

My earliest memory

When I was about four or five, my grandmother, who was Polish, was living (live) in London and we children often ¹ (spend) weekends at her flat. My grandfather ² (die) a couple of years earlier, so I suppose she was in need of company. We loved going there, as my grandmother ³ (cook) special meals for us and ⁴ (take) us for lovely walks in Regent's Park, which was quite nearby. One occasion that I remember really well was when she ⁵ (invite) me to stay with her on my own, without my brothers and sisters. On the first day, after lunch, my grandmother ⁶ (go) for her rest. I ⁷ (try) to sleep too, but I couldn't, so after a while I ⁸ (get up) and ⁹ (decide) to explore the flat. Everything was very quiet, so I was convinced that my grandmother ¹⁰ (sleep). The room I most ¹¹ (want) to explore was my grandfather's study, I imagine, precisely because she ¹² (tell) me not to go in there. I opened the door and went in, and was immediately drawn to his large old desk. I ¹³ (climb) onto the chair and ¹⁴ (see) on the desk a green pen in a kind of stand, with a bottle of ink. I ¹⁵ (ask) my parents for a real pen for a long time, but they ¹⁶ (refuse), foreseeing the mess that I was almost bound to make with the ink. I picked up the pen and then tried to open the bottle of ink. At that moment, I ¹⁷ (hear) my grandmother's voice saying, 'Christina? Where are you? What are you doing?' To my horror, I ¹⁸ (realize) that my grandmother ¹⁹ (get up) and ²⁰ (come) towards the study. Two seconds later, she ²¹ (open) the door. I will never forget the awful feeling of shame that she ²² (catch) me doing something that she ²³ (forbid) me to do.