



ESL Podcast 61 – Missing Persons (1)

GLOSSARY

to tick (one/someone) off – to make someone angry; to cause someone to be mad at one

* It really ticked Melinda off when her brother borrowed her car without asking her first.

missing – without anyone knowing where someone or something is; without a thing or a person's location being known

* Have you seen our missing cat? We've looked all over the neighborhood for her, but we can't find her.

on (one's) way – in the process of traveling from one place to another; in the middle of one's journey

* Call and tell Jamal and that we're on our way, but because of bad traffic, we'll be a little late.

son-of-a-gun – an informal way to call or to refer to a person, used sometimes in a funny or angry way

* Did you see that son-of-a-gun? He threw his empty food container and coffee cup out of his moving car and onto the street.

to moan – to make a long, low sound to express suffering in the mind or in the body

* While Norm waited for the doctor to arrive to examine him, the pain in his stomach made him moan.

ground – the surface of the earth; the land under one's feet

* Tell the children not to eat any of the food that has fallen onto the ground.

ski mask – a piece of clothing worn over the head and face for protection from cold temperatures, with holes for the eyes and mouth

* Don't even think about going outside in this snowstorm without wearing your ski mask.

to get the hell away – to tell someone forcefully and impolitely to leave or to go away

* A: Hey lady, you're very pretty.

B: Get the hell away from my wife!



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to grab him by (something) – to hold someone suddenly and roughly (not gently) by something, so that person cannot move or leave

* Jimmy's father grabbed him by his belt to prevent him from falling into the swimming pool when he played too close to the edge.

to twist – to turn one's body in a different direction; to turn one's body at the waist (middle part of one's body)

* No matter how much I twist and turn, there's no way I'll fit in to those tight jeans!

to not say a word – to remain silent; to not say anything; to not tell others about a secret

* Kahlid told everyone to not to say a word about his girlfriend's surprise birthday party.

coldly – in an unfriendly way; without emotion

* When Luis's wife criticized his mother, he looked at her coldly and told her to stop saying bad things about her.

no answer – without a response; without anyone giving an answer or doing any actions in response to a question or request to appear

* We tried calling Miyoung on his cell phone to see if he'd like to go with us to the ballgame, but we got no answer.

to knock on the door – to hit one's closed hand against a door to get the attention of the person inside

* The little boy knocked on the door of his neighbor's house to ask if he could retrieve his ball from the neighbor's backyard.



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CULTURE NOTE

Fiction for a Kinder, Gentler Word

People spend a lot of time with “fiction” (stories that aren’t true) in some “form” (type) or other. They watch movies, TV shows, and/or read novels. Could what we watch or read have a bigger “impact” (affect; influence) on us than we thought?

Jonathan Gottschall, who wrote a 2012 book about storytelling, “argues” (gives evidence to support his idea) that fiction “shapes” (changes) the way we see ourselves and other people, helping us develop empathy for others. “Empathy” is the ability to feel what other people feel and to understand them. According to the studies or research he “cites” (mentions as evidence), the more “involved” (deeply caring about) we are in the story, the more influence the story has on our empathy for others.

According to Gottschall, fiction “enhances” (increases) our ability to understand other people. It promotes a deep “morality” (feeling of right and wrong) that “cuts across” (is not limited by) religious and political “creeds” (sets of beliefs).

In fact, Gottschall argues that we respond to fiction in a very different way than we do to “nonfiction” (stories or writings based on facts, real people/events, and more, such as the news). When we watch or read nonfiction, our “defenses” (ways of protecting ourselves) are up and we tend to be “skeptical” (not believing; are not easy to convince).

On the other hand, when we “encounter” (meet) fiction — in movies, TV shows, and novels — our “guard is down” (not watchful for something to harm us) and we’re more easily “shaped” (changed).

Of course, while fiction may be able to make people more empathetic, it can also make them more angry, “militant” (aggressive; wanting to fight), or “bitter” (feeling hurt and resentful). However, according to the research that Gottschall cites, fiction tends to have a more positive than negative effect on us.



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 61 – Missing Person, Part 1: "The Man in the Mask."

This is ESL Podcast episode 61. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

This episode is the first of a special series called Missing Person. Unlike our regular podcasts, the next 12 episodes will all be connected as part of one longer story – a detective story, a murder mystery.

The format of these Missing Person episodes is just like our regular episodes: we'll listen to a story, then explain it, then hear it again at a normal speed. We will begin each episode by recapping or reviewing the previous episode, beginning with part 2, of course. There are 12 parts to our Missing Person special episode series.

As you're listening to the story, don't worry about trying to understand every word, but rather, try to get the general meaning of the story. Now, let's get started with part 1 of Missing Person. The title of part 1 is "The Man in the Mask."

[start of story]

I didn't kill him.

I didn't even plan to kill him. I had a gun, but I just wanted to hurt him and stop him from attacking me. I had no idea why this stranger was hitting me, and it was ticking me off.

This morning Anne Prado, one of my students at the University of Southwestern California, came to my office. She said she had a problem and she needed my help. Her sister, Sarah, was missing. We were on our way to Sarah's apartment to find her when, halfway up the front steps of the building, a man ran toward me and started punching me.

I hit the man in the ear. He screamed with pain. He was small, but a tough son-of-a-gun. I stepped back and hit him hard in the stomach.

"Oh my God!" he moaned. I think I hurt him that time.



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I knew he was in pain. I pushed him down to the ground. He fell onto the grass in front of the steps to the apartment building. Now it was my turn to take control.

I stood over him and asked, “Who are you? What do you want?” He didn’t answer. He had a ski mask on, so I couldn’t see his face.

“Just get the hell away from this apartment building! You’re not welcome here!” he said.

I grabbed him by the shirt, pushed his face into the ground, and twisted his arm behind his back. He yelled even louder now. I think he was finally ready to stop fighting.

“Now, who are you? Why can’t I go inside the apartment?” I was getting angry and wanted some answers. I saw a few people come out of the apartment building to see what was happening.

But the man still didn’t say a word. He lifted himself up suddenly and pushed me away. He looked at me coldly for a second, then ran into the street.

I turned to find Anne to make sure she was okay. “Do you know who he was? Have you seen him before?” I asked.

“No, Dr. Reeves. I don’t come to my sister’s apartment very often. I don’t know who he is.”

Let me back up a minute: This morning in my office, Anne had explained that two days ago she was supposed to have lunch with her sister, Sarah Salas. When her sister didn’t come to the restaurant, Anne called Sarah’s apartment. There was no answer.

Anne went to her sister’s apartment right away and knocked on the door, but there was no one home. She called Sarah’s work. Sarah’s boss told Anne that Sarah had been missing for two days. So Anne decided to ask me to help find her sister and her sister’s husband, Bill, who was also missing.

[end of story]

Our episode begins with the “narrator,” or the person telling the story, saying that he “didn’t kill him.” We begin our story in the middle of a fight between two men. One of them, our narrator, has a gun. The other one, a stranger – or someone he doesn’t know – is hitting him, attacking him.



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Our narrator (whose name is Dr. Reeves, we find out later) says that this man is hitting him, and it's "ticking [him] off." "To tick someone off" means to make them very, very angry – it's an informal expression. If you say, "I'm ticked off," that means "I'm mad, I'm angry." "That person really ticks me off" means that person really makes me angry. Again, it's informal, but fairly common.

Now, our narrator, Dr. Reeves, is a professor at the University of Southwestern California – not a real university, of course, but this is a story. One of his students, Anne Prado, had gone to his office and said that she had a problem. Her sister, Sarah, "was missing." "To be missing" means that no one knows where you are. We sometimes use the expression "It's gone missing" to mean a person or a thing somehow can't be found; we don't know where it is.

Dr. Reeves and Anne decide to go over to Sarah's apartment. On their way to the apartment, halfway up the front stairs of the building, a man runs toward Dr. Reeves and starts punching him. The expression "to be on your way" means that you are traveling toward something. "I was on my way to the store, and I decided to stop and get gasoline." So, I'm traveling in a particular direction on my way to some place. "Halfway up the front steps" would be, of course, not the bottom or the top, but somewhere in between. "Halfway up the front steps" someone starts punching our narrator.

Dr. Reeves hits the man back in the ear. He describes the man as "small, but a tough son-of-a-gun." A "son-of-a-gun" is a nicer way of saying a vulgar expression, which is "son-of-a-" and the last word begins with a "b." "Son-of-a-gun" is a nicer way of saying "son-of-a-(bitch)," but it still has the same meaning, which is: "This is a bad person, this is someone who I don't like very much."

Dr. Reeves steps back, or moves backward, and hits the man in the stomach. The man cries, "Oh my God!" This is a common expression in lots of different languages. "Oh my God!" is something you would say when you're surprised or you're angry or, in this case, you're hurt. The man "moaned." "To moan" (moan) is a verb which means to go "Ohh!" – that is to moan. Usually, we moan in pain. Dr. Reeves says that he knew the man "was in pain," and he "pushed him to the ground." The "ground" is another word for the earth.

The man falls on the grass and Dr. Reeves starts to question him, or ask him questions. "Who are you? What do you want?" The man has a "ski mask" on, so Dr. Reeves can't see the man's face. "A ski mask" is like a hat that covers your entire head and your face – it just has holes for your eyes and your mouth. It's



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what people wear in order to keep warm when they go skiing down the mountain. But they're also sometimes used by criminals who are trying to prevent other people from seeing who they are.

The man yells at Dr. Reeves, "Just get the hell away from this apartment building! You're not welcome here!" The expression "Get the hell away!" or "Get the hell out of here!" is a vulgar expression that means, basically, the person is very angry. When you see or hear that expression – "Get the hell away from me!" "Get the hell out of here!" – it is a very angry, vulgar way of telling someone to leave, to go away. Notice it's not "Get hell away!" but "Get the hell away!" – that's just the way the expression goes. The man tells Dr. Reeves he's "not welcome here," meaning he doesn't want him here.

Dr. Reeves then grabs the man by the shirt. Notice the expression "to grab by." You could grab someone by the ear. You could grab them by the nose. Dr. Reeves pushes the man to the ground and twists his arm. "To twist" (twist) means to turn something. But "to twist someone's arm" means to take their arm and turn it so that it hurts. In this case, he twists the man's arm behind his back. He is trying to get the man to stop fighting and to give him some answers.

Again Dr. Reeves asks the man why he can't go in the apartment building, but the man "didn't say a word." The expression "didn't say a word," means that someone was completely silent; not even one word did they speak. The man looks at Dr. Reeves "coldly." "To look at someone coldly (coldly)" means to look at him in anger or perhaps in fear. The man gets up and runs away. The doctor then turns to see if he can find Anne and asks if she is okay, and she says that she is. Dr. Reeves then asks her if she knows the man, and Anne says no, she doesn't know who he is.

The episode ends with a recap of what happened. The narrator tells us that this morning in his office, Anne Prado came and said that her sister had been missing for two days. When Anne's sister, Sarah, didn't come to a lunch appointment they had – "didn't show up," we would say – Anne decided to call her sister, but there was "no answer." When you're calling on the telephone and there is "no answer," that means no one picks up or answers the telephone.

Anne then went over to her sister's apartment and "knocked on the door." "To knock" is [knocking sound] like that, to knock on the wood, but "there was no one home." That's an expression we use if no one is in the house: "There's no one home." Then Anne called Sarah's work, and Sarah's boss told Anne that she had been missing for two days. And that's when Anne decided to go and ask Dr.



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Reeves for his help in finding her sister and her sister's husband, Bill, who is also missing.

Now let's listen to the story, this time at a normal speed.

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"No, Dr. Reeves. I don't come to my sister's apartment very often. I don't know who he is."

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[end of story]

In the next episode of Missing Person, we'll find out more about Dr. Reeves and the mysterious case of Sarah Salas, who's missing. Be sure to come back for part 2: "Beer and Cigarettes."

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. Come back and listen to us again here on ESL Podcast.

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