

1.

The other boys were now completely out of view, and Tommy was no longer trying to direct his comments in any particular direction. He was just raving, flinging his limbs about, at the sky, at the wind, at the nearest fence post. Laura said he was maybe “rehearsing his Shakespeare.”

2.

So before long Tommy had gone back to his original defence, producing work that seemed deliberately childish, work that said he couldn't care less. From there, the thing had got deeper and deeper. For a while he'd only had to suffer during art lessons – though that was often enough, because we did a lot of art in the Juniors. But then it grew bigger. He got left out of games, boys refused to sit next to him at dinner, or pretended not to hear if he said anything in his dorm after lights-out.

3.

By the time we'd crossed the courtyard and reached the grass, we were a very different group from the one that had stood about excitedly waiting for Madame to get out of her car. Hannah looked ready to burst into tears. Even Ruth looked really shaken.

4.

That was what had happened to Sylvie C. once on the second-floor landing, and on that occasion Miss Emily had gone into one of her rages. She never shouted like, say, Miss Lucy did when she got mad at you, but if anything Miss Emily getting angry was scarier. Her eyes narrowed and she'd whisper furiously to herself, like she was discussing with an invisible colleague what punishment was awful enough for you. The way she did it meant half of you was dying to hear and the other half completely not wanting to. But usually with Miss Emily nothing too awful would come out of it. She hardly ever put you in detention, made you do chores or withdrew privileges.

5.

Then Miss Lucy had said that since everyone at Hailsham was talking about little else, we should forget the play-reading and spend the rest of the lesson exchanging our views about the tokens. And that's what we were doing when Polly asked, completely out of the blue: “Miss, why does Madame take our things anyway?”

6.

The Sales were a complete contrast to the hushed atmosphere of the Exchanges. They were held in the Dining Hall, and were crowded and noisy. In fact the pushing and shouting was all part of the fun, and they stayed for the most part pretty good-humoured. Except, as I say, every now and then, things would get out of hand, with students grabbing and tugging, sometimes fighting.

7.

The little footpath that went all round the back of the main house was a real favourite of mine. It followed all the nooks, all the extensions; you had to squeeze past shrubs, you went under two ivy-covered arches and through a rusted gate. And all the time you could peer in through the windows, one after the other. I suppose part of the reason I liked the path so much was because I was never sure if it was out of bounds. Certainly, when classes were going on, you weren't supposed to walk past.

8.

So when I saw Tommy a few places ahead of me, I waved him over – the rule being that though you couldn't jump the queue going forwards it was fine to go back. He came over with a delighted smile, and we stood together for a moment without saying much – not out of awkwardness, but because we were waiting for any interest aroused by Tommy's moving back to fade.

9.

The Cottages were the remains of a farm that had gone out of business years before. There was an old farmhouse, and around it, barns, outhouses, stables all converted for us to live in. There were other buildings, usually the outlying ones, that were virtually falling down, which we couldn't use for much, but for which we felt in some vague way responsible – mainly on account of Keffer's.

10.

When I said I hadn't, she did a laugh and continued: "They're probably just having me on. Their idea of a joke. Forget I mentioned it." But I could see she wanted me to drag it out of her, so I kept pressing until in the end she said in a lowered voice: "You remember last week, when Chrissie and Rodney were away? They'd been up to this town called Cromer, up on the north Norfolk coast."

11.

So there we were, all coming out with our views, and I was glad I could say honestly, along with the others, that the woman we'd seen was by no means out of the question. The truth was, we were all relieved: without quite realising it, we'd been bracing ourselves for a let-down.

12.

Two women were passing by with dogs on leads, and although it was completely stupid, we both stopped talking until they'd gone further up the slope and out of earshot.

13.

I won't be a carer any more come the end of the year, and though I've got a lot out of it, I have to admit I'll welcome the chance to rest – to stop and think and remember. I'm sure it's at least partly to do with that, to do with preparing for the change of pace, that I've been getting this urge to order all these old memories.

14.

For the most part being a carer's suited me fine. You could even say it's brought the best out of me. But some people just aren't cut out for it, and for them the whole thing becomes a real struggle.

15.

She shrugged. "It wasn't any big deal. You remember the way she was back then. If anything, after you left, she got worse. You know, always telling everyone what to do. So I was keeping out of her way, that was all. We never had a big fight or anything. So you haven't seen her since then?"

16.

The fantasy never got beyond that – I didn't let it – and though the tears rolled down my face, I wasn't sobbing or out of control. I just waited a bit, then turned back to the car, to drive off to wherever it was I was supposed to be.

17. A lexical consolidation exercise

Complete these sentences by adding one or two missing phrases from the list. Use each phrase once.

in exchange for	in very good condition
in very bad shape	in order to
in charge of	in fact
in public	in common
in spite of this	in a hurry

1. *The dog was obviously in pain so the vet gave him an injection _____ stop it hurting so much.*
2. *Slow down! You're always _____ .*
3. *It's illegal for the public officials to take gifts _____ for favours*
4. *Who is _____ the place? I want to talk to the manager?*
5. *Doctors quickly discovered that the scientist was _____ .*
6. *She looks confident but _____ she's never sung _____ before.*
7. *It's not _____ . Look. The sleeve is torn.*
8. *They have so little _____ but _____ he's still going out with her.*