

READING FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS



60 STORIES ABOUT LIFE

60 HISTORIAS SOBRE LA VIDA

Compiled and edited by: Jacek Gordon



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The books in the series “Reading for English Learners’ are intended for people who already have a good knowledge of English but want to improve its practical use and also learn new words through texts that are interesting to read but written in relatively simple and commonly used English.

“60 Stories About Life” are 60 interesting stories based on real facts, told in the first person by both women and men; that is; seen from their point of view.

The author hopes that these stories will appeal to readers and improve their knowledge of English.



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1. TOGETHER FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE

When I think about our life with Stephen, I always see us as a close-knit team [un equipo muy unido]. We have been building our financial stability for years, which is the foundation of our marriage. We live in a nice, cozy apartment, and every Saturday we enjoy going out for dinner to our favourite restaurants. It seems like a simple life, but it is perfect for us.

However, I was worried that something had started to change recently. Several times, quite a large amount of money used to disappear from the bank account, but Stephen reassured me that these were only temporary problems. Although I tried to trust, but my inner anxiety [*mi ansiedad interior*] did not give me composure [*compostura*]. I felt that something was wrong.

The kitchen was our favourite place to talk. It was always full of the smell of freshly brewed coffee [*el olor del café recién hecho*], with warm light coming in through the window. I was sitting at the table, nervously tapping [*golpeando nerviosamente*] my fingers on the counter, when Stephen entered the room with a cup in his hand.

'Maddie, is something wrong?' he asked, noticing my tense posture [*mi postura tensa*]. 'You know what,' I replied, trying to control the trembling [*el temblor*] in my voice. 'What's happening with our money? It's disappearing from our bank account, and I don't even know why.'

'It's nothing serious, really. Just a temporary [*temporal*] problem,' he began to explain, stirring his coffee [*removiendo su café*].

'Temporary?!' I interrupted, feeling my frustration growing. 'How many times have I heard that? What's really going on?' I could see a hint of concern [*un atisbo de preocupación*] in his

eyes, but his face remained calm.

'I promise everything will be okay. It's just ... things have gotten a little complicated,' he tried to reassure me

[*tranquilizarme*], but his words rang hollow [*sonaron huecas*].

He was hiding [*estaba escondiendo*] something. I could feel that he wasn't telling me something, that he was hiding the truth from me that could change everything. And although I tried to believe him, my inner voice told me otherwise. Could I really trust his assurances [*confiar en sus garantías*]?

Two days later, a letter arrived from the bank. My heart was beating fast, and my eyes were scanning the lines of text that made me increasingly worried. Arrears [*atrasos*]? Credit? We didn't take out any credit! I could feel the anger starting to fill me.

'Stephen!' I shouted, not hiding the growing irritation in my voice. My husband entered the room and I waved the letter at him. 'What's that supposed to mean? Why are we in arrears and have a credit that I don't know anything about?' He looked at me for a moment, his face a mixture of surprise and concern.

'It's not what you think. I can explain everything,' he tried to explain, but his words brought me no comfort.

'Explain it to me now!' I shouted, feeling that I could no longer bear [*no podía soportarlo*] this uncertainty. 'You're hiding something from me, and I want to know what's going on.'

He didn't answer immediately, and that only increased my frustration and distrust [aumentaron mi frustración y desconfianza]. I felt like I was standing on the edge of a cliff [el borde de un acantilado], not knowing what I would find at the bottom if I jumped.

When Stephen left for work, I decided to act. I had to find out the truth. I searched through his files with growing anxiety [con creciente ansiedad], hoping in my heart that I wouldn't find anything that would confirm my fears.

Finally, I came across a stack of contracts and notes. My heart sank in my chest [se hundió en mi pecho] when I saw that it was about a business loan. With shaking hands, I closed the file, my mind racing with thoughts. Was Stephen really risking our lives together so much? When he got home, I was waiting for him in the kitchen.

'We need to talk,' I said quietly but firmly.

He looked at me with concern, knowing I had discovered something.

'Is something wrong?' he asked, although there was already a note of resignation in his voice.

'I found some documents. A loan for a business that didn't work out, right? Why didn't you tell me?' My questions were like bullets that wouldn't let him escape.

Stephen sighed, his shoulders slumping [y dejó caer los hombros] as if he'd lost all his strength.

'I wanted everything to be okay before I told you,' he admitted.

'But nothing is okay!' I exploded. 'You betrayed my trust, you've put us on the edge. How could you do this without consulting me?'

The conversation between us was full of pain and misunderstanding, the emotional chasm seemed unbridgeable [el abismo emocional parecía insalvable]. I felt cheated, as if everything we had built together had suddenly collapsed [se hubiera derrumbado de repente].

For the next few days, my thoughts revolved around one question: What next? I tried to understand what was driving my husband, what fears and desires had pushed him to such risky actions. Sitting on the balcony, I stared into space, feeling that my life stretched out before me, like an uncertain road.

His voice echoed in my head, explanations full of regret and hope for a better future that he promised to build. But could I really trust him again? Every day I struggled with this dilemma, weighing my heart on the scales of reason and emotion [en la balanza de la razón y la emoción].

'Please, let's talk again,' I heard Stephen, who stood in the balcony door. His face was full of remorse [estaba lleno de remordimiento].

I looked at him, trying to control the wave of conflicting emotions.

'I don't know what to tell you. Sometimes I think it's over, and sometimes that we can still fix everything.'

'I just want you to know that I will do everything to earn back your trust,' [para recuperar tu confianza] he said, looking into my eyes.

Even though his words were sincere, a battle was raging [se libraba] inside me. I was fighting with myself, trying to decide what would be best for both of us.

I decided that I had to face the problem practically. I went to the bank, wanting to understand the situation and find a way to resolve it [encontrar una manera de resolverla]. The visit was stressful, but I knew I had to do it.

At the bank's office, I was greeted by a bank representative whose face was polite but professional. Her measured gaze reminded me of how much my every word weighs [cuánto pesa cada palabra mía]

For the next half hour, we discussed various debt restructuring options. I felt that there was hope, after all, that we could find a way out of this, even if it meant hard work and sacrifice [significaba trabajo duro y sacrificio].

After the meeting, I left the bank with mixed feelings. I knew that I still had to think about our future with Stephen. I had to have a conversation with him and take up decisions that

head: let Ebaldo, Klara and their damn roses rot together [*sus malditas rosas se pudren juntas*]. I couldn't look at them anymore. I knew that life ahead of me wouldn't be easy, but I also felt that now I could start up once again, without lies and secrets. Although my heart still ached [*aunque todavía me dolía el corazón*], I felt peace inside. Ebaldo's betrayal opened my eyes to what I really needed and deserved.

I ended our marriage knowing that it was the right decision. Every day I gain strength, certain that I can cope again [*puedo hacer frente de nuevo*]. It's time to start a new chapter, in which I will be the one choosing flowers for my garden.

Eva, 37



7. DANGEROUS LOVE

My name is Penelope. I am an ambitious woman; ambition and determination had guided me on my career path for many years, until I became a manager. Working in a corporation is like an intricate game of chess [*un intrincado juego de ajedrez*]; every move requires consideration [*requiere consideración*] and every decision has its consequences. My

position gave me power, but also put before me new challenges.

I always tried to separate my professional life from my personal life. My relationships with my colleagues were good, but emotionless. But everything changed when I met Robert. He was younger than me, fresh out of university, full of energy and new ideas. Our meetings after working hours became more than just work. Shared moments in the office, laughter that bounced off the empty walls, glances [miradas] full of promise. A secret that connected us in a strange but exciting way.

However, every secret has its price. I began to notice how our hidden feelings affected [afectaron] my concentration at work. I wasn't the only one who noticed it. Gareth, one of my colleagues, was looking at me suspiciously. It seemed to me that his jealousy extended beyond our professional rivalry. The fear of Robert and me being exposed [quedemos expuestos] was becoming increasingly palpable [cada vez más palpable]. I knew that soon it would be time to face the consequences. But for now, I was still living in this bubble of unspoken words and hidden glances.

'What are we doing?' I once asked, leaning on the desk. The office was empty now, only the soft glow of the desk lamp casting a warm, dim light over our faces. Robert looked at me anxiously.

'I don't know. Sometimes I think it's just a dream, and other times I feel like nothing else matters.'

'But how long can we keep this a secret? Gareth must be suspecting something [*sospechando algo*] ...'

'Gareth?' Robert raised his eyebrows. 'I thought he just liked to gossip [*chismorrear*]. Did he say anything specific?'

I shook my head, but I couldn't shake the feeling that Gareth was looking for an excuse [*una excusa*] to prove something.

'No, nothing specific. But the way he looked at me ... I feel like he's just waiting for me to make a mistake.'

There was a moment of silence, the only sound being the ticking [*tictac*] of the clock on the wall. Every time Robert looked at me, every time he made a gesture, I lost focus [*perdí el enfoque*]. An internal battle was going on in my head; career or feelings?

'Don't worry,' Robert interrupted my thoughts, taking my hand. 'We'll get through this. You're a great manager, and I ... I just don't want to lose you.'

'But what if our feelings lead to disaster [*desastre*]?' I wondered aloud. 'If something goes wrong, I could lose everything I've worked so hard for.'

We stared at each other in silence, both lost in our own thoughts. Maybe this was the moment to stop and ask ourselves: What next? But my heart had a clear opinion on the matter and we were still stuck in this dangerous game.

Gareth appeared in my office unexpectedly. He brought with him a stack of documents [una pila de documentos] and a wide smile, which in his case never boded anything good [nunca presagiaba nada bueno].

'I need your help with this project,' he said, sitting down in the chair opposite me. 'You know, I've always admired your professionalism. By the way, I saw you with Robert recently. You have a great relationship, right?'

I hesitated for a split second, trying to keep a calm face.

'Yes, Robert is a good employee.'

'You know, sometimes I wonder what it's like with all these romances at work. You never know who's with whom, right?'

I tried not to reveal anything about myself, but I felt my heart speed up.

'Gareth, everyone here is a professional. Let's not talk about gossip.'

He smiled to himself, and I saw a hint of triumph in his eyes. When he left my office, I felt a weight, like an invisible noose [una soga invisible] tightening around me. I knew I had to be careful. Gareth suspected something, and I couldn't afford to make mistakes.

Thoughts about my relationship with Robert kept coming back to me throughout the day like an annoying echo. Was it really worth putting myself through all this? On the one hand, there was Robert, whose presence made me feel alive, but on

feeling of loneliness [*soledad*]. After a moment of solitude [*un momento de soledad*] in the hallway, I felt tears welling up in my eyes. I hid in the nearest bathroom to collect my thoughts. I decided then that I wouldn't let their words break me. I knew that the only way to prove myself was to focus on my strengths. Every day after school, I immersed myself in [*Me sumergí*] my books and school assignments [*tareas escolares*]. I wanted my results to be undeniable proof [*una prueba irrefutable*] of my effort and determination.

One day, I overheard a conversation between my classmates. They were standing nearby and talking loudly enough for me to hear everything.

"She may be smart, but without money, she has no chance," one of them said and the rest laughed.

Their words were like a cold shower. But instead of discouraging me [*en lugar de desanimarme*], they awakened anger and determination in me. I knew that what I was doing was worth it. I knew that my efforts would eventually be noticed. When the school held a math Olympiad, I decided to test myself. With my nerves carefully hidden under a calm demeanor [*escondido bajo una actitud tranquila*], I took the test that would decide my future. Each subsequent answer was like a brick building a wall between me and my former life, full of humiliation [*lleno de humillación*] and lack of understanding. When the results were announced, my heart beat faster. I

had scored the highest! The prize included a scholarship [*una beca*] to a prestigious university. I felt as if the whole world had stopped for a moment to appreciate my achievements [*un momento para apreciar mis logros*].

After the awards were presented, my teacher, who had always supported me, even when others doubted me, approached me.

'Mary, I knew you had the potential,' she said.

'Thank you. It was thanks to you, Mrs. Webham, that I believed I could achieve something,' I replied gratefully.

That day, for the first time in a long time, I felt that my dreams were starting to come true [*mis sueños empezaban a hacerse realidad*] I could finally brag [*presumir*] not only about myself, but also about what I had achieved due to my own determination.

Beginning at university was like entering a new world.

Spacious lecture halls, modern laboratories and above all, people who shared my passion for science. I immediately felt that I had found my place. I met students who, like me, wanted more than just a title or a job. Unlike my former peers, they respected me for who I was, not for what I had. Every day was a new adventure and a chance to grow. I discovered new interests and deepened my knowledge, enjoying every moment. I knew that there was still a lot to discover and achieve.

A few years had passed since I graduated from university and got my dream job in a large company. I became the head of a large department. One day we were looking for someone to help with office work.

During one of the interviews, none other than Kathy entered the room; an old school colleague who used to mock my origins [*que solía burlarse de mis orígenes*]. I saw a shadow of uncertainty and slight embarrassment [*ligera vergüenza*] in her eyes. She looked different, as if life had taught her humility. I was literally speechless.

'Mary? Is that really you?' she asked shyly [*preguntó tímidamente*], sitting down on a chair opposite me.

'Yes. We haven't seen each other for a long time,' I replied neutrally, trying to stay professional.

During the conversation, she told me about her professional experience and I struggled to stop myself from reminding her of her past behaviour [*me costó mucho evitar recordarle su comportamiento pasado*]. I felt an internal conflict. On the one hand, I wanted to pay her back for all the years of humiliation, but on the other, I knew that what really mattered was professionalism and an objective assessment of the candidate. And now it was up to me whether she would have enough money to feed her children.

When my old school-mate left the room, I wondered if I would be able to look at her only through the prism of her

qualifications. I knew that adulthood sometimes requires more maturity from us than what emotions impose.

Mary, 39



54. THE BEST REVENGE

Kyle and I had been together for over two years. Everything seemed to be going perfectly. Then one day, without any warning, he decided to leave. He said he needed space, that he wasn't ready for a serious relationship. I had no idea that two months later I would see him on social media looking like the happiest man alive with Claudia.

I felt like someone had popped the balloon of my hopes [*había reventado el globo de mis esperanzas*]. For three years I had tried to move on, but deep down I had a grudge [*en el fondo tenía rencor* against Kyle. Now, when I had the chance to get back at him on the Singles Day, I couldn't pass it up. I planned to make his perfect night a total disaster [*un desastre total*].

One day I found out that Kyle and Claudia were going to an exclusive party at one of the hottest clubs in town. I knew