The Girl at the Window  Antoinette Moses

Summary

Grace is a pretty young woman who lives in Norfolk in the early 19th century. She loves Tommy, a sixteen-year-old who is just going off to fight Napoleon in 1815. She is pregnant by Tommy, and nine months later she has a little girl, Mary. But the women take the baby away because there is no father. Mary waits for Tommy to return, even though the women say he is dead, and she also waits for the baby to come back. Someone paints a picture of her at the window.

The story moves to 2001, and the life of Sue, who arrives at the same house with her baby Sammy. By now the house is in a bad state, and needs a lot of work, but Sue rents it because it is cheap. We find out that Sue has left Sammy’s father because he drinks and has no work. They find the picture of Grace at the window hanging on the wall, and the baby likes it.

We find out that Grace’s ghost/spirit lives in the picture, and she is able to make the room cold so that people who want to live in the house don’t like it. But Grace wants Sue’s baby to be in the house and is very happy when the room with the picture becomes the baby’s room.

Sue gets very angry with Mr Price the builder for not getting on with the work, and she is also worried about the dangerous state of the wiring. She also doesn’t like the fact that the baby pays more attention to the picture than to her. When Sue tries to take the baby into her room, she feels as if something is pulling her hair to stop her. She phones her mother and tells her how bad she feels.

Grace is happy because Sue puts the baby back into ‘her’ room, but she’s also sad because she’s still waiting for Tommy and her baby. That night a fire breaks out in the house. Sue manages to call the firemen but cannot get to Sammy because the door is on fire. Grace sings to Sammy and says she will be all right. The firemen arrive and put out the fire. Grace feels she can leave now – she thinks the fireman is Tommy with Mary in his arms.

In the final scene, Sue and Sammy are in bed in hospital, safe. Sue is phoning her mother, who says they can go and live with her.

Before reading

1. Somebody is at a window when they spend a long time there, looking out, or looking for something or somebody.
2. The girl looks ghostly or unreal.
3. Grace has a daughter called Mary and a boyfriend called Tommy; Sue has a daughter called Sammy.
4. The story happens at two different times, two hundred years apart.
5. The story happens in Norfolk in the east of England.
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Check your reading

Chapter 1

1. 1815; Grace
2. To the war against Napoleon.
3. Grace is at the upstairs window of her house; Tommy is in his soldier’s uniform in the road outside the house; a man is painting Grace at the window. Perhaps Tommy and Grace are saying goodbye.
4. Her boyfriend Tommy; her baby, Mary.
5. The women take her away because Grace has no husband.
6. That she is still waiting for her baby in the house.

Chapter 2

1. In 2001; Sue
2. Her mother; she’s happy because she has a beautiful house and the baby likes it too.
3. Open; correct answer: the estate agent
4. The picture of Grace; it’s Grace’s house that Sue is moving into.
5. It’s very old and it needs a lot of work doing on it.
6. a T, b F, c T, d T, e F, f T,
7. She likes looking at it.

Chapter 3

1. Grace
2. 1 c, 2 b, 3 e, 4 a, 5 d
3. Because Grace is happy that ‘her room’ is going to be Sammy’s room.
4. Because Grace lost her own baby, Mary.

Chapter 4

1. Sue
2. She’s angry because the work isn’t finished on the house and the wiring is dangerous.
3. Because Sammy is only interested in the picture of Grace.

4. Grace seems to be pulling Sue’s hair to stop her taking Sammy out of the room.
5. a, b, c

Chapter 5

1. Grace
2. She feels sad because Sue takes Sammy away, and because she is waiting for Mary and Tommy; but happy because Sue brings Sammy back and Sammy smiles at her.
3. Fire
4. She takes Sammy out of the fire.

Chapter 6

1. a T, b F, c F, d F, e T
2. On page 26 Sue is lying on the floor telephoning the firemen; on page 27 the firemen are in the house helping Sue, who is unconscious on the floor.
3. Open

Chapter 7

1. a bad, b beautiful, c hot
2. She sings.
3. Her boyfriend, Tommy.
4. Because she thinks that the fireman is Tommy and that he has got their baby in his arms.

Chapter 8

1. They’re in hospital.
2. She can’t talk very well.
3. It burnt down because of the wiring.
4. They don’t understand how Sammy was saved. It was Grace who helped.
5. They’re going to live with Sue’s mother.

After reading

1–8. Student’s own answers.