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Classic stories in simple English

ADAPTED TEXT

The Open Window

Saki

An adapted retelling for learners.

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STORY

The English countryside, about a hundred years ago. A quiet house with a big garden.

This is Framton Nuttel. He is a nervous young man. His doctor says, “Go to the country. Rest. And don't get excited.”

His sister gives him some letters for people in the village. “I know how it will be,” she says. “You will bury yourself down there and not speak to a living soul.”

Today he visits Mrs Sappleton. But Mrs Sappleton is still upstairs. Her niece, a calm girl of fifteen, sits with him.

My aunt will come down soon, Mr Nuttel. Do you know many people here?

Almost nobody. My sister stayed here four years ago. She gave me some letters.

So you know nothing about my aunt?

Only her name and her address.

Her great tragedy happened three years ago. After your sister's visit.

A tragedy? In this quiet, comfortable house? Framton is surprised.

Do you see that big French window? It's open, on an October evening. Do you wonder why?

Three years ago today, my aunt's husband and her two young brothers went out through that window. They went shooting. They never came back.

They crossed the moor and fell into a deep bog. Nobody ever found them.

But my poor aunt thinks they'll come back one day. So every evening she leaves the window open until it's dark.

She often tells me how they went out. Her husband had his white raincoat over his arm. And Ronnie, her youngest brother, was singing “Bertie, why do you bound?”

Sometimes, on quiet evenings like this, I feel they will all walk in through that window…

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Then Mrs Sappleton comes in, all smiles.

I'm so sorry I'm late! I hope Vera has been looking after you.

I hope you don't mind the open window. My husband and brothers will be home soon. They're out shooting. They always make my carpets so dirty!

She talks happily about birds and shooting. Framton feels terrible. He tries to talk about something else.

My doctors say I must rest completely. No excitement, and no hard exercise…

But Mrs Sappleton isn't listening. She yawns. Her eyes are always on the window.

Here they are at last! Just in time for tea!

Framton looks at Vera. She is staring through the window, with horror in her eyes.

He turns round. In the dusk, three men are walking across the lawn towards the window. They carry guns. One has a white coat over his arm. A tired brown dog walks with them.

Then a young voice sings in the dusk: “I said, Bertie, why do you bound?”

Framton grabs his hat and his stick and runs. Out of the house, down the path, through the gate. A man on a bicycle nearly hits him.

Here we are, my dear. Who was that man who ran out?

A very strange man, a Mr Nuttel. He only talked about his illnesses. Then he ran off without a word. He looked as if he had seen a ghost!

I think it was the dog. He's afraid of dogs. Once, in India, some wild dogs chased him into a cemetery. He spent the whole night in a new grave, with the dogs above him!

Vera is very good at stories. She can make one up in a minute.

The End.

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