



**Life in English Podcast**

**Transcript**

**&**

**Key Vocabulary**

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## Life in English Podcast | Episode #170 - Can You Understand This Joke?

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### Episode #170 - Can You Understand This Joke?

Jan 25, 2022

[00:00:00] What's up, my friend? This is the Life in English podcast, and I am your sensei, Tony Kaizen. And in this episode, I'm going to tell you a joke in the form of a story. The joke comes from a post on Reddit, and the title was "What's a joke that's so stupid it's funny?" And when I say "so stupid it's funny", I mean, the level of stupidity is so high that the only thing you can do is laugh about it. It's not **necessarily**<sup>1</sup> funny, but it's so stupid, it makes you laugh, you know what I'm saying?

[00:00:30] Now the joke is a story about a woman and a man who decided to play a little game while on a flight from Los Angeles to New York, and one of them **ends up**<sup>2</sup> losing a lot of money. So I'm going to read it to you now, and then I'll explain a few keywords and phrases that you might find useful in your next conversation. Alright? So let's get into it.

[00:00:52] "A man and a woman are seated next to each other on a flight from Los Angeles to New York. The man asked the woman if she would like to play a fun game. The woman, tired, just wants to take a nap, so she politely **declines**<sup>3</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup> (esp. in negatives) in all cases; as an expected result

<sup>2</sup> to reach a particular place or achieve a situation after other activities

<sup>3</sup> to refuse

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rolls over to the window to **catch a few winks**<sup>4</sup>. The man **persists**<sup>5</sup> and explains that the game is easy and a lot of fun.

[00:01:13] He says, 'I ask you a question, and if you don't know the answer, you pay me \$5 and **vice versa**<sup>6</sup>.' Again, she declines and tries to get some sleep. The man, now **agitated**<sup>7</sup>, says, 'Okay, if you don't know the answer, you pay me \$5. And if I don't know the answer, I'll pay you \$500.' And this catches the woman's attention and **figuring**<sup>8</sup> there will be no end to the **torment**<sup>9</sup>, she agrees to the game.

[00:01:42] The man asked the first question: 'What's the distance from the earth to the moon?' The woman doesn't say a word. She reaches into her purse, pulls out a \$5 bill, and hands it to the man. 'Okay', says the man, 'your turn'. She asks, 'What goes up a hill with three legs and comes down with four legs?' The man, **puzzled**<sup>10</sup>, takes his laptop and searches all his references. No answer. He connects to the **in-flight**<sup>11</sup> WiFi and searches on Google and YouTube. No answer.

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<sup>4</sup> to take a nap

<sup>5</sup> to try to do or continue doing something in a determined but often unreasonable way

<sup>6</sup> used to say that what you have just said is also true in the opposite order

<sup>7</sup> worried or angry

<sup>8</sup> to expect or think that something will happen

<sup>9</sup> great mental suffering and unhappiness, or great physical pain

<sup>10</sup> confused because you do not understand something

<sup>11</sup> happening or available during a flight

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[00:02:18] **Frustrated**<sup>12</sup>, he sends a text to all his friends and co-workers and still no luck. After an hour, he wakes the woman and hands her \$500. The woman thanks him and turns back to get more sleep. The man -- who is **more than a little**<sup>13</sup> annoyed -- **nudges**<sup>14</sup> the woman and asks, 'Well, what's the answer?' Without a word, the woman reaches into her purse, hands the man \$5, and goes back to sleep."

[00:02:52] Alright, my friend. As I always say, don't worry if you don't understand the joke. **Humor**<sup>15</sup> can be difficult to **comprehend**<sup>16</sup> if you're not familiar with the language. But I will say that in my experience, when you can understand jokes and funny stories without the need for captions or explanations, it's a sign that you're at an advanced level of comprehension. I recommend you try listening to stand-up comedy and pay attention to the words they choose, how they tell stories, how they use their faces, their voices, and even silence to take you on a journey with nothing more than their words. It's truly an **art form**<sup>17</sup> and it's a great way to get exposed to a particular culture and its sense of humor.

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<sup>12</sup> feeling annoyed or less confident because you cannot achieve what you want

<sup>13</sup> to a great degree : very

<sup>14</sup> to push something or someone gently, especially to push someone with your elbow (= the middle part of your arm where it bends) to attract the person's attention

<sup>15</sup> the ability to find things funny, the way in which people see that some things are funny, or the quality of being funny

<sup>16</sup> to understand something completely

<sup>17</sup> an undertaking or activity enhanced by a high level of skill or refinement

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[00:03:28] But anyway, now I'm going to explain a few words and phrases that might help you understand the story better, as well as help you sound more natural in your next conversation. Alright, my friend, Let's do it. So the first thing I want to explain is "seated next to". It said, "A man and a woman were seated next to each other on a flight." And all that means is sitting to the side of each other or sitting side by side the same way you do on an airplane, right? You get the idea.

[00:03:56] So next is "rolls over". "Rolls over" or "roll over" - the phrasal verb just means to turn from one side of your body to the other while you're lying down. So picture her in the airplane seat trying to get some sleep, and she's lying on one side and she turns over to the other side to continue sleeping. Hopefully you can get the idea.

[00:04:17] So next is "catch a few winks". "She turned over to catch a few winks." All this means is to sleep for a short period of time. It basically means to take a nap. And to be honest with you, I've never heard somebody say "catch a few winks", like, I understand it, it makes sense, you can say it if you want. I'm just saying I don't hear that on a daily basis. I would just say "take a nap". Some people might say "catch a few Zs" or "catch some sleep", those things sound more natural to me, but you can say "catch a few winks", and I imagine most people would understand what you mean. Alright? But let's continue.

[00:04:51] Next is "persist". All this means is "to continue firmly in the course of action, in spite of difficulty, opposition or failure". In other words, you do not take no for an answer. That's what it means to persist. Okay?

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[00:05:05] Next is "vice versa". All this means, well, the dictionary definition is "with the main items in the preceding statement the other way around". The way I would say that is "it works both ways". So if you don't know the answer, you give me \$5. But since it works both ways, if I don't know the answer, I give you \$5. You see what I'm saying? It works both ways.

[00:05:29] Alright, the next word on the list is "agitated". Agitated. All this means, it's like another word for "irritated" or "nervous" or something's bothering you. That means you're agitated. Okay? And next on the list is "figuring" or "to figure". And all that means is to think or consider or expect something to be the case. So when...when the story said, "She figured", or this isn't exactly how it was said, but the idea is "she figured there would be no end to the torment".

[00:05:59] She expected this man to persist and persist and persist until she said yes. All things considered, she basically knew, or at least expected that to be the case. "If I keep ignoring him, he's just going to keep asking." Right? That's what she figured. That's what she understood or that's the idea she got in her head after thinking about the situation. I'm sure you get the point. I'm just trying to explain it in different ways, you know, to make it as clear as possible. But let's continue.

[00:06:24] Next on the list is "torment". To torment someone means to make them feel mental or physical pain; you cause them to suffer. See what I'm saying? So she figured that there would be no end to this man tormenting her. There would be no end to the torment. You see what I'm saying? Alright, next on the list is "reaches

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into". Now "to reach", the verb "reach" just means to extend your arm typically because you want to grab something or reach it...or not reach it...but uh...yeah, bring it into your possession with your hand.

[00:07:01] So imagine you're sitting in a chair and your phone is a meter or two away from you, you have to reach for the phone in order to grab it. See what I'm saying? You have to extend your arm and use your hand to grab that object. We call that motion "reaching for something". Okay? So when she reaches into something, all that means is to extend your arm and use your hand to grab something but you're doing it...you're placing your hand into a container, an **enclosed**<sup>18</sup> space, like in this case, her purse or a backpack or a box or something. You reach into the bag, into the box, into the purse.

[00:07:35] And then the next thing I want to explain is "pull out". So she reached into her purse and pulled out a \$5 bill. That's basically the opposite of "reach into" or it's what happens after you reach your hand into something. You grab the object and you pull it out. And you might be asking yourself, what's the difference between "take out" and "pull out" and "remove"? In this case, they're all really the same thing.

[00:07:57] You might "remove" a dollar from the bag, which is not the most natural thing to say in this case but it does make sense. Or you can "take" a dollar out of the bag, that's just a general phrasal verb in this case. But even more specific is to "pull out" because you're taking something out of the bag but with a pulling motion,

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<sup>18</sup> surrounded by walls, objects, or structures

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it's just more specific but it is the same thing, essentially. Okay? Hopefully that makes sense.

[00:08:20] Alright. Next on the list is "goes up". To go up just means to move to a higher position or to rise or to increase. So in this case, "What goes up a hill with three legs and comes down with four?" "What goes from the bottom of the mountain to the top?" That's just what it means to go up - to travel in an upward direction. So next is "come down", which is basically the opposite. You start at a high position and you travel to a lower position. You come down or go down just depending on the situation. Right? Cool.

[00:08:48] So next is "puzzled". Puzzled. If you feel puzzled, that just means you feel confused because you don't understand a situation or something that somebody has said or something like that. So, "What goes up a hill with three legs and comes down with four legs?" When somebody asks you that, you might feel puzzled because you don't know the answer. How could I possibly know what that is? I'm confused by that question. I'm puzzled, you see?

[00:09:12] Okay, next is the expression "more than a little". And this is just like a creative way of saying "a lot". So "He's more than a little annoyed." Or "He's very annoyed." You see what I'm saying? I wouldn't say "a lot of annoyed" because in this case, you know, "a lot of" is for, like, amount and quantities, "a lot of people", "a lot of money", things like that. But "annoyed" is like a feeling. So I would say "very annoyed". Hopefully that makes sense to you.

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[00:09:39] So if somebody says, "I'm more than a little upset", it just means "I'm very upset", right? "I've got more than a little bit of money." "I got quite a bit of money." And that's not...that example isn't the most natural but I'm just trying to get you to understand, it's the same thing as saying "a lot". Okay?

[00:09:55] Alright, next is "nudges". To nudge someone is to prod or to poke someone in a gentle way, typically with your elbow or your finger because you want their attention. So imagine them sitting on the plane next to each other. He's not going to punch her or **shove**<sup>19</sup> her or push her aggressively to get her attention. He just \*motions nudging\* just pokes her like, boop, boop, boop, boop with the elbow or the finger. You know what I'm talking about. We call that action nudging somebody, right? We \*motions nudging\* tap them gently with our elbow or finger to get their attention.

[00:10:26] And last is, "go back". I think the last line was something like, "She gave him \$5 and went back to sleep," or...or "she goes back to sleep". Something of that nature. In this case, in phrases like that, it just means to return to some activity. So if I go back to sleep, it means I return to my sleep. If I go back to watching the movie, it means I return to watching the movie. I start watching it again or I resume that activity. You see what I'm saying? That's the basic idea. Hopefully that makes sense. Okay, cool.

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<sup>19</sup> to push someone or something forcefully

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[00:10:57] Alright, my friend, I'd like to thank you so much for your time and attention as always. I really hope you enjoyed this episode of The Life in English podcast. I'm your host, Tony Kaizen, and I will talk to you soon. Alright. Peace!

[END OF EPISODE]

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### Key vocabulary

**Necessarily:** (esp. in negatives) in all cases; as an expected result

**Ends up:** to reach a particular place or achieve a situation after other activities

**Declines:** to refuse

**Catch a few winks:** to take a nap

**Persists:** to try to do or continue doing something in a determined but often unreasonable way

**Vice versa:** used to say that what you have just said is also true in the opposite order

**Agitated:** worried or angry

**Figuring:** to expect or think that something will happen

**Torment:** great mental suffering and unhappiness, or great physical pain

**Puzzled:** confused because you do not understand something

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**In-flight:** happening or available during a flight

**Frustrated:** feeling annoyed or less confident because you cannot achieve what you want

**More than a little:** to a great degree : very

**Nudges:** to push something or someone gently, especially to push someone with your elbow (= the middle part of your arm where it bends) to attract the person's attention

**Humor:** the ability to find things funny, the way in which people see that some things are funny, or the quality of being funny

**Comprehend:** to understand something completely

**Art form:** an undertaking or activity enhanced by a high level of skill or refinement

**Enclosed:** surrounded by walls, objects, or structures

**Shove:** to push someone or something forcefully