

News from Honeysuckle Cottage

November 9, 2020 20h30 - 21h30

Copy this link into a browser: <https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/83557612942>

Vocabulary

Consternation: a feeling of anxiety or dismay, typically at something unexpected.

Relocate: move to a new place and establish one's home there.

Torch (US flashlight): a small light that is held in the hand and usually gets its power from batteries:

Motorway (UK): a two or three lane road designed for fast traffic, with relatively few places for joining or leaving.

Out of his depth: outside his understanding or competence.

Hard shoulder: a hardened strip alongside a motorway for stopping on in an emergency.

Hazard warning lights: a pair of yellow flashing indicator lights on a vehicle, switched on simultaneously as a warning that the vehicle is stationary or unexpectedly slowing down or reversing.

Contractions: a shortening of the uterine muscles occurring at intervals before and during childbirth.

Stay on the line: don't end the phone call

Some disappointing news and some good news

You may remember that about seven months ago, Earl-Lea Riser, Mr and Mrs Tufty's son-in-law, had been offered the role of Vice-President of sales and marketing for *Hallmark Mills Corp*, the USA's biggest carpet maker. Much to the consternation of Mr and Mrs Tufty, Earl-Lea and his wife, Henrietta, were planning to relocate to Atlanta, Georgia. About the same time that Earl-Lea was offered the job, the couple had told Henrietta's parents that she was pregnant and expecting a baby in November.

The COVID pandemic had prevented Earl-Lea and Henrietta, from relocating to the USA as anticipated. Instead Earl-Lea and Henrietta had enjoyed spending time at Honeysuckle Cottage, painting and repairing the old house. As a newly married couple they were really appreciated the time together as well as getting ready for the arrival of their baby. Earl-Lea was also able to spend some time with his sister, Halle, who was staying at Mr Tufty's house until recently.

The baby's bedroom was painted and equipped with every baby gadget and toy imaginable. Everything seemed to be going according to plan to relocate at the end of the year until Earl-Lea received a phone call from the Vice President of Human Resources at *Hallmark Mills Corp*. She told him that, unfortunately, they were going to withdraw their offer of employment.

Henrietta and Earl-Lea didn't really talk much that evening and went to bed early as they were both tired.

Earl-Lea awoke early. The cottage was dark and silent. He could hear Henrietta's quiet breathing and turned to look at the glowing red numbers on their bedside clock. It was 5:00 a.m. Suddenly he became aware that the bed seemed wet on Henrietta's side! Henrietta had been having gentle contractions the day before but the baby was not due for another three weeks.

Earl-Lea shook his wife, and said in a quiet voice, "Honey, honey, wake up! I think your waters may have broken! Wake up!"

Henrietta took a few moments to become fully conscious and then the couple sprang to life. They had everything carefully planned and Earl-Lea quickly loaded the car and then went back into the house to fetch Henrietta. He wrapped a rug around her as he sat her in the passenger seat. As they started their journey Henrietta cried out and explained that her contractions were happening more frequently and were strong and painful.

It was only 6 a.m. when they left Honeysuckle cottage. It was a very dark and still morning. Earl-Lea decided that the quickest route would be to take the M54 motorway. It took them about 15 minutes from Honeysuckle Cottage to get to the motorway. As Earl-Lea drove down the motorway's slip-road he realized he had made a dreadful mistake.

There must have been a serious accident and all three lanes were at a complete standstill. It was impossible to leave the motorway and Henrietta started to make moaning sounds and finally began to scream.

"Earl-Lea, I think the baby is coming!" Henrietta said, breathlessly.

Earl-Lea knew that time was of the essence and he quickly dialled 999 on his mobile phone. He explained to the operator where they were and what was happening. The operator could detect the beginning of panic and calmly reassured Earl-Lea and told him to pull over to the hard shoulder and make sure his hazard warning lights were switched on. An ambulance was already on its way and everything would be fine. She asked Earl-Lea to stay on the line.

Earl-Lea prayed silently for divine help. Henrietta's screams were not encouraging and he suggested that she lie on the back seat of the car. She seemed fine for a few minutes but then started crying and screaming. Finally she said, "I think the baby is coming!"

Earl-Lea said lamely, "Now?"

He felt completely out of his depth, but he knew that he had to pull himself together. He grabbed a torch and looked at Henrietta.

It seemed like hours but in reality, a few minutes later Earl-Lea saw the blue flashing lights of an ambulance in the distance. It stopped behind their car a moment later. The ambulance crew consisted of two paramedics and a midwife. They quickly loaded Henrietta onto a stretcher and then into the ambulance. Earl Lea was told to make his own way to the hospital's maternity unit.

Earl-Lea felt relieved but adrenaline was still coursing through his veins as his heart seemed about to explode. He had completely forgotten his disappointment about the job. It was replaced by an excitement and anticipation as well as frustration as he rejoined the virtually standstill traffic....

Questions for discussion

1. What mistake did Earl-Lea make on his journey to the hospital with Henrietta?
2. Imagine you were taking a pregnant woman to the hospital and you got into a situation like Earl-Lea did. How would you react?
3. What reasons might there be for *Hallmark Mills Corp* to withdraw their job offer?
4. How will Mrs Tufty react to the news that Henrietta and Earl-Lea will no longer be relocating?
5. Should Earl-Lea explore the possibilities of going back to working for Tufty Carpets? What are the pros and cons of Earl-Lea returning to work for Tufty Carpets from Mr Tufty's perspective?

The pronunciation challenge

The pronunciation challenge has been recorded and posted to the English Champions web site:

<https://englishchampions.fr/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Pronunciation-challenge.mp4>

Dates des cours

	septembre	octobre	Novembre (on-line)
Intermédiaire / avancé lundi 20h30 - 21h30	21, 28	5, 12	2, 9, 16, 23, 30