

this is no mystery

1. Preposition Or Subordinating Conjunction
2. Coordinating Conjunction
3. Verb - Past Tense
4. Noun
5. Noun
6. Adjective - Comparative
7. Noun
8. Verb - Present Tense
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11. Noun
12. Verb - Past Tense
13. Verb - 3Rd Person Singular Present
14. Coordinating Conjunction

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_____ Preposition or subordinating conjunction _____ always when he got back from the hospital Henry stood on the doorstep trying and failing to find the right key.

The house was familiar, had been home when he was a child and now seemed almost to resent him for going away or for coming back at all. That was why the key always seemed to skitter away from his hand, hiding amongst its identical brothers and sisters until he was cold _____ Coordinating conjunction _____ frustrated enough for a point to have been made.

At last Henry found the key, turned it in the lock and pushed his way into a house that had stopped being a home and had turned instead into a dozen empty rooms gathered around a lot of silence.

The hallway was dim and looked no different than _____ Verb - Past Tense _____ had when he was a boy. There was still an old fashioned _____ Noun _____ on a table resting on a _____ Noun _____ of even _____ Adjective - Comparative _____ directories, framed prints of sea scenes and landscapes on the walls. The only change was a plastic _____ Noun _____ with _____ Verb - Present Tense _____ months and numbers, _____ Verb - Past Participle _____ forever on the 15th _____ Proper Noun _____, the day his father went into _____ Noun _____.

Henry could have walked through every room of the house with his eyes closed, navigating its landmarks by memory without need for stars or compass. On that afternoon though something felt different, out of place even.

"Hello"

The single word spoken aloud echoed awkwardly in the empty space, he didn't get an answer; he _____ Verb - _____ Past Tense _____ expecting one, but he still felt that he wasn't alone.

Henry climbed the stairs one riser at a time and the feeling of not being alone climbed along with him. Each step produced its own distinct creak, sounds to which he paid unusual attention. Like a child walking past the haunted house every neighbourhood _____ Verb - 3rd Person Singular Present _____ for no other purpose on a dare he imagined unseen eyes watching his every move.

He told himself with the voice of a reasonable adult that his reaction was absurd. The house was empty, it had been empty when he left _____ *Coordinating conjunction* _____ it had stayed that way while he was sat by his father's bedside.

At the top of the stairs he turned right into the bedroom he had used as a boy and had been drawn back to two moths earlier by the elastic of filial illness. The curtains were drawn to hide the clutter that had colonised it over twenty years of disuse and the air inside was faintly musty.

Having taken off his shirt he walked back across the landing and into the bathroom, turned the hot tap on full and when the basin was full wiped steam off the mirror.

There was a noise from somewhere behind him, in the mirror Henry watched the eyes of his reflection widen in alarm.

It wasn't, he was sure, one of the familiar noises the house made as it shifted and settled on its foundations; there was somebody else out there. Turning quickly with his hands still wet Henry rushed out onto the landing, a cold chill bristled across his shoulders.

There was nobody there; that didn't make him feel any more comfortable.

From the landing he walked into his father's room. It was a museum untouched since the day he went into hospital, one with a curator who deserved to be dismissed judging by the fine layer of dust covering every flat surface.

Out on the landing there was a stealthy scuffling noise, he couldn't identify what had made it; just knew that it shouldn't have been made at all.

Henry ran back out onto the landing, as he did do something flew up the stairs straight past his head.

Instinctively he ducked, throwing his arms up as if to ward off a thrown object. Whatever he was trying to ward off changed direction and came back towards him, bringing with it a gust of air tainted with something musty and unclean.

The flying object passed around behind him and banged against the top edge of the open bedroom door. Turning around again Henry saw a small brown bird hovering against the ceiling, its wings moving so fast they were almost invisible.

For some reason Henry found this more alarming than the rock throwing burglar he had imagined to be invading his house. He didn't question how this tiny brown intruder had got into the house; he just wanted to drive it out.

Suddenly he was running along the landing shouting and waving his arms as if he too wanted to take to the air. Frightened the bird shot up towards the ceiling, found nowhere to go then banging its wings awkwardly on the top edge of the door