

Read Stories



Learn English

THE SECRET IN THE WOODS





The Secret in the Woods – Karen Kovacs

CEFR level A1+ (Elementary)

Who is the story for?

This short story is for learners at CEFR level A1+ (Elementary). If you want help to find your level, click [here](#).

The story is free and anyone can read it. If you're a teacher, you can use it with your classes.

What is the story about?

When Shadow the dog runs into the woods, Emma finds an old house with a strange book inside. The book shows her a secret from the past – this secret could change the world. Who was her grandfather, and why did he go missing? With Shadow's help, can Emma find the answers?

New words

When you see a word in **bold**, look at the bottom of the page and you will find a definition.

The people in the story

Emma

Saul

Shadow, the dog

David Grey

Johnny

The Secret in the Woods – Karen Kovacs

CEFR level A1+ (Elementary)

Emma lived in a small house on a busy street. One day, a man came to her door. It was her friend, Saul. He lived on the same street.

“I’m going on holiday. Could you look after my dog Shadow for me?” he asked. Emma liked dogs. She said yes.

Shadow was big and black. He was a nice, happy dog. Things started well. Shadow liked to go walking with Emma, and he enjoyed playing in her garden.

But one day, Shadow did something **strange**¹. They were at the park and, for ten minutes, they played together with Shadow’s ball. Then, he stopped playing and he looked at something.

“What are you looking at?” Emma asked. She could see nothing.

Then, the dog ran into the **woods**².

“Shadow! Come back!” said Emma.

She went into the woods too and she looked for him. She couldn’t find him but she didn’t stop looking.

¹ **strange** (adj) – not normal or usual

² **woods** (n) – a place with many trees

She walked for twenty minutes. Then, she saw an old **hut**³. Shadow was outside the hut. Emma said his name, but he didn't come to her.

"Shadow, is there a problem?" Emma asked. The dog was **afraid**⁴, she could see that.

The door of the hut was open and Emma looked in. She couldn't see any people inside. But there were lots of old things – plates, cups, books.

She walked slowly inside. On a table, she found something strange – a small, brown book. It was very old. She opened it slowly. The book had lots of strange notes about the woods. On the last page, it said, "They are watching. We can't leave."

Emma thought hard. Who wrote this? Why was this person afraid?

She closed the book.

Emma heard a noise and she looked up, very afraid. Who was there? Were they watching her?

Then she saw Shadow at the door to the hut. "Oh, it was you!" Emma said. "I don't like it here, in this strange place. Let's go home."

They walked back to her house.

At home, Emma looked on the internet for more information. She found some information about her town. Many years ago, people went **missing**⁵. Some people said, "It was an accident." Others said, "Those people went missing because they were in a **secret**⁶ group."

This group of people lived in the woods. But there was no more information about them on the internet.

³ **hut** (n) – a small, simple house

⁴ **afraid** (adj) – scared; feeling fear or worry

⁵ **missing** (adj) – If you go missing, people can't find you.

⁶ **secret** (adj) – known by only one person or a few people

Emma wanted to **find out**⁷ more. The next day, she went back to the hut and she looked inside it again. She found something very strange. On the floor, there was a small key. What did this key open? Was it important?

Emma felt excited! “What will I find this time?” she thought.

Emma looked in every part of the hut. She found a **cupboard**⁸ on the wall. She used the key in the door and it worked! The cupboard door opened!

Inside, she found some photographs. One photo showed a man next to a big, old tree. Emma knew that face – who was it? Wait! It was her grandfather, David Grey!

She never knew him because he died a long time ago but there was a photo of him at her mother’s house. He went missing one day and his family never saw him again.

This was exciting! Now, Emma could answer her family’s questions:

- Where did David go?
- Why did he go missing?
- Where was he now?

Emma thought for a moment. Was her grandfather part of the secret group?

In the cupboard, there was also a letter. It was from her grandfather! At the bottom of the letter, there was a drawing of a plant. The letter said:

⁷ **find out** (phr v) – get new information

⁸ **cupboard** (n) – a small storage unit with a door

A month ago, we found a special plant in the woods. It's under the big, old tree, near the hut. It has **leaves**⁹ of two colours. It can **heal**¹⁰ many people.

But **pharmaceutical companies**¹¹ are angry. With this plant, people will not need their medicines. They say, "You mustn't tell anyone about this plant. We will kill you!" They want to stop us. We must **hide**¹² in the woods.

Other people told the secret before us. Then, they went missing. Are those people dead?



Emma felt sad about her grandfather but she also wanted to find this special plant.

She took Shadow with her and they went to the old tree. Under it, there was a plant with black and white leaves. "This is it, I think," she thought.

Emma and Shadow went home. Emma phoned her friend, Johnny. It was very dangerous for her, she knew, but she had to do it. Her friend was a **journalist**¹³.

She told him about the plant and the secret group. Johnny wrote everything down.

⁹ **leaf** (n) – the flat green part of a tree or plant (plural, **leaves**)

¹⁰ **heal** (v) – make someone healthy again

¹¹ **pharmaceutical companies** (n) – businesses that make medicine

¹² **hide** (v) – go to a place where no one can see you

¹³ **journalist** (n) – a person who writes news

Two days later, the story was in the newspaper! The pharmaceutical companies wanted to stop it but it was too late. Now, everybody knew about the plant.

One day, she saw Shadow again. “Thank you, Shadow,” she said. “You took me to the hut. I only found out about the plant and about my grandfather because of you.”

Where was Emma’s grandfather and the other people in the secret group? Where did they go? Were they hiding in the woods or were they dead? Emma never found out.

Emma was very sad about that. But hospitals in all parts of the country started using the plant and it healed many people.

Emma felt very **proud**¹⁴ of her grandfather and his friends. She never forgot them. But sometimes, she walked in the woods and she had a strange feeling. Was someone was watching her?

¹⁴ **proud** (adj) – happy because someone has done something good

Comprehension Questions

How well did you understand the story? The answers are on the next page.

1. What is the dog's name?
2. Where does the dog run when he stops playing?
3. What is the first thing Emma finds inside the hut?
4. Who is in the old photo that Emma finds?
5. What is special about the plant in the woods?
6. Why is Emma worried at the end of the story?

Answers

1. Shadow
2. into the woods
3. an old book with strange notes
4. her grandfather, David Grey
5. It can heal many people.
6. She sometimes feels that someone is watching her in the woods.



I hope you enjoyed this story.

I have **more stories** for you, at **different levels**.

You can find details of my books on my **website**:

readstories-learnenglish.com/all-our-books



Improve your English with my GRADED READERS!

Reading graded readers will really improve your English – not just your reading, but also your speaking, writing, listening and confidence!

Why are graded readers so useful?

- **Ordinary books are too difficult.** If a story has too many hard words, reading becomes slow and frustrating. My books use grammar and vocabulary at your level, so you can enjoy the story without stress.
- **You will learn new words easily.** When you see words in context, you remember them better. My books help you grow your vocabulary naturally.
- **No need for a dictionary!** Important words are explained in the back of the book, so you won't have to stop reading.
- **You will improve without studying!** Just by enjoying a story, you will get better at English. You don't need to memorise lists or do boring exercises.
- **Reading helps all your English skills.** Many studies show that people who read regularly in English improve faster in speaking, writing and listening too.
- **Most importantly, my books make learning English FUN.** When you enjoy reading, you will want to read more – and the more you read, the better your English will be!