

Transcript

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

I'm trying out a new thing. Maybe this is the musical episode, who knows? I would love to have an intro where I sing. The problem is, I need someone else to write the music for me. If any of you are talented musicians and would like to write a little song for me to sing, I would love that.

Anyway, I am Ariel Goodbody, your host for this show. Today's story is for pre-intermediate learners. The name of the story is *The Labyrinth*. You can find a transcript of the episode at EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Labyrinth. That's EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Labyrinth.

You thought I was going to sing a bit earlier again probably, and then I surprised you at the end. And then I made some weird animal noises.

Anyway, if you go to that link, EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Labyrinth, you can also download the episode as a PDF with no singing involved.

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

A **labyrinth** – I won't sing it this time! – is a kind of puzzle that you walk through. Labyrinths have high walls, and you have to decide where to go to get to the end. It can take many hours to get through a labyrinth. In Greek mythology, there is the story of a Minotaur, a monster that is half-man half-bull, who is trapped in a labyrinth.

Smash means to break something into lots of small pieces. There is a Marvel superhero called The Hulk. He always says, 'Hulk smash!' If you smash your phone, it's going to get lots of glass everywhere, and it definitely won't work anymore.

An **image** is a picture. Usually, images are copies of other things. For example, if you take photos with your phone, the files are called images.

Ignore is when you deliberately don't look at something. For example, you might see someone you know outside, but you don't like them. You ignore them, acting as if you don't see them when you really do. It is very mean to ignore someone, though!

Your **chest** is the part of your body between your neck and your legs. You wear a shirt to cover your chest. Some people have breasts on their chest.

Tight means firm, fixed in one place. If you hold someone's hand tightly, it shows that you like them. If your chest feels tight, you might have a health problem. If you close a door tight, it will not open again easily.

Poison is food or drink that kills the person who eats it. In the past, people put poison in other people's food, so that when they ate they would die. But now, the police can look for poison in your blood. So if you poison someone, the police will probably find out. Sorry. These days, people mainly use poison to kill animals like mice and rats. Fortunately, mice and rats don't have police. Yet.

Ashes are what you get when you burn something. When you burn wood with fire, it goes black, and then it turns into thin grey things called ashes. When someone dies, you might have their body burnt, cremated, and then you can keep their ashes.

An **urn** is a big pot that you put a dead person's ashes in. After a dead person is cremated, their ashes are put in an urn. Some people keep urns of dead relatives in their house.

A **fork in the road** is when you come to a part of the road, or path, where there are two turnings. One turning goes left, and the other goes right. We call this a fork, because it looks a bit like a fork that you eat with.

When ice turns into water, it **melts**. Ice melts when it is warm. Other cold things can melt, too. For example, when you buy an ice cream, you have to eat it quickly or it will melt, and you'll have very wet hands.

An **hourglass** [sings] – that's a song I like – is a clock that uses sand to tell time. Basically, it is a glass object split into two parts. In one half is sand. You turn the hourglass around and the sand starts to fall. Nowadays, hourglasses [sings] – sorry, I'll stop! – nowadays, hourglasses are not very common.

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

OK, so listen and enjoy!

The Labyrinth

The lady left because of the plate **smasher**. She had lived with the screamer, the hair puller and the heartbreaker, and now she lived with the plate smasher, and it was too much.

It didn't matter that they were plates her grandmother had given her when she died. It didn't matter that her foot was bleeding where she had stood on one of the broken plates. It didn't matter that she didn't know why he was so angry.

What mattered was the **image** before her: a man smashing plates in her kitchen. Her kitchen, her plates. It looked like a scene from a television show. Nobody really got that angry. Nobody went that red in the face. Nobody smashed every single plate in the cupboard, until the floor was a sea of white.

She calmly walked out of the house, **ignoring** the pain in her foot. She got in the car and looked in the mirror. She saw a face that was broken like a thousand plates.

She started the car. She didn't know where she was going, so she followed the road, and she went to the place where all roads lead.

The labyrinth.

The businessman left because his **chest** hurt. The pain started out small, like an insect bite. He worked and ignored the pain. Pain came and went, just like employees and money.

But this time, the pain grew. It grew from an insect bite into an apple, and then from an apple into an orange, and then from an orange into a bomb. The bomb sat comfortably in his chest, while he sat uncomfortably at his desk.

Finally, he went to the hospital, using time he could not afford. He stood in the queue and watched miserable people. Wives whose husbands had hit them. Children who had broken their legs. Old people, who held the arms of their relatives so **tight** they went red.

I should not be here, he thought. And the doctor seemed to think the same. There was nothing particularly wrong with him. So the doctor asked about his life. The businessman told her, in cold, fast words.

'Stress,' she said.

The businessman laughed. 'Stress is my coffee.'

'Poison, not coffee. If you keep drinking it, you'll be dead in three months.'

He smiled and got up. Went to his car. Looked in the mirror.

He saw a winner. But his chest said, 'Death.'

He didn't drive to the office. He didn't drive to the park. He didn't drive home.

He followed the road, and he went to the place where all roads lead.

The labyrinth.

For the young man, there was no one moment. The moment lasted twelve months. It started when his car hit the wall, and it never ended.

He had kept the urn of his friend's ashes, because his friend hated his parents. They wouldn't want it. They would throw it in a corner.

But the young man wasn't doing much better. He sat on the sofa, and the urn looked at him as he drank. Bottles appeared in a row on the other side of the room, like it was a competition. One dead friend, one bottle of beer, two bottles of beer, three bottles, four...

The urn lost to beer.

The ashes lost to wine.

The friend lost to vodka.

The day lost to poison.

One day, the young man got into his car. This was the one place he was never drunk. He could at least do that. Then he saw the clock. He saw the date.

Twelve months ago, he killed his friend.

So he drove. Not to the place where it happened – he could never go there. Not to the supermarket to buy more beer.

He followed the road, and he went to the place where all roads lead.

The labyrinth.

The three met outside, but they said nothing. Their roads did not meet.

The lady went in first. She walked quickly, like a man was following her. Left here, right there. No reasons, no thinking. Her feet smashed dry leaves on the path. Her mind said, 'Slow. Think.' She ignored it.

Then she came to a fork that was different. Here, there were two images on the stone walls.

On the left, a woman of fire. The lady felt the heat of it in the air. Her hair was burning waves. Her eyes helped ships reach the shore. Her body invited sailors to greet it.

The woman on fire walked bravely down the path, but a man held her hand. Tight. He was only stone, and he stood still, but his eyes were green like poison.

On the right, the image was a woman of dirt. She sat on the ground, her hair short, like an ugly bird. And birds came to her, sat around her. Was she so quiet that they were not afraid of her? The woman in the image did not walk, and there were lines of age in the stone. She could be a thousand years old. She sat alone, with only the birds for friends. The lady saw her and felt calm, and the feeling scared her.

She did not wait long at the fork. She turned left.

The businessman went down a different path, which led straight through the labyrinth. With each step, his chest felt tighter. The bomb was shaking, dancing madly. He ignored it.

He did not come to a fork, but a fountain. Its water was pure, but the path led around it. The businessman almost didn't see the golden bird sitting on top of it.

The bird was small, but the gold was so pure that it shone in the sun. It had to be worth thousands.

The businessman's mind did its job: it **melted** the bird, turned liquid gold into cold numbers. He could sell it for this, and with that money, he could get an assistant. He could pay someone else to do his job, for a while. He could pour the money into his business.

He touched the bird, and felt a strange feeling. Like an insect bite. Hot.

He pulled his finger away. It shone in the sun now, too. It was made of gold.

His mind worked again, worked so quickly that he almost took the bird without thinking.

But no. He could not melt his own body. He could not become numbers himself. He had tried, and now he had a bomb in his chest.

He couldn't move his finger. It was dead. Beautifully, beautifully dead.

The businessman continued down the path.

The young man stopped at every fork. He couldn't think. He was a child in an adult's body. His lips, his tongue, his heart was dry. His usual friends, the row of bottles, were far, far away.

He had the urn with him. He had forgotten that, in the morning's headache. Before he left, he went back into the house, put it in a bag, took it with him in the car.

But he couldn't drink his friend's ashes.

It didn't matter which path he took, he realised. He didn't know what he was searching for, and he didn't care what he would find. The pain wouldn't stop. He couldn't ignore it. He could only walk.

So he did. He wanted to turn back, to go home, to enter that pool of death, where the waters were sweet and his thoughts were empty. But he was too far into the labyrinth now. If he turned back, he would die.

At the centre of the labyrinth, the lady found an **hourglass**. When she turned it around, she became young again. Beautiful. New.

She got in the car and saw herself in the mirror. She laughed freely, like a bird in May. On the way home, she stopped at a jewellery shop and bought a pair of earrings shaped like hourglasses.

Then, she did not drive home. She followed her own road, and she went where her own road always led.

Some bar. It's not very important. They're all the same. You can find men anywhere.

At the centre of the labyrinth, the businessman found a letter. It was printed neatly, and the message was short. He touched it with his golden finger as he read.

The stress would have taken three months, but gold poisoning works much faster.

The businessman ran to his car. His mind worked madly, melting air to make numbers.

One day. If he had one day, where would he go?

He drove, followed his own road, went where his own road always led.

The office. He had to make sure that Gary didn't run the company after him. Gary was lazy.

At the centre of the labyrinth, the young man found water.

He had hoped for some magic. An hourglass, to bring his death now. A message from his friend. A way to bring him back.

But it was just water. So simple, but without it, we are nothing. The young man drank the water, cried and put the urn down.

He got in his car. He followed his own road, and this time, his own road went somewhere new.

THE END

If you enjoyed today's episode and want to be able to read my stories in a physical format, then good news! I have a book of ten short stories called, well, [*Easy Stories in English*](#). Get it on Amazon, Apple Books or Google Books, or go to EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Book to find out all the places it's available. Thank you for listening, and see you in two weeks!

Sorry, that probably sounded horrible because there's another song in the background with a different tune. Sorry! Bye!