



The Intruder

**a short story for English
reading and speaking**

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Introduction

What is an intruder?

Has anyone broken into your home before?

If someone broke into your home, how would you react?

The Intruder

Robert opened his eyes and stared into the face of a total stranger.

“Who are you?” he called out, pulling the bedcovers up to his chin. “What do you want?”

The man before him didn’t budge.

“I come to see you,” he said.

Robert could feel cold air coming off the man.

He wore a blue parka jacket, which was zipped up to his neck.

“I need to talk to you,” said the man in a whisper, leaning forward.

“Get out of here,” Robert called out. “This is my room. Get out.”

The man didn’t move an inch, just shook his head.

“It took me ages to find you. And now we have to talk.”

Robert assessed the man standing by his bed.

He wasn’t tall, but he looked big. He looked stocky, but that could be the parka he was wearing. It was hard to gauge exactly how big this man was, but none of that seemed to matter, as

Robert was lying in bed dressed only in his underwear.

The man sighed and sat on the edge of Robert's bed. The mattress heaved under his weight.

He pulled the zip of his jacket down a little and glanced around the room.

"So, this where you live?" he said.

Robert couldn't quite believe the conversational tone the man was using. He raised his voice.

"You're gonna have to get out and you're gonna have to get out right now."

Hopefully, one of the other lads he shared the house with would wake up. David lived in the room directly next to his own. Chris and Stuart in other parts of the house.

One of those small terrace houses with paper-thin walls, so one of the other guys must hear Robert and this stranger in his room.

The man shook his head and smiled down at Robert.

"We've got so much to talk about."

"Like what?" said Robert. "I don't even know you."

The man leaned closer to Robert, placing a finger on his lips. Robert shuddered. The taste and smell of the man's flesh metallic.

“Shhh... You’ll wake the neighbours,” said the man with a smirk.

Robert held his breath and stared back into the man’s eyes.

They were the colour of freshly poured tarmac, wet and glistening.

But unfocused. Like he could not really see Robert.

“You need to go,” said Robert through clenched teeth.

The man sat erect again and unzipped his jacket, opening it.

Then he reached one hand inside and pulled out a machete.

“Get up,” he said. “Time for us both to leave.”

Robert closed his eyes for a full two seconds.

He willed the entire scene in front of him to be just a bad dream, something from his over-imaginative subconscious mind. Something he would wake up from and tell the lads the next day.

You won’t believe the dream I had last night.

The man yanked at the flimsy bedclothes and tossed them to the side of the bed.

Robert clenched his fists against his chest. His stomach muscles tight and his legs clamped together.

He had never felt so vulnerable.

The man’s expression changed to angry impatience.

“I said, get up.”

Robert found his voice. He thought it best to comply with this man.

“Alright, take it easy. I’m getting up.”

The man stood to allow Robert to swing his legs off the bed.

Robert got to his feet and faced the man. He found that he was easily eight or ten centimetres taller than this stranger before him.

But Robert was skinny at best. While this man was shaped like a rottweiler — short and squat.

This was totally irrelevant, as Robert was dressed in only a pair of shorts and the man facing him had a big knife in his hand.

“Let’s go outside,” said the man.

“Outside? What for?”

“Because that’s where it is.”

Robert shook his head. None of this made any sense.

“Where what is?”

The man blinked his eyes a few times like he had a headache.

“You ask too many questions. Now come on, let’s go.”

Robert didn’t budge.

This couldn't be happening. There was no reasoning for it.

“I need my clothes.”

“No, you don’t,” said the man. “You don’t need nothing.”

“It’s freezing outside. I’ll catch a cold.”

Robert almost laughed at how ridiculous his statement sounded. He was being threatened — in his own room — by a man that had broken into the house carrying a machete.

And he was worried about catching a cold.

The man nudged him with his finger, shoving him in the shoulder. It felt hard and unyielding.

“Move.”

Robert half-turned, reluctant to have his back to the man. He kept his eyes on the silvery blade glistening in his hand.

He stepped out of his bedroom door and glanced over his shoulder towards the man.

“Can I put the light on?”

He said it as loud as he could to wake someone in the house — anyone — but not so loud that the man would suspect he was trying to be rescued.

The man nodded and Robert flicked the light on.

He went down the stairs, one hand on the bannister, the other sliding down the wall.

Any second, he expected to feel the man’s hand shove him

from behind and force him to fall down the stairs.

But all he could hear was the man's breath and the steady snoring of one of his housemates.

At the bottom of the stairs, the front door stood ajar. Cold air crept in and wrapped itself around Robert's exposed legs and body.

A combination of fear and the icy breeze coming into the house made him shiver.

He realised that once he took one step outside; he was under the man's control. That there would be very little he could do to escape.

Running in his bare feet didn't seem like an option. And the ground would be glistening with ice.

He would slip and be on his back in no time. And the man would be right behind him.

Robert took another step to the door. Outside, it was pitch black.

Another shove in his back from behind and he was outside the door. The cold night air wrapped itself around him.

This was it. He would disappear and his family would never see him again.

His throat constricted, and he swallowed to try to get some air.

The man closed the door with a gentle click.

Then, from above, another sound. A window opening.

“Robert? What the hell are you doing? Who’s that with you?”

One of his housemates' voices.

Robert turned to face the man.

The machete raised high above his head.

Reading Comprehension Questions

Who are the two main characters in this story?

Where does the story take place?

Try to give a summary of the story in three or four sentences.

What is Robert doing at the beginning of the story?

Where is he?

Who is standing next to Robert's bed?

How does Robert react to seeing this person in his room?

Does Robert know this person?

What is the man wearing?

What is Robert wearing?

Try to describe what the man looks like? Is he big? Small?

Strong?

Does Robert live alone?

Why does Robert hope that one of his housemates will wake up?

Does he try to raise the alarm with his friends? How does he do that?

How does the stranger man respond when Robert tells him to leave?

What does the man take from inside his jacket?

What does the man want Robert to do?

How does Robert respond when the man tells him to get out of bed and stand up?

Does Robert comply with him? Why does he do this?

Does Robert think he is imagining all of this?

Where does Robert go?

Does the man want Robert to stay in the house?

What kind of weather is it outside?

Does the man forbid Robert to put the light on?

What can Robert hear in the house?

Do Robert and the man go outside?

What is Robert concerned about going outside dressed only in his underwear?

Does Robert try to raise the alarm with his housemates while walking down the stairs? How does he do this?

Does Robert think he can escape from the man?

What sound does Robert hear above?

What does his housemate say?

How does the story end?

True or False?

Take a look at the following statements and say if they are true or false according to the story.

You can find all the correct answers on the full lesson plan download.

Robert wakes up to find a stranger in his room.

The man in Robert's room wants to talk to him.

The man in Robert's room is wearing a red parka jacket.

Robert is dressed in his underwear.

The man sits on the edge of Robert's bed.

The man reveals a knife hidden in his jacket.

Robert complies with the man's request to leave the room.

Robert insists on getting his clothes before leaving the house.

Robert is worried about catching a cold outside.

The man shoves Robert down the stairs.

Robert reaches the bottom of the stairs safely.

The front door is wide open when Robert reaches it.

Robert steps outside into bright daylight.

Robert fears he may never see his family again.

One of Robert's housemates calls out to him from a window.
The man raises the machete above his head.

Essential Vocabulary

stared	a total stranger	bedcovers
chin	budge	parka jacket
zipped	whisper	leaning forward
inch	shook his head	it took me ages
assessed	stocky	gauge
underwear	sighed	mattress
heaved	zip	glanced
conversational tone	he raised his voice	gonna
hopefully	lads	shared
directly	terrace house	paper-thin
shuddered	flesh	metallic
smirk	held his breath	freshly poured
tarmac	glistening	unfocused
clenched teeth	erect	unzipped
machete	willed	entire
scene	over-imaginative	subconscious mind
yanked	flimsy	tossed
fists	chest	stomach
muscles	tight	clamped
vulnerable	expression	impatience
comply	take it easy	to swing
centimetres	skinny	rottweiler

squat	irrelevant	blinked
reasoning	freezing	ridiculous
statement	threatened	broken into
nudged	unyielding	reluctant
silvery	blade	suspect
rescued	flicked	bannister
sliding down	snoring	housemates
ajar	crept in	wrapped
exposed	combination	fear
icy breeze	shiver	bare feet
pitch black	disappear	throat
constricted	swallowed	click
what the hell	raised	

Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

Stared — *past tense of the verb: to stare; (of a person's eyes) to be wide open, with a fixed or vacant expression.*

A total stranger — *a complete/perfect/total stranger (used to*

emphasise that you do not know the person at all).

Then write a sentence of your own that uses the new word or phrase correctly.

I stared at the page for one minute, but I could not understand any of the words I read.

A man said hello to me on the street today, but I didn't know him. He was a total stranger to me.

Do this with all the vocabulary and, over time, this will help improve all your English skills — reading, writing, speaking and listening.

What is the Correct Synonym?

Look at the table on the following page.

Match each word from the list on the left with the correct synonym on the right.

You can find all the correct answers on the full lesson plan download.

Word	Synonym
stared	optimistically
bedcovers	murmur
budge	shimmering
zipped	calculate
whisper	sneer
assessed	glimpsed
stocky	trembled
gauge	fastened
sighed	whole
zip	asphalt
glanced	scrutinized
hopefully	cleaver
lads	sturdy
directly	determined
shuddered	evaluated
smirk	upright
tarmac	fastener
glistening	exhaled
unfocused	fellows
erect	blankets
machete	view
willed	straight
entire	shift

scene	blurry
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What is the Correct Antonym?

Look at the table on the following page.

Match each word from the list on the left with the correct antonym on the right.

You can find all the correct answers on the full lesson plan download.

Word	Antonym
stared	reclining
budge	calmed
whisper	thick
leaning forward	gazed
shook his head	tarnished
assessed	despairingly
stocky	glanced
glanced	yell
hopefully	exhaled
shared	speculated
paper-thin	scowl
shuddered	stay
smirk	attentive
held his breath	nodded
glistening	slender
unfocused	partial
entire	concealed

Words and Meanings

Look at the table of words below.

Now match them with each of the meanings below the table.

You can find all the correct answers on the full lesson plan download.

Stared	Assessed
Bedcovers	Gauge
Chin	Sighed
Budge	Mattress
Whisper	Zipped
Inch	Glanced
Shook his head	Raised

The Meanings:

To evaluate or judge something or a situation

Sheets, blankets, or other coverings for a bed

The protruding part of the face below the mouth

To move or shift slightly; to make a small movement

To speak or utter softly, using hushed tones

An old-fashioned unit of length, there are 12 to one foot.

To look quickly or briefly at something

To let out a deep breath, often to express tiredness or boredom

Lifted or elevated to a higher position or level

A large thick pad to support the body on a bed

To move one's head from side to side to indicate saying no.

judge or assess a situation or feeling

To fasten or open with a zipper

Looked fixedly at something with an intense or prolonged gaze

Missing Words

Look at the table of words below.

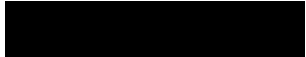
Now use each word one time only and fill in all the gaps in the sentences below the table.

You can find all the correct answers on the full lesson plan download.

bedcovers	underwear	zipped	assessed
a total stranger	inch	parka jacket	leaning forward
sighed	stared	gauge	shook his head
budge	glanced	unzipped	chin
stocky	whisper	mattress	took me ages

The Sentences

My teacher  back at me without saying a word.

I was waiting in the subway station, all one, when  sat next to me. I felt so scared.

I really need to change the  today. I've been using the same ones for weeks.

After I had a shower, I looked in the mirror and saw some soap on my [REDACTED].

I sat on the sofa, but my boyfriend would not [REDACTED] at all. He just stayed where he was.

In the winter, it gets so cold, the only thing I can wear is my blue [REDACTED].

I kept my jacket [REDACTED] up, as it was so cold inside the room.

Sometimes my friend speaks so quietly, she barely speaks above a [REDACTED].

[REDACTED], I pointed to the right answer on the whiteboard.

The hole in the wall was very small, maybe only one [REDACTED].

I asked my father if I could go out and meet my friend, but he [REDACTED].

I got lost in the city centre and it [REDACTED] to find out where I was.

The detective gazed at all the evidence and [REDACTED] the situation.

My brother is not very tall, but he is quite [REDACTED].

They continued the conversation, trying to [REDACTED] the best outcome for everyone.

I am very tidy and I like to keep all my [REDACTED] folded and in order in the wardrobe.

I asked my grandmother if she was feeling okay, but she just [REDACTED].

The [REDACTED] on my bed is so thin. I can barely sleep at night.

As soon as he arrived at the gym, he [REDACTED] his bag and took out his sports gear.

I [REDACTED] across the room to see if I recognised anyone at the party.

Discussion Questions

What do you think of this story?

Was it scary?

How did Robert react when he woke to see the stranger in his room?

How would you react if you were Robert?

What do you think you would do in Robert's place?

What can you say about the strange man in Robert's room?

What did he want?

Why did he want to take Robert outside?

Was this man mentally ill? An escaped convict? From a mental asylum?

If all of Robert's housemates woke up, could they all overcome the man, do you think?

The man pulls out a machete. Why does he have this on him?

How would you react if someone pulled a machete on you?

When Robert closed his eyes, what do you think he was doing?

Praying?

Wishing for something?

Did Robert do the right thing by complying with the man and going downstairs?

What would you have done?

Robert was only dressed in his underwear. Why does this put him at a disadvantage?

Does it matter what clothes Robert was wearing?

Why do you think the man wanted to take Robert outside?

Where did he want to go?

When Robert was at the bottom of the stairs of his house, what could he have done?

Run outside?

Run to the kitchen?

What would you have done?

Have you ever experienced a similar situation to this? Or anyone you know?

Have you heard of a story like this on the news before?

How could this story end?

Could Robert escape somehow?

Are there any lessons to learn from this story?

What are they?

Writing

This is a creative writing exercise.

You are going to continue the story at the beginning of the lesson.

Think about the following questions to help you:

- What is Robert's next move?
- Can he escape? If so, how?
- Can the housemate at the window help Robert in any way? How?
- What will the man do next?
- Could he overcome Robert? What will he do to him?
- Will the man go back into the house? Why?

Think about all the possible endings to the story. It is your story and you can have any ending you choose.

Take some time to write your story.

When you are ready, read your story out loud in front of your classmates.

Or hand it to your teacher for review.

Credits

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