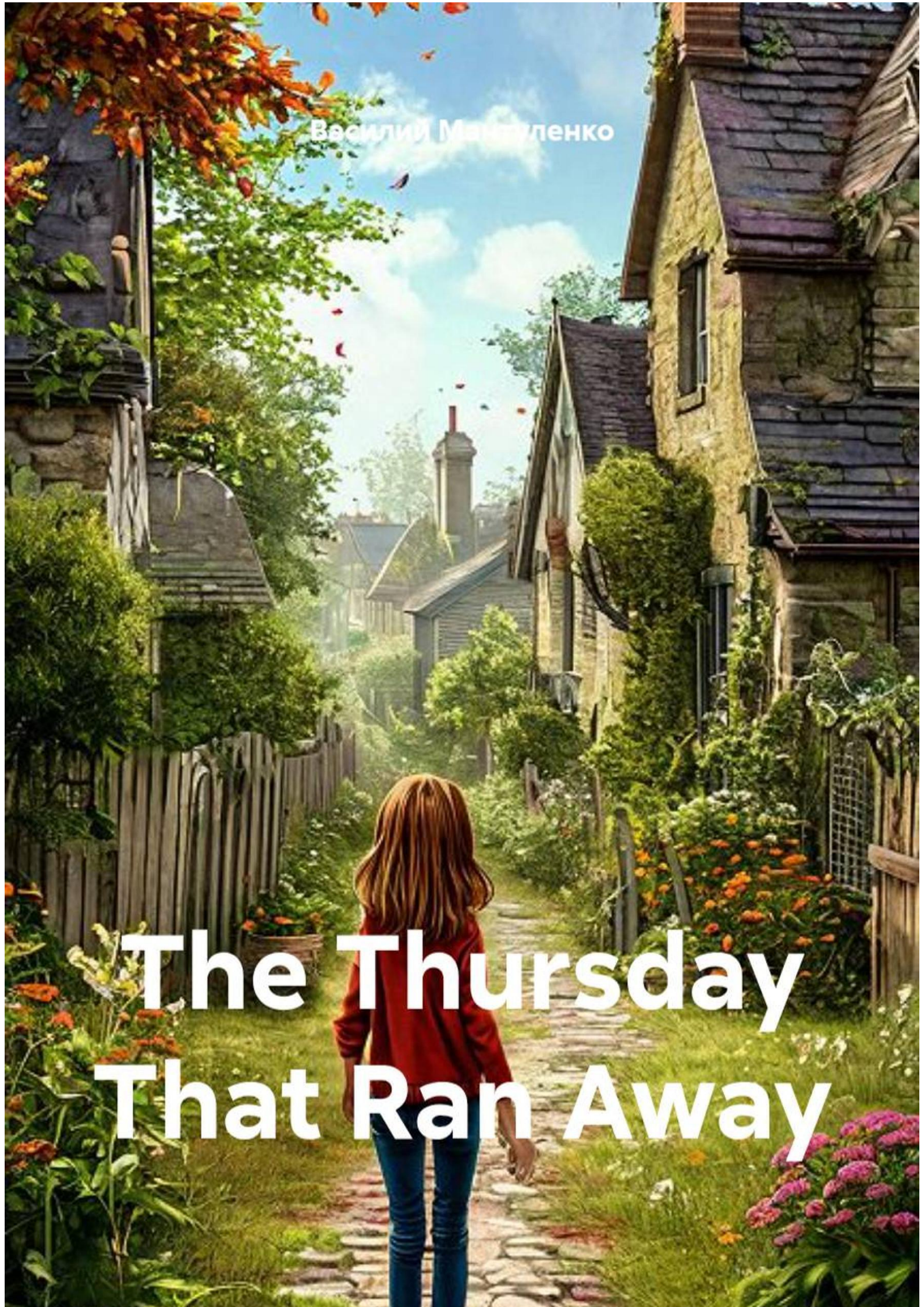




Василий Мангуленко

The Thursday That Ran Away

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«Автор»

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«The Thursday That Ran Away» — нонсенс-приключение, написанное специально для изучающих английский язык на уровне B1. Однажды утром Гортенза смотрит на календарь на кухонной стене — и находит дыру там, где должен быть четверг. Больше никто этого не замечает: взрослые, как выясняется, всегда были не очень хороши с днями недели. Но когда Гортенза протягивает руку, чтобы коснуться странного тёмного провала между средой и пятницей, она проваливается прямо в него — в Страну Потерянного Времени, место, куда тихо уходит жить каждый растраченный, забытый и проигнорированный день в истории. Там Гортензе предстоит найти пропавший четверг, пока весь календарь не развалился окончательно.

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Василий Мантуленко

The Thursday That Ran Away

The Thursday That Ran Away

A nonsense adventure for English learners (Level B1)

Written for young English learners, in the spirit of Lewis Carroll

Main Characters

Hortense

11 years old. Careful, curious, and extremely logical. She carries a small notebook labelled DEFINITE FACTS, and she likes rules — as long as they make sense.

Mr Tuesday

A tall, polite gentleman made partly of ticking clockwork. He has been trying to reach Wednesday for as long as anyone can remember, and never quite manages it.

Scrap

A very small, very stubborn comma. He believes no sentence is complete without him, and he is not shy about interrupting, to prove it.

The Mad Lexicographer

The host of the strangest tea party in the Country of Lost Time. Instead of tea, he serves small cups of Definitions, which can be dangerous if you drink the wrong one.

The Maybe Cat

A cat who exists somewhere between sixty and one hundred percent of the time. He speaks only in riddles, and he is always more helpful than he seems.

Thursday

A shy, quiet, rather tired day of the week, who ran away from the calendar for reasons that only become clear near the end of the story.

A Word Before We Begin: About Nonsense Stories

Long before this book was written, an English mathematician named Charles Dodgson — who wrote under the pen name Lewis Carroll — told a story to three young sisters during a boat trip on a river, one warm summer afternoon in 1862. That story became "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland," and a few years later, its sequel, "Through the Looking-Glass," which contains one of the most famous nonsense poems in the English language: "Jabberwocky."

What made Carroll's stories so special was not only their silliness, but their logic. Carroll was a mathematician, and he loved puzzles, wordplay, and strict, careful rules — even when those rules led to completely absurd results. In Wonderland, a Mad Hatter can be perfectly polite while making no sense at all. A Cheshire Cat can vanish, leaving only its smile behind, and somehow this feels like it follows its own kind of logic. A trial can be held before any crime has even been committed. Nonsense, in Carroll's hands, was never simply silly for its own sake — it was a careful, playful way of turning the rules of the ordinary world upside down, so that readers could see them clearly, perhaps for the very first time.

"The Thursday That Ran Away" was written in that same spirit, as a gift to readers learning English, and as a small tribute to Carroll's particular kind of storytelling. Like "Alice," it takes something ordinary and overlooked — in this case, not a white rabbit's pocket watch, but an entire day of the week — and asks a simple, slightly absurd question: what if the things we take for granted had feelings about being taken for granted?

As you read, look out for three things Carroll himself loved to use, all of which appear in this book too: invented nonsense words (you'll meet several in Chapter 11), a genuine logic puzzle hidden inside the story (Chapter 9, with more in Appendix B), and characters who follow their own strict, if slightly ridiculous, rules — much like Mr Tuesday, Scrap the comma, and the Maybe Cat.

Above all, Carroll believed a children's story could be clever, playful, and quietly meaningful all at once. We hope this one manages at least a little of all three.

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Chapter 1. The Hole in the Calendar

It began, as these things often do, with something so small that almost nobody would have noticed it at all.

Hortense was eating breakfast, looking at the calendar on the kitchen wall, when she realised something was wrong. The calendar showed Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday... and then Friday.

There was no Thursday.

Not a blank square, not a crossed-out square — simply nothing at all, as if the day had never been printed, and never existed in the first place.

"Mum," said Hortense carefully, "did you know Thursday is missing from the calendar?"

Her mother looked up from her tea, glanced at the calendar, and shrugged.

"Is it? I can never keep the days straight anyway," she said. "Was Thursday the one with the bins, or was that Tuesday?"

Hortense sighed. She had noticed, over the years, that grown-ups were remarkably bad at days of the week, considering how much time they spent living through them.

At school, nobody else seemed to notice either. Her teacher, Mr Bell, wrote WEDNESDAY on the board, and then, without any pause at all, wrote FRIDAY'S HOMEWORK underneath it, as though nothing strange had happened.

"Excuse me," said Hortense, raising her hand. "What happened to Thursday?"

"Thursday?" said Mr Bell, looking puzzled. "I'm quite sure we have one of those. Somewhere. Probably."

Nobody else in the class seemed bothered in the slightest. Hortense wrote a note in her small notebook, the one labelled DEFINITE FACTS, which said: Thursday is missing. I appear to be the only person who has noticed.

That evening, walking home past the old town clock tower, Hortense stopped in front of the large calendar painted on its side — the one that had hung there, the town said, for over two hundred years.

Between WEDNESDAY and FRIDAY, exactly where THURSDAY should have been, there was a strange, dark gap: not a picture of a missing word, but an actual hole, deep and black, as though someone had cut a piece directly out of the wall.

Hortense leaned forward, curious, and touched the edge of the gap with one careful finger.

The moment her finger touched the darkness, the whole gap seemed to open wider, like a mouth, pulling gently at her hand, then her arm, then, before she could even shout for help, the whole of her.

Hortense fell forward into the dark, spinning gently, calendar pages flying past her in every direction — pages marked with days that did not exist yet, and days that, apparently, had been wasted long ago.

She landed, with a soft and surprisingly polite bump, on a patch of soft green grass, under a sky the colour of old parchment, in a country she had certainly never visited before.

A large wooden signpost stood nearby. It read: WELCOME TO THE COUNTRY OF LOST TIME. PLEASE DO NOT WASTE ANY MORE OF IT THAN NECESSARY.

Vocabulary

shrug

to lift your shoulders briefly, to show you don't know or don't care

puzzled

confused, not understanding something

gap

an empty space between two things

parchment

old, thick paper used long ago for writing

signpost

a sign, usually on a post, that gives directions or information

patch (of grass)

a small area of ground

Comprehension Questions

1. What does Hortense notice is missing from the kitchen calendar?
2. How do the grown-ups and her teacher react when she mentions this?
3. What does Hortense find on the old clock tower in town?
4. What happens when Hortense touches the dark gap on the tower?

Exercise

Are these sentences True or False? Correct the false sentences.

1. Hortense notices that Tuesday is missing from the calendar. ____ True ____ False
2. Hortense's mother is very worried about the missing day. ____ True ____ False
3. The old clock tower has a calendar painted on its side. ____ True ____ False
4. Hortense falls through a dark gap and lands in a strange country. ____ True ____ False

Chapter 2. The Country of Lost Time

Hortense stood up, brushed grass off her skirt, and looked around properly.

The Country of Lost Time did not look like any country she had studied at school. Clocks grew on trees like fruit, some fast, some slow, and some clearly broken beyond repair. Rivers of pale golden light moved slowly across the fields, which, on closer inspection, seemed to be made of thousands and thousands of individual minutes, all flowing gently downhill.

A large, round-faced owl sat on a fence post nearby, wearing tiny round spectacles and a waistcoat covered in small gears.

"Ah," said the owl, without any surprise at all. "A visitor. How refreshingly punctual of you."

"Punctual?" said Hortense. "I fell through a hole in a wall. I don't think I planned this at all."

"Nonsense," said the owl. "Everyone who arrives here arrives exactly on time — the question is only whether it's the right time for the right reason. I am the Watchmaker Owl. I keep an eye on things around here, so to speak."

"I'm looking for Thursday," said Hortense, deciding to be direct. "It's missing from my calendar at home. I think it might have come here."

The Watchmaker Owl's spectacles glinted thoughtfully.

"Many things come here," he said. "Wasted minutes. Forgotten afternoons. The whole month of February from 1962, which nobody used properly at all. And yes — occasionally, an entire day, if it feels sufficiently unwanted."

"Unwanted?" said Hortense. "Why would a day feel unwanted?"

"That," said the owl, "is precisely the sort of question you will need to answer, if you want your Thursday back. But be warned — the Country of Lost Time has rules, and they are not always sensible ones."

"What kind of rules?" asked Hortense, taking out her notebook.

"Rule the First," said the owl, holding up one wing. "Nobody may lie about time. If you say 'I'll be there in a minute,' and you take longer, you owe the difference — usually paid in sleep, or in Tuesdays, which are the local currency around here."

"Tuesdays are money?" said Hortense, writing this down carefully.

"Rule the Second," continued the owl. "Every question deserves an answer, even a nonsensical one. Silence is considered extremely rude in these parts."

"And Rule the Third?"

"Rule the Third," said the owl, hopping down from the fence, "is that you should always, always be polite to Mr Tuesday, whom you are about to meet, because he has had rather a difficult four hundred years."

As if summoned by his own name, a tall, thin gentleman appeared around the bend in the path, walking very quickly and checking a pocket watch that appeared to be running in several directions at once.

"Late, late, terribly late," he muttered, hurrying past without even looking up. "Always trying to reach Wednesday, never quite arriving..."

"That," said the Watchmaker Owl, "is Mr Tuesday. I suggest you follow him. He is, in his own peculiar way, exactly the person you need to speak to."

Vocabulary

spectacles

glasses; things you wear on your eyes to see better

waistcoat

a piece of clothing worn over a shirt, without sleeves

punctual

arriving at exactly the right time

currency

the money used in a particular place

nonsensical

silly; without any clear or logical meaning

summon

to call someone to come to you

Comprehension Questions

1. What strange things does Hortense see in the Country of Lost Time?
2. Who is the Watchmaker Owl, and what does he do there?
3. What are the three rules the owl explains to Hortense?
4. Who does Hortense meet at the end of the chapter, and what does he seem to be doing?

Exercise

Complete the sentences with the correct word from the box: currency, punctual, spectacles, rules, gap.

1. The Watchmaker Owl wears small round ____.
2. He says visitors always arrive ____, in their own strange way.
3. In this country, Tuesdays are used as ____.
4. The country has three important ____ that everyone must follow.
5. Hortense fell through a ____ in the old clock tower.

Chapter 3. Mr Tuesday's Problem

Hortense hurried after Mr Tuesday, who moved surprisingly fast for someone who seemed permanently exhausted.

"Excuse me!" she called. "Mr Tuesday! Could I ask you something?"

Mr Tuesday stopped so suddenly that a small cloud of ticking sounds seemed to catch up with him a second later.

"A question," he said, sounding almost pleased. "Yes, of course. According to Rule the Second, I must answer it, whatever it is."

"Why are you trying to reach Wednesday?" asked Hortense.

Mr Tuesday sighed, a long, tired sound, like a clock slowly running down.

"I am Tuesday," he explained. "It is my entire purpose to become Wednesday, eventually, the way all Tuesdays should. But here, in the Country of Lost Time, purposes don't always work the way they should. I have been trying to reach Wednesday for four hundred years, and every single time, just as I arrive... it turns out to be Tuesday again."

"That sounds exhausting," said Hortense sympathetically.

"It is," agreed Mr Tuesday. "Though I've grown rather used to it. May I ask you a question in return? It's only fair."

"Of course," said Hortense.

"Why," asked Mr Tuesday, "does everybody always love Fridays, and nobody, ever, loves a Tuesday?"

Hortense thought about this seriously.

"I suppose," she said slowly, "Friday means the weekend is coming. Tuesday is just... in the middle of everything. Nobody's excited about the middle."

Mr Tuesday nodded sadly, as though this confirmed something he had suspected for a very long time.

"That is precisely it," he said. "Nobody is ever excited about the middle. I imagine that's rather how Thursday felt too, before it left."

Hortense's ears perked up immediately.

"You know about Thursday?" she asked.

"Everybody in this country knows about Thursday," said Mr Tuesday. "It caused quite a stir when it arrived. Very quiet day, Thursday. Doesn't like a fuss. Kept to itself, mostly, near the Lexicographer's tea party."

"Can you take me there?" asked Hortense.

Mr Tuesday checked his impossible pocket watch, which appeared to be showing four different times simultaneously.

"I suppose I'm not getting to Wednesday any time soon regardless," he said, with a small, tired smile. "Very well. Follow me — and mind Scrap, when we pass him. He's terribly particular about being included in every sentence."

"Included in every sentence?" said Hortense, confused. "What does that mean?"

Mr Tuesday only smiled mysteriously and continued walking, and Hortense, notebook in hand, followed close behind.

Vocabulary

purpose

the reason something exists; its main job

sympathetically

in a kind way, showing you understand someone's feelings

cause a stir

to make people excited, surprised, or worried

fuss

unnecessary excitement or attention about something small

perk up

to become suddenly more alert or interested

particular

very careful about details; fussy

Comprehension Questions

1. Why has Mr Tuesday been trying to reach Wednesday for four hundred years?
2. What question does Mr Tuesday ask Hortense in return?
3. What does Mr Tuesday say about Thursday's personality?
4. Who does Mr Tuesday warn Hortense about before they continue walking?

Exercise

Answer in your own words (1-2 sentences each).

1. Why do you think nobody gets excited about Tuesdays, according to Hortense?
2. Do you think Mr Tuesday and Thursday might have something in common? Explain your idea.

Chapter 4. Scrap the Comma

They had not walked much further when a small, sharp voice called out from a patch of tall grass beside the path.

"Stop! Stop at once! You cannot continue that sentence without me!"

Hortense looked down and saw, sitting on a leaf, a tiny black shape, curled at the bottom like a small comma — which, in fact, it was.

"I beg your pardon?" said Hortense.

"You began a sentence," said the comma, in an offended tone, "and you did not include me. I am Scrap. I insist on being included, whenever a sentence has a natural pause, a list, or an introductory clause. Which yours did. Obviously."

"Mr Tuesday leaned towards Hortense and whispered, "This may take a while.""

"I'm sorry, Scrap," said Hortense carefully, "but I didn't know you were there."

"That," said Scrap, "is exactly the problem with commas today. Nobody notices us until we're missing, and then everybody complains that the sentence doesn't make sense."

Hortense thought this sounded oddly familiar.

"That's exactly what happened with Thursday," she said. "Nobody noticed it, until it was gone."

Scrap paused, considering this.

"Well," he said, softening slightly, "Thursday and I did have rather a lot to talk about, actually, before it moved on towards the Lexicographer's."

"What did Thursday say?" asked Hortense eagerly.

"I couldn't possibly tell you," said Scrap primly, "without being properly included in the sentence first. Try again, and mind your pauses this time."

Hortense sighed, and tried again, very carefully.

"Scrap," she said, "please, could you tell me, what did Thursday say to you, before it moved on?"

Scrap glowed with satisfaction at being included not once, but twice.

"Much better," he said. "Thursday said — and I remember this precisely — 'Nobody ever looks forward to me. Monday gets sympathy, because it's hard. Friday gets celebrated, because it's nearly the weekend. I just get homework, tests, and complaints about how slowly the week is going. I'm tired of being the day nobody wants.'"

Hortense felt something small and sad settle in her chest.

"That's rather sad," she said quietly.

"Quite," agreed Scrap. "Very sad, in fact — and very well-punctuated, if I do say so myself, since I was there for the whole conversation, comma by comma."

"Do you know where Thursday went after that?" asked Hortense.

"Towards the tea party," said Scrap. "The Mad Lexicographer's. Follow the smell of old dictionaries, and you'll find it easily enough."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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