

The Strangest Shop in the World

Continuing the Story Example

(Description written in lesson 1 and edited and improved in lesson 5 shown in bold text.)

I immediately saw why Priestly's is undoubtedly the strangest shop in the world. I could see strange, exotic animals walking around the shop and piled mountains of rusting and discoloured metal, which reached almost as high as the ceiling. The shopkeeper, who could have been anywhere between 20 and 90 in age, was floating around the shop on a magic carpet.

There was a smell of ancient old age and there was a tall, badly-stuffed giraffe in the corner, its horns pressed against the ceiling. None of the things had prices on but there were posters on the walls which stated 'price available on request.' The walls were made of varieties of bread, placed together in all shapes and sizes to look like stones. I looked around in a daze and the shopkeeper, who had just been trying to balance a beach ball on his nose, made me jump when he suddenly spoke.

"How can I help?" he said, without moving his lips. He was a peculiar sight. His long neck was patterned like a giraffe's but a small and very human head sat on top of the neck. He wore glasses which repeatedly slipped down his nose as he bent over to peer at me.

"I want to buy a present for my teacher," I managed to reply.

"Hmmm," he said, "a present for your teacher?"

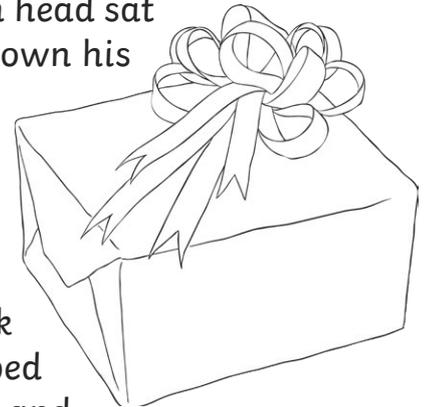
"A present for my teacher," I repeated.

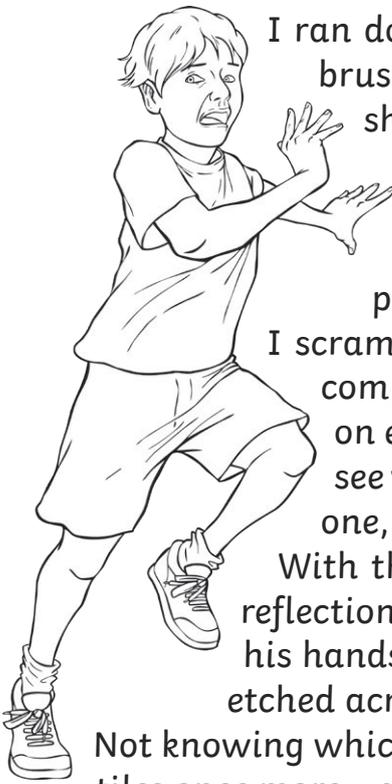
"Right," he said, "well, I don't wish to hurry you but the shop is closing in two minutes. Two minutes exactly." He flew back to the counter, pushed his glasses back on his nose and flipped a switch. Immediately, a siren began blaring intermittently and a giant two-minute countdown appeared on the wall behind him.

Each blast of the siren was matched by a flashing light so that the overall effect was something a little like a submarine sinking.

I set off in a rush down the closest aisle, with very little idea of what I was looking for. I had always expected that the present would show itself to me. I passed row upon row of bottled dreams, hardly pausing to look although I noticed with a smile that one label said 'School with No Trousers On.'

Turning sharp left, I entered an aisle of bizarre equipment. Iron cages, racks, padlocks and metal studs. Dungeon torture equipment! Wanting to escape the aisle, I began to run, but I tripped over an extending metal arm and fell to the floor. Black iron claws reached out and began pulling me towards the shelf. I desperately crawled away and stumbled to my feet once more. The red light kept flashing and the time projected on to the wall now read 1:27. I had to hurry.





I ran down the next aisle which seemed to contain mops, buckets and brushes and found myself on the floor once again. The floor was shiny and wet because the mops had cleaned it themselves. I lay with my face close to the gleaming white tiles for a second and smelt the unmistakable scent of lemon freshness. The siren jolted me back to reality. 1.01 read the wall clock; the shop still pulsed with warning noises and red light.

I scrambled to my feet and, taking great care not to slip, dashed to a completely different part of the shop. All of a sudden, mirrors appeared on every wall. There were ten of me converging on myself. I couldn't see which was aisle and which was mirror. Running smack-bang into one, I picked myself up and immediately ran face-first into another.

With the feeling of fear beginning to rise in me, I noticed at once the reflection of the shopkeeper moving towards me from ten different angles, his hands held out in front of him as if to grab me and a look of madness etched across his face.

Not knowing which direction was safe, I dropped to the floor – finding the familiar tiles once more – and barrel rolled under the nearest shelf and all the way through to the next aisle. Wanting to maintain my momentum, I kept my eyes tightly shut and repeated the movement again and again until I hoped I might be safer.

Hesitantly, I opened my eyes and there on the floor before me, in the dark beneath the shelf, was a wonder. It was a chunky snow globe containing a scene clearly from my home town. As I looked closely and brought my face right up to the glass, the scene morphed and magnified so that I found I could see along streets, down alleyways, under cars and through windows. I could travel along incredibly lifelike streets merely by moving my head. I could even see my school. So accurate was the scene that I had to remind myself that I wasn't actually there. I moved my head back to gain better focus of the object. Lying there on the floor, I picked it up in my hands and shook it gently. The most exquisite snowstorm began – each flake uniquely defined and delicate and each individual one settling slowly and gently on the ground.

I had found my present. Rolling free of the shelf, I stood up. The counter was now directly in front of me. As I placed the snow globe gingerly on the counter top, the siren seemed to fade. The countdown reached 5, 4, 3, 2, and as it ticked over to 1, I began to feel strangely light. I felt as though I was floating in a bubble. Moment by moment, the buildings in the snow globe seemed bigger. There was no exact moment when I was no longer in the shop but even as I looked around me, the shop had dissolved and I found I was standing in front of my school. I stood in a layer of fine, freshly fallen snow and was holding the snow globe in the palm of my hand.

