

Level 1

Level 1

## The Halloween Surprise

It's Halloween and the Brewster family sweet shop is busy with people buying sweets for the celebrations on October the 31st. The Brewster children, David, Katy and Rosie, are getting ready for their Halloween party. But their parents are worried. Chocolate is going missing from the shop and they don't know why. It's up to David and Katy to use some Halloween magic to discover who is behind the disappearances.

Level 1	A1 > A1+
Level 2	A1+ > A2
Level 3	A2
Level 4	A2 > A2+

The **Black Cab** readers offer enjoyable reading for English learners at four language levels. The original stories are specially written for middle school students, introducing them to aspects of culture in the English-speaking countries they are studying. Illustrations, maps, a list of characters and vocabulary definitions help students understand the stories more easily and take pleasure in reading on their own in English.

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The **Black Cab** 

## The Halloween Surprise

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Illustrated by Kevin Hopgood

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*Illustrated by*  
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## Chapter 1 - The sweet shop

David and Kate Brewster are **twins**. It's Saturday 24th October and they're helping their parents in the family sweet shop. There are always a lot of customers on Saturdays. Their little sister, Rosie, is there too. She's only five and she's very excited because next Saturday is Halloween and the Brewsters are having a party. But Rosie doesn't really understand what Halloween is. David is explaining, "It's a sort of magic night. Some people think that on Halloween – the night of 31st October – all the ghosts come to life."

Rosie looks frightened.

"Don't worry," says David, laughing. "Halloween





isn't real. It's just a lot of fun. People dress up in funny **costumes** and have parties. And there's 'trick or treat' too."

"What's 'trick or treat'?"

"It's when children go from house to house in the evening. Everyone has to give them a 'treat' – some sweets usually. If they don't give them anything, then the children can play a trick on them."

"What sort of trick?"

"I don't know – it never happens! Everyone gives the children something."

"Are we going to do 'trick or treat' next Saturday?"

"Not this year, because we're having a party. Anyway, we don't need more sweets, do we, Rosie? We've got a sweet shop!"



## Chapter 2 - A regular visitor

The door opens and a boy comes in. It's Brian Dent. He's in David and Kate's class at school but David doesn't like him very much. In fact, all the boys are a bit frightened of him.

"Oh no!" says David to Kate. "It's Brian again. He comes into the shop every Saturday, but he never buys anything. He just talks to you."



"Well, I think he likes me... I think he likes me a lot," says Kate.

She takes a **tray** of chocolate **pumpkins** from the counter and starts putting them on the shelves.



Brian doesn't say hello to David. He goes straight to Kate.

"Hi, Kate!" he says, with a big smile. "Can I help you?"

"No, it's OK thanks," says Kate. "Do you want to buy something?"

"Maybe. Maybe not. You look very pretty today, Kate."

"Oh, thanks." Kate goes red and smiles nervously.

After a few seconds, she says, "Tell me something, Brian. You like chocolate, don't you?"

Brian's eyes light up. "Like it? I love it! Why?"

"Well, at school, you always eat a bar of chocolate at break time but when you come here on Saturdays, you never buy anything. And this is the only sweet shop in the village."

"Well, if you want to know, my Mum comes here during the week and buys them for me. What's the problem?"

"Oh, no problem. So why do you come here on Saturdays?"

"Just to see you Kate. You know that."

Kate goes red again. Then her mother calls. She's holding a tray of chocolate spiders.

"Kate, can you put these in the window, please?"

"I'm busy, Mum," says Kate. "But perhaps Brian can help with the spiders."

"What?" says Brian. "Er... no. You go and get the tray of spiders, Kate. Give me the tray of pumpkins."

Kate laughs. "You aren't frightened of spiders, are you, Brian? They're only chocolate!"

"Of course not. I'm not frightened of anything," says



Brian, but his face is white.

David leaves Rosie and goes to Kate at the shop window.

"Kate, do you really like Brian?"

"Well, he's very good-looking. A lot of girls would like to go out with him. And he comes here every Saturday – just to see me."

"I think you're making a big mistake, Kate," says David. But Kate isn't listening.



### Chapter 3 - Plans for the party

It's six o'clock and the shop is closed. Mr Brewster is **doing the accounts**. Mrs Brewster and the children are talking about the party next Saturday.

"There are going to be a lot of people at the party, Mum," says Kate. "All the children in our class are coming." She looks at David. "Even Brian."

"Good. But they must all come in **fancy dress**," says Mrs Brewster.

"What about our costumes, Mum?" asks Kate. "Can I be a witch?"

"Why not? We can use some old clothes and make a hat out of paper."

"I'll make a **broomstick** for you," says David, "and a funny nose – why not a nose that lights up? All you need is a little battery and...."

He stops because Kate and his mother are laughing.

"What's so funny?" asks David.

They're laughing because David loves making things. He spends hours in his room making all sorts of things: model planes, robots and he's very good at it.

"OK, David," says Kate. "Make a funny nose for me, please. But what are you going to be? A robot, I suppose?"

"Robots aren't very **scary**, are they? Maybe a zombie..."

"What can I be?" asks Rosie.

"You're going to be a skeleton," says her mother. I'm making your costume tonight. Come and help me."





## Chapter 4 - Problems



Mrs Brewster and Rosie go upstairs to the flat above the shop. Mr Brewster is still doing the accounts.

"Oh no!" he **exclaims**. "Not again!"

"What's the matter, Dad?" asks David.

"I don't understand it. It's always the same. Every week there's something missing. On Monday, there were two dozen Superchoc bars on that shelf and now there are only twelve. I'm sure we didn't sell twelve during the week."

"Perhaps Rosie ate them," says David, laughing.

"Don't be silly," says Kate. She turns to her father. "You know you aren't very good at maths, Dad. Let me have a look."

Suddenly, there is a knock at the door. A woman is

standing outside.

"Sorry, we're closed!" shouts Mr Brewster, but the woman knocks again. Mr Brewster opens the door.

"Excuse me, I'm looking for my son," says the woman.

"I'm sorry but I don't know you or your son," says Mr Brewster.

"Wait a minute," says Kate, coming to the door. "You're Mrs Dent, aren't you? Brian's mother."

"Yes, that's right. Is Brian here? I know he often comes here on Saturdays."

"No, he isn't. He was here earlier but he left about four o'clock. Is it important?"

"Not really. I've got his mobile phone – he forgot to take it with him this afternoon. Don't worry, I **expect** he's at Anna's house."





"Anna?"

"Yes, Anna. Anna Teasdale. His new girlfriend. Oh well. Thanks anyway. Goodbye!"

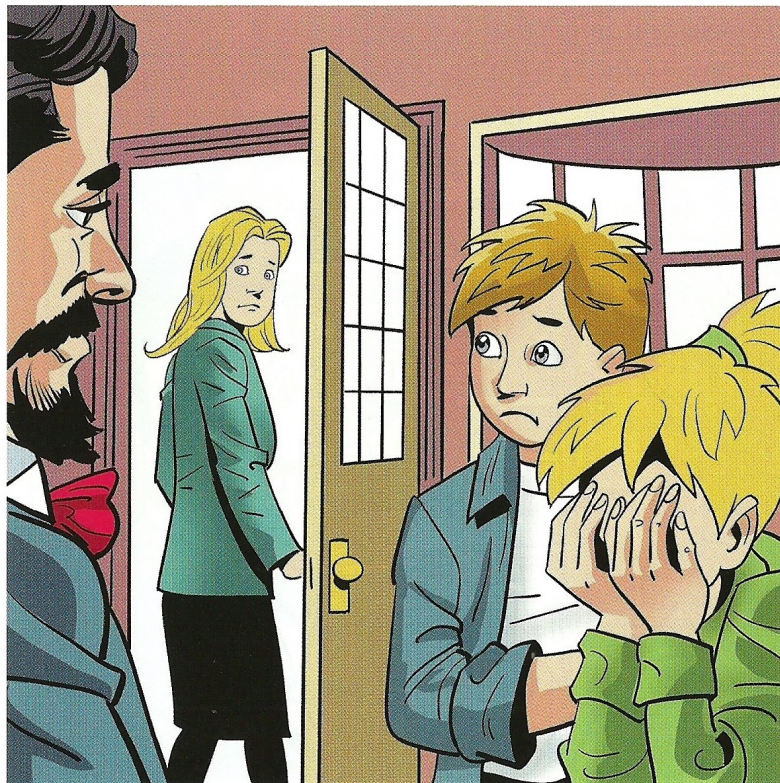
Mrs Dent leaves and Kate turns to David and her father. There are **tears** in her eyes.

"Anna Teasdale!" she cries. "His new girlfriend!"

"Oh dear," says Mr Brewster. "Problems of the heart?"

"**Never mind**, Kate," says David, putting an arm round her. "To be honest, I don't think Brian's very nice."

"Yes, perhaps you're right," says Kate. "He's not very nice."



12 **tears (n.)** When you cry, your eyes fill with tears.  
**Never mind.** It doesn't matter, it isn't important.

## Chapter 5 - On the way to school

It's quarter past eight on Monday morning. David and Kate meet Brian on the way to school.

"Hi, Kate," says Brian. "How are you today?"

"Fine, thanks," says Kate, coldly. "And how's Anna?"



"Who?"

"Anna Teasdale – your new girlfriend!"

"What do you mean?"

"We know about Anna," says David.



"It's none of your business, David," says Brian and pushes him. David falls on to the pavement.

"Don't push my brother like that!" says Kate. "And don't come to our shop again!"

"Don't be silly, Kate," says Brian. "I promise I won't see Anna again. All right? See you later."

Brian takes a chocolate bar out of his pocket and starts eating it as he walks away. David gets up. Luckily, he isn't hurt.

"Do you believe him, Kate?" he asks.

"Not for a minute. You're right. He isn't nice at all."

## Chapter 6 - Think, David!



At break time, Kate and David are sitting on a bench in the playground. Kate looks thoughtful.

"What are you thinking about, Kate?" asks David.

"About Brian."

"What? You said you didn't like him any more."

"No, I don't. It's just that... well, it's very strange."

"What's strange?"

"Dad's in the shop every day, isn't he? All the time,

14 **It's none of your business.** It doesn't concern you, it isn't your problem.

**pavement** (n.) If you walk on a street, you walk on the pavement.

**bench** (n.) a flat seat for several people – in a park, for example – usually made of wood or metal 15

except when he closes for lunch.”

“Yes, that’s right. Sometimes with Mum, sometimes not.”

“But Mum’s never there alone?”

“No, never.”

“So Dad sees all the customers, doesn’t he?”

“Of course. Why all these questions, Kate?”

“Brian says his mother buys his chocolate bars for him in our shop. That’s why he never buys anything when he comes in the shop on Saturdays.”

“So?”

“Think, David!”

After a second, David exclaims, “Oh, I see! Dad didn’t **recognise** Mrs Dent. That means she never comes in the shop!”

“Exactly! So how does Brian get his chocolate bars?”

“He... he **steals** them on Saturdays!”

“Yes, and that’s why there is always something missing when Dad does the accounts! We must go to the police!”

“We can’t,” says David. “We can’t **prove** anything.”

“So what are we going to do?” asks Kate.

David smiles. “I’ve got an idea,” he says. “But I’m going to need your help.”

## Chapter 7 - Friends again?

A little later, Kate is talking to Brian. As usual, he is eating a chocolate bar. Kate is smiling sweetly.

“Look, Brian. I’m not angry with you any more. Can we be friends again?”

“Yes, of course, Kate. You’re very pretty, you know.”

Kate giggles. “Thank you, Brian. And you... you’re very good-looking.”

Brian smiles. “Yes, I know,” he says, and eats another piece of his chocolate bar.





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It's the end of school on Friday afternoon. Kate and David are reminding their friends about the party.

"Listen, everybody," says David. "It starts at seven o'clock. Don't be late! Come in through the shop door, go through the door behind the **counter** and up the stairs. The party is in our living-room on the first floor."

Kate is talking to Brian.

"See you tomorrow, Brian," she says.

"OK. I'll come to the shop in the afternoon as usual."

"No, you can't. The shop is closed all day tomorrow because we're preparing for the party."

"Oh." Brian looks worried.

"But I'll see you at the party. You are coming, aren't you?"

"What? Yes. Yes, of course." Brian looks **thoughtful**.

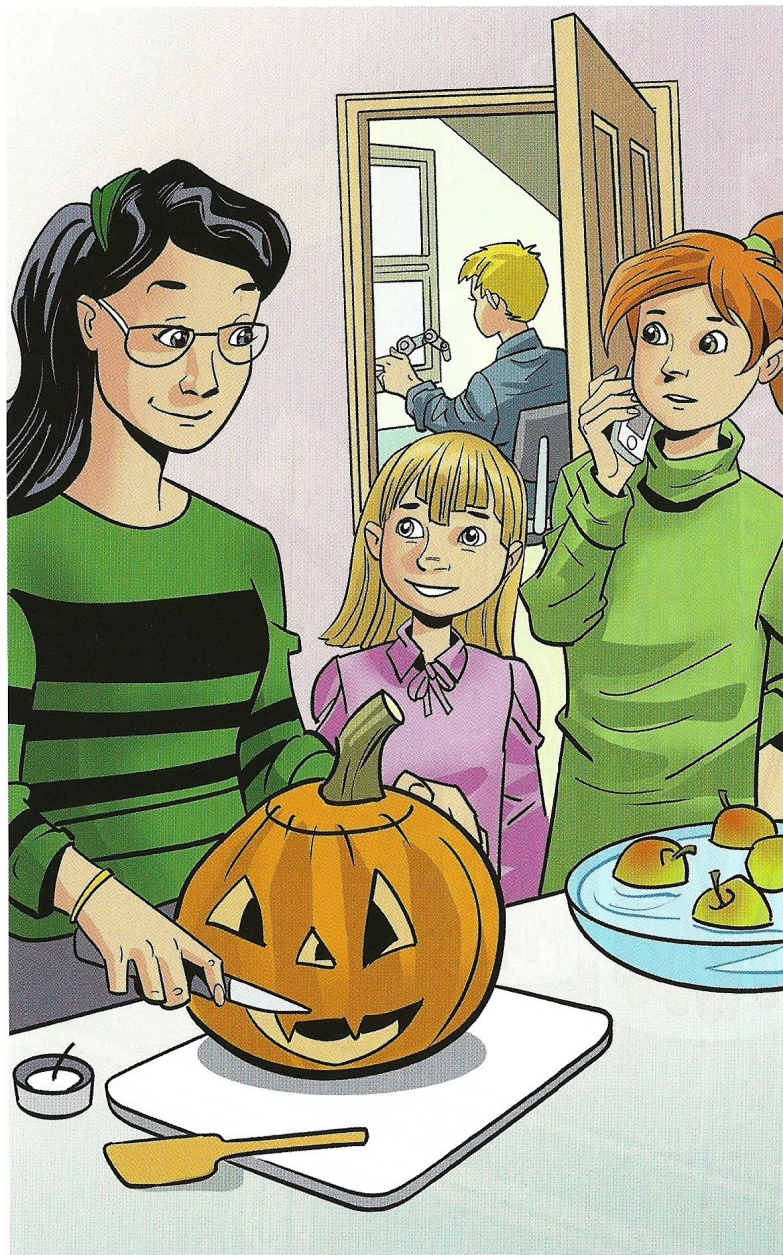
"Oh." Brian looks worried.

"But I'll see you at the party. You are coming, aren't you?"

"What? Yes. Yes, of course." Brian looks thoughtful.







## Chapter 8 - Getting ready for the party

It's Saturday afternoon and the Brewsters are preparing for the party. Mrs Brewster is making a funny pumpkin lamp. Kate is putting apples into a big bowl of water.

"What are you doing, Kate?" asks Rosie.

"It's a game called 'apple bobbing'. You put your head into the bowl, open your mouth and try to get an apple in your teeth."

"It looks very difficult."

"It is, and you get very **wet**. But it's a lot of fun!" says Kate.

Suddenly, Kate's phone rings. It's Brian.

"Hello, Brian. Listen, I can't talk now. I'm very busy. See you later."

"No, wait. I'm calling because..." Brian **coughs**, "... er, I'm not very well. I've got a terrible cold. I can't come to the party tonight. Sorry."

"Oh, what a pity, Brian."

"Yes. I'm really sorry. See you on Monday if I'm better. Bye!"

Kate puts down her phone and calls to David.

"You were right, David. You were absolutely right!"

David is in his bedroom. He's making something...

**wet (adj.)** the opposite of dry

**cough (v.):** You sometimes cough when you've got a cold – you make a noise in your throat.



## Chapter 9 - The pirate



It's half past seven and everyone is having a good time at the party. David and Kate are looking out of the living-room window. The street is almost empty, but a few children are going from house to house in fancy dress.

Suddenly, Kate says, "Look! There he is!"

"Yes," says David. "And he's very clever. He's wearing a pirate costume."

"Why is that clever?"

"Pirates wear long coats, don't they? And coats have pockets..."

"He's almost here," says Kate. "Is everything ready?"

"Yes. I'll go downstairs now."





## Chapter 10 - The Halloween Surprise

Brian opens the shop door. It's very dark inside. He can hear music and voices upstairs. He closes the door and goes to the shelf where his favourite chocolate bars are. The music is very loud and he doesn't hear the key turning in the **lock** of the shop door. He starts putting chocolate bars into the pockets of his pirate coat.



Suddenly, he hears a **whooshing** noise behind him. He turns round and sees an enormous spider! It's bright green, it's got red **flashing** eyes and its legs are moving.

- 24 **lock** (n.,v.) If you want to lock a door, you turn a key in the lock and no one can open it now without a key.



- whooshing noise** (n.) a soft sound when something moves quickly through the air  
**flashing** (adj.) A flashing light goes on and off, on and off.



## Chapter 11 - Take it away!

Upstairs, everyone hears cries from the shop.

"Help! Help! **Let me out!** Let me out! The door's locked! Let me out!"

"What's happening?" asks Mrs Brewster.

"Is it a ghost?" cries Rosie.

"Don't worry, everyone," says Kate. "Just wait. It's a special Halloween surprise."



A few seconds later, they hear **footsteps**. Someone is running up the stairs from the shop to the living-room. It's Brian. His face is white and he looks terrified.

Kate turns off the music.

"Hello, Brian," she says calmly. "What's the matter?"

"A spider! There's an enormous spider in the shop! It's horrible!"

- 26 **take away** (v.) to remove, to take to another place  
**let out** (v.) to free



- footsteps** (n.pl.) the noise of your feet when you walk  
**turn off** (v.) to use a button or a switch to stop a radio, a television, a light...



Then David comes up the stairs behind Brian.

"What's the spider like, Brian?" asks David. "Is it like this?"

Brian turns round and sees the spider in David's hands. Everyone laughs because they can see the spider isn't real.

"Take it away! Take it away!" cries Brian.

"I'll take it away when you empty your pockets, Brian," says David.

"What do you mean, David?" asks Mr Brewster.

"Brian knows what he means," says Kate. She puts her hand in one of Brian's coat pockets and pulls out a chocolate bar, then another and another...

"**Good Heavens!**" says Mr Brewster.

Brian looks miserable. "I can pay for the chocolate bars, Mr Brewster," he says. "Please don't call the police! And don't tell my parents!"

"We're not going to do that," says Mr Brewster. "But you must say you're sorry."

"Now?"

"Yes, now. In front of everyone."

"OK. I'm sorry. I won't do it again."

"And there's one more thing," says David.

"What's that?" asks Brian.

"You're frightened of spiders, aren't you?"

"Yes," says Brian in a small voice.

"Well then, you mustn't say you're not frightened of anything!"

"Yes, you're right. I'm sorry."

Mr Brewster puts his hand on David's shoulder.

"David. Brian was wrong to take things from the shop, but it was very **cruel** to frighten him like that."

"I know," says David. "But now no one's going to be frightened of Brian any more – because you're going to change, aren't you Brian?"

"Yes," says Brian. "I promise. But..."

"But what?" asks David.

"Please take that spider away! Now!"





## WORD LIST

- bench (n.)** a flat seat for several people – in a park, for example – usually made of wood or metal
- bright (adj.)** You need sunglasses if the sun is very bright.
- broomstick (n.)** Witches ride on broomsticks!
- costume (n.)** An actor doesn't wear his own clothes; he wears a costume.
- cough (v.)** You sometimes cough when you've got a cold – you make a noise in your throat.
- counter (v.)** The counter is where they serve you in a fast-food restaurant.
- cruel (adj.)** A cruel person has no feelings and treats other people very badly.
- do the accounts (v.)** to record the money you pay and receive
- exclaim (v.)** to say something suddenly and loudly
- expect (v.)** to be almost certain (that something is going to happen)
- fancy dress (n.)** if you wear fancy dress, you want to look like a famous person from history, an animal, etc.
- flashing (adj.)** A flashing light goes on and off, on and off.
- footsteps (n.pl.)** the noise of your feet when you walk
- Good Heavens!** an expression of surprise
- hurt (adj.)** If you are hurt (in a football match, for example) you probably cry "Ow!" or "Ouch!"
- It's none of your business.** It doesn't concern you, it isn't your problem.
- let out (v.)** to free
- light up (v.)** When your eyes light up, it means you are very interested or excited.
- lock (n.,v.)** If you want to lock a door, you turn a key in the lock and no one can open it now without a key.
- luckily (adv.)** You are lucky if good things happen to you by chance.
- Never mind.** It doesn't matter, it isn't important.
- pavement (n.)** If you are walking along a city street, you must walk on the pavement.
- play a trick on someone (v.)** to cause problems for someone – but as a joke
- prove (v.)** You prove your identity to someone when you show your identity papers.
- pumpkin (n.)** a big round orange vegetable
- recognise (v.)** to know someone when you see them

## WORD LIST

- scary (adj.)** frightening
- spirit (n.)** a ghost
- steal (v.)** to take something that isn't yours
- take away (v.)** to remove, to take to another place
- tear (n.)** When you cry, your eyes fill with tears.
- thoughtful (adj.)** If you look thoughtful, it looks like you're thinking carefully.
- tray (n.)** a tray is flat and you carry things on it
- turn off (v.)** to use a button or a switch to stop a radio, a television, a light...