

TRANSCRIPT · EPISODE 35

A Christmas Story in London

Full episode script · English

213 lines

Your English Toolbox

Welcome to Your English Toolbox, your slow English podcast where we train your ears step by step.

I am Martin, and I am very happy you are here with us today.

And I am Julia, and today we have a special Christmas story for you.

Martin, what are we going to talk about today?

Tonight we will walk through the cold streets of London on Christmas Eve.

We will meet a tired delivery rider, a strange old clockmaker,
and a shop where time does not work in a normal way.

And we will discover how one single hour can change a whole life.

If you stay with us until the end, you will practice real everyday English in a slow,
calm story.

You will learn useful Christmas and city vocabulary that you can use in real conversations,
and you will feel inspired to slow down, breathe, and think about the time in your own life.

Christmas Eve in Camden Town

The wind was sharp and wet over Camden Town, and the rain fell in thin lines under the
streetlights.

Delivery bikes crossed the streets like small animals searching for food.

People hurried with their heads down, pushing Christmas bags through the dark.

Thomas pushed his bicycle across the bridge over the canal.

His legs were shaking after

10 hours of deliveries, and his phone battery was almost empty.

One more order,

and his Christmas Eve would finally end.

The app showed a red dot near a narrow street behind Camden High Street.

The rain hit the screen and his fingers were numb inside his wet gloves.

He thought of his grandmother in Spain, sitting in a warm kitchen,
making soup and singing quiet carols.

She had sent a photo that morning of the family table already prepared.

He had answered with just one word, working, and a tired thumbs up emoji.

Next year I will not work on Christmas, he muttered.

But he had made the same promise last year and the year before.

When he turned into the narrow street, the noise of Camden disappeared.

The air felt older, as if the city had forgotten this place.

A closed fish and chip shop slept on one side and a dusty bookshop on the other.

At the end of the street stood a tiny shop with a faded blue door.

Above the door hung a sign in almost invisible golden letters.

It said,

Tempus and Sons.

Clockmakers since 1843.

In the window, dozens of clocks and watches shone softly behind the glass.

Some were tall and serious, some were small and playful.

A warm yellow light glowed inside like a pocket of time hidden from the cold.

The red dot on his phone was exactly on top of the little shop.

Who orders food to a clock shop at midnight, he said aloud.

He leaned his bicycle against the wall, shook water from his jacket, and opened the door.

A little bell rang above his head, not loud but perfectly clear.

The sound felt less like metal and more like a drop of water in a quiet pond.

Before we continue, I'd like to ask you something very simple.

This works like a small poll for our friends listening to the podcast.

Your answer helps us understand what kind of episodes you enjoy most,

so we can create more content that really fits you.

If you enjoy practicing English by listening to stories like this one,

please write yes in the comments.

If you prefer more educational and explanatory episodes,

please write no.

Just one word, that's all you need to do.

When you vote, future episodes become better and more adapted to what you like.

Now, let's continue the story.

The clockmaker and his shop.

Inside the shop was full of clocks.

They covered the walls, stood in corners, and lay sleeping on the counter.

Some ticked in quick nervous beats, others in slow, patient breaths.

Behind the counter stood a thin old man with silver hair to his shoulders

and round glasses on his nose.

He wore a dark waistcoat and a soft green scarf.

His eyes were bright and sharp like two pieces of winter sky.

Good evening, Mr.

Tomas.

The old man said.

His voice sounded dry and gentle, like pages turning in an old book.

You are late.

How do you know my name?

Tomas asked, almost dropping the paper bag.

Is this the right address for the order?

The old man smiled.

This is the right place for many orders, he said.

Some are for food, some are for time.

He came around his counter, his shoes making no sound on the floor.

You have been giving your time to strangers all day, he continued.

Tonight, perhaps, you will receive something back.

I just need a code and then I can go home, Tomas said.

If I do not finish soon, I will miss the last tube.

You are always afraid of missing something, are you not?

The old man asked.

The last train, the last order, the last chance.

Since he came to London, Tomas was always running, always late,
always chasing time that ran faster than him.

Who are you? he whispered.

And why does this shop feel so strange?

The old man touched a small clock shaped like a house.

I am Mr.

Tempest, he said.

And this shop keeps more than hours and minutes.

Behind another clock, Tomas saw an old photograph of Camden with horses in the street.

Another showed a young couple dancing in a tiny kitchen with flower on their faces.

These are not just clocks, Mr.

Tempest said.

They are moments that people brought to me when they broke.

Why am I here?

Tomas asked quietly.

Tempest looked at the almost dead phone in his hand.

Because you are about to lose unless a Christmas with your family, he said.

And you are starting to believe that this is normal.

I have no choice, Tomas answered.

London is expensive.

I must work or I cannot pay the rent.

Maybe you have less choice than you want, the old man replied softly.

But you have more choice than you think.

You can decide what to do with one single hour.

What do you mean?

Tomas asked.

Tonight you can borrow one hour from another part of your life, Mr.

Tempest said.

You can visit one moment from your past or one possible moment from your future
and live it as if it is happening now.

That is impossible, Tomas said.

Time only goes in one direction.

For most people, yes, answered the clockmaker.

But this shop is a small crack in the wall of time.

When the right person comes at the right hour, one special thing can happen.

He placed the small house-shaped clock on the counter.

The hands moved backwards very slowly as if they were thinking.

You must return the hour before dawn, Mr.

Tempest added.

And when you come back, you must change something in your life.

An hour with grandmother.

If I take this hour, what happens to my work and my rent?

Tomas asked.

Do they disappear?

Nothing disappears, the old man answered.

The world will forget that you were missing, but you will remember everything.

You will return with one new piece of time in your pocket.

Tomas did not need to think long.

I want an hour with my grandmother, he said.

Before she became so fragile, before I left for London.

Tempest nodded and opened a drawer.

He took out a small silver watch with a red thread attached to it.

Hold this, he said.

Follow the ticking, and when the hour is over, pull the thread.

The shop grew quiet and the other clock slowed down.

Tomas smelled something warm, like soup and oranges.

The wooden floor became cold tiles,

and the yellow light became the soft light of a small kitchen.

A radio played old Spanish songs.

Tomas, hijo, you are late as always, his grandmother called from the stove.

She turned with a wooden spoon in her hand, younger and full of energy.

Tears filled his eyes.

He hugged her hard.

She laughed.

Have they closed all the buses in Madrid or what?

For one golden hour, he helped her cut bread, set the table, and taste the soup.

He listened to her stories,

and this time, he spoke honestly about London.

He told her he was tired, lonely, and often afraid.

She listened in silence and then touched his cheek.

You are not a machine, Tomas, she said.

People need time that is not for money.

You cannot stop every job,

but you can protect one small hour every day for yourself and the people you love.

Rent does not wait, he protested.

The app does not wait.

Then you must learn to wait for yourself, she answered gently.

If you do not, one day your life will pass in notifications

and you will not remember what it felt like to sit at this table.

Her words sank deep inside him.

The red thread on the silver watch began to glow softly.

I have to go, he whispered, but I promise I will stop selling all my time.

His grandmother smiled and kissed his forehead.

The kitchen faded, the music became ticking,

and the smell of soup turned back into dust and machine oil.

A different Christmas morning.

Tomas opened his eyes and found himself back in the little shop.

The silver watch lay cold on the counter, the red thread now black and thin.

Outside he could hear the distant sound of cars on the main road.

Your hour is finished, Mr.

Tempest said softly.

It is almost dawn.

What will you do with what you have learned?

Tomas looked at his phone.

The delivery app showed his last order as complete as if he had already done it.

His earnings were the same, but his heart was not.

I cannot change everything today, he said, but I can change one thing.

I will not take any more orders tonight.

He switched the app to offline and felt strangely light.

Tempest disappeared into the back and returned with an old blue bicycle with a small bell.

Someone left this here long ago, he said.

Tonight it belongs to you.

You paid for it with one honest hour.

Tomas pushed the bike out into the pale London morning.

The rain had stopped and a thin line of pink was growing over the roofs.

He opened the chat with his grandmother and typed,

Abuela, I'm calling you in five minutes.

Put the coffee on.

Then he added, next year I want to eat your Christmas soup in person.

I am going to organize my life for that.

He pressed send and began to ride home through the quiet streets.

For the first time, the city did not feel like an enemy made of clocks and deadlines.

It felt like a place full of small quiet hours waiting to be discovered.

And deep in Camden town, behind a faded blue door,

a hundred clocks ticked together in gentle agreement.

Thank you for listening to this Christmas story, dear friend.

We hope it helped you practice your English and also think about your own time.

Maybe there is one small hour that you want to protect in your day.

Before we finish, a quick reminder.

Your comments work like a simple voting system for this podcast.

They help us decide what kind of content to create next.

If you enjoy learning English through stories like this one, write yes.

If you prefer more educational episodes, write no.

Just one word is enough.

The more friends vote, the better and more adapted this podcast becomes for everyone.

Thank you for helping shape future episodes.

From all of us at Your English Toolbox,

we wish you a peaceful, slow, and very happy Christmas.

Take care and see you in the next episode.
