

A Visitor From Chilly Bottom – 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 *A Visitor from Chilly Bottom*. You can find a transcript of the episode at EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Chilly, where you can also download the episode as a PDF.

This is a story I wrote with Alastair from [English Learning for Curious Minds](https://EnglishLearningforCuriousMinds.com). [Last week, we came up with a story idea and worked on it together](#). Then Alastair went away and wrote the story, we edited it together, and today you're going to hear the final version with both of our voices!

After the episode, there'll be a discussion between me and Alastair about the story – what we think went well, what surprised us and our thoughts on the experience – so do keep listening. You can go back and listen to the brainstorming session where we came up with the story at EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Together.

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

Chilly means a bit cold. When you go outside and the wind is blowing and making things cold, it's chilly. When it's chilly, you might not turn the heating on. You might just put on some extra clothes. In the UK, in winter it's rarely freezing cold, but often chilly.

A **seal** is a tool you use to mark a document or letter to prevent others from opening it or copying it. Traditionally, seals were made of metal. You poured out some wax onto an envelope and pressed the seal into it while the wax was still wet, so that it would dry into the shape of the seal. These days, it is usually only very old institutions that use these seals. A **royal seal** is a seal used for the royal family, the king and queen and so on. Of course, 'seal' can also refer to the animal that makes the sound [seal noise], which can lead to all sorts of funny puns...

Bonkers is British slang meaning 'crazy' or 'stupid'. If someone is bonkers, you probably don't want to talk to them. If you're in a bonkers situation, you probably want to get out of it!

A **butler** is the most important servant in a house. Of course, these days most people don't have servants, but in the past rich people would have many servants, and the butler would be in charge of the other servants. Jeeves is a character from a series of novels by P. G. Wodehouse. Jeeves is technically *not* a butler, he is a valet, but popular culture Jeeves is often thought of as the stereotypical butler. In murder mysteries, there is an idea that it is often the butler who commits the murder, and so the phrase 'The butler did it!' appears in many parodies of these stories.

A **tailcoat** is an old-fashioned piece of clothing for men. Tailcoats are worn as part of a suit. They are waist-length at the front and lower in the back. The back part is divided into two parts, or 'tails', and so tailcoats are often referred to as 'tails'. These days, tailcoats are usually only worn for very formal occasions.

Worship means to show respect to God by doing certain actions. For example, Christians worship by going to church and sharing in the Eucharist, the body and blood of Christ. Muslims worship Allah by praying five times a day. Jewish people worship God by going to synagogue and studying the Torah.

When you **spit**, and the past tense is **spat**, you throw water or saliva out of your mouth. In the UK, it is very rude to spit outside, but in the past, people used to chew tobacco and spit it out. If you eat some very bad food, you might spit it out. If you talk very angrily, you spit your words out.

Regurgitate means to bring food up from your stomach and spit it out. Certain birds go and hunt food, partially digest it and then regurgitate the food to feed their young. For example, penguins make use of regurgitation.

A **colony** is a country or area that is controlled by another country. Colonies are used to increase a country's resources. In the past, many European countries colonised other parts of the world, for example in order to get more gold and in order to sell slaves. We also use the word 'colony' to refer to groups of certain animals. For example, penguins live in colonies.

A **crumb** is a small piece of bread, cake or biscuit. When you eat bread, little bits of the bread break off and fall on your plate. These are crumbs. With some food you have to eat carefully or you get crumbs all over yourself.

Poo is a childish word for something that we all make, but which is very horrible. Poo comes out of your behind when you go to the toilet. When you go to the park, you should be careful that you don't step on dog poo, because then you will have to clean your shoes.

Furrow your brow means to frown, to make deep lines in your forehead. People furrow their brows when they are confused, angry or just thinking very hard. If you furrow your brows very often, you'll get wrinkles.

A **captive** is a prisoner, someone who is trapped and cannot escape. If you are being held captive, you will need someone to come and rescue you.

A **press release** is a statement written to put in newspapers and official publications. Artists often have press releases written when they release new work, but companies and sections of the government will also issue press releases when something important happens.

Waddle means to move with very short steps, usually with the body swaying from one side to another. Penguins waddle as they walk, because they have very short legs. Ducks also waddle for the same reason. Waddling animals are usually very cute.

OK, so listen and enjoy!

A Visitor From Chilly Bottom

'My gosh,' said the oddly-dressed man, as he looked out of the aeroplane window, 'what **foul** weather! I would have been better off staying at home.'

This was the gentleman's first trip to England. In fact, it was the first time he had stepped outside the snowy continent of Antarctica. For hundreds of years, people had lived very happily in the village of **Chilly** Bottom, three kilometres east (or was it north?) of the South Pole. Robert Falcon Scott, Bobby to his friends, was the first ever Antarctic to go abroad.

When he arrived at passport control, he was met by a **gruff** voice from the border control officer.

'Passport, please.'

Goodness gracious me, Bobby thought to himself. *Where are this man's manners?*

'My good sir,' he replied, 'I have an important message to pass on to your king. I trust you will grant me safe passage.'

The officer looked over his glasses.

'You what, mate? Where you from, the 18th century? I need to see a passport.'

Fortunately, the traveller had been told that he might run into a few problems at Heathrow, and he was well prepared.

'Sir, let me explain. I come from the village of Chilly Bottom, in BAT, or British Antarctic Territory. I am, like your good self, I presume, a British citizen. Here are my papers. I have an important message for your king.'

The man slid a pile of old papers under the glass window, and waited patiently while the passport officer thumbed through them.

'I'm going to need to show these to my boss. Wait here a minute, will ya?'

Several minutes passed before a woman emerged from behind a glass door, indicating for Bobby to follow her.

'Mr... Robert Falcon Scott, correct? This is all rather unusual, I have to say, but your papers do bear the royal seal.'

'The royal seal? From the South Pole? I had no idea one of my countrymen had come here already!'

'Err,' said the woman. 'Moving on. I've run this up to my superiors – it's gone all the way up to Buckingham Palace – and I am told that the king will be happy to receive you. A car is waiting for you outside.'

'Smashing,' replied Mr Scott, raising his hat to the woman.

'This is bonkers,' muttered the border control officer, shaking his head.

Mr Scott could only assume 'bonkers' was some modern slang used to describe situations of great importance. He smiled to himself as they moved him through security. It must be quite a rare occasion to see someone invited by the king himself. They arrived outside and guided him towards a sleek black limousine, and he wondered when he was going to meet the royal seal.

As the car made its way through the streets of London, the man leant forward and started to engage the driver in conversation.

'Sir, may I ask you a question?'

The driver remained silent, but the man continued anyway.

'Is it true that your king is holding penguins prisoners? That he has locked them up in cages for the amusement of the public?'

Looking at him in the rear view mirror, the driver's eyes met his, but they quickly turned back to the road and a stony expression covered his face.

'Don't know about any prisoners, sir,' said the driver in a peculiar accent.

'And is it always such bad weather here? The sky is grey, and it's pouring with rain. It might be a tad cold where I'm from, but at least we have blue skies!'

'Well yes, you didn't come to Mallorca, sir.'

The pair continued in silence, until the car pulled up at the gates of Buckingham Palace.

The door swung open, and a red carpet rolled down to greet them. At the top of a flight of stairs, a man stood dressed in black formal wear. Mr Scott climbed up and bowed politely.

'A pleasure to meet you, your majesty.'

'Mr Scott, I am Sir John Fitzwilliam-Patrick. I am His Royal Majesty's butler,' the man replied, his voice emotionless and cold.

'The butler? Why are you dressed as a penguin then? And if I'm not mistaken, a king penguin, with that tailcoat of yours. Surely such dress would be reserved for the king?'

The butler smiled.

'Mr Scott, his majesty is looking forward to receiving you. He will do so tomorrow morning, at 9 o'clock sharp. In the meantime, I have been told to make you comfortable, and to show you around. A footman will take your belongings up to your room. Please, follow me, we will sit a little and take tea.'

They settled into armchairs in a carpeted drawing room and servants worked around them, pouring tea and offering plates of some snow-coloured food.

‘Mr Scott, could I be so bold as to ask you to tell me a little bit about life in... Chilly Bottom, was it not?’

The Antarctic took a bite of the food – how odd, it tasted nothing like snow! – and crossed his legs.

‘Well, where do I start? Chilly Bottom is a small village in Antarctica, as I mentioned before. We are about 5 kilometres from the South Pole, and my parents, their parents – all of our ancestors, in fact – have lived there for as long as anyone can remember. We live a pretty normal and unremarkable life, really. I can’t imagine it is so different from yours. We get up, we have breakfast, we sing songs, we **worship** the penguin Gods, we drink tea with seal oil, it really isn’t as remarkable as you –’

‘Hang on a minute,’ the butler interrupted. ‘You worship the penguin Gods?’

‘Precisely,’ the man replied. ‘They bring us our food: delicious **regurgitated** fish; they stand around us when we’re cold, and they allow us to ride on their backs when it is slightly warmer and we want to take a dip in the ocean. Without the penguins, life in Chilly Bottom simply wouldn’t be possible!’

The butler looked straight at him, astonished.

‘Sir, I want to know all about Chilly Bottom, but before that I simply must ask you something. Your voice, your manner of speaking... It is, how can I put it? It is like mine, it is like His Majesty’s. You speak English like a true gentleman. But am I correct in that neither you nor anyone from Chilly Bottom has ever left Antarctica, nor had any contact with anyone outside your village?’

‘Well, my uncle did come across an African penguin once who had taken an unfortunate wrong turn. But yes, I am the first Chilly Bottomer to ever “break the ice”, as we put it. I mean, the first to leave Antarctica. If you are wondering why I sound so English, it all comes down to a book. Now, this goes back to the time of my great grandfather, 1912 to be precise. Our methods of communication were different. **Predominantly** we conversed in the Penguin tongue – a terribly harsh language, but beautifully poetic – and one day my great grandfather found a book in the snow, next to a little device with a man’s voice trapped inside it. We never found out who left it, but my ancestors studied the book, listened to the recordings, and started to adopt the language we heard there as our language. It is, if I am not mistaken, English that we are speaking now, correct?’

The butler nodded.

‘Excellent. Well, anyway, we found it to be a delightful language, and much easier to pronounce than the penguin tongue. For one thing, we have the same vocal organs. So I was brought up speaking English by my parents. And as a little nod to the author of the book, I am called Robert Falcon Scott, as is my brother, my sister, and in fact everyone in Chilly Bottom. We have a real respect for tradition, you know.’

‘Doesn’t that get a little confusing?’

‘Not at all. We know who we are referring to because we use slightly different tones. I’m *Robert* Falcon Scott, my sister is Robert *Falcon* Scott and my brother is Robert Falcon *Scott*. Is that confusing for you?’

‘Well, I guess you get an ear for it. But let me ask one more question. Why exactly are you here, sir? The driver told me you were talking about penguins.’

‘Bingo,’ Mr Scott replied. ‘We heard – in fact from that same South African penguin, who had heard it from a cousin of his who had spent some time on a nature reserve in Botswana

– that your king has something called a “zoo”, where he keeps penguins locked up for the amusement of the public. As a British citizen, I have come to demand that he release them.’

‘Sir,’ Fitzwilliam-Patrick interrupted, ‘I’m not sure that you *are* a British citizen.’

‘How dare you!’ cried Mr Scott. ‘Chilly Bottom is a British Antarctic Territory. Your king – *our* king – or some ancestor of his claimed it. I have grown up all my life knowing that I am a British citizen, and the suggestion that I am not quite offends me! Besides, that South African penguin told my uncle that people in Britain have quite a reputation for overseas territories. What is it you call them... **colonies**, yes? Well, do you know who else has colonies? Penguins. But at least we have the decency to not to come to Britain and put your citizens in cages.’

The Antarctic brushed some **crumbs** off his lap and crossed his arms. For a moment, he said nothing, and the pair sat in silence.

Fitzwilliam-Patrick was the first to speak, taking on a peaceful tone.

‘Sir, I do apologise for the offence caused. Let me reassure you that the king is looking forward to meeting with you tomorrow. In the meantime, let me show you something of the city. It is your first time in your home country, after all.’

‘Very well.’

Their first stop was The Royal Oak, a pub a couple of minutes away from the palace.

‘You must be hungry after your journey, and those sandwiches weren’t much.’

Fitzwilliam-Patrick placed two pints of beer on the table. ‘Shall we grab a bite to eat as well? Have you ever tasted fish and chips? It is something of a cliché, but they do it rather well here. His Majesty will pay for it.’

The Antarctic nodded, took a large sip of beer and immediately **spat it out**.

‘What rubbish is this!’ he exclaimed. ‘It has no fizz, it is completely flat!’

‘It’s English beer,’ Fitzwilliam-Patrick explained. ‘I’m guessing you are more of a lager man? Henry, could you pour my friend a pint of Kronenbourg? It is French,’ he whispered, ‘and His Majesty has a bit of a thing about us not buying British, but I don’t see a problem as long as we keep this between the two of us, don’t you agree? Now, where was I? Ah yes, Henry, two fish and chips, too, please. And make it snappy.’

‘Snappy’ – that was another new word, and from the way Fitzwilliam-Patrick **snapped his fingers**, he could see it meant ‘fast’.

Now that they’d settled down, Mr Scott looked around with interest. All around, there was ugly carpet, sticky furniture and drunk old men. This must have been what the book was referring to when it said ‘can’t wait to get back to the pub and have a pint!’ For a moment, he was overtaken by emotion at the thought of this rich cultural tradition, and tears started to form in his eyes.

Before he knew it, a waitress had brought out two plates. The man from Antarctica stared in complete astonishment.

‘Fish and chips,’ Fitzwilliam-Patrick repeated. ‘You’ll like fish, that’s the big long thing covered in batter. I’m sure you’ll like chips – I mean, who doesn’t? – and that green thing on the side there is –’

‘My dear man,’ Mr Scott interrupted, ‘I know very well what this is!’

And he took a big spoonful of the stuff. A moment later, it met the same fate as the beer: **spat out all** over the table.

‘I don’t believe it!’ he said. ‘This has to be the worst rotten penguin **poo** I’ve ever tasted.’

‘Rotten... penguin poo? Sir, I’m sorry to disappoint, but that’s mushy peas. It is a small green vegetable that’s been mushed up. It’s something of a delicacy around here.’

‘Pah! I’d take rotten penguin droppings over this any day of the week. I’m sorry, sir, but I think I’d like to go back to my room now. I’ve come a long way, and I need to rest before meeting His Royal Highness tomorrow morning.’

Fitzwilliam-Patrick nodded, and the pair returned to the palace. Mr Scott slept poorly that night. He wasn’t worried about the meeting the following day, rather, he couldn’t get comfortable in his bed. They had given him some thin useless piece of cloth, rather than a nice warm seal skin, and he missed the sound of the sea in the distance.

The following morning, the man from Antarctica was already showered, shaved and dressed by the time Fitzwilliam-Patrick knocked on his door.

‘Good morning, Mr Scott. I shall now take you to His Majesty, King Charles III.’

‘Jolly good.’

They walked for what seemed like miles through identical-looking corridors, until they reached a door and Fitzwilliam-Patrick said, ‘May I present to you His Royal Highness, the King.’

The door opened to reveal an old man sitting at a table, dipping toast into a boiled egg and getting crumbs on his trousers.

‘Call me Charlie, please,’ the man said, extending his hand. ‘I really am thrilled to see you.’

Mr Scott looked at the hand suspiciously.

‘Excuse me, sir, is this some kind of joke? I’m here to see the king. You have no crown, you’re dressed like a factory worker, and you’d rather I call you Charlie? I beg of you, please take me to see the king immediately.’

‘Mr Scott,’ the man said, his tone becoming friendlier still. ‘I am the king. How can I prove it to you? Hmm, I know! Wilkins,’ he said, motioning to one of the men guarding the door. ‘Come over here for a minute, would you? Wilkins, please open your wallet and show the gentleman a banknote.’

The man carefully took his wallet out of his pocket, and pulled out a piece of paper, handing it to his master.

‘This is a ten pound note. Take a good look at it.’ He passed it to his guest. ‘Notice anyone familiar?’ he added with an artificial smile.

Mr Scott **furrowed his brow**, looking down at the note and then up at the man standing opposite him.

‘You do look very similar to the fellow on there, I have to admit. It’s just all a bit unexpected. I thought you would be... how can I say? Different. No matter. Your Majesty, I am from the village of Chilly Bottom. I am one of your loyal subjects, and I am here with an important request to make of you.’

With this, his voice grew sterner.

‘Release the penguins!’

The king looked surprised, and then gave a small laugh.

‘Release the penguins? And which penguins might you be referring to?’

‘Your majesty, do you or do you not have a park in the city called Regent’s Park?’

‘Well, there is a park called Regent’s Park, but it isn’t exactly mine.’

‘And in this park, are there or are there not penguins being held **captive**, forced to do tricks for the amusement of the common man?’

The king looked puzzled, and turned again to one of the footmen.

‘Wilkins, didn’t you take your son to the zoo for his birthday a few weeks ago? Do you know if there are any penguins there?’

‘Yes, sir, there are. They feed them twice a day – wonderful show they put on, my son absolutely loved it,’ the footman responded, evidently pleased to be involved in something other than opening and closing doors.

‘Well, Mr Scott, there’s your answer. There are penguins, but I think it’s a bit much to say that I am keeping them captive. The zoo really isn’t anything to do with me. Why is it that you are so concerned about them, may I ask? Have you really come all this way to ask me this question? If you have, I am awfully sorry that there is nothing I can do.’

Mr Scott then proceeded to tell the king the same story he had told Fitzwilliam-Patrick the previous evening: how they worshipped the penguins as gods, how they had learned English from a book found in the snow, and how the news of the penguins at London Zoo had made it all the way to Chilly Bottom. The king was very interested.

As he listened, he furrowed his brows and stroked his chin.

‘You know, my dear Mr Scott,’ he said, smiling, ‘I think there might be something we can do. I’m going to have to speak with my legal advisors, naturally, but I just think I might know a way to resolve this problem. Leave it with me, but we must meet again tomorrow, 8am sharp.’

The following morning, the Antarctic traveller rose bright and early, and made his way to the king’s breakfast room through a maze of corridors.

When he opened the door, he saw the king wearing the same clothes, unshaven, with a mad look in his eyes. Papers covered the table, and several old leather-bound books were piled up on chairs nearby.

The king spoke quickly.

‘My dear Mr Scott – may I call you Bobby? Bobby, I think we have it. You may know that the king is the legal owner of all swans in the country, but did you know that he also can grant himself ownership over any bird in the British Empire if there is a valid ecological or theological reason for it? The law dates back to 1314, but my advisors have told me that it has never been changed. This means, my dear boy, that we have a solution. You and the residents of Chilly Bottom are my subjects. I might not have known about you, I mean, *nobody* knew about you, but Chilly Bottom is British Antarctic Territory, and that makes you one of us. As king, it is my duty to ensure that your religious beliefs are protected, and if your god – gods I should probably say – are being held in a zoo, then this is certainly a valid theological reason to call up Statute 1408, Point A Section 49. I’ll have my team write a **press release** immediately.’

Throughout this speech, Robert Falcon Scott had been nodding away, *mm-ing* in agreement with the king’s every word.

When the king finally finished, all the man from Antarctica could manage was a quiet ‘Thank you, Your Majesty’. He could hardly believe his ears.

And so it was that, 48 hours later, all 73 penguins from London Zoo **waddled** onto a specially-adapted aeroplane and made the long journey back to Chilly Bottom.

73 penguins and one man, that is, for right behind them was Robert Falcon Scott, the man who had rescued his gods.

Mr Scott kept a diary throughout his trip. The final entry reads as follows:

London, April 2024. Leaving now. The people speak with a horrible accent, the weather is worse than a sick seal’s bottom and they’ve never even heard of rotten penguin poo. I enjoyed my time in London, but I’m glad to be waddling home.

THE END

Discussion of the process

Ariel Goodbody: Hi Alistair, good to talk to you again. So how did you find the whole process of writing and recording the story together?

Alastair Budge: I really enjoyed it. It was a huge amount of fun. It was challenging in ways that I hadn't necessarily imagined. But I really thought it came together really nicely. It was kind of fun to document the whole process too. And I hope that people have perhaps enjoyed watching us go through it, watching me struggle, watching me being taught by you, and that they enjoyed the final results.

Ariel Goodbody: Yeah, well, I think my favourite moment was after we did the brainstorming session and you went away and wrote the story and then I read through the first draft – I actually went and sat in the park near my house to read it and I was sitting there like, laughing out loud, because I was finding it so funny, and it's so satisfying to do that collaborative process and then to see the result from the other end.

I felt really, I don't want to sound patronising, but I felt really proud of you, like, oh wow, like, this is really great work, and it was really great to see how that process went back and forth with suggestions and changes. And then it was so interesting to record a story that I had had some hand in, some work in, but then also it was a lot of, you know, original work from someone else.

Yeah, it was a really fun process for me, and although it was different from my normal process, it didn't feel like really difficult, or I don't think we had any real disagreements over anything, which was really fantastic, so yeah.

Alastair Budge: I'm glad you enjoyed the bits there. I also really enjoyed the writing of it. I kind of found myself laughing at some of the jokes as well. I hope that there were enough jokes on different levels there that people who are non-native English speakers will have been able to appreciate – perhaps some of them, perhaps all of them – and even if you didn't necessarily get all of the jokes in the story, that you will have enjoyed the narrative anyway. Hopefully other people are sitting in parks chuckling or at least kind of smiling when they're listening to the story.

Ariel Goodbody: Absolutely. I actually had a listener message me the other day and say that they listen to the stories in bed before they go to sleep. So they were asking if I could make some of the sound effects a bit quieter because it was waking them up. So hopefully this story, there's not too much like...

Because I know when I recorded it, I got really into doing the character voices, and quite often I do like different accents for different characters in my stories, but because this was, you know, very specifically British, set in London, and then King Charles was in it, I got to do a lot of fun character voices. I did this very exaggerated, ridiculous, kind of old-school voice received pronunciation accent for our hero, Bobby. And that was really fun, and I enjoyed playing up the theatricality of it. So yeah, hopefully even if people don't quite understand all the references, it's still fun for them, and hopefully it won't wake them up just as they're falling asleep!

Alastair Budge: For people listening to this, Ariel and I were deciding how we would split the narration of the story. Ariel said, I've got some ideas about some of these voices. So if you don't mind, I would like to narrate them. And I was very happy for that because I didn't have any particular fixed ideas about how these characters might sound.

So I was thinking, I wonder what Ariel's gonna come up with. When I first listened to the version that you did, I laughed because I thought, wow, this is amazing. I hadn't necessarily imagined the character like that, but the final version was much better than anything that I could have possibly imagined. So I thought it was great.

Ariel Goodbody: Oh, thank you. It's really interesting when you write something and then seeing someone else interpret it in a different way. And I think that went both ways, like there were certain things that I guess I would read out in a certain way and then hearing your reading I was like, oh interesting, okay, so there's like different emphasis or... I think maybe you have like a very nice kind of like dry sense of humour as well, whereas I tend to go for much more kind of loud, but I think hopefully they complemented each other quite nicely.

The main character's voice was quite a strain, like it was quite a vocal workout. I went for quite, I guess like an over the top, hysterical character voice. But fortunately, it was okay. I've done character voices before in episodes, like, especially if it's like an old man or someone very gruff and angry, where I really, like, strain my voice doing it.

Alastair Budge: It was great. I was always a little bit concerned with, you know, making sure that there were the right speech tags, you know, the kind of, he said, she said, they said, you said, type thing; so that the listener was able to properly understand who is speaking. But I think it worked very nicely with obviously the accents that you were doing, meaning that people knew very clearly who was speaking.

Ariel Goodbody: Yeah, it's interesting. Because I've been telling stories in this way for quite a while, I've learned to just – even if they're quite similar characters – find some way to distinguish the voices so that it's clearer to the listener. And I've actually been performing storytelling in person more recently, and it's quite interesting how also every time you do a character, you tend to kind of adopt a certain physicality.

At first, I had the temptation to kind of stand to one side for one character, and then move to the other side for another character, like you're two actors playing two parts. And then I realised it's a bit silly: you're the one storyteller, you just stand in the same place, but you change your voice and how you hold your body to represent each character.

I could very much feel how Bobby would stand versus the King versus, you know, a passport officer or whatever. But one question that I really want to ask you that I'm very curious about is, after this, are you going to do more writing? Are you thinking of doing more stories?

Alastair Budge: I really enjoyed the process. Certainly I think it could be a really fun thing to do. If people like this story, then we could go for another collaboration of some sort or continue the adventures of the man from Chilly Bottom. Although, it seemed to me that there was a satisfying-ish conclusion, and that we don't want to get into the trap of those kind of series that just roll out their main characters and just try and get them to go into even more unlikely scenarios.

Ariel Goodbody: That kind of story that is either very long-term or sometimes, I guess people talk about a 'forever story' where it can just keep continuing with the characters in new situations, right? That's a very different thing to write.

And honestly, I don't know if I could even write that because I don't have experience with that kind of story, like that kind of comic book story, I guess, where there's a new situation every week. But I'm definitely open to more collaborations. I think that would be really, really fun. And I think now that we've got a good idea of how the creative process could go, that opens up a lot of possibilities.

How did you find the whole brainstorming process? Was it challenging, or?

Alastair Budge: So, it was challenging! To be honest, one of the struggles I had when writing was wondering to what extent we should be true to what we talked about in the brainstorming. I know we started by talking about someone coming over from kind of France or Italy or Germany or Spain or something like that to the UK and talking about unusual cultural aspects. And of course the final story is very different.

I think in terms of the brainstorming, I found it super useful to do because you're kind of working through ideas but then when it came to the writing, I sort of thought, I wonder if there's a suitable place to fit this in, or if I'm just trying to fit in this idea or this episode just because we talked about it. Mainly because I also felt that if we added them in then it might seem a little bit artificial in terms of where the story was going. And I was also conscious that it was getting a little bit long, and I didn't want the characters to go and visit lots of different places and do lots of different things without those things being properly developed.

Ariel Goodbody: Are you familiar with the phrase 'kill your darlings'?

Alastair Budge: Uh, I think I've heard it. Yeah. So don't be too fixated on something that you initially show an interest in. Is that broadly what it means?

Ariel Goodbody: Yeah, so it's one of those phrases people use about writing and the idea is you write something in your story that you think is so beautiful or so interesting and you really want it to be in the final version, but actually it's not really adding anything to the story or it's making it too long and too distracted.

So you have to kill your darlings, you have to get rid of the parts that you really like that aren't maybe adding to the overall structure. And I think with my own writing, I've kind of learned to do that in the brainstorming process before I get into writing too much. Or like you say, you're writing the story and you think actually it's going in this direction and that idea is pulling it in another direction and I don't want to make it confusing.

Alastair Budge: That's very good advice. With writing my more non-fictional podcast, I guess, I often have that where there's some idea or quote or episode from someone's life that you think, this would be a really good thing to include and I really would like to include it.

I sometimes find myself trying to find a place to put it in, even if I know it's not really the best place for it. Or similarly, almost before I start writing, saying like, this has to be in there, this episode, or this quote from someone. I do occasionally fall into the trap of structuring everything around that, to the detriment of the rest of the episode, I think.

So for example, when they went to the pub, and they had some fish and chips and blah, blah, blah. I was kind of in two minds there because I thought, have we just forced the characters to go into a pub because it is a traditional British thing to do and we want them to have fish and chips and so on? Is it really adding anything to the story? In the end, we left it in. And I think you made some really good edits, to tidy things up and make it fit in nicely. But I think in the first version that I had written, I think it was not nearly as smooth.

Ariel Goodbody: That's a really interesting point that sometimes you have scenes that in isolation are interesting, but you have to find a nice way to sew them together to give them a nice transition. And then also I think that scene, yeah, it just needed like maybe a few more jokes.

In writing people talk about 'punching something up', which is basically just kind of giving it that boost in like humour or drama to make it clear that it has a place in the story, right? That it deserves to stay there.

But I think, you know, all the underlying structure was really good and I was just kind of adding some things on top. And also it's really interesting because there were jokes that I would have never thought of myself. I'm not a massive beer drinker, so the whole thing about

people complaining about, like, British beer, it just didn't occur to me because it's not something that...

I'm from Somerset, which is the cider-producing region of the UK, and I do get very annoyed at how bad the cider is in London, like you can't get good cider almost anywhere in London, and then a lot of people don't like cider because they've only had bad cider, and I get very annoyed about that, but yeah!

Is there anything else you want to add about the experience? Any questions or anything?

Alastair Budge: My last thought probably is to someone listening to this: if you have ever thought, I wonder if I can write a story in English, you probably can. And if you follow Ariel's advice and just start doing it, it can also be a really fun way to engage with language in a way that you might never have done in your own native language.

I always found writing fictional stuff, even if it's just like mini-stories in the languages that I was learning, I thought that was really a fun thing to do. It's a kind of exercise that most people probably won't do because you think no one's going to mark it, and what if I make a mistake, and it's not going to sound very good and blah, blah.

But I think it could be a really fun thing to do. Clearly you can use any words, any kind of structures you like. You don't have to worry about someone thinking that you have made mistakes or anything like that. So my last comment is just to encourage people listening to this to go out and start writing.

Ariel Goodbody: Yeah, absolutely. I think that's a really good point.

I will also say I really enjoyed the process and generally I love working with people who are writing or creating any kind of artistic work. So if you listened and you were like, wow, I'd love to do a similar thing with Ariel, do reach out to me. That's something I'm very interested in doing more of, whether that be us brainstorming together, me helping you write or edit your work, or what I often do with my teaching is kind of a reverse of the process where I ask the student questions, get their ideas, and then I write a story that's a learning resource for them that still has all their ideas that they can then take away and read as homework. I create some exercises based on the story and so on.

So if that's something that interests you, definitely send me a message, book a class. I would love to work with you.

Awesome. Okay, I think we'll wrap up there then. So, thank you to everyone who's listened throughout the process. We would love to hear your comments. Alastair, is there anything you want to plug or mention before we finish?

Alastair Budge: I just want to say a final thank you to you for allowing me to be part of this process. I have learned a lot, I've had a huge amount of fun, and it's been an honour to write this story. So thank you, Ariel.

Ariel Goodbody: No, thank you so much, and I really appreciate you reaching out in the first place. It was a fantastic idea. So I'm very excited for people's reactions and for future work together! So thank you so much, and have a great day.

Alastair Budge: Thanks, Ariel. Bye.

Ariel Goodbody: Bye.

Thank you for listening to this experimental episode of Easy Stories in English! Make sure to go and listen to [Alastair's podcast, English Learning for Curious Minds, at LeonardoEnglish.com/Podcasts](https://leonardoenglish.com/podcasts). If you'd like to hear more episodes like this in future, leave a comment at EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Chilly, or email me at

Ariel@EasyStoriesInEnglish.com. See you soon, and don't forget to pray to the penguin gods!