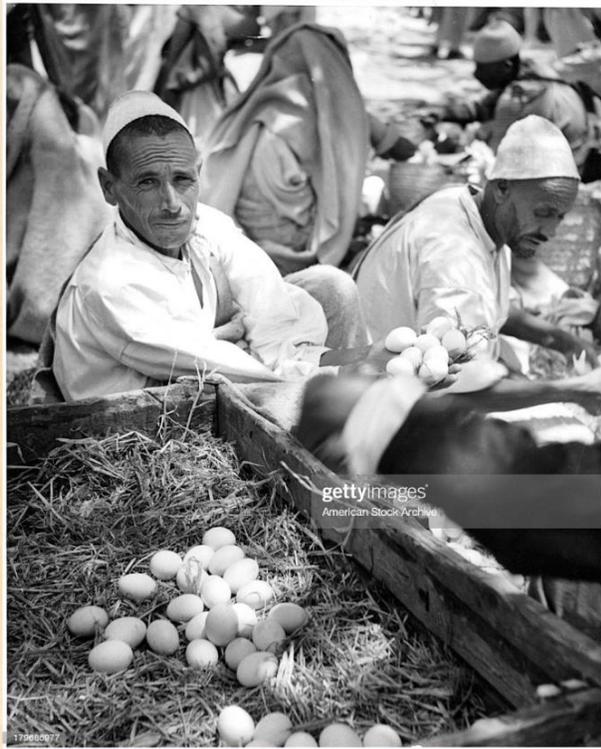


Learn English Through Story

"The Basket of Eggs"



A TALE FROM EGYPT

**ENGLISH SHORT STORIES FOR
ELEMENTARY LEVELS**

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Learn English Through Story

The Basket of Eggs

A tale from Egypt

Level 2

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Mousa really didn't like being poor. He lived in a small house in a small village next to the River Nile in Egypt. When there was work, he worked on farms, and when there was no work, he watched the waters of the River Nile. Sometimes he dreamt that he was in a beautiful boat, going slowly up the river to Cairo. He dreamt of a new life there - a big house, lots of money, beautiful clothes and lots of food. One day, when there was no work and he was tired of looking at the Nile, he thought, 'Enough is enough.' He decided to leave for Cairo and become rich.

While he was walking down the street, he met his old friend Abdullah.

'Abdullah, I'm so happy to see you before I go,' he said.

'Before you go? Where are you going?' asked his friend, with great surprise.

'I'm going to Cairo to become rich,' replied Mousa, excitedly. 'How are you going to become rich?' asked his friend.

'I'm going to...!' Mousa began, but he wasn't really very sure of his plan.

'Listen, Mousa,' said Abdullah, putting his hand on his friend's arm. 'I'm going to help you. Come with me.'

Abdullah pulled Mousa down a little street, and took him to Hafsa's house. In front of the house there was a big garden with many chickens running around in it. Everyone knew that Hafsa's eggs were the best in the village.

'Good morning, Hafsa,' said Abdullah. 'We need two hundred eggs, in a big basket.'

'Why are we buying eggs?' asked Mousa.

'With these eggs, you can go to the big market in Cairo. There you'll sell them for good money. Then you'll buy something else, and sell it in a different place for more money. You'll buy and sell, buy and sell, and soon you'll be rich. Then you can give me back the money for the eggs - and perhaps a little more for helping you to start your business.' Abdullah gave the eggs to Mousa, and they walked through more little streets until they came to the Nile. They found a boat which was going to Cairo.

'Here's some money for the journey. And Cairo is waiting for you! Good food, beautiful clothes, all the things that you've ever dreamt about. Good luck, Mousa. Come back rich!'

Mousa said goodbye to his friend and got on the boat.

Twenty minutes later, the boat left. In two hours he would be in Cairo, for the first time. A new life was waiting! Mousa closed his eyes and tried to imagine that great city.

'Mousa! Where are you going with all those eggs?'

Mousa opened his eyes to see who was talking to him. It was Khaled, the baker's son. He was going to Cairo that day to sell his father's cakes there.

'Well, no, not really. I'm not going to sell eggs all my life, you know. I'm going to be much more than that.'

'What are you going to do?' Khaled looked interested. A man and his wife from their home village also looked at Mousa, waiting to hear his answer. Mousa was very happy to tell them about his dreams.

'Well, first I'm going to sell these eggs in the market. I bought them from Hafsah, so I'll get good money for them.'

'Hafsah's eggs are the best in the village,' said Khaled.

'That's true,' said the man and his wife.

'Then I'm going to buy some beautiful material,' said Mousa. Some of the women sitting near looked at Mousa when he said this.

'And what material is that?' asked one of them.

'Ah, the finest material that you can imagine. There are materials in Cairo that you can't find anywhere else. Materials that are made with really beautiful colours... I can't even tell you their names.'

The women looked at each other. One of them closed her eyes, trying to imagine those colours.

'I'll come back to our village and sell this material,' said Mousa. 'All the women will want to buy some to make new clothes, so I'll make more money.' Now all the women in the boat were listening to Mousa.

'With this money I'll buy a ewe and give her the best food to eat.' When he said that, a group of men looked at him.

'A ewe is a good animal to buy,' said one of them. 'You must give her apples sometimes.'

'Carrots are better,' said another man in the group.

'My ewe will eat both apples and carrots,' said Mousa. 'Later she'll have two lambs. I'll sell the lambs and their mother, and... then do you know what I'll buy?'

Now everyone in the boat was listening to Mousa.

'A cow?'

'A boat?'

'A camel?'

'No, a water buffalo,' said Mousa in a loud voice.

Ah yes, I see. From two hundred eggs to a water buffalo. That's good business,' said Khaled.

'Very good business!' they all said.

Mousa stood up excitedly.

'When the water buffalo has a calf I'll have two water buffaloes to sell,' he shouted. And after I sell them, I'll be rich. And when I'm rich, I'll have a servant to work for me. All day I'll shout at him, "Do this! Do that! Quickly! Run!" And if he's slow, I'll give him a big kick, like this!'

With that, Mousa kicked the basket of eggs and it fell off the boat into the waters of the Nile. Two hundred eggs went to the bottom of the river, and Mousa was left with nothing - only his dreams.

- THE END -

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