

THE TEN LOST TRANSGRESSIONS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

A Series of 10 Stories (Pastiche in the worst way)

By Jack Brazos III

LITERARY PURPOSE

This is a fun writing distributed to the Sherlockian fans of the Crew of the Barque Lone Star for teaching, scholarship, and research of the writings of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The nature of the work is distributed solely for nonprofit Educational and Instructional Purposes and is not for commercial publication.

TRIBUTE

This work is Pastiche honoring the writings of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, author of the sixty Sherlock Holmes creations collectively identified as the "Canon". This "Sherlockian Pastiche" is in appreciation for his contribution to the literary world that has helped fill the empty lives of world-weary souls with entertainment, suspense, surprise and bewilderment around the globe.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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THE CASE OF THE MISSING PEARLS OF NORWAY

1st In a Series of "The Ten Lost Transgressions of Sherlock Holmes"

Staring idly out the windows of 221-B Baker Street, one of those blustery October mornings in London when all the city seemed to be wearily trudging to some menial place of occupation and endeavor, I was beginning to wonder why on earth I even got out of bed this morning. Holmes was deeply emerged in something he had found in the Times. Frustrated, he alternated back and forth between a thick stack of notes in his files and the morning paper. One of those notes had the all-familiar markings of the British government. Something from Mycroft no doubt. This was not to be one of those quiet mornings. Turning back to the window, something caught my eye.

"Holmes, there seems to be a lost woman on the street below."

"Young, a tradesman's secretary or perhaps clerk, late twenties" he replied without looking up. "She should ring us shortly."

No sooner had he replied than the woman rushed toward our now-located address and within what seemed a matter of seconds was being announced by Mrs. Hudson. Then a beautiful and very nervous young woman bustled into the room. "Miss Janie McIntosh, I believe," remarked Holmes glancing up briefly.

"Yes" came a flustered reply.

"Something traumatic has happened in your life. You have not slept well for several nights. Perhaps the loss of a loved one" probed Holmes still not paying much attention.

Taken aback, she reacted, "Is it that obvious?" She removed her coat and gloves almost unconsciously.

"Your color is pale and your eyes are puffed as though you bear the weight of some heavy anxiety," replied Holmes.

The woman finally noticed me and cast a nervous look in my direction. "This is Dr. Watson, my assistant and confidant. You may speak freely before him. Watson, this is Miss McIntosh."

"I was told I could trust you," she replied, still looking around in a worried manner.

"Please sit down and tell us what is your matter of concern," requested Holmes, finally focusing on the issue at hand in a more pleasant manner.

"My tragic state of affairs began when my fiancé bought me this expensive coat as a wedding gift. I then found out he borrowed a large amount of money from his roommate to pay for it. Things in my life have been unpleasant since. My fiancé, Romeo Jones is dead and his roommate, John, has disappeared" the girl blurted out. "My employer is acting in a most distressing manner, and now, my fiancé's mother is treating me like I have done some terrible thing."

"Have you?"

A speechless look engulfed the girl's face as Holmes continued to baffle her. He studied the woman carefully for a long time. She was quite attractive. Her manner reflected assertiveness, self-reliance and determination. Her coat was obviously new when compared to the remainder of her fashionable but worn regalia.

"Your speech reveals a slight French accent. Your manner and bearing disclose a European flair that can only be acquired over time and considerable travel. As you are no doubt familiar with the ways of the world, I must ask, why is this not being handled by the police?"

"They investigated and first thought my employer, Pawnshop Eddie Smith killed Romeo but he was in a poker game with friends at the time and now they think my boyfriend's roommate did it. John has disappeared and they cannot find him. They cannot do anything."

"Miss McIntosh, what exactly do you want me to do if the Metropolitan Police have taken charge of the affair?"

"I want you to find my fiancé's killer and I want to know why his roommate disappeared. We were all friends."

"The odd pearls of friendship" observed Holmes absently.

The sudden flash of fear that appeared on Miss McIntosh's face quickly melted into a look of trepidation. "Who is your employer?"

"His name is Pawnshop Eddie Smith. He owns Eddie's Pawn Exchange at 1214 Bunker Street in greater London. I have worked for him for two years in July."

"And your now-deceased fiancé?"

"Romeo Jones. He shared a room with John Farrington on 524 Greenhouse Lane. I tell you Mr. Holmes, there is something strange going on in that pawnshop where I work. Too many days, I have been sent home early with vague explanations Eddie needs to have a private meeting concerning "other matters." And then there's this side business that has something to do with another warehouse. The back part of our pawnshop is always locked and no one is allowed in except Eddie. Some of the invoices and books I reconcile are for things I never see with strange animal like names."

Once again, Holmes studied the woman closely. Standing dismissively, he stated, "Leave me your address and I shall contact you within a few days. That will be all for today."

Surprised at his dismissal, the woman stood, stammered a thank you and left. After she had departed, I asked, "Yes, why are you taking this case when the local police are fully capable of handling the matter?"

"Come now Watson, you know my methods, did you not notice the obvious? This is a sophisticated and well-traveled woman, who is currently with very limited funds. The expensive but faded colors of her blouse. The much repaired cuffs of her sleeves. The shape of her crinoline, washed until misshapen and could hardly "bell-out" properly. The worn but desperately well-cared-for shoes, her hat and gloves, obviously cast-offs. That peculiar irritating odor surrounding her hands..... And her nails.....her nails....Good Grief Watson, did you not notice her nails?"

"A cheap nail polish knock-off is easy for even a lazy chemist to recognize."

"The lady is accustomed to expensive regalia and dress but now finds herself in a state of desperation. She likes expensive things, but cannot afford them."

"I do know your methods," I replied, "they tell me there is something more here than a commonplace London murder."

"Precisely, Watson, you are making considerable improvement," commented Holmes with what almost passed for a smile.

"The woman is lying. I must find out how much and why."

"Your suspicion of women is overdone," I muttered shaking my head.

I accompanied Mr. Sherlock Holmes to Scotland Yard around noon. Inspector Lestrade was not overly happy to take the time to meet with us. Over-worked by two bank robberies and a series of burglaries in the West End, he was in no mood to spar with Holmes about a missing docker who was probably somewhere sleeping off a hangover. First it had to do with a quick peek at the corpse down at

the morgue. Lestrade elected to go directly on to the crime scene to see if the Constable had anything to report.

A hurried but thorough inspection of the body told us Romeo was killed with a knife, the result of what appeared to be two powerful thrusts passing cleanly between the ribs and directly into the heart. The wounds were lower than Holmes expected. I watched as Holmes sniffed, peered and probed every square inch of the cadaver that finally revealed the telltale fragment of evidence he had hoped for. He walked outside and stared into the street for almost a quarter of an hour, his eyes glazed over like he was comatose.

"I think it is time for us to survey the scene of this grizzly offense. Dr. Watson, would you summon a hansom?"

We arrived at Pawnshop Eddie's flat, the scene of the murder, around early afternoon. Lestrade met us at the door. Apparently Eddie was doing rather well for himself as his flat comprised a living area, kitchen and dining area and two reasonably sized bedrooms.

"The business must be doing rather well," observed Holmes.

"I thought so too," mumbled Lestrade, absently glancing around as Holmes poked, prodded, looked over, under, raised and moved every piece of furniture in the living area and both bedrooms.

Holmes looked over every item in every drawer and cabinet in the kitchen. The storage area for cleaning materials seemed to interest him most as he sniffed, smelled, touched, and even tasted some of the materials he found.

"What is taking you so long, Holmes?" asked Lestrade with impatience.

"Inspector, this is formalin. What does a pawnbroker need formalin for?" remarked Holmes.

"Formalin is the commercial name of a solution of formaldehyde gas (CH₂O) in water."

"What of it?"

"We know who our killer is, we just do not know where he is yet," grumbled Lestrade.

"Jones owed John more money than he could pay back. There were no prospects for repayment. Farrington has been known to be a bit rough. He knew Romeo was going to break into Eddie's flat and try to steal something, perhaps enough to repay the debt but this was a falling out among thieves and John Farrington found a perfect time to kill him, capture the booty and blame the murder on Eddie whose reputation is also questionable. It did not work. The two of them constantly squabbled before, had heated disputes and even fights, all of these facts verified by Miss Janie McIntosh. We just need to know the whereabouts of the now wanted and fleeing John, case closed."

Holmes smiled and then returned to the second bedroom. He spent an unusual amount of time in there. Finally he found what he was looking for on the edge of the cushion of the chair and also on the edge of the bed. It was not only the irritating odor of Formalin but also the other small traces of the adhesive characteristic he had suspected would be there. Lestrade met him at the door.

"You're on to something are you not?"

"You know my methods, you have yours, I have mine," murmured Holmes.

"The game is afoot."

The next morning, Holmes and I started early. Sherlock Holmes signaled for a hansom. "City Records Building" he told the driver.

City records quickly revealed Pawnshop Eddie Smith also owned Reptiles Import, Inc. We returned briefly to Baker Street in order Holmes prepare for an afternoon of undercover work. He changed clothes and left looking like a docker.

"A few pounds crossing the right palms identified a striking resemblance of John Farrington to a known courier," Holmes later commented sinking into the sofa exhausted. It seems several hours spent on the wharves revealed Pawnshop Eddie had a courier that made regular pick-ups on the dock from certain freighters arriving from Norway. The next morning Holmes was at it again. The London Bureau of Shipping Transportation records everything pertaining to shipping in and out of London. Buried deep in the numerous files, were records that further revealed since Norway was a strange place from which to import reptiles, that Reptiles Import, Inc. actually transhipped to Norway from the West African Port of Monrovia, Liberia.

A drawn out argument with Lestrade' produced a confidential Norwegian government report there was indeed, a counterfeit ring that had been operating out of Oslo for a little less than a year. Lestrade' was becoming more suspicious since Mr. Sherlock Holmes was spending an inordinate amount of time and now resources on what seemed to Lestrade to be an open-and-shut case.

"One more of your tricks of making us look inadequate, and I will have you inside of Scotland Yard" threatened Lestrade.

"Now, now," as Holmes sought to sooth Lestrade's concerns. "Scotland Yard always gets the credit, and the press. After all, I shall need you to make an arrest tomorrow afternoon."

"And who would that be?"

"Why the killer, of course." Lestrade glared as Holmes walked away.

The next task on the list was to take on the very formidable chore of interviewing Pawnshop Eddie. Eddie Smith did not like interviews as neither did he like people who wanted to ask him questions. Eddie viewed himself as an independent businessman, with a heavy emphasis on independent. The interview with Pawnshop Eddie Smith was ugly to say the least. He had grown up on the wharves of Liverpool and learned to survive and stay barely one step ahead of the law. It was an ongoing battle. Everything about the man was murky. Holmes did manage to get out of him Miss Janie McIntosh was a general pain, always nosing around asking questions about things that were none of her business.

Eddie made it clear he wanted to be left alone. "As long as I pay my taxes and do not get caught beating somebody up, it's no body's business," seemed to be his life philosophy."

As Holmes was about to leave, he asked, "Did John Farrington have feelings for Miss Janie McIntosh"

Eddie gazed out the window and slowly replied, "I always thought he did. Looked like it was a secret. She had a heart of marble. She's a real user, she is," and then he was through talking.

We arrived back at Baker Street shortly before five p.m. Mrs. Hudson entered with supper and we sat down for the meal. Holmes seemed more interested in reviewing the days' events than the meal.

"It was not difficult to verify Pawnshop Eddie whereabouts at the time of the murder" Holmes said at last. "He actually plays poker with some of my acquaintances. Lestrade, on the other hand, was rather stingy with his time, especially since he feels that he has already identified the killer and has men at all of the transport departure points together with the entire Police in search for one John Farrington. Tomorrow morning, I shall need your assistance Watson. There will be danger and you should make your revolver ready."

"I shall be prepared," I answered.

Suddenly there was a loud trampling of many feet in the hallway downstairs. "Why, Watson, I do believe our friends have arrived," remarked Holmes.

I turned as the door flew open and Wiggins announced his entire band of a half-dozen dirty youths who fell into a make-shift line with Wiggins front and center.

Holmes sighed as he stood. "Gentlemen, I have told you before - have Wiggins come up, and then he shall report to you."

Wiggins grinned. "Sorry Guv, bu' you know 'ow boys c'n be."

Holmes sighed, a slight smile on his face.

"Now then," he said, immediately getting down to business, "I am looking for a man. He is wanted by the police. Do not apprehend him, just locate him and report back to me. He is very ordinary looking, not quite six foot, clean-shaven, dark hair, about forty years old. He is hiding, will seldom be seen in public, not in restaurants, bars, parks, or church. He will dress casually, nothing flashy, will probably take a room in a lower cost rental where people are not likely to pay attention to the papers. He may be found on the docks. He works as a courier and picks up shipments of imported reptiles, so if you get close to him he will smell like formaldehyde. He has the tattoo of a star on the back of his left hand. There is no other like it. Inside the star is the name "John". His name is John Farrington. The usual fee, and a guinea to the one who finds him." Time is important. A ten percent bonus if he's found by noon tomorrow."

Holmes handed each one a sixpence, and they all turned and scurried towards the door. And then the Baker Street Irregulars were gone as quickly as they appeared.

Eleven a.m. the following morning Holmes received a report from Wiggins. This time they were much calmer than before. There was good news and it was also payday for The Baker Street Irregulars. The half-dozen dirty youths fell into line, Wiggins and Sam at the end farthest from the door all standing smart and at attention. A guinea prize to young Tom who had made the actual find and bonus all round. They were in and out with such silence that one would have hardly noticed save for the ragged clothing. Holmes's demeanor changed immediately.

"Watson, your revolver. We must go. The game is afoot."

Moments later we were in a hansom flying across town toward a small rooming house not far from the docks. No sooner had Farrington cracked the door answering our knock, than Sherlock Holmes quickly sandwiched himself through the opening and into the small room. The entire persona of Holmes had transformed instantly, those eyes became black openings projecting a fierce and vicious savage with a single purpose in mind. One that would not be denied.

"John Farrington, it is in your best interests to talk to us now, concerning your immediate danger" said Holmes in a stern voice.

"Who are you?"

"My name is Sherlock Holmes."

"So?"

"I make it my business to know what other people do not know."

"You know nothing of my affairs. Get out of my room."

"Mr. John Farrington, I know everything of your affairs. First, I know that you did not kill Romeo Jones. Second, I know that you are a thief. Third, I know that you are a counterfeit money smuggler. Forth, I know that you are wanted by Scotland Yard and the Metropolitan Police. And fifth, I know that you have possession of The Missing Pearls of Norway. And finally, I know that you will turn over The Pearls to me this afternoon or risk going to the gallows for murder, prison for counterfeit money smuggling not to mention minor offenses of evading and resisting arrest together with less minor charges of attempting to flee the country illegally. By the way, my good man, I also know that right now, if you try to run, you will be shot by my colleague here, who is a perfect marksman."

The man was frozen. I tried not to look shocked.

"Now, let me be very clear. The only thing that I'm interested in are The Missing Pearls of Norway. My client is very firm in that they must be returned. He will not take no for an answer concerning their safe return. I am not a police officer. I am a private consulting detective. I know you did not kill Romeo Jones. I have no interest in your import business. I have no interest in your part of the counterfeiting scheme. Do we understand each other?"

John looked faint. Clearly he was not a murderer, it simply was not in him. He is little more than a petty thief, in way over his head. Then suddenly, he could not stop talking. He would not shut up.

"I did not know what The Missing Pearls of Norway were. I saw them, they looked pretty and should bring a good price in a pawnshop. The old fool guarding them was half asleep and it was too easy. I was not even looking for something to steal. It was an accident. It was an opportunity that just fell in my lap. It was too easy. I simply walked out with them.

"Several days later, Miss Janie McIntosh was over to see Romeo and I knew she worked in a pawnshop so I asked her. She knew exactly what they were and said that she had been looking for them for a long time. She wanted them badly. Offered me all kinds of things but she had no money. So I said, well, I will go by Eddie's Pawn Exchange tomorrow and ask Eddie what he will give me for them. She almost turned green. Really became frantic. I have never seen her that way before. She became really vicious and mean. Made all kinds of threats. I made her get out. She left mad and screaming. That is the last I saw of her.

"Apparently she thought I had sold them to Eddie and that he had them. Next thing I knew is that Romeo had broken into Eddie's flat and gotten himself murdered and suddenly Scotland Yard is looking for me. I did not kill anybody. The paper says Miss Janie McIntosh was saying that I killed Romeo. I did not even know he was dead. That bitch is crazy. I have been running ever since."

"Where are The Missing Pearls of Norway," pressed Holmes in a cold voice.

"Close" replied John Farrington, "but I do not want to go to jail."

"I can prove to the police you did not murder Romeo but you are on your own concerning the counterfeit scheme," countered Holmes.

"Not good enough, I do not want to go to jail," insisted John.

"John, neither Scotland Yard nor the Police have discussed anything with me about counterfeit money. It is possible they are focused upon the murder and simply know nothing about your scheme or perhaps haven't had time to piece together any facts."

Holmes looked John Farrington straight in the eye and calmly explained again, "I am the only one who can prove that you did not kill Jones. I care nothing about the counterfeiting simply because my client is not interested. His only interest is - My only interest is - The Missing Pearls of Norway. I can keep my end of the bargain, can you keep yours?"

"Besides, when Miss Jamie McIntosh finds out you no longer have The Pearls, She will have no longer have a reason to try to kill you. Now, again; where are The Missing Pearls of Norway?"

Reluctantly, John Farrington gave in. "Here, in my security belt, strapped to my body."

"Come with me now, and we will settle this matter," counseled Sherlock Holmes.

McIntosh arrived promptly at four as requested by Holmes. With Lestrade and his constables stationed in hiding and within hearing distance, Mrs. Hudson showed her in and returned shortly with the tea that Holmes felt was appropriate. Holmes guided her to a chair as

she struggled with her coat and gloves. Relaxed and sipping hot tea, Miss McIntosh came directly to the point.

"You said in your message that you had information that I should hear concerning the untimely demise of my fiancé and the disappearance of his roommate."

"Yes Miss McIntosh, I fear that I do."

"Well?"

"You murdered your fiancé during the burglary of Eddie's flat. You pressured him into helping you to search Eddie's apartment for what you said was counterfeit money, when all the while you were obsessed about finding The Missing Pearls of Norway. You seduced Jones into helping you. It had become a sickness with you. Your lust for The Missing Pearls of Norway became a madness that you could not escape. Madness is the mildest of descriptions of your insane desire to own The Pearls all for yourself. You were beside yourself when you thought that John was going to take them to Eddie for sale. The idea that they might get away from you again became a curse. You thought he sold them to Eddie. When Eddie ignored your inquiries, you decided that he had bought The Missing Pearls of Norway and hidden them in his flat. You beguiled Romeo into helping you burglarize the apartments and take The Pearls for yourself. You searched the kitchen, found nothing and then turned to the bedrooms. The second bedroom caught your attention as the one where The Pearls should be. But they were not there. When you could not find The Pearls you became angry... you had failed again. Romeo discovered there was no counterfeit money and that all you were really looking for The Pearls, which he really did not much care for. He became disgusted and angry and was going to stop looking and stop helping and then began to insist that you do the same. But you could not give up. You tried pleading. You tried persuasion. It did not work. You would not quit. You could not quit. You had to have The Missing Pearls of Norway - it was an illness, a disease. He wanted to quit and you would not give up. About here is where Romeo realized that his affection for you was for naught. That he was never part of your life from the beginning. Your plans were always self-centered. Once you had The Missing Pearls you planned to immediately leave the British Isles without either your fiancée or anyone else. Everyone around you -- They were all mere pawns. A fight broke out. Coldly, and without mercy, you stabbed Romeo. Just like that. Then it dawned on you. You realized, John Farrington never sold The Pearls; he still had them and now he could not be found. And now, John had real problems, if you found him before the police did. Yes, Miss McIntosh, I have found him and interestingly he, like Eddie, has an ironclad alibi for the time of the Romeo Jones murder."

Stunned, the woman slowly shook her head from side to side.

"How did you know?"

"I make it my business to know things other people do not."

"This was not supposed to get out of hand" she struggled. "If they had just done as they were told. Neither one of those fools knew what The Pearls could have bought us."

With Holmes, it is always a matter of deductive reasoning.

"Your obvious need for an expensive lifestyle when none was available is evidenced by the details of your garments and general attire. The harsh use of chemicals was apparent upon



your skin. The very irritating odor of your hands and nails. The instinctive removal of your gloves. The skin irritation and rash around you fingers and nails told me that you had rummaged throughout every nook and cranny of Reptiles Import, Inc. and were very much aware of the covert smuggling inside the carcasses of the embalmed reptiles. "You see, formalin has a very irritatingly distinct odor and must be diluted with water before it is used as a preservative. The advantages of formalin over other preservatives are: it is inexpensive, it is generally available, a small bulk of concentrated stock solution may be diluted as needed, and specimens almost never decay in it. Its principal disadvantages are: it has a very irritating odor, it is very poisonous and may cause skin irritation or rash. It has a tendency to make specimens become brittle if the solution is too strong and tends to fade out certain colors rapidly. It must be stored in rustproof containers. There were multiple rust-proof containers in Eddie's kitchen upon which contain residue of your special brand of fingernail polish which rubbed off when you burglarized and searched Eddie's flat. The discoloration and fading of the blouse, worn by you on your first visit to Baker Street told me that you were in contact with Formalin on a regular basis. When I made a casual passing reference to "Pearls" you were noticeably surprised in a manner that a trained observer could easily recognize that a nerve had been struck. Then of course, there was the tell-tale fragment of fingernail polish that you use. A fragment was lodged behind his left earlobe while completing one of the stabbing motions. A brief check with the Oslo passport office determined that you had visited Oslo in recent months, although the purpose of the visit is still a bit unclear. In the end John Farrington had no reason to kill anybody for anything. Even though some of his business dealings are a bit cloudy."

Still dazed, Miss Janie McIntosh mumbled; "I did not want to kill him. He just needed to do what he was told."

Lestrade, listening at the door entered the room in a sour mood.

"I will take it from here."

"As you have already met Miss McIntosh, I will dispense with introductions" smiled Holmes, "I am sure you have much to talk about."

"I suppose that you'll hold this one over our heads for quite a time, Mr. Holmes."

"Lestrade", Sherlock began with a smile, "you handle the press and write the reports. Publicity and credit are all yours. I have a client to look after."

"I want to know about these rumors of counterfeit money," growled Lestrade' as Holmes sauntered through the door. "And by the way, does John Farrington really have an ironclad alibi?"

Holmes kept walking. "Watson, we have an engagement."

"So, your real mission was to regain The Missing Pearls of Norway for the King; that is what the note from Mycroft was about? All the secrecy? "I enquired.

"Norway sleeps peacefully tonight," replied Holmes guardedly.

"Solving the murder of Romeo Jones was really just a way to gather information concerning the whereabouts of The Pearls? By the way, why did she kill him? It did not get her The Pearls."

"Watson, we still have time to enjoy the evening Opera."

THE MYSTERIOUS KIDNAPPING OF OLD WIDOW JONES

2nd In a Series of "The Ten Lost Transgressions of Sherlock Holmes"

THE PRELUDE

It was another one of those bleak wintry days that London is famous for. The familiar murky fog lay over the city like a blanket and trying as hard as I could, I was unable to make out the few shadowy figures on the street below. Seldom had I looked upon 221-B Baker Street as confining, but with nothing in the papers and no calls from the police, it almost appeared that crime had taken a fortnight off.

Sherlock Holmes had been peering through his ever-present microscope for almost an hour without moving save for the change of specimen clips and an occasional adjustment of the micromanipulator. Apparently this interest in antiques was some new attempt to cure the boredom of idleness.

"It is the craquelure Watson, without a doubt," he suddenly stated with conviction. "Oil paintings begin to crack after sixty to one hundred twenty years. Canvases are constructed by taking four pieces of wood, nailing them together into a frame, and then stretching a piece of canvas over the frame; the canvas part is then stapled to the back of the newly-constructed frame to hold it in place. With the passage of time, paintings tend to become bent around the inner-border, that part closest to the wood, which results in cracks. The cracks first begin to show up in the lighter tones, usually the white tints or hues. This painting is a forgery, probably painted within the last twenty years and rather poorly done at that."

"Well, I am glad London can sleep peacefully tonight." I observed dryly.

It was maddening to watch Sherlock Holmes trying to busy himself on pedestrian issues when he was clearly bored to the point that it was beginning to wear on both of us. Soon the indoor shooting practice would begin. Without challenging work, he was like a caged animal. As I was about to wish for a good old fashioned murder, Mrs. Hudson arrived looking rather distressed.

"Mr. Holmes, I have something that you must look into. My closest friend's next door neighbor, Old Widow Jones our friend, has been kidnapped."

"The police?" inquired Holmes, without looking up.

"That's just it, the police do not think much of the matter. They sent an officer around, he ask some questions, took some short notes and left. There was not much of an uproar at the time, no breaking to enter a dwelling house, she is just gone. The only way we know it happened is that my friend happened to be working in her garden and see as they shoved her into a carriage, holding her down with her head covered and drove away."

"How long ago did this happen?"

"It has been over a week."

"Mrs. Hudson, if it had been a kidnapping, by this time there would be a ransom request, a note, a notice in the paper, some kind of message demanding something of value."

"That is what is strange, there is nothing. She is just gone for no reason. She is a widow, has little, lives in an old house with that old worn out furniture and some faded furnishings. She is a pensioner who keeps respectable company and causes no trouble. Church every week and all."

"Perhaps she just left hurriedly on holiday," he muttered dismissively.

"No, she is not like that, we always visit every week without fail. Old Widow Jones, as some people call her, has done nothing like that in the ten years that I have known her. Besides, I know all of her friends. We go to church together, sew together, the same garden club. I know that there is something dreadfully wrong."

"If it is a kidnapping, there will be a ransom note," replied Holmes, clearly bored. "However, if that creak in the stairway means anything, we may receive some enlightenment," he added.

Suddenly there was a knock on the door.

Mrs. Wilson appeared in good spirits.

"Widow Jones is home. She escaped. She is alright." virtually shouting and clearly happy for her friend.

Silent, Sherlock Holmes suddenly began to pay closer attention, his curiosity vaguely aroused. The women retreated to Mrs. Hudson's quarters to discuss the good fortune of their friend. Holmes, in the meantime had clearly lost interest in his forged painting case.

"Watson, what is wrong with that picture?" he casually asked.

"Nothing apparently," I responded. "A pair of ignorant would-be kidnappers were bested by a seventy year old woman. They will be too embarrassed to show up in that neighborhood again."

"You know my methods; look at the facts. Something is a bit queer about this story. A seventy year old woman is taken against her will in broad daylight in an apparently well-planned and executed abduction. She is held for not for two or three days, but six days for no apparent reason, during which time there is no ransom requested, no demands made, no threats or claims of any kind, no requests for anything, and then miraculously she escapes from the confines of muscular hooligans. "There is more to this than meets the eye. We should talk to this woman. This is clearly a singular case. Please tell Mrs. Hudson, we should like to meet her two friends."

Sherlock Holmes retreated to his library of files and newspapers and remained buried there for the remainder of the afternoon.

Sometime later, Mrs. Hudson knocked on the door to inform us that Mrs. Wilson will come round tomorrow at 11a.m. and will bring her next door neighbor, Old Widow Jones with her.

THE INTERVIEW

The following day the two women arrived at 11 a.m. sharp. Mrs. Hudson showed them in and brought tea. The two ladies could pass for sisters. They both dressed in a conservative matronly style and their demeanor was similar. Each had worked hard most of their lives with Old Widow Jones leading the more difficult life. The callous on her hands and the stoop of her shoulders told the story of a life not lived by the faint of heart but her stern bearing and direct eye contact told Holmes that whatever she said was likely to be true.

Mrs. Geraldine Wilson, her neighbor, even though within a year of her age, had fared much better. Her conservative, religious and happy jovial outlook was refreshing compared to many of the working-class women of her age. Both women were clearly trustworthy.

"Mrs. Jones; I realize that you have been through an appalling event. I shall not treat it in a whimsical manner. If you are quite comfortable, please tell me how this incident came about," requested Sherlock in his most soothing voice.

"Well, to jump right in, I was having my morning coffee as usual, when someone knocked on the door. When I answered, two large and very, smelly, ruffians just pushed their way in and grabbed me."

"Do you always open your door so easily?" interrupted Holmes.

"Well, I thought it might be that nice young couple that have been looking for their lost Persian kitten and I did enjoy visiting with them last week. I made some tea and they were very enjoyable to talk to. Stayed for some time. Anyway, as I was saying about these brutes, they just pushed their way in and shoved me about--they shouted and screamed a bit and pushed me into a chair. They were very rude. They were smelly too. Before I could say anything one of them pushed a gag into my mouth---it was very uncomfortable. Before I knew it, they had my hands tied, threw my old shawl over my head and then that blanket, that smelly blanket. They threw that thing over my head. I could not see anything. It was awful. They banged and rummaged around the house like it was theirs. Then they grabbed me up and carried me out to some type of carriage. I did not know what they wanted except they did not want to hurt me."

"How did you know they did not want to hurt you?" asked Holmes.

"Why I heard them say, 'be careful'. They said it several times. I mean they tied my hands, picked me up and carried me to the carriage. I suppose they did not want me to fall or something."

Holmes listened intently.

"Did they ask you anything – anything at all?"

"No, nothing. They seemed to just bang around a lot."

"They just seemed to want to get out as quickly as they could. I remember Geraldine had been working in her garden. I hoped that she would see this calamity and do something."

"She did see you and reported the matter to the police immediately," answered Holmes.

"How did they treat you while they held you captive?" Holmes pressed further.

"Well, it was uncomfortable, but they were nice. They took me to some part of a house, a nice house and they gave me good food with bathroom adjoining. It was well furnished and they checked on me, like every hour, even went and got some medicine for me one time. I told them I could not go more than a day without my blood pressure medicine and they said I would be home soon anyway. I could not tell what they wanted. They never ask for anything. It was almost like a college prank only this was not funny. It was humiliating, and I told them so."

"Did you ever see what they looked like?" asked Holmes.

"No. They were very careful about that. There were three or four different people. None that I could recognize, except I know that two of them that always wore ugly masks and funny clothes. The two big smelly ones did not seem too much care. Foreigners I think. I heard some foreign languages spoken and something about them leaving town as soon as they got paid, but I could not make any sense out of it."

"Mrs. Jones, any detail that you can remember will help considerably. How exactly did you manage to escape?"

"Well, looking back on it, it was really pretty easy. They decided to move me for some reason. Threw that stinking blanket over my head and tied me up again. When they tied my hands up, they did not tie them very tight. They did not hurt and I started wiggling my hands around when they were not looking. This carriage seemed smaller than before. It was like their minds were on something else. And then we stopped – they had said they had to take me to another building where I would be more comfortable. I said I did not want to

be more comfortable, that I wanted to go home and they said they could not do that. So we went somewhere else."

"What happened then?" quizzed a more interested Sherlock.

"Well, they said we had to stop for a bit and for me to wait there. It got quiet and then I did not hear anything. I waited a few minutes, did not hear anyone around and then I really began trying to wiggle out of those ropes on my wrists. They actually came off pretty easy, I could not believe it. I pulled that nasty blanket off my head, that thing was really awful, and looked out of the carriage where we had stopped. I did not see anyone anywhere. I opened the door, looked all around, and still did not see anything and then I ran looking for the first policeman I could find. There was a bobby on the beat about two blocks away and I told him what had happened. By the time the policeman got back to where the carriage was, it was gone. Nothing. The police sent a hansom for me, took my statement and told me I could go home. The investigator said they would have an officer patrol around my house for about a week."

Holmes drifted off into deep meditation for some time. The women were chatting about local gossip when he seemed to awaken from his almost coma-like thought. He seemed refreshed.

"Mrs. Jones, you mentioned several times that the blanket and your captive quarters stank or smelled badly. What exactly did it smell like?"

"It smelled like these new-fangled automobiles – that strange smell – like the fuel; like something you would clean with."

"And the offensive odor of the men who held you, was it similar?"

"Yes. At times it almost burned my eyes," she replied with a grimace.

"This young couple that you mentioned earlier, the ones looking for their lost Persian kitten, do you still have their card?"

"Yes, I have it here somewhere in my purse. Sam and Mary Morrison. They seemed very nice."

After duly recording their name and address, Holmes stood up and smiled absently.

"Ladies, thank you so much for coming. Mrs. Jones, you shall hear from me within a few days."

When the guests had departed, Holmes lit his pipe and stared out the window for a full hour without saying a word. I had given up trying to communicate with him and was deep into today's paper reading of a crime that had occurred last night.

Then without any warning, he looked up and stated, "This case is elementary, Watson, tomorrow I think we should visit Mr. & Mrs. Morrison. I should also stop for a visit with Inspector Lestrade as we are about to finish with this unsavory matter."

I looked quickly to my paper.

"Would that be Sam and Mary Morrison?"

"Yes."

"You will not see them."

"And why not?"

"They were murdered in their home last night."

THE INVESTIGATION

The next morning Holmes was up very early and hard at work. His files were scattered everywhere.

"I think after breakfast we must make a reconnaissance to the home of the late Sam and Mary Morrison."

At mid-morning we found ourselves upon the steps of the Morrison residence. The edifice facing Wilshire Road was a high tan

brick structure, rather uninviting from street level which gave no clue as to the make-up of what may lie within. Once inside, the design of the property abruptly changed into a court-yard style setting that revealed a large open area with considerable trees, shrubs and undergrowth. The thick warm air and rich choking fragrance of plant-life clutched at our throats. A large, two story structure seemed to cover the remainder of the compound, all covered with extensive vines, foliage and fern.

"Why Lestrade!" Holmes exclaimed as a figure appeared from behind one of the large shrubs.

"A double homicide – I should have known you would not be able to resist," Lestrade muttered offhandedly.

"Since you are here, look around and tell us your thoughts."

Holmes had already begun his investigation. I could see his quick brightened eyes darting their questioning glances in every direction.

Lestrade continued, "You may view the bodies at the morgue. We have completed only a fraction of our investigation as this is a large place. There have been some things pilfered about, some obviously missing, but we have yet to determine if robbery was the sole purpose of these murders. Both victims were found in the living quarters, a sizeable living dining room combination which would normally be used for entertaining as it had an easily accessible open kitchen just off to one side. We managed to identify the deceased by some photos and an abundance of their business papers. He was a tall man, late thirties, appeared to be strong with multiple blemishes and bruises on his arms and hands which I take to be from working with the furniture, scraping, staining, lacquer and some forms of paint, as much as I can make out.

"When we found him he appeared to be dressed informally, as though he were supervising the restoration but not doing a lot of the nasty work. The rest was a bloody mess. It seems that he put up quite a fight as his clothes were torn badly, knuckles and nails were broken, scratched and mangled in addition to parts of his face damaged. He lost most of his right ear. His throat was slit with a great gash. The medical examiner may tell us more. The woman on the other hand, seemed to never have a chance. The killer apparently slipped up behind her, reached around and with one gigantic thrust, cut her throat with little trouble. Her death was very quick. She was in her late twenties or early thirties, fair skin, medium height, and apparently well attended to. As best we could tell, with all of the blood, she had been a rather attractive young woman. She was well dressed, hair and nails well cared for and did little physically with the business."

"My word, Inspector Lestrade is beginning to sound like Sherlock Holmes," I observed with a twist of a smile.

"The Morrisons knew the killer or killers. Otherwise they would not have been able to get close enough to use a knife with such little trouble," interrupted Sherlock Holmes as he turned to launch off on his personal pursuit of the challenge before us.

A slight tension was reflected on his face and as his brisk manner mutated into fluid-like movements I knew the game was afoot. His whole persona seemed to absorb itself into his immediate surroundings. He explored everything before him and closely examined every inch of surface in sight – the grounds, up onto the porches and continued into the interior of the dwelling house. Soon he had moved further away from us and disappeared back into the far reaches of the building. It was like a seasoned hunter silently tracking a wild animal. Suddenly we heard a crashing sound as though someone had broken down a door.

"What's going on here?" shouted Lestrade.

"I did not authorize you to destroy the crime scene."

Lestrade and I rushed to the scene of the crash and at the same time a constable arrived behind us. As we stepped around the splintered door we found ourselves in what appeared to be an extensive laboratory containing furniture restoration equipment and very large vats capable of holding large quantities of liquids and a very foul odor. Holmes was studying an old photo of a Persian Shawl identified as The Shal of Viborg Bay.

"This explains many things gentlemen," commented Holmes with a rather satisfied expression on his long face.

Extending off one side of the laboratory was a study which contained a small library lined on three sides with books, manuals and pamphlets. It seems that Sam and Mary were more than just underwriters. There was a library containing all current and historical files and writings for the analysis and appraisal of antique furniture. How to identify it, analyze it, price it and sell it -- all of the tricks of appraisal acquisition, restoration, repair and marketing of very expensive furniture.

Open, on one of the small tables was a detailed reference book on the subject of Persian Shawls, "Shal", a Persian word for shawl.

Since Lestrade's investigation had yet to discover this room, he began to search this new treasure-trove with considerable interest. Holmes continued to explore the remainder of the house never-the-less accompanied by a constable, a precaution that seemed to amuse him considerably.

Sherlock Holmes walked every square foot of the property-every foot of ground, every level, and every room. There were three bedroom upstairs. One on each end of the second level and the third off to the side like it might be a rather large out of the way room for children. As he carefully inspected the third bedroom, it became clear that it had been occupied recently and straightened up in a hurry. A medicine bottle had rolled under the bed which was now being studied carefully by Holmes.

The next bedroom was obviously that of Mr. and Mrs. Morrison. The clothes of each hung in separate armoires with personal items scattered about. A considerable amount of ladies cosmetics and personal toiletries were spread around Mrs. Morrison's side of the room. One of the cabinets contained a multitude of personal papers with some personal photographs of each of them and together. What you would expect in the bedroom of a couple living together.

It was the last bedroom that seemed to be of particular interest to Holmes.

The focus of his interest, upon which he spent considerable time, were the ashtrays located between the two beds. Although previously searched and inventoried by Lestrade and his assistants, Holmes touched, patted, sniffed and making deft use of his little finger, tasted various samples of several surfaces including the floor, the surface of the bed, the tables, the dresser and certain parts of the floor under the bed. He pulled the blankets, sheets and pillow cases off the beds and gave all the appearance of virtually trying to inhale them. While doing so, he discovered an over-looked button.

Sherlock Holmes went to the chair by window, sat down and began to carefully examine the button. One half hour later when Lestrade found him he had not moved.

"I have found this button, here, in this room, caught in the bedcovers and I think that it is of paramount importance to your case," he stated as he handed the button to Lestrade. Saying nothing, Lestrade accepted the button with a doubtful look on his face.

"We are about through here, Holmes. The remains should be available to you at the morgue by now," announced Lestrade. "This appears to be a random home burglary —home robbers. A straightforward home burglary with theft in mind. The wallets and purses of the victims are missing. Some of the silver seems to be missing. Some small pieces of jewelry were left scattered about. They apparently took everything that they could carry and left," summed up Lestrade apparently ignoring the large laboratory and its contents. I do not know why you think your button is so important," Lestrade stated with a ring of finality in his voice.

"You have your methods, I have mine," replied Mr. Sherlock Holmes.

A swift and silent ride in a hansom brought us back to our rooms at 221-B Baker Street.

Holmes went to the window and sat down in the near-by chair. He was very quiet staring out of the window onto the wintery street. Soon he lit the unsavory clay pipe which was the companion of his deepest meditations. He smoked incessantly but otherwise, he did not move for some time. Then without warning or comment, he went to his old newspaper files and carefully shuffled through the old clippings. He was still deep into that chore when I went to bed.

The following morning Holmes was gone long before I awakened and before coffee was ordered. He returned in the middle of the afternoon dressed like a tramp. Then, before I knew it, he had vanished. Shortly after dark he appeared at the door looking tired.

"Good Lord Holmes! You look like you have been wallowing in a hog-pen," I scolded.

"Tell me Watson, do you know who Old Widow Jones is?"

"No. Just an older widow who is a friend of Mrs. Hudson and whose name happens to be Jones."

"She is the granddaughter of a famous sea captain, Captain Timothy Hobbs of the Royal Swedish Navy who was killed in a fierce naval battle with the Russian fleet in the Battle of Viborg Bay in 1790. He was famously called "Fighting Tim". He is highly honored in Swedish history. His family had been quite prosperous and Old Widow Jones was his granddaughter who at one time had the same reckless nature as Fighting Tim. Her future did not fare so well. She survived with only a remnant of the standing of her grandfather and has lived quietly and frugally here in London for over twenty years."

"Interesting," I replied.

"You have heard, no doubt, of The Legend of The Gold of Viborg Bay"

"Only in passing several years ago," I replied.

"Mythology has it that The Legend of the Gold of Viborg Bay says that Captain Hobbs had captured a Russian ship loaded with a fortune in gold that was being transferred to another location for safekeeping due to regional hostilities. Before entering into the naval battle that resulted in his death, he elected to hide the gold. The two survivors of the naval battle were below decks at all times and knew nothing about where the ship was located nor its destination. The battle was lost as well as the whereabouts of the captured gold." explained Holmes.

"I see, she had a famous grandfather," I noted.

"I have some details to clear up in the morning and then we should be able to turn this matter over to Lestrade by tomorrow afternoon," said Holmes with a note of finality in his voice.

When I awoke the following morning, Mrs. Hudson delivered a note with my coffee saying that Holmes and I would meet here with Lestrade at three this afternoon.

THE CONCLUSION

Lestrade and Constable Johnson arrived promptly at three. Mrs. Hudson showed them in and disappeared to get a tray of tea. Sherlock Holmes arranged us in the sitting area where he offered tobacco all round.

"Inspector Lestrade, I fear that I have bad news. I have solved one mystery and three crimes. One kidnapping, one theft and two murders to be exact. Sadly, I feel that the criminals have escaped."

Lestrade glared in silence.

"You know my methods."

"The kidnapping is simpler. The kidnapping was an incidental part of a grand theft. The culprits were not at all interested in Old Widow Jones. They were after the Persian Shawl. That is the reason they made no demands and asked for no ransom. They already had what they wanted; The Shal of Viborg Bay.

"Sam and Mary Morrison, in addition to being Underwriters, are also registered professional Antique Dealers and speculators. They are also very creative in making "not so old" furniture appear to be "very old" furniture. They specialize in high-end and much sought-after expensive furniture, their dwelling house and ample grounds serving as headquarters as we discovered during the murder investigation. They had also expanded their ambitions into broader fields including the search for The Shal of Viborg Bay allegedly containing a map to the location of a fortune of hidden gold. Their home proved to be a treasure trove of information. Then luck finally came their way when quite by accident they stumbled upon the trail of the long lost Persian Shawl and gaining entry to Old Widow Jones' home in search of a lost Persian kitten was simply a ploy to confirm a rumor they had heard that she was the present owner of this singular and long sought after Shal of Viborg Bay.

"Shal, the Persian word for shawl, warrants some explaining at this point. The Legend of the Gold of Viborg Bay says that Captain Hobbs had captured a Russian ship loaded with a fortune in gold that was being transferred to another location for safekeeping due to regional hostilities. Before entering into the naval battle that resulted in his death, he elected to hide the gold. The two survivors of the naval battle were below decks at all times and knew nothing about where the ship was located nor its destination. The battle was lost as well as the whereabouts of the captured gold.

"The basis of legend says that a map of the location of the gold was woven into the design of a Persian shawl that one of the Parthia stewards was weaving for the Captains wife at the time of its capture and concealment subsequent to the naval battle that cost the Captain his life and the lives of his crew save the two illiterate survivors working below decks.

"One version of the legend says that the shawl was taken off the ship by one of the survivors who used it as a bandage or sling for his injured arm. From that point the rumors run wild. One rumor claims that years later the injured survivor sought out the Captains granddaughter and gave the shawl to her as a memento of that fateful battle and that out of gratitude and sympathy they became lovers.

"Another rumor says that he knew about the map woven into the shawl and tried to sell it to the Captains granddaughter and she had him arrested and kept the shawl for herself. There are many other rumors, all unsubstantiated. Government officials from both Russia and Sweden, in addition to fortune hunters of all stripes, have searched for decades trying to find the shawl allegedly containing the map to the gold," patiently explained Holmes.

"Having found the shawl, the next problem Sam and Mary had to solve was how to get the shawl away from Old Widow Jones. If they tried to buy it, that would alert her to the fact that it was unusually valuable and run the risk of her asking too high a price or her refusing to sell entirely.

"They decided to steal the Persian Shawl. This unwise decision created another problem in that they would probably be recognized. Fearful that they could not escape detection, they compounded their risk by unwittingly hiring arguably the two most dangerous gangsters in Europe to help them not knowing who they were. This was a tremendously bad decision."

"Who are these two mysterious hooligans who kidnapped Old Widow Jones?"

"They are none other than the disreputable and dangerous 'Blues Brothers.' They are twins, born and well educated in Russia, traveled widely, decided upon a life of crime as a hobby and are well-known in certain small art and antique circles as the only modern day thieves able to rob the famous "Blue Mosque" in Istanbul."

"Preposterous" exclaimed Watson. "I never heard of this."

"It was quietly hushed up as they are agents of Professor Moriarty. In the criminal world, they are widely known and even respected among thieves."

"Really, what did they get away with?"

"As you may recall, the interior of the Blue Mosque is lit with 260 windows which were once filled with 17th century stained glass. The Blues Brothers, as this feat is reported, stole five of the most beloved originals, managed to get away, and were never convicted. This feat gained them fame and fortune in the underworld. The European press, with the Blue Mosque in mind, labeled them, The Blues Brothers. The moniker stuck."

Lestrade stared silently as Holmes continued.

"The Morrisons not only hired them but also moved them into their home and office compound. The Blues Brothers no doubt liked the idea of concealing the theft with a kidnapping, because once they allowed Old Widow Jones to escape, upon her safe return, everyone would forget about confused drunken ruffians and a temporary abduction during which no one was hurt and no ransom was requested. The whole matter would soon all be forgotten. The purpose of the kidnapping first became obvious when Old Widow Jones revealed the kidnappers said not once but several times "Be careful!", "Be careful"! They were not talking about Old Widow Jones, they were talking about not damaging The Shal of Viborg Bay. Our victim complained several times about the "terrible odor" that bothered her so much. That was furniture stripper and cleaner. The old photo of The Shal of Viborg Bayr found in the laboratory assured me that I was on the right track.

"Then there was the escape. Suddenly a seventy-year old fragile woman can escape two or more muscular ruffians who seemingly cannot bind her hands and do so poorly that she slipped from her bonds without hurting herself?

"Next we have the murders. It is yet unclear why The Blues Brothers decided that the Morrisons had to die. Probably an argument over money or maybe they just did not want any accomplices left behind. They attempted to disguise the murders as a burglary gone badly and divert attention away from The Shal of Viborg Bay. It was vital that the subject of the shawl not come to light. Information on the shawl is sketchy at best but some reports indicate that the trail did stop here in London.

"Confirmation that they lived at the Morrison's residence is supported by the fact that both brothers smoked a very unique and special brand of tobacco imported from the East Indies by the name of Muassel which means "honeyed" and is a syrupy tobacco mix with molasses and vegetable glycerin which is smoked in a Hookah. There are remnants of Muassel on the floor, under the bed, on the dressing table, in the ash trays and on the bed clothing of their bedroom. The button that I secured and surrendered to Lestrade at the scene is made of a special whalebone used on the Norfolk jacket, a particular brand of clothing the Blues Brothers prefer. The brothers had an unusual habit of marking their clothing with a peculiar mark of "BB" on at least one button on all of their coats or jackets. You will find this singular marking on the button now in the custody of Scotland Yard."

Lestrade listened and continued to scribble notes in a crumpled notebook.

"Associates that I have on the street and in a few of my unsavory hangouts tell me that Professor Moriarty has wanted The Shal of Viborg Bay, allegedly containing a map to the location of a fortune in gold, for quite some time now. The Bureau of Records show that the Blues Brothers quietly entered the British Isles about six months ago. Since they were not currently wanted, they migrated to London, kept a low profile and began to monitor criminal networks to find out if there was any rumor of the whereabouts of The Shal of Viborg Bay containing the map to the gold that Professor Moriarty yet feels he must have. They could find nothing. The trail had gone cold. Then Sam and Mary Morrison turn up. It was like them winning a large turf wager. Apparently neither Old Widow Jones nor any of her friends were aware of the value of this old shawl, which now I suspect lies somewhere within the vault of an ocean vessel bound for a yet-to-be revealed foreign port with the Blues Brothers topside enjoying congratulatory cigars and whiskey."

Lestrade continued to glare and scribble.

"Come Watson, we still have time for dinner and to attend the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane tonight."



THE CASE OF THE CABMAN MURDER

3rd In a Series of "The Ten Lost Transgressions of Sherlock Holmes"

THE PRELUDE

Depressingly foggy is the only way this London morning could be described, when neither man nor beast should desire to test the wrenched British elements. There was nothing in the Times save one mundane notice:

CABMAN MURDER

A cabman who regularly serviced the Megatherium Club for many years was murdered in his home last night. Scotland Yard has no leads and no explanation as to why this well-liked and very pedestrian Cabman would be the victim of such a brutal murder. The victim, Tim Lawrence Cooper was a faithful employee, well liked among his fellows and Club members. After six months of hard work, Tim had finally won the coveted "Cabman of the Month" award. Services will be held today at Bellengrath Burial Gardens, 10:00AM. Long after breakfast and tiring of paperwork, I found myself staring into the muggy gloom that so endears all mankind to the charms of English weather. I had lost track of time when I heard a hysterical shout from the next room. I entered Holmes' sitting room and discovered that he was not alone. Seated opposite him on the sofa was a rather thin middle-aged man of medium height with a thick head of gray hair and a solemn expression that could best be described as unhealthily worried. A stylish top hat hung on the hat-rack beside an expensive dark frock-coat. Strong cheekbones beneath intelligent, inquisitive black eyes peering through gold-rimmed spectacles and a trim brush mustache balanced out rather handsome aristocratic features that were presently struggling with grave matters. Traces of boyish good looks lingered beneath the lines in his face. Mr. Sherlock Holmes was sprawled out in his usual chair with thin blue clouds of smoke spiraling upward from that aged clay pipe that dangled awkwardly from his long face.

"Please come in Dr. Watson, I was about to call for you—we should be able to progress more quickly as it is time for your medical skills to reign over this problem."

"I thought that we were speaking in total confidence," the thin man bristled.

"Please forgive me," Holmes quickly responded. "Let me introduce my close friend and trusted colleague, Dr. Watson. Watson, please make the acquaintance of distinguished Professor Gillespie Von Gillmerstein, the world's foremost specialist of the Parnassius species of butterfly, Director and member in good standing of the Megatherium Club. Professor Von Gillmerstein has come to us on matters of some distress."

"It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance Professor. I regret that our meeting comes at a time of anguish," I replied. "How may I be of assistance?"

"The frustration confronting Professor Von Gillmerstein comes on two fronts, each involving some concerning details," replied Holmes. "It seems that the Professor has entered into a rather leisurely romantic relationship with the General Manager of the Megatherium Club, a very talented and well-schooled Biologist who also trained in Chemistry at Oxford as well as Business Management. She is just one course away from graduation on her

Master's Program. Her name is Mary Helen Steel, a ravishing and ambitious young lass who is well liked by all members of the club as well as her fellows. She came highly recommended. For sometime now, the two of them have been spending extensive time together after work and the Professor is concerned about gossip due to the considerable difference in their ages.

"They were in a restaurant across the city one evening last week, dining rather late when the President of the Megatherium came in with his wife. It was late and the lighting was very low and the Professor does not think that they were seen but it did cause a heated discussion between he and Miss Steel on the way home surrounding the subject of whether or not he is ashamed to be seen with her in public. That dilemma has created a very sensitive issue in their normally passionate relationship. It is here that I should add that Professor Von Gillmerstein describes Miss Steel as the most adoring, eager and exciting lover that he has ever encountered. He is clearly obsessed. Both parties are unmarried but the members and especially the Board of Directors of the London Megatherium are very conservative. It is a very traditional men's club and there is the matter of his reputation. The second matter of disturbance comes in what should be a routine matter of building maintenance. Professor Von Gillmerstein was engaged in a bit of jovial, flirting banter with Miss Steel in one of the secluded sections of the library, the research section of the stacks to be specific, when he came upon a small mound of soil -- plain dirt, about the size of one of Mrs. Hudson's cherry pies, lying on the floor in that out-of-the-way area of the building. That was strange enough in itself, but it was Miss Steel's response that has caused him downright worry and loss of sleep."

"I can give you something so that you may sleep but yet be able function during the following day. The dirt and the woman are not yet medical disciplines." I replied rather blandly.

"Thank you Doctor, but right now I can't get the incident out of my mind because it is such a peculiar thing to find in a library, especially a location that is infrequently used. A mound of dirt is not something you expect to find. And it was the strange way that Mary Helen reacted. She has always been very formal and business-like about anything happening in and around the library, very serious, very stern and very concerned. On this occasion however, she treated the matter as nothing. Almost child-like, she treated it like a joke, a laughing matter. After laughing about it she even suggested that I should at least snicker a bit; just laugh it off. That is out of character for her. The whole thing is very perplexing for me," the Professor ranted.

"Then it is her unexpected reaction to the queer incident that has made you ill," I observed.

"I suppose so."

"I shall prescribe something for you."

I replied as I left the room to get a prescription pad.

When I returned the Professor was more subdued, worn down from exhaustion no-doubt.

"You will hear from me very soon Professor Von Gillmerstein. I have some things I must do. Continue with your activities as usual until you hear from me," remarked Holmes rising to conclude the interview.

"Thank you, please hurry," urged the Professor as he departed.

Studying the matter seriously, Holmes rose and went to his Persian Slipper for more tobacco. Pacing about the room in a methodical rhythm, his expression grew more solemn as he turned the matter over and over in his mind, carefully formulating his plan of inquiry. After a while he stopped, his expression relaxed.

"As you have returned to the present day and time, I must ask, what exactly is the Megatherium Club?" I inquired. "I recall hearing the name while at Charing Cross Hospital but bring to mind no details."

"The Megatherium Club is a singular group. The name comes from an extinct sloth. The Club owns the building in which it is located. The London Megatherium is a very conservative Gentlemen's Club. It's mission is to provide a quiet, calm retreat for writers, professors, professionals and intellectuals in general, who seek an oasis of serenity and tranquility while writing, studying and doing research, generally in the field of Naturalism. Unique in organization, the club directors always select an honor student for its General Manager. The selection process is extensive. Also unique, the Club itself is divided into sections and each section assigned to a specific Director for which he is responsible. A Directorship in the Megatherium Club is one of London's most sought after positions in intellectual circles. It has always been a bit stuffy for me," concluded Holmes.

"One whisky and I shall retire for the evening," I said sleepily.

"I think tomorrow will be a busy day," he muttered carefully tapping the ashes from his clay pipe.

THE INTERLUDE

The beggar on the corner near the Megatherium Club obviously had not bathed in months. Dirty and slouching around the street since early light, Mary Helen Steel had considered calling for a bobby to assist in making him relocate to another part of the city but as he was old and didn't really appear dangerous, she elected to let well enough alone. 'Gil', as she secretly called Professor Gillespie Von Gillmerstein, would be arriving soon. She was very careful in the presence of the members of the Megetheriam, as it would not do well for anyone to discover her clandestine affair with one of their most respected members. As was his custom on Thursday, the Professor would arrive later than usual, relax for about an hour and then leave before the time most of what Mary Helen referred to, as the 'Evening Members' would begin to arrive. The Megatherium was closed only five hours, 4 AM-9 AM for cleaning and maintenance. As many of the members were accustomed to reading and research all hours of the day and night, as soon as the doors were open some member would immediately begin use of the extensive library and research material. Miss Steel usually arrived sharply at nine in the morning, and then departed after five in the evening, then to return later in the evening at various hours.

Geraldine Wilson, the widow of Sergeant G. G. (Grits & Guts) Wilson, of the Northumberland Fusiliers rents Miss Steel a small room near the club, which she uses infrequently. As her responsibilities are extensive, she maintains a large office in the Megatherium Club where she might lie down, rest and relax while the staff looks after the members and what assistance they might need. This was very little, as most of their time was spent in quiet reading and research together with some writing.

The food and beverage services were handled in a separate section of the building and she had little contact with that department. All of the members that she came in contact with were scholars,

professional men and a lengthy list of successful and aspiring writers and authors. The morning following Holmes' interview with Professor Von Gillmerstein, I arose early and was told by Mrs. Hudson that she had not seen Mr. Holmes and assumed the he had gone out very early. Late in the evening I engaged a beggar who had managed to slip in our front door by trickery no doubt. Furious, I had him by the collar and was about to throw him down the stairs when a familiar voice caught my attention.

"Really Watson, this is not the time to throw me around, I am very tired."

"Holmes?" I gasped.

"It has been a rather long day," replied the familiar voice.

"What the blazes are you doing dressed up like that?" I fumed. "I should have given you a thrashing for sneaking around here looking like a scavenging pickpocket."

"Enough, let me get to my room" he responded escaping up the stairs.

"If you haven't eaten, order supper for us, I think Mrs. Hudson may still be stirring in the kitchen."

SURVEILLANCE

Sherlock Holmes had arrived before dawn. The Megatherium Building faced north with the cab waiting line for cabs along the west side of the building. Only Hansom style cabs appeared for service in the cab waiting line except for No. 3 cab, which was a Growler. If larger carriages were required they had to be summoned from further down the street near the large retailer Huntington's, a subsidiary of the Franco-Midland Hardware Company headquartered in Paris. Observation told him that Mary Helen Steel arrived sharply at 9 am and departed sharply at 6 pm in the same cab that she arrived in. The waiting line of the cabs seemed to be a systematic arrangement that would require further inquiry. Miss Steel was the party responsible for summoning the cabs. It was also interesting that she always used the same cab, number 3, a Growler. A scuffling argument with one of the drivers revealed that she insisted on holding No. 3 cab in the waiting line. She also insisted that No. 3 cab be kept waiting for her exclusively. This caused some quarreling among the cabmen, but she always got her way. A very muscular and rough appearing German man was seen hanging around No. 3 Cab and then disappeared.

Holmes also observed No. 3 cab also had the same driver, departed at the same time every day and with the same passenger, Miss Steel. Sherlock also observed something very queer about cab No. 3 other than it was the larger Growler and all others were Hansoms. In addition to taking the same route to and from the Megatherium, at the same time of day and the same passenger, none other, cab No. 3 was unique in a singular manner. Coincidence is something Mr. Sherlock Holmes did not accept.

Holmes observed that No. 3 cab never drags bottom when crossing "Sir Johnson's Bump" in the morning when arriving at work however, cabman No. 3's cab always drags bottom when departing in the evening.

"Sir Johnson's Bump" is the large abrupt rise in the level of the street just outside the Megatherium Building named after Sir James Johnson, the street and road contractor task with building streets that carriages could travel on without sinking to the axle in mud during the notoriously wet weather that London embraces with all of the endurance of a third century warrior. His construction company was eventually sued by the City of London for poor workmanship causing

the 'Bump' mishap resulting in the bankruptcy of his construction company. Rumor has it that apparently Sir Johnson had anticipated the fatal legal action far in advance and had successfully looted the company's account long before foreclosure. It was heard some years later that he had managed to re-establish himself in Liverpool and was living quite well. Non-the-less, these cab movements were matters that should be investigated further."

"This is an assignment for the unofficial force," Sherlock decided.

The morning started with a flash of excitement. No peering out of foggy windows today. The weather was cold and damp but the trample of feet of a small army of street urchins announced the arrival of the Baker Street Irregulars. In spite of numerous warnings, Wiggins had arrived with his entire band of half dozen dirty youths who instantly fell into a line and stood facing us with expectant faces. Straight out of *The Sign of Four*, the assignment begins.

"Got your message, sir," reported Wiggins "and brought 'em on sharp. Three bob and a tanner for tickets."

"Here you are" Holmes replied handing over silver coins.

Holmes shook his head as he stood. "Gentlemen, I have told you before - have Wiggins come up, and then he shall report to you."

Wiggins grinned. "Sorry Guv, bu' you know 'ow boys like us c'n be." Holmes sighed, a slight smile on his face.

"Now then," he said, immediately getting down to business, "I want you to observe the cab activities around the Megatherium Building. I want you to watch the cabs going, the cabs waiting line and the cabs departing of the four cabs that regularly service the building. Specifically, I want you to watch closely Cab No. 3, which seems always a Growler. I want to know everything Cab No. 3 does. I want to know when it arrives. I want to know where it waits, if it is anywhere else but No. 3 position. I want to know when it leaves. I want exact times. I want to know where it goes, when it leaves, how long it stays and when it leaves that destination and I want to know when it returns to the Megatherium Building. I want you to tell me anything strange it does or looks like. A shilling a day, with a guinea to the boy who discovers something weird or different, a vital clue, from what an ordinary cabdriver would do."

Holmes handed each one a sixpence, and they all turned and scurried towards the door.

And then the Baker Street Irregulars were gone as quickly as they appeared.

"Watson, you inquired about the details of the Megatherium Club, would you like to accompany me on brief tour of the facilities?" ask Holmes.

"My understanding was that it was very conservative and very private," I replied.

"Professor Gillespie Von Gillmerstein has arranged for us to have a short visit this afternoon, I would welcome your company and you might find the club interesting as well as relaxing" he responded.

"I shall call for a hansom," I replied.

INSIDE THE LIBRARY

The Megatherium Club was elegantly furnished. As the outer doors closed behind us one of the most striking young women I have ever laid eyes on moved gracefully toward us. Her elegant features were those that men only dream of. A fine choice of lace, color and corset served to accentuate her natural beauty. This woman did not walk; it was more like a glide. She simply floated toward us with all of the poise described in Greek mythology. Then she smiled. It was like

the sun had burst from behind a dark cloud at high noon. I felt paralyzed, my mouth was dry, my tongue wouldn't work and my eyes blurred.

"My name is Mary Helen Steel. I am the General Manager of the Megatherium Club. Professor Von Gillmerstein is expecting you. If you will follow me, I will escort you to his office."

Her voice had the soft eroticism of Homeric Poetry. Stunned by her beauty and grace, I followed that magnificent creature to Professor Von Gillmerstein's office with my mind as empty as an old spent rifle cartridge. I had to snap out of this. Recovering my composure, I blinked like a blind man regaining his sight. And then she was gone. I could hear the Professor's voice coming closer as my composure fully restored itself.

".....and then we will go to my designated Section of Responsibility."

We arrived at Professor Von Gillmerstein's designated area of the library. It looked like any other section of a library research wing. Then I began to focus on the volumes carefully filed on the shelves.

"This is the most extensive collection of the numerous publications and writings on the subject of the Parnassius species of butterflies. Parnassius tenedius is a member of the Snow Apollo genus Parnassius of the Swallowtail (Papilionidae) family," began Professor Von Gillmerstein. The Snow Apollo genus is most fascinating because of the unique mating methods performed by both male and female," Mr. Sherlock Holmes commented as he began peering through a large round magnifying glass produced from his coat pocket.

"Alexander Eduard Friedrich Eversmann, the biologist and explorer has written numerous publications and is considered the pioneer of research of the Parnassius species of butterfly. These are often hard to identify and can sometimes only be identified by dissection of the genitalia. The phylogeny of the group is still under study. The exact number of species within the genus is disputed and numbers are still contested," continued Holmes clearly interested in the subject at hand.

"The Parnassius butterflies also have a peculiar reproductive strategy in that the male has special accessory glands that produce a mating plug that seals the female genitalia after mating. This is believed to ensure the success of the male and to prevent other males from mating and avoids sperm competition," Holmes carried on.

"I can see that you are somewhat familiar with biology," replied Professor Von Gillmerstein clearly surprised at Holmes' knowledge of butterflies.

"It is my business to know things," replied Holmes already beginning to sink into the obsession of the mystery of his surroundings.

As the Professor continued to lecture on the various features of the library, Holmes was transformed as though a hound on the hunt. Something had pricked his interest. Blood seemed to rush to his head coloring his face with the hue of red wine. The tense expression narrowed his eyes, intensifying his already piercing gaze all the while compressing his lips into a mere slit while the veins stood out on his face and neck. He was indifferent to anything around him. Like a well-trained foxhound dashes back and forth, caught up in its eagerness until it comes across the lost scent, Holmes methodically inspected the bookshelves, the books, tomes, pamphlets, folders and binders.

Then he began very carefully to lift books from their resting places. Almost reverently, he handled the very singular and rare

volumes with a delicate touch. He touched, patted and even carefully ran his tongue across particular areas of some of the publications. Every one of his actions was directed towards a definite end. Observation and deduction were silently screaming from his very soul.

"We have an ongoing maintenance, monitoring and environmental control program that we feel is essential for reducing the threat of deterioration to our collection. Light and humidity, we feel are relatively easy to handle. It is the microorganisms, insects and rodents that we are most fearful of since they are as harmful to books as they are to museum objects," stated the Professor as he began to wind down his information presentation.

"Miss Steel is presently reviewing all of the volumes stored in my Section of Responsibility and rearranging and inspecting each volume for individual analysis to ensure maximum originality retention," concluded the Professor indicating that we were about to return to his office.

Holmes, on the other hand was nowhere to be found. We found him two stacks over lying flat on the floor with his magnifying glass shoved far back into one of the empty spaces of a partially filled bookcase.

Mary Helen Steel appeared from nowhere to advise Professor Von Gillmerstein that he had another urgent matter to deal with. She cast a questioning look toward Sherlock Holmes as he wound his long legs under him and rose to his feet. Their eyes locked and something exchanged between the two of them that I cannot put into words. It was really bizarre to watch. Two strong personalities engaging each other with not a word or expression suggested. We all made our way back to the Professors' office.

"I hope this was helpful," said Professor Von Gillmerstein looking hopefully toward Sherlock Holmes.

Holmes scarcely acknowledged with a barely noticeable nod of his head.

I found it enlightening that Miss Steel carefully took notice of this non-communication. I, on the other hand, could not take my eyes off of her. Then she turned and looked me directly in the eye and smiled. The radiance was blinding. I was hypnotized. Mechanically I followed Holmes out the door trying not to knock any furniture over.

On the street, Holmes looked at me and laughed heartily.

"Dr. Watson, I believe you are a bit smitten," he joshed enjoying himself at my expense.

"I suppose you are entitled. I have been a bit of a school-boy," I responded through clenched teeth.

Still laughing, Holmes summoned a hansom.

BACK AT 221-B BAKER STREET

Back in our rooms on Baker Street, Holmes went straight to his library that consisted of bundles of files, papers, manuscripts, notes and scribbling that made up a working library on things Mr. Sherlock Holmes considered useful and important in his inquisitive world. Just over an hour later Holmes looked up.

"I shall return to the Megatheriam Club this evening when both Miss Steel and Professor Von Gillmerstein are away," announced Holmes.

Tired of all of the excitement and with visions of Miss Steel still spinning around in my twisted mind, I decided to retire for an afternoon nap.

When I awoke for supper, Holmes was gone. A telegram from Washington, in America, lay on his tray. After a late supper, I read

the evening Standard, making some notes about a large German man being detained after a scuffle near the Megatheriam Club, being questioning and then released. It seemed he was not a vagrant. I went back to bed. It had been a very long day. It was Friday, far past mid-morning in London and Sherlock Holmes was nowhere to be found. I had finished a late breakfast and was on my second cup of coffee searching through the last page of The Daily Telegraph when Homes arrived accompanied by Wiggins. Apparently they were just finishing up his surveillance report.

"And you are sure of this," Holmes addressed Wiggins in a most serious manner.

"It's a fact Gov', just like you said. It's be'n st'dy on c'rse . Sa'm thn'g you tol' us. The Lady ro'd Cab No. 3 to work, a Gr'l'r, no dr'gg'n bottom on Sir J's Bm'p co'mm to work, dr'gg l'k "ell on the way home. The Lady rode both ways—j'st h'r, both times. Gr'l'r Cab. T'ng is, they alw's ma'd 'nuth'r st'p on t' w'y hom'. Js't l'k you s'd. 1724 Gl'ch'str Ln." continued Wiggins making clear what had happened. I felt as though Holmes had him repeat the report more than once.

The Baker Street Irregulars liked working for Mr. Sherlock Holmes. They were very reliable.

"Good work Wiggins, an extra shilling all round for details," replied Holmes as silver changed hands.

"Thanks Gov'." And then he disappeared, melting into the streets of the city.

The mood of Sherlock Holmes changed immediately. He was frantic, almost possessed.

"Quick Watson, your revolver. We must make all necessary haste."

Sherlock Holmes was beside himself. I had never seen him this way. Even under the sedation of Morphine or Cocaine he had always maintained a measure of self-control. This was different.

"This woman is dangerous! She is about to commit a very daring and expensive robbery! Call for hansoms immediately! Take the 1st hansom! Go to Scotland Yard! We must have Lestrade and several Constables. Instruct them to go to the Megatheriam Club with all due haste. There is about to be a most daring and expensive grand theft. An alert should go out to all of the policemen throughout the city. I shall take the 2nd hansom directly to the Megatheriam now. Speed is of the essence! Go! Go!" Holmes roared.

"What is in the Megatheriam that anyone would want to steal?" I pondered waving at the nearest cabman. "There is nothing there but stacks of... ol', ah Old books, very old books," I whispered to myself as the magnitude of the event began to sink into my brain.

And then I was in the cab, speeding across the city to Scotland Yard in search of Detectives and Constables.

CONCLUSION & STRATEGY

I arrived at the Megatheriam Club accompanied by Inspector Lestrade and three husky Constables. More Bobbies were on the way. As we entered the elaborate doors of the Megatheriam, two of the Directors met and led us to Professor Von Gillmerstein's designated Section of Responsibility. Lestrade distributed the Constables appropriately and they were off. Inspector Lestrade and I located Holmes and Professor Von Gillmerstein pulling apart book slipcases and had dozens of them scattered over the floor, on study tables and on empty sections of book cases.

"What has happened here?" inquired Lestrade' sternly.

Mr. Sherlock Holmes was frenzied. Barely composed, Holmes replied, "It appears we are too late. A massive betrayal and very expensive theft has taken place right in our midst. This historic criminal episode has been going on for weeks, possibly months, hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions have been lost," he growled through clenched teeth.

Angrily he tried to explain while breathing heavily, "These slipcases are filled with counterfeit copies of rare books, some filled with unrelated volumes of irrelevant subjects. Mary Helen Steel has perpetrated a huge criminal enterprise to steal numerous rare volumes, books, papers and files from the Megatherium. Some time back, perhaps months possibly, she even sought this position for this singular purpose. She and her long-time boyfriend, Harry Don Clinton, began an elaborate scheme to steal books from the London Megatherium Club and sell them to her cousin, a Professor Stephen L. Zimmerman II at the Megatherium Club in America."

"What?" ask Lestrade' completely puzzled.

"The Megatherium Club in America, a group of naturalists originated in Washington near the Smithsonian as early as 1857. One of the Washington members in America, the young and ambitious Professor Stephen L. Zimmerman II, decided to dedicate his time to building a Biology Department, together with the most comprehensive Biology Library possible, within the Megatherium. His plan was to buy expensive and much sought after books and even complete libraries in order to build his Washington library rapidly, with all due haste. A secret desire to compete with the Smithsonian lurks somewhere in the background. In addition to his personal studies and those of close friends, he felt the fastest way to grow was to buy books and libraries from any reliable source that would agree, legitimate or otherwise. Professor Stephen L. Zimmerman II is the 1st cousin of Mary Helen Steel.

"Miss Steel decided to steal the books, and even libraries of rare books, volumes and transcripts from the London Megatherium Club and sell them to her cousin at the American Megatherium Club. It simply comes down to that. This information has been difficult to accumulate on short notice. Much of it is still developing, as the entire criminal episode is very complex. These people are very smart," muttered Holmes still distraught.

"The matter first caught my attention when Professor Von Gillmerstein insistently complained of the unusual matter of the finding dirt on the floor of the very sedate section of a research library and then Miss Steel's out-of-character reaction to an incident that would normally call for immediate investigation. She is the General Manager. Anything, anything out of the ordinary should have inspired a detailed inquiry. This is troublesome under any circumstances. Observation on the street exposed a unique manner of managing the availability of cabs for service just outside the Megatherium Club. Miss Steel was in charge of the availability and calling up of cabs and her system was unlike anything seen around the city. And then of course, the peculiar circumstances surrounding Cab No. 3. The scheme is quite elaborate and well planned. Further investigation and inquiry revealed the following. The strategy was to dig a tunnel from the street, where it burrowed straight down far enough to turn and go under the building, once under the building, burrow up through the floor and create an opening large enough for a man to crawl through and pull containers, probably sacks, of books back through the tunnel under the building, to the street, then up to the surface underneath the floor of the waiting No. 3 cab where the tunnel originated.

"The digging began first from inside the Growler Cab, concealed from street view by skirting on the outside of the cab. The digging was straight down to the necessary level to then turn and go under the Megatherium Building. The soil dug from the tunnel each day was pulled back through the tunnel, up into the cab, hidden inside the Growler Cab and hauled away each evening when transporting Miss Steel home, causing the cab to drag when passing over Sir Johnson's Bump. She and the soil rode out together. This went on for weeks, perhaps months. Then later when the digging was complete, the soil cargo was exchanged for rare books cargo for shipment to Professor Stephen L. Zimmerman II in America. It is then obvious why each morning, on the way to work, No. 3 cab cleared Sir Johnson's Bump with all ease without dragging the bottom of the cab simply because the morning cab ride had no load.

"Cab No. 3 driver, Harry Don Clinton, Miss Steel's longtime boyfriend from their Oxford days was the getaway driver. Harry Don had won 'Cabman of the Month' every month for a year and a half, since he began to drive in the Megatherium Club cab line.

"Cabman of the Month' entitled the winning cabman to: 1. All you can eat at Sir Henry's Pub every Friday after work; 2. Name on Plaque outside the 'Cabman's Station' and in Cabman's Lounge; 3. First choice in selection of Place-in-Waiting Cab Line-Up by the Megatherium Building.

"When Tim Lawrence Cooper won 'Cabman of the Month', then Harry Don Clinton lost the right to choose the No. 3 cab slot, at which time the entire scheme was in danger of being disrupted, perhaps exposed. The loss of place in the cab-line by Harry Don, the cabman who was the get-a-way driver, disrupted their digging and transportation efforts and would jeopardize the whole illicit scheme. We have yet to find out just how long this scheme has been in effect but we do know that agreements had been made, prices decided, payments of money had been made, not to mention some of the money had already been spent – Nothing could go wrong! Apparently they could not deal with Tim about place-in-line. If Tim Lawrence Cooper could not be bought off, he had to be disposed of!

"The large man of German decent hanging around the cab wait-line beside the Megatherium was a little more difficult. Police records in Hamburg revealed that Daniel D. Daingerfield ("Digging Danny" - The Dirt Man) is an all' round hooligan, gangster and thug born in Germany, raised in Hamburg's roughest neighborhood and was hired to dig the tunnel to drag the books to the waiting No. 3 cab. Facts are presently developing that suggest that Mary Helen Steel, the brains behind the entire unlawful affair, hired "Diggin Danny" to murder Tim Lawrence Cooper in order to ensure that Harry Don Clinton retained the right to wait in No. 3 cab slot in the cab line at the Megatherium Club. It was the seemingly senseless murder of the Cabman that attracted the attention of the authorities, otherwise the whole criminal endeavor might have continued for months," continued Holmes.

"When first visiting the club with Professor Von Gillmerstein, my close inspection revealed several impermissible acts. First of all, fragile rare books should be boxed for protection in custom-made book boxes that are sized to the book and constructed of acid free materials. These boxes can be made in-house from pre-cut bond stock or purchased ready-made. This was not done. Note that custom-made boxes are not slipcases, which are containers that slide onto the book and leave the spine exposed. Slipcases were in use everywhere. A slipcase is a four or five-sided box, usually made of high-quality cardboard, into which binders, books or book sets are slipped for protection.

"Careful analysis revealed that many of the books had fresh glue and the spines had been improperly handled. While they appeared to be old, many had actually been replaced material that just seemed aged. The artificial books were placed inside mere slipcases with the false spine for all to observe and accept thoughtlessly as the authentic rare book. In any event slipcases should be avoided for rare books because they often lead to abrasion and structural damage when inserting or removing the book. Abrasion is something that will diminish the value of aged documents very quickly, therefore should be avoided at all costs. Foreseeable structural damage is always a bad thing.

"Then there was the fact that several volumes had been rotated over to shelves, which were located against outer walls. This is never permissible with older and rare books. This is the height of negligence. Temperature variance is most damaging to any book and more so to aged documents whose natural fabric is very fragile. Several volumes showed signs of flaking and powdering of the leather bindings, which any curator knows should be placed in a book box and closely examined to determine treatment requirements. This is common knowledge. I began to suspect early on that many of the books had been duplicated!" continued Holmes angrily.

"All of this was negligence he would never be allowed by any reputable curator or even a mere novice acting in good faith. Mary Helen Steel was well trained, well educated, knowledgeable and experienced. None of what was going on in that research library matched reflected her training and experience. This had to be intentional," Holmes concluded pounding a nearby table. Miss Steel did an excellent job of distracting Professor Von Gillmerstein by use of her flirtatious skills and romantic charm. Their love affair blinded the Professor as effectively as it has charmed Dr. Watson in recent days. That ploy worked beautifully in that whenever Professor Von Gillmerstein or any other Director came into this Section of Responsibility she very charmingly explained that the changes, book rotation and movement were merely temporary necessities in order to properly treat and care for the sacred volumes," Sherlock Holmes virtually spat through clenched teeth.

Professor Von Gillmerstein appeared before us looking as if all of the blood had been drained from his body. He was as white as a sheet.

"I cannot believe this" he sputtered incoherently. "I cannot believe this. It cannot be happening" he wailed.

"I have been incredibly stupid" he moaned.

Constable Pugh arrived with an excited look on his face.

"Patrolman Johnson has been notified that two Bobbies have spotted an attractive young woman matching Miss Steel's description accompanied by a young man in a Growler headed toward Charing Cross Station. At this time they are in hot pursuit" he reported confidently.

Sherlock Holmes looked up with hope written all over his long and weary face.

Within moments another Police cab plowed to a stop outside, horses winded and sweating, hooves throwing mud in several directions.

"She got away! She got away!" Yelled Constable Henderson angry and frustrated all at the same time.

"Alas! That pesky wench has escaped me" Holmes shouted, virtually strangling in the process and nearly falling over a small coffee table.

Pacing back and forth, Sherlock Holmes was beside himself. This had never been seen before. Truly singular.

"She has committed a colossal theft before my very eyes!"

A never-before-seen hopeless look appeared on his face.

"I fear that she shall never see 'The Old Bailey,'" muttered Holmes shaking his head in despair.

I could not believe that my close colleague and friend for many years had become upset over a mere woman. Nothing like this had happened since the encounter with Irene Adler. This was puzzling as well as fascinating. Holmes? Upset over a woman? I cannot believe it.

It must be the brandy.

P.S. The Snow Apollo genus was the most fascinating to Professor Stephen L. Zimmerman II, in America, because of the unique mating methods performed by both male and female. He was most eager to possess the exclusive and very authoritative research and writings that at this time were owned by the Megetharian Club of London. It seemed that he didn't care how he obtained them.



THE CASE OF THE WRONG CABMAN MURDER

4TH In a Series of "The Ten Lost Transgressions of Sherlock Holmes"

PROLOGUE

The blustery winds of fall were swirling in turbulent circles just enough to churn up the foggy clouds that slightly chilled every human subject to the elements of London weather. The Morning Chronicle reported several incidents from the Police Blotter. It seems that two solicitors got into fisticuffs outside of The Baying Hound Pub with one losing a tooth and the other getting his trousers torn off in the street. A burglar over on Lennox Avenue had his nose broken by an irate housewife when he tried to break in and steal fresh pies that she had baked for the Ladies Sewing Circle of Roding Lane. A woman discovered a dead cabman in downtown London. The Judiciary Section account included the following death notice:

RESPECTED JUDGE MURDERED

A well-known Judge who regularly handled high-profile cases for many years was murdered in her home last night. Scotland Yard has no leads and no explanation as to why this well-liked and highly regarded Judge would be the victim of such a brutal murder. The Honorable Judge Cynthia K. Herrington, who made history as the first woman to serve as a judge in that court via peerage, was the daughter of First Sea Lord, Sir James Webb, hero of the bloody battle of Mozambique Channel. Judge Herrington brought much-needed dignity to the court, was hardworking, fair and disciplined. Services will be held today at Bellengrath Burial Gardens, 10:00 AM.

Sherlock Holmes was very sick. He had lost both appetite and weight. His eyes no longer had that sharp penetrating gaze and much of the time could muster no more than glassy emptiness. He took what soup and sympathy that Mrs. Hudson bestowed upon him in his most stoic manner and occasionally accepted what water I insisted that he drink. On each occasion he always returned to his own scientific remedy concocted from a formula given to him by a Zen Buddhist some years ago while assisting with a matter involving Siamese interests in later modifications to the Siamese-American Treaty of Amity and Commerce which are still in existence today.

When he could sit up he continued reviewing and updating his files with hands so weak that they shook sporadically. Pale and feeble for over a week, he always returned to a single file—and then back to bed. While monitoring his condition as best as he would allow me, he asked if I had been keeping up with the Atlas Salvage Company case moving through the courts. It was rumored to be a large case with lots of money involved and the subject of gossip throughout commercial circles.

"Not much" I replied. "It seemed to be a straight salvage matter involving a fairly large river vessel."

"This is an unusual case," noted Holmes in a weak voice not much over a whisper.

He returned to bed and immediately dozed off. Sherlock Holmes was very sick.

INTERVIEW BY DR WATSON

The following day began in a manner unknown to Baker Street. On this blustery day, I found myself interviewing Mrs. Hudson

concerning the attempted delivery of a book purchased by Sherlock Holmes through the Megatheriam Club and resulting with Mrs. Hudson discovering a dead man in the street below. This morning Holmes felt well enough to sit up briefly after taking some of Mrs. Hudson's soup and a small amount of porridge. Eager to get back to work, but very weak and subject to relapse, he was able to function for a short time.

"Mrs. Hudson, please tell me how this body-discovering matter occurred," he asked weakly. "The Morning Chronicle says that there were two murders in one day and your incident was one of them," he whispered.

"Well, a delivery driver with a book that you had ordered arrived around 7 P.M. He said that it had been prepaid and that all I needed to do was to sign the delivery slip acknowledging that I had accepted delivery in behalf of Mr. Sherlock Holmes. I did so and as I was returning to place the book on your tray, I looked more closely and discovered that it was not the title that you had instructed me to accept. Thinking that it was a simple mistake I turned to try to catch him in hopes of correcting the delivery error and found that he was nowhere to be seen. He must have been in quite a rush. I hurried down the stairs and onto the street and still there was no driver in sight. However, down by the street lamp stood a hansom delivery carriage with the horse winded and lathered. In hopes of catching him before he put the whip to the horse, I hurried to the rig. As I arrived I saw a man slumped down toward the drivers floor half falling from the drivers perch."

"Driver!" "Driver!" I called to him.

"He did not answer. Alarmed, I looked closer and saw that he had a deep, jagged, gash in the back of his head with bone protruding through the upper section of that dreadful trauma."

"Peering further into that bloody clutter of flesh and bone, I grasped that he was dead, his face frozen in a horrid expression of fear. More shocking, I realized that this was not the man who had delivered the book. His hair was a different color and his skin color was not even close. This man was dark with worn boots. The man who delivered the book was very light and wore expensive shoes. His skin was so pale it was like he had never been out in the sun. And besides, the man who delivered the book was wearing much better clothes with a fancy shirt collar and cuffs with no tie" Mrs. Hudson continued. Holmes was getting very sleepy, almost dozing off.

"Watson, you must listen closely and continue on my behalf," said Holmes as he began to struggle with consciousness. "You must handle this investigation," Holmes mumbled. "You know my methods, you must use them. I will guide you," and then he was asleep.

It is true, I had assisted Mr. Sherlock Holmes on hundreds of cases under every imaginable circumstance and state of affairs. However, stepping into the deductive reasoning world at his level would be impossible. If this were to work at any level, I would simply try to remember things he did, how he did them and try to apply everything I had heard and observed. It is possible, that I might reach some level of success, at least until he can recover. I tried to regain the discovery process that Holmes had started with Mrs. Hudson.

"So there is no question, the man you found dead in the hansom cab is not the man that you signed the receipt for and accepted the book from."

"No question, without a doubt", replied Mrs. Hudson.

"Then it would appear that there was a good reason for someone, obviously not a delivery driver, to make the delivery of the book to Mr. Sherlock Holmes," I observed softly to myself.

"Find out where my name is on the delivery order list," whispered Holmes, slightly regaining consciousness. "The order of names on the delivery list is of some major significance," he coached groggily. "The man delivering the book to Mrs. Hudson had something important at risk, so much that he took a chance attempting a pedestrian chore that he was not familiar with."

What could be so important that he must deliver that book, and then get it wrong?" I pondered half out loud. "I must see that delivery list," I concluded.

Mrs. Hudson could remember little more after the shock of finding a dead body except for one small fact that stuck in my mind. The horse was winded and lathered. If you were a deliveryman with numerous deliveries to make why would you tire your horse this early in the evening? This fact was still stuck in my mind as I tried to go to sleep that night. Early tomorrow morning, I would be at the Evidence Locker at Scotland Yard.

INVESTIGATION BY DR. WATSON

Upon returning from my early visit to Scotland Yard with the name of the deceased cabman and a copy of his delivery schedule, I found Sherlock Holmes sitting up and reasonably alert.

"You have acquired the name of the unfortunate delivery driver and his schedule of deliveries for the day of the murders" stated Holmes as I removed my coat and hat. I can see that you are somewhat better," I replied.

"My name was fourth on the list of twenty scheduled stops for that evening's assignment," commented Holmes is already beginning to look weary.

"How did you know that?"

"The Megatherium has unchanging policies and I have made considerable use of their exceptional resources for years. They use a grid system for all deliveries. A 7 PM arrival will place me either third or fourth on the drivers routing list."

"Interesting" I replied.

"The cab driver's name was Jack Nelan and had been employed as a delivery driver for five years" I added. Poor Driver Nelan was likely the victim of a robbery since he had nothing on him when the police searched his body. Identification was made by his cab license attached to the inside panel of the passenger cabin of his carriage."

Just then Inspector Lestrade arrived accompanied by a young Investigator Don Dobbs whom he introduced as the "best and the brightest" of several new detectives just promoted.

"Scotland Yard can always stand a fresh set of eyes," acknowledged Holmes looking over the young lad closely. "He is a hard worker, I'll give you that. Look, his boots have been re-soled twice and his hat brim is battered from the weather. No sitting around headquarters for him" observed Holmes causing the young detective to glance quickly to his boots.

"How did you know twice?" the younger man asked.

"The stitching, the stitches and the worn uppers" replied Holmes in a bored but courteous manner.

"We would like for you to help us with the murder of Judge Herrington" interrupted Lestrade' trying to get everyone focused on his most important matter.

It was not uncommon for Lestrade and Gregson to request the assistance of Sherlock Holmes, but this early in a case was a bit unusual.

"Ah, the dead Judge" replied Holmes. "This should prove interesting, as Dr. Watson has just noted" observed Holmes as his speech began to slow.

"We do not have much to work with and the barristers are demanding quick results," noted Lestrade with a hint of desperation in his voice.

"I anticipated as much," replied Holmes sleepily. We shall begin immediately." "Watson, you must go to the late Judges' apartment as quickly as possible," urged Holmes, his voice beginning to weaken.

"Why on earth would I want to do that? I thought that we were investigating Mrs. Hudson's newly found body."

"You see, but you do not observe," lectured Holmes weakly. "You must change that" he remarked slipping drowsily into a shallow sleep.

"Why are we investigating some Judges death that half the Metropolitan Police force is working on when Mrs. Hudson found Jack Nelan dead in his cab virtually on our doorstep" I ask a soundly sleeping Sherlock Holmes.

"Judge Herrington was very popular in the legal community as well as in Parliament," replied Lestrade' as they prepared to leave. "We will look into the other homicide in due time."

"Glad to have made your acquaintance Dr. Watson," offered Investigator Dobbs. "I look forward to seeing you again."

Lestrade glared as they departed.

"This is madness," as I continued to talk to a man sound asleep.

With Holmes resting quietly, there was nothing for me to do except follow in the direction that he was guiding me. Back on the street, I waved for a hansom and shortly found myself in front of the address provided in the Municipal Directory of the late Judge Cynthia K. Herrington. The surly landlady informed me that the Metropolitan Police had pilfered through the entire building all day and half of the night and had also disrupted the entire neighborhood and why was I so late even if I was the colleague of Mr. Sherlock Holmes. I was also advised to hurry up as now with the investigation over, she could finally begin to clean things up. I needed to get to that apartment before she began to destroy the crime scene. I have observed Sherlock Holmes many times when he approaches a crime scene. There was almost a state of affection. He wanted to see all, in its purest form no matter how disgusting and inhuman it offered itself. Trying as hard as I could to duplicate his style, I entered the late Judge's apartment.

"It is the details! It is the details!" I kept saying over and over to myself.

The apartment was, or had been, tastefully furnished. Generally what you would expect from a middle-aged female judge. The Investigators had shoved some of the furniture around and someone had been very interested in one corner of the bookshelf within the judge's small library. Young Investigator Dobbs, no doubt. He had mentioned at Police Headquarters that they had conducted a thorough investigation of the crime scene and that there was nothing left of any relevance. There was legal material scattered all about. The judge was preparing her written opinion obviously drawn from a variety of casebooks, hornbooks and practice guides that were marked with bookmarkers, slips of notes with various scratches of

shorthand, almost like code that would mean nothing to anyone save the author. All of this was scattered around one end of the small library. The Investigators had understandably been trying to figure out which way Judge was going to rule because plausibly the losing barrister would be a reasonable suspect, having the most to lose. I was focusing so hard that my head began to hurt trying to visualize what Holmes would look for if he were here. Something about the Judges opinion preparation kept nagging at my subconscious.

"You see, but you do not observe" I could hear Holmes saying to me over and over.

Frustrated and about to move on to something else, it suddenly became clear.

All of these casebooks, hornbooks and practice materials had the same name engraved on the inside owners notation page. The same lawyer owned all of the books that Judge Herrington was using to prepare her written opinion on the Atlas Salvage case and it was not the Judge and not the London Law Library. The owner of these legal materials was one William Blackstone Jr. Also, they had been here for some time. Young Investigator Dobbs was on the right track; he simply had the wrong scent. He was focused on which way the Judge was indicating that she would rule on the high profile case.

"You see, but you do not observe"

The scratch paper, notes and markings, I now viewed in a different light. Now I wanted to know how often this William Blackstone had frequented the Judge's dwelling house. The closet revealed a man's expensive dress shirt of medium size tucked carefully in with considerable feminine attire. Markings on the shirt were WB. Since it appeared undisturbed, the police must have overlooked it.

I remembered that Holmes had scratched, sniffed and patted every square inch of a crime scene that aroused his insatiable curiosity. Back to the bedroom for the third time found me crawling under the bed and hugging the floor for longer than I can ever remember. Struggling to get out from under the bed, I clawed for the back leg and out rolled a cuff link. This cuff link had the mark of the House of Lords. This was no ordinary cuff link. The toiletries and kitchen areas revealed nothing.

Drawn back to the library, I stepped back for a wider view. In the center of the crowded shelf above the fireplace, which appeared at first to be a vessel to hold matches, were the unmistakable remnants of tobacco. The use of Holmes's best sniffing techniques revealed that awful smelling brand of cigars made from tobacco in Afghanistan. I would never forget that putrid odor. This tobacco connoisseur had been a frequent guest. That evening at Baker Street, I shared my findings with Sherlock Holmes. After an in- depth discussion of each and every detail and a very careful inspection of the late discovered cuff link, he was very quiet.

"I think that when we find the owner of the cuff link and the consumer of the Afghan tobacco, we will likely have our killer," I stated feeling that I had made good use of Sherlock Holmes's deductive reasoning method.

Unimpressed, he merely commented, "It is a capital mistake to theorize before you have all of the evidence. It biases the judgment. Early tomorrow you shall visit the morgue and carefully examine the remains of both the deceased Judge and the deceased cab driver. You shall do so with the utmost care and in the minutest detail overlooking nothing. You shall observe exactly how the lethal blows were administered and with what. I want what size, depth, angle and force together with the rapidity if possible. Rigor Mortis will have fully impacted the corpse and will normally last anywhere from eight to

twelve hours after which time the body is completely stiff; this fixed state lasts for up to another eighteen hours. This may prove to be an advantage for us. Then the rigor mortis will reverse and the body will return to a flaccid state," he continued.

"I am fully aware of the decomposition process Holmes; I am a Doctor!" I brusquely reminded Mr. Sherlock Holmes.

Unimpressed, he continued, "This is a chore that I should perform myself but this illness prevents me from doing so at this time. Soon my strength will return. You must turn over the cuff link to Lestrade," said Holmes as he turned toward his bedroom.

As he opened the door he turned with one more instruction, "Go back to the judges apartment, check the hallway, Scotland Yard always forgets to check the hallways."

The visit to the morgue was not as rewarding as I had hoped for. As it turned out, both victims had been bludgeoned to death. The judge fought back, fiercely I might add. The blows were heavy, fast and frequent. The corpse showed teeth ripped loose, fingernails torn unbelievably, markings that indicate that she had gotten in several solid blows with her fists. Her feet indicated that she had kicked fiercely. Wherever her attacker was, he carried the consequences of the fight. He had not escaped lightly. The cab driver was different. He was hit from behind with something like a very heavy black jack and probably had not seen it coming.

Two sharp blows killed him quickly. It appeared that the killer in each case was a large man and very vicious. Grudgingly I returned late in the day to Judge Herrington's apartment and began to survey the hallway as Holmes had directed. Stunned, there snagged on a crack near the landing was a small piece of fabric apparently torn from a man's dress shirt. I arrived back at Baker Street shortly before dark. On my way up the stairs I passed a tired looking woman, mid-forties with a worried expression. She nodded slightly to me and continued on her way.

"Who was that woman I passed on the stairway?" I asked Holmes as I entered the room.

"That was the widow of the recently deceased cab driver, Mrs. Jack Nelan."

"Tomorrow you must go to McDuffey's Pawn & Brokerage with this description. It seems one of the things taken from Jack Nelan at the time of his murder was a family heirloom in the form of a unique pocket-watch. McDuffey's is a good place to start as he keeps very good records," replied Holmes.

Mrs. Hudson brought in supper for me and soup for my ailing friend. Sherlock Holmes was not at all impressed with my performance of the day. He was however very interested in the overlooked piece of fabric that I had "secured" from the hallway of Judge Herrington's apartment and immediately began to examine it with his microscope and then began to rummage around his cabinet for some chemicals. Holmes worked on this until he became exhausted. Later he regained some strength. Groggily, he gave instructions for tomorrow.

"Lestrade is convinced that the death of the judge is directly linked to The Atlas Salvage Co. v. Victoria Marine Transportation, Inc case but so far he cannot prove it."

"Go with Lestrade' and Dobbs when they interview the barristers that are in charge of the litigation" he instructed.

"Make physical and verbal contact with each and every one of the barristers. Look into their eyes, test their grip, force them to move awkwardly, get them to reach or grab for something suddenly and without notice. Look to see if they have the marks of a recent fight," he continued, beginning to show definite signs of fatigue.

"Surely you do not think that an officer of her Majesties Court would resort to common thuggery?" I asked truly shocked.

"Watson, the amounts of money in this case are extremely expensive. Reputations are at stake. You must be at your best wits attention," he continued lecturing me weakly.

"The Law of Salvage is a concept in maritime law which states that a person who recovers another person's ship or cargo after peril or loss at sea is entitled to a reward commensurate with the value of the property so saved. The concept has its origins in antiquity, with the basis that a person would be putting himself and his own vessel at risk to recover another and thus should be appropriately rewarded. A related consideration was widespread piracy; a vessel in peril could very well be left for pirates if the owner did not generously reward a potential honest salvor. The Atlas Salvage Company has a meritorious claim against the motor vessel GEORGE HENLEY, owned by Victoria Marine Transport, Inc.

"The GEORGE HENLEY broke loose from her moorings on the Thames during a severe storm a year ago last fall. Surging tide and current carried her downstream damaging two bridges and causing damage to other vessels and docks on the river before being salvaged and secured by boats owned by The Atlas Salvage Company. The dispute surrounds events that occurred before, during and after that unfortunate event. Accusations on both sides of forum shopping, witness tampering, bribery, false claims, threats to persons and property have been regularly reported in all of the papers for months. Claims cannot be resolved between the parties and now the matter is before the Admiralty division of the High Court," explained Holmes now exhausted and speaking in a whisper. There are many inquiries to be made. You know my methods, use them" and then he was asleep.

INVESTIGATION BY DR. WATSON (CONTINUED)

The lawyers were not happy to spend much time with us as they were in a state of upheaval caused by Judge Herrington's death. Each one fiercely provincial over his own motion, legal argument and billing time, the in-house combat was as savage as between the parties in court. All twenty-one of them, solicitors, barristers and staff agreed to meet us in a conference room at Lawrence Strasser's office. Lestrade objected to this threatening some legal action of his own if they were not more cooperative. This resulted in an agreement to interview each lawyer individually at random which was much more his style. Lestrade, young Dobbs and myself met with Lawrence Strasser first. He was the barrister for Victoria Marine Transport and immediately indicated that he did not like Atlas Salvage or any of its lawyers. He was a big man, well-built approaching middle age with a full head of black hair, crisp dark moustache, strong jaw and black penetrating eyes.

He was wearing an expensive dark suit of tasteful material and expensive fashionable shoes which made him look like what he was – an impressive and successful lawyer accustomed to impressing his will upon all who came before him. Lestrade handled the questioning and after a half-hour of wrangling about alibis and accounting for whereabouts he finally declared the interview over, with mixed results. Before I could inquire about his bruised knuckles and slightly injured face, Strasser began to boast.

"You gentlemen know of course, that I belong to The Donovan Street Club" he volunteered rather proudly.

"Recently I had two separate training bouts with retired light-heavy weight 'Hammering Hank' Johnson. He gave me a few sore ribs."

"The Donovan Street Club, that is a 'fight club', is it not?" I interrupted.

"I grew up on the rough streets of Liverpool. I worked my way through law school as a stevedore on the Liverpool docks," Strasser continued in a defiant mood.

"As a young man I frequently paid expenses by bare-fisted fighting for money," he flatly stated, looking me straight in the eye.

"Duly noted," I responded.

With that, Lestrade ended the interview. The Atlas Salvage Co. barrister, Edward Blair was a retired law professor in his early seventies. We met with him in his office. A pleasant refined man with a cultured face, high-nosed, pale skin, and steady bright eyes and with a certain petulance and the demeanor, he was a man accustomed to authority and expectation of obedience. He was clearly focused on the technicalities of the law. In addition to his experience with the Arabian Voyager case in which he won a hefty settlement for the High Seas Salvage Company, he was sure that he would prevail in the legal action with no difficulty at all.

"You know that I shall triumph in this case with all ease," he mentioned leisurely.

"Experience and case law shall give me the results that I desire," he stated with an heir of supreme confidence.

"Take all the time you want with questioning. As you can see, I have no plans for travel," referencing his difficulty walking and standing caused by some form of nerve damage in his legs.

This was plainly not the man who had brought the judge to her demise. There must be a hired hooligan, if the legal community was involved at all, I thought to myself. Lestrade and Dobbs decided not to interview any more lawyers which left me free to pursue the owner of the cuff link and the Afghan tobacco. A visit to the House of Lords brought me to the Custodian of the Halls who, after some preliminary discussion, showed me a special marking I interpreted as a trademark followed by a number.

"This number identifies the cufflink as belonging to William Blackstone Sr., barrister and former member of the House of Lords, now deceased," explained the Custodian.

"His son William Blackstone Jr. visits about once a year but is in private practice."

"Does he happen to smoke cigars," I inquired.

"Yes, barrister Blackstone smokes cigars imported from Afghanistan and usually has a few with him. This is common knowledge."

It seems that William Blackstone had appeared for the second time in our investigation. This had been an interesting day. When I returned to Baker Street and began to climb the stairs, I was almost trampled by Wiggins and his gang of street Arabs scurrying down the stairs and on to the street in all directions.

"Hi Mate!" greeted Wiggins as he rapidly passed me. Sherlock Holmes was beginning to recover. He could now stay awake for up to an hour and move around the apartment at will. The illness still had a firm hold on him but he was gaining on the wretched beast daily. Wordless, he listened attentively to my day's report. He remained silent for some time after I finished. He sat unconsciously turning the shaft of his Penang Lawyer over and over as deep meditation possessed his entire being. Finally he relaxed and the concentration subsided.

"It is time that we meet this William Blackstone," Holmes muttered softly. "Tomorrow you shall interview him at length. I shall prepare a detailed and precise list of questions for your inquiry. Upon completion of the Blackstone inquiry, you shall return and re-interview Lawrence Strasser yet again. I suspect that Strasser has a lady friend upon whom he spends lavishly. You will be busy tomorrow."

Early morning found me at William Blackstone's residence in Sunbury, a suburb about twenty miles from the center of downtown London. At first he was ill at ease with my unannounced appearance at his door but once I explained the purpose of my visit and the mention of Sherlock Holmes, he became quite cordial.

"I recall your name, you are Mr. Holmes' physician and friend. Please make yourself comfortable," he invited with a welcoming smile.

William Blackstone Jr. was well-groomed, trimly clad with a degree of refinement and delicacy in his bearing. He was medium size and build somewhat slim, in good physical condition and carried an unconscious flair of aristocracy and good manners that made him a truly agreeable person. Women would find him rather handsome.

"Cynthia's death is a terrible shock. We were very close. She was not only a close and dear friend but we have been romantically involved for a lengthy period of time," he said in a heartbroken voice barely above a whisper. "I had been assisting her with research for the opinion on the Atlas Salvage case."

"Forgive me but I must ask, do you smoke Afghan tobacco?"

"Cynthia did not approve," he murmured.

"And you can account for your whereabouts at the time of her death?" I pressed with some misgivings.

"The night of her murder I was presenting a seminar on barrister ethics in Watford to a group of young solicitors," he replied.

"Can you tell me anything about Lawrence Strasser," I asked.

"Lawrence recently questioned me intensively about the Atlas Salvage case. As a matter of fact Lawrence became rather rude when I told him I had no idea how the Judge was going to rule. The final ruling was something we never discussed. I told Lawrence that I did not know and did not care how Cynthia ruled.

"Thank you for your time and courtesy," I quietly stated ending the interview.

The death of his long-time love was tragic. The late morning began disastrously. Lawrence Strasser was not at all pleased to see me again. Especially he did not enjoy talking about his personal spending habits under any circumstances and any further contact by me would have to come through legal channels. Noon found me back at 221-B Baker Street with very little to show for my time and effort. I was not happy to report this to Sherlock Holmes but mid-day found him in a different frame of mind.

"The barristers of London are a tight knit group," he began.

"They are very snobbish and hold themselves as exceedingly important. Without them, the Empire would cease to function. Their arrogance and haughtiness makes them for easy gossip at any level of our class-based society. I suspect that Lawrence Strasser has a lover and that he spent lavishly on her. This strained the cost of his also financially indulgent long-suffering wife of many years. This barrister cannot gain funds fast enough. This minor financial indiscretion could soon be cured. He had gained the status of Barrister of Record on the Atlas Salvage case. Soon there would be funds for all. Handsome and with a commanding presence, the courtroom was his. He was perfectly at home with an opponent in the dock, he on the attack and shredding the poor soul until most

dragged themselves away from his fierce assaults seeking succor in the nearest pub" he concluded.

"William Blackstone" I began "told you nothing that you did not already know" interrupted Holmes.

"William Blackstone is a mere distraction in this investigation," he concluded firmly. "Lestrade and young Dobbs are about to arrest William Blackstone Jr. for the murder of Judge Cynthia K Herrington. He is not the killer. We must act quickly. Dr. Watson, you must find Lestrade' and Dobbs immediately and advise them that I must meet with them before they act rashly! If at all possible, bring them here. I must speak with them immediately," stated Holmes obviously tiring and needing rest.

CONCLUSION

Aggravated at being interrupted by Holmes' spontaneous request, Inspector Lestrade and young Dobbs arrived late in the afternoon. Mrs. Hudson brought in tea and when they were settled Sherlock Holmes pushed through the pain of his illness by explaining the urgency of his request.

"We have two items of evidence discovered and 'secured' in our investigation of the Judges murder. One unique cuff link found in the late Judges home. The other, a small piece of fabric snagged from the shirt of the assailant as he fled the scene through the hallway. They are here for your collection."

"Arresting William Blackstone Jr. for the murder of Judge Cynthia K Herrington would be a bit premature. He is not the killer," Holmes began.

Lestrade glared silently. Young Dobbs looked curious.

"William Blackstone Jr. has been quietly in a romantic relationship with Judge Herrington for a rather long time and he was simply supplying her with legal material so that she might reach the proper and right decision on the salvage case. He had no interest in the outcome," lectured Holmes. "His shirt in her closet, cuff link under her bed and remnants of Afghan tobacco were of no consequence since he was a frequent and welcome guest. "

The murders took place in approximately the following manner:"

"Go back to the evening of July 28th -back to the Judges' home," Sherlock Holmes began. "The Hansom Delivery Driver, Jack Nelan was working his way down a list of deliveries to be made that evening. One of the earlier deliveries is a recent periodical ordered from The Megatherium Club to be delivered to Judge Cynthia K. Herrington. As driver Nelan arrives at the Judges' door and is about to knock, he glances through the open window and as the drapes have been pulled back, he sees a man and a woman obviously quarreling angrily. Quickly the dispute escalates into physical violence. Transfixed, Jack Nelan cannot take his eyes off of the squabble and watches through the window as blows begin to fall. Within a short minute, the man who strikes the woman repeatedly with brutal blows grabs a heavy lamp. He swings. She falls; he continues to rain blows down upon her now fallen body. Nelan cannot see her at this point, but it is obvious the man is continuing to beat the now fallen woman unmercifully.

"Nelan is spellbound. He cannot move. He cannot believe what he has just witnessed. The assailant stops, looks down, then looks around, then looks toward the window. He realizes that it is open. He comes closer and sees the deliveryman with his package.

He realizes that this man has witnessed him killing the woman. The cab driver has witnessed a murder! The assailant quickly runs from the window, through the hall snagging his shirt, and down the

steps to the street in hot pursuit of the delivery driver. Hurriedly, Nelan is trying to climb into his cab when the man catches him from behind. Jack Nelan feels a sharp blow and everything goes black. Jack Nelan never wakes up. Jack Nelan's funeral will be a few days later.

"The killer knows he has a problem. He has to do something to throw future investigating detectives away from this last delivery address. Quickly he pulls the drivers delivery routing sheet. The killer looks for the next delivery address and drives the cab there and makes the next delivery to a Mr. Sherlock Holmes at 221-B Baker Street. Arriving at 221-B Baker St., he is informed that Mr. Holmes is very ill and the landlady, a Mrs. Hudson, will accept the delivery on his behalf. She signs for the delivery and the killer hastily leaves. After the deliveryman has departed, Mrs. Hudson discovers that this is the wrong book, the wrong address is on the address form and this package should be delivered across town.

"Realizing that the driver has just left, Mrs. Hudson decides to try to catch up with him and correct the error, perhaps retrieving the desired package for Mr. Holmes. She sees a hansom delivery carriage under the streetlight with the horse winded and lathered. She hurries to the rig. She sees a man slumped down toward the drivers' floor half falling from the driver's perch. She looks closer. He is obviously dead. More shocking, he is not the delivery driver that she just talked to only a minute ago. This is the wrong cab driver! This is a completely different man and he is also very dead. The killer sought to confuse us by making the next delivery himself, as he had already bludgeoned the driver to death" continued Sherlock Holmes. "His intent was for there to be no connection between the dead cab driver and the murdered judge so that we will not discover that he had killed the only witness to the judges' demise. Had he been successful, the two murders would remain unrelated and possibly unsolved," he explained.

"My street sources tell me that a well-dressed man matching barrister Lawrence Strasser pawned a small antique watch bearing the emblem of an American brown pelican, carried by cabdriver Jack Nelan and stolen from his body the night of his murder. The records

at McDuffey's Pawn & Brokerage should bear this out. Next is the small piece of fabric, recovered from the hallway leading up to the Judges' apartment. Overlooked in your initial investigation, you will find upon examination that it is from the torn shirt of one Lawrence Strasser. Lawrence Strasser's alibi for the night of the murder is flawed. "Hammering Hank" is quite brain-damaged and with the combined influence of whiskey and money he remembered the sparring match with barrister Strasser on a night when he was drunk over in the Village of Dartford, some twenty-five miles and one hang-over away.

"Both William Blackstone and Lawrence Strasser are members of the Megatheriam Club of London. As a long-ago member of the Megatheriam, I am familiar with their by-laws and one of those is to be solvent and creditworthy to qualify for membership. Lawrence Strasser is deeply in debt for gambling wagers not yet paid. He is well known around the local racetracks and fight clubs," explained Sherlock Holmes.

"Strasser discussed the Atlas Salvage case with Blackstone and he began to think that the Judge was going to rule against him. Blackstone did not know and told him so. Then a few days later Strasser could not stand it anymore and decided to confront the Judge directly. Lawrence Strasser unethically called upon the judge that fateful night to prevail upon her to find in favor of his client, Victoria Marine Transport. The transport company was in financial difficulties and could not afford to lose a large river vessel or pay a large settlement, as they were self-insured. Deeply in debt and his reputation at stake, his entire future depended upon a favorable outcome of this case. He could not lose.

"The judge no doubt said she could not discuss the case and threatened to report him to the barristers licensing board. They argued. Strasser became desperate. A fight broke out ending in her death. At this moment, Lawrence Strasser is likely at his favorite watering hole, The Baying Hound Pub. If you hurry, you may arrest him there. Watson, we shall have more discussions on deductive reasoning and the use thereof."



THE CASE OF THE SITTING CORPSE

5th In a Series of "The Ten Lost Transgressions of Sherlock Holmes"

PROLOGUE

Sherlock Holmes had that look. At first it is just simply frightening as you look into his eyes then best described as an empty stare until you peer further into the vacant hollows that ring the depths of his complicated soul. The horrors that dwell within that complexity make me shudder at what imaginary beasts may subsist there. It is at this point that I always fear that he has slipped back into the clutches of his old demons that have once again returned to torture him without mercy. There was no evidence of the dreaded evils in sight and it had been years since the last encounter. None-the-less, the danger lurks. Encouraged, I ventured a cautious inquiry.

"Anything interesting in The Morning Telegraph?"

"Not really" he immediately replied. "It is just that I still seem to have some lingering after-effects of my recent illness. Apparently I failed to recognize the seriousness of my disease."

At that moment there was a knock on the door of our sitting room. "An appointment?" I asked of Holmes.

There was a rustle in the hallway and Mrs. Hudson's voice, then the door opened with Mrs. Hudson irritatingly saying; "I tried to explain to this woman that she cannot just push her way in here."

I observed that Sherlock Holmes suddenly looked alive again as unknown circumstances materializing before our eyes were the healing balm that he had sought for some time.

"Thank you Mrs. Hudson. Yes my good woman, please introduce yourself," said Sherlock Holmes in a curious voice.

The woman before us was in her early thirties, decidedly attractive with a cute nose, rosy cheeks and blue eyes. Her hair was a glossy chestnut and she was equally blessed with a lush body.

"My name is Gloria Mason and a close and private personal friend of mine has been murdered. One of the investigators at Scotland Yard said you might be of help."

Holmes was studying the woman closely, virtually picking her apart with his piercing stare. Becoming uncomfortable under his probing gaze she continued, faltering somewhat; "He is the owner of 'MITCHELL ICE & STORAGE COMPANY'."

Frustrated and becoming more uneasy as Holmes continued to silently stare, she looked around anxiously toward me for help. As I was about to respond, Holmes finally addressed her.

"Would this close personal private friend also be a secret lover that you do not wish to acknowledge publicly?"

Stunned, she impulsively gasp a frightened breath and appeared to be about to faint.

"It is quite alright madam," said Holmes in his most soothing voice as he approached her. "Your secret is safe in this room. This is my friend and confidant Dr. Watson. He has assisted me on many cases. Your personal matters will be treated in a most confidential manner."

Looking somewhat relieved, color began to return to her face.

"How did you know?"

"You have been crying for some time. Your eyes have begun to swell and your nose is red from the unusually frequent use of handkerchiefs which has roughened the surface of a lovely face.

Your darkened lashes are faintly askew. You are carefully groomed and yet there are tiny smudges of a lip reddener about your clothing that linger from the continued emotional stress. Today you are ever so slightly rumpled compared to the normally scrupulous care that you take in your appearance.

"Additionally your shoes are miss-laced, a matter that would not normally appear for a woman who presents herself to a secret lover with more care than a loving wife to her familiar spouse. Also—you wear no wedding ring and there are no markings that you have had one in the past. In short, you are a paradigm of a young woman who has lost someone truly dear to her heart, is distraught and still grieving. Watson, please ask Mrs. Hudson to bring us tea and crumpets.

"Miss Mason, take comfort, you are in safe hands," continued Holmes as he reached forward and patted her hands in an expression of sympathy.

I rang for Mrs. Hudson.

With our guest refreshed after the sustenance of Mrs. Hudson's crumpets, Gloria Mason seemed to have regained her composure and pressed forward.

"Mr. Holmes, I want you to find out who killed Milton."

"That would be Milton Mitchell, the owner of MITCHELL ICE & STORAGE COMPANY."

"Yes, this was truly the most decent man I have ever known and the only man I will ever love."

"Miss Mason, if Scotland Yard is on the case, why do you feel that you need my services?"

"That family. They are a strange lot. They are all honest and hardworking, but it is as if they had been around each other so long they would like to kill each other. His wife is well liked among her friends but she has taken lovers many times over the years and no matter what anyone says, she is just plain mean.

"She and Milton cannot stand to be at home together for any length of time or bitter quarreling breaks out. Oddly, they can run the business together without any problem and do so very well. They are very successful. They just hate each other. Emotionally they parted company years ago. Milton was heartbroken. We met at a church charity function and it was love at first sight. No one has loved me like he did. And now he is gone" as she burst into tears.

"Please compose yourself madam" Holmes murmured in a consoling manner and once again took her hand and patted it. "Dr. Watson, what do you recommend?"

"As you referenced, she is grieving. This will pass. Perhaps some spirits" I suggested.

"Tell me more of this family," requested Holmes.

"Well, his wife is an adulteress that hates him, his son is a wastrel, and his sister has gambling problems, hates him for his success and constantly wants more money that he refuses to provide. Sarah Washington, his sister, is thankful for him taking her in when her husband abandoned her and went back to sea. Still, she tries to manipulate Milton out of everything that she can. She has not stolen from him but she will extract anything out of him possible. She does so on every occasion.

"She cannot handle money, is always in debt, constantly in trouble with her creditors and is hugely jealous of Milton. She has been a hard worker but due to her terrible gambling habits, she has become too much trouble. Then she borrowed 500 £ from illegal pawnbrokers. The people that she is mixed up with are dangerous. Deathly dangerous if they are angered. Her life could easily be over if she fails to pay them. Last week she tried to get the money to pay them from Milton. He said no, turned her down cold. He was so tired of her badgering him, he was thinking of firing her. Recently they have not even spoken.

"Walter, the son, is just plain lazy and dreams of being some sort of city gentleman but he has made no money, refuses to hold a steady job and is always trying to get Milton into some business scheme to get rich. All of his reckless ideas are failures. He wants Milton to sell the business and split the money among the family and then he will have yet another scheme to get to the proceeds on some other type of far-fetched idea that will fail.

"Mary, his wife, would like to sell the business so she can indulge herself with luxuries that she cannot afford and really does not understand. She also has creditors badgering her. She spends enormous amounts of money on luxurious lingerie, expensive clothes and accessories to impress a string of lovers that she can exploit and dreams of marrying royalty. His brother, John Mitchell is the only decent one in the family. He is the only one not trying to victimize Milton in some way. John is the only one he can depend on.

"Milton has told me many times that I am the only one he feels truly loves him. It is true. We have been lovers for over five years now. I do not think any of them care as long as they can continue to extract money from him. I seriously doubt that they care if his killer is caught," Gloria said as she was beginning to tire. Milton Mitchell was a good, hardworking businessman and I will always miss him. I loved Milton, still do and I want you to find who did this horrible thing to the only decent man I ever knew."

Holmes had listened attentively to everything that she had said, all the while studying her mannerisms, passion and her description of the parties surrounding Milton's life, business and death. He also carefully studied the veracity of Gloria Mason. Holmes was silent, unconsciously searching his dressing gown for one of his pipes while he digested her description of a family that he knew well. Finally, he stood and began to stir.

"Milton Mitchell was of considerable assistance some years ago on the Russian Diplomat case when we found the need to preserve a body for shipment back to Russia. I knew Milton. He was a good man. Miss Mason, I shall look into the matter on your behalf. Go home. Get some rest. I shall contact you within a few days. Watson, we have work to do."

Gloria Mason had just reached the street when yet again there was a noise in the stairway and hall. There was a knock on the door and then who is before us but Inspector Lestrade'.

"Glad that I found you at home," muttered the inspector while dusting debris off his bowler and pulling a crumpled note pad out of one of his coat pockets. "It seems that we are in need your services Mr. Sherlock Holmes," he grumbled in a statement that clearly was a cross between a request and threat of jail.

Inspector Lestrade' was very uncomfortable in a position that might imply that he should have to rely on Sherlock Holmes for investigative purposes. The policeman was very proud.

"There has been a flurry of burglary cases just assigned to my office and I am busy with an unreasonable number of court appearances in the still evolving Megatheriam theft investigation and

prosecution that has now become an international matter. This recent murder case needs more attention now," he further explained.

"We are a bit occupied at the moment, but I shall take your matter in hand," replied Sherlock Holmes with a hint of a smile.

HOLMES & WATSON INVESTIGATE THE CRIME SCENE

"Dr. Watson, I think that we should visit the crime scene as soon as possible. It is a busy commercial location and soon Scotland Yard will finish and business will resume spoiling what evidence that has not been examined," said Holmes as he reached for his hat and cane. During the extended cab ride to the well-known MITCHELL ICE & STORAGE COMPANY Holmes described the business.

"MITCHELL is one of the older ice companies in London. Initially ice was gathered from ponds, rivers, and canals and then stored in underground ice stores. Milton Mitchell dug and built one of the first underground ice houses. London wanted ice in far greater quantities than the British climate provided. Britain started to import ice from Norway in the 1820's and the business increased when ice began to be imported from the United States in the 1840's. MITCHELL sells ice to customers for food preservation, medical purposes and for ice cream which is very popular with children," he explained.

When we arrived at MITCHELL'S business was brisk. Merchant and delivery wagons were loading, medical personnel were listing their specific requirements and ice cream vendors were making careful selections. We maneuvered our way through the small crowd to an opening and ask to speak to someone in charge. A big, outgoing middle aged man appeared. He wore a warm cap covering his ears, dressed in rough warm clothing with ice hooks and tools attached to his outer belt with an order pad sticking out of one pocket.

"Yes, how can I help you?"

"We are assisting in the investigation of the unfortunate death of the owner. I am Sherlock Holmes and this is Dr. Watson."

"I've heard of you. My name is John Mitchell, Milton's brother. Call me John," the muscular man said shaking hands with Holmes and nodding to me.

"I am regretful to learn of your brother's demise and do not wish to intrude upon your sorrow, but we are tasked to identify the person responsible for his untimely passing," stated Homes with compassion as he released his handshake.

"Thank you. The family has decided to hold the remains here until we can conduct a decent funeral. What do you need?"

"We would like to see the place where Milton's body was found and also view the remains, if that can be arranged."

"Come this way. The London Medical Examiner is still here."

John Mitchell led us further back into the underground ice store which was much larger than I had imagined and a great deal colder.

"Mary found him just inside this door," he said sadly motioning toward an ice vault marked House "A". Don't leave the door open very long. There are candles inside on the shelf by the door. 'Milton's remains are temporarily housed in the second vault, House' B", John said gloomily.

We stepped inside the underground freezer and immediately felt the shock of a much colder temperature. Totally oblivious to the bitter atmosphere, Sherlock Holmes was immediately on the hunt. He moved about the freezing space like a trained hunting dog searching for the eluding scent of his prey. His keen, ever probing eyes were scanning every inch of the freezing space for the minutest clue, all the while touching, patting, and testing the contour of the bulwarks

and smallest cracks for any flaw that might grasp some hint related to the tragedy that had occurred within these walls.

I moved to the far side of the freezer away from the door and was studying the bulkheads and floor on the right side of the space when a delighted shriek sprang from the other side of the freezer. Holmes was lying down on the frozen floor with a candle and his large magnifying glass in one hand and was gesturing for me to come to his aid with the other.

"Watson, I must have one of your evidence containers and a soft instrument brush. We have the remnants of cigarette ashes and from the cut of the burn, they are of a singular brand."

Having collected what evidence Holmes determined relevant and concluded our investigation of the crime scene, we moved forward to House B where the corpse was being held.

HOLMES & WATSON EXAMINE THE CORPSE

The Medical Examiner had just finished his preliminary examination.

"Good Morning Dr. Collins."

"Good Morning Dr. Watson. This is a cold way to begin the day."

"Agreed," I replied. "Do you have an opinion yet?"

"It looks very much like blunt force trauma."

The victim died in the cold freezer and is well preserved.

"I am trying to establish the Blood Pool" replied Dr. Collins but it looks like he was just plain beat to death with the infamous "blunt instrument."

As we entered House "B", Sherlock Holmes began a dull monologue. I could not tell if he was addressing himself, the corpse, me or possibly all three.

"Experts tell us the following," Holmes began. "Extreme cold is more fatal to humans than extreme heat. Cold makes you sleepy, and when you fall asleep, you die. A rule of thumb is; if the body feels cold and stiff; it has been dead between 8 and 36 hours; if the body feels cold and not stiff; it has been dead more than 36 hours.

"Death is rather straight forward" clarified Holmes. "Experience reveals that at the time of death the heart stops, the skin gets tight and gray in color. The muscles relax, the bladder and bowels empty, priapism occurs and the temperature of the body will typically drop 1.5 degrees F. per hour absent outside influence. The liver is the largest organ in the body and stays warmest the longest. This temperature is used to establish time of death if the body is found within that time frame. It is also the most complex. After 30 minutes the skin gets purple and waxy, the lips, finger and toenails turn pale colored or turn white as the blood leaves. Blood pools to the lowest parts of the body leaving a dark purple-black stain called lividity. The hands and feet turn blue and the eyes start to sink into the skull.

"After 4 hours rigor mortis begins to set in as the purpling of the skin and pooling of blood continue. Rigor mortis causes the muscles to tighten for another 24 hours, then the process will reverse itself and the body will return to a limp state. After 12 hours the body is in full rigor mortis. After 24 hours the body will acclimate to the temperature of the surrounding environment. In males, the semen dries, the head and neck turn a greenish-blue color and the greenish-blue color spreads over the rest of the body. A strong smell of rotting meat develops and the face of the person is no longer recognizable. This is what time and record-keeping tell us."

Stated Holmes concluding his lecture.

"Is this going to take long?" Asked the bored Medical Examiner looking at his watch.

Sherlock Holmes approached the corpse almost reverently. First he began by standing about two feet away looking for anything obvious such as marks, bruises and wounds that would be visible from a distance. Then he moved closer, his gaze scanning the body in a grid-like fashion.

"The art of observation takes as long as necessary. In my mind I divide the corpse into three equal vertical parts that I label A, B and C, Front or Back. Then I further sub-divide those parts into vertical grids of I, II and III and within these sub-divisions, I divide those sub-parts into horizontal grids of 1, 2, 3 and 4, 5, 6 and 7, 8, 9 grids. I then scan each part and sub-part with a disciplined machine tool like manner that moves horizontally across the body then down to the next grid, moving across and down until I have visually scanned the entire body in a style and manner that Dr. Watson says reminds him of a large awkward crane-like bird," Holmes explained to no one in particular.

Dr. Collins had long since departed.

"Here we have a knife wound in Part A, section III, subpart 8 in the upper chest, front side."

Holmes continued finding at least nine different deep marks, the result of heavy blows with a blunt object, likely those of an ice mallet in the A, 123 grid which caused the victim to bleed and render him unconscious. Parts C4 and 6 and 7, 8, 9 indicated that he had been kicked severely, but these were not life threatening. With the number of vicious blows rendered and many after he went down plus probably being unconscious, told Holmes that this had been a very personal attack delivered with enormous visceral hate.

Further inspecting the body, Holmes used some gadget that I had seen him working on in his laboratory. The gadget probed the body in peculiar way unknown to me.

"What is that unusual tool you are using?"

"I am experimenting with a new form of detecting where blood settles when a person dies — how blood pools."

"I say Holmes, is this the time to be experimenting with some new unproven gadget on an active crime scene?"

"Dr. Watson, I can think of no such place that is better suited."

While Holmes spent another ten minutes closely examining the body, engulfing himself in its condition, I began to feel the effects of the cold ice storage house. My shivering was getting worse.

"It is time to go, we can do no more here," he finally agreed.

As I mentioned in the beginning; "We are fortunate, Watson. The family has decided to keep the body at the icehouse and it is now speaking to us. It is telling us how Milton Mitchell died."

Finally we escaped the hostile environment to the outer office and customer area.

"Gentlemen, you were back there for an unusual time for "non-icemen" smiled John Mitchell.

"Yes", I chattered trying to get feeling back into my legs.

"John, might we prevail upon you for a brief visit with Mary Mitchell and Sarah Mitchell, the wife and sister?" requested Holmes in his most sympathetic voice.

"That is Sarah Mitchell Washington. Mary came in for about an hour and left right before you arrived. I'll get you their addresses, as I'm sure that Mary was going home to meet friends. I have not seen Sarah Washington today."

INTERVIEW WITH WIDOW – MARY MITCHELL

We arrived at the Mitchell home late in the morning. Accepting our apology for the unscheduled arrival, Mary Mitchell understood

that identifying her late husband's killer required immediate investigation. Mrs. Mitchell is a short, pretty middle-aged woman with a soft pale complexion which makes her seem even younger.

She wore her long wavy brown hair loose and has warm, almond-shaped brown eyes, small nose and full lips. She dresses fashionably and expensively with a provocative flair. A tempting smile and a sparkle in her eye make her simply alluring. Most men would find her enticing.

Sherlock Holmes made a point of consoling Mrs. Mitchell in a manner that I was unaccustomed to seeing from my friend. It seemed he was trying to impress the woman with his concern for her now deceased husband.

"Mrs. Mitchell, I cannot tell you how sorry I am for your loss. Your husband was of great assistance to me some years back on a very sensitive matter involving the government. I shall truly miss him" gently stated Holmes with more feeling that I have ever seen him display.

He tenderly moved close and grasp both her hands in his and slightly squeezing, looked straight into her eyes and expressed his deepest regret for her tragic loss. Initially somewhat startled, she relaxed as he backed away releasing his grip.

"Yes, I seem to recall something about Russia but the whole matter was rather vague and no trouble to us at all" she replied courteously.

She welcomed us into a tastefully furnished parlor and guided us to a stylish sofa.

Continuing to speak in a comforting tone, Holmes began to inquire into the details of her tragic discovery.

"Scotland Yard tells me that you found your husband on the floor when arriving for work on that fateful day."

"Yes. I unlocked the business at 4:30 am as usual."

"What prompted you to look into House "A" on that particular morning?"

"At first nothing, except that George, one of the drivers came up to the office to report that the door of House "A" had the lock jammed from the outside and he could not get it loose."

"What did you do?"

"By that time John had arrived and we went to see what the problem was."

"How do the door locks work on the vault?" questioned Holmes of a subject he already knew the answer.

"All of the vaults have a safety release on the inside to prevent anyone from accidentally being locked inside of a freezer. The safety lock-release is very simple, dependable and within easy grasp even if you are almost lying down. They are very low and very easy to release. A child can do it with no trouble."

"It is common knowledge that you and your husband had a fight here the night of his death" calmly suggested Holmes.

"Yes, unfortunately."

"And you would be able to account for your whereabouts for this entire week" Holmes inquired bluntly.

Her reply was a very uneasy, cold and deliberate stare.

"Who do you think killed your husband?"

"I really do not know. For the last month, it seems as though several people have been angry with both of us but I cannot say why. There have been some delayed deliveries but that happens from time to time and it is usually resolved without any hard feelings. That is about all that I can speculate on. Honestly, I am both hurt and

puzzled as to why someone would murder my husband" as her voice began to crack.

"Mrs. Mitchell, we have taken up enough of your time. We shall leave and let you rest. Once again, I am sorry this has happened" Holmes quietly murmured as we moved toward the door.

On the street, I remarked, "Holmes, I've never seen you so compassionate over the death of a stranger. Is this some new eastern philosophy that you are toying with?"

Silence.

On the cab ride to Sarah Washington's residence, Holmes was initially silent.

Then, with no warning he simply stated, "Mrs. Mitchell is very attractive, flirtatious, and sensual. She is mysteriously unaccounted for at least two days each week.....Nervously evasive when questioned about her whereabouts.....This woman has a lover."

And then Sherlock Holmes lapsed back into silence.

INTERVIEW WITH SISTER – SARAH WASHINGTON

A young woman was entering the building at the same time we were and seemed very nosy. "What brings you gentlemen out on a day like this?"

"We have come to visit Sarah Washington, do you know her?" inquired Holmes.

"Yes, she lives across the hall from me up on the third floor. She seems sick, complaining about spending too much time outside. I did not understand why she went out at all, she did not bring anything back, not carrying anything. Odd, she must be a bit delirious. I must stop off here on the first floor. Good day gentlemen."

"Interesting person."

"Nosy neighbors are a wealth of information my dear Watson," smiled Holmes.

Two large unshaven men passed us silently on the next landing. Unsmiling, scarred and brusque, they made no eye contact. Sarah Washington peeked through the slightly cracked door with a suspicious look on her almost completely covered face. She had not expected our unannounced call at her home. Then, with no warning, once more I was witness to Mr. Sherlock Holmes uncharacteristic compassion for a surviving relative and great sorry for the respected dead.

I really should take a look at that new Pakistani tobacco he was experimenting with, I thought to myself. Milton's sister did not feel well and really did not want to talk to anyone. She had met earlier with one of the young Inspectors from Scotland Yard and answered a lot of questions and why could we not have accompanied the other policemen instead of waiting so long. Besides, the Doctor had given her some heavy medication and she should stay in bed. Sherlock Holmes gently but steadily continued his new consolation style of questioning witnesses.

"Mrs. Washington, I am deeply sorry for the loss of your brother and your recent illness. I know this must be a strain upon you both physically and emotionally. I promise you that Dr. Watson and I will be very brief."

"Your friend is a Doctor?"

"Yes. He will monitor your health for the short time that we are with you", replied Holmes as I raised an eyebrow with a quizzical look.

"Well, a few minutes maybe, him being a Doctor and all" opening the door all the while looking directly at me as she hesitantly allowed us into her small apartment.

Sarah Washington was matronly, middle aged and distrusting. Cold black eyes and a tight expressionless mouth reflected years of hard work and comparatively bad luck.

She was dressed in a house gown with a soft light nightcap fitted loosely over her head extending down completely covering her ears and on to her collar. Her cheeks were flushed and covered with some form of face cream. Milton made a job for her at the ice company several years ago when her husband ran away to sea. She was a strong, healthy woman and was glad for the job that her brother had given her at the ice storage store. She is not especially liked or disliked, just someone that the family pays no attention to.

Sarah is a hard worker and a person not to be trifled with. Sherlock Holmes seemed to take a longing look at one of the small tables used for coffee and relaxation. There were ashtrays and cigarettes with brands I did not recognize. Sarah had tried to go to work but after the tragedy at the icehouse, came home sick. The death of her brother hurt her deeply.

"Mrs. Washington, I just have a few questions and we will depart and allow you to continue your well-deserved rest. Who do you think killed your brother?"

"I do not know. It was a surprise to me."

"Did you see the fight between Milton and his wife?"

"Yes, part of it and then I left. I have seen that too many times before."

"So you left the ice house property about what time?"

"I think it was around 6 PM or so."

"Did you come straight home?"

"Yes"

"Did anyone see you on the way or after you arrived home?"

"I think I talked to Paula, my neighbor who lives in the apartment across the hall around midnight."

"When we talked to Paula earlier, she mentioned that you had caught a cold and were extremely ill as though you spent considerable time outside, is that correct?"

"I do not feel well. Yes, I had to go out for a while for some things and did not pay attention to the weather," she replied nervously.

"Yet Paula does not remember you returning with any packages or bags" queried Holmes.

"She...she just did not see them," stuttered Sarah. "Oh, I don't know what she saw. I put them up before I saw her," replied Sarah, uneasy and clearly worried.

"I am very sorry Mrs. Washington. I have been rude. You are undoubtedly tired and ill. It was thoughtless of me to detain you this long," whispered Holmes as he rose to leave.

Again that uncharacteristic behavior presented itself as Holmes tenderly grasp both her hands in his, looked straight into her eyes and expressed his deepest regret for her tragic loss. Out of the corner of my eye, I barely caught a glimpse of Sarah Washington suppressing a small cry while spontaneously withdrawing her hands from his gentle grasp. He relaxed his grip, all the while continuing to speak in a soothing manner about his concern for her welfare completely ignoring her fleeting discomfort as she cautiously adjusted the thin gloves that covered her hands and arms.

"Is there anything that I can do for you before we leave?" I ask innocently.

"No. I'm fine," she mumbled. Her teeth unconsciously clenched as the door closed behind us.

Back on the street, I could not help but again comment upon Sherlock Holmes' unusual change in disposition toward women during an investigation.

"This sudden attention to women. I swear Holmes, you should end up in a monastery," I observed with only a tinge of sarcasm as we searched for a hansom.

As the cab sped across London, Holmes dozed off into a light sleep leaving me to speculate as to how he would deal with the prodigal son of a hardworking respected now deceased businessman.

INTERVIEW WITH SON-WALTER MITCHELL

Milton Mitchell's only son, Walter Wayne Mitchell, was a third rate ne'er-do-well. Childishly handsome with superficial charm and a spoiled attitude, Walter enjoyed an unearned lifestyle with only one thing in mind; spend all of anyone's money that he could acquire by any means. This lad was a mess. Walter had leased a comfortable flat in an upscale part of London. Obviously expecting to hear from us, he warmly welcomed us into his well-kept dwelling.

"Yes gentlemen, what may I do for you?" Walter asked with a friendly motion to come inside.

"I am Sherlock Holmes and this is Dr. Watson" Holmes replied coolly.

"I know of your reputation and am delighted to meet both of you. Perhaps we should get down to business," responded Walter boldly shaking hands with both of us. "You are investigating the death of my father. Again, what may I do for you?"

Sherlock Holmes looked over the young man carefully. He was absorbing everything Walter said, how he said it, the expression on his face and most importantly, the look in his eyes. There was an awkward silence as he analyzed everything about his subject.

"We are trying to account for the whereabouts of employees and family members at the time of the murder of your father," Holmes said slowly while holding a keen eye on the younger man.

"Of course. I was with one of my lady-friends, "Jamie!" he called out.

"Yes" a soft voice replied from the doorway to the living room.

An attractive woman appeared, mid-thirties, medium height with dark hair dressed in business attire with a professional manner.

"These gentlemen are interested in my whereabouts the night Father died."

"I am Jamie Allison and it is true that Walter was with me that terrible night. We were preparing a business proposal which carried us into the late hours and Walter was kind enough to provide me a room to nap before returning to my commercial schedule the following day. I took a cab back to my residence, prepared for the business day and returned to my office to submit our proposal to my superiors for modifications and approval" she replied.

"Would that business proposal be the sale of MITCHELL ICE & STORAGE CO.?" asked Holmes.

"Confidential." You understand" smiled Jamie.

"Of course."

Walter had moved to the corner of the room and poured himself a drink of expensive whiskey.

"I am Walter's lawyer in addition to being one of Walter's business associates", continued Miss Allison. "If that is everything gentlemen, we have a busy schedule today. Please do not hesitate to call us if we can be of further assistance. Thank you," concluded

Jamie Allison as she very smoothly ended the interview and escorted us to the door.

"Smooth, swift, firm. This woman is very smart," I said to Holmes as we found ourselves on the street searching for a cab back to Baker Street.

CONCLUSION

Once again Inspector Lestrade' was at our door. Over worked, tired and grumpy Lestrade' had decided to see where we were on the murder of Milton Mitchell.

"What is this about some disagreement you have with the medical examiner over the cause of death?" he asked, coming straight to the point.

"The problem is with the 'blood pool' began Sherlock Holmes. "The 'blood pool' is wrong. If a body dies in one position and is not moved for some time after death, the first thing that happens is what's called Dependent Lividity, which is when all the blood in the body pools in the lowest places because of gravity. After the heart stops beating, the body immediately starts turning cold.

"This phase is known as algor mortis, or the death chill. Each hour, the body temperature falls until it reaches room temperature.

"At the same time, without circulation to keep it moving through the body, blood starts to pool and settle.

"Once lividity is set, it doesn't move because the blood clots soon after pooling.

"This is how investigators can tell if a body was moved after death.

"If lividity is fixed on the back, it means that the person died lying on their back... so if they're found face down it means the body was moved after death.

"Scotland Yard is saying that Milton Mitchell died from blunt force trauma and a single knife wound. He did not lose that much blood.

"If he had died from the fight, he would have been knocked out lying on the floor.

"The blood pool would have settled in his lower back, buttocks and backs of his legs, if he had died on his back.

"If he died face down on his stomach, the blood would settle in the stomach and face area.

"He did neither!

"Milton Mitchell's blood pool settled in the lower part of his body. The abdomen and legs is where it settled.

"This victim died sitting up. The fight with his wife probably knocked him out but he was still alive.

"He did not lose that much blood.

"Someone dragged him into the freezer after the fight and locked him in there.

"He regained consciousness and died of hypothermia, sitting up.

"He froze to death!

"The killer saw the fight between Milton and his wife.

"The fight spilled out into the common area in front of the vaults.

"The killer saw the stabbing and the blows with the ice mallet.

"Someone saw this.

"They hid and waited.

"Most employees had already gone home.

"The fighting between Milton and Mary was nothing new to the family as well as other employees.

"Employees saw them fighting earlier.

"The killer hid.

"Where?

"In the freezer.

"They waited in the freezer until everyone else left the storage house. Milton is unconscious from the fight.

"Killer waits in the freezer; everybody else leaves; Milton possibly begins to stir. This is bad news for the killer.

"This is a chance to get rid of him.

"Wife will be blamed.

"Killer then drags him into the freezer and locks him in. He regains consciousness and cannot get out.

"He slides down with his back against the wall in a sitting position.

"He freezes to death.

"Whoever the killer was having to wait in the freezer until everyone else left the building.

"That was a long time at a very cold temperature. That person will suffer from frostbite.

"That person's fingers will be sore and sensitive to any touch or grasp and discoloration will present in various degrees, as will be the ears, feet and face.

"Evidence of medical treatment will be found upon the injured areas.

"An unusual brand of tobacco called Jaisalmer from India was found on the freezer floor.

"That person had to wait quite a while in the freezer. That person smoked while waiting.

"That person smoked tobacco from India while waiting.

"That person has frostbite.

"That person would find shaking hands very painful.

"Find a person who did not work the following day, has evidence of frostbite on their hands, ears, face and feet, have difficulty shaking hands without experiencing pain and who smokes Jaisalmer tobacco."

"That is your killer!" Sherlock Holmes concluded.

Lestrade' stopped scribbling on his crumpled pad and stared at Sherlock Holmes.

"Milton Mitchell's sister, Sarah Washington satisfies all of those elements. Come Watson, we have an engagement."



THE CASE OF THE ARTISTIC MURDER

6th In a Series of "The Ten Lost Transgressions of Sherlock Holmes"

PROLOGUE

The late fall had furnished us with a slight chill in the air as the winds of early winter began to gather their skirts in preparation for the squall blowing in off the English Channel. Sherlock Holmes was busy collecting his notes on the Megatheriam theft, which had been widely reported throughout Europe. The breeding habits of the Snow Butterflies have become the talk of continental social circles. This resulted in weeks of letters, telegrams and messages to Holmes ranging from people wanting to know how they could obtain their own private collection to a multitude of other very forgettable inquiries.

That of course, left Holmes cold, as flattery and attention are not his manner. Then who among them had the culture, wisdom and mental curiosity to appreciate the sheer delicacy of a Snow Apollo butterfly? The unique softness and sensitivity of the butterfly's wings is exquisite beyond description. There was no doubt that Holmes' continued interest in this singular genus of butterfly centered around the mysterious events at the Megatheriam Club and will linger until all of the tentacles of the plot are uncovered.

On the other hand, by a trek through The Morning Telegraph, I discovered that a hansom cab driver had imbibed too far into his cups and broken into the SouthWind Pub by physically pounding his way through a solid interior wall and stumbling into the pub lounge during the middle of the night. It seems as though he made it all the way through the east wall and had destroyed a large enough opening to stagger through. Charges are being prepared.

Holmes set aside the papers and groped through his dressing gown pockets for that wrenched clay pipe. Securing tobacco from the Persian Slipper, he proceeded to relax into his favorite chair while staring out the window with a faraway look in his eyes.

Then without notice he stated, "I always preferred the Megatheriam Club to the Diogenes Club."

I raised an eyebrow and waited.

"The Megatheriam has a much larger library. The Diogenes has that matter of silence."

"I have heard."

Then he quoted directly from the The Greek Interpreter.

"There are many men in London, you know, who some from shyness, some from misanthropy, have no wish for the company of their fellows. Yet they are not averse to comfortable chairs and the latest periodicals. It is for the convenience of these that the Diogenes Club was started, and it now contains the most unsociable and unclubbable men in town. No member is permitted to take the least notice of any other one. Save in the Strangers' Room, no talking is, under any circumstances, allowed, and three offences, if brought to the notice of the committee, render the talker liable to expulsion. My brother was one of the founders, and I have myself found it a very soothing atmosphere."

"The Megatheriam is much easier to get information from," Holmes concluded, clearly for his own satisfaction.

As I had little interest in either, I was waiting to hear why this was important when Mrs. Hudson knocked and entered with a small package for Sherlock Holmes. She set the tray down on the table and departed. Holmes immediately became fascinated with the package.

"Tell me Watson, what can you tell about the sender of this package?"

"First of all, it has not been subject to the package delivery system for very long as it has no sign of being jostled about by much handling. Therefore it has come a short distance, probably local. The cord is a heavy Manila hemp, commonly used around ships. The packaging is made of a cardboard box and ordinary wrapping paper. The handwriting is masculine, fairly well written. It was not written by a woman, nor did a woman participate in the preparation. The package was prepared while on the water causing the moisturized paper to shrink after presence on land for a few hours. The sender prepared the parcel with what was readily available not having time or opportunity to purchase proper writing and packaging paper. I would say a sailor sent it," I proudly recited.

"Interesting," Holmes smiled. "Now let us open our new found challenge and see what lies before us," as he began to probe at the binding.

Sherlock Holmes almost reverently unwrapped the package, tenderly lifting the article as though it were dangerously fragile.

"The item is a Chinese dagger, the late 17th century I believe. The engraving is of superb quality and the inlay is of excellent workmanship. It would be the kind of item a sailor would bring back from a voyage as a keepsake or souvenir. The note is on medium paper normally used for writing."

"Mr. Sherlock Holmes,

Please forgive the intrusion. I heard of your reputation several years ago while on voyage aboard the Northern Star back to Russia to deliver a frozen body to St. Petersburg. I am in need of your help. My fiancée has been murdered. I will be at 221-B Baker Street at 8:00 PM tonight after work. Please accept this antique dagger as payment.

Franklin Fleetwood, 1st mate J. W. STEINES"

"The sailor that you correctly identified has also had special training, holds a position of responsibility and supervisory duties. It appears, Watson, that we have met a seaman and we have a client."

Franklin Fleetwood 1st mate arrived at 8:00 PM sharp. Tall and masculine, he stepped through the door with confidence and sureness schooled by years at sea. A shadow of sadness hung drearily over a strong friendly face. That sadness was new to him and made him look a bit tired as he moved across the room.

"Thank you for seeing me, sir" he addressed Sherlock Holmes. "I find myself in the unusual position of having to ask another man for help."

"That is quite understandable Mr. Fleetwood. I can tell by the sadness in your expression and newly formed wrinkles in the corners of your eyes that fate has suddenly cast upon you misfortune that

had no forewarning nor reason. Please sit down and make yourself comfortable. I shall order tea."

"Thank you but whisky would be the same if you have no objection."

"My oversight, whisky it shall be."

"That was rude of me. I'm not used to circumstances I cannot handle myself. I did not know that it was obvious."

"Do not concern yourself, singular matters are not new to us. Let me introduce my colleague and friend, Dr. Watson."

"The pleasure is mine."

"Likewise," I replied.

With introductions completed, Holmes moved toward the matters at hand.

"Your note carries a very distressing message," he commented as he opened a bottle of Bushmills and set down three glasses.

"Please forgive my bluntness, but a beautiful young woman has been murdered, which is bad enough but no one seems to be able to do anything about it. That woman was Victoria Jane Richardson, my fiancée. This was a needless and brutal murder of a young woman who had never brought harm to anyone and nothing is being done about it."

"Not exactly" stated Holmes very softly. "You are doing something about it now. You are here."

This observation stopped the young man briefly.

"Yes but I mean the authorities are doing nothing."

"Your fiancée, Miss Richardson, is that the young woman that was found not far from HARRODS about three weeks ago?"

"Yes."

"Quite brutal as I recall" replied Holmes as he moved to his files and began to thumb through newspaper clippings. "Here it is...I see" as he skimmed the wrinkled clipping.

"She had been with me. I had escorted her and we were about to go up to her flat when she said that she had to check on a special order for the following day and needed to stop by the store. I had planned to wait but as she entered the store, she said it would not take long and since her flat was just around the corner that I should go on home. It was only about a one-half block. I could not imagine something happening. There was no one on the street," Fleetwood said shaking his head in sorrow.

"It appears that Scotland Yard has the case in hand," noted Holmes.

"They feel that it is a simple robbery gone badly and as far as I can tell are just waiting for something to randomly turn up. Mr. Holmes, Victoria was the first woman that I have had any interest in since my wife died. She was full of laughter, enjoyed life and was truly a pleasure to be around. She had the ability to walk into a room and make everyone smile. It was like the sun came up on a dark day. Every day that I was with her was like a day I was on vacation from all of the bad things in the world. It was like a childhood dream," Fleetwood remarked in a distressful voice.

Then, shaking off his grief like a fighter recovering from a heavy blow, he turned and looked Holmes directly in the eye.

"I want something done. Mr. Holmes, will you take my case?" he asked forcefully.

Sherlock Holmes was still folding and unfolding, glancing over and twisting around the newspaper clipping as he sipped the whisky. He walked over to the window and stared into the dark street for a few minutes while Franklin Fleetwood slowly sipped whiskey and looked exhausted. Holmes had refused to help the rich and powerful if their case did not appeal to him. But, he would accept the case of a

humble client if it challenged his imagination. Finally Holmes turned away from the window.

"Leave me an address where I may reach you in a few days. After all, this is a murder case."

"I have only the knife to pay you with."

"It will be quite satisfactory. I shall contact you," concluded Holmes moving toward the door.

"Thank you."

SCOTLAND YARD

Inspector Lestrade and young Inspector Dobbs were both in a foul mood after a heated dispute with the public prosecutor and were not pleased to see anyone. Holmes finally managed to get them to discuss the Victoria Jane Richardson murder.

"I was on the night watch and was able to get to St. James Park quickly and made a preliminary investigation. It was a street murder near dusk and no one was on the street at the time nor did anyone see anything," replied Dobbs as Lestrade was happy to let him take up the discussion while he turned back to deciding how to handle the public prosecutor.

"The killer or killers had viciously attacked the woman, stripped her of her valuables including expensive jewelry which reportedly were several nice pieces including some she was carrying, as a special order for a customer. For some reason the body was not discovered until late morning the following day. It has been three weeks and there is not much to go on except hope that some of the jewelry turns up," he continued.

"Has any of the jewelry turned up?"

"Surprisingly it has," replied young Dobbs.

"Suspects?"

"As a matter of fact, yes. We have four. But, they are very weak, not much more than leads. We have roused them twice but cannot get much out of them. They all had some of the jewelry on them but all four insist that they won the pieces gambling on the other side of town. It seems that the place across town is frequented by foreigners and out-of-town travelers. They say that they do not like going over there very often but managed to do well at various games of chance so they risked it every few months. Apparently there were always new people, only a few did they ever recognize. We have yet to be able to place any of them near the deceased at the time of her death."

"We should trouble you for the names if you do not mind. We have a client," requested Holmes.

"And who would that be?" requested Lestrade, suddenly interested.

"Miss Richardson's betrothed, Franklin Fleetwood, 1st mate on the ferry J. W. STEINES."

"Yes, we are also interested in him," growled Lestrade, now very interested. "We have not questioned him yet but this whole group is part of the crew on the ferry J. W. STEINES. These characters are really a shady bunch. Fleetwood; we cannot seem to find anything on him but he has been a lot of places and traveled with a very suspicious crowd. The other four read like what they are, one step out of jail."

"Can you tell us more," prompted Holmes.

"Blackie Coy is a ticket-of-leave man," began young Dobbs. "The rest of them, we are still doing background investigations on, but it is very difficult as they move around frequently. Sea Dog Jones, Two-Beers Tommy Thompson and Bad-Rope Johnson round out the

suspect list, which also coincidentally makes up the crew that our only lightly shady betrothed, Franklin Fleetwood runs on board the ferry, J. W. STEINES. Our theory is that there was enough jewelry for all of these chaps to be involved. The special order that she was carrying was worth close to a quarter million £s. We think they all did it, simply beat her and robbed her. We are very curious as to how a young woman of good reputation like the deceased would get mixed up with a rough crowd like this gang. We would also like to know what you find out," concluded young Investigator Dobbs.

This time it had been Mr. Sherlock Holmes, who had been furiously scribbling.

INVESTIGATION

A battered seaman limped slowly up from the river Thames and through the doors of the SouthWind Pub. It was early and the galley had just opened. He carefully removed a tattered cap and ordered hard tack and black coffee. The seaman ate and drank slowly. It was to be a long day for him. The SouthWind was a very popular pub for diverse classes of people in London. Located between Charing Cross Station and a deep bend in the river Thames, it attracted many working and retired maritime tradesmen. The food was good, inexpensive and better prepared than most of the pubs in the area, which appealed to a steady stream of loyal patrons. Then in the evening there was a novelty, unique to most of the pubs in town. The SouthWind had a special form of street type entertainment, "Deep-Water-Dan". Everyone knew "Deep-Water-Dan".

Dan was a crippled, crazy ex-sailor and a very talented painter. His specialty was painting murals and in this case, on the interior east wall of the SouthWind Pub. At first it was just a crazy old sailor, amusing himself with some paint and a brush with nothing to do. Then patrons of the bar got to know him, listened to him tell tall tales about his years at sea on seal hunting ships or "sealers", the dangers and adventures of his voyages and this took place while he piddled with his paint brush and then pub customers realized that he had painted a perfect likeness of themselves on the wall as a truly pretty mural. People liked it, came back, bought him food and drinks and watched him paint.

Soon it became a special event attracting larger crowds, a habit, a ritual and then a custom. Eventually his mural painting became a regular and relied upon part of local custom. "Deep-Water-Dan" was a necessary part of pub-life in that section of the city. His artwork simply began to take over the east wall. Crammed closely together, soon it was difficult to tell where one stopped and another began. The wall was full. Occasionally Dan would decide to remove some of the artwork and fill the freshly scrubbed spot with some other more recent painting. Crazy, crippled and talented, he was loved by all.

About mid-morning the battered seaman drifted outside, loitered in the sun for a while and then quietly disappeared into the bustling commercial activity along the river's edge.

That evening there was a new participant among the contestants at the local fight club. He handled himself rather well. Later in the evening there was an added player at the gambling tables along the waterfront. This went on for three days. On the fourth day, the battered seaman failed to appear. He was never seen or heard of again.

221-B BAKER STREET

"Mrs. Hudson, how long has Sherlock been gone? It is not like him to leave without some notation."

"It has been four days Dr. Watson. He said nothing to me beforehand. Would you like more coffee?" asked Mrs. Hudson turning toward the door.

"Yes, please."

There was a rustle in the hallway and then Mrs. Hudson's voice, "What are you doing up here. You cannot come up here. Get out!"

"I am a bit tired, Mrs. Hudson, may I get some breakfast?" replied a familiar voice.

"Mr. Holmes! What are you doing dressed like that? You look awful."

A battered soul appeared before us and then he began to unmask.

After Sherlock Holmes had changed and finished breakfast we freshened our coffee. I inquired as to his recent activities.

"I assume that you have been gathering information concerning the murder of Miss Victoria Jane Richardson?"

"That would be correct," Holmes replied holding his clay pipe and reaching for the Persian slipper. He seemed in a talkative mood. Lestrade is accurate. This is a very shady crowd. Blackie Coy is a likeable but very shifty, solitary soul. He is in his early thirties, thin with black moustache that makes his pallor seem almost sickly. He dresses like a businessman, Norfolk jacket and bowler, always carries a briefcase and is a member of the ferry crew on the J.W. STEINES. He is a ticket-of-leave man out of Australia, something about a man being killed. He was found with some of Miss Richardson's jewelry on him when questioned by Lestrade and young Dobbs.

"Sea Dog is difficult to read. A suspicious big dark man who is very silent and keeps his own counsel. His head is shaved with a short black beard, bulked up torso and thick-set body. He is an ex-wrestler who is feared by the others and several of this gang think he is wanted in some other country. He is just plain mean. Two-Beers Tommy, is liked by everyone. A baby-faced lad who looks younger than he really is and is actually the ladies' man of the Crew. His happy-go-lucky up-beat attitude and boyish looks in some strange way make women want to mother him. He loves knives and guns, and is a skilled safe-cracker. Legend around the docks has it that, 'two beers and he can pick any lock, crack any safe' and 'penetrate the most difficult security barrier with no trouble.'

"Bad Rope Johnson, is someone who could never catch a break. The world was against him from the beginning. A fire at sea occurred in a powder magazine. One of the heavy ropes broke and dropped burning gun-powder on him causing severe injury over 20 percent of his body. "Bad Rope" is the best pick-pocket in London and is well known in Charing Cross Station where he must work in disguise. All four of these characters bunk together in a flat they rented near the river when they are not onboard the J.W. STEINES. All of them were found with pieces of Miss Richardson's jewelry in their possession. However, all four of them have alibis for the time of her death and her robbery. These chaps are a dangerous gang of ruffians, capable of most anything. Our client, Franklin Fleetwood is not a perfect soul. Born in Liverpool, he has been a merchant seaman all of his life. He has sailed most of the seven seas and is well liked by most who sailed with him. Some years ago his wife became ill and he gave up the high seas and took a job as 1st mate on the ferry boat J.W. STEINS. About three years ago his wife died.

He met Miss Richardson while shopping in HARRODS. He is too close to a gang of unscrupulous hooligans who have left a trail of questionable acts over both hemispheres." Holmes concluded with his summation.

"There is one other matter I must look into this evening. Dr. Watson, I should like you to accompany me this evening and we may have use of your revolver," requested Holmes. "There is something I am missing, something big."

Sherlock Holmes muttered to himself moving over to peer out the window as curls of smoke followed overhead.

THE MURDER SCENE

The murder of Miss Victoria Jane Richardson took place at the edge of St. James Park. The time was shortly before or near dusk when visibility was still clear but the sun was beginning to fade. Investigators are still puzzled as to why there were no witnesses. Sherlock Holmes believes that there were witnesses but they have not yet been found or for some reason have not yet come forward. And this is what Holmes and I are doing here in St. James Park on a foul fall evening poking around in an almost deserted park when the civilized inhabitants of London are fully engaged in social gatherings, pub society or at home sitting down to the family supper.

There are a number and variety of public benches, resting places, water fountains and seating arrangements scattered around the park at random so that citizens and tourists alike may make comfortable use of the clean and well-kept grounds.

"We are looking for something, perhaps I can help," I offered.

"Yes, you can. A second set of eyes is always helpful. There are many of our citizens who generally go unnoticed that make use of public facilities throughout the day and night. The fact that they go 'unnoticed' is what we are exploring this evening," replied Holmes in a low voice. "Someone was sitting on a park bench, on the ground, taking a nap or waiting for a friend. Someone or perhaps several people were out and about in this area at the time of the murder. We just have not found them yet."

Holmes then chose a bench slightly behind a tree that gave us full view of the closest chair and benches near the crime scene and then beckoned me to sit and be quiet. The sun was still bright but beginning to slip behind the very tops of some of the taller trees. We were there about five minutes when Sherlock spotted him. A lonely figure nestled on the ground in a knapsack and foul weather gear was comfortably dozing just under the edge of a Buxus Sempervirens shrub.

He was very close to the spot the investigators had determined that the robbery and murder of Miss Richardson had taken place. And he was sleeping soundly. Sherlock beckoned me to move quietly and we managed to approach without startling him. Sherlock Holmes was very careful.

"Dan – Deep-Water-Dan," he called out softly.

The motionless figure began to stir. "Yes, what do you want," he responded.

"I am very sorry to disturb you. My name is Sherlock Holmes, this is Dr. Watson and we need your help," Holmes responded quietly.

"I've heard of you. I'm a little sleepy, but what is it you want?" came a muffled reply.

"We would like to know if you saw something bad happen to a woman here in the park about three weeks ago."

"I see a lot of bad things happen. Three weeks ago is a long time. I don't remember."

"It would have happened around this time of day."

"Mmmmm, could have I suppose. Well, I'm going back to sleep." And with that he was fast asleep.

And with that, we were back in the park, searching for more park patrons. We found two more, one was almost blind and the other was too intoxicated to talk. The breeze off the river Thames had put a chill in the air and the evening was growing long. It was time for sustenance and then I recognized the inviting sign of the SouthWind Pub as Holmes led us in that direction.

THE SOUTHWIND PUB

I had never been to the SouthWind Pub and was curious to see if it was everything that it was said to be. Holmes seemed to know all about it. It seems that an old seaman known as Deep-Water-Dan, had been injured on board the SEA FALCON, a "sealer" hunting Arctocephalus seal somewhere in Antarctica. The Antarctic fur seal is highly valued for its pelt which is in great demand both in England and the United States. The breeding system of the Antarctic fur seal is polygynous and the stronger breeding males mate with as many as 20 females during good season with the gestation period lasting almost a year. Legend has it that Deep-Water-Dan was highly skilled in locating and finding a species known as the Kerguelen fur seal. He was forced to retire with a small pension from The British Pelt & Oil Producing Corp. after the injury at sea. Strangely, the story goes, he was left with unusual artistic skills and a mind of peculiar disorder. Crazy, crippled and talented, he is known and loved by all.

After we had taken pleasure in food and drink, Sherlock Holmes began his inquiry with the man in charge. Barnacle Bill recognized Holmes's name and reputation and proved to be very forthcoming. Barnacle Bill had been the bartender and general manager of the SouthWind Pub for the last ten years. He had renovated the place twice, cleaned up the bedraggled front and generally made the ordinary old pub look more friendly and inviting. Clientele and business had increased considerably. He had appealed to office workers instead of relying solely upon the maritime trade. He actually had to increase the space in order to serve the growing trade. Part of that was based upon the way he allowed the crazy old retired seaman, Deep-Water-Dan to demonstrate his artistic skills by painting his very popular murals on the wall of the pub whenever he wanted to. He never told him what to paint and never refused any request from the various patrons who ask Dan for something special. He just let the old sailor paint anything he wanted to at any time. Everybody was happy.

Explaining that we were following up on the Scotland Yard investigation of Miss Richardson's demise, Holmes began to question Barnacle Bill more closely.

Had Miss Richardson ever come into the pub? As a matter of fact she had. The first time that he saw her she was in the company of a hackney driver, but that was only a few times for a quick lunch a long time ago.

"The last time they seemed to be in some sort of disagreement. I remember because they were very loud and about to annoy the people at the next table when she got up angry, paid for her lunch and abruptly left alone," explained Bill.

Holmes continued to talk with Barnacle Bill for some time about anything that the bartender had seen or heard about Miss Victoria Jane Richardson. Finally Bill asked a question that had been

bothering him since Sherlock Holmes had come into the pub this evening.

"I'm glad to help with the murder case, but has everyone forgotten about the break-in to my pub? Some nutty hackney driver that Miss Richardson became miffed at goes out of his mind and breaks in, knocks down a huge part of my wall, damaging my pub, destroying my property and creating a general drunken mess and Scotland Yard has seemingly forgotten about it. I want this crank to pay for my wall. When do I get some police effort? When are you going to work my case?"

"This was about to be my next line of questioning, Bill. As I understand it, Investigator Dobbs requested that all of the debris be collected, boxed up and stored in a secured space. Am I correct?" ask Holmes.

"Yes, in the back of the building, same level."

"May I have keys to examine the rubble?" requested Holmes.

Bill muttered something about having to go back to work and handed Holmes some keys off of his chain.

THE RUBBLE

"Young Inspector Dobbs having been on the night watch the evening of the SouthWind Pub break-in, arrived at the crime scene quickly and had collected, swept up and boxed up all of the broken parts of the wall that was damaged in the break-in and stored them in one of the storage areas for later examination. As they were very busy that night, the inspector took the report, secured the evidence, arrested Clarence Carter then continued on to the next call," Holmes explained as he surveyed the scene.

Barnacle Bill agreed that we might have one part of the storeroom that we might section off and lock up. Within a half hour Barnacle Bill had arranged for a secure space large enough for Sherlock Holmes's purpose.

At this point I was becoming confused. "Holmes, we came over here investigating a murder. Why is it that we are spending time investigating a property crime where apparently nothing was stolen, when we began investigating the brutal murder of Miss Richardson? Are we working on a murder or a burglary?" I asked in frustration.

"The game is afoot, Watson" he responded with a sly smile. Observation and deduction tell us, both," replied Holmes.

Asking me to serve as door guard and assistant he began to assess how he was going to handle the debris. Holmes studied the boxes full of wall rubble silently for a full five minutes. Then he began to separate the boxes out over the secured storeroom area. Gently, like he was handling delicate China, he began to sort through the rubble from the destroyed wall. Larger pieces first, then stop and assess what pieces might fit where. It was as though we were assembling a giant children's puzzle. Try this piece here, that piece there. No, try again. Fit one or two pieces, then continue. Or, perhaps backtrack again and start over. With the patience of Job, he labored over this like a giant jigsaw puzzle, back and forth he went. This went on for hours. Stop. Study. Re-engage. Continue. Now we were down to the smaller parts and the going was really slow. However, a very clear and interesting picture was emerging. Faces, forms and recognizable people were beginning to emerge, clearly emerge. This was almost scary as to what we were beginning to see. Finally Holmes stood up and stopped.

"Watson, I think we should stop and cover this with blankets until we can get a uniformed officer at the door. Meantime we shall leave it incomplete until we can make arrangements for Lestrade and

Dobbs to be present for completion. I must ask you to remain here until we can get an officer to guard the evidence. I should interview hackney driver Clarence Carter concerning his erratic behavior, as I understand he is still being held by Scotland Yard," he concluded.

CONCLUSION

"Why was I summoned to look at the debris left over from the crushed wall of a local pub?" groused Inspector Lestrade. "I have five murders on my hands and I do not have time to spend in a pub."

Young Inspector Dobbs looked equally annoyed.

"I think you will find it worth your drive over," began Sherlock Holmes. "Inspector Dobbs had the good instincts to get to this crime scene quickly, collected and boxed up all of the broken parts of the wall that were damaged in the break-in and stored them in one of the storage areas for later inspection and examination."

"We know," responded Dobbs dryly.

"Dr. Watson and I have taken the time to carefully examine each broken part, piece and fragment. We then reassembled the pieces of the interior wall back into its original order, with some small pieces chipped away. This enables you to view and study the damaged paintings carefully and in their original detail." Holmes explained.

The mural was lying on the floor completely reassembled like a giant child's jigsaw puzzle and there clearly visible, was a perfect painting of Miss Victoria Richardson being beaten to death by one hackney driver known as Clarence Carter.

"Deep-Water-Dan had painted, among other paintings on the wall, a perfect replica of the actual murder of Miss Richardson in detail with the faces of the participants easily recognizable for all to see. The mural of the murder scene was crowded in close to other art work of other things, one a street scene and the other the Captain and 1st officer of a whaling ship playing dominoes, but if you look closely you can clearly recognize the face of Cabman Clarence Carter brutally beating Miss Victoria Richardson with both faces easily recognizable." Holmes carefully pointed out.

"The bartender, Barnacle Bill remembered seeing Victoria Richardson and Clarence Carter in the Pub together more than once. The last time he remembered because they were very loud and about to annoy the people at the next table when she got up angry, paid for her lunch and abruptly left alone. Carter met Miss Richardson when she hailed his cab one afternoon. He seemed nice enough and when asked her out for coffee she agreed. A brief romance followed – over within a week. She broke it off. He became obsessed!

"Carter was hurt, angry and jealous. He could not stand for Victoria to be happy with someone else. He could not stand to be without her. His loss of love was more than he could bear. He was angry. He was frantic. If he could not have her, no one could. He could not live this way. He began following her. For weeks he saw her with Franklin Fleetwood. He spied more. He saw Victoria with Fleetwood more and more, then all of the time. He could not stand it. It was driving him insane. He followed Fleetwood and Victoria home the night of the murder. He saw Fleetwood leave. He saw her near the park when she returned to HARRODS that night for the special order for a customer. He approached her, pled with her one more time. She refused. He became angry. They fought.

"He lost his temper and in a heat of passion, beat her to death. Then he realized he had killed the woman that so infatuated him. He looked around, saw no one. He failed to see Deep-Water-Dan in his sleeping bag under the Buxus Sempervirens shrub. The fight awoke

Deep-Water-Dan. He watched. He remembered. He went back to sleep." Holmes paused for effect.

"Clarence Carter thought fast at the murder scene. Seeing no one, he simply decided to make the murder look like a robbery gone badly. He removed all of the jewelry on Miss Richardson's body, earrings, bracelets, necklace and brooch. But he did this gently so as not to hurt the now lifeless body of the woman that had so obsessed him. This told us that the killer knew and cared for the victim," emphasized Holmes.

"Carter then stripped everything out of her purse and then took the special order jewelry making it appear to be a profitable bit of larceny with the misfortune of a resulting death as just incidental to the robbery. Over the following days he shrewdly circulated the jewelry into various card and dice games around the docks so that Sea Dog, Blackie Coy, Two Beers Tommy and Bad Rope Johnson ended with enough in their possession that it threw suspicion upon them. Clarence Carter shrewdly passed all of the jewelry off to these chaps so that they would be remembered having it and it would be found on them and Clarence Carter was forgotten about having any jewelry, just unlucky at gambling.

"All seemed well until: The next time the images of that dreadful night reappeared in Deep-Water-Dan's jumbled head and he was in the SouthWind Pub. Deep-Water-Dan did what he does best. He painted a mural on the wall of what he saw that fateful night. Just like he always paints what he sees, exactly the way he sees it. With great detail, likeness and clarity, he reconstructed the murder. But the painting was on the wall with hundreds of others. No one noticed. The murder was right in front of everyone, the entire general public and since it was so obvious, it was overlooked and unnoticed."

Sherlock Holmes paused for tobacco. Then he continued.

"Clarence Carter stopped in the SouthWind Pub about a week after the murder and was shocked to see his face clearly identifiable and perfectly recognizable in Deep-Water-Dan's mural right there on the wall before all to see. A painting of him murdering Victoria Richardson on the wall of the pub. It is simply the fact that it was so obvious and right in front of everyone, no one stopped to look or pay attention.

"Carter was scared to death. He had to do something. He decided the only thing he could do was to destroy the mural by making it appear to be a burglary at night when someone was just trying to break into the pub. And it did work for a while.

"Scotland Yard has had hard evidence of the murder right under its nose all of this time. When young Dobbs took custody of the rubble remaining from the destroyed wall he captured the evidence and the answer of who murdered Miss Victoria Jane Richardson. It became police property and has been stored in the SouthWind Pub storeroom all this time.

"As you already have Clarence Carter still in custody for breaking into the SouthWind Pub, there is nothing more for us to do.

"Come Watson, the Theatre Royal is featuring the spectacular drama, Armada this evening and we cannot be late."

Footnote:

Franklin Fleetwood never goes to the SouthWind Pub. He knows nothing about it. He met Victoria at HARRODS purchasing a gift (from her) for his mother in Liverpool. The dangerous ruffians that made up the crew of the J. W. Steines had no knowledge of the murder of Victoria Jane Richardson.



THE CASE OF THE MAIL BOX MURDER

7th In a Series of "The Ten Lost Transgressions of Sherlock Holmes"

PROLOGUE

It was a rainy day in October during which frequent cloudbursts cut through the pea soup like an avenging torrent determined to wash the city clean from its sins against mankind. Our drapes were open just enough that we might monitor the cleansing down-pour along with the purging of tree leaves, dead branches, loosely held umbrellas and ladies hats. Neither Holmes nor I had any plans to leave our rooms as I had no patients scheduled and Holmes was sprawled comfortably on the sofa with a research paper from the French Police on the subject of blood pooling and patterns. I laid aside *The Daily Telegraph* and once again picked up the envelope I had received yesterday, removed the letter and read it yet one more time. In deep meditation, I folded, unfolded, twisted, refolded and generally fiddled the letter and then re-twisted and folded and then put it back into the envelope and indifferently flipped it over to the pile of papers beside me. Holmes was preoccupied with what the French report had to say, so conversation was out of the question. I closed my eyes, slowly relaxed and soon my consciousness was drifting into a tranquil state of peacefulness when softly in that blissful state, a voice said: "You are right, she does have a right to be happy."

"I hope so," I responded.

"Not to worry."

"We will see." I countered. "What?" I screamed shaking my head to become fully awake. Holmes, are you playing mind games with me again? You are, for all practical purposes, reading my mind – and having a conversation with my sub-conscious. This is witchcraft. I will not have it!" I bellowed.

"Not to worry Watson," Holmes responded in a calming voice. "As you remember I am only reading your train of thoughts via your features and your eyes. We have had this discussion before. This time it was easier in that when you received the envelope yesterday and opened it, the message gave you pleasant thoughts, brought back old memories that you have randomly been reviewing and speculating upon over and over again. There is some concern that there may be risk in your good news. You have opened, read, returned the letter to the envelope seven times this morning.

"When this happens a pleasant expression appears on your face, a tug of a smile. There have not been that many smiles since you returned to London after your service in Afghanistan. So it is a message from someone you knew either in medical school or while in the military. A smile developed across your face and therefore whoever your correspondent is, it is good news about someone you care about. When you tossed the envelope back into your stack of papers and closed your eyes to doze, you had come to a resolution that you could live with whatever news the letter contained. Since you seldom concern yourself with male friends extensively and have a fondness for women, the author of the letter is probably a woman, likely a woman you knew professionally. It is most likely a nurse and since the service in Afghanistan impacted your life greatly, the writer of that letter is almost surely a nurse you served with in Afghanistan."

"Incredible!" I stammered half angry, half amazed.

"Do not trouble yourself Watson, as you reflect upon what we have discussed before you will recall that it is simply a matter of attention to detail, the rest flows from the subject's reaction in

addition to information you already know and understand about the particular subject at hand. It is really the intrusion that you resent and once you are aware of it you can adapt and react accordingly. We are still where we began, Observation and Deduction." Holmes patiently explained.

"Be that as it may, it remains evil. You do know they used to hang people for things like that," I replied not wanting him to get away without some degree of remorse. Stay out of my head!" I declared as Sherlock Holmes laughed heartily.

Half-way through my coffee I decided to share my news.

"Since you have shown an interest in my latest correspondence, it is from an old army colleague. Yes, Nancy Norton was a nurse and still is. She has written to tell me that in spite of all of the tragedy in Afghanistan and a failed marriage, she is still working as a nurse for a private corporation traveling in Europe. While in France she met a businessman in Paris six months ago and he is so funny and charming she has fallen in love. They plan to marry next year. He has given her a lovely wedding present and she is very happy. Our history of being two of the few survivors of Maiwand she simply wanted me to know. She will be back in London soon and wanted us to get together for a visit. You are right, she deserves to be happy."

Sherlock Holmes expressed only a hint of a smile and went back to *The Paris Police* and blood patterns. I dug further through my office mail and discovered that I had a new patient that wanted to see me around noon tomorrow, someone named Sam Styles.

DAY 1

I arrived at my medical office shortly before noon for the Sam Styles appointment and at the top of the stairs the first thing I saw directly in front of my door was a large friendly affable man who appeared to be harmless and well meaning. He and the postman were laughing hysterically about some story they had shared and apparently had been chatting for several minutes like old friends.

"What is this?" I asked staring at what looked like my week's order of supplies. "What are my supplies doing out in the hallway abandoned, for strangers to pilfer through?" I barked in a loud voice.

"I am very sorry Dr. Watson, my name is Sam Styles and I had requested an appointment with you for today and since I was already here and going to wait anyway, I told the delivery man to go ahead and I would help move the items inside. Please do not be angry with him, this is all my fault. Just thought I would try and help," the big man humbly explained. "Please, I will make it up to you, where do you want these boxes?" he said picking up two of the boxes eager for me to open the door.

"This is highly irregular," I grumbled fumbling for my keys to open the door. "These deliverymen have strict orders and I shall remind them of that. Over there, inside that closet" I pointed.

Before I finished hanging up my hat and coat and regulated the heat, my new patient had stacked and stored all of the supplies from the hallway. Helpful lad, I thought. Overly eager to please; could be a symptom of insecurity.

"So, you are Mr. Styles?" as I took stock of this happy-go-lucky fellow who evidently never met a stranger.

"Yes, Sam Styles, I am in the Import / Export business and very thankful for you agreeing to see me on such short notice. I want you to know that I admire your work with Mr. Sherlock Holmes. I know you must be a very good Doctor," he gushed like a worshipful teenager meeting his favorite soccer hero.

"Thank you Mr. Styles," I answered stiffly while suppressing my satisfaction that a total stranger had noticed my seldom recognized talents. "Now that we have this minor housekeeping matter behind us, what brings you to my Doctor's office?"

"It is my breathing, Doctor. I have been told that I have Asthma. I know little about it. What do you know about asthma, Dr Watson?"

"That is interesting: The word asthma originates from a Greek word for panting or gasping and a Greco-Roman doctor named Galen, discovered that asthma was due to bronchial obstruction. Galen treated it with owl's blood in wine. Treatment in ancient history ranged from stress reduction and herbal treatment to nutrition and change of climate. Hydrotherapy has been popular from ancient civilizations and is still very effective.

"Presently ingredients of cocaine or morphine have been somewhat effective. Recently we have been having noticeable results with ingredients of atropine derived from the deadly nightshade plant," I summarized. "Cinnamon and Trikatu tea have worked reasonably well here in London. But here, we need to get some information on you plus a medical history. Please, sit down and we will get started," I instructed.

With Sam talking almost non-stop, a half an hour later I knew his medical history as well as most of his life story, much of which I did not need but he seemed to enjoy sharing. He was a very pleasant person, easy to be around and earnestly wanted to be liked by everyone. This overly friendly and likeably large man did indeed have asthma, some high blood pressure and several scars that he had picked up along the way. Prescriptions and cautionary advice and I was ready for someone else's company for a change. Sam Styles was very friendly but also overwhelming.

"Come back to see me if you have trouble," I instructed my new patient as he walked through the door.

221-B BAKER STREET

That evening Sherlock Holmes had dozed off while relaxing from a rewarding day of dredging through countless musty files searching for a yet to be identified subject. Sensing his barely conscious state, I ventured a subtle attempt to "read his train of thoughts." a subject upon which I was still smarting from this morning's invasive conversation.

"You found something interesting in The Daily Telegraph. There was an article on the theft of a Golden Necklace, Sassanian period, 5th - 6th century A.D. from The Musée du Louvre in Paris. There must be some connection between the jewelry theft and your entire day's work reviewing files," I ventured softly.

"One might think," came a sleepy reply.

"Holmes?"

"Yes,"

"You are fully conscious," I said suspiciously.

"Stop amusing yourself by allowing me to think that I am reading your innermost thoughts."

Slyly Sherlock Holmes shifted his gaze over to me, "You are really trying to understand the art, are you not,"

"This is madness," I growled.

Holmes laughed and began searching for his pipe.

"I have patients tomorrow, Good Evening."

Holmes clasped his pipe and was removing tobacco from the toe of the Persian Slipper as I left the room. Holmes was still glancing furtively toward the Golden Necklace article like he could not let it go.

DAY 2

Once again, when I reached the top of the stairs to my second floor walk-up, in front of my office was none other than Sam Styles, deeply engaged with the postman. Sam obviously had finished his tall tale and the postman was laughing so hard he could barely stand. Two of the ladies that worked in the next office were racked with humor to the point that tears were flowing. I noticed that Sam was breathing with difficulty and as soon as everyone began to recover from what could only be called "The Noon-Day Comedy Show," I asked Sam how much trouble he was having with his breathing. The clear answer to that was demonstrated by his gasping for air through a huge smile, he sputtered a wheezing "Yes".

"Come in and we will get you started on some honey and cinnamon," I urged. The postman said goodbye and the ladies drifted back toward their respective offices still snickering.

I had just settled Sam into his breathing treatment when a woman entered the waiting area with five children, all of them coughing and sneezing.

"Doctor, I think we all have caught a cold." The children were all surly and restless, and as she said with symptoms of head colds.

Not having an assistant on a regular basis, I was working on one side of the small office behind a heavy curtain with the unruly children and mother on the other side of the room. Sam, on the other hand surprised us all by briefly setting aside his honey and cinnamon treatment and began entertaining the children with magic tricks. Soon they were quiet and attentive, solely focused on Sam and his parlor entertainment. Within moments the waiting area was filled with "uuuu's" and "aaaah's" instead of bickering and restlessness. Sam totally dominated the children and taking his treatment at the same time. This was really strange as he was still breathing heavily while totally charming the children. Sam totally fascinated the children and I managed to treat the entire family in record time.

"Well, that was something right out of public school children's entertainment. You handled the children with considerable skill. Is that from experience?"

"I am still a child myself," he replied sheepishly. "There is a little book written by an old German woman "Playing with Children" that I have used frequently. I have an extra copy at home that I will give to you. I will bring it around on my next visit. I think everyone should have a copy. It is really very short but always effective," he smiled.

"I think your next visit should be sometime in the future. Take the proper dosage of salt and change out with honey and cinnamon should give you adequate relief," I reminded Sam as he departed.

When everyone had gone, I resolved to call my some-time assistant and engage her more frequently and more importantly regain control of my medical office. Grudgingly I had to admit, Sam Styles was a likeable man who had been helpful. That evening, I mentioned some of these matters to Sherlock Holmes.

"Interesting person this Sam Styles, tell me more."

Holmes, with wisps of curling smoke above his head, listened silently as I related the events leading up to and including today.

"He is chatting with the postman each day?"

"Yes, by now they are old friends."

"This is the same time, around noon?"

"Yes, that is when the postman makes his deliveries."

"The position of postman is a time-honored career. The Royal Mail can trace its history back to Henry VIII when he established the Master of the Posts in 1516 and the Royal Mail Service was first made available to the public in 1635, with postage being paid by the recipient. We are the first country to issue prepaid postage stamps and British stamps are the only stamps that do not signify the name of the country of issue on them. As you are well aware, we now have between six and twelve mail deliveries per day in London, permitting correspondents to exchange multiple letters within a single day.

"Postmen in Victorian England were popularly called 'Robins.' This was because their uniforms were red. The British Post Office grew out of the carrying of royal dispatches. Red was considered a royal color, so uniforms and letter-boxes were red," Holmes continued with his lecture.

"I am familiar with the Royal Mail service."

Holmes stared at the ceiling and continued smoking as I retired.

DAY 3

My medical practice was struggling along with a half-day schedule, which meant that I was free in the morning to write or should Mr. Sherlock Holmes request my assistance, journey off on one of his always interesting challenges. Recently he was not saying much and due to his moody temperament and I seldom inquired about his activities unless invited. Today he was already gone before I was ready for breakfast and as I settled in with the morning paper it appeared to be the beginning of a rather quiet day.

Later in the morning however, as I arrived at my medical office around noon as had become my recent custom, a nagging uneasiness began to chew its way through the uneventful morning. There at the door of my office was none other than Sam Styles, once again chatting and joking with the postman which at this point had become a very singular habit. Three days in a row, the same patient returning to the same doctor's office is highly irregular unless specifically directed by the doctor.

"Hi Dr. Watson," Sam Styles greeted me in his friendly jovial manner. "I wanted to drop off this copy of "Playing with Children" before I forgot about it," he explained innocently.

"Thank you," I replied, not quite comfortable with this ongoing over-helpfulness. Noticing my poorly concealed concern, Sam Styles quickly responded, "Well, I must go" and continued down the stairs greeting one of the passing secretaries. Interesting man, I surmised opening my office and preparing for my first patient.

221-B BAKER STREET

"You had a busy day no doubt," inquired Sherlock Holmes.

"Not really. Only a brief encounter with my new-found friend." I replied. "I thought that I would be hearing from Nancy Norton by now. I know that she was going on to Nice to meet her sister before returning to London but that was to be only a short visit. I suppose that I shall find out when she returns. I am tired. I will visit in the morning," I said leaving the room.

Holmes smoked his pipe in silence.

DAY 4

The morning found Holmes deep into The Telegraph when I arrived for breakfast. "A woman was murdered in her home by parties unknown" the paper tells us," he casually commented.

"And this is special for what reason," I inquired since he had raised the issue.

"It is not that a murder is so unique, it is the way Scotland Yard is handling it. There is a one sentence statement of short acknowledgment referring to the unfortunate death, but no details of any kind by anyone. The authorities are very quiet about this murder," he observed.

"Perhaps they have not discovered anything," I ventured.

"My sources tell me that the French police have sent a Detective to London to look into this murder is what makes it special," Holmes replied. The morning lapsed into silence. Then I noticed that Sherlock Holmes was gone. I arrived at my medical office at the usual time only to discover the postman had tripped and fallen in the street below and was being helped by none other than my now daily patient Sam Styles who had not only managed to pull him up the stairway to my office but was also distributing the mail letters and parcels. Regrettable as the circumstances were, this patient helpfulness was beginning to get on my nerves.

"It is really good to see you Dr. Watson," Sam greeted in his usual friendly manner.

"Now you are here, I have to go," he stated and then departed.

"Thank you for the help Sam," called out the postman.

I administered first aid to the postman and opened a Medical File with the necessary information. I learned that his name was Jim Jackson, that he was forty-two, in good health, married, wife named Cynthia and a daughter named Maryann who was extremely ill.

"You have a slight concussion. Go home and take it easy for the rest of the day. Rest, but be sure that you are awakened every hour for the next twenty-four hours. I would like to see you tomorrow about this time." I advised after looking the postman over closely. It is interesting that Sam Styles just happened to be here to help," I observed out loud.

"Yes it is. I cannot figure out how I stumbled over Sam when we were just talking as usual." stated the postman.

"You stumbled over Sam? Did I hear you correctly?" I inquired with considerable interest.

"Yes, it was a freak accident. But it just seemed strange, we were just talking. It was like we suddenly got our feet mixed up," he answered. "It hurts, can you give me something for the pain?"

"Take it easy for the day. I will get you something," I answered.

Our local postman seemed to be pleasant, responsible fellow. Just the kind of chap you would expect to serve with Her Majesties Royal Mail Service.

THE POSTMAN

Jackson had been a postman all of his life. That is all he ever wanted to be. He had started as a young boy following the postman down to the end of the block, as far as his mother would let him go. Something about the responsibility of carrying and delivering the people's property made it so important, like a sacred duty that the city could not function without, a responsible duty-bound person to deliver the mail. It was in his blood, his very being. He had to face it. He could not live without being a postman. Jim Jackson wore the red uniform proudly. Red was considered a royal color, so uniforms and letter-boxes were red. He stood a little taller when someone called him a "Robin." Jim Jackson was pleased with his station in life. Then

suddenly his world changed in mid-life. His daughter was ill. The little girl was deeply sick and badly in need of more treatment, all of which was very expensive. The cancer like-infestation was literally eating away at little Maryann every day. Each day he had to look at it, steadily gnawing and chewing away at the helpless child's body, on and on, relentlessly, it steadily moved taking parts of her each day. It was bad enough for the helpless child, but it was killing Jim Jackson. If he only had the money for the drug combination that the doctors were certain would rescue his only daughter.

Thinking back, Jim could not remember exactly when he had shared the tragic news of his daughter with Sam Styles. As it was always on Jim's mind, it could have been at any time, but suddenly it was always the topic of discussion each time they met. And of course, Jim was grateful for the sympathy and then at some unmemorable point Sam suggested that they meet for an ale after work. It seemed ordinary enough at first. Then the subject of discussion veered in another direction. It went to places he had never dreamed could exist.

"It is a sorrowful meeting" Sam summarized to Jim. They sat in the pub drinking in remorse and suffering. "Each of us has a major problem that actually has a logical solution. I have to do something that never in my wildest dreams I would be proposing. I still cannot believe it." Sam stated in amazement to himself. Asking you, a loyal member of an honored profession to breach your code, your honor. I cannot believe that I am doing something so horrible by asking you to miss-deliver one item, one letter of Her Majesties Royal Mail to me-- one letter and one letter only, a single letter from Nancy Norton to Dr. John Watson, arriving in only a few days from France. Deliver it to me. That is all. Jim, I cannot believe that I am responsible for all of this. Of course, you will be paid immediately in the pound sterling, far and above the amount required to save your daughter from her illness. The money is to be available within moments from the time the letter is in my hands. So as to attract no attention, your payment will be in a letter sized envelope with your name on the outside. God please forgive me what I am doing to you," Styles pled as he ask Jackson to misdeliver the letter to Styles rather than Dr. Watson.

The two drank quietly, neither saying a word, never looking each other in the eye. The agreement was made. The bond was sealed. Not a word was spoken. Each knew what he was to do. Each man left the pub quietly without a word nor a sign made. Neither looked at the other and neither wanted to. The night outside was ghost like. The moon scurried behind a cloud. The street was like a grave yard in the dead of night.

221-B BAKER STREET

When I returned to Baker Street late that evening, there were telegrams from police agencies all across Europe all addressed to Mr. Sherlock Holmes. They were four deep in two piles with a thick packet on top. Two men with heavy Italian accents waited for an hour and one half then indicated that they would return tomorrow. Holmes of course was nowhere to be found and if anyone knew where he was, they were not talking. I had passed Wiggins on the stairway as he rushed by with a worried look. That was unusual for him as he usually had his gang of urchins with him and was normally in good spirits. Things about me seemed a bit out of sorts this evening but with the agony of my last patient, I was in no mood to concern myself with Holmes's private messages and lost foreigners. With all of this secrecy, I could not help wondering if there was not some foreign disease that had been loosed upon the Western World. I sat down to

relax and skim the evening paper when among the correspondence there was a brief note from Holmes.

DR WATSON ----- THE GAME IS AFOOT!

We should witness an arrest tomorrow. Keep your revolver on your person at all times.

MIND THE ACTIONS OF YOUR NEW FOUND FRIEND!

I shall see you soon. Sherlock Holmes

Interesting, I thought. In the meantime, I shall have whisky before retiring.

DAY 5

This is a singular day at my physician's office. Holmes apparently did not come home last night but there was an early telegram from him urgently requesting that I come into my medical office three hours early. When I arrived, Lestrade was waiting with a hall full of policemen wanting to get inside of my office. Lestrade entered and stayed with two burly constables. I was told to stay outside and follow instructions. I heard Holmes somewhere in the background. Lestrade was clearly ready to act. When they heard the loud and gregarious good natured Sam Styles in the hallway, they poised to move. As Sam begins his usual friendly banter and engagement with me and Postman Jim Jackson, the Postman tells us that there is no mail for Dr. Watson's office today, only a small card of advertisement. When Lestrade hears Sam's voice, he and the two constables swiftly rush the hallway, grab Sam and pronounce the arrest of Sam Styles for the murder of Nancy Norton. Sam is completely surprised and resists strenuously as he tries to fight back. There is a brief scuffle and many policemen. Scotland Yard prevails.

During the scuffle surrounding the arrest of Styles, a packet sized envelope falls to the floor. Sherlock Holmes swiftly scoops it up unnoticed by anyone except me and as it is addressed to Postman Jackson, Holmes discretely hands the envelope to Jackson.

CONCLUSION

Concluding the arrest we are gathered in my office with the room packed full of police. Holmes begins his summary to Lestrade.

"Nancy Norton knows Dr. Watson from Afghanistan where Nancy was a nurse working briefly with the young doctor. They are friends who have gone separate ways but kept in touch by letters, usually about two times per year. Nancy writes Watson that she was recently in France on business and met a new friend (now a new love), also from London and also there on business. She has found love in the arms of this large affable and likeable man with an outgoing demeanor and sunny happy attitude.

"She is truly taken with her jovial and amiable mate who never met a stranger. They are in love. On a sunny afternoon one day when they are playing on the rolling green countryside of the French Riviera the lovers decide to become engaged. This wonderful man gives Nancy a golden necklace as a wedding present.

"She does not know that her fiancé is a notorious smuggler and that the necklace he has given her is really the stolen Golden Necklace of a Persian Queen, Sassanian period, 5th - 6th century A.D. worth hundreds of millions, a favorite of and worn frequently by the wife of the President of France, Sadi Carnot before his untimely assassination in 1894. Also, she is not aware that the sole reason for giving it to her is so she can transport it through customs undetected as her fiancé is well known to the customs agents will be searched upon his every crossing.

"Nancy spontaneously takes a picture of the two of them with her wearing the Golden Necklace leisurely enjoying a countryside picnic and the fresh air off the warm waters of the Mediterranean.

"She mails the photo of herself, her new love and wedding gift with a letter back to Dr. Watson in London. Romance has captured them. Dr. Watson has never seen her new love, does not know his name, and does not know what he looks like. Her fiancé tells her that he is called back to London suddenly on business and must leave immediately but will meet her in London as soon as she can return. Nancy has agreed to meet her sister Lorena in Nice for a short visit but she, and her new wedding gift, plan to be back in London in five or six days. Sadly, they leave each other's company to satisfy the existing travel plans. They will re-unite in London within a week. Nancy is not aware that her new love is not all that he appears to be. He also uses his happy-go-lucky charms as one of the leading confidence men in Europe.

"Nancy is unaware that he intends to redeem the necklace from her once everyone is back in London safely away from the weary eyes of customs authorities of two countries. After he recovers the necklace from her, his plans for Nancy are uncertain. This confidence man, her adorable fiancé, is Dr. Watson's new and helpful friendly patient and skilled international smuggler, Sam Styles. This is a very old story. Sam Styles must intercept the letter with the photo of him and Nancy. Sam schedules an appointment with Dr. Watson for treatment. From here it is easy for Sam. He is always ready with a joke and is the type of open friendly person who is welcome in any crowd. A bit of a rascal, he can always find humor in any circumstances. Every day he thinks up a reason to be outside Dr. Watson's medical office. Every day just at the time that the postman makes his deliveries. He easily makes friends with the postman. Soon he is almost a member of the family. He just needs to be certain that he obtains the letter from Nancy before Dr. Watson is aware of it. Nancy returns from France and she and Sam take up their romance where they left off. Nancy has cleared customs with the stolen necklace experiencing no difficulty and has brought it home not realizing how valuable it really is.

"Sam tells Nancy that one of his business deals has fallen through and he needs the necklace to sell or pawn to raise money. Nancy says no! He gave it to her for a wedding gift and she will not part with it. Sam begs, pleads, and makes outlandish promises if she will only turn over the necklace to him. Nancy says no!

"Sam is desperate! They argue, it becomes heated. While Nancy is strong and struggles valiantly, Sam is much larger and stronger. They fight harder and Sam becomes more desperate. He now threatens viciously. Nancy will not give in.

"She says no again. Now it becomes a full-fledged physical fight with blows falling very hard. Sam loses his temper. He becomes extremely violent. It becomes a beating. It becomes a severe beating. Sam brutally beats Nancy to death.

"Now Sam Styles has real problems. He has stolen the expensive Golden Necklace Sassanian period, 5th - 6th century A.D. from The Musée du Louvre in Paris.

"He gave Nancy the necklace for a wedding gift as a ploy planning all along to recapture the necklace for himself and sell it to the highest bidder.

"He has murdered Nancy in her home and even though he now has the necklace in his possession, should Dr. Watson receive that letter that Nancy mailed from the French Riviera containing the photo of Sam and Nancy wearing the Golden Necklace, he will be known and exposed.

"He must intercept Dr. Watson's mail, get the letter and destroy the photo before Dr. Watson finds out who smiling and happy Sam Styles really is.

"Of course the true owner of the Golden Necklace, Sassanian period, 5th - 6th century A.D. is The Reza Abbasi Museum, in Tehran and naturally they want their Golden Necklace back.

"Sam feels that he has left no clues in Nancy's home and that he only has to meet the postman each day before he hands over the mail to Dr. Watson.

"He will make some way to intercept the letter from the postman before Dr. Watson can open it and discover that he is not just a fidgety patient, but the lover of Nancy Norton."

"You have him. You have arrested him. But what do you have for proof that he murdered Nancy," I could not resist asking.

"Friendly Sam was not as careful in Nancy's home as he thought he was. You know my methods. The remains of your dear colleague yielded compelling evidence. Fragments of his flesh were under her fingernails, between her teeth and she managed to hold onto some hair fragments.

"Dr. Watson, your war companion spared nothing upon this evil chap. She made a very strong accounting of herself her last moments on earth.

"You should take special pride in your friendship with her. Even more eager and impatient, are the authorities from France, Italy and Persia who have sent policemen to recover the missing necklace and settle some long-standing claims against each other.

"These gentlemen are at this moment descending down upon the enterprising chap Sam Styles with a barrage of primitive investigative techniques.

"I suspect that shortly his tongue will be very loose.

"In closing," noted Holmes, "the letter that Sam Styles coveted so dearly has been in the hands of Scotland Yard for the last two days. We knew exactly who we were looking for."

Lestrade wandered through the hall as we were on our way out. "How did you find that rugged policeman from an old Persian tribe, he looks like he has been in the mountains for years?" he asked. "And I thought I saw something fall to the floor during the fray."

"He is a hunter and is here for his bounty. People were falling all over during the arrest."

When I pressed Holmes later about the dropped envelope, his only response was "like a good Robin, I delivered the mail."



THE CASE OF THE MISSING DESIGN

8th In a Series of "The Ten Lost Transgressions of Sherlock Holmes"

THE PROBLEM

It was a wintry day in London. The streets were full of melted snow and the hansoms slogged through the mush like river boats plowing through debris-infested waters. Occasional skidding and sliding resulted in near-misses, flaring tempers and swearing on every block. London was a mess. Still awakening, I half snoozed my way through The Daily Telegraph, only spilling coffee twice. I had no patients until noon, as was my current custom, so the morning was free to inquire as to what challenge my friend might be currently embarked upon.

Sherlock Holmes was quiet, deathly quiet. An open telegram from Mycroft lay on the table before him. Well, it seems the British government needed help running the Empire on this miserable morning. Myth exists in certain circles that Mycroft is the British government. I began to stir. The last of my coffee began to have real taste and I finally realized that Sherlock Holmes was staring at me with those dark penetrating eyes.

"Now that you are awake and I have your attention, I have need of your services," Holmes stated succinctly. Mycroft wants me to meet with representatives of the First Sea Lord at DALTON NAVAL BASE in Southend-on-Sea. I would like for you to accompany me as I feel that this is a security matter affecting the strategic strength of the British Empire. Mycroft is very uncomfortable. A train leaves Charing Cross Station within the hour."

Later in the day we were standing in an admiral's office on DALTON NAVAL BASE.

"I will come directly to the point. You gentlemen have been vetted for top secret security and I am instructed to provide you with full disclosure concerning this highly confidential matter. The Royal Navy has purchased the design plans and permission to build the Holland Type VI submarine from Irish inventor John Phillip Holland. The Admiralty feels that we must develop underwater warfare in order to remain superior to other countries and master of the seas. Shortly after the transaction had been finalized and we had taken possession of the Design Plans, they were all stolen from our Security Safe right here in this very office. We think access was gained by a substitute member of the cleaning crew, who must have been a master safecracker. The safe was found empty without a scratch on it. As of yet, we are unable to determine how they got the two large envelopes off the base. Everyone passing through these gates is searched by a petty officer under the supervision of a commissioned officer. We want you to assist us with this case," summarized Admiral Brown.

"Admiral," Holmes began. "We have been through this very same thing with The Bruce-Partington Plans affair in 1895, when some plans were stolen. This is the same identical story. These chronicles seem to never end. Then there was some type of disturbance about the French and electric submarines. As I remember the American named Tuck built something called the 'Peacemaker' and now we are back into the business of losing plans to thieves. And now I suppose you want me to go and steal them back? How does her Majesties government keep losing their plans for underwater warfare? I want to know more and I want more now," Sherlock Homes demanded.

The admiral glared.

"Since 1864, when the Confederate submarine, CSS (SS-1) H. L. Hunley, attacked and sank the 1,240 short ton sloop, USS Housatonic in Charleston's outer harbor, the Admiralty has been interested in developing an underwater warfare department in order to maintain control of the high seas. Germany, France and the United States are getting far ahead of England in developing underwater warfare strategies and many of us fear that we will be left behind. Disputes have arisen among various departments of the Admiralty as to the value of underwater strategies causing delay and fragmented attempts to move forward. The involved parties finally agreed upon the purchase of these design plans as a step toward an undersea strategy," the Admiral stated ruefully. "These design plans were stolen from an exceptionally secure space. We suspect France, or possibly Italy are the potential end users but we are not sure. Germany may even be involved. We need your help. Mycroft is very uncomfortable about this matter. We want you to recover the design plans and papers by any means necessary," the Admiral finished.

It was a silent ride back to our rooms on Baker Street. Holmes was totally still as the hansom clattered across the cobblestone streets. Even when we passed over Sir Johnson's Bump he failed to comment on the disastrous escape of Miss Mary Stewart Steel that continues to haunt him to this day. Arriving back at 221-B Baker Street we climbed the stairs in silence. Awaiting us at the top of the stairs was Mrs. Hudson with a telegram from Irene Adler.

"More telegrams for Sherlock Holmes. Evidently crime likes you," I taunted Holmes with a smile. The message was short.

"You want to meet me at 6:00pm at The Midland Grand Hotel" -- Irene Adler

"Sounds more like a summons," I taunted further.

"That Woman' must have something of importance," muttered an annoyed Sherlock Holmes as he turned, walked down to the street and waved for a hansom.

Irene was in her usual festive mood.

"Everything is for sale, Sherlock, please do not be so pedestrian. It does not look good on you," she mocked. "I know who broke in and stole the plans for your fishy-boat and how they did it."

Holmes stared.

"Edward and Eric Wagner, better known as The Blues Brothers, were a tad careless on board a certain ocean vessel sometime back when they bragged to my friendly sea captain whom I happened to be visiting. They talked a bit too much about an old shawl, The Shal of Viborg Bay, as I recall. When they discovered the Shal missing around the time I departed the ship, they blamed me for their loss," Irene Adler smiled mischievously.

"They would like to do bad things to me, Sherlock," she whispered softly. "Please do not let that happen."

"If The Blues Brothers stole the plans for the Holland Type VI submarine, how did they get the plans off of the very secure Naval Base?" Holmes pondered.

"Oh come now Sherlock, do not expect me to do everything for you... Dirk? You do remember your mishap with Old Trevor in college? I must go, lock the door on your way out."

And then she was gone.

Sherlock Holmes harked back to his days in college. Victor Trevor, college and that wretched bull terrier that froze on my ankle while on my way to chapel. His mind raced as he sat in Irene Adler's hotel room while she roamed about the city. He continued to roll over and over in his mind; Trevor's bull terrier froze upon my ankle --- painful --- Dirk --- what was that woman talking about? Back at 221B Baker Street, Holmes slowly sipped coffee as he began talking, his mind wandering.

"The Blues Brothers are master thieves. No doubt Irene Adler did something to them and they want to punish her. She would like for me to catch them so that she might escape their revenge. They are dangerous and they did successfully burglarize the Blue Mosque in Istanbul."

I listened quietly.

"She is trying to tell me that the Blues Brothers stole the Design Plans for the Holland Type VI from a secure naval base. But how did they get the plans past the guards that search every sole that walks through those gates? The guards search every vehicle, every carriage, every bicycle, every person and every piece of luggage. Assuming the Blues Brothers did it, the other questions remain. And what does a dog in my college days have to do with anything? What is Dirk?" Holmes continued to ponder.

"I can tell you who Dirk is. Everyone in the British Military knows," I interrupted with some degree of satisfaction. "Dirk is the most famous Combat Canine (K-9) in the British Army. He is the first and the finest of Her Majesties OOK's, OOK-1. He frequently visits all of the military bases to help with the morale of the men. He is very popular among the enlisted ranks. He comes and goes as he pleases within military facilities."

"This must be a very singular dog," Holmes observed.

"He is," I assured him.

"Then Dirk could move in and out and around any Naval Base with impunity and arouse no suspicion," announced Holmes, his eyes lighting up like two small bricks of burning coal. I could literally feel his mind working like a steel trap.

"That would explain everything. Two master thieves who can crack any safe enter a secure naval base as part of a cleaning crew that works at night. Some way they managed to get hold of Dirk long enough to train him to obey their commands, as the dog is very experienced and adaptable to fast training. I remember now, seeing this dog in photos with a back-pack within which he carries supplies, rations and even ammunition. The Blues Brothers cracked the secure safe, quickly packed the two large envelopes into Dirk's back pack and subject to their commands, Dirk simply trotted past the guards, through the gates at his leisure. He probably even got a salute from the guard at the gate on his way out. Watson, these criminals are very talented," Holmes announced, astonished at the simplicity of the entire criminal scheme.

ENCOUNTER WITH THE BLUES BROTHERS

"The Blues Brothers are coming here?" I gasp in disbelief.

"At four p.m. If nothing else, they will be prompt," replied Holmes.

Before I could recover, Mrs. Hudson was announcing their arrival.

"Edward and Eric Wagner," the closest one said presenting their card to Holmes.

The Blues Brothers were somewhat as I expected. Twins, thickly built German stock, taller than I anticipated, both were

endowed with big heads and high intelligent foreheads. The restless grey eyes reflecting alert mental power and the strong Germanic jaw line told me that these men were not to be toyed with. They were remarkably similar. Both had full heads of dark hair and dressed well in dark suits and bowlers. Probably around fifty years of age, both walked with Penang lawyers. They were born and well educated in Russia, traveled widely, and early in life decided upon a life of crime as a hobby. They are well-known in certain small art and antique circles as the only modern day thieves able to rob the famous "Blue Mosque" in Istanbul. The interior of the Blue Mosque is lit with 260 windows which were once filled with 17th-century stained glass. The Blues Brothers, as the feat is reported, stole five of the most beloved originals, managed to get away, sold their illicit bounty for a fortune and were never convicted. This endeavor gained them fame and fortune throughout the European underworld. The European press, with the Blue Mosque in mind, labeled them, The Blues Brothers. The moniker stuck.

"You gentlemen are prepared to bargain, I take it," the one closest to Holmes stated with a strong Germanic accent.

"I am addressing whom?" inquired Holmes coldly. "I am sorry. I presumed that we had met previously. My Name is Edward Wagner. This is my brother Eric Wagner. And I should likewise have you gentlemen verify your identity?"

"I am Mr. Sherlock Holmes and this is my colleague, Doctor John Watson. You are also known as the "Blues Brothers," I understand."

"We know who you gentlemen are and yes, there is that rumor," smiled Edward. "My brother and I are here to negotiate the sale of the design plans and blueprints of the Holland Type VI submarine and I assume you gentlemen are prepared to do the same -- Is that correct? We are not here to waste your time," Edward stated professionally.

These men could have been haggling over the sale of a dining room table.

"My client is prepared to pay 500,000 (£) pounds sterling," responded Holmes.

"Hardly an opening drivel and practically, an insult," interrupted Eric. "Edward, these people are not negotiating in good faith. This is a childish waste of time. We must leave now!"

"What my brother is saying gentlemen, is that we are prepared to begin the bidding at no less than five times your figure and we anticipate offers from the Continent will rise quickly," Edward explained rising and reaching for his coat and hat.

"You may contact us at the address on our card. We shall be in town as necessary. We are in no hurry but there will be a cut-off date within a few days," Eric answered already in the hallway.

Sherlock Holmes glared as the Blues Brothers made their way toward the elegant four-wheeler awaiting them at the curb. Two well-groomed chestnuts snorted, eager to travel. Holmes had considered holding them by force, but the Blues Brothers were likely well-armed, and no doubt did not have the design plans with them. These were formidable criminals and would make few mistakes.

"Holmes, they have stolen government property. Why did we not pull our revolvers and hold them for Scotland Yard and be done with it?"

Holmes looked very tired. "First, we cannot prove they have stolen anything nor have any government papers of any kind in their possession. Second, Mycroft has deemed this entire underwater battleship matter Top Secret. The British government does not want to admit that they are even thinking of something as advanced as a

so called 'fish-boat' or 'submarine'. Third, there is the embarrassment of having the plans and drawing of a top-secret project stolen right out from under their noses. All of this is too much for them to admit to the British Parliament, much less the British Citizens."

INFORMATION GATHERING

Holmes walked to the bay windows and stared blankly into the street for some time. He groped for his clay pipe and then absently strolled to the Persian slipper for tobacco. Staring at the floor he lit the pipe and wandered slowly back to the windows. He stared into the street until the gas lamps were lit. The evening editorials were behind me before I realized that Sherlock Holmes was gone. I had finished breakfast and was busy with the front page of The Daily Telegraph, when a clatter of feet moving up the stairway alerted me that it was about to become an interesting morning. Holmes burst into the room with the Baker Street Irregulars on his heels. They quickly lined up as usual, awaiting instructions. Holmes took off his hat and coat and immediately turned to business.

"I want these men followed everywhere they go, night and day. Everything they do, every place they visit, everything, and anything. Any mail, message or package they receive I want to know about. They currently reside at the Great Western Royal Hotel."

Wiggins thought for a moment, then spoke up.

"Thr' inside this rch hotl....we cnt get in sid."

"Not necessary" replied Holmes. "I will take care of inside. It is in the street that you men are at your best. Just follow everywhere they go. Pay as usual. A shilling a day, with a guinea to the boy who discovers something unusual or different, a vital clue."

Silver changed hands and the Baker Street Irregulars were gone as quickly as they arrived. Holmes dressed in the disguise of a disgustingly ordinary man and left without a word. The middle aged man seemed quiet and reserved. He was tall and rather thin, modestly dressed in a thread-bare business suit and a bowler that had seen better days.

His references said that he had worked for a cousin in Warrington just outside Liverpool managing a small Inn in a lumber and fishing area for the last decade. His interview with Great Western Royal Hotel revealed that he could not only work the desk, dealing with hotel guests, but was strong enough to handle luggage, do emergency plumbing and extensive repair work. If there were no criminal complaints, the applicant, James Holt, was just what the head of personnel needed.

"Wait until I am able to review this with the General Manager, please," the assistant stated to James.

While waiting, James walked through one of the hallways and watched as one of the maids dropped a case of soap off the maid's cart and on to the floor. Without hesitating, he picked up the case and placed it back on the cart. Lucy smiled. James wandered over to the Porters and Maids Locker Room, passing time. Linda got her cart stuck on the corner of the stairway and spilled half of her supplies on the floor. James easily picked up, sorted the items and placed them in their proper slots. He made it seem easy. She seemed grateful and moved on with her duties. Molly was short and always had trouble getting the heavy blankets spread properly. A few minutes with James and he showed her a few short-cuts and she was able to handle the heavy bedding with no trouble. Susan, on the other hand, simply did not know how to make up a bed. James realized that she had really never been properly trained. Two demonstrations and one walk-through and she was perfectly on track.

By the time Mr. Hendrix came back with the decision to employ James on probation awaiting a response from Warrington to verify his application information, James had everyone that he met owing him a favor. His friendly manner and always offering to help everyone he met enabled him to make friends very quickly. As the hours continued, so did James' popularity. He worked the remainder of the day, grabbed a few hours' sleep in the Locker Room and began again the next day, not only doing his assigned jobs but helping everyone else with whatever they were struggling with. In two days, every one of the employees in the Great Western Royal Hotel knew the new, tall thin man, liked him and owed him a favor.

The Baker Street Irregulars conducted surveillance for two days. Wiggins brought them in and reported to Holmes briefly.

"It's a fact Gov', it's been steady stream a people in n; out. Lst two dys. Tlk n to ev bdy."

It was payday for the Baker Street Irregulars and they stood tall. Holmes did not get what he had hoped for but if it was out on the streets of London, the Irregulars would have it by now. It was payday and they were paid well. They were gone as quickly as they had arrived, a loud scuffle of feet and then silence as they melted into the streets of London.

As best I could make out, there had been people in and out, off and on, for the last two days. Holmes immediately disappeared in his "Ordinary Man" disguise. I did not see him for two more days. Holmes looked tired upon his return to 221-B Baker Street. He came in rather late and after dining on a cold sandwich that Mrs. Hudson had left over, he did something that very rarely occurred. He sought my counsel.

"I am at a difficult cross-roads. I have two choices, neither of which I like," he said looking at me. Shockingly, it was like he was looking to me for guidance.

"Yes" I inquired.

"First choice; I have is that I plan and participate in committing a felony. Second choice; I ask someone else to commit a felony." stated Holmes in a clear voice.

"I can see where that would call for careful consideration, perhaps we should discuss this further," I answered trying to sound calm.

"The first plan," Holmes began, "you cannot be involved, in fact you cannot be involved in any of it," he firmly stated.

"Holmes, you will tell me what this debacle is all about," and you will tell me now, I insist!"

Holmes appeared to be exhausted. I could also tell that he was running out of patience. "Tell me what is going on, I demand it!"

"I plan to break into the rooms of the Blues Brothers at the Great Western Royal Hotel and steal the Design Plans for the Holland Type VI submarine from them."

"For heaven's sake Holmes, think what you are doing."

"You have decided to burglarize and rob the two most successful thieves on the European Continent. I am sure you remember we went through a similar scenario with The Bruce-Partington Plans."

Sherlock Holmes became very calm. "We have a theft of top security plans and designs that directly and materially bear upon the fundamental security and welfare and of the British Empire," Holmes replied. "I am running out of time. The Blues Brothers will sell these plans to the highest bidder. That could easily be France or Italy. Possibly even Germany. Spain is not out of the question. I must act and I must act quickly." he replied seemingly unruffled.

"I find this all very frightening. What if you are caught? Detection, discovery, capture. Your lengthy and honorable career, your entire career would be irreparably damaged, likely destroyed in an instant. Your reputation disgraced in a single evening. Think man!" I cried.

"This is part of the risk. There is no other way or recapturing the plans for the 'fish-boat' or 'submarine' as it is called. You remember, the British government bought and paid for those plans in honest negotiations, for a fair price finalized with an open and straight-forward agreement. These late arriving interlopers have committed blatant and unmitigated theft. They stole what was not theirs. They deserve the wrath of all of Her Majesties' force and might," Holmes stated clearly.

"Agreed, but you cannot tell what may happen. If you are resigned to do this, I am going with you."

"No, I cannot allow it. There is no point in two of us subjecting ourselves to this kind of uncertainty. It is out of the question," Holmes sternly replied.

"Think further Mr. Sherlock Holmes," I argued in a measured voice. "There is great risk. It is for a noble cause. It is simply the recovery of what truly belongs to the Queen. We are her subjects. We are simply securing what has been unscrupulously taken from her Majesty, therefore denying her the rightful use and enjoyment of her property," I argued with surprising conviction. "That aside, we have shared the same quarters for years. Would it not be a singular thing if we shared the same cell?" I continued with a slight smile. "Think about the risk assessment. The details, the simple mechanics to complete such a daring venture," I continued.

"It is morally right since we will take nothing save those documents belonging to The United Kingdom. Additionally, the future of the entire Royal Navy for the next century depends upon our development of this under-sea warfare strategy," Holmes spoke slowly as though he were getting used to the idea of me accompanying him on this high risk mission.

"This must be carefully planned and executed. These people are very smart." I cautioned.

"Then let us begin in the following manner," Holmes instructed. "I have gained access as an employee of the Great Western Royal Hotel. My name is James Holt. My title is that of Assistant Desk Clerk in Training. My duties are also as that of General Repair and Maintenance Man in Training. That of course means that unless assigned to a particular task, I am free to roam throughout the hotel and should I find something in need of attention, then report it and begin to repair the matter. As a result of this unique status, I have the right and responsibility of the general operation of the entire hotel. I can move to any location on the property.

"The Blues Brothers have leased the entire third floor of the hotel and retained German thugs as security guards. I have information from a reliable source that the Blues Brothers amazingly, have chosen to keep the design plans with them in their room with them personally. Apparently they plan to sell very quickly so we must move without undue delay. Did you hear me? They have the design plans with them!" Holmes said enthusiastically.

"The design plans are in a safe. The safe is a special safe the Blues Brothers had installed at their own expense. It is near the small study room in their suite which is next to their bedrooms. They literally sleep on top of the safe containing the design plans," Holmes continued as he anticipated the possibility of success.

The thought of a successful recovery had his dark eyes blazing, his breathing had rapidly increased and his hands virtually twitched

with the thought of gaining physical possession of the design plans. Holmes sat down on the sofa and drifted slowly into meditation. He hardly stirred and when he did, he studied the message scratched on his notepad.

"127 Mansfield Street, London, England, present residence of one Abdullah Quilliam - ennobled as the Sheikh of Islam of the British Isles by the Ottoman caliph, Sultan Abdul Hamid II, has received a confidential communiqué from The Grand Visor, Mehmed Said Pasha in Istanbul, Turkey."

"Holmes, we are about to embark upon a plan of action that is a felony at the least as well as placing us in physical danger should we be detected. I feel that I am entitled to know all of the tactics that are at hand in this attempt at reclaiming Her Majesties property. Full disclosure is what I mean," I stated bluntly and looking my friend straight in the eye.

"Yes, there is a parallel plan that seems to be developing over which we will have no control. It is the product of activities that made the Blues Brothers infamous to begin with. It seems that descendants of Ottoman Turks do not feel kindly over the theft of their cherished stained glass windows from the Sultan Ahmed Mosque in Istanbul, popularly known as the 'Blue Mosque'. I took the liberty of notifying the Grand Visor of the present physical location of the Blues Brothers," Holmes replied calmly.

"Who or what is a Grand Visor?"

"A little history is in order here and I will be brief," Holmes replied. "The Ottoman Empire was strong to say the least. With Constantinople/ Istanbul as its capital and control of vast lands around the Mediterranean, the empire was the merging point of relationships between the East-Asian cultures and Western-European cultures for over six centuries. The Ottoman legal system, as a strategy to hold power, arranged itself around the local customs and rules. Administration of the Ottoman legal system was largely a balancing act between local administration and the central authority that seldom interfered with non-Muslim religious legal rules. Jurisdiction was balanced between religious and cultural groups that were sometimes very different. The Ottoman Empire had three court systems: Muslim court, non-Muslim court, and a "Trade court". The Kanun law system (pre-Islamic) was the secular law of the Sultan, and dealt with issues not clearly addressed by the Sharia (religious law of Islam) system.

"Islamic faith is based upon fulfilling the Five Pillars of Islam. (1) Belief that there is but one God, Allah. (2) Pray five times a day (3) Help the poor. (4) Fast (5) Make the Pilgrimage to Mecca. The system of faith is so simple that even the most ordinary of humans can understand the five pillars," Holmes paused as he was about to finish up. In this part of the world, religious belief is taken very seriously. These people are true believers. They are willing to fight and die for what they believe in. Their beliefs and customs should not be taken lightly. Theft is not taken lightly, especially when you offend the Prophet. There can and will be consequences for those who offend Allah," Holmes concluded.

Sherlock Holmes muttered to himself in a barely audible tone, "Should this matter get out of hand, our entire effort will become an international scandal."

Holmes tucked the notepad with the address into his pocket, put on his hat and coat and walked out the door.

CLOSING IN

Sherlock Holmes planned to simply bribe the security guards to collaborate with him in his scheme. His plan was to gain entrance to the suite of rooms where the safe was located containing the Design Plans of the Holland Type VI submarine, crack the safe, secure the envelopes containing the documents and simply walk out the door. I, Dr. Watson was to serve as lookout, stave off any surprise of special security guards or wandering employees and if caught, plead that I was just a lost visitor trying to locate an old friend registered in the Great Western Royal Hotel. Leaving me in the hotel lobby, Holmes proceeds to the third floor where he unexpectedly encountered Molly who has been called to bring additional towels to the secured floor rented by the Blues Brothers. She wants to know exactly what he (James) is doing on this secured floor. About the same time I encounter Mycroft in a corner of the lobby of the hotel.

"Mycroft, what on earth are you doing here," I asked, completely surprised.

Mycroft seemed shocked to see me, though I am not sure why. "I have men outside," he simply stated.

"I must go. Stay out of the way," I ordered Mycroft doubting that he would heed my instructions.

Meanwhile, Holmes is dealing with Molly up on the third floor and having difficulty explaining why he is up there. I finally catch up with Holmes but then this further confuses Molly who wants to call hotel security to clarify the entire matter. Holmes admits to Molly that he needs her help. Holmes finally convinces her that I, Dr. Watson, have been called as a private physician and that he, i.e. James, is simply guiding me to the proper suite. Molly finally relents and goes back to her maid's station. Now we are trying to gain entry to the first set of rooms in the secured suite. Holmes breaks out his lock-picking tools.

"Susan was to leave a key hidden around here somewhere in an old black bible. Look for an old black bible," Holmes stated as though that was the simple solution to everything. He re-focused his attention on the door, using a series of lock-picks to try and open it.

"I understand, but how can you be so sure that one of their German Guards will not appear?"

"Well, first because they would have opened the door by now after hearing the two of us, but second because having the entire floor sealed off for several days, they are likely to have become careless concerning a breach of their security," Holmes muttered as he tussled with a difficult lock. "Ah!" With a final click, the lock gave way and Holmes pushed the door open. The rooms were in complete darkness, with short stairs along the right wall leading upwards, though Holmes ignored them and led me down the hall and left into a living room.

"We cannot use any light." Holmes said quietly, "The risk of someone seeing us is too high, but keep your eyes open for an old black bible, worn and smells of Afghan tobacco. This suite has been totally rearranged, different from the floor-plan in the engineering department blueprints," he stated. Holmes grabbed my arm and led me back down the hall and up the stairs, taking care to make no noise, he chose the door straight in front of him, leading me into a bedroom.

On top of the dresser was a small book. I was about to alert Holmes when I heard another noise.

"Holmes!" I whispered.

"And there you are!" a gruff voice said from the door. I did not need to turn around to know who was standing there. The harsh

German accent said it all. I was looking over my shoulder, my back stiffening and a cold glaze settled over my eyes as the lights were switched on and footsteps trudged to the center of the room. Slowly, Sherlock Holmes turned around to see the large German guard, over six feet tall with dark hair staring at him with a tight smile on his face. Holmes watched as the guard slowly reached behind his hip, presumably for a weapon.

"I am not surprised." the guard said. "You thought we would be surprised."

Without warning he pulled a large black-jack from his pocket and swung very hard. At the same time, Holmes felt a rough shove throwing him out of the way. He barely hit the floor before he was up again and chasing the guard, not hearing the thud behind him. Out of the room his long legs carried him down the stairs, jumping from the third one up and landing on the guard, crashing both of them the floor. Twisting the muscular German onto his back, Holmes pinned his arms and reached for his trousers, searching for his handcuffs. Remembering that it was I who had the cuffs he held out his hand waiting for me to deliver the cuffs to him. When nothing happened, the German began laughing.

"You didn't see your friend go down? And there I thought you were just plain mean," the guard laughed. Holmes hit him as hard as he could. The big German let out a cry as his jawbone broke.

"Stay here," Holmes growled.

The guard struggled, and Holmes slammed him against a nearby radiator, knocking him cold. Holmes rushed back up the stairs and into the bedroom and stopped where the guard had been a few minutes ago. He looked across to the back of the room and found me just below the window. I could feel my short breaths were too shallow.

Holmes eased me onto my back. I could hear him shouting; "Watson? Watson, can you hear me?"

I could feel my eyes open to reveal a hazy blur.

"Holmes, are you alright?" I managed to ask.

I could barely hear his answer, "Yes, I am fine."

I think that I had a silly smile before pain shot through my body and then I drifted off toward a blissful sleep. Silence, then...

"No, he is still breathing, but I need to get him to a hospital" Holmes said to someone.

Somewhere I realized that I was fighting to keep my eyes open, knowing as a doctor that I might never wake up if I closed them.

"Watson, stay awake. Help will be here soon." Holmes called. I blinked and saw a female form. "We must get you out of here," Holmes said in a commanding voice.

Suddenly I felt myself being lifted and carried like a bale of rags. There were doors, some stairs, I think, and then blackness, then some twisting and lots of pain for me. Sherlock Holmes kept talking to keep me awake as I drifted in and out of consciousness.

"It will pass Watson, it will pass," Holmes soothed. "Just stay with me."

I could not answer.

"Sherlock, it is me," Mycroft's stern voice broke through my consciousness.

I could only think that we must be in the lobby of the hotel, probably because that is the last place I saw Mycroft.

"Watson has a serious head injury, Mycroft, he needs--"

"I know, Sherlock. I can see. There is a carriage outside. We will take him to a hospital now."

Wasting no time, Holmes scooped me up from wherever I was as my head rolled around. Outside, the carriage door was open and it

seemed like there were many people helping. The door barely closed and the carriage was racing away. I lost track of where Holmes was.

"Mycroft? Why are you here?" I mumbled.

The elder Holmes glanced briefly in my direction.

"Trying to keep you lads out of trouble." he answered a bit briskly.

"Really?" I mumbled.

Then Mycroft had us outside the Charing Cross Hospital. I felt a stretcher and someone talking about a large gash in the back of my head and surgery. Where was Holmes, I wondered?

JUSTICE

Very early in the morning, far before sunrise and the day's forthcoming events, a telegram was delivered to Mr. Sherlock Holmes, from Istanbul, Turkey.

The Ayatollah had reviewed and the Sultan had approved the secret file and thus determined that the matter would be dealt with. Express gratitude is to be extended to concerned parties, a Mr. Sherlock Holmes and a Dr. John Watson. They are to be graciously rewarded for their respectful concern and efforts. Allah be praised. There is but one god, I am but an instrument of his will."

"The Most Holy Sons of Allah will care for the matter from this point forward. Allah be praised."

There had been some small skirmish in the Great Western Royal Hotel Lobby but was disposed of shortly as a carriage departed for the hospital. The powerfully built young men on staff at the Great Western Royal Hotel appeared to be of middle-eastern descent. Quietly, the two muscular bell boys entered the room with

two food carts. The fast acting drugs had weakened the Blues Brothers but they were only sleepy. The husky young Moslems moved quickly, dirks at their sides, until they were within arm's reach. Holmes peered from behind the thick floor-to-ceiling curtains, barely able to view most of the room. The young men moved swiftly.

Well trained and rigidly disciplined, the Warriors of the Prophet silently attacked. Simultaneously two quick thrusts with the short Dirks expertly plunged between the ribs and directly into the heart. Peeping through a crack, Holmes witnessed an ancient and practiced ritual. The deaths were in perfect unison. The Blues Brothers died instantly and simultaneously. The holy ritual continued. The unbelievers,

Thieves of the ancient holy stained glass windows celebrating Mohammad, the impure ones were propped into a sitting position and then carefully, methodically and with trained precision, the Blues Brothers were beheaded, decapitated for their crimes of theft and defacing of the Holy Blue Mosque of Istanbul. The razor sharp saber severed their heads from their unholy bodies in surgical-like execution. The sordid heads were quickly shoved into special sacks for transportation back to the elders for proof of Mohammad's revenge. Death to the unbelievers.

Taking their proof, the Holy Representatives of Mohammad quietly departed the room and melted into the street below, the first leg of a long journey home.

Sherlock Holmes lost no time. Seeing where the Blues Brothers had hidden the stolen Design Plans for the Holland Type VI submarine, he quickly opened the safe and shoved the huge envelopes into his shirt next to his heaving chest under his long coat and walked calmly out into the hallway, down the stairs, out the front door and disappeared into the street. Later that evening, Mycroft dozed comfortably in a soft chair at the Diogenes Club.



THE CASE OF THE SINGULAR POOCH-PATROL

9th In a Series of "The Ten Lost Transgressions of Sherlock Holmes"

PROLOGUE

His shoulder stiff from an old gunshot wound, Watson slowly twisted in an effort to get comfortable while he sat sipping coffee and staring out the window of 221-B Baker Street. Sherlock Holmes had dozed off, apparently bored with *The Morning Telegraph* having nothing of interest for him.

In spite of the unpredictable spring weather of London, flowers were blooming, birds were chirping and the days were getting longer in this year of 1896. At times it could be chilly, gray or damp and you could still see a few frosts.

Also, this time of the year is known for frequent but brief showers, hence the name, 'Spring showers'. A thousand miles and twelve hours later, on a warm and balmy evening in Rome, Italy, the Diplomatic Office of the Italian Government had decided to host a ball as a sign of goodwill toward all countries with which Italy has trade relations.

All members of the diplomatic corps of the several countries, their families, friends and any of their visitors were invited. The purpose was that of a good-will gesture during which the attendees might simply mix and mingle for fun and entertainment and get to know one another on a purely social basis. In the opinion of some, it may have worked a little too well.

A stunning young British debutante, Miss Regina Wilson, niece of British Envoy, Sir Charles Masters, was introduced to young Louis Zanante III, four years her senior and son of Antonio Zanante II, reigning King of Italy.

She was just completing finishing school in Switzerland and he had finished Oxford two years prior. Reportedly, it was all very spontaneous.

"Regina, you have been discretely staring at that masculine young man across the room for the last ten minutes," her aunt declared, shaking her out of a transfixed gaze.

"Would you like to meet him?" Her breath quickened.

"Not especially," she replied automatically.

"Really my dear," was the doubtful response.

"Come," beckoned the older woman.

A few minutes later the two young people were on the balcony engaged in deep conversation. Louis could not take his eyes off the dazzling dark haired beauty.

Jerked out of what he had anticipated as a stuffy and boring evening talking to older women about their shopping habits, he found himself totally captivated by the wit and challenge thrown before him.

"That sounds nice, so when do you plan to become King and save the world?"

"Well, not this year," he smiled, struggling to keep up with her slicing humor. "Politics is tricky in Italy. I have been out of Oxford almost two years and things change when you are away," he stated trying to regain his composure.

She smiled and moved further away from the light. Instinctively and in unison, he moved with her. Six months later Miss Regina Wilson, the niece of British Envoy Sir Charles Masters and Prince Louis Zananti III, son of the King of Italy, Antonio Zananti II are engaged to be married.

PHYSICIAN / PATIENT

Miss Regina Wilson had been a patient of Dr. John Watson since he had first begun to practice in London. She was a healthy young maiden simply requiring the standard physical examination for entry to Institut Villa Pierrefeu Finishing School in Switzerland.

The exam was brief and uneventful, reflecting good health, only one minor childhood disease, chaste and requiring no medicine other than a mild vitamin should she participate in strenuous physical activities.

Dr. Watson had been recommended by one of the Professors teaching at Charing Cross Hospital simply because he knew Watson was not busy at the time and the examination had a very short deadline.

Having slept late due to a difficult evening the night before with a critically ill veteran of Afghanistan, I encountered Holmes, totally emerged in the study of *The Triple Alliance*.

"There is coffee on the table, Watson. Please make yourself comfortable and tell me what you know of the Triple Alliance," requested Holmes without looking up from his files.

"I would like something to eat before diving into international agreements that are made and broken as quickly as the weather changes," I replied not fully awake. "What is the urgency?"

Holmes looked up from his research with an anxious expression on his long face. "Mycroft wants to meet me at the Diogenes Club in two hours, according to this telegram," he replied. "I would like for you to accompany me."

"The only thing I recall about *The Triple Alliance* is that it is an agreement negotiated by Bismark with Austria-Hungary and Italy to help each other out under certain circumstances. Bismark has created a powerful German Empire under Prussian leadership," I replied while swallowing coffee and ringing for Mrs. Hudson and breakfast. And then a short time later, we were in the Strangers Room of the Diogenes Club of London, "the most unsociable and unclubbable men in town." Mycroft barely acknowledged my existence and immediately began with all due urgency.

THE PROBLEM

"The War Party in the Italian government, a cadre of Generals and other high ranking officers, want badly to rebuild the Roman Empire. This group will go to any lengths and pay any price in their desire to go on offense immediately. The only two obstacles in their path at the moment are *The Triple Alliance* and the marriage of Miss Regina Wilson, the niece of a British Envoy to Prince Louis Zananti III of Italy. The Triple Alliance is weak and they are making considerable progress in pushing it toward collapse. The most pressing problem however, is the forthcoming marriage of Miss Wilson, the niece of British Envoy Sir Charles Masters and Prince Zananti III, son of the King of Italy, Antonio Zananti II. Two weeks from now, with the culmination of the marriage ceremony, this union will guarantee peace between the Kingdom of Italy and the British Empire for the next hundred years. We must have this union. Assassination of one of the parties or character defamation of the bride are the only two ways they can stop this marriage. We want

you to prevent any assassination attempt of Miss Wilson or Prince Zananti on our soil." Mycroft stated succinctly. "We will deal with any defamation rumors they care to create."

"I am a consulting detective, not a body guard service," Holmes sniffed indignantly. "Call Scotland Yard. They have the manpower," Holmes retorted, still feeling insulted.

"Sherlock, we must have this marriage. When Italian troops entered Rome in 1870, it ended more than one thousand years of Papal temporal power. Italy accepted Bismarck's proposal to enter into a Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria. Britain now finds herself diplomatically isolated. Despite my warnings, the Parliament has followed the policy of 'splendid isolation', in order to avoid involvement in European affairs. Even though these several alliances are sometimes weak and frequently ignored, the major problem is we no longer command respect in world politics. At this very moment we are negotiating an 'Italian Accord.' This marriage will assure that the accord is reached and be a major step toward guaranteeing our domination of the seas and maintain control of our colonies for decades to come," Mycroft concluded.

"Once again," he reiterated, "We must have this union."

"Apparently my assignment is first, catch the would-be assassin before he kills one of the betrothed and second, protect Miss Wilson and Prince Zananti while they are on British soil," Holmes muttered staring at no one in particular. "Well, that should be simple enough since we do not know who we are looking for, what they look like, nor the resources they have at their disposal," sniffed Holmes in his most sarcastic tone. He was then silent for a moment.

"Where is the wedding ceremony to be held?"

"Here in London at St. Paul's Cathedral," replied Mycroft. "A small private ceremony."

"Where is the young couple now?"

"Dalton Naval Base at Southend-on-Sea. Both are aggravated at 'being looked after like three-year-olds.' The restrictions placed upon their movements since the engagement was formally announced has made them more rebellious."

Holmes moved from the Strangers Room into the nearby section of the Diogenes Club and reclined in a soft chair. Due to past experiences, I followed, picking up a copy of the Times, I settled down into one of the most comfortable chairs that I have ever occupied.

Holmes sat silently staring past the over-filled bookshelves toward the light from the window. He sat frozen that way for some time.

Two periodicals later, I looked up to see him staring straight toward one of Shakespeare's writings, his mind miles away. Abruptly, he stood up and motioned to me that we should leave. Passing through the Strangers Room, he briefly stated to Mycroft.

"Let it be known to the public, that Mr. Sherlock Holmes has taken charge of the security of Miss Wilson and Prince Zananti. Scotland Yard shall continue with their normal security, of course," Holmes continued. "Just at more of a distance. I want the public to think that I am in charge of their security," said Holmes.

The ride in the hansom back to Baker Street was equally silent but Holmes did seem a bit less frustrated. Getting out of the cab, he finally spoke.

"Do you recall the strategy that we used in 'The Adventure of the Empty House'?"

"Yes, I do," I answered. "I remember very well the use of the dummy and we staked out across the street in that sinister old Empty House."

"We must bring the assassin to us," confirmed Holmes. "The Empty House strategy appears viable. The marriage is two weeks away so if I am to execute this plan, we must move quickly," declared Holmes. "Your coat and hat Watson, we must meet with this young couple immediately," implored Holmes, reaching for his frock coat.

NEW FRIENDS AND OLD

Arriving at Dalton Naval Base at Southend-on-Sea, Holmes and Watson are escorted to Officers Quarters where the couple, Regina Wilson and Lewis Zananti III are presently quartered with their respective assistants and family members. When introduced, Regina was excited.

"Lewis, this is Sherlock Holmes that I have been telling you about. And also, let me present Dr. John Watson, a veteran of Afghanistan who is also my doctor. Gentlemen, this is my fiancé, Lewis Zananti." Her charm and personality were overwhelming.

Holmes smiled, "Thank you Miss Wilson."

"Please call me Regina, and this is Lewis."

As a patient, she was simply a patient. Seeing her in a non-medical capacity, I was truly captivated by her charm and beauty.

"It is a pleasure as always," I managed.

"And how is Dirk, Dr. Watson? The first and the finest of the '00K's."

"His old combat wounds cause him to be a bit stiff on cold days but other than that, quite well, thank you. I suspect he misses your visits," I replied.

"Doctor, I am glad to meet you. Regina has mentioned you and Mr. Holmes many times," said young Lewis stepping forward to shake hands following standard Oxford formality. His easy smile and attentive gaze radiated an energy that hinted a natural leadership style that made it easy to visualize this young man leading a country in the not-too-distant future. Holmes, while no doubt impressed, wasted no time in going straight to the problems at hand.

"I would like for you to accompany us back to 221-B Baker Street immediately. I want it known that you are frequent guests at Baker Street."

"I sense a trap, a ploy" smiled an astute Lewis. "I like it."

"We shall see," replied Holmes.

"Notify your families," instructed Holmes. "The four of us should leave immediately. Bring one reliable body guard."

"That will be Angelo" stated Lewis. "He is from one of our special units." Within moments they were in a Growler speeding toward Baker Street.

Mrs. Hudson was an immediate hit with our new guests. Her warm and caring disposition relaxed them and no doubt brought back memories of a favorite aunt.

She made tea and crumpets for everyone as Holmes began to outline the "trap" as Lewis described the plan of entrapment utilizing the strategy of The Empty House.

"We are scheduling a social gathering at Baker Street tomorrow evening for three couples consisting of the two of you, Regina and Lewis and two other couples made up of young Scotland Yard officers whom you shall meet soon. Watson and I shall host. The three couples will socialize with us for about two hours giving the culprits ample time to see them.

"One couple will be a bit more formally dressed, only a bit. The other couples will be dressed as college students. After two hours, the party will end, the two college couples will leave by carriage and

go back to the Dalton Naval Base. One of those couples will be Miss Wilson and Prince Zananti.

"The remaining couple, the young Scotland Yard officers, slightly more formally dressed and disguised to look like Regina and Lewis will remain at 221-B Baker Street. They will move about in a manner that they can be seen and vaguely identified at a distance, but not long enough for a sniper to sight and get a shot off.

"They will continue this for the next three hours. Watson, we will be across the street, employing the Empty House strategy. The house that was vacant by chance, is right across from 221-B Baker Street. A well trained rifleman could easily shoot accurately from that building."

INTERVENING CIRCUMSTANCES

Now disguised as two Cambridge students they prepared to leave Baker Street under the watchful eye of Holmes and Watson. Louis and Regina, eager to engage in the anticipated evening activity gained a slight lead while descending the seventeen steps to the sidewalk.

As they arrived at street level, they encountered a burly man who brusquely introduced himself as a bodyguard sent by Scotland Yard 'to protect them on their travels while within the city.'

"Johnson, at your service madam," tipping his hat to Regina and briefly nodding in the direction of Lewis. "This way please," moving with authority he motioned toward a waiting carriage. Two well combed and brushed, grays restlessly awaited the whip. "I am here to escort you to your desired destination," he firmly beckoned.

As the three of them started toward the carriage, the burly man began to turn toward Regina who was ahead of Louis descending the 17 steps. Immediately there was a grunt from Regina as she stomped hard downward driving the spiked heel of her heavy boot into the arch of his foot.

His scream was cut in half as she thrust her gloved fist directly into his face breaking his nose as the weighted small revolver clutched in her hand gave her full weight into the blow.

Surprise and pain took the burly man to his knees as Watson and Holmes, close behind, rushed to the aid of the couple. Holmes shoved the bleeding hulk against the side of the building as Watson handcuffed him.

"Wow"! Lewis gasp, managing to find his voice.

"Where did you learn? ... You did not learn that in some Swiss finishing school," still trying to grasp what just happened.

"Two brothers," she smiled straightening her boots and placing her handgun back into her purse. London can be a rather mysterious place at times."

"How did you know he was a fraud," asked Holmes as Watson surveyed the damage Regina had inflicted upon the culprit.

"The horses. Scotland Yard always buys Blacks, never Grays. It is some sort of 'man' thing. They think the Grays are inferior," she replied in a matter-of-fact manner. "Let's go, I'm hungry."

TRAPS AND MISADVENTURES

The following evening, after two hours of partying at 221-B Baker Street, the two casually dressed college couples departed for Dalton Naval Base.

The plan or "trap" as Lewis preferred, was proceeding as scheduled and the evening was progressing perfectly. Regina and Lewis were safely on their way back to the Naval Base and the

remaining disguised young officers looked amazingly like Regina and Lewis.

They were playing their part perfectly. Holmes and I waited. We were positioned across the street inside where we could see both the window and the back door of the Empty House as well as a part of the window of 221-B Baker Street.

Occasionally we could catch a glimpse of the two young Scotland Yard officers disguised as Regina and Louis. It was an excellent likeness.

Two hours later we heard a noise at the back door. A tall, muscular man walked carefully, feeling his way toward the window facing our rooms. His progress demonstrated that he had been here before.

The tall, muscular stranger was carrying a modified Fusilier, regulation Royal Army long rifle with a bi-pod for resting the barrel sniper-style. There was a desk already in place where he quickly set up the bi-pod and immediately began to sight in the rifle.

This, no doubt, had been practiced before in this very room. As he began to settle into the shooting position and sight-in his target, Holmes lunged and grabbed him from behind.

The stranger's unpredictable strength surprised both of us as he flung Holmes aside like a rag doll at the same time pulled a pistol from his belt and quickly took aim at me. My revolver already in hand, I fired, as he lunged toward me squeezing his trigger. I fired again. He fell.

'This is not good' was the only thought running across my mind. I only meant to wound him. This is not good on so many levels. My mind was in a daze. I had just fatally wounded a person. This should not have happened.

"Thank you Watson!" I heard Holmes strong voice penetrating the dream-like condition my mind had retreated to as I began to face the fact I had taken this man's life, no matter how bad he was.

"He was about to murder at least two people in our rooms and almost put me into the grave, right in front of your eyes. You saved at least three people Watson!"

Holmes voice pierced through the daze in my head and I began to focus somewhat better. I still felt like I was disorientated. I needed a tall glass of whisky. Maybe a bottle would be better as my thoughts wandered aimlessly.

"Questioning him is no longer an option, let us see what an assassin carries in his pockets," muttered Holmes as he bent over the lifeless body and began to search his pockets.

An inventory of his personal effects yielded: a card of Sir Alfred Johnson in his pocket, a hotel room receipt from the Grand Royal Hotel, a note from the hotel desk saying he had received a message at the Grand Royal Hotel earlier from someone inside the British government, and then the rifle that was a special type popular with long range shooters used in Afghanistan.

The clues lead to a Member of Parliament who does not want the Italian Accord to be signed. Or, are they merely miscellaneous happenstance?

"I must call Lestrade' immediately. Watson, you need rest."

STRATEGY AND TACTICS

Italian War Party strategist Luige Gabardo was furious.

"Why can't you idiots do anything right? I delegate a simple abduction of one young, privileged soul, still a mere child and your men fall all over themselves. They were whipped by a woman! It is a wonder they did not get themselves killed. Get rid of this bunch and

make sure my name is never mentioned," he screamed storming out of the office.

"We are going to have to do better than this and we do not have a lot of time to do it. Get Donatello and Alberico in here. We need a new strategy." Two hours later, they were in another meeting in the thick of new tactics.

"The British have brought the full force of the military into the protection of the young couple while they are on English soil. The whole country is like a fort." lamented Donatello.

"I think we should abandon the murder part of this whole effort. If this kind of thing is linked back to any form of an Italian political party, the entire continent will look upon us with disfavor for decades. No sympathy will fall in our favor. It is simply not worth it," stated Alberico with conviction.

"And you have what in mind?" asked Luige.

"Slander and defamation work really well when applied properly" stated Alberico. "Additionally, once the right rumor is started, it takes on a life of its own.

"You have something on your mind," probed Luige. "Give!"

"The two lovebirds have not been out of each other's sight for six months. They are young, healthy and they are in love. By now nature should have taken its course. We simply get hold of any type of medical file that says she is not a virgin on her wedding day and Papal Law will automatically prevent the marriage. Case closed."

"Nice try, but do you think anyone in the church cares enough as long as they go forward with the marriage?" inquired Donatello.

"Think gentlemen, how is she going to prove which boyfriend deflowered her?" suggested Alberico slyly. "Trust me, it will be a mess."

"Which boyfriend? I never heard of another suitor."

Alberico smiled patiently. There was silence throughout the room for quite some time.

"I do not think we have any choice," said Luige.

"OK, I'm in. How do we do this?" asked Donatello.

Leaning forward across the large table, "We start like this," began Alberico.

The Italian War Party strategists had decided upon disgrace and defamation as the only viable strategy to destroy the marriage plans.

Disgrace, embarrassment and defamation of the bride was the surest way to discredit Miss Regina Wilson and prove that she was not a virgin entering into the marriage ceremony.

Operatives were sent to break into Dr. John Watson's office and steal Miss Wilson's medical files and threaten to publish them.

They anticipated that the records proved that she was not a virgin, evidenced by a medical report that the hymen had been broken prior to the wedding and therefore dictated by papal law, she was ineligible for marriage to Italian royalty based upon church law.

DIRK

"Dirk is a fast and nervous English Terrier who served in Her Majesties Secret Service. The first and the finest of the "00K's", Her Majesties 00K-1. When on assignment, he will assist Mr. Sherlock Holmes and accompany Dr. John H. Watson, 'as requested.' Dirk is 'the most unsociable and most unclubable K-9 in town,' truly a singular pooch.' Dirk served in military combat, deployed to North Africa and Afghanistan. Wounded twice in combat, he proudly wears the India General Service Medal and the coveted 'K-9 Combat Badge.' His battlefield decorations are exemplified by his fearless defense of a seriously wounded Royal Marine, rendered helpless and

pinned-down by enemy gunfire in an attack upon a rebel sniper nest that was firing persistently upon British troops during a surge attack against criminal rebels barricaded in the rugged mountains of North Eastern Afghanistan.

Wounded and bleeding, he fiercely guarded the stranded and seriously wounded marine by snarling, barking, biting and physically harassing with swift and abrupt physical movements.

He relentlessly fought with physical advance and abrupt withdrawal movements, and held off four separate advances by the enemy combatants, repelling the hostile forces until fellow Royal Marines could regain the positions and rescue the wounded marine and Dirk.

Dirk was hospitalized for a month and required another month of convalescence and rehabilitation that included a gourmet dog food, ample helping of special milk, purified drinking water, a half-dozen chewy toys and three healthy lady-dogs his age supplemented with adequate vitamins and stimuli.

A special private ceremony is being planned by the Queen. Dirk holds the position of Adjunct K-9 Training Professor at Her Majesties Royal K-9 Military Training Academy and occasionally makes guest appearances at the elite Special Forces 'Bow-Wow' School of Black Arts.

Presently Dirk is on assignment and serves as Dr. Watson's guard dog at 'The Office of Doctor John Watson,' informally known as 'Pooch-Patrol.'

The way that Dirk and Dr. Watson met is singular in itself. Shortly after Mr. Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson took rooms together at 221-B Baker Street, while Watson was still recovering from wounds he received in Afghanistan and was "thin as a rail and brown as a nut," Watson elected to spend the afternoon enjoying Hyde Park.

With Holmes still at work in his laboratory at the University and Watson with no practice or patients yet, the doctor decided to stroll through Hyde Park.

One half hour into his stroll, he began to feel ill and not wanting to risk passing out, sought refuge on a park bench. Random hooligans, who later proved to be pick-pockets, one being known as 'Fast Eddie' noticed his weakness and moved in to exploit his brief disadvantage.

From no-where came a bull terrier and 'froze on Fast Eddie's leg and held fast' snarling and growling until a roving Bobby on park patrol spotted the thugs and came to Watson's rescue.

The whole episode occurred in about three-quarters of an hour. Sherlock Holmes, walking back from the University laboratory, arrived quite by accident shortly after the policeman arrived.

Both Holmes and Watson were impressed with the fierce effort that the bull terrier put up in defense of the doctor. After turning the thugs over to the policeman and resting Watson so he felt like walking, they turned their attention to the bull terrier.

Sherlock Holmes applied his Deductive Reasoning powers to what Watson had told him: Before freezing on Fast Eddie's leg, the dogs tactical maneuvers of lunging forward, bark in attack mode, fall back to regroup in a defensive position near his charge, the K-9 was executing a well-trained tactical maneuver to defend a master, attack--fall back, attack, fall back, regroup.

"This K-9 is military trained, Watson. Look at the disciplined way he handles himself and the circumstances presented to him. Look at him," said Holmes.

"He stands well, is very alert, is in good health and knows all that is going on near him, 360 degrees around the compass," agreed Watson. "Look for tags, if he will let us."

There were no tags, and no obvious markings, but the dog and Watson seemed strangely similar, thought Holmes.

"His teeth remind me of the middle-eastern knives, short knives -- a Dirk, said Watson.

"DIRK!" Sherlock Holmes called in a forceful voice. The dog reacted immediately and began walking toward Holmes while glancing uncertainly toward Watson as though awaiting instructions.

CONCLUSION

'The Office of Doctor John Watson'

CONFIDENTIAL MEDICAL FILE of Miss Regina Wilson.

January 15, 1895

Wilson, Regina - Miss

PATIENT: Female -White

1895

SUMMARY: Physical Exam shows she is healthy, a virgin and has no visible ailments.

Normal Physical Examination

History: No smoking, average weight, no excessive alcohol use, adequate exercise; no apparent bad habits, no complaints, no negative history

Vital Signs - all vital signs normal

General Appearance - mentally quick, skin color-good, stand & walk easily

Heart Exam - normal

Lung Exam - normal

Head and Neck Exam -normal

Abdominal Exam - all areas normal

Neurological Exam - normal

Dermatological Exam - normal

Extremities Exam - all extremities functional and normal

Breast exam - no lumps, no visual abnormalities

Pelvic exam - virgin, no visual abnormalities

Laboratory tests - normal

April 10, 1897

Wilson, Regina - Miss

PATIENT: Female -White

1897

SUMMARY: Physical Exam shows she is healthy, not a virgin and has no visible ailments.

Normal Physical Examination

History - No smoking, average weight, no excessive alcohol use, adequate exercise; no apparent bad habits, no complaints, no negative history

Vital Signs - all vital signs normal

General Appearance - mentally quick, skin color-good, stand & walk easily

Heart Exam - normal

Lung Exam - normal

Head and Neck Exam -normal

Abdominal Exam - all areas normal

Neurological Exam - normal

Dermatological Exam - normal

Extremities Exam - all extremities functional and normal

Breast exam - no lumps, no visual abnormalities

Pelvic exam - no visual abnormalities

Laboratory tests - normal

May 27, 1897

Wilson, Regina - Miss

PATIENT: Female -White

1897

SUMMARY: Visit by patient for slight allergy/mild prescription provided.

Otherwise, no complaints.

Physical Exam shows she is healthy and not a virgin with no visible ailments

Vital Signs - all vital signs normal

Mentally quick, skin color-good, stand & walk easily

OFFICE LOG REFLECTS FOLLOWING INFORMATION

April 15, 1897 -- Italian thieves break into Dr. Watson's office to search his patient's medical records. Records thrown about. Dirk barks, growls and snarls alerting police, meanwhile challenging thieves. Burglars are caught after they are severely mangled by Dirk. One of them is still in the hospital. The other is still in jail. Dirk received a minor scratch.

May 1, 1897 -- Dr. John Watson receives notice that he will have to testify under oath at a formal legal hearing in August to determine the health details of one client: Miss Regina Wilson.

May 12, 1897 -- Italian thieves break in a second time -- They break into Dr. Watson's office to search his patient's medical records.

"DIRK" -- COME HERE!" Watson commanded.

The bull terrier came to him, wagging his tail and sat down at his feet.

"He really likes you, Watson."

"Yes, it seems he does. His present assignment is that of serving as Dr. Watson's guard dog at 'The Office of Doctor John Watson,' informally known as 'Pooch-Patrol.'

Records pilfered. Dirk barks, growls, alerting police, meanwhile challenging thieves. Burglars are caught after they are severely mangled by Dirk. This time Dirk caught an artery in one of the burglars and he died on the way to the hospital. His fellow burglar is still in jail. Dirk received a minor bruise.

June 1, 1897 -- Thieves break in a third time -- They search Dr. Watson's medical files. The lock was opened. Medical files appear untouched. There was no altercation. Apparently nothing was taken. Dirk is silent. It appeared nothing was even touched. Dirk was resting comfortably when police arrived on the scene for investigation.

In anticipation of his forthcoming testimony under oath, by order of subpoena in August, during a formal legal hearing, Dr. Watson reviews the files on Miss Regina Wilson.

Dr. Watson discovers that his files only reflect a Physical Exam finding that patient Regina Wilson is a white female, a virgin, in good health with no visible ailments.

A few days later at 221-B Baker Street, Holmes is helping Watson prepare for his oral testimony under oath the following day concerning the Papal Request for Testimony.

"It is testimony only, under oath. They did not request Records," Watson noted. "I have carefully reviewed the dates of all unusual activity in my office this year, especially those events surrounding Regina Wilson."

"Interestingly," continued Watson, "I can only state under oath that Miss Wilson's confidential medical files show that my patient is a white female, a virgin, in good health with no visible ailments."

Holmes raised an inquisitive eyebrow. He then reviewed the appointment and office logs to satisfy his own curiosity. After several moments Sherlock Holmes put down the files and gradually began to smile.

"That is interesting," he pondered.

"How did the thief get past Dirk? Apparently he did not even bark."

"Thinking back," considered Watson, "Regina always liked Dirk, played with him every time she was in the office."

"Come to think of it, Dirk always did get very gentle and even cuddly when Regina was around him," mused Watson.

"You do not suppose.....?" Watson thought haltingly as a smile slowly crept over his face.

"No, Never," replied Sherlock Holmes with a wink.

EPILOGUE

The Wedding was private, flawless and elegant.

The bride was beautiful, the groom was handsome.

Dirk slept through most of the ceremony.

The Italian Accord was memorialized.

Robust trade grew between the two countries.



THE CASE OF THE MYSTERIOUS PARAMOUR

10th In a Series of "The Ten Lost Transgressions of Sherlock Holmes"

IN THE BEGINNING

It was a light wintry evening in London as the snow fell softly and the wind had died down to the point that couples could stroll comfortably along the walkways and parks throughout the city with a feeling of comfort and tranquility. The Empire was temporarily in between wars, the crime rate was down, trade was good and Parliament was not in session. People were out all over the city. It seemed the whole country had taken a holiday. I turned the corner and leisurely walked up Whitehall enjoying the evening air.

The lady was gorgeous. Suddenly something caught her attention that she found hilarious. She burst into laughter. It was the rich, full-throated laugh of a young female truly amused. The group that she accompanied began entering the luxury restaurant. Six or eight couples at least, of German and American finely dressed women and formally dressed men made it obvious that this group was wealthy and powerful.

The fairest of them had just locked eyes with me when I turned the corner up Whitehall. And then like an evaporating cloud on a summer day, the group was swallowed into the luxury, exquisite services and opulent facilities. The door man closed the door, then stepped across to stand at parade rest, thus securing the entranceway and ensuring the privacy of those therein.

I continued my journey considering the event a mere pleasant distraction in an otherwise quiet evening in Metropolitan London. The remaining walk back to 221-B Baker Street was without event. I enjoyed a light supper, played a few moves of chess with Holmes and then went to bed. The following morning Holmes was nowhere to be found. A telegram lying openly on the sideboard noted that he had been summoned to The Diogenes Club for a meeting with Mycroft; something about a German counterfeit money scheme.

Later that day there was some shuffling on the stairs outside that attracted Mrs. Hudson's attention.

The old man could hardly walk. He appeared to be a long-suffering University Professor too far away from a familiar campus.

"I beg your pardon sir, I must ask who you are, as you are outside the private rooms of two of my residents," queried Mrs. Hudson.

"I have an appointment with Mr. Sherlock Holmes, madam," replied the elderly gentleman.

"And you are?"

"I am Professor I. M. Trickingyew, Senior Professor at Oxford University, Department of Deceptive Studies, College of Investigation. Mr. Holmes wishes to see me," he stated elevating his chin ever so slightly.

"I will tell him you are here," replied Mrs. Hudson suspiciously.

"Mr. Holmes!" she announced as she knocked sharply upon the 221-B door. "If he is not here, I am to present this to you." Opening the note handed to her, Mrs. Hudson read:

"Mrs. Hudson, please allow entry to my apartment to the bearer of this note." Regards, Sherlock Holmes

"Very well, please enter," she replied, shaking her head and turning toward the kitchen. The professor trudged laboriously into Holmes' living room and carefully sat down, joints obviously aching with every step. He settled himself on the couch for a long wait.

"Would you like some tea?" inquired Mrs. Hudson attempting to show some courtesy to the beleaguered guest.

"I think I will be fine, I am accustomed to unexpected delays," he replied now completely relaxed. After Mrs. Hudson closed the door, Sherlock Holmes slowly stood and stretched his cramped legs satisfied that his disguise had just passed the most difficult test.

The weeks of November moved very slowly for me. Holmes apparently had no cases to challenge him and yet he summarily disappeared for two weeks without a word. The day he returned I happened to be at home and noticed that his hands were grossly discolored. "What have you been experimenting with Holmes, your hands look horrible?"

"Interesting that you should ask, Watson. What do you know about currency and coin in England?"

"Very little except that I have an insufficient number of them," I replied cynically.

"The 1887 London Mint sovereigns are more yellow in appearance than other London produced sovereigns," began Holmes. "This additional silver affects the amount of copper in the coin, not, of course, its gold content which brings me to the subject of counterfeiting. Since at least 1282, the quality and validity of coins produced by the Royal Mint have been independently verified by using a procedure historically known as the Trial of the Pyx. It is actually a trial in the full judicial sense, presided over by a judge with an expert jury of assayers. It takes its name from the pyx or box in which were kept the sample coins set aside for testing. An assayer is a person who tests ores and minerals and analyzes them to determine their composition and value. There is an ongoing development of spectrographic analysis. Any process that quantifies the various amounts, powers and intensities, versus frequency can be called spectrum analysis. I have been attempting to verify these procedures," he said proudly.

"Was it worth it?" I asked.

"Apparently someone thinks so," he replied and then dismissed the topic entirely.

Any medical practice for me was going through a slow period, leaving far too much time for writing and research. One morning, while I was perfecting a new technique for treating bronchial ailments, a courier delivered a telegram to my Surgeons Office marked 'Special Delivery- Confidential!'

Unusual for my practice, unless there was some dangerous problem with one of the few new medicines or some communicable disease brought into the country via the ships in the harbor. I was puzzled. The telegram read:

PLEASE COME IMMEDIATELY [Stop] INJURY
SERIOUS [Stop] URGENT [Stop] TELL NO ONE [Stop]
PLEASE HELP [Stop] SECRET [Stop] PLEASE COME
[Stop]! CC, 147 Reading Road."

I wonder who CC is. Strange note to write to a Surgeons Office, I thought, reaching for my coat.

147 READING ROAD

A brisk Hansom ride and I was at the door of 147 Reading Road, an upscale neighborhood on the quiet side of Hyde Park, a

favorite area of wealthy businessmen and influential government officials. A uniformed nurse cracked the door. "Are you alone?" she demanded.

"Yes, as instructed" I responded suspiciously. "Why all the mystery, and who is sick?"

"Are you Dr. John Watson, former Army Surgeon?"

"Yes. Now please tell me what is going on."

"Just a moment....." then she was gone, the door left ajar and me on the stoop. Immediately, she was back.

"Come this way," she demanded. The woman was beginning to sound like a cross between a nurse and a bodyguard. I followed my gate-keeper through a medium sized living room and then entered a large bedroom -- what appeared to be a hastily arranged sick room-- all new equipment and furnishings, some still in the packing crates. I followed the nurse to the bedside and began to try and assess what was happening.

"She insisted upon you, Dr. Watson.....knows your career. She was nearly killed, run down in the street by a team of horses -- reportedly a four horse team. She is badly injured and for security purposes cannot go to a hospital. There can be NO question about that. Please see what you can do," the nurse explained.

"Let me see--good lord, she should be in a hospital now! I exclaimed. She's....."

"No, treat me here! No, you must treat me here!" was the weak but commanding order. Before me was a beautiful but very injured young woman. Several broken bones and a severe blow to the head had marred a beautiful body and badly bruised a near-perfect head of blond hair. Her remarkable bone structure reflected aristocratic breeding, and skin-tone of perfect light complexion. A high intelligent forehead had escaped bruising but her right cheek bone was very dark from a strong blow. Carefully we turned her over, enabling me to complete my examination.

The nurse was right, she had barely escaped being trampled to death. The victim was holding off the pain rather well. This dainty looking girl was very tough. Haltingly, she began, "I must not go to the hospital, for security and commercial reasons, and that is all I can say," she stated directly. "There are temporary living quarters in this residence for you and whatever staff you will need. I have adequate funds for whatever you require."

"First of all, who are you?"

"Courtney Carrington."

No one I ever heard of, I thought to myself.

"I will need to take some personal information if I decide to treat you," I said bluntly.

"Please Doctor, I am asking you to treat me and to treat me here," she continued. "I know of your training, your experience in the Army, your association with Mr. Sherlock Holmes, and most of all your dedication as a Doctor. You are skilled at handling stress and emergency circumstances. I need you and I need you now."

"The nurse?"

"She will stay if you like. I am able to afford you and any assistance you may need. Just ask."

"Well, since Nurse...."

Nurse Johnson" the nurse interrupted. "I know you through your work at Charing Hospital," continuing to straighten a pillow.

"Full Name?"

"Courtney Carrington," the patient replied in a whisper.

"Age?"

"27"

As I continued my Intake Information I realized that Nurse Johnson and Miss Carrington had known each other for some time. Since this was going to be a lengthy recovery period, I may as well get started, I decided instinctively.

"Nurse, get the entire household together. We are going to set up a Convalescence and Therapeutic schedule for Miss Carrington. It has to be organized and we do not need any outside interference. Get them together in the dining room as soon as possible."

A butler, George, who looked ex-military, a driver, Sam, who appeared to be an early retired wrestler, a cook Betty, and two housekeepers, Lena and Helen whom I swear either could win any street fight they might be thrown into. And then Nurse Johnson, who looked like she could run an entire emergency facility by herself. This was a little unusual for some kind of injured government artist. What was wrong with this picture?

"Nurse, what is going on here? The staff here looks like they could hold-off a small regiment of the French Army in the dead of night." Most of them were restless and shuffled around looking like they wanted to leave immediately. Nurse Johnson gave me one of those long world-weary looks, turned and walked away.

PROGRESS AT 147 READING ROAD

"Good morning, how are we feeling?"

"Mmmm-mhaa - '...thank you" came a whisper. "I ...think I ...musht have gotten some ...shleep," came a small voice just above a whisper somewhat clearer.

"Congratulations, two complete sentences," I smiled at my new patient.

"Ahh-ohoh" was the result of an attempted smile.

"Try not to talk much, but since you are at least partially awake, I do want to look at your condition. Just respond, I will ask the questions." Two beautiful blue eyes were peering at me almost fully awake. It seemed I had seen them before--somewhere buried in my memory bank they seemed familiar. "Nurse Johnson, I want to do a complete physical today, including a pelvic. I have no history on this woman and there may be injuries that did not manifest in my earlier limited examination."

"Yes, doctor." My patient smiled and drifted back to sleep.

"She seems to be breathing normally," commented Nurse Johnson. About twenty minutes later, she began to stir.

"Well, we may feel like staying awake for a while this time," as I once again greeted my mysterious new patient.

"I guess so," blinked those beautiful blue eyes. She tried the smile again and this time managed to hold it.

"How long have I been asleep?"

"About ten hours all total. Would you like Nurse Johnson to help you to the toilet?"

"Yes, thank you."

"Nurse, get me all lab samples as soon as possible," I instructed as I began to dig through my medical bag. After completing all of my examinations and finally bringing my Intake Information Sheet up to date, I turned to my now fully awake patient.

"You are in much better condition than I had hoped for. Lucky for us, neither of your lungs seem punctured. We are, however going to be here for at least eight weeks, minimum."

"If you say so," she smiled. I confess, I was surprised that she did not resist, like she had no place to go. This was good.

The two weeks were painful but progressive. She was settling where she was able to adjust to the progress that her body so badly

wanted to make, yet would none-the-less take time. Nature is an excellent healer.

"Well doctor, are you going to check on my well-being?"

Courtney Carrington greeted me mischievously.

"Yes, I shall," I replied carefully avoiding her playfully dangerous eyes. "You seem to be in good spirits this morning."

"Only for you," came that flirtatious interplay that seemed to be growing daily between us. This woman had an invigorating way of affecting everyone around her.

"Watch," she spontaneously announced. She rose from the sofa and I instinctively knew what she was going to attempt. I started to object, but Courtney's finger was suddenly resting against my mouth. The soft pressure made me think of a kiss.

"I have to do some of these things for myself," she smiled.

Her hand dropped away and I felt a strange sense of disappointment when her touch vanished. She started across the room at a cautious but determinedly slow gate. I knew she was battling with her pride. Her fierce independence caused her to want to do things that her body would not yet allow her to do.

I had no desire to dampen her spirit so I elected to say nothing. She was finally walking under her own power, up and moving over and through the pain. I saw the gleam of moisture growing rapidly in her eyes and moved toward her. I did not think about my actions, I simply did what seemed natural and pulled her into my arms.

"We will get through this," I whispered.

Courtney seemed as shocked as much as reassured. As a doctor, I did not normally react to tears, but the soft shudder of her body close to mine touched me in more ways than one. Courtney responded unconsciously as she put her hand on my chest and three weeks of tears poured from her freshly healing body. I could not help feeling the way her body fit so perfectly in my arms. Her long blond hair teased the stubble on my chin and I had to force myself to resist tightening my arms around her narrow waist and bring her even closer. This had to stop. She needed a physician, not an emotional amateur. I had to force myself to gently guide her back to the sofa.

"You need some rest. One day at a time, remember?" I counseled softly. I reminded myself, no matter how many ethics rules there were in the medical profession, my growing feelings toward this woman were going to get in the way.

The next three days were relatively uneventful. The mail for my patient was light but sporadic and from places I recognized but very unfamiliar addresses. A huge arrangement of flowers arrived from Paris. The day before a stunning arrangement had arrived from someone clearly of royalty postmarked Rome.

"Nurse, where or who are these people with so much expensive stationary? Many of these addresses are from what are clearly very powerful people, many of whom appear to be in the government."

"That would be accurate," she replied briefly and that was all that I could get out of her. Later that afternoon I asked Courtney.

"It is people I know and work with, John. Do not let it over impress you. Life is short."

And then she smiled that radiant smile again. When that happened, it seemed like the sun just rose all over this part of the world and by that time I did not care about somebody else's flowers.

AN EVENT

The assassin's bullet crashed through the window right behind where Courtney had been sitting. A sudden desire to get up and stretch had more than likely saved her. Exchanging my stethoscope

for my revolver I eased Courtney to the far side of the room. She moved stiffly but quicker than I had expected. Gritting her teeth as she moved we ended up behind some furniture away from the broken window.

"Stay here, I am going to see what this is all about."

"Come now John, you know what an assassination attempt looks like," she smiled through clenched teeth.

Racing to the door, I stepped into the fading afternoon sun only to come face to face with Sherlock Holmes.

"What the.....what are you doing here?"

"The subsequent gunfire you heard was British Intelligence officers shooting the assassin to death," he replied curtly.

Looking past Holmes gaunt frame, I saw a dozen men, some in military uniform and several in the dark dress of government officers. A large young man in a dark suit came forward and instructed.

"Doctor, go back inside! We have dealt with this matter."

"Holmes, what is this and what on earth are you doing here?"

"Details Watson, details. Go back to your charge. This matter is over out here."

Then he turned and walked away. I caught a glimpse a body being recovered from the corner of the house. By the time I got back inside and looked back through the window, the last vehicle was leaving, and then all was silent, like nothing ever happened. I was still adjusting to what happened when Courtney called to me. She was very calm.

"John, come here, it will be alright. The staff will handle things,"

Obviously she did not mean my staff, I thought silently. However I did notice that the driver, butler, cook and two maids had all taken strategic defensive positions. I looked askance toward Nurse Johnson.

"We are all Special Forces trained on British Government Assignment to the Department of the Exchequer, I am in charge of security. Agent Carrington is in command of Operations," brusquely explained the Nurse. "Just treat Miss Carrington, we will deal with security matters here," as she motioned for the staff to gather around.

As I reached Courtney's side, she took my hand and I instantly felt the heat of her touch travel up my arm and penetrate my whole body.

"Let's get you back to your room. This is enough excitement for one day. I want nothing to interrupt your recovery. You are progressing much better than I would have ever dreamed," I managed to mumble. And then I made the mistake of looking at her.

At this moment, she was beyond a doubt, the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. Slowly I realized that she was clutching my arm so tightly that it was affecting the blood flow in my lower arm.

"Let's get you some rest. I will give you something to relax."

"No more drugs. Just stay with me, please."

"No more for the time being, and yes, I will stay."

This is insane; I feel more like a silly school boy than a medical doctor caring for a patient. The rules of ethics were snapping like wooden match sticks in a hurricane.

MORE PROGRESS AT 147 READING ROAD

As the days of recovery passed, she seemed to heal faster and faster. We played chess, poker and baccarat. She was good at everything. She had a quick mind that sometimes seemed to work like a steel trap. She sometimes showed me some tricks for analyzing art and appraising valuable articles for insurance purposes.

She certainly knew a lot about the values of currency and coin, how it affected foreign trade and the way we presently live in England. One afternoon, she went into detail about the Trial of the Pyx being a procedure in the United Kingdom for ensuring that newly minted coins conform to required standards. Trials have been held from the twelfth century to the present day, normally once per calendar year; the form of the ceremony has been essentially the same since. Trials formerly took place at the Palace of Westminster. The term PYX refers to the boxwood chest in which coins were placed for presentation to the jury.

Coins to be tested are drawn from the regular production of the Royal Mint. The Deputy Master of the Mint must, throughout the year, randomly select several thousand sample coins and place them aside for the Trial. These must be in a certain fixed proportion to the number of coins produced. For example, for every 5000 bimetallic coins issued, one must be set aside, whereas for silver Maundy money the proportion is one in 150. Criteria are given for diameter, chemical composition and weight for each class of coinage.

The time that I am spending with my patient is becoming more pleasant and rewarding for me. Her company totally fascinates me to the point that I have to force myself to think of her as a patient. So far I seem to be violating every ethical rule known to the medical profession, in my mind of course. I have to keep reminding myself that every time I look into that woman's eyes, my mind goes blank.

She was now able to dress better each day and worked on her appearance daily. She simply did not want to look sick or be sick. Each morning I simply could not stop staring at the elegantly styled creature who entered the room. This morning she looked especially nice. For several seconds, I absorbed the way her clothing accentuated her natural beauty. The golden shades of the dress made her hair glow and her blue eyes seem larger than life.

221-B BAKER STREET

I decided that I should pay Holmes a visit. I had not made contact with him since I had taken the job of caring for my mysterious patient. Courtney and I had spent almost every waking hour together and I was really liking her more and more. She seemed much attached to me and the more time we spent together the more I cared for her. I did, however, want to find out what Holmes was doing on my patients' property the evening of the gunfight. As was his custom, Holmes had slept late and was still having coffee when I arrived.

"Come in Watson," he greeted cheerily, "how is the medical care business?" he inquired with a mischievous expression.

"Very busy, even though I have only one patient at the present time. One mysterious patient, I should say." Holmes smiled. Then it occurred to me, I should ask.

"You made an unexpected appearance at her residence. You know something about her." He remained silent and only smiled.

"Holmes, I have become infatuated with this woman even though she is a patient.

Other than medical information, I really know little about her. Tell me what you know."

"I know she is very smart and is presently well cared for. Her recovery is progressing extremely well as I would expect and both of you are highly intelligent, physically strong and inquisitive by nature.

"She is an excellent match for you Watson," he summarized.

"That was not what I asked. I want to know what you know about her." I insisted.

"Very little I am afraid."

"Do not play games with me Holmes, I know your methods. What do you know about her?"

"Seriously," he replied in a more solemn voice. "Not a great deal more than you do, except from a different view point."

"So, what do you know?" I insisted more forcefully.

His gaze shifted out the window and remained there for a time as he finished his pipe. Then he spoke.

"Agent Courtney Carrington, a.k.a. 'The Lady', your woman is BI-2, officially known as British Intelligence-Foreign Affairs, a seasoned agent with a feel for the edge of danger. Apparently she is one of Mycroft's best. Beauty, Brains and Bartitsu. Trained as a counterfeit art and currency expert, she has also excelled in martial arts as a hobby. She has proven to be of great value to the Empire. What you do not know is, however, she is deadly. Known inside British Foreign Intelligence as one of the 'Triple-Ds'. Deadly attractive, deadly intelligent and Deadly toxic. When they tested her before training, she had the highest IQ in Government Service, second only to Mycroft."

I felt dizzy. Not knowing what to say or how to say it rendered me speechless. I was glad to be sitting down so this queasy feeling in my stomach would not cause me to fall. I did not see this coming.

"I know that you have fallen in love with her while treating her. Mycroft and I have discussed this matter. Neither he nor I see it as a bad thing. She is basically a monogamous woman with high moral standards. She has had assignments in which she has been identified as a paramour to several powerful men in government and industry. We know she does not like it and is eliminating those activities from future service assignments. Her most recent assignment during which she stabilized the Pound Sterling has been unimaginably beneficial to the British Empire and very costly to her personally as you well know, experiencing her recovery on a daily basis. Once she regains her health, she will receive a high governmental appointment which will remove danger from her career permanently. As an aside, information has come to us that she is very fond of you, Watson. I suggest that you do not squander those feelings. That concludes any statements that I have concerning Agent Carrington."

And with that Sherlock Holmes turned back to his morning paper. I did not know what shocked me the most.

Learning that my mysterious patient was some kind of super government agent that she had deep feelings for me or that Sherlock Holmes was passing out romantic advice in a most humane manner. Idly I began to wonder if Irene Adler had not made a quick visit into his life recently.

Close to recovery, Courtney stayed up and about the house and grounds all of the daylight hours now. She was walking around the sitting room answering some mail via dictation when I arrived.

"Hi! Have you been a busy doctor?" she inquired cheerfully.

"I visited Sherlock Holmes today. Frankly I wanted to know what he was doing on your front lawn," I responded without hesitation.

"That should have been enlightening."

"Actually it was," I countered.

"I'm hungry, are you ready to eat?" Then she stopped and looked at me.

"Sorry, do you want to talk about your visit to Sherlock?"

"Yes." She stopped, looked at me and thought for a minute, then began to speak.

"These are things that happen in people's lives John. There is nothing we can do about it. The fact of the matter is, you intervened into my life at just the right time. I realized what I was missing."

"I do not even know who you are," I stumbled

"Yes you do John, yes you do." She was speaking softly.

"Sherlock told you the things we had worked on together. High risk, high stakes and exceedingly dangerous, for both of us, I might add."

"He said you had a taste for 'the edge of danger', whatever that means. And what about these foreign agents or thugs trying to kill you and what the devil is this about you being a paramour for some flag admiral or some diplomats or whatever that crew of inflated egos is all about?" I was really confused and angry now.

She smiled, walked toward me and stopped as we were barely touching. Her hair smelled like distant honeysuckle. The fragrance of her clothing cast a hypnotic effect upon my reasoning and for a grown, former combat medical doctor, I felt like all of my skills were betraying me. Her near touch sent a warm sensation through my body and I simply could not stop looking at her.

"John, the surviving foreign agents are being returned to their own countries, under embarrassing circumstances I might add. As far as the paramour business, yes, over the years I have had on two different occasions had exceptionally wealthy and influential male companions. Much of the paramour business was for pretense and ego in certain male quarters where virile males tend to dominate all negotiations. It is a global world we live in. Besides, should you look closer Doctor, you will realize that younger lasses can handle those assignments much better than I these days. That has come to an end as I will be needed on Downing Street in view of the most recent near counterfeiting debacle. That part of my career has already entered the history books."

I had been looking directly at her the entire time that she was speaking but my blindness had failed to grasp that she was crying. I put my arms gently around her and simply held her for a moment. I leaned forward meaning to kiss her with affection but my resistance crumbled into a long, deep and passionate kiss that pulled both of us into a volcano of charisma, excitement and rising heat that became unbearable. Finally the embrace relented. I looked into her eyes and simply said, "I will never leave you."

She buried her face into my chest and grasp me with both arms like she would never let go. Sometime later the maid announced the evening meal.

CONCLUSION

Lestrade had requested assistance from Holmes several times concerning the appearance of counterfeit money being circulated

around London. He had been unable to isolate where it was coming from and was aggravated because he felt Holmes was giving him mixed messages as to the assistance he might offer. Holmes requested a meeting at 221-B Baker Street to share what information on the subject might have passed his way. Lestrade was on time and eager for information concerning his most baffling case. When they were settled with Mrs. Hudson's coffee and biscuits, Holmes began.

"The issues, as they originated, were simple enough. Several countries including America, Germany, France, Norway and Italy to name a few, had been trying to develop their own underwater warfare program ever since the Confederate Submarine, CSS H.L. HUNLEY, sank the much larger USS HOUSATONIC during the civil war in the United States.

"Recently the Germans had reached an agreement with the Americans to buy the Design Plans and Authorization to build the much improved L HUNLEY-IX, arguably the most advanced submarine to date. The German Navy had developed a foreign operations strategy identified as "Yankee One," to take place in London, England.

"Yankee One" was a German Naval Intelligence Operations Strategy to buy the much improved HL HUNLEY-IX plans from the Americans, and pay for those plans with counterfeit British Pound Sterling which the Americans would immediately exchange for gold leaving the London markets awash with counterfeit pounds. The transaction was to take place in London in the winter of 1899."

"British Agent Courtney Carrington, The Lady, had plans of her own. She designed and executed British Naval Intelligence Operation 'Yankee-Krout Gift' to secure, (steal) the HL HUNLEY-IX Design Plans for the British Government, from the Germans and expose the ongoing German scheme to flood London financial markets with millions of counterfeit Pound Sterling. The Lady, paramour of the 1st Sea Lord, executed 'Yankee-Krout Gift' successfully in December of 1899, resulting in London newspapers reporting nothing about any missing submarine plans but launched full, front page editorials about the details of a large German counterfeit money scheme that was blanketing the entire south of England. A scandal resulted. There was much consternation in the German Embassy."

"I, Sherlock Holmes completed the final leg the 'Yankee-Krout Gift' operation by receiving the hand-off from Agent Carrington successfully and delivering the Plans securely to Mycroft and the 1st Sea Lord at the Diogenes Club. Unfortunately, The Lady was the victim of revenge."

"Now convalescing comfortably somewhere in Southern France with her personal physician, her return date is undetermined."

Scribbled by
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