



# Learn English Through Stories

## D Series

### D35

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# 1. My Cousin Rachel

by Margaret Turner

The New Year began and my birthday — on 1st April — was three months away. How I wanted to have control of my own money! I was tired of Nick Kendall being my guardian.

However, I could spend money on the house. I decided to make it beautiful for Rachel. There were many repairs to be done. From January, I had nearly twenty men working for me. The bills for the work were sent to my godfather.

Rachel and I had many plans for the gardens too. Work had started on a sunken water-garden. We had found the design for the water-garden in one of Rachel's books.

Because there were so many workmen in the house, we could not have visitors. My cousin Rachel and I stayed quietly at home and I was very happy. I loved to watch Rachel move about the house. I loved to hear her voice. When her hands touched me, my heart beat faster.

The first days of spring came and the sun shone. Then something happened which took all my happiness away again.

I had kept one of Ambrose's old coats to wear myself. One day, as I was walking in the woods, I felt something in a pocket. It was another letter from Ambrose.

I was pleased that I was alone. I walked on until I reached the highest place on the estate. Ambrose had always loved to sit there. I sat down and held the letter in my hands. I did not want to open it. I was afraid that Ambrose had written something bad about Rachel. We were so happy together now that I wanted to forget the past. But at last, I opened the letter. It had been written three months before his death, but he had never posted it.

My cousin Rachel, Ambrose wrote, had been expecting a child, but it had died.

The doctors told her that she could never have another child. At first, Rachel was quiet and unhappy. Then she began to spend money carelessly. Ambrose suspected that Rainaldi was in love with her. For these reasons, Ambrose had not signed his new will, in which he left everything to Rachel.

Ambrose also wrote about his terrible headaches. He told me about the fever which at first made him violent. Then it made him very weak. Ambrose was very unhappy and he had written: You are the only person who can help me, Philip. Are Rachel and Rainaldi trying to poison me for my money? I must know!



I hid the terrible letter under a large stone and walked slowly back to the house. I could not forget Ambrose's words. But I decided that Rachel must never know about the letter.

In three weeks' time the estate and all the money would be mine. But this was not right. Ambrose had made a new will, but he had not signed it because of his illness. His money belonged to Rachel. She must have it.

That night, I asked Rachel about Ambrose's will. She showed me a copy of it, which I read carefully. Everything had been left to Rachel. Then if she had died without children, everything was to be mine.

'Why did Ambrose not sign this will?' I asked. 'Tell me, Rachel.'

'I don't know,' she answered quietly. 'Perhaps when he knew we could not have children, his feelings changed. Perhaps it was only a mistake. But when the headaches started, Ambrose suspected me of terrible things. I can't speak about that time. Please leave me alone, Philip. I can't answer any more questions.'

'I have reasons for my questions,' I said. 'You will understand in three weeks' time.'

By the following morning, I had made up my mind. I rode into the town and, with the help of a lawyer, wrote out a document. In three weeks' time, all my property would be given to Mrs. Rachel Ashley. The jewels would belong to her too. But she would not be able to sell the house or the land.

'I have one question,' the lawyer said. 'Mrs. Ashley is quite a young woman.

What will happen to the property if she marries again?'

I thought for a moment. The house and the estate must always belong to the Ashleys. 'If she marries,' I said, 'or if she dies, the property becomes mine again. That must be made clear.'

I told the lawyer that the document must be kept secret. He promised to send me a copy on the last day of March.

I felt very happy as I rode home. My dear Rachel would never leave me now.

We would live in perfect happiness forever.

When I reached the house, I heard voices in the library. The door opened and Rachel came out, laughing happily.

'Come and see my visitor, Philip,' she cried. 'He has come a long way to see us both.'

The man stood up and held out his hand.

It was Rainaldi. We stood there, looking at each other. Then Rainaldi began talking about his journey. Rachel suggested that he should stay in the house for a few days. I could say nothing.

During dinner, Rachel and Rainaldi talked about people and places I knew nothing about. Often, they spoke in Italian and I could not understand a word.



‘Rainaldi and I have some business to discuss. He has brought papers I must sign.’

They went upstairs and I walked alone in the gardens. I felt cold and unhappy. I stayed outside until the light went out in Rainaldi’s room. I had just reached my own room when there was a quiet knock on my door.

‘I came to wish you goodnight,’ my cousin Rachel said. ‘Why didn’t you come and drink tisana with us, Philip? You must make Rainaldi welcome. He is a very old friend of mine.’

Rainaldi stayed with us for seven days. As he laughed and talked with Rachel, I began to hate him. When it was time for Rainaldi to leave, he took my cousin Rachel’s hand and kissed it.

‘Write and tell me your plans,’ he said. ‘I shall be in London for some time.’

‘I am making no plans until after the first of April,’ Rachel replied with a laugh. Rainaldi smiled. ‘I hope Philip enjoys his birthday,’ he said. ‘1st April is All Fools’ Day, isn’t it? But perhaps Philip doesn’t want to remember that.’

When Rainaldi had gone, Rachel smiled at me. ‘You have been very good, Philip,’ she said. ‘Are you glad we are alone again?’

## Chapter twelve: All Fools' Day

As my birthday came nearer, I became more and more excited.

Rachel laughed at me. 'You are like a child!' she said. 'What plans are you making for the day?'

But I had made no plans. All I wanted was that Rachel should know about the document. And one more thing — Rachel should have all the family jewels. I went to the bank myself. I brought them back to the house and hid them in my room.

On the last day of March, I rode over to Nick Kendall. First, I handed him a copy of Ambrose's will. My godfather looked at it carefully.

'I don't understand why Ambrose didn't sign it,' he said. 'But we have done all we can for Mrs Ashley.'

'I don't agree,' I said. 'I want to make everything right.' And I handed him a copy of the document the lawyer had prepared.

'Read this,' I said. 'And remember that my cousin Rachel knows nothing about it.'

'I wish Signor Rainaldi had seen this,' Nick Kendall said slowly. 'He told me how careless Mrs. Ashley is with money. This document of yours gives her great power over the property. I have to ask you one question, Philip. Are you in love with Mrs. Ashley?'

My face went red.

'I am only doing what Ambrose wanted,' I said.

'Perhaps,' Nick Kendall answered. 'But people are talking. Mrs. Ashley should leave, get married again. She might marry you if you asked her.'

'I am sure she would not,' I said.

Nick Kendall watched me sadly as I signed my name on the document.

'There are some women who bring sadness to all those who love them,' he said. 'They cannot help it. I think Mrs. Ashley is one of those women.'

The sun was setting as I rode home. I bathed, changed my clothes and went into the dining-room. Rachel wanted to know where I had been. But I laughed and told her nothing.

After dinner, I was too excited to sit still. I walked down to the sea. There was

a moon and the night was warm. I took off my clothes and for a few minutes I swam in the ice-cold water.

When I got back to the house, it was five minutes to twelve. I could not wait any longer. I stood under Rachel's window and called her name. When she looked out, I said, 'I have something for you, Rachel.'

Then I ran to my room for the jewels.

'I want you to have these now,' I said. 'Listen, the clock is striking twelve and it is the first of April. I am twenty-five and I can do what I like.'

I put the document on her table and began to open the boxes of jewels. Rachel's eyes opened wide in surprise and suddenly we were laughing together. I put the pearl collar round her neck. As I looked at her, I remembered the other Ashley women who had worn it.



*I put the document on her table and began to open the boxes of jewels.*

'You have given me so much,' Rachel said at last. 'I have only a small present for you. What else can I give you? Tell me.'



‘There is one thing,’ I said. I looked into her dark eyes. They shone very brightly in the candle-light. She laughed softly and blew out the candle. We were alone in the darkness.

I did not leave her room until sunrise. Happiness had come to me at last. Rachel accepted me and my love. She was the first woman I ever loved - and she was the last.

I remember walking alone in the garden as the birds began to sing. Rachel and I would be always together now — day after day, night after night, for all our lives.

I went back to my room and slept. After breakfast, I went into the garden again. I picked the most beautiful flowers I could find.

Rachel was in bed, eating her breakfast. I threw the flowers on the bed in front of her.

‘Good morning, again,’ I said. ‘I have come to say one Thing — I love you.’

Rachel looked up at me without smiling. ‘You should not come into my room so early,’ she said. ‘The servants will talk.’

I smiled, but said nothing. I went downstairs. I wanted to tell the servants that Rachel and I were going to be married. Then I decided that we would tell them together, later.

I walked in the gardens until it was time for Rachel to leave her room. The day was fine and I decided we should go out riding. But when I got back to the house, Rachel had already left. I waited for a long time, but she did not return. At last, I walked along the road, hoping to meet her.

When I saw the carriage, I stopped it. I got in and sat down beside Rachel. She was wearing a veil and I could not see her face.

‘Where have you been?’ I asked her. ‘To see your godfather.’

‘You cannot change anything,’ I told her. ‘I am twenty-five. Everything I have is yours.’

‘Yes, I understand that now,’ Rachel said. ‘But I wanted to be sure.’ Her voice was quiet. I did not think she was smiling.

‘Let me look at your face,’ I said.

She lifted her veil. There was no love in her eyes now.

‘I think Louise was a little more friendly today,’ Rachel said. ‘She will make

you a good wife. We made plans to meet in London together.'

I looked at her in surprise. It was unkind of her to make jokes about Louise.

And why was Rachel talking about London? We had made no plans to go there.

'Come into the woods, Rachel,' I whispered. 'I want to kiss you so much.'

She did not answer, but took something out of her bag. 'Here is your present,' she said, and she gave me a small, gold pin for my tie. 'If I had known about the money, I would have bought something larger.'

As I dressed for dinner, I could think of only one thing. Money is the one way to please her ... the one way to please her ...

When we sat down together for my birthday dinner, Rachel was wearing the pearl collar. We both drank wine and I started to feel happier. Time would soon pass. When the mourning time was over, Rachel would be my wife ...

While we were sitting at the table, the Kendalls came into the room. When they had wished me a happy birthday, I stood up, my glass in my hand.

'From this morning, I have been the happiest of men,' I said. 'I want you to be the first to know. Rachel has promised to be my wife.'

I smiled at them all. But Rachel's face was hard and cold.

'Have you gone mad, Philip?' she said. She looked at the Kendalls. 'You must forgive him, he has drunk too much wine. I'm sure he will apologize.'

Rachel got up and the others followed her out of the room. I stood without moving until I heard them leave the house. When Rachel came back, we stared at each other without speaking.

Then Rachel said, 'You had better go to bed, Philip, before you say any more foolish things.'

'Foolish?' I repeated. 'But last night ... Surely you love me, Rachel? Last night you proved that you loved me. It was a promise of marriage ...'

'No, Philip, I had no thought of marriage. I was thanking you for the jewels, that was all. There was no love.'

I looked at her hard, cold face. I began to understand what Ambrose had suffered. She had everything. What else could I do? Suddenly I wanted to frighten her, to show her my strength. I put my hands round her neck and

looked into her eyes.

'Will you marry me now?' I whispered.

Her dark eyes were full of fear, but she did not speak. I loosened my fingers.

There were red marks on her white skin.

Rachel turned and went upstairs. I followed her, but she was too quick for me.

She closed her door and locked it.

As she stood there, I saw myself in a mirror on the wall. There I stood, tall, awkward, white faced. But was it myself or Ambrose standing there?

As I lay in bed, I heard the clock strike midnight. All Fools' Day was over.

## 2. Grammar page

### Am, I and Are:

The words 'am, is, are' are also verbs, but they are not action words. They are the simple present tense of the verb be. Use **am** with the pronoun I, and **is** with the pronouns he, she and it. Use **are** with the pronouns you, we and they.



1. I am Banta. I am not Santa.
2. She is Miss Reeta. She is a teacher.
3. He is my father. He is a doctor. He is not a lawyer. He is very clever. He is not stupid.
4. You are a stranger. You are not my friend.
5. We are in the same class, but we are not on the same team.
6. They are good friends. They are not enemies. They are good people. They are not bad people.
7. She is my mum. Her name is Kapati. She is a scold.

## Exercise

Fill in the blanks with am, is or are.

1. They \_\_\_\_\_ my good friends.
2. He \_\_\_\_\_ a soldier.
3. You \_\_\_\_\_ taller than Charlie.
4. She \_\_\_\_\_ ill.
5. We \_\_\_\_\_ very hungry.
6. It \_\_\_\_\_ a sunny day.
7. I \_\_\_\_\_ angry with Joe.
8. You \_\_\_\_\_ all welcome to my house.

## Answers

Fill in the blanks with **am**, **is** or **are**.

1. They **are** my good friends.
2. He **is** a soldier.
3. You **are** taller than Banta.
4. She **is** ill.
5. We **are** very hungry.
6. It **is** a sunny day.
7. I **am** angry with Joe.
8. You **are** all welcome to my house.