

Activity I Tapescript

This story is set in a small, rather politically unstable country in Eastern Europe, around 1920. Mary is a wealthy young woman, who has been travelling round seeing the world. It is now time for her to go home, and she travels to the small town of Lot to get a train which will eventually take her back to London. While in Lot she meets a very pleasant elderly lady, Mrs. Baker, who has been a language teacher in Lot for a few years, and is now returning home to England. Mary and Mrs. Baker meet at the station and travel together in the same compartment in the train, sitting opposite each other. Later they are joined by an important-looking gentleman and his wife. Mary and Mrs. Baker chat, have a cup of tea, read some magazines, and enjoy the journey. Mrs. Baker leaves the compartment to go to the toilet, and doesn't return. After an hour or so Mary gets worried. She looks through the train, but cannot see Mrs. Baker. Fearing she may have been taken ill, she decides to speak to one of the train guards. He returns with her to her compartment. Mrs. Baker is still missing. The guard talks to the gentleman and his wife. They look very surprised and say there never was a Mrs. Baker. They hadn't seen anyone in the compartment except Mary, who had been asleep most of the time. Mary couldn't believe it. Of course, Mrs. Baker had been there. But the guard obviously didn't believe her at all. Then the gentleman spoke again.

"Let me introduce myself. I am Dr. Ernest Page. I am a leading brain surgeon. I am travelling today to the next station to pick up a seriously ill patient, and take her to the nearest large city where there is a well-equipped hospital where I can perform an operation. So, you see I am an expert in anything to do with the brain. It is obvious to me that you have imagined Mrs. Baker. I suppose you have been travelling around alone for some time. Now you have had a very clear dream. It's quite common, and nothing to worry about."

"But, of course, Mrs. Baker was real. I couldn't be mistaken," said Mary.

"No, maybe real to your brain, but not really real," replied the doctor. "We never saw her. You imagined it. Now let me give you something to relax, and we'll forget all about it."

Just then the train started to slow down to enter a small station. Dr. Page excused himself and went to meet his patient. Mary watched everything to see if Mrs. Baker appeared. There on the station platform was an ambulance men with a patient whose head was covered in bandages. The patient was carried onto the train, and Dr. Page's two nurses took the patient into a quiet cabin. The men got off, and the train continued its journey. No one else appeared.

Although no one believed her, Mary was still sure she had not imagined Mrs. Baker, and she started searching the train again. It took her almost 40 minutes, but she was completely unsuccessful. She returned to her compartment. There was someone new sitting opposite her now. Dr. Page got up as soon as he saw her.

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"Ah, I'm so sorry. I said no one had been sitting opposite you before. My mind must have been on my patient. Of course, this lady got on at the same time as you. She only stayed about 10 minutes, then went to chat to a friend. You fell asleep, and your dreaming mind turned this stranger into Mrs. Baker. So simple."

But Mary was sure he was lying. This woman had never been there before. Suddenly she began to see what had happened.

Can you work out the truth?