

In the early hours of the morning, I was awoken by a tapping on my bedroom window. I had been sleeping in my childhood bedroom; a little box room, with a single bed pressed up against this window. I was therefore aware that if I were to open by blind, whoever, or whatever, was there would be able to see me. It had been a hot summer, which meant that I often slept with my window secured by its latch. That morning, however, was accompanied by a torrential downpour. The tapping was sudden but insistent, and it seemed that whatever was making the noise was keen to get my attention. Still drowsy from my slumber, I struggled to make sense of what was happening. Leaving the window open on the latch may have given the impression that it was left ajar, perhaps a cue for someone to want to break in. The tapping continued for a couple of minutes, and I remained completely frozen, as I knew that if I were to breathe there was only half a meter between me and what was waiting for me outside.

Eventually, I was able to return to sleep—though it was anything but restful. I woke up later that morning, completely drained and distressed, having experienced several hypothetical nightmares with varying interpretations of what could have occurred earlier that morning. Was someone really trying to get into my room? As I began to regain full consciousness and with the help of some google searches, voice note exchanges between friends, and an evaluation of the environmental factors at play; I was finally able to reach the more sensible conclusion that this event was of no threat. It was likely to have instead been a bird, trying to find some shelter that was safe and dry amidst the heavy downpour.

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Though Mary was no stranger to loneliness, upon her arrival at Misselthwaite Manor, she became more acutely aware of it. When she lived in India, at least her Ayah would be there to read a story, if she was in need of some entertainment. But she no longer had people attending to her demands in the ways they once had. And in a strange new place, she did not know how to occupy herself. Misselthwaite Manor had nearly one hundred rooms. You would think that this would be enough to keep any child occupied for weeks if not months, however Mrs Medlock, the head of servants at Misselthwaite, made herself abundantly clear that she would not have Mary snooping around and visiting any parts of the house that were unauthorised. Mrs Medlock had set up a nursery for Mary, but it was rather lifeless. Maybe a child who was used to playing could have found a way to use their imagination, and though Mary is an imaginative child, she still did not know how to play and therefore found no use for the room.

One dull and wintry morning, Martha, a young maid who waits upon Mary, is able to convince her to wrap up warm and go out to play. Usually Mary wouldn't hesitate to protest, as she only does what she sees fit. But at this point, her boredom was so great that she could not convince herself of any reason to stay indoors. It is here where Mary first explores the grounds of the Manor, and that she meets Ben Weatherstaff, the gardner and a friendly little red breasted robin. Mary, a child who

supposedly never felt warmth towards anyone or anything, begins to feel fond of this dainty little being. The robin becomes a companion to Mary, as they continue to encounter each other on her outdoor adventures. She feels understood in the robins' company, and this reciprocity is perhaps the first time in her life that Mary feels she actually belongs to someone and she considers the robin one of the first people that she likes. Not only this but the robin starts to reveal things to Mary, secrets to help her along her way.

I wish that I had been brave enough to pull up my blind, and see who was tapping for me that morning. Should I have been like Mary, and allowed for the bird to speak to me, I could have discovered what it was that it was trying to tell me.