and they said, 'Did you like the play? I thought it was awful,' and you say, 'I loved it!' and they say, 'I don't believe you! It was awful,' then you can say, 'I truly enjoyed it.' You are saying 'truly' to make it clear that you are not lying.

Evil means a very, very bad person. For example, Lord Voldemort from *Harry Potter* is very evil. Usually, witches and monsters are evil.

If something is happening, but then something else happens to interrupt it, we can use the phrase **just as**. For example, just as I was about to eat my pizza, a bird flew down and took it out of my hand. If you're a long-time listener of the podcast, you probably already know that story. Or, just as we were all saying, '2020 is going to be my year!' coronavirus happened. Ouch.

Crawl means to move forward by lying down and using your hands and feet. People only crawl when they are trying to stay hidden, for

example soldiers who are trying to secretly get into a building. Snakes and insects always crawl, because they cannot stand up.

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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!

The Spider's Thread

It was a normal day in Heaven. It was morning, and Buddha was standing beside a pool, thinking. The pool was full of beautiful flowers. As Buddha thought, he walked around the pool and smelt the flowers. They smelled wonderful.

But under the calm water, there was something quite horrible. Buddha looked into the water, and far below it, he saw Hell. The water was like a piece of glass. Above it was beautiful Heaven, and below it was horrible Hell, where people suffered for their crimes.

Buddha looked down at the suffering.

First, there was the Sanzu river. A narrow bridge went over it, but very few people tried to walk across it. The river was full of demons, and whenever a bad person walked across, the demons jumped up, grabbed the person and threw them into the water, and all the other demons ate them.

Above the land, looking down like a cruel teacher, was the Mountain of Needles. Thousands of sharp needles made the mountain, and as you can imagine, it was horrible to climb it.

However, only the truly bad people in Hell had to climb up. But their cries of pain were so loud that everybody heard them. Most mountains had a cap of white snow, but the Mountain of Needles had a cap of red blood.

Below the mountain sat the Lake of Blood. The blood here did not come from the needles, but the boiling hot water, which smelled of old eggs. If someone climbed the Mountain of Needles, but the demons thought they hadn't suffered enough, then it was decided that they were pure evil. These evil men and women were thrown into the boiling water, and made to swim. They swam until all the blood came out of their body and filled the lake. They say that evil men do not cry when they are hurt, but everyone cried in the end.

These were just a few awful parts of Hell, and Buddha could not keep watching, because it was simply too horrible. But just as he was turning away from the pool, he saw a man he recognised and stopped.

The man was a thin, nasty creature called Kandata. He was a very evil man, and he had suffered for months in Hell—he had gone across the Sanzu river three times, and each time the demons ate him like a picnic. He had climbed the Mountain of Needles twice, and had a hundred needles enter his body. He had even swum through the Lake of Blood, and instead of crying out in pain, he whistled happily.

In his life, Kandata had been a thief. While most thieves have limits—they will not steal from a dying man, and they will not kill a woman with child—Kandata did not care. He killed everyone he stole from just because he wanted to, and sometimes he even locked the door of a house and burned it down with people alive inside. Even other thieves hated him, and indeed, this is how he died, murdered by men like him.

But Buddha had watched Kandata for a long time, and once, just once, the man had done good.

One time, Kandata was walking through a thick forest. He whistled to himself, thinking about the man he was going to rob. The man was a poor farmer, who had found a pot of gold that some thief had hidden many years ago. The money was far too much for the old man, and he wanted to share it with the rest of his village. But Kandata couldn't have the money be wasted like that. So he was going to steal the gold, and hopefully, if the man was around, he could kill him as well.

As he walked, he felt something on his foot. He looked down and saw a spider crawling along his toe.

'Gah!' cried Kandata.

He shook his foot and the spider fell off. Just as he was about to step on it, he stopped.

'One old man is going to die today. Why should a little spider die, too? Everything has a reason to live—though usually that reason is to make money for me!'

Of course, the spider did not listen to Kandata's words, and ran away before the man could hurt him. Kandata soon forgot about the spider.

Buddha remembered this event, and wondered if Kandata was truly evil. A truly evil man would never save a life, and would never do good. But if there was even a tiny piece of goodness in Kandata, then perhaps he could be saved.

Next to the pool of flowers in Heaven, a green spider was crawling. This was no ordinary spider—while ordinary spiders made weak, white threads, this spider made golden thread that was stronger than anything on earth. The golden thread shone in the light, while the spider crawled along as normal.

Buddha pulled the golden thread away from the spider and dropped it into the water. It fell down to Hell.

In Hell, the demons were discussing what to do with Kandata. He hadn't cried out once during all the suffering, and he had even

laughed sometimes. Clearly, this was a truly evil man, and they needed to treat him in a special way.

‘Hey, are you going to give me something to do?’ said Kandata. ‘I’m bored! Why don’t you let me kill some of these people?’

‘Oh, shut up,’ said one of the demons, and threw Kandata into the Lake of Blood.

So Kandata went for a swim and **whistled** to himself. Then he saw something bright in the sky. At first, he thought it was just the Mountain of Needles shining in the light, but when he looked harder, he saw that it was gold. He couldn’t believe it—a long, gold thread was slowly coming down from the sky!

He looked around. Nobody else had noticed it because they were suffering too much, and the demons were busy discussing Kandata’s suffering.

Well, he wasn’t going to let this opportunity go. His chance to escape Hell had come down like a present!

Kandata quietly climbed out of the lake and walked up to the golden thread. It was very thin, and he thought there was no way it could hold him, but when he pulled on it, it didn’t break.

So Kandata started to climb. The thread stuck to his hand, and he had always been a strong climber. He had climbed into hundreds of people’s houses to steal from them. Still, there were thousands of miles between Heaven and Hell, and he would get tired.

A few hours later, Kandata stopped for a break. He looked down to see how far he had climbed, and also to laugh at the demons below. The Mountain of Needles and Lake of Blood looked so small now, and the demons and people were just ants...

Suddenly, he felt something pulling on the thread. He looked down and saw that lots of small ‘ants’ had started to climb the thread. *His* thread!

The thread was thin, and although it could hold him, it would probably break if everyone climbed up it. Didn’t those people realise

how selfish they were being? They'd all end up falling into the Lake of Blood!

Kandata shouted at the people below, 'Hey, you miserable creatures! This here is *my* golden thread. I found it, so it belongs to me. Got it? Get off, or I'll climb down and cut your heads off! I'll—'

Just as Kandata was about to say more horrible things, there was a SNAP, and the spider's thread broke. Down and down Kandata fell, and he landed in the Lake of Blood with a SPLASH, along with all the other evil people. The spider's thread hung in the air, shining bright like the sun, while all the people in the lake cried and swam to the shore.

'I don't believe it!' roared Kandata. 'I was so close! I'll get you all, I'll—'

'Oh no you won't!' said one of the demons.

A group of demons pulled Kandata out of the water.

'We've decided how we're going to make you suffer,' said one of them. 'And this time, you'll really cry.'

'I've already suffered enough!' shouted Kandata.

But they didn't listen to him, and carried him to a dark cave. Inside the cave, there was a spider that was ten metres tall.

'Meet your new friend,' said the demon.

'Oh,' said Kandata. 'Er, hello.'

The spider looked very happy.

Buddha sighed. He had given Kandata a chance to save himself and many others, but the selfish man had shown that he would always be evil. For a while, Buddha watched Kandata and the spider, but it was too horrible, and he walked away from the pool.

It was a normal day in Heaven. The flowers in the pool smelt beautiful, and beside it, a green spider crawled along, making its golden thread.

THE END

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!