

The Open Window

by Saki (H. H. Munro)

presently

= very soon (Note: This word sounds like traditional British English.)

self-possessed

= calm and not worrying, 沈着な

to put up with

= to bear with, 我慢する

to undergo

= to experience something such as surgery or a change. (Note: In the story, he should undergo treatment for his nervous problem by resting in the countryside.)

a rural retreat

= a place in the countryside for relaxation

to bury

= to hide

to not speak to a soul

= to not speak to anyone

to mope

= to show a depressed mood, 元氣なくあてもなく歩き回る

hardly a soul

= almost nobody

a caller

= a visitor

to be out of place

= to be unusual

a French window

= a tall and traditional window that reaches the floor and sometimes can be walked out of

to open on a lawn

= to open toward a grassy area around a house

three years ago to a day

= exactly 3 years ago

shooting

= hunting

a moor

= a dry and wild area only a little marshy

to be engulfed in

= to be surrounded by, 吸い込まれる

treacherous

= dangerous

a bog

= a marsh or swamp, 沼地

to falter

= to be unsteady, not self-possessed, よろめく、ためらう

a spaniel

= a medium-sized dog with large drooping ears (sometimes used for hunting)

dusk

= semidarkness, the time of sunset or sunrise (Note: In this case, probably sunrise)

still

= quiet

creepy

= scary, frightening

to break off

= to stop talking

a shudder

= shaking one's body because of fear

to bust into a room

= to come quickly and noisily into a room

a whirl of

= a storm of, going in circles

to rattle on

= to talk constantly and quickly

the prospects for

= the future possibilities of

desperate

= trying hard because of need or danger, 必死になる

to turn the talk to

= to change the subject to, ぞっとする

ghastly

= terrible, similar to a ghost

to be conscious

= to be aware

a fragment

= a little piece

to stray past

= to go past or look beyond

a coincidence

= 偶然

vaguely

= not clearly

muddy up to the eyes

= their bodies covered with dirt

to shiver

= to shake because of fear or cold

to convey sympathetic understanding

= to show kindness, わかっていますよと同情

dazed

= shocked

swung round

= turned around quickly (Note: the verb is “to swing”)

close at their heels

= walking near their かがと

to grab

= to get quickly

a gravel drive

= 砂利道

to be dimly noted stages

= to almost not be noticed

a headlong retreat

= running away with great speed

the bearer of

= the person who has (something)

a mackintosh

= a traditional British raincoat

to bolt out

= to run out quickly

to dash off

= to run off or away

to have a horror of

= to be afraid of (Note: This expression sounds like traditionally British English.)

a cemetery

= 墓地

on the banks of the Ganges

= on the sides of the famous river in India

a pack of stray dogs

= a group of wild and dangerous dogs

a grave

= お墓

to snarl and foam

= うなったり、歯をむきだしたり、口から泡を吹いたり

to lose (one's) nerve

= to become frightened, to go crazy

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by Saki (H.H. Munro)

‘MY AUNT will be down presently, Mr Nuttel,’ said a self-possessed young lady of fifteen. ‘In the meantime, you must put up with me.’

Framton Nuttel tried to make pleasant conversation while waiting for the Aunt. Privately, he doubted more than ever whether these formal visits on total strangers would help the nerve cure which he was supposed to be undergoing in this rural retreat.

‘I’ll just give you letters to all the people I know there,’ his sister had said. ‘Otherwise, you’ll bury yourself and not speak to a soul and your nerves will be worse than ever from moping.’

‘Do you know many people around here?’ asked the niece.

‘Hardly a soul. My sister gave me letters of introduction to some people here.’

‘Then you know practically nothing about my Aunt?’ continued the self-possessed young lady.

‘Only her name and address,’ admitted the caller.

‘Her great tragedy happened just three years ago,’ said the child.

‘Her tragedy?’ asked Framton. Somehow, in this restful spot, tragedies seemed out of place.

‘You may wonder why we keep that window open so late in the year,’ said the niece, indicating a large French window that opened on a lawn. ‘Out through that window, three years ago to a day, her husband and her two young brothers went off for their day’s shooting. In crossing the moor, they were engulfed in a treacherous bog. Their bodies were never recovered.’

Here the child’s voice faltered. ‘Poor Aunt always thinks that they’ll come back someday, they and the little brown spaniel that was lost with them, and walk in the window. That is why it is kept open every evening till dusk. She has often told me how they went out, her husband with his white waterproof coat over his arm. You know, sometimes on still evenings like this I get a creepy feeling that they will all walk in through that window —’

She broke off with a little shudder. It was a relief to Framton when the aunt bustled into the room with a whirl of apologies for keeping him waiting.

‘I hope you don’t mind the open window,’ she said. ‘My husband and brothers will be home directly from shooting and they always come in this way.’

She rattled on cheerfully about the prospects for duck shooting in the winter. Framton made a desperate effort to turn the talk to a less ghastly topic, conscious that his hostess was giving him only a fragment of her attention, and that her eyes were constantly straying past him to the open window. It was certainly an unfortunate coincidence that he should have paid his visit on this tragic anniversary.

‘The doctors ordered me a complete rest from mental excitement and physical exercise,’ announced Framton, who imagined that everyone — even a complete stranger — was interested in his illness.

‘Oh?’ said Mrs Sappleton, vaguely. Then she suddenly brightened into attention — but not to what Framton was saying.

‘Here they are at last!’ she cried. ‘In time for tea, and muddy up to the eyes.’

Framton shivered slightly and turned towards the niece with a look intended to convey sympathetic understanding. The child was staring through the open window with dazed horror in her eyes. Framton swung round and looked in the same direction.

In the deepening twilight three figures were walking noiselessly across the lawn, a tired brown spaniel close at their heels. They all carried guns, and one had a white coat over his shoulders.

Framton grabbed his stick; the hall door and the gravel drive were dimly noted stages in his headlong retreat.

‘Here we are, my dear,’ said the bearer of the white mackintosh. ‘Who was that who bolted out as we came up?’

‘An extraordinary man, a Mr Nuttel,’ said Mrs Sappleton, ‘who could only talk about his illness, and dashed off without a word of apology when you arrived. One would think he had seen a ghost.’

‘I expect it was the spaniel,’ said the niece calmly. ‘He told me he had a horror of dogs. He was once hunted into a cemetery on the banks of the Ganges by a pack of stray dogs and had to spend the night in a

newly-dug grave with the creatures snarling and foaming above him.
Enough to make anyone lose his nerve.'