

Greetings, everyone! My name is Laurence, and this is *English in Practice!*

## MUSIC

Welcome to this bonus episode of *English in Practice*, in which I shall read out an amusing piece of flash fiction by Patience Mackarness. Its title is *Lost Time* and it was published by Bandit Fiction in June 2020. As always, you can find the link to the story in the description, should you wish to read along.

For those who wish to download the transcript, simply visit my website: [www.jamesfable.com](http://www.jamesfable.com). James Fable is my penname – an invented name that I use for writing.

Just one announcement today: I now pay money to keep this podcast running, and so I have set up a PayPal link for donations. You can find the link in the episode description. I am only a university student and I run this podcast for free, so any donations would be of enormous help.

Even more than donations, however, I would like to hear from you. If you do wish to get in touch and tell me a bit about yourself, then send an email to the following address: [englishinpracticepodcast@gmail.com](mailto:englishinpracticepodcast@gmail.com). Otherwise, you can contact me through the Facebook page, 'English in Practice: A Podcast for Intermediate-Advanced Learners.' A 'like' there would also be greatly appreciated.

Without further ado, let's look at some of the key terms that appear in the upcoming story, *Lost Time!*

## MUSIC

Okay, so the following pieces of vocabulary are the ones that I consider the most important for understanding the story. There may be other words or phrases in there which you have not heard before – if so, I encourage you to look them up afterwards – but they are not essential to understanding the plot.

The first important phrase is *to make up for lost time*. This can simply refer to making up for wasted time. For example: you are driving to the beach with some friends, but you get stuck in traffic on the motorway. Once the traffic has cleared, your friend says, 'Drive quickly. We need to make up for all that lost time.' That means: 'We need to make up for the time that was wasted by being stuck in traffic.'

The other meaning of the phrase *to make up for lost time* is very similar to the first one, as it means 'to spend more time doing something that you previously neglected, that you previously did not do much.' Imagine you have a friend who is sixty years old and has only just discovered that she loves mountain biking. She now goes every single day. You might say that she is 'making up for lost time', because it is almost as if, by going biking every day, she is trying to make up for half a lifetime of neglecting the sport. I hope that's clear, because this concept is important to the story.

*Alzheimer's* = This is a disease of the brain which chiefly occurs in elderly people. Those with Alzheimer's might suffer from memory loss, disorientation (that is, not knowing where one is), and the degeneration of other mental faculties. It is a common form of dementia.

*Pneumonia* = This is a disease marked by inflammation of the lungs. You tend to catch it when you get very cold.

*To pump someone's stomach* = This is a medical procedure for emptying someone's stomach in case of an emergency. If someone drinks too much alcohol in a short space of time, they might suffer from alcohol poisoning and have to have their stomach pumped.

*Envious* = This adjective comes from the noun *envy*, which is similar to jealousy. However, they are not quite the same, even if many British people do not know the difference. If you are envious of someone, you resent them because they possess something which you wish you had yourself or because they can do something which you wish you were able to do too. For example, I am envious of my mother's ability to paint, because I wish I could paint as well as she could.

Jealousy, on the other hand, is the feeling of resenting someone because they have gained something which you feel you deserve. For example, you might be jealous of your co-worker if they were to get a promotion that you believe you should have got. People can also experience jealousy in a sexual sense, for example, if their partner spends a lot of time with another person. However, it is the adjective *envious* that appears in today's story, not jealous.

Excellent. Here comes Patience Mackarness' piece of flash fiction, *Lost Time*!

## SOUND EFFECT

Follow the link to read along: <https://banditfiction.com/2020/06/09/lost-time-by-patience-mackarness/>

## SOUND EFFECT

So, what did you think of the story? Find it funny? Enjoy my attempts at trying to imitate the accent of a posh English lady? I hope so, it wasn't easy. Anyway, I'm now going to go through the story and summarise it. So, if you want to listen to *Lost Time* again or read it yourself, I suggest you pause the podcast now.

Okay, *Lost Time* begins with the narrator explaining that they found her mother in the woods, barefoot. Understandably, the police sergeant believes that she may have Alzheimer's, but the narrator says her mother only started going on such wanderings after her parents split up.

The narrator and her brother, Jason, sit their mother down with a cup of tea, noticing that she smells strongly of alcohol. She doesn't quite seem herself, though nor does she seem like a person with Alzheimer's, with dementia; in other words, she doesn't appear to have lost her mental faculties, but simply to be in an odd mood.

They ask where she has been the past three days, and she jokes that she had gone on a 'dirty weekend in Lisbon with someone else's husband.' The narrator then reveals that she had done exactly this when she was 22, which hints that her mother has not been acting oddly of late for no reason.

When Jason then tells Mother to be serious, she changes her story and claims that she had actually crashed into a tree while snowboarding, forcing her family to pay thousands to get her home because she didn't have insurance. This time it is Jason's turn to be quiet, as he did exactly this when he was nineteen.

Next, Mother says that she was also at a rock festival, where she stripped naked and caught pneumonia. This is an allusion to what the narrator did at Glastonbury, which is the biggest festival in the UK.

And finally, Mother claims that, before going to this rock festival, she had spent all night drinking at a party, thrown up on the wall and had her stomach pumped. Once again, this is something that Jason did as a teenager.

Understandably, Jason and the narrator are a little annoyed: they 'glare' at their mother as she calmly sips tea. Since Mother jokes that she has been doing exactly the same crazy things that her children did in their youth, they assume that she is trying to make a point about their behaviour while growing up. The narrator says: 'Okay. We were shits. We admit it. Do you want an apology?'

Their mother, however, says no. She explains that she had simply been very drunk the last three days and hadn't known where she was. This is because she had been trying to 'make up for lost time.' In contrast to what her children believed, Mother had never been annoyed at them for skiing without insurance or going on a dirty weekend with a married man – for being so 'wild and stupid', to use her words. Their father had been angry at them, but their mother had only ever been 'envious': she wished she had done such crazy things when she was younger as well. That's why she's spent the last three days getting very drunk and doing whatever she feels like – she's *gone on a bender*, if you want to use some British slang – because she neglected to do this when she was growing up.

The story has a nice ending. Since everyone now understands that Mother simply wishes to experience the youth she never had, that she wishes *to make up for lost time*, her children decide to help. Jason books a skiing holiday for them all, then the narrator and her mother go clothes shopping, before heading out for a night of drinking in Newcastle. I guess a moral of this story is that you are never too old to have fun.

I hope that summary has made *Lost Time* a little easier to understand. I recommend having another read through or another listen so that you can make sure you have picked up on all the subtleties in the story. I personally enjoyed it more on second read.

As mentioned at the beginning, please feel free to get in contact and let me know a bit about yourself. Once again, the email address is [englishinpracticepodcast@gmail.com](mailto:englishinpracticepodcast@gmail.com), and the Facebook page is called 'English in Practice: A Podcast for Intermediate-Advanced Learners.' Don't be afraid of making mistakes in your message; it would simply be nice to hear from you. And if you have enjoyed the podcast or found it helpful, please do tell your friends about it, share the Facebook page on social media, subscribe, etc.

That's all from me for today. I hope you have enjoyed this episode of *English in Practice*. Look out for an interview episode next week. All the best. Over and out.

*Patience Mackarness' website:* <https://patencemackarness.wordpress.com/>

*Se Habla Español:* <https://www.facebook.com/sehablaespanolpodcast/>