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**Сборник рассказов на
английском языке. Мистика
и детективы. Intermediate.
Домашнее чтение с
заданиями и ответами**



ЛитРес: Самиздат
Москва

УДК 82-312.9
ББК 84(2)6
В58

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Сборник рассказов на английском языке. Мистика и детективы.
Intermediate. Домашнее чтение с заданиями и ответами /
Власов Д. А.; с участием Тактайкина В. В. — Москва: ЛитРес:
Самиздат, 2021. — 86 с.

ISBN 978-5-532-93478-8

Книга для чтения на английском языке включает четыре мистических и детективных рассказа среднего уровня. Пособие рассчитано для широкого круга лиц, изучающих английский язык самостоятельно, также для преподавателей на занятиях по домашнему чтению. Каждый рассказ снабжен обширным набором упражнений с ключами. Все рассказы написаны автором издания, переведены и отредактированы носителем языка в Нью-Йорке. Рассказ «Таинственное исчезновение» стал бронзовым призером на литературном конкурсе «Маленькие шедевры». Автор выражает благодарность преподавателю английского языка Тактайкиной В. В. за участие в разработке упражнений.

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The Magician

A travelling circus was giving the first performance of the season in a small country town. The striking billboards invited the townspeople not to miss a fairytale show. The circus tent-pavilion was erected right in the town center. The stage was decorated with colorful fairy lights. The town residents were not spoiled by frequent visits from performing guests like these, so the tickets were instantly sold out five shows ahead. The influx of spectators was so considerable, that the circus manager set up an additional standing-room. The tent was ready, the stage was set, and a crowd was forming outside. But one hour before the first show, a novice magician went up to a propman and demanded he be given a box for a rabbit to fit in, immediately. He explained that his magical black box got lost somewhere, and he couldn't perform his act without it. The elderly propman pondered a little, and finally promised to find something alike. Ten minutes later, the magician had in his hands a wooden black box. It was a rather old and worn-out prop with faded sides. Unfortunately, the propman didn't have something newer. Having opened the prop, the magician examined it carefully, and was really surprised at finding a mirror attached to the inner side of the lid. The conjuror had a few minutes before his appearance on the stage, so he didn't have enough time to think about the purpose of the mirror.

It should be noted that the novice magician was a budding actor. The circus manager saw a creative personality in him. His repertory did not include a set of trivial tricks. The actor successfully materialized his fantasy on the stage after desperate creative searches and trials. Astonished spectators went into raptures over his honest deception. His bewildered colleagues frequently attacked him with queries such as, How did you manage to perform this trick? What is your secret? The conjuror replied that he drew his inspiration from nature, trying to reveal details that ordinary people were unable to see. And that set the right tone in his work.

The ringmaster had already announced the magician to be on the stage, so he ran into the arena along with his assistants. In the glare

of the circus spotlights, he went ahead with the act. The magician demonstrated intricate tricks, including objects moving in the air. His artistry, agility, and dexterity marveled the public. Manipulation and illusion were elegantly presented, and the virtuosic master received roaring applause more than once. The program should have ended with the above-mentioned box. When the moment came, a pretty assistant showed the empty prop from inside and put it on the table in the center of the arena. Our illusionist announced that a rabbit would appear inside the box from absolutely nowhere. Having said that, he knocked three times on the lid, and opened it. As expected, a white rabbit jumped out. The assistant demonstrated the marvelous result of the trick to the public. Success and tremendous applause! However, the illusionist did not expect any kind of animals to appear at all. At that moment, he felt panic attacking him. After recollecting his self-control, he suppressed the horror that gripped him because of the rabbit's appearance. His face had a kind of contorted smile. He stared at the rabbit and could not believe what had happened. Something went wrong. Backstage, the manager ran up to the actor with the rabbit in his hands, hugged him paternally, and said loudly, "Well done! The public is thrilled to bits! But wait. Where did you get this rabbit from? Changes like these in your program must be coordinated only with me."

"The rabbit should not have appeared!" the pale artist interrupted, screaming at the manager. "I don't understand the way the rabbit got into the box. There should not have been any kind of trick at all! Do you remember the script? I had to open the empty box without any animals at all, then clowns would run out into the arena and turn it into a farce!"

"Then whose evil joke is this? Maybe the tamer's? But he works only with predators, so he can't be responsible," the manager said thoughtfully, walking away.

The conjuror took the rabbit by the ears and went into the dressing room. He examined the box carefully from every side more than once, but couldn't find the slightest clue. Tired, he threw it into a corner, and looked at the rabbit. It was snow white, sitting on the table and basking under the lamp, and crunching on a third sweet carrot. At the same time, he was wiggling his ears with pleasure.

Long after midnight, the illusionist was still sitting in a chair in the dressing room, trying to understand. A knock at the door brought him back to reality.

“Who is it?”

The white-haired propman showed his head from behind the door.

“May I come in?”

The actor did not answer, so the propman went in anyway, and went over to the rabbit, and stroked him.

“Well, hello, I do recognize you, Brer Rabbit.”

“What? You rigged all this, didn’t you?!”

“Don’t get so excited. You’d better listen to what I tell you. Just let it be between you and me. Our circus has a long history, and I’ve been working here for a long time and seen a lot of things. Forty years ago, I began my career as an assistant magician, so I am a witness to the case, which our troupe is not aware of. What happened to you today in the arena took place forty years ago, but it was the other way around. The illusionist, who I assisted at that time, crafted this same prop. His stage name was Faust. As you can see, the box is rather ordinary, only with a mirror inside. His rabbit did not have to vanish in the box, but it disappeared the first time he did the act, and we’ve never seen it since. We searched the whole circus, everywhere. After that, Faust swore off not to make any tricks with that prop. He and the circus vowed never to speak of it again, to try and forget. However, I guess this rabbit returned today from somewhere.”

“A rabbit doesn’t live forty years,” the magician said, vaguely.

“But he spent this time somewhere,” the propman said, and left the dressing room.”

“So, where have you been all this time?” the exhausted actor addressed the rabbit.

The animal, as if realizing the question, ceased to nibble on his goodies, moved his ears, and jumped down on the near couch. An open scientific journal was on it. The panting rabbit settled down on the page so his right paw was clearly pointing at the title of the article, “*Wormwholes.*”

The magician moved the rabbit aside, picked up the journal, and read the beginning of the article:

Time machines do not exist, but astrophysics proves the existence of wormholes in the Universe, in theory. A wormhole is a hypothetical topological feature of space time. It is much like a tunnel with two ends, each in separate points in space time.

He looked at the rabbit in amazement.

- ...?

Questions and Activities

I. Find English equivalents to the following Russian phrases.

- яркие афиши
- сказочное зрелище
- шатер цирка
- наплыв зрителей
- с выцветшими стенками
- подающий надежды артист
- восторженные зрители
- в свете софитов
- ужас охватил его
- прекратил грызть
- озадаченные коллеги

II. Translate the following words and word-combinations.

- a novice magician
- a worn-out prop
- a conjuror
- the repertory
- an honest deception
- a ringmaster
- intricate tricks
- a predator
- agility
- dexterity
- a kind of contorted smile

- the script
- a propman
- a couch
- a wormwhole
- a tamer

III. Find adverbs in the text. Make up your own sentences with them.

IV. Unscramble the words in bold.

1. A travelling circus was giving the first **mcnproearfe** of the season in a small country town.
2. The town residents were not spoiled by **qtrfnuee** visits from performing guests.
3. The **jrocounr** had a few minutes before his appearance on the stage.
4. Do you remember the **srtepi**
5. The white-haired **npramop** showed his head from behind the door.
6. He stared at the **btarib** and could not believe what had happened.
7. But he works only with **prderstao**, so he can't be responsible.
8. His **gaset** name was Faust.
9. A **cockn** at the door brought him back to reality.
10. A **mwloheor** is a hypothetical topological feature of space time.

V. Give definitions of the following verbs.

- to erect
- to spoil
- to demand
- to examine
- to reveal
- to grip
- to stroke
- to craft
- to vanish
- to swear off
- to vow

VI. Grammar:

1. Find and translate sentences in the Past Simple Tense.
2. Find and translate a sentence with homogeneous parts.
3. Find and translate one sentence in the Present Perfect Tense.
4. Find and translate one sentence in the Present Perfect Continuous Tense.
5. Find sentences with the direct speech. Change them into the indirect speech.

VII. Answer the following questions.

1. What kind of person was the magician?
2. Where did he work?
3. Where was a travelling circus giving the first performance?
4. What did the magician ask the propman for?
5. How did the black box look like?
6. What happened in the arena?
7. What story did the propman tell the conjuror?
8. What is the wormhole?
9. Do you believe in the human ability to travel through time in the future?
10. What is the main message of the story?
11. Which of the tricks do you think would be the most impressive to watch?
12. Have you had any experience of mind-reading or illusions? Give details.
13. If the magician asked a member of the audience to participate on stage, would you do it?

VIII. Say whether the following sentences are true, false or not given in the text. Say what is wrong with the false ones.

1. A travelling circus was giving the second performance.
2. The town residents hated frequent visits of performing guests.
3. A novice magician demanded to be given a box for a hare to fit in.
4. The public was marveled by the performance.
5. The conjuror demonstrated stunts and tight rope walk.

6. The black box vanished with the rabbit inside.
7. The illusionist Faust appeared on the stage with the rabbit.
8. The propman told the story about wormholes.
9. According to the text rabbits live forty years.
10. The animal ceased to nibble on its carrot.

IX. Speaking.

1. Describe the magician.
2. Speak about the atmosphere in the town before the show.
3. Describe the performance of the conjuror.
4. Act out the dialogue between the propman and the magician.
5. Give the summary of the story.

X. Which of the sayings best summarises the main idea of the story?

1. The fated thing will happen.
2. There is a time and place for everything.
3. The world is a mere illusion.

XI. Solve a crossword puzzle.

Across:

- 2/ A person who performs tricks that seem strange or impossible to believe.
- 6/ A long pointed orange root vegetable.
- 8/ A group of people, sometimes with trained animals, who perform acts with skill in a show that travels around to different places.
- 10/ An individual responsible for objects used by actors during the performance of a play.
- 11/ The act of performing a play, concert or some other form of entertainment.
- 14/ A small animal with soft fur, long ears and a short tail.

Down:

- 1/ A large board on the outside of a building or at the side of the road, used for putting advertisements on.