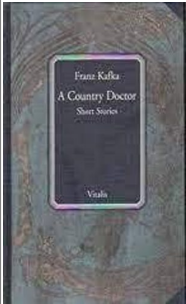


# a country doctor

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| <b>author</b>      | <a href="#">franz_kafka</a>                                                       |
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The plot follows a country doctor's hapless struggle to attend a sick young boy on a snowy winter's night. A series of surreal events occurs in the process, including the appearance of a mysterious groom (stablehand) in a pig shed.

It begins with the doctor having to urgently attend a sick patient in a village ten miles away, but his only horse died the night before, so his maid Rosa goes off to find another. She returns empty-handed — “Of course, who is now going to lend her his horse for such a journey?” — and the doctor expresses his frustration by kicking the door of what he thinks is his empty pig shed. A mysterious groom appears from within and supplies the doctor with two magnificent horses to pull his trap. The groom, being the oaf that he is, boorishly kisses Rosa when she tries to hand him a harness, leaving two rows of red tooth marks on her cheek. The doctor scolds the groom, but quickly realizes that he is in the groom's debt and jumps happily into the carriage. The groom declines to travel with him, preferring to stay with the terrified Rosa, who dashes into the house and makes every effort to secure herself, although her fate is “inevitable”. The doctor can do nothing to stop the groom, who, with a simple “Giddy up!” sends the horses on their way and breaks down the doctor's front door to get at Rosa.

The doctor is almost instantly transported to his sick patient's house. It is, he says, “as if the farm yard of my invalid opens up immediately in front of my courtyard gate”. After being ushered into the house by a family whose explications he does not comprehend, the doctor is quietly implored by the patient to let him die. Initially, the doctor deems the patient completely healthy and feels annoyed that his patients keep calling him at night for no reason, but, after he notices the boy's sister holding a bloody towel, he reexamines the boy and discovers a large, deep wound on his right side that is full of worms. The family and assembled guests are pleased to see the doctor at work. The horses, meanwhile, having somehow freed themselves of their straps, have opened the windows and are neighing frantically.

The doctor's thoughts keep returning to the fate of his maid, for which he blames himself. In accordance with a simple tune being sung by a school choir that has assembled outside the house, the family undresses the doctor and places him in bed alongside the patient. When the family leaves

the room, the doctor assures his skeptical bed mate that the wound is not that bad, gathers his belongings, and jumps out a window and onto one of the horses. He expects to get home so soon that he does not even bother to get redressed, but the horses do not move as quickly as they did on the outgoing journey. The doctor, disgraced, finds himself and the horses “crawl[ing] slowly through the wasteland of snow like old men”. He feels betrayed by his patients and his community, and the story concludes with the line “A false ring of the night bell, once answered — it can never be made right.”

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A\\_Country\\_Doctor\\_\(short\\_story\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Country_Doctor_(short_story))

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