

The Freezer Door – Transcript

Welcome to 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 beginner-level story is called *The Freezer Door*. As always, the transcript and PDF are available at [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com](https://www.EasyStoriesInEnglish.com), and you can find the link in the description.

So, I have good news and bad news. Good news! I have a new job! Woo! If you listened to a few episodes ago, my episode about Hamburg, I talked about how I was looking for a part time job. Well, I got the job, but not in a bar or a café as I was originally looking, but I actually got a job in a language school. So, doing more of what I already do.

But it's very welcome, and it's actually the first time I've taught in a physical classroom since before COVID, since 2019. So it feels really good, although it's quite a strange adjustment. I have to change a lot. It's harder work, in many ways, mainly because I have to go to the school. I can't just teach from my house.

So, the day I'm recording this, it's Thursday, and I started my new job on Monday, and I've been very busy since then. I've just been generally busy, and that brings me to my bad news, which is: I'm very tired today, and a little bit ill. You might hear a bit of a cold, and that's because I started this new job right after going to Manchester for the weekend, and I have lots of other things going on in my life.

Tomorrow, which will be after this episode comes out, I'm doing some work at the British Library, which is the biggest library in the UK, I think, probably. It might be the Bodleian, which is a library in Oxford, but it's one of the biggest libraries in the UK, and they're doing an event for young people to get involved in the arts, and I'm helping run a kind of talk show. It's kind of difficult to explain, but if you're watching the video version of this episode, I will show some pictures.

So, all of that to say, if I seem tired today, it's because I am.

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

Freeze, and the past tense is **froze**, is what happens when something goes very cold. When water gets very cold, it freezes and becomes ice. If a river or a lake freezes, you can walk on it. If the weather is very cold outside, you can say, 'It's freezing!' If you are moving and then you suddenly stop moving, you freeze. For example, when the police want to catch someone, they say, 'Freeze! It's the police!'

In your kitchen, you might have a **freezer**. Freezers are big white boxes that you put food in. Freezers are colder than a fridge, so when you put food inside a freezer, it freezes! For example, you can put ice in a freezer, ice cream, frozen vegetables and so on. It is very common to have frozen peas and frozen carrots in your freezer, for example, because you can keep them for a long time.

Your **cheeks** are the parts of your face between your mouth and your ears. In some European cultures, people kiss each other on the cheek to say hello. In some places, you kiss people on the cheek multiple times, and you change cheek each time. This can get confusing. In some parts of France, people kiss three times on the cheek, in some parts they kiss four times, and there are even places where you kiss people five times on the cheek to say hello!

To **pick at** something means to pull small pieces off something. For example, if you have a plate of food in front of you but you're not hungry, you might pick at it. You would only eat small bits of food. Some people pick at their skin when they get anxious. They pull off

bits of skin until it goes red. When picking at your skin becomes a serious health problem, it's called dermatillomania.

Kid is an informal word for 'child'. A phrase that old people often say is, 'Kids these days...' To be honest, in everyday life, we usually say 'my kids' instead of 'my children', for example.

A **nightmare** is a bad dream. If a nightmare is really scary, you might wake up from it. If you're having a really bad nightmare, it can feel better to wake up.

Gooseberries are a type of fruit. Gooseberries are small, green berries that have little hairs on them. Gooseberries are very sour, so usually people make jam with them, and they add lots of sugar. There is also a popular dessert called gooseberry fool, which is a bit like a yoghurt or a mousse.

By the sea, there are sometimes very high rocks, and these are called **cliffs**. If you fall off a cliff, you will fall a very long way. Not all cliffs are above the sea – mountains often have many cliffs. There are famous chalk cliffs in England called the White Cliffs of Dover.

Sober means not drunk. When someone is drunk and does things to become sober, they **sober up**. For example, you might drink water and eat food with lots of carbohydrates to sober up.

If someone drinks alcohol all the time, and it causes problems in their life, then they are an alcoholic. If an alcoholic says, 'I've sobered up,' it usually means that they have stopped drinking completely. There is an organisation called Alcoholics Anonymous which helps alcoholics stop drinking and sober up. Alcoholics Anonymous is often shortened to 'AA'. So when someone talks about going to an 'AA meeting', this is probably what they are talking about.

When you **weigh** something, you see how heavy or light it is. For example, you might weigh your suitcase. If your suitcase weighs less than 20kg, you can take it on the plane, but if it weighs more, you can't!

When you **weigh something up**, you consider the advantages and disadvantages of something. For example, maybe you're trying to decide whether to go on holiday to London or Berlin. You weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of each. Maybe you decide that London has great history, but Berlin has a great nightlife, and that these are the two priorities for you. So you have to **weigh** London's history **against** Berlin's nightlife – you compare the two to make this difficult decision. Although, of course, I would say you should come to London because I love London, so...

A big theme in today's story is **parallel universes**. 'Parallel' is when two lines run next to each other, but they never meet, they never touch. So parallel universes is the idea that there are different universes, different worlds, where everything is the same except for a few small things. There are many films about travelling through parallel universes, where the characters can see what would happen if they had made a different decision. For example, the film *Everything Everywhere All at Once* is about parallel universes.

Parallel universes are sometimes called 'mirror worlds'. In this story, I call them mirror worlds. They are like the world and the reflection of the world is in the mirror. But of course, at least one thing is different, which I guess means it's not really a mirror and a reflection, because a reflection is exactly the same. Maybe the mirror is dirty, and that's why it's not a perfect reflection.

Anyway, enough about that! Listen and enjoy.

The Freezer Door

I was sad. I was strong and I was clever and I had a good job and I loved my husband and my children loved me, but I was sad.

I thought I was happy. *I must be happy*, I thought. Because sad people don't wake up and kiss their husbands on the cheek. Sad people don't bake fresh bread and bring toast to their children in bed. Sad people don't go for a run and have an ice-cold shower before work.

I wasn't happy, of course. Happy people don't pick at their cheeks until they go red. Happy people don't say, 'I'm not hungry,' and watch their kids eat supper. Happy people don't read books until four am and then have nightmares.

But life continued. I counted the days: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday... I counted the months: April, May, June, July... I counted the years. Of course, there was no end. I didn't want an end. I was afraid of an end. When my husband said, 'When the kids grow up and leave home...' I felt as cold as ice and I wanted to say, 'No!'

Then, one day, I opened the freezer door. It was a hot summer's day. I was getting ice cream for the kids – gooseberry ice cream that I had made. But when I opened the freezer door, I did not see frozen carrots and gooseberry ice cream. I saw my kitchen. The freezer was like a mirror, but inside the freezer the kitchen was empty. I could not see myself in that kitchen. I could not see myself in that world.

'Mum!' called my daughter from outside.

I froze. I loved my children. I would close this door and open it again, and then the strange mirror kitchen would be gone, and I would see the frozen carrots and gooseberry ice cream and everything would be normal.

I started to close the door.

'Muuuum!' called my son.

My hand stopped. I looked behind me. I saw my children for a second. I saw the love in their eyes.

Then I climbed into the freezer and shut the door.

'I'm sorry,' I said, but my words were eaten by the ice.

In the first year, I thought a lot about going back. I opened and closed the freezer again and again, but I always saw the same things: frozen carrots and chocolate ice cream. I tried emptying the freezer, taking everything out. That didn't work. I tried making gooseberry ice cream and putting the frozen carrots exactly where they had been before. That didn't work. I tried opening the freezer door at midnight, when I couldn't sleep. That didn't work.

By the second year, I had stopped trying. I lived my new life and tried not to think about the old one.

Was I happier here? Not really. But I was alone. I did not know why this mirror world was different, why I had no husband or children here. But that was how it was. I was alone, and when you're alone, you can be sad. Nobody says, 'Mummy, why are you picking at your cheek?' Nobody says, 'Did you have that nightmare again, love?'

So for five years I fell, alone. I fell into alcohol and partying and ice cream – cheap ice cream from the shop. I did my work badly. I was often late. Finally, I lost my job. So I took a job in a bar. I started smoking. It felt good to be bad.

But in year five, I almost died. I drank too much and went walking in the forest. I fell off a cliff and broke my leg. If someone hadn't come and found me, I would have died.

And that was when I learned the truth: I did not want to die. There, at the bottom of the cliff, lying with a broken leg, I learned this. I did *not* want to die. There, at the bottom of the

cliff, lying with a broken leg – and it hurt a lot, believe me, it hurts like nothing else – there, I learned that I did not want to die.

After that, it was five years of climbing. I worked hard to make my leg better. I joined AA, went to meetings every week. I started going to the gym. I sobered up.

And I met a man at my gym. He made me think of my old husband. My ‘old’ husband... I had lived in this world for so long. Sometimes, I thought the other world was a nightmare and was the real one. But then I remembered my ‘old’ husband and my ‘old’ kids.

The man from the gym was a bit like my old husband. But his hair was shorter. Actually, he had lost most of it. He was also sober – he had stopped going to AA years before. He didn’t need it anymore. We talked a lot about being sober. Alcoholics always talk a lot about being sober or *not* being sober. He was older than me, but I liked that. We both knew we were too old to have kids. And really, we didn’t want kids.

Slowly, this new man moved his things into my house, and by the end of the year we were living together. It was nice. We had both been sad, and we had both fallen off a cliff, and now we stood together in a safe place. Slowly, I stopped thinking about the other place, the old place. This world became the real one, and the old place became the mirror world.

One hot summer’s day, we were sat in the garden reading. ‘Shall I get us a drink?’ I said. ‘Please,’ he said. ‘With lots of ice.’

So I went into the kitchen and opened the freezer door. You know what happens next.

For a moment, I didn’t know what I was looking at. They had changed the kitchen. There was a new floor and they had painted the walls. But I saw that old clock and realised it was my kitchen – my old kitchen. And then I saw *them*.

My children were almost adults now. My son was sat at the table with a cup of tea, writing something. Preparing for an exam? My daughter was playing on her phone. My heart thudded as I waited to see my husband. Was he there? Was he alive?

‘Hello,’ I said. Then: ‘Hello! Hello!’

But they couldn’t see me or hear me. My daughter said something, and then I saw my husband. He was making drinks. He came to the freezer to get ice, and now he was standing right in front of me.

I could see how much he had changed in ten years, every new line on his face, every grey hair. He was so close I could kiss him.

‘Love, what are you shouting about? It sounds like fun.’

I froze. Behind me, my new husband called. In front of me, my old husband took ice out of the freezer, stood up, held his back and said, ‘Oof, I’m getting old!’ I couldn’t hear, but I knew what he was saying. He had been saying that for about *twenty* years.

A wall of ice stood between the new me and the old me. In a moment, the door would close and it might never open again.

I had to choose between me and me. But really, I had to choose between *him* and *them*. I had to weigh the pain I had caused my old family against the pain I would cause my new husband.

My old family had felt that pain already. They had made new lives. But the pain might be too much for my new man. It might kill him.

What do you think I did? Did I go back to my old family, say sorry, tell them I was too sad and I had to leave? Did I leave my new husband out in the sun, throw him down a cliff, so that he would never know what happened to me? Or did my old husband close the freezer door, and make that decision for me?

What I really wanted, what I *really* wanted, was to stay there. I wanted to stay in front of the freezer door and never close it. I wanted to stay in front of that mirror, to watch my old life

and stay in my new life. I wanted to freeze that feeling, that horrible decision, and never move.

This is when I am happiest. Maybe this is the only time I have been happy in both my lives.

Every decision I could make was both right and wrong. I could choose to go or choose to stay, and I would be loving someone and hurting someone else. Both worlds were perfect mirrors, so why not live between them?

We think that pain is heavy. We say that pain weighs more than anything in the world. But in that moment, and only in that moment, I was as light as air.

THE END

Thank you for listening to this episode of *Easy Stories in English*. My *Story Builders* eight-week online Zoom course is still open and it starts on the 23rd of October. [So go and sign up at EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Build](https://www.EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Build) before it's too late and you're trapped in the mirror world forever. Oh no, reflections everywhere. The mirrors are going to eat me. Aah! Bye!