

### **Lesson 3.**

## **The Midnight Visitor**

### **GIST**

The story revolves around three characters, two rival spies named Ausable and Max and one mystery writer Fowler. Ausable is a chubby, lethargic, messy and clumsy man while Max is slender and rugged. The story is a short but intriguing insight into the life of a spy which may not be as glamorous as in the movies but still full of danger and suspense. Ausable meets Fowler, a writer fascinated by spies and secrets. Ausable was expecting a sensitive document to arrive that night and so asks Fowler to follow him through the night. Disappointed at Ausable's appearance and mannerisms, Fowler agrees to do the same. Suddenly, Ausable gets a phone call regarding someone who had entered his hotel room. Alarmed but not overly worried he

beckons Fowler to follow him to his room. The room was in the 6th floor. As they enter the room, they are startled by a pistol-toting individual staring at them. It is Max, the rival spy of Ausable. He asks them to enter and lock the room. He threatens Ausable and warns him to hand over the documents to him as soon as they arrive at his room later that night. Playing rather composed Ausable sits down and complains about the balcony window that he thought Max used to break into his room. Max claims that he used the master key to get inside and had he known about the balcony he would have used that instead. Ausable reiterates that he had complained to the management about the balcony window several times and has had previous break-ins. Fowler was listening to the conversation intently. Suddenly there is loud clamor at the door. Ausable suggests that it must be the police that he had arranged to safe keep the documents. Max is gets anxious and asks Ausable to turn them away while he hides in the balcony.

He threatens to shoot if he smells any trickery. As soon as Max leaps outside the window he yells out of horror as he crashes to the road below. The room had no balcony after all. Next, the door opens and Fowler sees a waiter holding Ausable's drinks rather any policeman. Fowler is relieved and impressed by Ausable's presence of mind. He realizes that looks can truly be deceiving.

### **Short Answer Questions (30-40 words):**

1. What made the story of the balcony so convincing?

Ans. Ausable showed his annoyance for the nuisance created by the balcony. He said that this was the second time that someone had got into his room through it. He also said that the balcony was not his but belongs to the next apartment and earlier his room used to be a part of a large unit.

2. How did Max go out of Ausable's room to save himself from the police?

Ans. Max was very nervous to find the police at the door. He went out of the window saying that he would wait in the balcony. He warned Ausable to send them away or he would shoot him. Max did not confirm the balcony and stepped out of the window and died.

3. How did Ausable kill Max without using a weapon?

Ans. Ausable was an intelligent spy. When he found Max waiting for him in his room, he made a story of a balcony under his window. He convinced Max about the balcony. And thus, when someone knocked at the door, Max fearing it to be the police, jumped out of the window and died.

### **Long Answer Questions (100 -150 words)**

Q1. With reference to 'The Midnight Visitor', do you think the presence of mind should be developed and to what advantage? Elaborate highlighting the values possessed by Ausable.

Ans. Max was a spy who was overconfident and too proud. His pride blinded him, and he thought that wielding a gun would give a further edge over the seemingly slow Ausable. Max lay in wait for Ausable to steal the important paper from him. As Fowler observed, apart from the pointed gun he didn't look very menacing. Even this proved useless for him as Ausable outwitted him with his presence of mind and intelligence. Ausable cleverly found out how Max had entered the room and created an extremely believable story about a non-existent balcony. He kept calm, and, hearing the waiter knock, declared it to be the police. Max, in an attempt to hide, fell to his death. Thus, Ausable got rid of Max without moving a muscle.

Q2. Describe the incident leading to the death of Max.

Ans. Ausable was a secret agent. He was living in a French hotel. His room was on the sixth and top floor of the hotel. One evening a young writer named Fowler came to meet him. When they entered the room and switched on the light, they found a man standing in the center of the room. He had a pistol in his hand. His name was Max. He came there to grab the important report from Ausable. Seeing Max, Ausable remained cool and silent. But he seemed to be angry with the management of the hotel. He said that because of the balcony just below his window anyone could enter the room. When there was a sudden knock at the door, Ausable said that it might be the police. He said that he himself had called the police. Max jumped through the window to the balcony. But in reality, there was no balcony. So, Max fell down to the ground from the sixth floor and was killed.

Q3. Write a character sketch of the secret Agent Ausable.

Ans. Ausable was a secret agent. He was fat and sloppy fellow. In his appearance, he did not seem to be a romantic figure. He came to Paris from Boston twenty years ago. He could speak French and German passably. He had not lost the American accent. Ausable was a very intelligent person. He had a great presence of mind. He did not lose heart in a difficult situation when he faced a man with a pistol in his hand. He remained cool. He cooked-up a story about the balcony. He made Max nervous by telling him about the police. He got Max killed without any fighting and shooting. Fowler who was disappointed to meet him at the beginning of the story was very much impressed with his intelligence and presence of mind at the end of the story.

## **UNSOLVED QUESTIONS:**

### **Short Answer Questions (30-40 words):**

1. What story did Ausable cook up regarding the arrival of the police? How did it affect Max?
2. How did clever Ausable outwit and get rid of his rival or enemy secret agent Max?
3. How do you judge Ausable as a secret agent?
4. What happened to Max after he jumped out of the window?
5. How did Fowler have his first authentic thrill of the day?

### **Long Answer Questions (100 -150 words)**

- Q1. Ausable was a successful secret agent. What qualities can be attributed to him? Give some examples.
- Q2. Presence of mind and intelligence are more powerful than a gun. How far is it true in the case of Ausable, the secret agent?
- Q3. What makes you think Max was a careless and foolish fellow?

## **LESSON 4:**

### **A QUESTION OF TRUST**

#### **GIST**

This story is about a thief who gets a taste of his own medicine. Horace Danby can be termed as a thief with a difference. He steals only once in a year. He is fond of books and spends most of his booty on buying books. He plans meticulously before attempting a burglary. During his burglary attempt at a big house, he gathers all the necessary information and enters the house for stealing from the safe. He is cheated by a lady thief, who claims herself to be the owner of the house. Finally, Horace ends up in prison only to repent at the way he was deceived by a person from his own profession.

#### **Main Characters of the Story- A Question of Trust Character Sketch**

1. Horace Danby: Horace Danby was about fifty years old and unmarried. Everyone thought him a good and honest citizen. He was otherwise very well and happy except for attacks of hay fever in summer. He made locks and was fairly successful at his business. Horace Danby was good and respectable but not completely honest. He used to rob a safe every year. He used to do so because he needed money to buy books. He had a passion for buying rare and costly books. He would rob only the rich person. He never hurt anyone and carried no weapon with him. He was not very aggressive and didn't want to go to prison.