

Transcript

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

I'm just going to start by reading out some reviews from listeners.

adelan12 from the Czech Republic says: *Hello, I am from Czech republic. And I just want to say.. thank you so much for you help!!! I am really in love with your podcasts!! 😊*

Thank you so much, adelan12! Today's story is actually based on a Czech poem – but more about that later!

隔壁班老師 from Taiwan says: *Fun and easy to understand 😊❤️ Thanks for making these podcasts!*

Thank YOU, 隔壁班老師! I think your name is maybe supposed to be a joke in Mandarin? Google translates it as 'the teacher in the next class'. Are you a teacher, too?

Ittomll – which I guess is pronounced 'Tom'? – from Saudi Arabia says: *I really like your voice it is clear and smooth and the music by the end I really love it don't change it please thank you for everything 💕💕*

Aww, thank you so much, Ittomll! I hope you're still enjoying the show.

Here's a hint for everyone else: if you'd like me to read your words out on the podcast, you can also leave a review on Apple Podcasts, but preferably leave a name that's easy to pronounce!

OK, so onto today's episode. As I mentioned before, this story is my version of a Czech poem called *Vodník*. It was written by Karel Jaromír Erben, a folklorist from the 19th century. A folklorist is someone who studies and preserves folklore – folk stories and fairy tales. The famous Czech composer, Antonín Dvořák, also wrote a musical version of the poem, which is how I found out about the story.

So yes, today's story is a poem! I've done that once before, when I adapted [Sir Gawain and the Green Knight](https://EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Gawain1) for the Christmas episodes last year. You can listen to that at EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Gawain1.

Poetry is obviously quite a difficult form of language to understand, but I really enjoy reading and writing poetry, and I don't think being a learner should mean that you don't get to experience poetry in English. So to make it easier to understand, I'm going to give a summary of the story first, so that you know more or less what happens before you listen to the poem. My version is quite a bit shorter than the original, and I changed some details, just so you know.

So: a water monster, or goblin, is sitting by a lake at night, making clothes while singing to himself. He's making clothes for his own wedding, because he plans to

marry a human woman. That night, a mother dreams about her daughter. She dreams that her daughter will wear beautiful wedding clothes, but that actually the dress and jewellery will be made out of water and tears.

The next morning, the woman's daughter decides that she wants to go to the lake to do laundry, and her mother tells her not to and explains the dream. The girl goes anyway, and the water monster captures her and pulls her down to his underwater world. He feeds her weeds which make her sleep, marries her, and has a child with her.

The mother loves her baby, but she is very sad in the monster's house and wants to leave. She begs him to let her go, and he agrees that she can visit her mother for one day, but there are three rules: one, she cannot hug anyone; two, she has to leave her baby behind; and three, she has to come back when the church bells ring in the evening.

Naturally, the girl breaks all three of these rules, and the monster comes and bangs on the door to tell her to come back. Her mother tells her to stay, and the monster threatens her and says that if she does not come back, he will kill their child. The girl stays with her mother, and they hear an awful noise and loud thunder.

In the morning, they find the remains of the child's body, and they never see the water monster again.

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

Swirl means to move around in a fast spinning movement. When your sink is full of water and you let the water out, it swirls away. When you're making soup and you stir it, you turn it, really fast, it swirls around the pot. Latte art has been quite popular in the past few years, which involves adding frothy milk to coffee and then swirling it to make interesting patterns on top.

Froth is bubbles that sit on top of a liquid. If you pour water into a cup very quickly, there will be some froth on top. Beer makes a large froth when you pour it, but there are ways to pour it to reduce the froth so that less of the beer is wasted.

Pearls are white jewels that are very expensive. A necklace of pearls is often referred to as a **string of pearls**, as pearls are worn on a string around the neck. Pearls come from a sea creature called a clam.

Seaweed is a green plant that grows in the sea. Seaweed looks like long, thick grass, but it is much harder than grass. In many Asian countries, seaweed is used in cooking. For example, many sushi rolls are wrapped in a kind of dried seaweed called nori.

Someone who is **mild** is gentle and kind. For example, a mild baby does not cry a lot and is very sweet. We can also talk about food being mild. Mild food is not spicy.

Brine is a kind of water that has a lot of salt in it, usually from the sea. Brine is used to pickle foods, to ferment foods, for example cucumbers and beetroot. You fill a jar with the food you want to pickle, add brine, seal the jar and leave it for several weeks.

When you **bend someone's will**, you make them do what you want them to do. Bending someone's will usually means you are doing something quite horrible. You

are literally forcing the person to do what you want. We can also talk about bending our own will. If you really do not want to do something that someone else is trying to get you to do, then you can say that you won't bend your will.

Tea is, of course, a hot drink, but in certain parts of the UK 'tea' can also mean 'dinner' or 'supper'. So when someone says 'I'm just about to cook tea' or 'I haven't had my tea yet,' they're probably talking about cooking dinner.

When you **make to do something**, you are about to do something but someone interrupts you or stops you from doing it. For example, maybe you are making to leave in the morning when your husband calls you back inside and tells you he's sick. Or maybe you're at a boring party and you make to leave, but then someone pulls you into a long, boring conversation.

Flesh is the parts of our body under our skin. Usually, flesh includes muscle and fat. For example, pork is pig flesh, and beef is cow flesh. The phrase '**flesh and blood**' is used to emphasise our physical form, basically our body, instead of the spirit or our soul. When we talk about our 'own flesh and blood', it refers to our immediate family. For example, someone might say that they would never hurt their own flesh and blood.

OK, so listen and enjoy!

The Water Monster

Beneath a tree beside a lake
a monster sat, his clothes to make
A shirt of green and boots of red
a cheerful cap upon his head

'Shine, moonlight, shine!
Tomorrow, she'll be mine
A gorgeous human wife
who'll love me all my life.'

And in the night, a mother dreamed
She saw her daughter walk in streams
A **swirl of froth** made up her dress
A **string of pearls** lay on her chest

But in the froth, there sat a sadness
In her eyes, there shone a madness
The pearls were only made of tears
the beauty drowned in lakes of fear

The morning came, the daughter rose
She filled a basket full of clothes
'I'm off to wash these in the lake.'

'Don't go!' said Mum. 'My heart will break!'

She told the girl about the dream
about the dangers in the stream
But Daughter heard the frothy call
She promised that she wouldn't fall

She found the lake and got to work
began to wash her favourite shirt
But then the water swirled and frothed
The water monster grabbed her cloth

He pulled her into watery deeps
He gave her herbs so she would sleep
He married her with crabs and fish
for guests; had seaweed as a dish

The girl woke up; she had a child
His hair was green, but he was mild
His eyes were red, but he was bright
and still, the girl cried every night

She cried for Mother, Father, Brother
She wished that they could see each other
She wished she lay inside a grave
Better dead than a monster's slave

She held her child and made a wish
that one day he might leave the fish
and crabs and seaweed, darkened depths
The boy was all the bride had left

The water monster made her cook
and clean and dance until she shook
He captured human souls in cups
He added brine and drank them up

She asked if she could leave; she prayed
to see her mother just one day
She begged a hundred times and still
the monster would not bend his will

She said, 'Destroy me, make me stone!
Drink my soul and eat my bones!

Turn me into crabs and fish!
Make me heartless; that's my wish!

The monster could not bear to see
his pretty wife disturbed by grief
He said, 'Alright, you have one day
but these three rules you must obey:

You must not hug another, not even your dear mother
Your son will stay behind to keep me on your mind
And when your time is past, you must come running fast
before the midnight bell has rung its last.
Understood?'

The girl said yes and kissed her boy
She walked upon the land with joy
She saw her mother and they hugged
For without touching, what is love?

All day they sat and cried and sang
until those awful church bells rang
The mother said, 'Ignore the ring!
On land that beast can't do a thing.'

But when the ringing rang no more
the monster came and hit the door
'Wife!' he cried. 'Come back to me!
You know it's time to make my tea!'

The daughter sighed and made to stand
but mother dearest grabbed her hand
The mother cried, 'Ignore the beast!
Stay with me one more day at least!'

And still the ringing rang no more
and still the monster hit the door
'Wife!' he cried. 'The day is dead!
Now boil my brine and make my bread!'

The daughter sobbed and made to leave
but mother dearest grabbed her sleeve
The mother cried, 'Ignore the beast!
Stay with me one more hour at least!'

And still the ringing rang no more
and still the monster hit the door
'What happened to my wife so mild?
If you don't come I'll kill our child!'

The daughter screamed and shook and begged
as mother dearest held her head
'The monster lies, his words are mud!
He would not kill his **flesh and blood!**'

Then **lightning struck** and water fell
The daughter screamed like bloody hell
as tears of pain cut through the rain
and everything went quiet again
And in the morning by the door
a swirl of blood lay on the floor

For a body, he had salt
For hair, he had seaweed
For eyes, he had rubies
For a heart, he had nothing

The lady's tears: a string of pearls
The mother's sadness: froths and swirls

THE END

If you enjoyed the story and want to say thank you, [you can buy me a coffee](#). Just go to [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com](https://www.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 @arielgoodbody](#). Thank you for listening, and see you in two weeks!

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