
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

Jamaica Inn

2: A cold and lonely place



NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Language focus: Present perfect continuous tense

Mary narrator

I have arrived at Jamaica Inn to live with my aunt. My uncle is landlord here. It's a cold and lonely place. I'm at the door and I'm waiting for someone to let me in...

Joss

Who's there?

Mary

It's me. Mary. Mary Yellan.

[Heavy door opening]

Joss

Ah, so, you've arrived at last. Well, say hello to your Uncle Joss.

Mary

Where is my Aunt Patience?

Joss

What's the hurry? Don't you want to give me a big kiss first? Patience! She's here.
[impatiently] Where are you, woman?

Patience! Where in hell is that woman?

Patience

I'm here. Is it the girl?

Joss

See for yourself.

Mary narrating

A woman with grey hair hurries towards me. In the candlelight her face is pale. She looks afraid.

Patience

Mary.

Mary

Aunt Patience - I am so glad to see you.

Mary narrating

But she is unrecognisable. Her curls have gone and her happy smile also. I can see that **she's been crying**. This woman is old and anxious. She starts to cry.

Joss

Stop **whimpering**, woman. Can't you see the girl is hungry! I'll take her things up to her room. If there's nothing to eat on the table when I come down, you'll soon have something to cry about.

Mary narrating

He lifts my heavy box as if it's a bag of feathers. He is huge with shoulders like those of a bear.

Mary narrating

The kitchen is full of smoke from the fire. There are **stains** on the stone floor and there's a strong smell of alcohol. On the table there are two empty bottles of **brandy**.

Patience

You mustn't mind your Uncle Joss. Some people find him strange at first, but he is very **respected** here. Just yesterday he told me that a man stopped and told him how much he admired.

Joss

Are you talking rubbish again woman? Sit down Mary. Eat. Listen, Mary. I'm in charge here and you'll do as I say. You'll serve the customers in the bar and help in the house. But if you open your mouth and **squawk** like a hen, you'll be sorry.

Mary

I'll help you like you say, but if you hurt my aunt, I'll tell and you'll be **punished**.

Joss

Patience, go and get me another bottle and be quick. Big words – maybe we're not so different, Mary. Here, drink this. This is my **curse**, Mary – drink. **I've been drinking a little today but** - Oh you'll see how we drink here some Saturdays – they hear the shouting and singing far away. People are afraid of me but I'm afraid of no one. Go to bed now.

Mary narrating

He suddenly grabs my wrist.

Joss

Listen carefully. Some nights you'll hear wheels, footsteps and voices outside. You must stay in your room and put your blanket over your ears. If you ask questions, I'll break every bone in your body. Do you understand?

Mary narrating

My room is small and **bare**. Just a bed and a table with a broken mirror. I feel lonely and **trapped** like a bird in a cage. But it's not too late to run away. I **creep** down the dark passage.

Mary

[to herself] Who's crying? It must be my aunt!

Mary narrating

I turn back. My uncle frightens me but I must stay and protect Aunt Patience.

I did not sleep well last night. My bed is hard and the blanket is thin. The house is quiet this morning. I'll look for a place to wash downstairs. Here is the bar. Ah, there's a passage here – maybe it's along here. A door – this must be the washroom.

Mary

How strange – it's locked.

Patience

Mary! What are you doing?

Mary

Why is this room locked, Aunt Patience? What's in it?

Mary narrating

My aunt looks quickly behind her and her eyes are like a frightened rabbit's.

Mary

Is it because of the people who come to the inn at night?

Patience

Mary. Mary. **I've been worrying about how to tell you this.** I must warn you. Bad things happen here. Men come at night and they go into that room with Joss. When you hear them, you must stay in your room. You must never ask me or your uncle about it again.

Mary narrating

What is in this room and why is my Aunt so scared? I'm not going to like it here but I must stay to support her and keep her safe. Next time we meet – I have to work in the bar of Jamaica Inn on Saturday night where I get to meet a group of rough and drunk men. Later

that night there are some strange goings-on in the yard outside. What's going on at Jamaica Inn?

Vocabulary

stains

dirty marks

brandy

a strong alcoholic drink

respected

admired

squawk

(here) slang for 'complain'

curse

(here) evil influence

bare

(here) basic, with very little equipment

trapped

unable to leave

creep

move very carefully and secretly so that nobody sees you

Quiz

1 Why is Mary surprised when she sees her aunt?

- a) Because her aunt is crying.
- b) Because her aunt doesn't recognise her.
- c) Because her aunt has changed so much.

2 Why does Mary decide to stay at Jamaica Inn?

- a) Because she is too frightened to run away.
- b) Because she wants to protect her aunt.
- c) Because she wants to help her uncle in the bar.

3 What does Mary find when she goes downstairs in the morning?

- a) A room where she can wash
- b) A room that is locked
- c) A room with people in it

Feedback

1 Why is Mary surprised when she sees her aunt?

- a) Because her aunt is crying. - Wrong – She doesn't recognise her aunt.
- b) Because her aunt doesn't recognise her. - Wrong – She doesn't recognise her aunt.
- c) **Because her aunt has changed so much. - Correct - Well done!**

2 Why does Mary decide to stay at Jamaica Inn?

- a) Because she is too frightened to run away. - Wrong – She is frightened, but that is not why she decides to stay.
- b) **Because she wants to protect her aunt. - Correct - Well done!**
- c) Because she wants to help her uncle in the bar. - Wrong – She hears her aunt crying and wants to stay to protect her.

3 What does Mary find when she goes downstairs in the morning?

- a) A room where she can wash - Wrong – She is looking for a washroom, but she doesn't find one.
- b) **A room that is locked - Correct - Well done!**
- c) A room with people in it - Wrong – She finds a room, but she can't open the door to go in.