

GRANDMA'S HALLOWEEN RULES

Даниэла Перес

A2-B1



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Аннотация

Пятнадцатилетняя Кейт приезжает с матерью в глухую норфолкскую деревню, чтобы разобрать дом умершей бабушки, и находит в застрявшем ящике комода жестяную коробку с надписью на крышке: «Хеллуин. Прочти до темноты». Внутри лежит список из десяти правил на ночь тридцать первого октября, и девять из них звучат как обычная деревенская осторожность: запереть заднюю дверь, поставить свечи в окна, выходящие на дорогу, оставить еду на пороге, считать стук. Десятое правило не объясняется ничем: никогда не открывай дверь тому, кто позовет тебя по имени. Разгадывая, зачем бабушка писала и складывала этот листок шестьдесят два года, Кейт узнаёт про её младшую сестру, чьё имя в деревне не произносили вслух с 1963 года, и понимает, что вся история держится на одной фразе, сказанной испуганной четырнадцатилетней девочкой в семь утра.

Адаптивная история для A2-B1 уровней.

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GRANDMA'S HALLOWEEN RULES

Daniela Perez

English A2-B1

Graded reader with vocabulary, grammar and exercises

Chapter 1. The House on Fen Lane

Key vocabulary

a cottage — небольшой деревенский дом

a lane — узкая дорога, просёлок

a village — деревня

a marsh — болото, топь

a fen — заболоченная низина

damp — сырой

a chimney — дымоход, труба

a latch — щеколда, задвижка

a hedge — живая изгородь

to inherit — унаследовать

an estate agent — агент по недвижимости

a will — завещание

dusty — пыльный

unfamiliar — незнакомый

to belong to — принадлежать

The House on Fen Lane

The road to Wraycombe was flat for eleven miles and then it was flat for eleven more.

Kate Mercer sat in the passenger seat with her feet on the dashboard, which her mother normally hated, and watched the country go past. There were no hills. There were no woods. There were fields the colour of wet cardboard, and long straight ditches full of black water, and every few miles there was a farm building with no roof. Above all of it there was an enormous grey sky that started at one side of the windscreen and finished at the other.

—It's very big, Kate said.

—What is?

—The sky. There's too much of it.

Her mother did not answer. She had been driving for three hours and she had not said very much for the last one.

Kate was fifteen. She was tall and thin and she had her grandmother's dark hair, which everybody in the family mentioned at least once a year, usually at Christmas, usually in a voice that suggested it was a compliment. She was in the middle of the October half term holiday, and instead of spending it at home with her friends, she was in a car in Norfolk, going to a house she had visited exactly twice in her life.

Her grandmother had died in August.

It had happened quickly and quietly, in hospital, on a Tuesday

afternoon, and Kate had not been there. Her mother had been there. When she came home that evening she had put her bag down in the hall and said, in a completely normal voice, that Grandma Iris had gone, and then she had made dinner, and they had eaten it, and nobody had cried until much later and separately.

Since then Helen Mercer had organised a funeral, answered forty letters, cancelled a phone line, argued with a bank, and said the phrase “I’m fine, honestly” approximately two hundred times.

Now they were going to Wraycombe to empty the house.

—How long do we have? Kate asked.

—Nine days.

—And then what?

—And then an estate agent comes and takes photographs, and in the spring somebody buys it, and that’s that.

—Somebody will buy it?

Her mother laughed, and it was not a happy sound.

—Somebody always buys them, she said. People from London see a cottage and they see roses round the door. They don’t see the damp.

—Did you like living here? Kate asked.

—I liked leaving, her mother said.

—That’s not an answer either.

—No, her mother agreed. It isn’t.

Kate looked out of the window and decided to stop asking questions for at least twenty minutes. She had learned this

technique at the age of about eleven. Her mother was not a person who could be pushed. Her mother was a person who eventually arrived somewhere on her own, three days later, at an inconvenient moment, usually while washing up.

Kate had looked it up on the way, in the twenty minutes before the signal died, and had learned that Wraycombe had a population of four hundred and ten, one listed building and no railway station since 1968.

The village appeared without any warning. There was no sign at first, just a bend in the road and then, suddenly, houses. There were perhaps sixty of them. There was a church with a square tower, a shop with a hand painted sign, a pub called the Drowned Man, a red telephone box that clearly did not work, and a green with a wooden bench on it.

Then the houses stopped again and the fields came back, and Helen turned left down a lane so narrow that the hedges touched both mirrors.

—Fen Lane, she said. Almost there.

The cottage stood on its own, about four hundred metres from the last house in the village.

It was low and long and made of pale brick, with small windows and a roof of dark red tiles. The chimney was crooked. There was a wooden gate, a path of grey stones, and a front door painted a colour that had once been green. Behind the house the land went down slightly and became something that was not quite a field and not quite water, and beyond that there was nothing at

all until the horizon.

Kate got out of the car and stood in the lane and did not move for a moment.

The air smelled of mud and salt and cold.

It was the middle of the afternoon and it was already beginning to get dark, the way it does in the last week of October when the sky is low. Somewhere behind the house a bird made a long, thin, unhappy noise.

—Right, her mother said, taking a suitcase out of the boot. Let's get the heating on before we do anything else.

The key was in an envelope in Helen's handbag, with a label in her grandmother's handwriting that said FRONT.

The lock was stiff. Helen turned it, pushed the door with her shoulder, and they went in.

Inside, the cottage was exactly as Kate remembered it, which surprised her, because she had only been there twice and the second time she had been seven years old.

There was a narrow hall with a stone floor. There was a coat hook with three coats still on it. There was a hall table with a bowl for keys, and above the table there was a mirror in a dark wooden frame, and the mirror had a cloth over it.

Kate stopped.

—Mum.

—Mm?

—Why is there a cloth on the mirror?

Helen came back and looked.

—Some people do that, she said. When somebody dies. It's an old custom. Mrs. Pratt from the shop was here in August, she probably did it.

—It's a bit creepy.

—It's a bit Norfolk, her mother said, and carried the suitcase through to the kitchen.

The sitting room was on the left, and Kate put her head round the door and did not go in. It was a small square room with a fireplace, two armchairs, a bookcase and a carpet with a pattern of brown leaves. Everything in it was arranged carefully and nothing in it had been touched for two months. There was a pair of reading glasses on the arm of the chair by the window, folded, waiting.

Kate closed the door again quietly.

The kitchen was at the back. It was the biggest room in the house and it was clearly the room where Iris Mercer had actually lived. There was a wooden table with four chairs, though only one of them had a cushion. There was an old cooker, a deep white sink, and a dresser along one wall with plates standing up on it. There was a calendar from the previous year. There was a chair by the window with a blanket over the arm, positioned so that a person sitting in it could see the back garden, the fen, and about nine miles of nothing.

And there was a great deal of dust.

Helen stood in the middle of it with her car keys still in her hand.

—Right, she said.

—Mum.

—I'm fine.

—I didn't say anything.

—You were going to.

—We'll start with this room tomorrow, Helen said. Then the sitting room, then upstairs, then the shed. There's a system.

—Is there?

—There's going to be a system.

Helen found a notebook in her bag and wrote SYSTEM at the top of a page, underlined it twice, and then sat looking at the empty space underneath it for so long that Kate quietly took the pen out of her hand and put the kettle on instead.

They worked until seven o'clock. They opened windows and closed them again because it was too cold. They found the heating and it made a noise like a large animal waking up. They discovered that there was no hot water, and then that there was, but only if you hit a pipe under the stairs, which Helen knew about and Kate did not, and which upset her mother more than she wanted to show.

At half past seven they ate fish and chips out of paper on the kitchen table, because the shop in the village closed at four and the pub had stopped serving food in 2019.

—What was she like? Kate said.

—Who?

—Grandma.

Helen put down a chip.

—You knew her.

—I met her twice. She sent me a card every birthday with five pounds in it. That's not the same as knowing somebody.

Her mother was quiet for a while.

—She was practical, she said finally. She could fix things. She grew almost all her own food. She read a lot, mostly local history. She wrote letters, actual letters, on paper, to about nine people.

—That's what she did. What was she like?

—Kate.

—Sorry.

Helen picked up the chip again and then put it down a second time.

—She was hard to know, she said. She was kind, and she was funny sometimes, and there was a door in her that was shut, and I lived in this house for eighteen years and I never got through it. That's what she was like.

Outside, the wind moved in the hedge and something in the roof made a small sound and then stopped.

They went to bed early because there was nothing else in the house to do and because both of them had run out of conversation at about the same moment.

Kate's room was upstairs at the front, under the slope of the roof, with a window that looked out over the lane. It was cold in a way that central heating does not fix. There was a bed with three blankets, a chest of drawers, a small bookcase with about

twenty books on local churches, and a framed picture of a boat on a river.

Kate sat on the edge of the bed and sent three messages to her friend Priya, and none of them delivered, because there was no signal in Fen Lane and there had never been any signal in Fen Lane and, according to a sign in the village shop window, there was not going to be any signal in Fen Lane until at least 2027.

She put the phone face down on the chest of drawers.

She lay in the dark and listened to a house she did not know.

It was not quiet at all. Old houses never are, and this one had a great deal to say. There was the wind. There was a pipe somewhere that clicked eleven times and then stopped. There was a sound from the back garden that was probably a fox, and once, from a long way off, there was a noise that might have been a bird and might have been a person.

At about eleven o'clock Kate got up and went to the window.

The lane was completely black. There were no street lights in Fen Lane, and there was no moon, and she could not see the hedge or the gate or the road, only her own face in the glass with the dark behind it.

But she could see the village, four hundred metres away, and she noticed something that seemed odd, although she was too tired to think about it properly.

In every single house that faced the lane, on the first floor, there was one small light burning in the window.

Not a lamp. Something smaller and yellower and less steady

than a lamp.

She counted eleven of them before she got too cold and went back to bed, and in the morning she forgot about it completely for another six days.

Vocabulary exercises

1. Complete the sentences

1. Grandma Iris lived in a small brick _____ outside the village.
2. The house stood at the end of a narrow _____.
3. Behind the garden there was a wide, wet _____.
4. The rooms were cold and _____ because nobody had lived there since August.
5. The _____ on the roof was old and crooked.
6. An _____ was coming in nine days to photograph the house.
7. Everything in the kitchen was _____ after two months.
8. Helen and Kate _____ the cottage after Iris died.

2. Match the words

1. a latch 2. a hedge 3. a will 4. unfamiliar 5. to belong to 6. a fen
- a. завещание b. щеколда c. заболоченная низина d. живая изгородь e. принадлежать f. незнакомый

3. Choose the correct answer

1. A cottage is: a) a large city building b) a small country house
c) a farm animal
2. If a room is damp: a) there is water in the air and walls b)
it is very hot c) it is very clean
3. A lane is: a) a wide motorway b) a narrow country road c)
a river
4. To inherit something means to get it: a) from a shop b) from
a person who has died c) from a friend
5. A marsh is: a) dry land b) soft wet ground c) a kind of tree

4. Answer the questions

1. Why are Kate and her mother going to Wraycombe?
2. When did Grandma Iris die?
3. What does Kate notice in the hall of the cottage?
4. What does Helen say about her own mother at dinner?
5. What does Kate see from her window at eleven o'clock?

5. True, false or not given

1. Kate has visited the cottage many times.
2. The village has a shop, a church and a pub.
3. Helen cried at the funeral.

4. There is no hot water in the house at all.
5. Kate counts eleven lights in the village windows.

Грамматика

Past Simple: правильные и неправильные глаголы

Past Simple используется для законченных действий в прошлом, когда известно или подразумевается, **когда** это произошло. Это основное время повествования: почти вся эта книга написана в Past Simple.

Правильные глаголы: окончание -ed

Инфинитив — Past Simple:

work — worked

open — opened

stop — stopped

carry — carried

Правила написания

Окончание: обычный глагол · Что происходит: + ed · Пример: walk → walked

Окончание: немая -е на конце · Что происходит: + d · Пример: live → lived

Окончание: согласная + y · Что происходит: y меняется на ied · Пример: carry → carried

Окончание: гласная + y · Что происходит: просто + ed · Пример: play → played

Окончание: короткий глагол, одна гласная + согласная ·
Что происходит: согласная удваивается · Пример: stop → stopped, plan → planned

Неправильные глаголы

Их около двухсот, но в живой речи постоянно используются примерно шестьдесят. Их нужно выучить наизусть, потому что правила для них нет. Вот самые частые, все они встречаются в этой главе:

Инфинитив: be · Past Simple: was / were · Русский: быть

Инфинитив: go · Past Simple: went · Русский: идти, ехать

Инфинитив: come · Past Simple: came · Русский: приходить

Инфинитив: have · Past Simple: had · Русский: иметь

Инфинитив: say · Past Simple: said · Русский: сказать

Инфинитив: see · Past Simple: saw · Русский: видеть

Инфинитив: take · Past Simple: took · Русский: брать

Инфинитив: get · Past Simple: got · Русский: получать

Инфинитив: make · Past Simple: made · Русский: делать

Инфинитив: know · Past Simple: knew · Русский: знать

Инфинитив: think · Past Simple: thought · Русский: думать

Инфинитив: find · Past Simple: found · Русский: находить

Инфинитив: sit · Past Simple: sat · Русский: сидеть

Инфинитив: stand · Past Simple: stood · Русский: стоять

Инфинитив: put · Past Simple: put · Русский: класть

Инфинитив: do · Past Simple: did · Русский: делать

Обрати внимание на форму be

Это единственный глагол, у которого в прошедшем вре-

мении две формы:

*I / he / she / it **was** и you / we / they **were***

Слова-указатели

yesterday, last night, last week, in August, in 1963, two years ago, then, that morning

*She died **in August**. · They arrived **that afternoon**.*

Grammar exercises

1. Put the verb in Past Simple

1. The road (be) _____ flat for eleven miles.
2. Kate (sit) _____ in the passenger seat.
3. Her grandmother (die) _____ in August.
4. They (arrive) _____ in the afternoon.
5. Helen (take) _____ a suitcase out of the car.
6. Kate (see) _____ eleven lights in the village.
7. The lock (be) _____ very stiff.
8. They (eat) _____ fish and chips at the kitchen table.

2. Write the Past Simple form

1. go → _____
2. come → _____
3. think → _____
4. find → _____
5. stop → _____
6. carry → _____
7. put → _____
8. stand → _____
9. know → _____

10. live → _____

3. Complete the text

Kate and her mother (1. leave) _____ home at eleven o'clock. They (2. drive) _____ for three hours and they (3. not talk) very much. When they (4. arrive) _____ in Wraycombe, it (5. be) _____ already getting dark. Helen (6. open) _____ the front door and they (7. go) _____ inside. In the hall Kate (8. see) _____ a mirror with a cloth over it.

ОТВЕТЫ

Vocabulary 1: 1. cottage 2. lane 3. marsh / fen 4. damp 5. chimney 6. estate agent 7. dusty 8. inherited

Vocabulary 2: 1-b, 2-d, 3-a, 4-f, 5-e, 6-c

Vocabulary 3: 1-b, 2-a, 3-b, 4-b, 5-b

Vocabulary 4: 1. To empty the house before it is sold. 2. In August, in hospital, on a Tuesday afternoon. 3. A mirror with a cloth over it. 4. That she was practical and kind but hard to know, and that there was a closed door in her. 5. One small yellow light in the first floor window of every house facing the lane.

Vocabulary 5: 1. False 2. True 3. Not given 4. False 5. True

Grammar 1: 1. was 2. sat 3. died 4. arrived 5. took 6. saw 7. was 8. ate

Grammar 2: 1. went 2. came 3. thought 4. found 5. stopped 6. carried 7. put 8. stood 9. knew 10. lived

Grammar 3: 1. left 2. drove 3. didn't talk 4. arrived 5. was 6. opened 7. went 8. saw

Chapter 2. The Tin Box

Key vocabulary

a tin — жестяная коробка

a drawer — ящик (стола, комода)

a lid — крышка

handwriting — почерк

ink — чернила

a sheet of paper — лист бумаги

to fold — складывать

a crease — сгиб, складка

faded — выцветший

a rule — правило

a list — список

deliberate — обдуманный, намеренный

an instruction — указание, инструкция

a warning — предупреждение

ordinary — обычный

The Tin Box

They started with the kitchen, because Helen had a system now and the system began at the back of the house.

It went badly for about an hour and then it went well for six.

The problem at the beginning was that everything had a story attached to it, and Helen did not want to tell any of the stories, and Kate could see her deciding not to tell them, which was worse than hearing them. A wooden spoon with a burnt handle. A tin of buttons. A blue jug with a crack in it that had clearly been mended a long time ago and mended badly.

—Right, said Helen at nine o'clock, with a marker pen and a roll of bin bags. Three piles. Keep, charity, bin. If we start discussing things we will still be here at Christmas.

—Understood.

—I mean it.

—I have understood, said Kate.

—Keep or go? Kate said, holding up the jug.

—Go.

—Are you sure?

—Kate, if I keep everything in this house that means something, we will need a lorry and a second house.

—Fine. Go.

Helen turned round.

—Actually, put it on the table.

—You just said.

—I know what I said.

By eleven o'clock they had a rhythm. Kate emptied cupboards onto the table, Helen made three piles, and every twenty minutes one of them carried a box out to the shed. The shed piles were called KEEP, CHARITY and BIN, and by lunchtime the BIN pile was enormous and the KEEP pile was one small cardboard box with a jug in it.

They stopped at one for sandwiches and ate them standing up, because both chairs were covered in saucepans.

—Nine days, Helen said, looking round the room. We've done a third of one room in five hours.

—We've done the hard third.

—Have we?

—Obviously not, Kate said. I was being encouraging.

Her mother laughed properly for the first time since they had arrived, which lasted about two seconds and was worth the whole morning.

At two o'clock they moved to the dresser.

The dresser was the oldest thing in the room, a great dark wooden object almost as tall as the ceiling, with shelves above and cupboards below and, between them, a row of four narrow drawers.

Helen opened them from the top, one at a time, in order, because that was the system.

The first drawer was full of string.

The second drawer was full of things that a house collects in fifty years: batteries, keys with no locks, a torch, seed packets, three pairs of scissors, a rubber band ball, a plastic thing that Kate could not identify at all.

The third drawer contained bills, all of them paid, all of them filed in date order going back to 1998.

—She was extremely organised, Kate said.

—She was frightening, Helen said. When I was seventeen I lost a library book and she found it in four minutes. It was under my bed. I had already looked under my bed.

—What's in the bottom one? said Kate.

—No idea. It has never opened in my lifetime.

—Never?

—Never, said Helen. My father tried it once with a chisel in about 1988 and she told him to leave it alone, and he left it alone, and I have not thought about that sentence for thirty-seven years until precisely this second.

The fourth drawer was stuck.

Kate pulled it twice and it did not move. She put both hands on the handles and pulled harder and the whole dresser leaned forward slightly and Helen said something short from the other side of the kitchen.

—It's stuck.

—It's always been stuck. Lift it and pull at the same time.

Kate lifted and pulled at the same time and the drawer came out about ten centimetres and then stopped again, and inside,

wedged sideways across the whole width of the drawer, was the reason.

It was a tin.

She got it out eventually, after five minutes of careful work with a wooden spoon, and the drawer came free so suddenly that a handful of drawing pins went across the floor in every direction. It was a biscuit tin, rectangular, about the size of a large book, with a picture on the lid of a mountain and a lake in colours that had faded to almost nothing. The corners were rusty. Somebody had put a rubber band round it, and the rubber band had gone hard and grey and broke as soon as Kate touched it.

—What is it? Helen said.

—I don't know yet.

Kate put it on the kitchen table and took off the lid.

Inside there were four things.

The first was a small brown envelope with nothing written on it, and inside the envelope there was a hair ribbon, dark blue, about twenty centimetres long, quite badly damaged along one edge as if it had been in water.

The second was a photograph, face down.

The third was a folded sheet of paper.

The fourth was a second folded sheet of paper, much newer than the first, in a plastic wallet.

Kate reached for the photograph first, because that is what anybody would do, and because it was the only thing in the tin with a person in it. because that is what anybody would do, and

Helen said:

—Wait.

Her mother sat down opposite her.

—Show me the tin first.

Kate turned the tin so her mother could see the inside of the lid.

There was writing on it, in black marker pen, quite large, in handwriting they both knew from birthday cards.

HALLOWEEN. READ BEFORE DARK.

Neither of them said anything for a moment.

—Right, Helen said. Well. That's not creepy at all.

Kate took out the first folded sheet.

It was old. The paper had gone soft along the creases, and it had been folded and unfolded so many times that it was beginning to come apart in the middle. The ink was not black any more. It was brown.

She unfolded it carefully on the table and turned it round so they could both read it.

At the top, in careful capital letters, it said:

RULES FOR THE NIGHT OF 31 OCTOBER

Underneath there were ten lines, numbered.

1. Lock the back door before it gets dark. Leave the key in the lock.

2. Put a candle in every window that faces the road. Light them at six.

3. Put out a plate of food on the front step. Bring the plate in

before morning. Do not look at what is left on it.

4. Do not go to the churchyard after sunset.

5. If somebody knocks, count. Three knocks is a neighbour. More than three is not.

6. Cover the mirror in the hall. Do not uncover it until the first of November.

7. If a voice outside asks for water, take the water to the step and go back inside. If a voice asks to come in, say nothing at all.

8. Stay in the kitchen until the church clock has finished striking twelve.

9. Whatever you hear in the garden, do not answer it.

10. Never open the door to anyone who calls you by your name.

Underneath the tenth rule there was nothing. No signature, no date, no explanation.

Outside, a tractor went slowly along the lane and the whole kitchen shook very slightly, and neither of them noticed.

Kate read the list twice. Then she looked up.

Her mother was reading it for the fourth or fifth time, and her face had gone very still.

—Mum.

—Yes.

—Is this a joke?

—No.

—How do you know?

—Because it's her handwriting, Helen said, and she never made jokes on paper. Not once in her life.

Kate looked back down at the list.

—Some of these are actually quite sensible, she said slowly. Locking the back door. Candles in windows so people can see the house. Putting food out for people walking home in the dark. Not going into a churchyard at night, that's just, you know, don't fall over a gravestone.

—Yes.

—Number five is a bit strange.

—Number five is very strange.

—Number ten, Kate said, is not strange. Number ten is completely mad.

She read it out loud, which somehow made it worse, the way instructions always sound worse when a human voice says them.

Never open the door to anyone who calls you by your name.

—Think about it, she said. Everybody who knocks on your door knows your name. The postman knows your name. Neighbours know your name. If a friend comes round and says hello Iris, are you in, then according to this you're supposed to stand in the hall and not answer.

Helen did not reply. She had picked up the plastic wallet with the newer sheet of paper in it, and she was holding it without opening it, and after a moment she put it back in the tin.

—Aren't you going to read that one?

—Not today.

—Why not?

—Because I have been in this house for twenty-six hours,

Helen said, and I would like to do one thing at a time.

—Mum?

—I remember the candles, Helen said.

Kate stopped.

—What?

—I remember the candles. She put candles in the windows on Halloween. Every year. I thought it was decoration. I thought it was for the trick or treating, except nobody ever came trick or treating here, because we were four hundred metres out of the village and it was pitch dark, and I remember being annoyed about that when I was about nine.

—Do you remember anything else?

Helen picked up her cup of tea, discovered it was cold, and put it down again.

—I remember we always had dinner in the kitchen on the thirty-first, she said. Which was normal. We always had dinner in the kitchen. But we stayed in there afterwards. We didn't watch television, and the television was in the front room, and I never once asked why.

She looked at the list.

—I was a child in this house for eighteen years, and I never saw this piece of paper, and now I am forty-six and I am reading it in the same kitchen and I do not understand one word of it.

They sat with the paper between them for a while. The light in the kitchen was already going orange at the edges, because it was the twenty-fifth of October and the afternoon had decided

it had done enough.

Kate turned the photograph over.

It had been face down in the tin for a reason, Kate thought afterwards, although at the time she simply turned it over the way you turn over any photograph.

It was black and white, quite small, with a white border and a rounded corner where it had been damaged. It showed two girls standing in front of the cottage gate, in coats, squinting into the sun.

One of them was about fourteen and Kate recognised her instantly, because she had the same face as the woman in the photographs on the stairs, and roughly the same face as the woman sitting opposite her at the table, and roughly the same face, if she was honest, as the one Kate saw in the mirror every morning.

The other girl was younger. Maybe ten or eleven. She was smaller and rounder and she was laughing at something outside the picture, and she had a dark ribbon in her hair.

On the back, in pencil, somebody had written four words.

Iris and Nell, 1962.

Helen looked at it for a long time.

—Mum, Kate said. Who's Nell?

—I have absolutely no idea, said Helen Mercer.

Vocabulary exercises

1. Complete the sentences

1. The dresser had a row of four narrow _____.
2. Kate found an old biscuit _____ stuck in the last one.
3. There was writing on the inside of the _____.
4. The paper was soft along the _____ because it had been opened many times.
5. The _____ was brown now, not black.
6. They both recognised the _____ from birthday cards.
7. The picture on the tin was almost completely _____.
8. Nine of the ten rules sounded quite _____.

2. Match the words

1. to fold 2. a warning 3. an instruction 4. deliberate 5. a sheet of paper 6. a list
- a. предупреждение b. складывать c. список d. лист бумаги e. намеренный f. указание

3. Choose the correct answer

1. A crease is: a) a line where paper has been folded b) a colour

c) a kind of box

2. If a colour is faded: a) it is very bright b) it has become weaker with time c) it is new

3. Handwriting is: a) printed text b) the way a person writes by hand c) a signature

4. If an action is deliberate: a) it happens by accident b) somebody planned it c) it is forgotten

5. A rule tells you: a) what you should or should not do b) where you live c) how old you are

4. Answer the questions

1. What was in the first three drawers of the dresser?

2. What four things were inside the tin?

3. What was written on the inside of the lid?

4. Which rules does Kate think are sensible, and why?

5. What does Helen remember about Halloween in that house?

5. True, false or not given

1. The fourth drawer opened easily.

2. There was a hair ribbon inside a brown envelope.

3. The list of rules is signed and dated.

4. Helen remembers candles in the windows every Halloween.

5. Helen knows who Nell is.

Грамматика

Past Simple: отрицания и вопросы

В утвердительной форме Past Simple выражается самым глаголом: *she **opened**, he **went***. Но как только появляется отрицание или вопрос, в дело вступает вспомогательный глагол **did**.

Отрицание: did not (didn't) + инфинитив

*She **didn't** open the door.*

*They **didn't** go to the churchyard.*

*I **didn't** know her name.*

Главное правило: после **didn't** глагол стоит в начальной форме, без окончания -ed и без второй формы. Прошедшее время уже выражено словом did.

Правильно: *He **didn't** say anything.*

Неправильно: *He **didn't** said anything.*

Вопрос: Did + подлежащее + инфинитив?

***Did** you see the photograph?*

***Did** she know about it?*

***Did** they live here?*

Краткие ответы: *Yes, I **did**. / No, I **didn't**.*

Специальные вопросы

Вопросительное слово ставится перед did:

Where **did** they go? · Why **did** she write it? · When **did** he arrive?

Исключение: глагол to be

У глагола **to be** нет вспомогательного did. Отрицание и вопрос строятся напрямую:

She was not (wasn't) at home. · Were they in the kitchen?

Правильно: *Was he there?*

Неправильно: *Did he be there?*

Вопрос к подлежащему

Если вопросительное слово само является подлежащим, did не нужен, и глагол остаётся в прошедшем времени:

Who wrote this list? (кто написал?)

Сравни: *Who did she write to?* (кому она написала?)

What happened in 1963? (что случилось?)

Grammar exercises

1. Make the sentences negative

1. Kate opened the drawer easily. → _____
2. Helen knew about the rules. → _____
3. They found a signature on the paper. → _____
4. Iris made jokes on paper. → _____
5. The photograph showed three girls. → _____

2. Write the questions

1. They arrived on Tuesday. → When _____ ?
2. Kate found the tin in the dresser. → Where _____ ?
3. Iris wrote the list. → Who _____ ?
4. Helen recognised the handwriting. → _____ ? (yes or no question)
5. She lit candles because of the rules. → Why _____ ?

3. Correct the mistakes

1. She didn't opened the tin.
2. Did they went to the village?
3. Where did she found it?

4. Did he be in the kitchen?

5. Who did write this list?

4. Complete the dialogue

— _____ (1. you / find) anything interesting today?

— Yes, we _____ (2).

— What _____ (3. it / be)?

— An old tin. It _____ (4. be) in the bottom drawer.

— _____ (5. your mother / know) about it?

— No, she _____ (6). She _____ (7. not see) it before.

ОТВЕТЫ

Vocabulary 1: 1. drawers 2. tin 3. lid 4. creases 5. ink 6. handwriting 7. faded 8. ordinary

Vocabulary 2: 1-b, 2-a, 3-f, 4-e, 5-d, 6-c

Vocabulary 3: 1-a, 2-b, 3-b, 4-b, 5-a

Vocabulary 4: 1. String; batteries, keys, a torch and other small things; bills filed in date order since 1998. 2. An envelope with a hair ribbon, a photograph, an old folded sheet of paper and a newer sheet in a plastic wallet. 3. HALLOWEEN. READ BEFORE DARK. 4. Locking the back door, candles in windows, food for people walking home and staying out of the churchyard, because they are all practical. 5. That there were candles in the windows every year and that they always stayed in the kitchen after dinner on the thirty-first.

Vocabulary 5: 1. False 2. True 3. False 4. True 5. False

Grammar 1: 1. Kate didn't open the drawer easily. 2. Helen didn't know about the rules. 3. They didn't find a signature on the paper. 4. Iris didn't make jokes on paper. 5. The photograph didn't show three girls.

Grammar 2: 1. When did they arrive? 2. Where did Kate find the tin? 3. Who wrote the list? 4. Did Helen recognise the handwriting? 5. Why did she light candles?

Grammar 3: 1. She didn't open the tin. 2. Did they go to the village? 3. Where did she find it? 4. Was he in the kitchen? 5.

Who wrote this list?

Grammar 4: 1. Did you find 2. did 3. was it 4. was 5. Did your mother know 6. didn't 7. hadn't seen / didn't see

Chapter 3. Nobody Talks About It

Key vocabulary

- a shop counter — прилавок
- a customer — покупатель
- a notice board — доска объявлений
- a churchyard — кладбище при церкви
- a gravestone — надгробие
- the vicar — приходской священник
- a parish — приход
- a record — запись, документ
- to mention — упоминать
- to avoid — избегать
- polite — вежливый
- awkward — неловкий
- to change the subject — сменить тему
- a stranger — незнакомец, приезжий
- local — местный

Nobody Talks About It

The village shop opened at eight and closed at four and had a sign in the window that said WE HAVE BREAD, which suggested that this was not always true.

It also had a bell on the door that had clearly been there since before either of them was born, and which announced every customer to the entire village.

Kate walked in at half past ten on Sunday morning while her mother was on the phone to a solicitor.

Inside it was one room with four narrow aisles. There were tins, there was a fridge, there was a rack of newspapers with three copies of a Saturday paper still on it, and there was a counter with a till, a jar of sweets and a man of about seventy reading a magazine about tractors.

—Morning, he said, without looking up.

—Morning.

—You're the Mercer girl.

Kate stopped in the middle of the second aisle.

—How does everybody know that?

Now he looked up. He had a round red face and white eyebrows that went in several directions.

—There are four hundred and ten people in this village, he said, and I have sold most of them a pint of milk this week. You are not one of them. Therefore you are new. There are two houses

with new people in them and one of them is Iris Mercer's. Amos Pratt.

—Sorry?

—That's my name. Amos Pratt. You looked like you were waiting for it.

—Is there anywhere in this village to get a signal? she asked.

—Top of the church tower, Mr. Pratt said. Or Barford.

—Is the church tower open?

—No.

—Right.

—People do go up it, he said, turning a page. I am not going to tell you how, because you are fifteen and I would like to keep my licence.

Kate bought bread, milk, teabags and a chocolate bar, and while Mr. Pratt was putting them in a bag she looked at the notice board by the door.

There was a card about a lost cat. There was a poster for a quiz night in the Drowned Man on the eighth of November. There was a printed sheet about a mobile library that came on alternate Thursdays. And in the middle, on a piece of yellow paper, there was a notice in large letters:

THE QUIET NIGHT

31 October

Candles from six. Please keep to the usual arrangements.

—What's the Quiet Night? Kate asked.

Mr. Pratt continued putting things in the bag.

—It's what we call it, he said.

—Call what?

—Halloween.

—Why?

—Because that's what it's called here.

Kate waited. He put the last item in the bag, folded the top over, and pushed it across the counter.

—Four pounds twenty.

—Mr. Pratt, why is it called the Quiet Night?

—Because it's quiet, he said. Four pounds twenty, please, my love.

She paid. He gave her the change and went back to his magazine, and Kate stood there for three more seconds and then gave up and left, and it was only outside on the green that she realised he had not looked at her once during the entire second half of the conversation.

She stood on the green for a minute with the bag in her hand.

It was a perfectly ordinary Sunday. A man was washing a car. Two women were talking outside the pub with their coats open because the sun had come out. A dog was asleep on the step of the telephone box. Nothing about any of it was strange, and that was what made the yellow notice strange, because a village that put up a poster about a quiz night in the same week also put up a poster telling everybody to light candles and stay in.

A dog crossed the green in front of her, considered her carefully, and went away again.

She went to the church.

St. Botolph's stood at the top of the only slope in the village, which was about four metres high. It was flint and grey stone with a square tower, and the churchyard around it was full of leaning stones with names worn off them.

Kate walked round it slowly, twice, because there was nobody there to think it was odd.

It was a bright cold morning, and the wind was moving in the yew trees, and it was, she thought, one of the least frightening places she had ever been. Somebody was doing something at the far end with a wheelbarrow and a rake.

She read the stones as she went, because she always read stones, and because there is something about a churchyard that makes you walk more slowly whether you intend to or not. Mercer, Mercer, Ward, Pratt, Pratt, Pratt, Vance, Mercer.

She found her grandmother almost immediately, because the earth was still new and the stone was not there yet, only a small wooden marker with a printed card in a plastic cover.

IRIS MARGARET MERCER · 1949 to 2025

Kate stood in front of it for a while and did not know what she was supposed to feel, which was, she suspected, quite normal, and she stayed until she got cold.

Then she went looking for Nell.

She was thorough about it. She started at the wall by the gate and walked every row, reading every stone, including the ones so old that the writing had gone. There were eleven Mercers. There

was Iris's mother, Margaret Mercer, 1921 to 1989. There was a Thomas Mercer, 1918 to 1974, who was presumably Iris's father. There were Mercers from the 1880s and one from 1809.

She went round a second time in case she had missed a row, and then a third time along the wall where the oldest stones were, where the names had gone soft and green and she had to touch them with her fingers to read anything at all.

There was no Nell.

She stood in the middle of the churchyard with cold hands and read the list again in her head to be sure.

There was no Eleanor, no Ellen, no Helena, no Petronella, and nobody at all who had died as a child in the nineteen sixties.

—Can I help you?

Kate turned round. The person with the wheelbarrow had come up the path behind her and turned out to be a woman of about forty in a waterproof coat, muddy boots and a clerical collar.

—Are you the vicar?

—I am. Alice Sandoe. And you are standing on my grandfather.

Kate looked down and moved.

—Sorry.

—He won't mind. He was a very forgiving man and also he is extremely dead. You're Iris's granddaughter.

—Does everyone in this village just know things?

—Yes, Reverend Sandoe said. It's the main hobby. What are

you looking for?

Kate hesitated for about half a second and then decided that there was no point in being clever.

—I'm looking for a grave for somebody called Nell Mercer. She'd have been born around 1951 or 1952.

The vicar put down the handles of the wheelbarrow.

—There isn't one, she said.

—I know. I've looked at everything.

—No, I mean I know there isn't one. I've been here six years and I've read the whole burial register twice, because it's interesting and because in this job you have very long evenings. There is no Nell Mercer in this churchyard.

—Could she be somewhere else?

—She could be anywhere. But if she was a Mercer of Wraycombe and she died here, she would be here. This family has been putting people in this ground since before the church had a roof.

Kate took out her phone and showed the photograph, which she had taken a picture of that morning.

Reverend Sandoe looked at it for a long moment.

—Nineteen sixty-two, she said, reading the back.

—Yes.

—And you have never heard of this child.

—My mother has never heard of her. And my mother lived with Iris for eighteen years.

The vicar handed the phone back.

—Come to the vestry, she said. I'll put the kettle on and get the registers out. And I want to say something first, and I want you to hear it properly rather than think I'm being dramatic.

—All right.

—I have been the vicar of this parish for six years, and in that time three people have mentioned something that happened in 1963, and all three of them stopped in the middle of the sentence. Not because I asked them to. They simply stopped. One of them was your grandmother.

Kate felt the cold arrive properly, all at once, in the middle of a bright morning.

—What did she say?

—She said, and I remember it exactly because of how strange it was, she said: you don't need to know about that, it's a village thing, we manage it.

—Manage it?

—Manage it, Reverend Sandoe said. And then she asked me about the guttering on the south porch, and we talked about guttering for twenty minutes, and I have thought about that conversation approximately once a month ever since.

They walked up the path together. The vicar left the wheelbarrow by the porch and pushed open a small door in the side of the tower with her shoulder, in the way that people open doors they have opened a thousand times.

The vestry was cold and smelled of paper and candle wax, and there was a kettle on the floor next to a box of hymn books, which

told Kate almost everything she needed to know about how the parish was doing. There was a table, a cupboard, a filing box and a electric heater with one bar working.

The burial register for the 1960s was a large book with a hard green cover. Reverend Sandoe found 1963 in under a minute.

There were nine burials that year in Wraycombe. Kate read all nine names twice.

None of them was a child. None of them was a Mercer.

—Well, the vicar said. There we are.

—So she didn't die.

—Or she died somewhere else. Or she moved away. Or she was never born and somebody wrote the wrong name on a photograph, which happens more often than you would think.

Kate looked at the green book, at the nine ordinary names in careful handwriting, and thought about a list of rules in a tin.

—Reverend Sandoe.

—Alice.

—Alice. Do you know what the Quiet Night is?

The vicar closed the register.

—I know what people do, she said. They put a candle in every window facing the road, at six o'clock, and they stay in. Nobody goes out. Nobody has a party. The pub is open but it's empty. There is no trick or treating in Wraycombe and there never has been. Children in this village go to Barford, four miles away, and everybody thinks this is completely normal.

—And why?

—That, said Reverend Sandoe, is the interesting part. I have asked eleven people over six years. Do you know what every single one of them said?

—No.

—They said: it's just what we do.

Kate walked home along the lane with the shopping bag banging against her leg.

Halfway back she stopped and turned round and looked at the village from a distance: sixty houses, one tower, a green, a shop with bread in it. It looked like every small place she had ever driven through without stopping.

Then she thought about a woman standing in a church porch, being asked a direct question by her own vicar, and choosing instead to talk about guttering for twenty minutes.

She started walking again, rather faster than before.

Vocabulary exercises

1. Complete the sentences

1. Mr. Pratt stood behind the _____ and read a magazine.
2. There was a yellow notice on the _____ by the door.
3. Kate walked round the _____ and read every stone.
4. Her grandmother had no _____ yet, only a wooden marker.
5. The _____ of St. Botolph's was called Alice Sandoe.
6. The burial _____ for 1963 listed nine names.
7. Three people had _____ 1963 and then stopped speaking.
8. Mr. Pratt was polite but he clearly wanted to _____ the question.

2. Match the words

1. a parish 2. awkward 3. a stranger 4. local 5. to avoid 6. polite
a. незнакомец b. приход c. местный d. избегать e. неловкий
f. вежливый

3. Choose the correct answer

1. A vicar works in: a) a shop b) a church c) a school

2. If a conversation is awkward: a) it is comfortable b) it is uncomfortable c) it is very funny
3. To change the subject means to: a) start talking about something else b) speak louder c) leave the room
4. A record is: a) a written note of something that happened b) a person c) a room
5. A local person is somebody who: a) is visiting b) lives in that place c) works far away

4. Answer the questions

1. How does Mr. Pratt know who Kate is?
2. What does the yellow notice in the shop say?
3. What does Kate find, and not find, in the churchyard?
4. What did Iris say to Reverend Sandoe about 1963?
5. What do people in the village do on the Quiet Night?

5. True, false or not given

1. The shop is open on Sunday.
2. There are eleven Mercers buried in the churchyard.
3. There is a gravestone for Nell Mercer.
4. Nine people were buried in Wraycombe in 1963.
5. Children from Wraycombe go trick or treating in Barford.

Грамматика

Past Continuous и Past Simple

Past Continuous описывает действие, которое **длилось** в определённый момент прошлого. Оно как бы рисует фон.

Форма: **was / were + глагол с -ing**

Лицо — Форма:

I / he / she / it — was walking

you / we / they — were walking

*Отрицание: She **wasn't** listening. · They **weren't** talking.*

*Вопрос: **Was** he reading? · **Were** you waiting?*

Как два времени работают вместе

Это главное, ради чего нужен Past Continuous. Длинное действие идёт фоном в Past Continuous, а короткое действие врывается в него в Past Simple.

*Kate **was walking** round the churchyard when the vicar **appeared**.*

*Her mother **was talking** on the phone when Kate **left** the house.*

Обрати внимание на союзы:

Союз — Какое время после него:

when — обычно Past Simple (короткое действие)

while — обычно Past Continuous (длинное действие)

as — Past Continuous

*She went out **while** her mother **was talking** on the phone.*

*She **was reading** the stones **when** somebody **spoke** behind her.*

Два одновременных длинных действия

Оба глагола в Past Continuous, обычно с **while**:

*Mr. Pratt **was reading** a magazine **while** Kate **was looking** at the notice board.*

Когда Past Continuous не используется

С глаголами состояния: *know, understand, believe, want, need, like, remember, mean, seem, belong.*

Правильно: *She **knew** the answer.*

Неправильно: *She **was knowing** the answer.*

Ещё одно применение: описание обстановки

В начале главы или сцены Past Continuous часто задаёт фон, а затем повествование переходит в Past Simple.

*The wind **was moving** in the yew trees. Somebody **was working** at the far end with a wheelbarrow. Kate **walked** round the churchyard slowly.*

Grammar exercises

1. Past Simple or Past Continuous

1. Kate (walk) _____ into the shop while Mr. Pratt (read) _____ a magazine.
2. She (look) _____ at the stones when somebody (speak) _____ behind her.
3. Her mother (talk) _____ on the phone when Kate (leave) _____.
4. The wind (move) _____ in the trees and the sun (shine) _____.
5. While the vicar (make) _____ tea, Kate (read) _____ the register.

2. Choose when or while

1. She was reading the notice _____ he came in.
2. _____ they were working in the kitchen, the phone rang.
3. Kate found the tin _____ she was clearing the dresser.
4. _____ the vicar was looking for 1963, Kate looked out of the window.
5. He stopped speaking _____ she asked the question.

3. Correct the mistakes

1. She was knowing the answer.
2. While she read the register, the vicar made tea.
3. They was waiting outside.
4. What did you doing at six o'clock?
5. He was write a letter when I arrived.

4. Complete the paragraph

It (1. be) _____ a cold bright morning. The wind (2. blow) _____ across the fen and a few leaves (3. move) _____ along the path. Kate (4. read) _____ the names on the stones when she (5. hear) _____ a wheelbarrow behind her. She (6. turn) _____ round. A woman in muddy boots (7. stand) _____ there and (8. look) _____ at her.

ОТВЕТЫ

Vocabulary 1: 1. counter 2. notice board 3. churchyard 4. gravestone 5. vicar 6. record / register 7. mentioned 8. avoid

Vocabulary 2: 1-b, 2-e, 3-a, 4-c, 5-d, 6-f

Vocabulary 3: 1-b, 2-b, 3-a, 4-a, 5-b

Vocabulary 4: 1. Because there are only four hundred and ten people in the village and he knows all of them. 2. THE QUIET NIGHT, 31 October, candles from six, please keep to the usual arrangements. 3. She finds eleven Mercers, including Iris and her parents, but no Nell and no child who died in the sixties. 4. That Kate's family did not need to know about it, that it was a village thing and they managed it. 5. They put a candle in every window facing the road at six and stay indoors; nobody goes trick or treating.

Vocabulary 5: 1. Not given 2. True 3. False 4. True 5. True

Grammar 1: 1. walked / was reading 2. was looking / spoke 3. was talking / left 4. was moving / was shining 5. was making / read

Grammar 2: 1. when 2. While 3. while 4. While 5. when

Grammar 3: 1. She knew the answer. 2. While she was reading the register, the vicar made tea. 3. They were waiting outside. 4. What were you doing at six o'clock? 5. He was writing a letter when I arrived.

Grammar 4: 1. was 2. was blowing 3. were moving 4. was

reading 5. heard 6. turned 7. was standing 8. was looking

Chapter 4. Ten Instructions

Key vocabulary

an order — приказ

advice — совет

a command — команда, приказ

sensible — разумный

practical — практичный

superstition — суеверие

a custom — обычай

harmless — безобидный

to obey — подчиняться

to break a rule — нарушить правило

to protect — защищать

a threat — угроза

specific — конкретный

odd — странный

the point (of something) — смысл, суть

Ten Instructions

The walk down Fen Lane took eleven minutes and she did it in eight, because the wind had got up and because she had a great deal to say.

Kate got back at half past twelve and found her mother sitting on the stairs with the phone in her hand and an expression that suggested the solicitor had won.

—Any bread? Helen said.

—I have bread.

—Then I forgive everything.

The bread was two days old and neither of them mentioned it.

They had lunch. Kate waited until her mother had eaten most of a sandwich, because she had learned that too, and then she put the list of rules on the table between them.

—I want to talk about this properly.

—Kate.

—Ten minutes. Then we can go back to the shed and I won't mention it again today.

Helen put down her sandwich and looked at the piece of paper for a moment, and Kate watched her do the thing she had been doing all week, which was to decide to be reasonable about something she did not want to discuss.

—Go on then.

—Right. Rules one to four. Lock the back door and leave

the key in the lock. Candles in every window facing the road at six. Food on the front step, bring the plate in before morning. Don't go to the churchyard after sunset. Those are all completely sensible and I can explain every single one of them.

—Explain them.

—The back door, Kate said. This house is four hundred metres from the village on a dark lane. Lock it. Obviously lock it. And if you leave the key in the lock, nobody can push a key out from outside and nobody can get a hand through and open it, and also you can find it in the dark.

—Fine.

—Candles in the windows facing the road. That's a lighthouse. There are no street lights. If somebody is walking back from the pub on a night with no moon and there's fog off the fen, a line of lit windows tells them where the road is and where the ditch isn't.

Helen said nothing.

—Food on the step. If it's the one night of the year when everybody's out walking, you feed people. And don't look at what's left is not spooky, it just means don't be nosy about who took it, because in a village of four hundred people, being hungry is embarrassing.

—All right, her mother said slowly.

—And don't go to the churchyard after sunset, because it is full of stone edges and holes and there are no lights and you will break your leg.

—Kate, why do you know all this?

—Because I read a lot and there's no internet here, said Kate.
Rule five.

—Count the knocks.

—Count the knocks. Three is a neighbour, more than three is not. And that one is odd, but it's still practical if you think about it. Somebody who lives here knocks three times because that's what everybody does. A stranger, or somebody drunk, or somebody in a panic, knocks a lot. So it's a code. It tells you who's outside before you open the door.

—That is genuinely clever.

—Rule six, Kate said, cover the mirror. That's a custom. Loads of cultures cover mirrors after a death, and the reasons people give for it are all different and all made up afterwards. Mrs. Pratt did it in August, you said so yourself.

—I did.

—So that one isn't even hers. That one is just the village.

—Unless she wrote it down because the village did it, said Helen, in which case it is the only rule on this list that came from outside her own head.

Kate stopped and looked at her mother.

—That is a really good point.

—I have my moments, said Helen Mercer. That's a custom. Loads of cultures cover mirrors after a death. Mrs. Pratt did it in August, you said so yourself.

—I did.

—Rule seven. If a voice asks for water, take it out and go back

in. If a voice asks to come in, say nothing.

Kate stopped, with her finger on the line.

She had read the list perhaps thirty times since Saturday afternoon, on the stairs, in bed, once in the bath, and she had read it as ten things. Sitting at the table with her mother opposite her and the paper the right way up, she saw for the first time that it was not ten things at all. It was six things and then four things, and something happened in the middle of it.

—That one changes, she said.

—What do you mean?

—Rules one to six are about things. Doors, candles, plates, mirrors. Rule seven is about a person. And it's not don't let them in. It's say nothing at all. Which is a very strange thing to write down.

Helen turned the paper round and read it again.

—Rule eight, Kate said. Stay in the kitchen until the church clock has finished striking twelve. And you remember doing that.

—I remember doing that.

—Rule nine. Whatever you hear in the garden, do not answer it.

—Yes.

—And rule ten.

Neither of them said rule ten out loud, and both of them looked at it. It sat at the bottom of the page in the same brown ink as the other nine, in the same careful capitals, taking up exactly one line.

—Here's the thing, Kate said. Nine of them are village sense. You could write nine of them for anywhere in the country in nineteen sixty and nobody would blink. But ten is not general advice. Ten is about one specific thing that somebody expects to happen.

—You don't know that.

—Mum, look at the language, Kate said. All the other rules are about categories. Somebody. A voice. Anybody walking past. Rule ten says: anyone who calls you by your name. That is not a category. That is a description.

Helen was quiet for a while. She got up and filled the kettle and did not switch it on, and stood at the sink looking out at the garden and at the flat grey line of the fen behind it.

—She wrote this when she was frightened, she said finally.

—Yes.

—Not once. Look at the creases. She folded and unfolded this for years.

They sat with it.

The kitchen clock, which was electric and which neither of them had switched off, made its small click on the half hour. Outside the window a bird landed on the fence, decided against it, and left.

—I'm going to try something, Kate said. Don't be annoyed.

—That is a terrible way to start a sentence.

—I want to do it. All ten. On Friday.

Helen looked up.

—Absolutely not.

—Why not?

—Because it's ghoulish, Helen said, and because I do not want to spend Halloween in my dead mother's kitchen performing a ritual I don't understand. And because I have spent two months being extremely sensible about all of this and I would quite like to keep going.

—It's not a ritual. It's a to do list. Lock a door, light some candles, put a plate out, stay in the kitchen. We were going to stay in the kitchen anyway, there's nothing else in this house except one armchair and a broken television.

—Kate.

—And if nothing happens, said Kate, then we know it's nothing. And if we don't do it, we will both be sitting here on Friday night thinking about it anyway, and we will not sleep, and you know that's true.

Her mother opened her mouth and closed it again.

—I hate that argument, she said.

—I know.

—I hate it because it's correct.

—One condition, her mother said.

—Anything.

—We don't do rule ten as a game. If somebody genuinely knocks on that door on Friday night, and it is a real person who is cold and needs help, we open it. I am not standing in a hallway ignoring a human being because of a piece of paper.

—Agreed.

—Say it properly.

—Agreed, Kate said. A real person gets the door.

They compromised in the end, in the way that families compromise, which is that Helen said she would think about it and then did not mention it again, which Kate correctly understood as yes.

They went back to work. The shed took the rest of the afternoon and produced a lawnmower that did not work, nine flowerpots, a bicycle from about 1975 and a box of jam jars, all of them washed, all of them stacked upside down, all of them empty and waiting for a summer that was not going to happen.

Kate carried the jars out to the bin pile, and then she stood holding one of them for slightly too long, and put it in the KEEP box instead, and did not explain why, and her mother did not ask.

At four o'clock somebody knocked on the door.

They both went very still, and then both felt extremely stupid, because it was four o'clock in the afternoon and the sun was out.

Kate counted the knocks afterwards, in her head, without meaning to, and there had been three of them.

There was a girl on the step. She was about Kate's age, with short hair, a puffa jacket and a bicycle lying on its side on the path behind her.

—Are you Kate?

—Yes.

—Ruby Vance. My gran wants to meet you.

She said it the way you deliver a message you have been told to deliver word for word, and then she waited.

—Sorry, who's your gran?

—Edna Vance. She's eighty-eight and she lives at number four on the green and she has been talking about you since Friday.

Kate looked back into the hall. Her mother had appeared at the kitchen door with a tea towel.

—Why does your gran want to meet me? Kate said.

Ruby put her hands in her pockets.

—Because you went to the churchyard yesterday and asked the vicar about 1963, she said, and Alice told my gran, and my gran hasn't sat down since. She's made a cake. That's a serious sign. She hasn't made a cake since my brother's wedding and she doesn't like my brother.

There was a short silence on the step.

—Ruby, Helen said from the hall. Does your grandmother know what happened in 1963?

—Yeah, Ruby said. She was eleven.

She said it in the completely flat way that teenagers say enormous things, and then she added, more carefully:

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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