Storylines are lively, original stories with contemporary themes, illustrated in full colour. They are carefully graded at four levels to encourage students to read for pleasure.

Cassette available

THE LOCKED ROOM

A man wakes up in a beautiful room in a strange house. The door is locked. Who is he and why is he there? And who is the person in black clothes? Slowly the man remembers . . .

Cover illustration by Alan Marks

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1 Storylines

1 THE LOCKED ROOM



The Locked Room

Peter Viney

Storylines 1

The Locked Room

1 Where am I?

Where am I?

I don't know. I'm in a beautiful room in an old house. There's a bed, an expensive chair, and a beautiful table. I can't see anything from the window, only a green field. The sun is shining on the field. I can hear music, quiet music. It's Mozart.

Why am I here?

I don't know. My head is hurting. I can't open the door, and I can't open the window. I'm wearing grey trousers and a grey shirt. I'm not wearing any shoes. I'm hungry and I'm thirsty. There isn't any food in the room. There isn't a drink either. There's a pen and some paper on the table. There isn't anything on the paper.

Who am I?

I can't remember. I can't remember my name. I can't remember anything. My head hurts a lot. I'm very tired. I'm going to sleep.



It's morning. I'm on the bed. I'm wearing the grey clothes. I'm very hungry and very thirsty. I can hear music again, it's the Mozart again. My head doesn't hurt now, but I can't remember my name. I can't remember anything. I can hear someone. There's someone outside the room. The door's opening . . .

He's in the room. He's wearing black trousers and a black shirt. I don't know him.

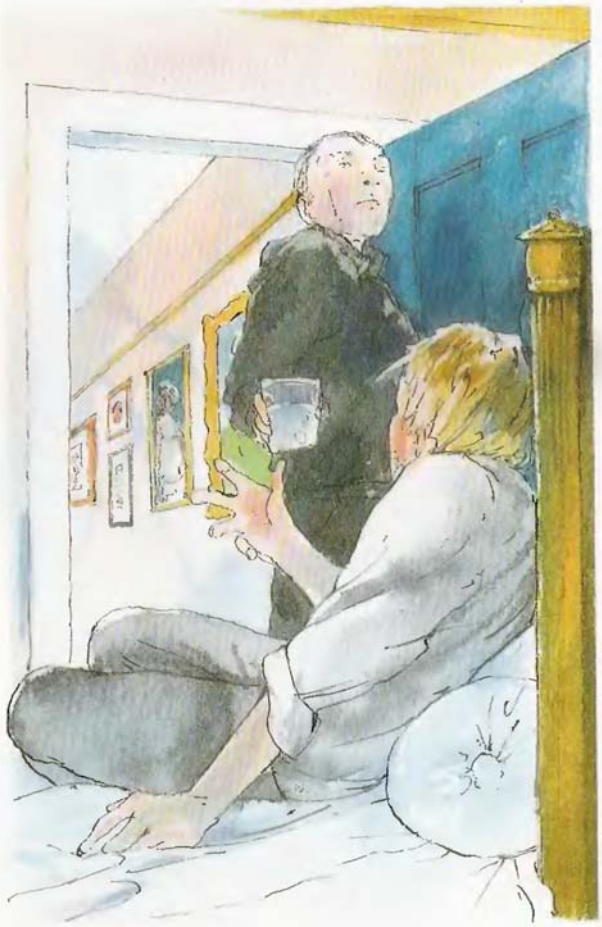
Man Hello. How's your head?
Me My head? It's OK. It doesn't hurt now.
Man Good.
Me Where am I?
Man You don't know?
Me No.
Man Are you thirsty?
Me Yes, I'm hungry and thirsty.
Man Drink this.

He's got a glass in his hand. I drink from the glass . . . I'm very tired again. I'm going to sleep . . .

What time is it?

My head's hurting again. I'm on the bed, and the room is dark. I can't hear music now. I'm going to turn on the light.

Now I can see. There's a glass on the table. I'm thirsty again . . . I'm going to drink from the glass . . . Sleep! I'm going to sl . . .



Man Wake up!
Me What? My head . . .
Man I'm going to ask you some questions. Who are you?
Me I don't know.
Man What's your name?
Me I don't know.
Man I'm going to ask you again. What's your name?
Me I can't tell you. I don't know.
Man Where are you from?
Me I don't know . . .
Man Drink this.
Me No, I can't, there's . . .
Man You are going to drink it. Do you understand?

There's a gun in his hand. I drink from the glass . . . The room is dark . . .

2 Questions

I'm awake again. It's quiet outside. The sun is shining outside the window. There's food and water on the table. I'm not tired now, and my head's OK.

Someone's coming. The door opens. It's the man in black clothes.

Man Do you want to talk now?
Me What about?



Man OK, who are you?
Me Who are *you*?
Man I'm asking the questions. Why are you here?
Me You tell me.

Then he hits me. He hits me across the face.

Man We're going to start again. Who are you?
Me I can't remember. Don't hit me . . .

But he does. Then he opens the door, and he goes. There's a bump on the back of my head. It doesn't hurt now, but my face hurts. A bump . . . I can remember something.

I can remember. I'm in a field. I'm lying under a tree. I've got some binoculars in my hand. I'm watching a house. It's a beautiful old house. Then there's a noise behind me. It's a man with a dog, a big dog. The man's holding a gun. Then the man's hitting me. He's hitting me on the head with the gun. Then everything's going dark. I've got a bump on my head now.

Why? Why am I in that field? Who am I? Am I a policeman? Am I a spy? And who is the man? Is he a policeman? Is he a spy? Or is he a criminal? I don't know. But now I can remember something. Tomorrow. Tomorrow I'm going to remember some more.



3 No more time

The next day. The man with black clothes is in the room again.

Man Well, how are you today?
Me I'm OK.
Man Can you remember anything?
Me Yes, a little.
Man Who are you working for?
Me I don't know.
Man Why are you watching us?
Me I don't know. Who are you? Tell me. Then . . . maybe I can remember.
Man Very clever. I can't tell you anything.

He goes out.

I remember again ... I'm watching the house. It's evening. I'm wearing a blue coat. There are lights in the house. A car's going to the house. It's a white Jaguar. I'm watching carefully. I can see two people. They've got a box. Then ... then there's the noise behind me and the bump on the head.

It's dark. I can hear voices outside the room.



Woman Well, is he going to talk?
Man Maybe. He can't remember anything, because of the bump on his head.
Woman What about the drinks?
Man No. The drinks aren't helping us.
Woman OK. Two days more. Then . . . that's it. We haven't got any more time. How much does he know? That's the important thing.

4 Out of the locked room

I hear a key. They're putting a key into the lock. They're turning the key. They're locking the door. They're walking away. But the key is in the lock! Two days more . . . and that's it! What are they going to do? I can't stay here. The key's in the lock.

I've got some paper from the table. Now . . . put the paper on the floor. Push the paper under the door. The paper's under the door. Now . . . take the pen. Push the pen into the lock. Yes, there's the key. It *is* in the lock. Push the key with the pen. Yes! The key is falling from the lock! Is it on the paper? I don't know. Pull the paper under the door. Pull it slowly and carefully. Very slowly and very carefully. It's coming under the door, and there's the key. It's on the paper! I've got the key. I can open the door. It's quiet outside. I'm opening the door very quietly and carefully. There's a corridor. It's empty.



I'm going out. Now, I'm going to lock the door again, and take the key.

I'm walking along the corridor. It's a beautiful house. I can hear the music again, the Mozart. There are a lot of doors. At the end I can see stairs. I can hear people downstairs. I can't go down. I open some doors. There are bedrooms. I open four or five doors, then I open another door. The room is full of paintings! Famous paintings, Picassos, Rembrandts, Van Goghs. They're beautiful. They're on the floor. There are millions of pounds in this room! Millions! I look at a Picasso. It's the famous stolen Picasso from the London Art Gallery.

Who are they? They're art thieves. But who am I?

I close the door. How can I get out of this house? They have got guns. I remember! One of the bedrooms! There's a telephone. I can telephone the police. I walk quickly along the corridor and open the door. The telephone is next to the bed. The number is on the telephone, Bradstreet 35972. I take the telephone carefully. 999 . . . I'm waiting.

Operator Police, fire or ambulance?
Me Police . . . quickly.
Police Police. What's your number?
Me Bradstreet 35972 . . . Quickly! I'm a prisoner here. I can't get out. The house is full of stolen paintings. Come quickly!
Police What's your name?
Me Come quickly. This is Bradstreet 35972. I can't . . .



Then I hear people in the corridor. I put down the phone. I can hear them outside the locked room.

Woman Well, open the door, then.
Man I can't find the key.
Woman Come on . . .
Man I can't find it.
Woman There's another key in the kitchen. Get it.
Man Right.

5 Who am I?

Five minutes later. I can hear him again. He's coming with the key. He's opening the door.

Man What? He isn't here! Where . . . but the door's locked.
Woman Find him . . . and take your gun. And this time, finish him. Do you understand?
Man OK, I'm going . . .

I can hear him. He's opening doors. Are the police going to come or not? He's in the next room. Then I hear them! Police cars, a lot of police cars. They're outside the house.

Woman It's the police! What do they want? Don't take the gun with you!

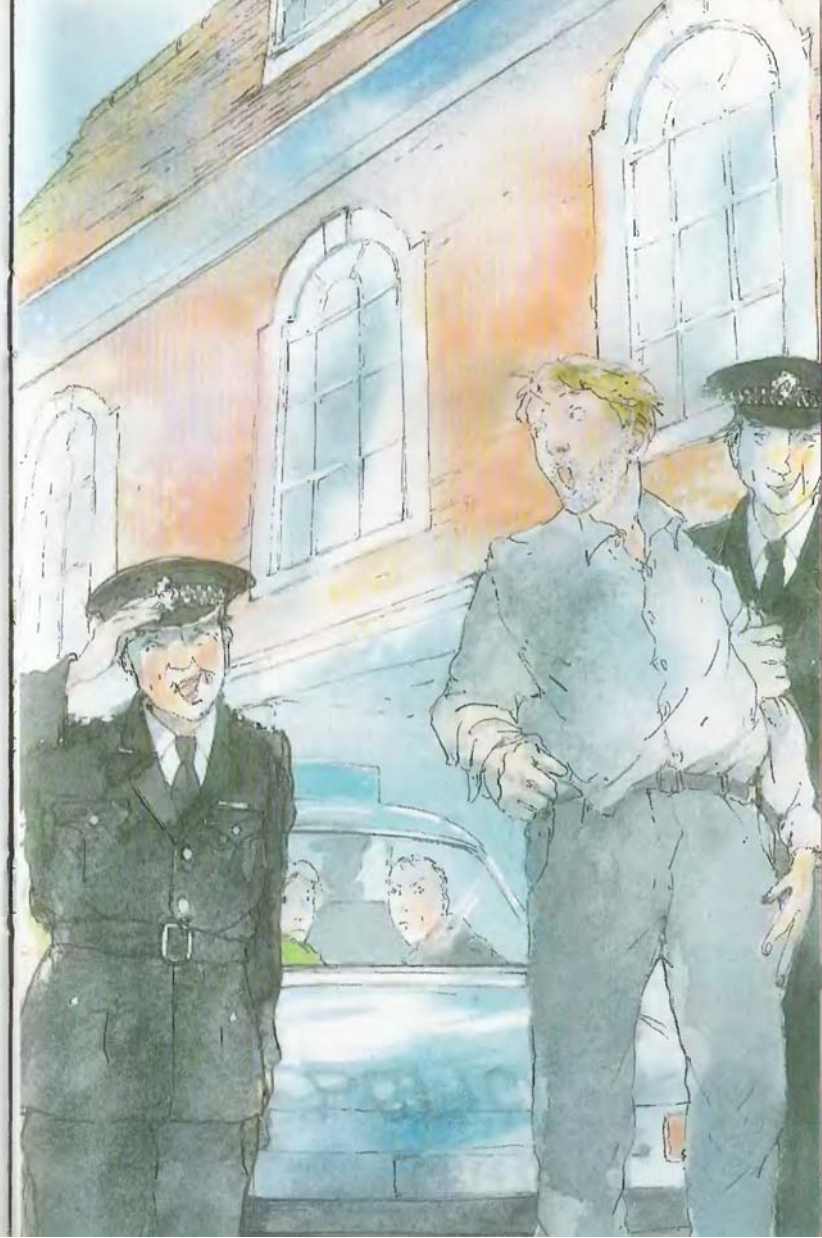


They're going downstairs. I can hear voices.

Woman Good evening, Inspector. What can I do for you?
Inspector We want to look round the house. We're looking for some paintings.
Woman But there's nothing here. Nothing.
Inspector We can look, then.
Woman But why?
Inspector A telephone call. A telephone call about some paintings.
Woman Who from?
Inspector We don't know.
Woman You don't know? Well . . .
Me From me, Inspector. The paintings are up here. I can show you. Follow me . . .

It's ten minutes later. The man and the woman are in the police cars.

Inspector Well, Eddie, this is a surprise.
Me Eddie? Is that my name?
Inspector Eddie! Come on!
Me No, I can't remember.
Inspector You can't remember me!
Me I can't remember my name. Eddie . . . Eddie what?
Inspector Eddie Hampton. What are you doing here, Eddie?



I tell him. I tell him about the field and the binoculars. I tell him about the bump on my head, and the room. I tell him about the paper and the key. He's laughing at me.

Me OK, I'm Eddie Hampton. But who's Eddie Hampton?

He's laughing again.

Me You know me. Am I a policeman?

Inspector No, Eddie, you aren't a policeman.

Me Then who am I? And what am I doing here?

Inspector I don't know, but I can tell you something.

Me What?

Inspector Eddie Hampton's a criminal . . . a thief. Not a big thief. Those two people are big thieves, with their famous paintings. No, you're a small thief, Eddie. You steal from houses. Televisions, radios, videos, hi-fi's, a little money sometimes. You're a small thief. But thank you for your help.

Exercises to accompany this story are available on a photocopiable worksheet in the Storylines Teacher's Guide.

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