

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 beginners. The name of the story is *The Singing Widow*. You can find a transcript of the episode at EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/WidowL1. That's EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/WidowL1. There, you can also download the episode as a PDF.

This is a levelled-down version of a pre-intermediate story. You can listen to the pre-intermediate-level version of *The Singing Widow* at EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Widow.

Today's story is a folk tale sent in by a listener, Daniel. Daniel is from the north of Argentina, where this story comes from as well. Thank you again for your help, Daniel.

By the way, this story mentions coplas, a kind of Spanish folk song.

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

A **widow** is a woman who was married, but her husband died. Widows usually live very sad lives, but if they have children, then their children can look after them. It is not so common to be a widow these days, but it can happen.

A **tear** is water that comes from your eyes when you cry. If someone cries but there are no tears, they might not really be crying. If you are wearing make-up, crying can be very bad because the tears ruin the make-up.

A **grave** is the place you put a body when someone dies. Graves are usually in the ground, the earth. You put a gravestone on top of the grave, and the gravestone has the name of the dead person on it. Most graves are next to churches.

Float means to sit on top of water or air. If you put something very light, not heavy, in water, it will float on the top. For example, people sometimes get little yellow rubber ducks that you put in the bath, and the rubber duck floats on the water. Float can also mean to fly lightly through the air.

Land is the thing below you. So when you walk outside, you are walking on the land. Plants and trees grow on the land. Land can also mean country. For example, England is a land. Originally, it meant 'Land of the Angles', one of the Germanic tribes.

Death is the noun of 'die', 'dying'. Death is something that we will all experience at some point. So in that way, death is a natural part of life, but also, death is the opposite of life. Very confusing!

A **ghost** is a person who has died, but has not left the world. Most people think ghosts are not real, but some people do think ghosts are real. In cartoons like *Scooby Doo*, ghosts usually look like white sheets with eyes and a mouth in them, and they go ooooooh! In horror films, ghosts can be very scary. Usually, when someone dies, they do not become a ghost. Ghosts are people who die and do not want to leave. Usually this is because something happened in their life, and they want to change that thing before they leave.

Skin is the outside part of the body. Humans can have dark skin or light skin. Some people have lots of hair on their skin, but others don't. If your skin is hard or rough, you can use moisturiser to make it nice and smooth. Personally, I have quite dry skin and I often have to put cream on my hands.

Petals are the small, thin parts on the top of a flower. Flowers usually have about five to ten petals, and they are in a circle. Petals can have lots of colours, and they are usually the most beautiful part of the flower. Petals can be used to make jam, to make perfume, to use as decorations and so on.

When you **smile**, you move the sides of your mouth up. It is like a laugh, but smaller. You want to show that you are happy. If you like someone, you smile at them. In some countries, people smile a lot more than in other countries. Sometimes, Thailand is called 'the land of smiles'.

Someone who is **lonely** is alone, and they are sad because they are alone. People are often lonely if they have no friends or family near them. For example, if you move to another country and you don't know anyone, then you will probably feel lonely.

OK, so listen and enjoy!

The Singing **Widow**

Once, there was a woman who lived in Salta, in the north of Argentina. She loved her husband very much, but one day the man died and she was alone. She cried and cried, filling rivers with her **tears**, until she was dry and empty.

Every Sunday, she went and visited her husband's **grave**. She put flowers on the grave, prayed, sang **coplas**, and drank wine until she was full. Then she cried again and went home.

Nobody can live this way, **floating** on a sea of sadness. So one day, the widow cried her last tear, closed her eyes, and never woke up again.

That is, she never woke up in our world. Instead, she went to the **land** of the dead, and she was very happy. Now she could meet her husband again! She ran through the streets of the land of the dead, climbed hills and mountains, and asked everyone where her husband was. But she could not find him. She looked everywhere, asked everyone, but still, nothing.

Her happiness turned to sadness, and she had no more tears to cry.

Finally, she returned to the land of the living. Most people who die have no reason to go back to the land of the living. But this woman would not feel happy in **death** until she found her husband again. And so she walked the road from death to life.

But of course, the dead cannot come back to life, so she returned as a **ghost**. Her **skin** turned white like the flowers on her husband's grave, and she floated through the air like **petals** in the wind.

When she came to the grave, she did everything like before. She tried to put flowers on it, but she could not pick them up. She prayed, but nobody heard her. She sang coplas, but her voice was not beautiful. She tried to drink wine, but the wine went through her body.

Most ghosts float from one place to another, carrying sadness and old memories. But the widow was different. She talked to her husband and listened to him, but really, he said nothing.

Finally, other people began to see the ghost. Her flowers stayed on the grave, and the wine stayed in her stomach. The only thing that was strange was her hair, which was silver like the moon.

One day, a man came to her, as she sat by the grave. He had been watching her for a long time, and he had fallen in love with her.

He was not a normal man. His skin was white and his hair was silver just like hers.

'What are you looking for?' he asked the widow.

'I am looking for my husband,' she said, 'but I do not think I will find him. I have looked in the land of the dead and the land of the living, and now I live between the two.'

The man **smiled**, and picked up a flower from the grave.

'Such beautiful petals, but if you take them away...'

'The flower won't be beautiful anymore,' said the woman. She took the flower and put it back on the grave.

'Perhaps. If you find your husband and he has lost his petals, will you still want him?'

'I have walked through both lands and I have not lost *my* petals.'

'And that makes you special. But if you look for someone for a long time and you cannot find them, maybe that person does not want you to find them.'

The widow laughed coldly and drank some wine.

'He was my whole world. If I cannot find him, then what should I search for? Should I try to return to the land of the dead? It is an empty place, if he is not there.'

The man offered his hand to her. 'There are those in the land of the living who *do* want to be found. Will you go for a ride with me?'

The man showed her his horse. The animal, too, was white and had long, silver hair. The man said, 'She is **lonely**, just like us.'

'And who said I was lonely?' said the woman. But she smiled. 'Fine, take me for a ride.'

So they got on his horse and rode away from the grave. The woman soon found that there were other ways to live. Now she had a man and a lovely horse to sing coplas and drink wine with. She could smile, and she could cry when she needed to.

She never found her husband, but she was not lonely. And wasn't that enough?

So be careful, if you ride through the town of Salta. You might see a man and a woman riding a horse, with silver hair and white skin. Don't look them in the eye, or you'll feel the coldness of death!

But you also might feel a fire of love.

THE END

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