

Short Story: Unconditional Love

Level: B1-B2

Her first son left while she was asleep. He didn't want to see his mother when he stole out of the village, penniless but filled with hope. When she woke up, he was gone. "If only I hadn't slept," she admonished herself bitterly, I would have said goodbye to my son. Now, he is gone and I will never see him again."

Her second son left while she was at the market. She had gone there to buy food for the whole family, including him. "If I leave now," he told himself, "she will not see me leaving and she won't be heartbroken." He snuck past the stalls of busy women and waved them goodbye. He never caught sight of his mother and she never caught a glimpse of her son. "If I had stayed a little bit longer at home, I would have hugged him for the last time. Now he is gone and I will never see him again."

ALL CONDITIONALS



ZERO CONDITIONALS	(IF/WHEN+SIMPLE PRESENT) + (SIMPLE PRESENT)
Example	• If you work hard, you pass your exams.
FIRST CONDITIONALS	(IF + SIMPLE PRESENT) + (WILL + BARE INFINITIVE)
Example	• If I see her, I will be happy!
SECOND CONDITIONALS	IF + SIMPLE PAST) + (WOULD + BARE INFINITIVE)
Example	• If I were rich, I would buy her a beautiful house.
THIRD CONDITIONALS	(IF + PAST PERFECT) + (WOULD HAVE + PAST PARTICIPLE)
Example	• If I had talked to her, I would have told her the truth.

Hence, she swore that she would keep her last son. She would guard him jealously and he would not even think of stepping out of the compound. She warned him of all the dangers he could encounter on his way to nowhere. He listened and nodded and swore in return that he would always remain in the

village. The official mother of three smiled and lowered her defences. If only she could read people's minds! Once her grip was loosened, there was no way she would continue to detain him.

Empty promises! Empty promises from a son! If somebody decides to do something, they do it. You can never stop anyone from doing what they are dying to do. That's the nature of life and there is nothing she could do about it. The slap came sooner than she'd expected —unconditional love!

Her third son left while she was in the kitchen. She was preparing his favourite food: chicken with rice. "If I go now, the food will comfort her. I need to leave now, just like my brothers did. There is no future in this country, my mother will understand. She has unconditional love for me. If I were rich, I would stay here. I would build her a beautiful house and buy her stunning clothes that she truly deserves. I have nothing to give her. If I have nothing to show for my love as her one and only son, I cannot bear to see her suffer."

ZERO CONDITIONALS



If a son leaves home, he says goodbye to his father, mother and siblings.

When a mother cries, the children cry as well. It is a tough time.

If two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers.

When one wants to go, you can not keep him or her.

If you behave well, you keep out of trouble.

If you wish to be rich, you go away to look for greener pastures.

If you want to travel, you have to plan ahead well in advance.

If you sleep too late, you have trouble waking up in the morning.

If you wake up early, you can do a lot of things during the day.

She saw him leave. His walk was different. It was as if he was running away from something, from someone. Instinctively, she knew. She knew deep down her heart that that he would not be coming back.

"What wrong have I done?" she asked herself, holding her womb and feeling its empty promises lashing

at her. "What wrong have I done? Was there anything I could have done to keep him? Didn't I give him unconditional love?"

"You did," her husband told her. "Look at all the hours you spent taking care of them. Wasn't that unconditional love?"

"It was my duty as a mother. I had to take care of my children and ensure that they were safe and healthy. I loved them."

"You showered them with love and never asked for anything in return," her own mother told her. "Isn't that unconditional love?"

"I don't know. I wanted them to stay. I didn't want them to go away. Look, I am now lonely. If I had money, I would travel around the world to see where they are. I would give everything that I had in order to see them again. I want to see my children again." She gripped her womb and tore at it carelessly. "It is as if this...this thing... never carried anyone. If I could see one of my sons again in my lifetime, I would be the happiest woman on earth."

FIRST CONDITIONALS



If I leave now,

I'll arrive at noon.

If she sees me now,

she'll cry. I'll never be able to forgive myself!

If I tell him to stay,

he'll stay. I'll be the happiest woman on earth!

If the train leaves now,

I'll never see her again.

If my father comes,

I'll tell him what my real intentions are.

If my sister calls me,

I'll stay. I want to spend more time with her.

If my friend comes,

we'll go there together.

If my uncle pays,

I'll reimburse him as soon as I can.

If I eat this,

I'll surely fall sick.

Her last son came back while she was asleep. It was in the middle of the night. He stole past her bedroom and went to sleep in his former bed. She woke up and found the yard entirely swept. There was tea and bread with butter on the reed mat next to the kitchen. She saw him before he saw her. "If I remain like this, I'll fall," she told herself. "I cannot believe my eyes." She sat down on the mat. He walked towards her. There was shame in his eyes. "If the ground could swallow me now, I would not fight against it," he told himself. His legs shook as he advanced.

Finally, he sat down and lowered his head. "I'm sorry mother. I'm sorry for the pain I've caused you. I had to..."

"Thank you for coming back my son. I do not want any explanations. I am also sorry for my fear. I am sorry for wanting to keep you here. If you ever feel the need to go away, please do so. Do so, but tell me first. Tell me where you are going so that I will know where to find you if you need help. The worst thing for a mother is NOT to know where her children are."

SECOND CONDITIONALS



If I were rich,

I would buy her a beautiful house.

If I stayed,

I would remain poor. I don't want that.

If I won the lottery,

I would buy a bicycle for everyone.

If she told me not to go,

I would stay. I love her so much!

If he came,

she would be very happy. She can't live without him.

If they went away,

she would be devastated. He is her only child.

If they fired him,

he would sue them. He has got a good lawyer.

If they talked to him,

he would understand. He is not deaf.

If we loved them,

they would be kind to us. They are good people.

"I am sorry mother."

"Have you heard from your brothers?"

"No, I haven't."

"May the good Lord protect them wherever they are. They will be safe, I know He will take care of them. If you have faith in Him, nothing is impossible," she smiled. " I am so happy you came back. I love you my son."

"I love you too mother."

Then they drank their tea in silence.

THIRD CONDITIONALS



If I had stayed,

my life would have remained the same.

If she had come,

I would have been very happy.

If he had talked to her,

she would have changed her mind. She loved him!

If they had slept,

they would never have caught the thief.

If they had told her,

she would have been relieved.

If I had called her,

I would have known her real plans.

If you had seen him,

you would have stopped him.

If she had run,

he would never have caught her.

If I had stopped,

I would have been very disappointed.



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