

Hello, my Lovely Learners and welcome to Easy Stories in English! Today's episode is sort of a rerun. I'm basically going to present you a story from several years ago that I put on the Patreon.

*If you don't know, I used to run a Patreon for Easy Stories in English. That's basically a website where you can create member content, you can create exclusive content for people who support you financially. I stopped doing the Patreon, but when I did it, I did a bonus episode once a month only for Patreon members, and this story was originally one of those episodes. It's called *The Monkey's Heart*, and it's a cute little story, so hopefully you'll enjoy it.*

I'm using this episode today because I'm so busy. I'm so tired. You know, I'm getting ready to go to China. I'm actually going into the Visa office tomorrow to hand in, I think, hopefully the last document. I just started a new job two weeks ago, which is going well, but it's, you know, stressful. I've just been in Cambridge for a May Ball, which are these really big parties that happen at the different colleges in the summer. I'm visiting my parents as I record this. That's why it's recorded on my phone, by the way. Sorry about that. I meant to bring my microphone to my parents' house and I completely forgot. That's how busy and tired and frazzled I've been.

And next week I'm going to my cousin's wedding in Edinburgh, and then I have my Japanese exam the day afterwards. And then after the exam, I have a week at the school where I work not only of teaching in the mornings, but also running the social program activities in the afternoons. And then three weeks after that, I'm moving out of my current accommodation and moving in with a friend for the last two weeks before I move to China.

So I'm just really busy and I didn't have time to record a full episode of Easy Stories in English. So hopefully you enjoy this episode. I will put up a transcript as well, and I hope you're all having a lovely time.

It's very, very hot here in the UK. It's set to be 33 degrees tomorrow in London, which is going to be quite infernal, quite hellish. In fact, I'm set to do hot yoga in the evening. You're supposed to do a hot yoga at 47 degrees, and normally our yoga studio can't get that hot, but maybe today will be the day. If you don't hear from me, I might have melted into a puddle.

Anyway, thank you for listening, and I'll see you soon!

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. This is an exclusive Patreon story for intermediate learners. The name of the story is *The Monkey's Heart*. You can find a transcript of the episode at Patreon.com/EasyStoriesInEnglish.

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

A **fig** is a soft, dry fruit. It is purple on the outside and red on the inside, and has many small seeds. You can grow figs pretty much everywhere now, and they taste very good. There is a certain type of insect, a wasp, that lives inside figs. Figs are often eaten on their own or used in cooking desserts.

If you are **nimble**, it means you are very quick and good at moving. Acrobats, dancers and gymnasts are all nimble, at least, if they are good then they are nimble!

Toss means to throw, but you are not throwing it hard, just lightly. So when you are playing sports, you throw a ball because you care about where it is going, but if you get home you might lazily toss your keys onto the table.

“**X and Y don’t mix**” means that two things never go together. For example, I could say, ‘Ariel and beer don’t mix,’ meaning that I don’t react well to beer. Another example is, ‘Cats and cucumbers don’t mix,’ because there are lots of videos online of cats being scared by cucumbers. It’s weird, I don’t know why!

Halfway means half of the way between two things. So let’s say I’m getting the train from Bath to London, which is about 115 miles. When I have ridden 57.5 miles, I will be halfway to London.

If you are **graceful**, you are elegant, you have grace. You move smoothly and carefully. Ballet dancers are graceful, swans are graceful but I am *not* graceful. I always fall over and drop things!

If you are **indifferent** towards something, you do not care about it either way. For example, some people feel very strongly about Coke and Diet Coke: they strongly prefer one over the other. I’m indifferent. I have no strong opinion. I like both equally, more or less. But Coke Zero? That’s the best.

An **ordeal** is a very long and unpleasant experience. For example, getting a new passport can be a long ordeal. You have to fill out lots of paperwork and stand in long queues.

When you have a **nap**, you go to sleep for a short time. Naps are usually 10 minutes to an hour in length. In some countries, like Spain, it is traditional to have a nap after lunch. Personally, I rarely have naps, although I did go through a period of napping every day.

If your friend says, ‘I’m going to see Linda later,’ and you haven’t seen Linda in a long time and want your friend to say hello to her from you, you can say, ‘**Send her my wishes!**’ Basically, it means that your friend, if they’re a good friend, will say to Linda, ‘Ariel sends her wishes!’ or ‘Ariel says hello!’ It’s just a nice way of passing on a hello to someone. So if any of you want to send your wishes to my dragon, Alejandro, do let me know!

OK, so listen and enjoy!

The Monkey’s Heart

Once upon a time, long ago and far away, there was a village that stood by the sea. Of course, the people had carefully built their houses so that they were not affected by the high tide, but on the edge of the town there grew a great **fig** tree that hung over both the houses and sea. In the water below the tree, sharks liked to come up and splash about, and the humans kept well away for safety.

But not all were so careful, and every morning a small grey monkey could be found swinging from branch to branch, picking figs and snacking on them as he went. He was **nimble** and clever, and never fell into the water. Once he had finished his breakfast, the little creature climbed down the tree and found a nice spot in the shade to relax, and one day, he noticed a shark watching him from the water.

‘Can I help you, friend?’ the monkey asked politely.

‘Oh! Dear monkey, I would be ever so grateful if you could **toss** me down some of those things in the tree. I have never tasted them, and for fifty years I have only eaten salty fish, which I am oh so tired of.’

‘Very well!’ said the monkey. ‘I can’t imagine eating salty food for that long, either. Just be a good shark and wait there with your mouth open, and I’ll throw you down some nice juicy figs.’

So he pulled down a branch from above his head and picked off some figs, but when he tried to throw them into the shark’s mouth, he found it was not as easy as he thought. Some landed in the water, some on the ground, and a few even bounced off the shark’s teeth. But eventually he hit the target and the shark greedily chewed on the fruit.

‘Mmm, delicious!’ said the sea creature. ‘Another one, another one!’

So the monkey climbed all over the tree, picking figs and throwing them into the shark’s mouth. They passed most of the day this way, but the monkey’s patience ran out much faster than the shark’s hunger.

‘It is getting late,’ said the monkey, ‘so I must go home to my children.’ In reality, he had no children, but he wanted to get away from this creature, with his four rows of sharp teeth. ‘If you come at the same time tomorrow, I’ll toss you some more figs.’

‘Oh, thank you, thank you!’ cried the shark, showing off his frightening teeth. ‘You have made me so happy, and I look forward to our meeting tomorrow with great enthusiasm!’

For several weeks the monkey and the shark continued on in this way, sharing their breakfast of figs and chatting, and given the shark’s enormous hunger, it was amazing that the tree had any fruit left for them. They became good friends, and the monkey found himself unable to dislike the shark, although he made sure to mix in some lies with the information about himself. After all, sea creatures and land creatures rarely made good friends.

One thing that the monkey greatly enjoyed about this arrangement was hearing the shark talk about life under the sea. He described the strange plants, beautiful fish and brilliant colours, and the monkey was filled with a desire to visit this world himself. The shark, realising this, told even greater stories of the wonders of the deep blue, and the monkey grew more and more excited by the idea of going there. But it was not to be, as monkeys and water did not mix.

However, one day, after finishing their breakfast, the shark said, ‘My dear friend, I have thought long and hard about how best to thank you for your kindness these past weeks. I have nothing here to offer you in return for the figs, but perhaps you would like to come and visit my home and choose something you like?’

‘I would love to!’ said the monkey. ‘But how could I get there? The thought of swimming makes me sick! Monkeys and water **don’t mix**.’

‘Oh, that is no problem at all!’ replied the shark. ‘Jump on my back and I will make sure that not a single drop of water touches you.’

So the next day after breakfast the shark came up to the shore and the monkey jumped on his back, his feet safely away from the water. They began to ride into the ocean, and once the monkey had gotten over his initial fear, he did indeed feel a sense of wonder at it, and began to ask all kinds of questions—what fish was that cutting through the water there, and what was that strange seaweed and those strange objects that floated below the surface? The shark patiently answered his questions, making up answers when he was not sure of the response himself. After all, it was a shark’s job to eat fish, not to study them.

As they swam, the shark began to sink ever so slightly into the water, but whenever it came close to touching the monkey’s toes, the little creature **cleared his throat** and the shark lifted up again.

After many hours of this, the shark interrupted the monkey's questioning to say, 'My dear friend, I have news both good and bad. First, we are **halfway there** already.'

'And what is the bad news?' said the monkey suspiciously. 'You sound so serious.'

'Ah, it is not so important! Only that, before I left to visit you today, I found out that the King of my country is very ill, and the only thing that can cure him is a monkey's heart.'

And at that very moment, the monkey's heart began to beat quickly in his chest, but he did a brilliant job of hiding his fear.

'What a poor man! And what a poor country that must worry about its king! But I must say, dear friend, that it was quite foolish of you not to tell me this before we left the shore.'

'What do you mean?' asked the shark.

The monkey paused, thinking quickly, and then said, 'You see, I did not bring my heart with me today.'

For a brief second the shark slowed down, and then said, 'You did not bring your heart! Surely this is a joke, my friend? All creatures carry their hearts around in their chest.'

'Ah, but we land creatures are quite different from you sea creatures, and we monkeys are the most different of all. Every day we swing from branch to branch, shouting and dancing, and if we kept our hearts in our chest, do you not think they would suffer greatly? We cannot all be as smooth and **graceful** as you, my friend. No, we hang up our hearts in the trees on which we swing, and if you wish me to give my heart to your king—and believe me, I would like nothing more than to help you!—then I am afraid it will not be possible without it.'

The monkey spoke in such a calm way that the shark believed him entirely, even though the monkey's heart beat loudly in his own ears like a heavy drum.

The shark considered the situation carefully and then said, 'Well, then, I suppose there is no point in us going on if your heart is not with you. We had better turn back so you can fetch it.'

'Are you sure?' said the monkey, not wanting to seem too eager. 'It is such a long way... but I suppose it is the only way I can help.'

'Of course!' said the shark. 'I will swim at double speed.'

And so they swam quickly to shore, and the salty sea water splashed onto the monkey's feet and felt horrible, but he did not complain once.

As soon as they were within safe distance of land, the monkey jumped off the shark's back and climbed up the tree.

'Wait for me here! I will just have a little snack and then go and find my heart.'

Then he climbed up high in the branches where the shark couldn't see him and lay down to have a nap. The whole **ordeal** had tired him greatly.

The shark swam patiently around, but after an hour had passed, he grew impatient and cried out, 'My dear friend! Are you up there?'

The monkey yawned and sat up in the tree. 'Yes, I am here! What do you want? I was having such a nice **nap**.'

'Have you found it? We should leave now if we want to arrive before sunset.'

'Leave to where?'

'Oh, you have such a good sense of humour! You know where we are going, to meet my King! Surely you remember?'

The monkey stuck his head out of the tree and laughed. 'My *dear* friend, I think I have had quite enough of the sea, actually.'

'Don't be so silly,' said the shark, deadly serious. 'You promised you would bring me your heart! The King is waiting.'

'I am sure there is no such king. You only wish the heart for yourself. It would make quite a nice little snack, wouldn't it, a monkey's heart? Even tastier than a fig. But I'm afraid you won't find the heart on this tree or anywhere else. You see, it's hidden quite safe and sound, right here!'

And with that, the monkey beat his chest.

The shark **snarled**. 'You lied to me!'

The monkey yawned and said, 'I'm feeling quite tired after all that swimming today. It's almost time for supper, and I have *so many* figs to eat, now that we won't be sharing... As you said, you better get going or else it'll be sunset before you get back to the King! I *do* hope he gets better soon. **Send him my wishes.**'

The shark was so angry that he did not say another word, only splashed about in the water with his tail, before sinking back into the ocean, never to return again.

THE END

Thanks for listening to this episode of Easy Stories in English. Have a great week and I'll see you next time! Buh-bye.