

# A Crooked Old House – 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 pre-intermediate learners. The name of the story is *A Crooked Old House*. You can find a transcript of the episode at [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/House](https://EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/House), where you can also download the episode as a PDF.

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

When something is **crooked**, it is bent and not straight. For example, if you break your nose, it will be crooked, and your glasses will look crooked as well. If you don't look after your teeth well, you'll have crooked teeth. When a house is very old, the walls move and are not straight anymore – it becomes crooked.

**Moist** is when something is a bit wet but not very wet. After you have a shower, the bathroom will probably be moist. **Moisture** is how moist the air is. Moisture is very important, because it can affect how hot or cold a room feels, and if a room is very moist, the furniture can get damaged. Interestingly, a lot of English speakers say that 'moist' is the ugliest word in the English language. I don't know if I agree!

If wood is left wet for a long time, it **warps**, it changes shape. That is why it is important to build houses well. Old houses were often built of wood, and if the house got moist inside, the wood would warp and the walls would no longer be straight. Ooh, that's a bit of a tongue twister! 'The wood would warp.' Wood can also become warped through heat. If wooden floor boards warp, the building could become unsafe.

A **hook** is a curved thing that you have on the wall. You use hooks to hang things on. For example, many houses have a row of hooks to hang coats on. Or you might have hooks in the garden shed to hang tools on. I have a desk from IKEA that has two hooks on either side to hang headphones on. Very handy for a podcaster like me.

A **zip-line** is a thick wire, a thick cable, that lets you travel quickly from one point to another by riding down. Basically, there is a bit you hold onto, and then you hang in the air and let gravity pull you down the zip-line. Zip-lines are often used in adventure playgrounds for children, as they are a fun and exciting way to fly through the air, but they are also used in tourism, for example to let people fly over a jungle.

**Roll** is when you move something by turning it around. So balls roll around, because they are round. You can also roll up a piece of paper and hit someone with it. When cars move, their wheels roll along the ground.

A **fern** is a long green plant. Ferns have long thin leaves and no flowers. Ferns grow their leaves in little balls which slowly unfold themselves. Ferns usually grow in dark, moist places. Eww!

**Drains** are pipes in your house that take water away – the water drains away. When you wash up or shower, the water goes down the plughole and into the drain. Drains are obviously very important for modern life. If your drain gets blocked, then the water will stop draining, and that's not fun.

A **plumber** is a person whose job it is to fix sinks and pipes. If your drain is blocked, or your shower is broken, or even worse – if your toilet won't flush properly! – then it's time to call a plumber. The word 'plumber' comes from the Latin word *plumbum*, which means 'lead'. Lead is a type of metal. The chemical symbol for lead is Pb – again, from *plumbum*.

Plumbers have this name related to lead because in the past, pipes were made of lead. However, we now know that lead is poisonous to humans, so fortunately we use different materials now!

An **association** is a group of people who work together with one purpose. For example, there are plumbers' associations where plumbers can meet and discuss their area of work. There are football associations which help decide the rules and regulations for playing football. There are also associations of people who help out with different things, for example caring for the sick and the elderly.

When you **pretend**, you do something but you don't really do it. For example, if you pretend to eat, you don't actually put the food in your mouth. If you pretend to drink, you don't actually put the drink in your mouth. If you pretend to know something, you say, 'Oh yes, I know that!' but really you don't.

OK, so listen and enjoy!

## A Crooked Old House

Once upon a time, there was a crooked old man who lived in a crooked old house. The house had lived through three hundred summers and winters, and each year the wood **warped** and the house became more crooked. The old man had not been crooked when he moved in there, but just as the **moisture** warped the wood, the house warped the man.

Every morning he got out of bed and climbed up the hill to the kitchen. The floor had become so steep that he truly had to climb. He took two sharp **hooks** and pushed them into the floor, and pulled himself up the hill.

Once he was in the kitchen, he made his morning tea and his breakfast, and there was one part of the floor that was so warped that he could sit in it. It was so warped that it made a nice chair. The old man sat on the floor-chair, drank his tea and ate his toast.

Afterwards, he went to the bathroom. In order to get there, he went to the edge of the kitchen, put the climbing hooks in his pocket and rode a **zip-line** down to the end of the corridor. In the past, he had **rolled** down the hill, but after hurting himself badly one time, he installed the zip-line. A few times, he had forgotten his hooks in the kitchen, and then it was awful because he would have to climb the corridor with his hands. He remembered one particularly bad occasion when he was hungry and it took him almost an hour to reach the kitchen. After that, he bought a spare pair of hooks, which he kept in his bedroom. Just in case.

The bathroom was not as warped as the rest of the house, but it was the moistest part of it. When he walked into the bathroom, it was like walking into a jungle. At first, mushrooms grew in there. Some even grew on his toothbrush. He made sure to wash them off before brushing his teeth, and it really wasn't much of a problem. Then, other things started to grow: **ferns** and tropical plants. One day, he found a frog hiding in one of the ferns.

Eventually, the **drain** stopped working. When the old man showered, the water took a very long time to drain, and finally, it stopped draining completely. He called in a **plumber**, but when the plumber saw the man's bathroom, he said, 'All the money in the world wouldn't be enough for me to fix this. I think you should set this house on fire and start again. Except it's probably too moist to set on fire!'

Now, the old man didn't like people talking badly about his house, so he never called in a plumber again. He had his own ideas about why the drain might've stopped working. Probably part of the floor warped and moved the pipes. But you couldn't do anything about warping. It was an old house, and old houses were beautiful and crooked.

So finally the bath filled up with water and fish started swimming in it – who knew where they came from? – and the old man got used to it and started washing in a bucket instead. He fed the fish, and they grew. When the fish grew too big to live in the bath, he put them in a bag of water, took them to the forest, and put them in the river.

But most days were not so exciting. The old man mostly just sat in his living room. At first, he read books, but they became too moist to open without damaging. So instead, he listened to the radio, but the radio started making strange noises. He would fall asleep and wake up to a voice speaking in a language he didn't know, which didn't sound like any human voice, either. After one particularly scary night, he broke open the radio and made it into a home for some of the frogs.

Now he spent his days playing with the wild animals that lived in the house. Many had come over the years, as it was easy to get in through the warped old doors and windows. There were dogs and cats and some animals that the old man wasn't sure about, but that was probably just his eyesight. Still, they ate the bread he gave them and let him play with their hair, so they couldn't be that dangerous.

The old man thought that there was no better place to live than his old crooked house, but of course others did not agree. The plumber was not the only one who suggested he leave. His parents were dead, and they had never liked their brothers and sisters, so the old man did not even know if his aunts, uncles and cousins were still alive. And he had never been married or had children. He had been in love when he first moved into the old house, but the house had warped the relationship, too.

No, it was not family that tried to get him to move out. It was some local do-gooders.

There was an **association** of young people who visited the elderly in their homes. The old man had never been interested in such associations – he didn't like to think of himself as elderly. The young people knocked on his door, and when they told him they were from the association, he said, 'No, thank you!' and shut the door in their face. This didn't work so well, though, because the door was warped and didn't shut properly.

The young people from the association came knocking several times, and each time the old man shut the door in their face, but one day, they brought a carrot cake in a tin. And it just so happened that the old man needed a new tin. All his old tins had become warped like the house. He wasn't interested in the cake, of course – he could bake anything better than these young people. Though recently he mostly cooked the fish that grew in the bathroom... But that *tin*. He wanted that tin.

So he allowed them inside. At first, they **pretended** to find the house charming, and said all sorts of things like, 'It's so... interesting how the floor goes up here,' and, 'A zip-line indoors! Wow, that's fun!' He invited them into the kitchen for tea, but when they saw the climb, they said that was quite alright.

'Alright, then,' said the old man. Then he tied the cake tin around himself, took the climbing hooks off the wall and started to climb.

The next time the young people from the association visited, they didn't pretend to like the place. Instead, they said things like, 'Are you really comfortable here?', and, 'You know, there are homes you could live in with other people, and they cook and clean for you.'

'No, thank you,' said the old man, grabbing the tin of chocolate cake they had brought – he hated to admit it, but their carrot cake had been very good. 'If that's all you have to say, then don't come round here again.' He thought for a moment. 'Actually, you can bring cake. Just leave it by the door.'

'Oh no!' said the young people. 'We do love visiting you. Why don't we sit and have a cup of tea?'

So they pretended to be comfortable on the sofa surrounded by all the wild animals. It was very hard for them to pretend, because the floor under the sofa was so warped that they kept falling off.

After that, the young people from the association stopped coming round. The old man thought it was a shame, because he really had liked their cake. But as long as he had the energy to climb up to the kitchen, he could certainly bake his own cakes – and he had two nice new tins to put the cake in! Though recently he had lost the energy to cook much. Instead, he just ate the mushrooms that grew in the bathroom. He didn't even have to climb up to the kitchen for that.

One day, as the old man was zip-lining down from the kitchen, the zip-line broke. SNAP! He fell to the floor and rolled all the way to the bottom of the hill. The house started to shake, and the climbing hooks fell off the wall with a CLANG! The wild animals made horrible noises, and the fish in the bath tried to jump out of the water. In the sitting room, the sofa fell down and rolled all the way across the floor.

And the old man couldn't get up. He had hurt himself in the fall, but more than that, he simply didn't *want* to. He was cold, and it was moist, and hadn't he done enough in this life? So he lay down on the floor and let the house take him.

The ferns from the bathroom slowly climbed over and wrapped their fingers around him. The moisture poured down the walls and made a pool until only his face was above the water. Some of the animals came and **sniffed** him, and when he did nothing, they opened their mouths. Before the old man closed his eyes, he thought he even saw a mushroom get up and move towards him.

The crooked old house **let out a sigh**. Three hundred summers and winters was more than enough. The bones of the house started to break, and then in a few seconds, the whole thing came down. The ceilings fell, the water rose, and before people outside knew what was happening, the ground had eaten the whole place up.

For years afterwards, people spoke of the crooked old man who lived in the crooked old house. Although people searched for months, nobody could find the body. Some of the animals were rescued, although they weren't very friendly to the humans who saved them, and the walls, doors, plants and furniture mixed into the earth.

A hundred summers and a hundred winters later, when people had long forgotten about the crooked old house, something moved in the wet earth. Nobody was watching, so nobody noticed it. But if someone had looked very closely, they would've seen something small push out of the ground.

It was a tiny wooden door, opening in the spring like a new flower.

## THE END

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