

English

Stage 6

Paper 2 Fiction

Cambridge Primary Progression Test

Insert



2024

Text for **Section A**, an extract from *Tales of the Unexpected* by Roald Dahl

Billy is a young travelling salesman working for a large company. He has arrived in a town he has never been to before. It is evening and he only has a little money. He is looking for a cheap place to stay.

Billy was seventeen years old. He was wearing a new navy-blue overcoat and a new brown suit, and he was feeling fine. He walked briskly down the street. He was trying to do everything briskly these days. Briskness, he had decided, was the one common characteristic of all successful businessmen. 5

There were no shops on this wide street that he was walking along, only a line of tall houses on each side, all of them identical. They had porches and pillars and four or five steps going up to their front doors, and it was obvious that once upon a time they had been swanky residences. But now, even in the darkness, he could see that the paint was peeling from the woodwork on their doors and windows, and that the handsome white facades¹ were cracked and blotchy. 10

Suddenly, in a downstairs window that was brilliantly illuminated by a street-lamp, Billy caught sight of a printed notice. It said BED AND BREAKFAST. There was a vase of yellow chrysanthemums², tall and beautiful, standing just underneath the notice. He stopped walking. He moved a bit closer. 15

Green curtains (some sort of velvety material) were hanging down on either side of the window. The chrysanthemums looked wonderful beside them. He went right up and peered through the glass into the room, and the first thing he saw was a bright fire burning in the hearth. The room itself, so far as he could see in the half-darkness, was filled with pleasant furniture. There was a baby-grand piano and a big sofa and several plump armchairs. 20

After dithering about in the cold for two or three minutes, Billy decided that he would walk on. He turned to go. And a queer thing happened. He was in the act of stepping back and turning away from the window when all at once his eye was caught and held in the most peculiar manner by the small notice that was there. 25

BED AND BREAKFAST, it said. BED AND BREAKFAST, BED AND BREAKFAST, BED AND BREAKFAST. Each word was like a large black eye staring at him through the glass, holding him, compelling him, forcing him to stay where he was and not to walk away from that house, and the next thing he knew, he was actually moving across from the window to the front door of the house, climbing the steps that led up to it, and reaching for the bell. 30

He pressed the bell. 35

Far away in a back room he heard it ringing, and then at once, it must have been at once because he hadn't even had time to take his finger from the bell-button, the door swung open and a woman was standing there. Normally you ring the

bell and you have at least a half-minute's wait before the door opens. But this dame³ was like a jack-in-the-box. He pressed the bell – and out she popped! It made him jump.

40

She was about fifty years old, and the moment she saw him, she gave him a warm welcoming smile.

'Please come in,' she said pleasantly.

Glossary

¹facade: the front of a building

²chrysanthemum: a type of flower

³dame: an American word for a woman

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