Reading

"My aunt will be down **presently**, Mr. Nuttel," said a very **self-possessed** young lady of fifteen; "in the meantime you must try and put up with me."

Framton Nuttel **endeavored** to say the correct something which should duly flatter the niece of the moment without **unduly** discounting the aunt that was to come.

Privately he doubted more than ever whether these formal visits on a **succession** of total strangers would do much towards helping the nerve cure which he was supposed to be undergoing.

"I know how it will be," his sister had said when he was preparing to migrate to this rural **retreat**; "you will bury yourself down there and not speak to a living soul..."

Framton wondered whether Mrs. Sappleton, the lady to whom he was presenting one of the letters of introduction, came into the nice division.

**“**Do you know many of the people round here?”

Hardly a soul. My sister was staying here, at the rectory, you know, some four years ago, and she gave me letters of introduction to some of the people here.

“Then you know practically nothing about my aunt?”

“Only her name and address.”

“Her great **tragedy** happened just three years ago.”

“Her tragedy?”

“You may wonder why we keep that window wide open on an October afternoon.”

“It is quite warm for the time of the year. But has that window got anything to do with the tragedy?”

Out through that window, three years ago to a day, her husband and her two young brothers went off for their day's shooting. They never came back...

Here the child's voice lost its self-possessed note and became **falteringly** human.

Poor aunt always thinks that they will come back someday, they and the little brown spaniel that was lost with them... Sometimes, on still, quiet evenings like this, I almost 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.

“I hope Vera has been amusing you?”

“She has been very interesting.”

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

To Framton it was all purely horrible. He made a desperate effort to change the topic.

“The doctors agree in ordering me complete rest, an absence of mental excitement...”

“No?”

Then she suddenly brightened into alert attention—not to what Framton was saying.

“Here they are at last! Just in time for tea, and don’t they look as if they were **muddy** up to the eyes!”

Framton shivered slightly and turned toward the niece...

In the deepening **twilight** three figures were walking across the lawn toward the window...

“I said, Bertie, why do you bound?”

Framton grabbed wildly at his stick and hat... **bolted** out...

“Who was that who bolted out as we came up?”

A most extraordinary man, a Mr. Nuttel... dashed off without a word...

“ I expect it was the spaniel. He told me he had a **horror** of dogs...”

Romance at short notice was her specialty.

Vocabulary

Words

1. **presently** [ˈprez.ənt.li]

**adv. 不久，很快**

● Vera said, “My aunt will be down presently.”

Vera 說：「我姑媽馬上就下來。」

1. **self-possessed** [ˌself.pəˈzest]

**adj. 鎮定的，自我控制的**

● She was a very self-possessed young lady of fifteen.

她是一位非常鎮定自若的十五歲少女。

1. **endeavor** [ɪnˈdev.ər]

**vt. 努力，嘗試**

● Frampton endeavored to say the correct thing.

Frampton 試圖說出得體的話。

4. **tragedy** [ˈtrædʒ.ə.di]

**n. [C/U] 悲劇，不幸的事件**

● Her great tragedy happened just three years ago.

她的不幸事件正好發生在三年前。

5.  **shudder** [ˈʃʌd.ər]

**vi. 發抖，顫慄**

• She broke off with a little shudder.

她打了個小冷顫，話也停住了。

6. **muddy** [ˈmʌd.i]

**adj. 沾滿泥巴的**

• Don’t they look as if they were muddy up to the eyes?

他們看起來不是全身都是泥巴嗎？

7. **bolted** [ˈbəʊltɪd]

**vi. 奔逃、衝出（bolt 的過去式）**

• Mr. Nuttall bolted out without a word.

Nuttall 先生一句話也沒說就衝出去了。

8. **horror** [ˈhɒr.ər]

**n. [U] 恐懼，極度厭惡**

• He told me he had a horror of dogs.

他說過他非常怕狗。

9. **retreat** [rɪˈtriːt]

**n. [C] 靜修地、避靜所；撤退**

• He was preparing to migrate to this rural retreat.

他正準備搬到這個鄉間療養地。

10. **succession** [səkˈseʃ.ən]

**n. [C] 一連串，一系列**

• These formal visits on a succession of strangers...

這一連串拜訪陌生人的正式會面……

12. **unduly** [ʌnˈdʒuː.li]

**adv. 過度地，不適當地**

• ...without unduly discounting the aunt that was to come.

……又不能過度地忽略即將出現的姑媽。

14. **falteringly** [ˈfɔːl.tər.ɪŋ.li]

**adv. 支吾地，顫抖不安地**

• Her voice became falteringly human.

她的語氣變得顫抖，有了人味。

15. **twilight** [ˈtwaɪ.laɪt]

**n. [U] 黃昏，暮色**

• In the deepening twilight, three figures were walking across the lawn.

在逐漸昏暗的黃昏裡，有三個人影走過草坪。