TRANSCRIPT · EPISODE 203

Short Stories with Peter: The Hats in the Snow

English learning resource · EN

Full episode script · English

80 lines

Study task: Listen again and notice the expressions you studied.

Welcome to Short Stories with Peter, from Your English Toolbox.

Today, The Hats in the Snow, an original adaptation of the Japanese folktale Kasa Jizō.

This is a story about kindness when you have very little to give.

Listen for the moment when a small choice changes the journey home.

Long ago, an older couple lived in a small village in Japan.

Winter had arrived, and snow covered the road outside their home.

The last day of the year was near.

The couple had worked hard, but they had very little food left.

They hoped to buy rice cakes for the New Year.

Together, they made five straw hats to sell at the market.

Perhaps someone will need a warm hat today.

I will do my best, and I will be home before dark.

The man put the hats carefully into a bundle and set off along the snowy road.

He reached the market and waited beside the other sellers.

People passed with baskets, children and parcels under their arms.

Some looked at the hats, but nobody stopped to buy one.

The afternoon grew colder, and the market slowly emptied.

Not one hat sold today.

I wish I could bring something special home.

He picked up the bundle and began the long walk back.

Snow fell more heavily as he approached the village.

At the side of the road stood six small stone figures called Jizō.

In Japanese Buddhist tradition, Jizō is a compassionate figure associated with protection.

The man saw that snow had gathered on the heads and shoulders of the six statues.

You have been standing here in the cold all day.

He brushed the snow away, but fresh flakes settled almost at once.

He looked down at the hats he had not sold.

These may help keep the snow off.

He placed one straw hat on each statue.

When he reached the last figure, his hands were empty.

There were six statues, but only five hats.

For a moment, he stood still in the falling snow.

Then he took the cloth from his own head and wrapped it around the sixth statue.

There, now each of you has something.

He continued home with snow in his hair and nothing to sell.

A little light shone through the window when he reached his house.

His wife opened the door and noticed how cold he looked.

Come in quickly and warm your hands.

He told her about the market, the statues and the five unsold hats.

I am sorry I could not bring home rice cakes.

You saw someone in the cold and chose to help.

That was a kind thing to do.

We can welcome the New Year together with what we have.

They shared their simple evening meal and sat close to the warmth.

Outside, the snow continued to fall.

Later that night, a soft, unusual sound came from the road.

The couple woke and listened carefully.

Can you hear someone outside?

There was a gentle knock, followed by the sound of something being set down.

The man opened the door and looked into the snowy darkness.

On the doorstep lay food for a New Year celebration.

There was rice, vegetables and the rice cakes they had hoped for.

Who could have brought all of this?

In the distance, the couple thought they could see six small figures moving away through the snow.

Five wore straw hats, and one wore a familiar piece of cloth.

The man and his wife looked at each other and smiled.

They carried the food inside and gave thanks for the unexpected gift.

And in the quiet house, the New Year felt a little warmer.

End of the story.

Now, let’s dive into the language and break down some of the key vocabulary from the story.

First, to set off means to begin a journey.

The man set off for the market carrying his hats.

You might set off early to catch a train.

Next, to brush something away means to remove it with a light movement of your hand or a brush.

The man brushed the snow away from the statues.

You can also brush crumbs away from a table.

To keep something off means to stop it from touching or covering something.

The hats helped keep the snow off the statues.

A coat can help keep the rain off your clothes.

A doorstep is the step directly outside the entrance to a home.

The couple found the food on their doorstep.

Finally, unexpected describes something you did not expect or predict.

The food was an unexpected gift.

Now it is your turn to practise.

What time do you set off when you travel somewhere?

What do you wear to keep the rain off?

Think of an unexpected kindness you have received.

You can find the full transcript, vocabulary and practice at Your English Toolbox.

Thank you for listening to Short Stories with Peter.

Until next time, take care.