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## The Locked Room – Part 1

It happened in Suffolk, near the coast. There is a tall, red house there, built in about 1770, perhaps. It has a small, untidy garden behind it and from the front windows you can see the sea. Tall, dark trees stand around this lonely house. Near the front door there is a sign which shows that this was once a public house, where travellers could stop to eat and sleep.

One fine spring day, a young Cambridge University student called Thomson arrived at this house. He wanted to spend some time in a quiet and pleasant place where he could read and study. No one else was staying there at the time and Mr and Mrs Betts, who managed the house, welcomed him and made him feel very comfortable.

They gave him a large room on the first floor with a good view from the window. He spent his days very calmly and quietly. Every morning he worked, he walked in the country in the afternoon, and he usually had a drink with some of the local

people in the bar in the evening before going to bed.

He was very happy to continue his life like this for as long as possible. He planned to stay for a whole month. One afternoon, Thomson walked along a different road from the usual one and in the distance he saw a large white object.

He walked towards it and discovered that it was a large square stone with a square hole in the middle. He examined the stone, then he looked at the view for a moment - the sea, the churches in the distance, the windows of one or two houses shining here and there in the sun - and he continued his walk.

That evening in the bar, he asked why the white stone was there.' It's been there for a very long time, since before any of us were born, in fact,' said Mr Betts. 'People used to say that it brought bad luck . . . that it was unlucky for fishing,' said another man.

'Why?' asked Thomson, but the people in the bar became silent and clearly didn't want to talk about the stone any more. Thomson was puzzled. A few days later, he decided to stay at home to study in the afternoon. He didn't feel like going out for a walk, but at about three o'clock he needed a break.

He decided to spend five minutes looking at the other rooms on his floor of the house - he was interested to know what they were like. He got up and went quietly out of his room, into the corridor. Nobody else was at home.' They are all probably at market today,' he thought.

The house was still and silent, except for the flies. The sun was shining and it was very hot. He went into the three rooms near his own bedroom; each one was pretty and clean. Then he tried the door of the south-west room, but found that it was locked.

This made Thomson want to know why it was locked and what was inside it. and he took the keys of all the other doors on the floor to try to open it. He finally succeeded, the door opened, he went in and

looked around him.

The room had two windows looking south and west, so it was very bright and hot. There were no carpets and no pictures, only a bed, alone in the corner. It was not a very interesting room, but suddenly . . . Thomson turned and ran out of the room, closing the door behind him noisily.

'Someone was in there, in the bed!' he almost shouted. There were covers over the whole body on the bed, but it was not dead, because it moved. He was not dreaming, Thomson knew: this was the middle of a bright, sunny day, after all. He didn't know what to do.

First, of course, he had to lock the door again but, before he did this, he listened. Everything was silent inside the room. He put the key into the lock and turned it as quietly as he could, but he still made some noise.

Suddenly he stopped: someone was walking towards the door! He turned and ran along the corridor to his room, closed the door and locked it behind him as fast as he could. He waited and listened.

'Perhaps this person can walk through doors and walls?' he whispered to himself. Nothing happened.