

### Listening 6: Lesson 2C, Exercises 2 and 3

What could you buy for \$16 in the USA? A quick lunch in a coffee bar, maybe; a few litres of petrol for your car; or perhaps a large house in a nice suburb near Dallas, Texas, complete with garden and swimming pool. Impossible? That's what most people would think. But then, most people have never heard of an obscure law called 'adverse possession'.

The story of Kenneth Robinson and the sixteen-dollar house began in 2011, when he noticed that a large house in Flower Mound, near Dallas, had become empty. The house had been well maintained and was in a good state, but unfortunately, the owner had not been able to pay the mortgage. After the mortgage company had evicted the owner, the company itself went out of business. So the house was not just empty – it was also unclear what would happen to it.

After doing some research into property laws, Mr Robinson, a 51-year-old former soldier, filled out a form online, paid a fee of \$16 to submit the form officially, and moved into the empty \$300,000 house. Although he didn't exactly buy the house for \$16, he had discovered that a law called 'adverse possession' meant he could not be evicted unless the original owner paid off the mortgage – and even then, it would be a long and expensive legal process.

The story was widely reported in the media both in the USA and around the world. For some people, Mr Robinson was a hero who beat the system. Others tried to copy his actions, and suddenly local councils were having to deal with thousands of forms claiming 'adverse possession'. But to most of Mr Robinson's neighbours in Flower Mound, he was just a squatter. They even called the police to arrest him, but the police said they could do nothing as no crime had been committed.

According to US property laws, if Mr Robinson stayed in the house for three years, he could claim legal ownership of the property. During that time, he would have to do all the basic maintenance – keeping the garden tidy, and so on – but he would not have to pay any mortgage or rent. However, eight months after he had moved into the house, he received a letter from a judge telling him he had to leave the property. Although he could have challenged the decision in court, Mr Robinson decided not to do that; he moved out.

Looking back, Mr Robinson certainly has no regrets. He has written a book about his experiences and is often asked to give talks about them. And if you wanted to hire him to give a talk, you'd have to pay a lot more than \$16!

### **Listening 7: Lesson 2F, Exercise 2**

There's a young woman sitting cross-legged on the floor. Maybe she's a teenager. She looks about seventeen or eighteen, I reckon. She's holding a red box and lifting the lid so she can see what's inside. It's obviously a gift that somebody has given her. She doesn't look very happy with the gift – in fact, she looks really disappointed. We can't see what the gift is because it's covered with tissue paper.

### Listening 8: Lesson 2F, Exercises 4 and 5

I remember one Christmas, it was about ten years ago, when I was seven or eight years old. My uncle and aunt were staying with us.

In those days, we used to have a Christmas tree every year. My parents used to put all our presents under the tree. We'd open them on Christmas Eve. I always used to feel the presents and try to guess what they were.

For months, I'd been asking my parents for a Hello Kitty lunchbox. I really wanted one because my best friend had one. So when I picked up a present from my uncle and aunt with my name on it, felt it and realised it was a lunchbox, I was so excited. Apparently, my parents had told my uncle and aunt what to buy me.

But when I opened the present on Christmas Eve, I felt so disappointed. Yes, it was a lunchbox. Unfortunately, it wasn't quite what I wanted. Instead of Hello Kitty, it had a picture of a different cartoon cat on it. Garfield, I think. My parents had told my uncle and aunt the wrong thing. Or maybe they hadn't understood properly. I smiled and said thank you – but inside, I wanted to cry. Obviously, I didn't say anything to my uncle and aunt. Luckily, they didn't realise how disappointed I was. To be honest, I've never mentioned it since.

## Listening 9: Get Ready for you Exam 1

**Speaker 1** I know exactly what I'm going to do now that I've finished school, as I've been meticulously planning it for absolutely ages! I'm doing a full-time stint in the restaurant down the road this summer – I've been working there on and off for years part-time. I've got to save up £800 – enough money to go travelling for the rest of the year. I've planned a route through Thailand, Cambodia, Australia – where I've set up some more catering work – then South America and the US before university next year.

**Speaker 2** I can't make up my mind between work experience and travelling. I'm hanging on to hear if I've got a temporary job at the local vet's. If I get that, I might as well go for it as I'm doing agriculture at university next year. But I'm pretty keen on going out to stay with my uncle and aunt. They've moved to a ranch in the States and want me to visit. How cool is that? But that won't be till much later in the year, so I'll have to see what's possible.

**Speaker 3** I'm desperate to get some work experience before I start my politics degree in the autumn, so I'm hassling local MPs and government offices to see if I can volunteer! If I'm lucky enough to get selected, I should get travel and lunch expenses, but I won't actually earn any money. It's vital though to have real-life experience for my degree course, as it's fiercely competitive. My parents understand and are happy to continue supporting me. If I've time, I'll take a break before the course starts.

**Speaker 4** I've got absolutely masses to do before my course starts in October and zero time for a holiday! I'm off to study English Literature and Theatre Management in Manchester, and need to do stacks of reading before then as I've got a massive list of classic literature to study. But I've also got a summer job in the theatre where I'm helping during the run of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. It's backstage work – clearing up, helping change scenery and assisting the actors – but I'm so looking forward to it!

**Speaker 5** I'm taking a gap year and putting off university till next year. I've got an amazing job lined up – in South America! Well, it's sort of a job as it's not paid work – I'm volunteering for an educational project in Guatemala. We'll be building a school in a tiny jungle village for five months – staying with the locals there – then I'll hit the road for a bit. Exciting! I'm studying Spanish next year, so it'll be perfect experience for me and I want native-speaker fluency when I come back!