

FREDRIK BACKMAN

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF  
*ANXIOUS PEOPLE*

# BRITT-MARIE WAS HERE

"Backman's truest,  
most satisfying  
book to date."

—*Paste Magazine*



# ESL 360 BOOK CLUB

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Chapters 9 -11  
18 February 2026

## Weekly Book Club Assignments, Group A (10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.)

Week	Date	Reading	Ira	Flavia	Maria	Lisa	Mariana	Banu	Fatemeh
2	28 Jan	Ch 1-3	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Time Keeper
3	4 Feb	Ch 4-5	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Time Keeper
4	11 Feb	Ch 6-8	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Time Keeper
5	18 Feb	Ch 9-11	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Time Keeper
6	25 Feb	Ch 12-14	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Time Keeper
7	4 Mar	Ch 15-17	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Time Keeper
8	11 Mar	Ch 18-20	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Time Keeper
	18 Mar	NO BOOK CLUB — SPRING BREAK							
9	25 Mar	Ch 21-23	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Time Keeper
10	1 Apr	Ch 24-26	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Time Keeper
11	8 Apr	Ch 27-29	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Time Keeper
12	15 Apr	Ch 30-32	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Time Keeper
13	22 Apr	Ch 33-34	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Time Keeper
14	29 Apr	Ch 35-36	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Time Keeper
15	6 May	Ch 37	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Time Keeper
16	13 May	Ch 38	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Time Keeper

## Weekly Book Club Assignments, Group B (11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.)

Week	Date	Reading	Monica	Cristy	Esmeralda	Yulianna	Lily S.	Yariela	Lily L.
2	28 Jan	Ch 1-3	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker
3	4 Feb	Ch 4-5	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer
4	11 Feb	Ch 6-8	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker
5	18 Feb	Ch 9-11	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder
6	25 Feb	Ch 12-14	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter
7	4 Mar	Ch 15-17	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer
8	11 Mar	Ch 18-20	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist
	18 Mar	NO BOOK CLUB — SPRING BREAK							
9	25 Mar	Ch 21-23	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker
10	1 Apr	Ch 24-26	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer
11	8 Apr	Ch 27-29	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker
12	15 Apr	Ch 30-32	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder
13	22 Apr	Ch 33-34	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter
14	29 Apr	Ch 35-36	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer
15	6 May	Ch 37	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist
16	13 May	Ch 38	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker

# 60-SECOND SUMMARIZER

LISA

**Chapter 9** Britt Marie stands next to the window of the recreation center watching the siblings Vega and Omar playing outside. She notices that Omar is always in his sister's shadow and this reminds her of Ingrid. Ingrid was the positive, talented, and charismatic sister and people always loved her. Britt Marie remembers about her balcony again, and shares about her love for saving homeless plants. It gives her the strength because she couldn't save her sister. Later, the siblings see Britt Marie and ask if they can watch the match inside the recreation center. Of course, this situation is not in Britt Marie's list, so she calls to the employment office to get permission. She comes back to talk with the kids and sees a policeman next to them. Sven, the policeman, introduces himself, says welcome to her, and gives her a jar of jam.

**Chapter 10** Britt Marie allows the siblings and their friends (Dino, Toad and Pirate) to enter inside the recreation center. They sit on the sofa wearing white jerseys and drinking soda. Britt Marie makes sure they sit on towels. The kids are very superstitious. Everything needs to be the same as the last time they won. Because of the superstition, Britt Marie and Pirate are locked out of the room.

**Chapter 11** Britt Marie spends the second half time in front of the mirror in the bathroom until the match is over. Sven is there again and gives her a piece of paper about a room that is available for rent. He also says he can drive her to the recreation center if she wanted but she refuses because she is afraid everyone thinks she is a criminal. The policeman looks ashamed of himself and turns to leave. Soon, he returns and show a bamboo curtain to Britt Marie and says that she can hold it against the window, so no one can see her. She stands in silence for a long time, and finally she decides to get her things.

# DEEP THINKER

LISA

## Questions:

1. Why didn't Britt Marie get upset with the kids for being locked outside? Why do you think she allowed that?
2. Do you think living in her sister's shadow affected Britt Marie's life?
3. The policeman was kind to Britt Marie. Why do you think he was so kind? What do you think will happen later?

# 60-SECOND SUMMARIZER

LILY S.

The weather in Borg is mild, the snow turns to rain, and everything begins in a serious and focused manner. Despite the rain and the darkness, the children play soccer. From the kitchen window, behind the curtains Britt Marie watches them.

The rat is gone. Britt Marie closes the door and washes and cleans the recreation center once again.

The siblings Vega and Omar play on opposing teams. Britt Marie doesn't know about soccer, but anyone can see that Vega is the better player, or the least worse. Britt Marie is reminded of her sister Ingrid when she sees Omar and all the other kids living in Vegas's shadow. Everyone loved Ingrid; she was never negative, always positive.

Britt Marie remembers her past. Ingrid, Britt Marie's sister dreamed of visiting Paris. After Ingrid's death, her father abandoned them and her mother became bitter and depressed. Kent and his brother Alf were neighbors; they both courted Britt Marie. When her mother dies, Kent visits Britt Marie; he is divorced and has two kids.

Shortly after, the children ask to watch a football match on television at the recreation center. Britt Marie reluctantly agrees and becomes entangled in a world of football superstitions, which leaves her outside the recreation center and in the bathroom.

Britt Marie let the children in, and the same time, a short, chubby policeman appeared among them. Sven introduced himself. He welcomes Britt Marie and gives her a jar of blueberry jam he made. He likes Britt Marie despite being hazy. Sven handed the jam to Vega and staggered away from the doorway toward the parking lot, heading for the pizzeria.

# 60-SECOND SUMMARIZER

LILY S.

(continued...)

The children sit on the sofa wearing the white T-shirts that she had washed and drink soft drinks while watching the soccer game.

Sven, the policeman, drives again to the recreation center, offering to drive Britt Marie to a place where she can stay: Bank's house. Britt Marie is concerned about being seen with the policeman, so he goes back and brings a bamboo screen thing. Sven takes Britt Marie to Bank's house. Bank rents Britt-Marie a room but only until she sells the house. The events in these chapters mark a turning point in the story for Britt-Marie and the people living in Borg.

# DEEP THINKER

CRISTY

1. Why do you think Britt-Marie accepts the children's company?
2. Why do you think Vega is such a smart girl? Do you think something happened to her to make her that way?
3. Why is Britt-Maria starting to feel more comfortable?

# VOcabuLARY BUIlDER

## MARIANA

### 1. **DRIPPING** (verb) /'dri:pɪŋ/ – DRIP-ing

**Sentence from the book:** (p. 75, Ch. 9) “Worse still, she’s dripping mud and rain on the floor.”

**Dictionary meaning:** To let liquid fall in small drops.

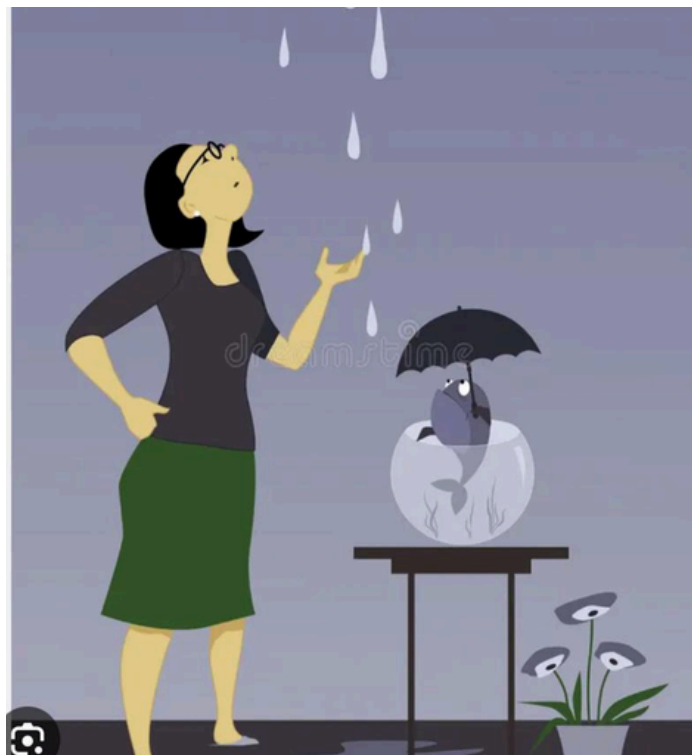
**My definition:** Dripping means water is falling little by little.

#### **Example new sentences:**

“My jacket was dripping after the storm.”

I told my daughter, “Your umbrella is dripping. Leave it outside.”

#### **Picture idea:**



### 2. **UNCOMPROMISING** (adj) /ʌn'kɒm.prə.maɪ.zɪŋ/ – un-KOM-pruh-MY-zing

**Sentence from the book** (p. 81 Ch. 10): “...Britt-Marie interjects with uncompromising articulation.”

**Dictionary meaning:** Not willing to change opinion or behavior.

**My definition:** Uncompromising means very firm and not flexible.

#### **Example new sentences:**

“I am uncompromising about being on time.”

“I said in a meeting, ‘I am uncompromising about safety rules.’”

#### **Picture idea:**



# VOcabuLARY BUIlDER

MARIANA

3. **SLIGHTLY** (adverb) /'slaitli/ – SLYTE-lee

**Sentence from the book** (p. 82, Ch. 10): “He suddenly looks slightly nervous.”

**Dictionary meaning:** A small amount; a little.

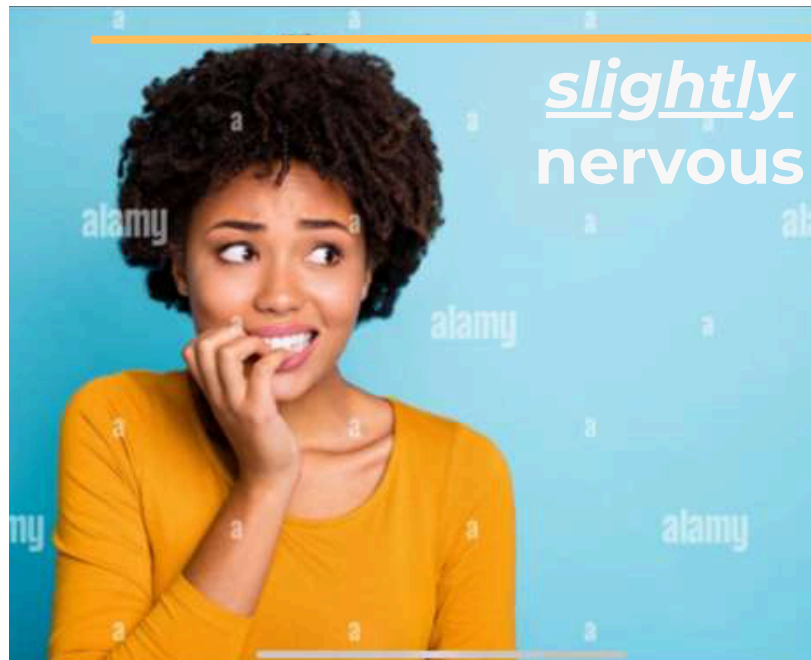
**My definition:** Slightly means a little bit.

**Example new sentences:**

“I felt slightly tired this morning.”

“I told my friend, ‘I am slightly worried about the test.’”

**Picture idea:**



4. **THRESHOLD** (noun) /'θrɛʃhoʊld/ – THRESH-hohld

**Sentence from the book** (p. 85, Ch. 10): “...She catches hold of his collar but he’s already wearing his shoes and has already gone over the threshold.”

**Dictionary meaning:** The entrance of a doorway.

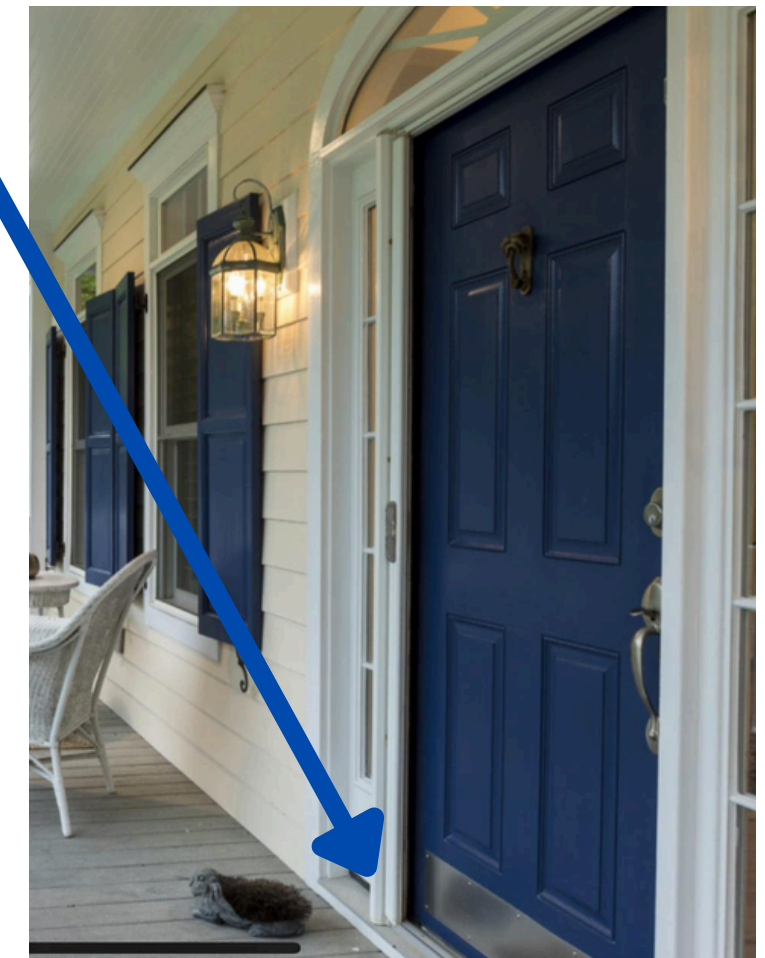
**My definition:** Threshold is the step at the door.

**Example new sentences:**

“The dog waited at the threshold.”

I said, “Please take off your shoes at the threshold.”

**Picture idea:**



# VOcabuLARY BUIlDER

## MARIANA

5. **ASHAMED** (adj) /ə'ʃeɪmd/ – uh-SHAYMD

**Sentence from the book** (p. 92, Ch. 11): “The policeman looks ashamed of himself.”

**Dictionary meaning:** Feeling guilty or embarrassed.

**My definition:** Ashamed means feeling bad about something you did.

**Examples= new sentences:**

“I felt ashamed after I forgot my appointment.”

“I told my son, ‘It’s okay to feel ashamed, but learn from your mistake.’”

**Picture idea:**



# VOCABULARY BUILDER

LILY L.

1. **INFINITELY** (adverb) /'ɪn.fə.nɪt.li/ – IN-fuh-nit-lee

**Sentence from the book:** “The usual boys who, Britt-Marie realizes, were infinitely too unusual to even look at Britt-Marie and yet far too usual in every way to deserve her sister.” (Chapter 9, page 73)

**Dictionary definition:** to an extremely large degree; without limits.

**In my own words:** Infinitely means something goes on without limits or is extremely large. It can describe emotions, numbers, or possibilities that feel huge.

**My own sentence:** “I was infinitely grateful when my friend helped me finish my project at the last minute.”

**Bonus:** I used this word when I told my sister, “I’m infinitely happy you came to my birthday party!”



# VOCABULARY BUILDER

LILY L.

**2. AMBIVALENT** (adj) /æm'bi.v.ə.lənt/ – am-BIV-uh-lent  
indifferent – no strong emotion; don't really care.

**Sentence from the book:** “The policeman looks ambivalent.” (Chapter 9, page 79)

**Dictionary definition:** having mixed or conflicting feelings about something.

**In my own words:** Ambivalent means you feel two opposite things at the same time, like being unsure or torn about a decision.

**My own sentence:** “I felt ambivalent about joining the new club because I wanted to try it, but I was nervous.”

**Bonus:** I used this word in conversation: “I’m ambivalent about going to the concert because I like the band, but I don’t like crowds.”



# VOCABULARY BUILDER

LILY L.

**2. AMBIVALENT** (adj) /æm'bi.və.lənt/ – am-BIV-uh-lent  
indifferent – no strong emotion; don't really care.

Ambivalent-ambi- — “both” or “on both sides”

• valent — from the Latin verb valere, meaning “to be strong” or “to have power”

So literally, it means “having strength on both sides.”  
In other words, two opposite feelings are equally strong.

🧠 History of the word:

The term was introduced in the early 20th century by Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler. He used it in psychology to describe a state in which a person experiences opposite emotions at the same time (for example, love and hate).



# VOCABULARY BUILDER

LILY L.

### 3. **ADMITTEDLY** (adverb) /əd'mɪtɪdli/ -- ad-MIT-id-lee

**Sentence from the book:** “Admittedly there weren’t any proper coasters, so Britt-Marie has used two pieces of toilet paper folder over.”  
(Chapter 10, page 81)

**Dictionary definition:** used to agree or admit that something is true, often reluctantly.

**In my own words:** Admittedly means you’re agreeing with a fact or truth, sometimes even if you didn’t want to at first.

**My own sentence:** “Admittedly, I forgot to bring my homework to class, but I explained it to my teacher.”

**Bonus:** I used this word when I told my friend, “Admittedly, I was nervous before the game, but I played my best.”



# VOcabuLARY BUIlDER

LILY L.

## 4. **MISSPELLED** (adj)\* mis'spɛld/ – miss-SPELD

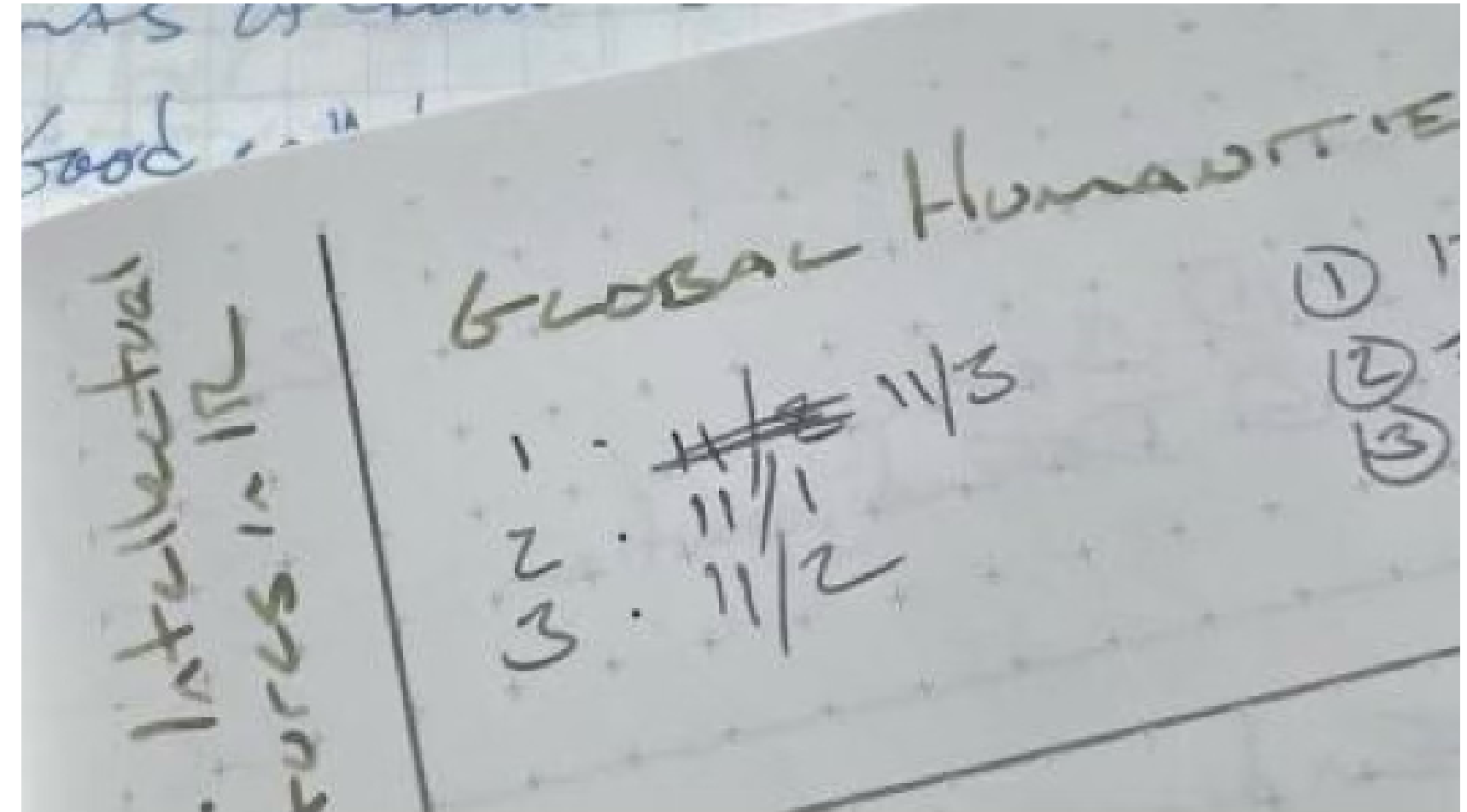
**Sentence from the book:** “It’s a handwritten, misspelled advertisement for a room that’s available for rent.” (Chapter 11, page 91)

**Dictionary definition:** a word that is spelled incorrectly.

**In my own words:** Misspelled means a word that is written the wrong way — the letters aren’t in the correct order.

**My own sentence:** “I noticed my friend’s misspelled name in a text and quickly fixed it before sending it.”

**Bonus:** I used this word in conversation: “Your email address was accidentally misspelled in my contacts list, so my message didn’t go through.”



\***misspelled (verb)** can also be a past-tense form of the verb misspell, which means the act of spelling something incorrectly. “I misspelled her name.”

\***misspelling** can also be a noun, meaning a spelling mistake. “I noticed a misspelling in the book.”

# SOUND SPOTTER

BANU

## 1. **Ambivalent** (c.9) æm'bɪvələnt/

“Sven feels ambivalent when he first meets Britt-Marie because she is different from what the children described.”

This word is difficult because it has many syllables and the stress is in the middle.

exp: “I felt ambivalent [conflicted] about moving to a new country, excited about new opportunities but sad to leave my friends.”

## 2. **Fastidious** (c.9) /fæ'stɪdiəs/

“Britt-Marie is very fastidious about coasters, clean floors, and proper glasses.”

This word is hard because of the long pronunciation. It is easy to say it too fast.

exp: “My mom is fastidious about keeping her kitchen clean after cooking.”

## 3. **Preposterous** (c.10) /prɪ 'pɑːstərəs/

“Britt-Marie thinks it is preposterous that the children believe the TV team is their real team.”

exp: “It would be preposterous for them to build apartments on the Native American burial ground.”

# SOUND SPOTTER

BANU

## 4. **Despondently** (c.11) /dɪ'spɒːndəntli/

“Simon shakes his head despondently when Britt-Marie refuses his offer.”

This word is difficult because it has many consonants together.

exp: “She sighed despondently when she realized I didn’t understand what she was saying.”

## 5. **Superstitious** /suːpər'stɪʃəs/

“The children are superstitious about soccer and believe certain actions bring good luck.”

This word is hard because of the “sti-shus” sound and the long structure.

exp: Ron tried every superstitious ritual he knew, lucky socks ,knocking on wood and etc. Harry walked despondently to Slughorn's office in Hogwarts to ask for powdered unicorn horn, knowing the superstitious professor believed it would bring bad luck to give away such a precious ingredient.”

# SOUND SPOTTER

MONICA

## 1. **Twiddle** (verb) /'twɪd(ə)l/ – TWID-uhl

to twist, move or fiddle with something in a purposeless or nervous way.

Book sentence: As you might twiddle your toes against someone you love while sleeping.

New sentence: When I was little, I used to twiddle my shoe laces instead of tying them.

Pronunciation difficulty: The last syllable sounds like an r instead of l.

## 2. **Admittedly** (adverb) /əd'mɪdədəlē/ – ad-MIT-id-lee

used to introduce a concession or recognition that something is true or is the case.

Book sentence: Admittedly, it seemed a bit odd to have an American name in Paris. (Page 152)

New sentence: “Admittedly, strength lies in Unity”

Pronunciation difficulty: It is confusing seeing last syllable tted sound dəd.

## 3. **Shudder** (verb) /'SHədər/ – SHUD-er

Tremble or shake with fear, cold, or other strong emotion.

Book sentence: He falls headlong into a muddy puddle. Britt Marie shudders.

New sentence: “One chilly morning after my workout, I left the gym and my body shuddered in the cold”.

Pronunciation difficulty: The vowel sound in both syllables doesn't seem to be the same sound when pronounced.

## 4. **Despondently** (adverb) /dɪ'spɔːn.dənt.li/ – dih-SPON-dent-lee

doing something in a way that shows a complete loss of hope, courage, or spirit.

Book sentence: He shakes his head despondently and turns to leave (page 190)

New sentence: “I was looking despondently at the empty streets during COVID.”

Pronunciation difficulty: Second syllable sounds like a short a?

# SOUND SPOTTER

MONICA

**5. allot** (verb) /ə'lät/ – uh-LOT

To give or assign something as a share portion or task.

Book sentence: He had certainly done his allotted share of the task. (Page 191)

New sentence: When we were young, we were allotted a list of chores that rotated weekly.

Pronunciation difficulty: The second syllable sounds like a short a?

# CHARACTER ANALYZER

## IRA

**Character:** Sven the policeman from Borg

**Traits:** sheepish, fumble

**sheepish** (shy, bashful) is a mental state and the resulting behavior of a person, characterized by indecision, fearfulness, tension, stiffness, and awkwardness in society due to a lack of self-confidence or social skills.

**fumbling / bumbling** (clumsiness) is a term used to describe behavior in which a person moves out of proportion, makes abrupt or imprecise actions, and often drops objects or bumps into surrounding objects.

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### **Evidence:**

- He stares dumbly for a moment while he tries to think of something to say to her, but in the end decides the most civic thing he can do is to hold out a big glass jar towards Britt-Marie. (p. 79)
- At a loss, Sven scratches himself on various parts of his police uniform. (p.79)
- Sven blushes.
- "No, no, no, of course, that's not what I meant. I want... just welcome to Borg, just that. That's all I wanted to say."
- He presses the jam jar into Vega's hands and totters away from the threshold... (p.80)
- The policeman smiles and holds out a piece of paper, which he drops just as he's giving it to Britt-Marie. (p.91)
- The policeman swallows and seems to be drumming up some courage. A little too abruptly he whips out a bamboo curtain, almost smacking it into Britt-Marie's forehead. (p.93)

# CHARACTER ANALYZER

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I R A

**(continued . . .)**

**Character:** Sven the policeman from Borg

**Traits:** sheepish, fumble

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Sven, a policeman, is short and chubby with strange-looking hair, kind but very shy, with the best of intentions he tries several times to start a conversation and explain to Britt-Marie the essence of the proposed solution to the housing problem, but each time his movements and thoughts are angular, abrupt and slightly awkward, but in fact they melt the chill and wariness in Britt-Marie's soul and... the thing that has started. I suspect this is because this trait resonates with Britt-Marie's inner sense of self, which feels like a cube being forced into a triangular slot, her feelings torn in different directions, bumping into the corners and edges of unfamiliar situations and strangers.

# CHARACTER ANALYZER

CRISTY

**Vega** is a very smart girl for her age; she's the best soccer player and the only girl on the team. She's the team leader and also protects her brother, which reminds Britt Marie of her sister Ingrid. Britt Marie was Ingrid's shadow, just as Omar is Vega's, and Ingrid loved playing soccer. Vega's laugh also reminds her of her sister. I think Vega is a girl who looks for solutions (like when she asks to watch the game or with the bulbs), and she's strong, but I'm not sure yet if that's because she had to become strong for a situation at home. I think Vega's personality will help a lot to Britt Marie.

# WORD ARTIST

.....  
FLAVIA

The children open the door in euphoria, yelling, singing their soccer team's song, jumping and dancing. Their voices mixed with the sound of thunder and the rain outside.

They open the rusty door to let Britt Marie and Pirate back in. Britt Marie is standing near the door when it suddenly opens, she loses her balance and stumbles on the dark threshold before stepping inside.

The night is cold and dark, the only light she can see comes from the bright neon sign of the pizzeria, glowing in a vivid red tone that reflects across the entire parking lot, mixing with the flashes of lightning through the sky.

Later, Britt Marie spends the second half of the game in front of the small and broken mirror on the green wall at the bathroom.

Her mirror image shows a winter on her face: silence, cold, and dry leaves like her mistreated skin, dry and full of wrinkles.

But this time, something is a little different. She feels a slight warmth, like the transition from winter to spring, it's the first time in an absolute age that someone has told Britt-Marie it is important for her to be somewhere.

# WORD ARTIST

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## ESMERALDA

At the beginning, the recreation center was a place frozen in time. The air was heavy, smelling of accumulated dust and old wood. The walls seemed to hold their silence, as if no one had laughed there in a very long time. There were only a few pieces of furniture, hard and uncomfortable; when you touched them, you could feel the wear of the years. Everything had a gray, faded tone, as if even the light entered timidly.

Even walking down the hallways made the echo of footsteps noticeable. It felt cold—not only because of the temperature, but because of the loneliness that surrounded it. It was not a place where anyone would want to stay for long.

But little by little, something began to change. The smell of dust slowly disappeared, replaced by the scent of cleanliness, fresh soap, and homemade food. The windows seemed to let in more light. The space no longer felt so empty.

On rainy days, in the deep silence, the drops falling on the roof create a beautiful sound. The smell of wet earth drifts gently through the cracks, and the atmosphere becomes fresh, almost cozy. The nights feel peaceful and comfortable for sleeping, as if the building itself were breathing calmly.

Now, when I hear the children laughing as they run through the hallways or see their backpacks tossed in a corner, the place feels different. It feels alive. It is no longer an abandoned building; it is a refuge. It may not have luxuries, but it has something more important: warmth.

If the center once seemed gray and soulless, it now feels warm, filled with small stories born each day. Being there is feeling how a forgotten space can transform into a home. The recreation center now it's a lively place, full of smiles and beautiful stories.

# CONNECTION MAKER

MARIA

Britt-Marie is starting to confront loneliness and at the same time, she has more experiences, because she starts working at the recreation center. Plants remind her of Ingrid, because Ingrid loved things that were alive. And for this reason Britt-Marie repeatedly saves homeless plants, to give her the strength to remember a sister whose life she was not even able to save once. P77

Britt Marie reminds me of when I lost my loved ones. I felt so much sadness, and I liked to go to the park to walk, to feel the morning breeze and touch the plants and flowers, which felt alive, and I felt that my loved ones were there. I didn't have a balcony near my window, but when I opened the curtains and saw the ray of sunlight coming through my window, or at night when I saw the bright moon, it was proof that there was a light at the end of the tunnel, and there were my family and my friends to encourage me. Their love helped me to keep going. It is very important to build more sincere friendships and to get to know people better beyond their problems, and for this reason you are able to have more empathy for the people around you. You make the difference.

Just as Britt-Marie faced difficulties in her life, I also had difficulties, but when we arrived this country, we found beautiful people along the way who helped us in the transition to have a better lifestyle and get ahead as a family. That's where you find beautiful friendships.

# CONNECTION MAKER

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YULIANNA

We talk a lot about Britt-Marie, but today I would like to analyze her husband, Kent. We know that he is an entrepreneur and successful at his job. Kent is a person who never cares about the people who are around him, so he does not appreciate those who are close to him and lacks a sense of gratitude. He doesn't value others and has no appreciation for them. He also asserts himself at the expense of others. Throughout the novel, we see that he asserts himself at the expense of his wife, constantly humiliating her.

In contrast to Britt-Marie, I knew someone very close to me who was completely different from her, yet her life with her husband was surprisingly similar.

She was a very confident woman who knew what she wanted, but after meeting her husband, she changed. At the beginning of their marriage, he was quiet and insecure, and she helped him grow into a confident man. She supported him through college, bought two apartments and a car so he would appear more respectable at work, and helped him secure a good job. She bought him guitars and spoiled him as much as she could.

Once he got back on his feet, everything changed. Every year on her birthday, he would say he was going to the sauna with his father or fishing with friends. When she cried, he told her she was a bad woman and that this was her punishment.

Over time, she became irritable, emotionally unstable, and eventually insecure. She once had excellent taste in clothes, but after constantly hearing from him that nothing suited her, she began dressing like an old-fashioned Russian woman.

# CONNECTION MAKER

.....  
YULIANNA

(continued . . .)

While he did the bare minimum at work, eight hours a day, she worked at two or even three companies as a chief accountant and Chief Financial Officer. She barely slept so they could afford two apartments, and she dreamed of opening her own audit firm in the future.

She desperately wanted a child, but she kept experiencing unexplained infections that were described as sexually transmitted diseases. Eventually, she became pregnant, but she miscarried, and the doctor told her to rest. For the first time in her life, she found a hobby and became softer, more gentle. Then one day he told her to stop wasting time and go back to work because they were running low on money. I remember her crying. I still have the bracelet she never finished.

She grew professionally and eventually moved to a big city, hoping he would follow her. But he didn't.

I worked with him. He often tried to humiliate the women on the team, but he never tried it with me. I stood up for myself. Because he was afraid of my friend, he targeted other women instead. Many people at work challenged him, and I believe he took out his frustration on her.

After living alone in Moscow for two years, she finally decided she could not continue like that and divorced her husband. Later, she discovered that he had been cheating on her, and that was the reason for her infections — even though they had sex only once a year. He was constantly irritated and never hugged her.

Unfortunately, this news completely broke her. She cried a lot, was constantly anxious, and over time she not only became an insecure woman, but her health also deteriorated.

For the past two years, I have been in close contact with her, trying to help her regain her confidence and reminding her of who she used to be. She replies, "That's not me."

But there are small steps forward. Very small — but they are there.