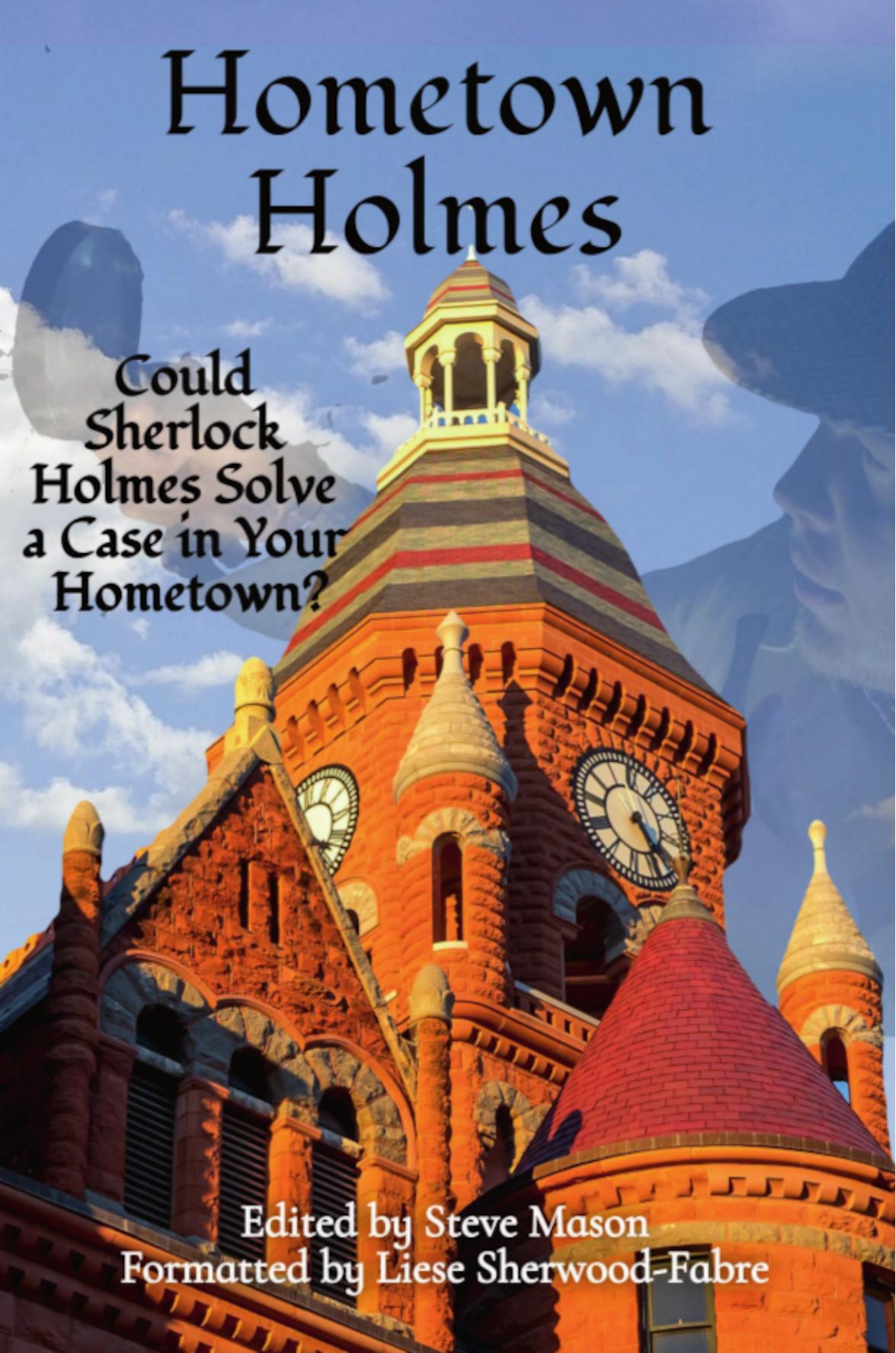


# Hometown Holmes

Could  
Sherlock  
Holmes Solve  
a Case in Your  
Hometown?



Edited by Steve Mason  
Formatted by Liese Sherwood-Fabre

# Hometown Holmes

**Could Sherlock Holmes Solve a Case in Your  
Local Community?**

by

**The Crew and Passengers of  
The Barque Lone Star**



**EDITED BY STEVE MASON, THIRD MATE  
FORMATTED BY LIESE SHERWOOD-FABRE, DECK-MATE**

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## FOREWORD

The Crew of the Barque Lone Star was founded as a scion society of the Baker Street Irregulars in April 1970. Through the years, the society has been home for many authors of fiction, Sherlockian criticism, and other non-fiction pieces of work.

The inspiration for this book came from two stories written by David Marcum, and published in the MX Book of New Sherlock Holmes Stories. The stories were graciously submitted by David for inclusion in this volume.

*To all those who keep the memory green and keep Sherlock alive.*

# CONTENTS

The Case of the Peculiar Pronouns <i>Kevin and Loretta Beard</i>	1
The Empty Castle <i>Will and Barbara Brannon</i>	4
Rache! <i>Ann Caddell, Deckmate/CBLS</i>	14
Last Mission of Doctor Watson <i>Micah Cover</i>	19
The Case of the Gold Frame <i>Karin Diskin</i>	26
The Scarlet Horse <i>Amelia Higgins, Age 10</i>	31
High Plains Grifter <i>Luke Higgins</i>	33
In, Out & About Ontonagon <i>Valli Hoski, Editor UP Ward News-Herald; Librarian UP Town Ontonagon Library</i>	35
The Adventure of the Golden Man <i>Naching T. Kassa</i>	37
A Diagnosis Out of Time <i>Robert S. Katz, MD, BSI, ASH, Deckmate/CBLS</i>	49
Sherlock Holmes In Detroit <i>Rich Krisciunas, ASH, Deckmate/CBLS</i>	54
The Adventure of the Snow Angel <i>Ron Levitsky</i>	59
Sherlock Holmes And The Chicago Bluebeard Murderer: The Evil That Men Do <i>Diane Gilbert Madsen</i>	65
The Adventure of the Austin Axe Murderer <i>Steve Mason, BSI, ASH, Deckmate/CBLS</i>	73
The Adventure of the Rescued Revolutionary Sherlock Holmes <i>David McCallister, ASH</i>	79
A Singular Discovery <i>J. T. Page Jr.</i>	84
The Adventure of the Eyes of Old Main <i>Tracy J. Revels, BSI</i>	87
Kenilworth, Illinois 1966: The Dog that Did Not Bark <i>Brenda Rossini</i>	93
The Disappearance of Ambrose Small: Mystery Solved <i>Barbara Rusch, BSI, ASH&lt; Mit, Deckmate/CBLS</i>	101
The Murder of Benjamin F.M. Chamberlain <i>Pallavi G Shanmugam and Meghna G Shanmugam</i>	119

Holmes Dies on the Scaffold	128
<i>Bob Sharfman</i>	
Now it Can Be Told	130
<i>Joseph Jefferson "Shoeless Joe" Jackson Asks Sherlock Holmes for Help</i>	
The Adventure of Lafitte's Buried Treasure	133
<i>Liese Sherwood-Fabre, Deckmate/CBLS</i>	
Mysterious Incident at Perrache Station	141
<i>Sonia Yazmadjian</i>	
The 1894 Parkdale Murder Mystery in Toronto, Canada	144
<i>Donny Zaldin, BSI, MBt</i>	
The Affair of the Brother's Request	151
<i>David Marcum</i>	
The Adventure of the Madman's Ceremony	172
<i>David Marcum</i>	

# THE CASE OF THE PECULIAR PRONOUNS

KEVIN AND LORETTA BEARD

**I**t was a cool and damp morning in the fall of '98 as Holmes and I were finishing breakfast and checking our correspondence.

"Say Holmes, this may interest you. My old friend Barnaby of Texas sent this:"

*MY DEAR DR. WATSON,*

*I hope this finds you well. I'm writing to thank you again for your advice regarding that Aurora incident last year and to bring you another minor mystery.*

*To summarize, I was called in after a mysterious airship crashed near Aurora, Texas on April 17, 1897, that left considerable debris and a single corpse.*

*I only arrived the next day; the corpse was unlike any I have seen. The skin was rather grey, more than could be accounted for by the heat, and the body appeared to have no gender, being neither male nor female. The tall hairless body had the largest eyes I'd ever seen in a human, and the grievous wounds had obviously been fatal.*

*The townspeople insisted upon disposing of the body immediately without a proper autopsy; the local Texas Rangers appropriated all the metallic debris with the intention of selling it as scrap in Galveston without further investigation or documentation. There's much truth in the old Texas adage that they "don't have the conscience God gave a rattlesnake".*

*I was never able to ascertain from whence he or she or it came, and my efforts to that effect were stymied by local officials. The body was quickly buried without fanfare nor service; may he? she? it? E? 7? F? rest in peace.*

*Oddly, the locals used the pronoun "E" (in place of "he" or "she") when referring to "Em" ("him" or "her"); struck me as rather odd at the time. A few townspeople insisted that one should use "7" and "7m", while some were quite vehement about the subject; still others loudly insisted on "F" and "Fm". When questioned, none of the locals would discuss the matter with a foreigner.*

*That brings me to my next mystery. On a recent trip to Houston, I found that the natives there have also begun to use a variety of pronouns, but I've not found a cogent explanation of their logic. The practice appears to have begun around the same time as the airship crash.*

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

*For Houston denizens, in the case gender is unspecified, they are using "E" rather than "he" or "she" as pronoun, and "Em" rather than "him" or "her" as the object. In the case of some of the peculiar local characters who display both male and female characteristics, they say "6", "6m", sometimes adding an "x" prefix to avoid any ambiguity, especially in writing. An "s" suffix suffices to show possession; "Es" for "his" or "hers".*

*Subsequently, I heard "7" used where we might say "he, she and it". Groups of men are sometimes called a "12", women as "14", and groups containing both as "1E", while a grouping of men, women and dogs as a "17".*

*While attending a traditional theatrical show of well dressed apparently hermaphroditic performers, I heard the performers collectively labeled "16". The natives insist it all makes sense, but cannot or will not explain their logic.*

*When there could be ambiguity between the pronoun and a number, the locals prefix it with an "X"; for example, "X17 did something" vs "Seventeen did something", and an "s" as a suffix to show possession, "Es ranch is worthless."*

*Perhaps you or the Great Detective would enlighten a simple country doctor about this mysterious practice?*

YOURS TRULY,  
Dr. Barnaby Sells  
Paradise, Texas

"Do you recall that Aurora incident Holmes?"

"Of course, my dear Watson, but one cannot make bricks without straw! Pending new evidence, there was very little I could have done by traveling there."

"Well, Holmes, regarding the pronouns, I remember reading a suggestion made in *The Writer* some years ago by a South Carolinian that "E" be used in place of "he" or "she". It didn't seem to gather any interest that I recall."

"Watson, Watson, English is a wonderful language that is constantly evolving and changing. Are you familiar with the work of Babbage?"

"I remember much talk some years ago about Babbage's analytical engine, some sort of machine to perform mathematical computations. I don't recall that it was ever actually constructed."

"It wasn't, Watson, but his work included the concept of representing facts as numbers, and I see how this may have been applied to Texans' issues with gender. Let's see if we can reason it out as we did with the Dancing Men."

"Watson, let's try to solve the mystery. To begin, what are the characters in use? We see 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, E, and F. Let's presume that we can expect 0-9 and A-F for a complete set; a total of 16 characters, and only 1 or 2 characters are used at a time. Suggestive, isn't it?"

"Recall, that our base-10 uses 0 through 9, but there is nothing fundamental about that. One could use base-8 or base-16 just as easily, and the latter has a number of advantages.

Let us suppose that the pronoun represents some logical information; values of true and false for specific questions. Let us further attempt to determine those 5 questions...

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

Pronoun	Meaning	Answers
E	he OR she	f <u>TTTf</u>
F	he OR she OR it	f <u>TTTT</u>
6	he AND she (hermaphrodite)	f <u>fTTf</u>
12	multiple he	T <u>ffTf</u>
14	multiple she	T <u>fTff</u>
17	multiple (he or she or it)	T <u>ffff</u>
16	multiple (he AND she)	T <u>fTTf</u>

First note that a leading 1 seems to suggest “more than 1?”, and if the answer is in the negative, it isn’t required. If that’s so, then the next to last question represents “male gender?”; then the preceding question must be “female gender?”. The very last question must be “no gender?”.

So now we have the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> question, leaving only the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Since man or woman is E=“TTTf”, and a hermaphrodite is 6=“fTTf”, the 2<sup>nd</sup> question must be “Use OR vs AND?”.

Hence, the Houstonians’ new pronouns are explained as simply the answers to 5 questions expressed as a number. “It” becomes 1; “he” is 2, “she” is 4, “he OR she”  $8+4+2=E$ , “he AND she”  $4+2=6$ , and so forth. Of course, many additional questions could be added by extending this system to cover nearly every contingency.

“But Holmes, could not using numbers such as “12 wander lost” be interpreted as ‘Twelve (persons) wandered lost’ rather than ‘A group of male persons wandered lost?’”

“Simplicity itself my good man; the ‘X’ prefix is used to prevent confusion, so one would write or say ‘X12 wander lost.’”

“Who knows, Watson, what exotic, brave new combinations will arise in the Texas wilderness? Perhaps the world *will* adopt this system to improve the language.”

“Holmes, I can’t imagine that any group of people could ever become so perverse in their use of language. The mere idea of so many genders is depraved. I can only blame it on the horrid Texas climate addling the native’s wits.”

“Dear Watson, none of us know what the future will hold. A most peculiar west wind may yet bring strange changes for us all someday.”

# THE EMPTY CASTLE

## WILL AND BARBARA BRANNON

SOME THREE YEARS AFTER the West Texas wolf scare during which the entirely fictional Capt. Derrick Miles and Dr. Frank Hooper solved the entirely fictional case of Sir Basil Wolverton's unfortunate demise, consulting detective Miles returns—apparently from the grave—on a mission to track down the elusive con man and apparent serial murderer Dr. H. H. Holmes.

The true-life crimes of Holmes (yes, the pseudonym was his twisted and deliberate choice), born Herman Webster Mudgett in 1861, spanned two decades in the 1880s and '90s across America and famously centered on the “Murder Castle” he built in Chicago to serve patrons of the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition. Accounts of his perverse mind and nefarious deeds have been widely recorded and even more widely speculated upon; one of the best-known novelizations was Erik Larson’s 2003 *The Devil in the White City*, which refreshed for modern-day readers Holmes’s international infamy dating back to the “yellow journalism” era of the 1890s.

What fewer fans of crime and suspense know is that H. H. Holmes, only months before his 1894 arrest, also constructed a “Murder Castle” in the heart of Fort Worth, Texas. Yes, this is verifiably true—as is the Texas-based charge of horse theft against Holmes, which played a significant part in his ultimate downfall.

Given the previously determined choice of Fort Worth as the detective duo’s London in the award-winning pastiche *The Wolf Hunt: A Tale of the Texas Badlands* (2021), the story of the city’s real-life Murder Castle begged to be retold as a sequel.

The standalone segment below is adapted from a novel in progress titled “The Castle of Fear.” While it necessarily fictionalizes some circumstances—let alone riffs freely upon the master’s canonical tales *The Valley of Fear*, “The Empty House,” and “Silver Blaze”—care has been taken to research and preserve tantalizing factual details as well as the local and world events and places within which the story has been set.

Return with me, then, to the Panther City, as it begins to emerge from its outpost cowtown roots. Cattle shipping on a tarantula-shaped network of railroads has led Fort Worth to boom; multi-story brick business houses are quickly replacing rough-

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

and-ready board buildings; sidewalks are being laid; telephone exchanges and bicycles are facts of daily life; an imposing pink-granite courthouse is rising on the bluffs above the Trinity River. Famed city marshal “Longhair Jim” Courtright has already been dispatched to his grave by Luke Short, and the Sundance Kid has yet to arrive; oil has been struck in the region; Hell’s Half Acre thrives; and there are fortunes to be made. It’s anybody’s guess whose they might be. —Barbara Brannon, *Crew of the Barque Lone Star, September 2023*

### DERRICK MILES WAS DEAD.

AND HAD BEEN for precisely one thousand three hundred and eleven days, a fact I knew from my own witness but could still hardly fathom. I had seen with my very eyes the unsurvivable fall from a great height, Miles and his foeman plunging into the deep gorge at the Pecos High Bridge. The ocular proof had been incontrovertible, the disappearance of the world’s first and foremost consulting detective attested to by myself and accepted by all.

Yet here he was in the flesh, on the last afternoon of October in the year of our Lord 1894, striding a half step ahead of me along Fort Worth’s bustling Main Street, as had so often been our custom on shared missions of yore. In the stained duster, spurs, and much-used Stetson he’d acquired moments ago from a secondhand dealer in men’s furnishings, he dodged recognition, as did I in similar disguise.

The fog had burned away, pushed aside by a fitful wind, by the time we turned the corner east onto Fifth.

“We’re not going back to the apartment?” I asked.

“Not for the moment,” replied Miles. “It’s surely being watched. We’ll do well to keep our partnership under wraps—quite literally—for the time being. Nicetameetcha, Al—I’m Zeb.” We knotted our scarves nearly to our ears. I shouldn’t have worried. North on Rusk, we fell right in with the assorted pedestrians—busy clerks, bustle-bottomed ladies with skirts aflutter and maids and children in tow, delivery boys with wheeled carts throwing up trails of dust, bandannaed cowhands like ourselves—hoofing it north toward the courthouse or south toward the stockyards or every which way to all manner of emporiums and eateries, for Fort Worth seemed to have blossomed into a more modern and, dare I say, respectable, place even during my hermitage. I gazed in awe as a tall, two-wheeled contraption lunkered by, almost grazing my elbow as its rider pedaled laboriously uphill. The bicycle craze, I had to admit, held no fascination for me.

From his rucksack my pardner Zeb retrieved a lariat and casually practiced tricks as we walked, dropping the loop over hitching posts as we strolled up the hill. The rope, made of a dark, glistening fiber wound with an outer layer like a piano string, appeared unusually supple. I wondered where he’d acquired it—or his skill in using it—but I asked no questions.

At the corner of Fourth, where a uniformed patrolman directed vehicle and pedestrian traffic by means of whistle and gloved hands, we waited our turn to cross. I let my eye rest upon the familiar brick exterior of the Fort Worth Land Title building, cater-cornered to us, where in previous days Miles and I had frequently consulted records; then allowed it to travel up the block to the handsome, four-story façade of the Natato-

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

rium. I had often recommended to my patients the health benefits of its Turkish baths and indoor swimming pool, from my firsthand knowledge as a founding patron. Farther along, the opera house had once also been a favorite haunt of mine—and of Miles as well, before his unexplained hiatus. In this familiar but foreign-feeling scene I spied no sign of awareness on the faces around me that the great detective was once again in their midst.

The patrolman's whistle signaled, and we joined the throngs crossing Fourth Street. "Well, here we are, Al," said the detective, hooking his thumb toward a hot-food wagon at the corner. The aroma of sizzling steak wafted our way. I realized he was talking to me. "Whaddya say, let's grab a bite?" he added in with a twang. "Ah'm *hon-gry!*"

Cowboy Zeb strode over, fished into his pocket for a quarter, and returned with a portable meal wrapped in waxed paper for each of us. Like the other workingmen, we found a perch at the edge of the plank sidewalk, folded back the wrapper, and tucked in. The luncheon sandwich turned out to be a grilled patty made from shredded beef laid between slices of bread, and dressed with pickles and Heinz mustard. And it was—delicious.

"Hamburger, they call it," said Zeb. "Now, let's git down to business. Up the street—what do you see?" He cocked his head in that direction, where I spotted, to my astonishment, a forbidding-looking, three-story brownstone pile in progress—that had not existed the last time I'd set foot here.

"Our destination," he explained between bites.

"But I didn't even know about this . . . what is it?"

"I realize you haven't been out and about. But you must not have been reading the papers, either."

"No," I admitted.

"It is, to all accounts, a boardinghouse—of a hundred rooms, it's said. Not all of 'em with doors."

A shiver tickled my spine. Puzzlement must have shown on my face, for my companion went on.

"*This* is what brought me back from the netherworld, though I did not know it at the time. And I have begun to suspect it is its own brand of hell." He paused to let that sink in, and I gulped down the last bite of my Hamburger sandwich. "They call it the Castle."

"Who is building it?"

"Ah, my friend, that is the question, isn't it? Come, let us take an observational tour."

Zeb reached into the pocket of his duster for a pouch of chewing tobacco and inserted a plug into his cheek, a finishing touch to his ruse. We crossed Rusk back to the other side, where the three- and four-story buildings shielded us somewhat from the gusting north wind.

"What grabs you first, Al?"

I glanced up surreptitiously to avoid notice as we slowed to a shuffle. "Well, that shore is a heap of brickbats, Zeb," I replied. I thought I detected a chuckle beneath Zeb's face covering, in response to my attempt at charade.

"All o' that done got throwed up in less time'n it'd a took fer a passel of armadillo pups to git borned," said my partner. Miles stepped closer and snapped out of character. "Word around town is, work crews changed out every few days. Tradesmen got fired with no notice, new ones came in to take up where those left off."

"I—I never even noticed," I replied. If Miles had a clue why I hadn't, he didn't let on.

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

He continued with his forensics. "Talk in some corners of City Hall is that the builder, one Benton T. Lyman, was playing a shell game with his contractors. He and his business associate, a Mr. Pratt, would use a parcel of land as collateral to obtain materials. Once a workman finished a portion and looked to get paid, they'd find some minor fault with it, put him off. The furnishings and fixtures they'd also bought on credit, they'd turn around and hock for cash, which they then used to string the crews along, just enough to stave off a suit."

"Well, surely if work has come to a standstill and folks are onto their scheme, these men will now be brought to account?"

"There also seems to be some confusion of identities," he said. "No one is really sure who Pratt and Lyman are . . . and I for one have a theory that 'Lyman' carries an ironic double meaning."

I rubbed my chin, considering this, as I gazed up at the brick trim of the unfinished third story.

"Back in July, it appears, the partners may have skipped town, together or separately. Or it's possible either or both have been right in our midst, masked among the masses as convincingly as you and I."

I cast a glance over my shoulder, measuring the aspects of the random faces passing us on the sidewalk, neither man nor woman nor child giving any hint of recognition to a duo who, a relatively short time ago, were as well known as any in the city. It was equally surprising to me that I had, so far, encountered not a soul *I* knew. Yes, Miles was right. Fort Worth had become busy and crowded enough to hide a criminal of any stripe who determined not to be found. I felt a frisson, a hint of winter rawness to come.

Turning my gaze upward, I asked my companion, "What about that turret on the corner? Seems out of character . . . the rest of the building is just a big flat ugly box with shuttered windows."

"S'all rather haphazard, ain't it, Al?" he replied, pausing to spit a chunk of tobacco on the sidewalk and then cocking his head for me to resume our pace. "See that there shop directly below it on the ground floor?"

"Yup," I nodded.

"At's a 'pothecary shop in the makin'. Might be the owner deals in some patent medicines and the like, y'know. Might be he wants to keep an eye on comin's and goin's down both streets, too, if ya see what I mean." He turned his chin upward and shielded his eyes against the dust.

"Yep, I do, Zeb. Yep, I reckon yore right. It ain't the most elegant arky-tekcher for sech a tony quarter, either, if y'ask me."

"You speak the God's truth, Al. Almost like th' owners didn't *want* it to git noticed on the front page of the papers." We walked slowly west on Second, stealing glances at the structure. I marveled at its proximity to our own digs. *Former* digs, I reminded myself. This monstrosity would have cast a morning shadow over the stretch of Main Street behind our own apartments at 221B Houston.

"I got one question fer ya, Zeb," I uttered, leaning closer and pausing to pull down my kerchief as the wind and dust battered my face full on. "Where's th'other winders and doors?"

"I 'speck hotel guests might be wonderin' that too. This place ain't likely to git many bookin's if the tourists cain't enjoy a view of the river or a eyeful of that brand-new courthouse goin' up."

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

Miles was right. Anyone lodging on the third floor might expect to be rewarded with a northward vista across the Trinity bluffs, with a front-row seat to the construction of the imposing Renaissance Revival granite landmark rising on the hilltop. Even now I spied, above the parapets of Second Street, a dozen workers clambering across the scaffolding around the courthouse's center tower, and could hear the echo of their chisels and hammers ringing through the alleyway. Yet nowhere on this side of the Castle was any glazing in evidence. Window apertures were instead boarded up and painted the same dun brown as the stone, and even in the middle of the block where one might have expected a side door for the public, the entrance space was bricked over. There was no fire escape.

At the alley, I followed Miles's gaze to the left. Stacks of building materials lined the dirt passageway, leaving room only wide enough for the rubbish cart to pass. Again, no doorway, no ladder.

Unaccustomed as I had grown to outdoor exercise, I felt a weariness settle into my bones, along with a hearty distaste for this blemish on the city's skyline. "I'm bushed, Zeb," I said, stepping back into my stage role. "Kin we stop in fer a sodey pop?"

"We're outta luck here, pardner. Place never even opened for bidness. Boarded up tighter'n a banker's fist. But don'tchew worry, I got a plan for gittin' us inside. It'll be comin' on dark here in a bit. Let's go have us a jigger of somethin' stronger than sodey while we wait."

I hiked up my galluses and pulled my duster tighter around my shoulders. It was beginning to look like we were in for a night of it.

AT A SALOON on Weatherford where we'd once been regulars, we took a back-corner table as Zeb and Al. The young bartender greeted us with a "What'll it be, strangers?" and soon returned with a brace of Lone Star pints. The beer went down smooth and delicious, and I ventured to ask Miles if he'd missed our favorite local brew during his, ah, absence.

"Glad as I am to be back on Texas soil," he replied cannily, "it cannot hold a candle to a Truman's East End porter, my friend."

"You were—you've been—in *London*?"

He smiled wryly. "You're disappointed that I bring no report from the pearly gates—or those of Hades," he said.

I nodded. "You owe me some explanation, don't you think?"

Miles shifted his chair around where he could keep a better eye on the front door and pulled his hat down at an angle. He lowered his voice and abandoned the drawl. "What I'm about to tell you bears on one of the most horrendous chapters in the world's criminal history, and delves into the darkest recesses of a fiend's deviant mentality. Yet I promise you, the investigation in which I have been involved was in no way premeditated. It was an opportunity dropped in my lap, Hooper. One I could not pass up."

I motioned for another round. "I for one have had enough of this soulng-and-guisng for one Hallow's Eve," I said. "It's time for the truth." We settled in as the afternoon shadows deepened.

"Let us begin at the Pecos River," he said in a tone not much more than a whisper. "On a bright March morning with a railroad president aboard a train."

"I've not forgotten."

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

"I was not expecting Professor MacHinery himself to also be aboard," Miles continued. "I thought his attack would come from below and from the rim of the gorge, where his minions, as we know, were already in place. But I was prepared for an array of possibilities. With this." He pulled back the edge of his duster to reveal a glimpse of the black lariat.

"Go on."

"You've seen the versatility of this rope. It is my own invention, employing rubber harvested from the Amazon jungles and reinforced with a thin cable of steel. It is capable of supporting the weight of a man—or two—and stretching to twice its length before springing back. I call it *bom-jefe*."

He laid the slack end of it across the table as an invitation for me to check his claim. I found the rope supple and strong, and I was able with some exertion to extend a short section even as he had described.

"The one I had brought with me aboard the Union Pacific train that day saved my life even as MacHinery plummeted onto the rocks beneath the channel of the Pecos. As the villain pushed me from the platform of the train I managed to wrest myself loose and catch this end"—he revealed a mighty iron hook that had been hidden in the cable—"on the trestle. Three successively shorter—and terrifying—bounces of the line left me hanging halfway above the water and able, in due time, to haul myself back up. You, and the train, were long gone. If any of MacHinery's henchmen witnessed my survival, they had scattered; but after a few days, when I heard no word to controvert that of my apparent demise, I saw my chance. A week later, after I'd crossed into Mexico and walked for seven nights across the Pensamiento, I was able to send a coded message from the Allende village to my brother Percy in London."

"You telegraphed him rather than me . . ." I trailed off. "Why did you not at least let me know?"

"You couldn't have kept the secret, amigo. The genuineness of your mourning—witnessed by our enemies as well as our allies—was the most convincing evidence in all quarters that I had not survived. Don't you see: the members of MacHinery's mob got over their own grief so quickly, they quarreled among themselves and grew cocky. Many were easy marks for arrest all around the world. Some surrendered; some were imprisoned; some hanged. You read of this in the papers, I trust?"

"No. I read nothing. I struggled to put one foot in front of the other, to tend to a few patients . . . until I became one myself."

Miles paused at this, then nodded slowly before continuing. "We had our informants, of course. We knew you had vacated 221B." He paused again as though waiting for acknowledgment—or forgiveness. He took out his pipe, filled it, lit it, and drew on it, before resuming his narrative. "Well then. Here you are, and glad I am of it."

"You left off in Coahuila," I prompted. "Go on."

"Yes, Coahuila. From there I made my way by train to San Antonio and New York, then sailed for England. All undercover, though the passage was not without its tense moments. By May Day I was sitting in my brother's office at the ministry to hear him out on a secret mission. Percy can be quite persuasive, as you know. He convinced me that a ghost might prove the best man for the job of tracking a killer."

"You mentioned the name, this morning, of Jack the Ripper. The Whitechapel murderer. Did you have any success?"

Miles took another long draw on his meerschaum, then puffed the smoke out in a

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

series of little rings. Two more beers arrived. He leaned in closer and drew his scarf up around his ears as the afternoon shadows deepened.

"Imagine with me, if you will, an ordinary day at the city's Diogenes Club, which I myself can only imagine, as I was not present, having kept carefully out of public view for two and a half years. I picture the setting thus. My elder half-brother, dapper in his customary afternoon sack suit and starched collar, is occupying his customary leather chair beside his customary smoking stand while in his hand is his customary gin and tonic with lime. Customarily, Percival Miles would be deep in thought, holding court with his own company.

"But in strides a stranger. A Yankee, and not just any American, but a true Boston barney, a preceptor of drama at a Back Bay school of performing arts. This much and more Percy learns after the stranger takes a seat opposite him while he sips his own beverage, clearly not his first of the day. The gent is a member of a reciprocating club, the Lambs, and has been on the continent and in England for a fortnight, taking in a few shows and seeing museums; it is his chief aim, however, to trace the whereabouts of a onetime ward and student of his, an orphaned female cousin who had fallen out of communication with her remaining kin soon after becoming engaged to marry in Chicago.

"Percy continues to listen, saying little as the visitor eases deeper into his cups. A handful of letters from the young woman discussing vague plans to travel abroad with her new husband are all he has had to go on. Said husband, it seems, has a questionable past. Some months on, the Pinkertons have been consulted, but their man has turned up nothing useful. For a year now, the stranger says, he has been carrying around a gnawing feeling that something might be very wrong, as the young lady had fully intended to return to a budding career as a stage presenter and elocution teacher.

"Percy, not typically one to suffer anyone's random ramblings, catches a few words that pique his interest. The missing woman, says the visitor, has inherited valuable property—land and cash and horses—in Fort Worth, Texas."

My eyes opened wide, my sudden gaze momentarily breaking the plane of Miles's little drama.

"Yes, Hooper, you've heard me right. 'Minnie had every expectation of going back after her summer at the Chicago fair,' says the man. 'She would never have abandoned her dreams, or her younger siblings. And then Nannie the quiet one didn't write back either....'

"Bear with me just a little longer in this narrative, the import of which you may begin to grasp. It is the visitor's last day abroad before returning home with nothing, he tells Percy. If only he knew someone with better connections . . . Percy asks for the man's card, accepts it, rises slowly, instructs him to wait, walks casually to the club's telephone office, places a call to a secret number. Professor Fred Williams of Boston, Massachusetts, does not realize that he has poured out his drunken soul to the one man in all London with precisely the right resources to assist."

I took this all in. Miles had painted a picture so vivid I expected to glance up and find myself surrounded by the stuffed shirts and cigar smoke of the Diogenes, and to observe Percival Miles himself returning to his chair. "Your brother sensed a correlation with the larger thread of unsolved crimes you'd been pursuing," I said.

"Enough to suggest that the time was ripe to act. Despite everything we'd painstakingly pieced together, the Whitechapel killer remained unknown—and quite possibly at large. One theory I myself had begun to advance led—and still leads—to an *American*

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

perpetrator, one with a skewed mentality regarding women, a keen understanding of human anatomy, some skill with a knife, and an extraordinary talent for disguise and misdirection."

"Not unlike yourself," I interjected coolly, baiting him.

"You jest, but the gift of virtually inhabiting the criminal mind carries its advantages. I had spent my hiatus doing precisely that *sub rosa*, reenacting scenes, examining evidence, following every strand of speculation in the Ripper cases—as well as many facts unknown to the rank and file—thanks to Percy's access. Together he and I had systematically eliminated all known suspects put forth over the years by Scotland Yard. Strange as it might seem, the picture had begun to emerge of a U.S. citizen, male, white, born sometime before the war—possibly the fifties—with submissive mother, domineering father, taunting siblings; and possibly a wife of his own and child, or children, by now. Our man claims a degree of medical training. Though he is not traditionally handsome, he also possesses a portion of charm; in physique he is of average height and weight, with no distinguishing features other than ample facial hair—brown. He is sufficiently vain about his appearance, however, that he generally wears mutton chops, as well as a bowler to cover his receding hairline or, perhaps, baldness."

At this I cast a glance up at him.

"No personal offense intended, of course. Now, where were we . . . . He is not wealthy. Though probably not gainfully employed in a particular job, he is clever at obtaining anything on credit and has amassed sufficient means to parlay small sums into larger schemes. His victims are always vulnerable, even gullible. He is a frequent, and erratic, traveler by train. He is a voracious reader of newspapers. He holds a savant's fascination with clues and ciphers. It was this latest characteristic I had landed upon, Hooper, only the week before Dr. William's chance encounter with Percy at the Diogenes Club. My casual source at Hatchards—on my undercover rounds I had taken to scouting not only the Paternoster stalls but the established bookshops—fell to discussing the escalating fascination with the detective stories of Arthur Conan Doyle. I recall that you yourself were an early adherent?"

I nodded assent.

"The author's stories in *The Strand* have suddenly become the store's hottest seller,' the man said. 'Imagine that, eclipsing Dickens and Stevenson and even the Bard . . . this upstart writer for the masses!' and such. He practically sniffed the air as he recalled his first fanatical customer, back in '87. A New England traveler had stopped in to specifically request the *Beeton's Christmas Annual* for that season. This might not have been a memorable occasion, of course, but the man appeared so taken with his find when the clerk handed it to him, he stood right there at the register and devoured the entire cover story—and then had to be reminded as he started to walk off without paying. 'Shall I take down your name, sir, in order to notify you when future works by this author arrive?' the clerk asked him. 'Yes, by all means,' he answered. 'You may find me via a notice in the papers to Dr. Henry—ah, Dr. H. H. Holmes.'"

I MULLED the possible repercussions of Miles's narrative as I found myself drawn inexorably into this caliginous London landscape. To think that the most notorious killer of our age might have been a citizen of our own advanced shores—and not some escapee from Bedlam or aberrant throwback to the Picts—cast the Whitechapel murders in a different frame of reference indeed. What would have possessed an

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

American to abandon the privileges of our thriving democracy and go in search of victims abroad? Perhaps the man was widely known, or perhaps widely enough known in certain circles . . . perhaps he intended to hone his skill, and return . . .

I did not realize that I was speaking these theories aloud until Miles leaned toward me and interrupted.

"Precisely, Hooper," he said. "I had already come to the conclusion that the killer had planned to rehearse, to exercise his technique; most likely, on female victims he deemed expendable. He bore no moral prejudice toward the class of Englishwoman he targeted; he simply guessed that fewer energies would be put forward in pursuing a perpetrator. On this score he was wrong. The whole of Scotland Yard devoted years to the effort, under the likes of Abberline, Moore, and Andrews. Detective Inspector McWilliam himself got in on the action. But ultimately their work was as inconclusive as that of your Lestrade and Gregson in those potboilers you're so fond of."

"Did you yourself make more progress during your sojourn?" I asked, trying to maintain a casual tone.

"No, frankly, not in the sort of proof the Metropolitan Police were looking for—eager as they were to remove the stain of embarrassment resulting from a notoriously unsolved murder discovered right on their own premises."

"You refer to the woman's dismembered body found in Whitehall in the fall of '88," I offered.

"Indeed. The police believed that incident unconnected to the so-called Ripper cases," he said nonchalantly. "They were—and are—quite wrong. Once the trail of evidence in Great Britain grew cold, around '91, the London police abandoned the chase, and the matter has been allowed to stand as a mystery in the public's imagination. Percy's chance visitor provided the missing link for me."

"How so?"

"Fred Williams said that his niece's mystery suitor—later husband, though an unlawful one, I'm certain—claimed to be a medical doctor." I raised an eyebrow at this revelation. "You are no doubt aware, my dear physician, of the inconsistent nature of standards and licensure in the profession in the 1880s."

"Despite Dr. Osler's vigorous campaigning, of course," I added. "The situation is only now beginning to turn about."

"Eighty-thousand self-described doctors in the United States—according to our most recent Census tally—and no consistent, nationwide registry by which to verify their credentials. And the medical schools themselves have only of late started to professionalize. It was, and still is, far easier for someone falsely claiming to be a medical practitioner in our nation to elude discovery than in the mother country. A clever forger with a nimble hand could move about at will, peddle snake-oil, cure a few ills, perform easy procedures, and fool many. Once I had a name to go by—and a fortnight's access to Fred Williams' correspondence and recollections as I accompanied him back home under cover—I was able to pick up that faint trail left by our Dr. H. H. Holmes from Whitechapel westward across the ocean to Boston, then on to Chicago, St. Louis, Denver, and here. At every stop I learned something useful, and a picture began to emerge."

The light was fast fading, and a distinct chill was descending, by the time Miles brought his narrative to a close. "Our killer was known in New England as Mudgett, in Chicago as Holmes and later Gordon, in Denver as Howard, and most recently, in Fort

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

Worth, as Pratt or Bond. The most diligent and painstaking work has been required to prove beyond doubt that these figures are one and the same."

"How marvelous! And will you arrest him?"

"That final task, I would prefer, as was my former custom, to leave to the local authorities. But there's only one main complication at this point."

"What would that be?"

"Our Mr. Lyman the investor has slipped the dragnet again."

"He's left Fort Worth?"

"I sent Agent Nicholls northward after him," said Miles. "For now, our concern is with the fake doctor Holmes himself. We must find a way into his murder castle—and to prevent him from repeating his previous atrocities on Texas soil." He indicated with a nod over his shoulder that we should pay up and be on our way. The Hallow's Eve goblins would soon roam abroad, eager to practice their pranks; bicycles and storefronts were padlocked, shoppers were long since scattered to the warmth of their parlors, and Derrick Miles was itching with a theory to test.

Night was falling, and I gathered that its shadows would supply ample cover for whatever the resurrected detective next had in mind.

# RACHE!

ANN CADDELL, DECKMATE/CBLS

Some of my readers may remember that in the first case of my friend Sherlock Holmes that I laid before the public, the bizarre murder in Lauriston Gardens, the German word "Rache" played a role. Oddly, that same word was to come into our lives once more, and again it would portend strange doings on the other side of the Atlantic.

On a pleasant summer day in 1886, Holmes and I were idling the afternoon away in our sitting room, windows open to catch the soft breeze, when a sharp ring at the bell and footsteps on the stairs announced the presence of visitors. Mrs. Hudson ushered in our friend Inspector Lestrade of Scotland Yard, followed by a younger man with short brown hair and an intense, piercing gaze.

"Why, friend Lestrade, what brings you to us on such a lovely day? Surely even the criminals of London must be taking some time off to enjoy the season," asked Holmes.

"It's not London we're concerned about, Mr. Holmes," replied Lestrade. "This gentleman is Mr. Robert Lancaster, with the Pinkerton Detective Agency, based in Chicago, in the United States. No doubt you've seen the newspaper accounts of the horrible riot in the Haymarket in Chicago in May, with an anarchist bomb thrown and seven policemen killed. Here is a copy of the leaflet calling for the demonstration." He handed Holmes the document which I have reproduced here, with the call for "Revenge" prominent in English and German.

"Indeed, after the police had killed six strikers at the McCormick plant the day before," said Holmes.

"No doubt there were very fine people on both sides," I interjected drily.

"Be that as it may," broke in Lancaster, "the fact remains that a dangerous anarchist has caused chaos in a major American city, and the Chicago police are making no



## HOMETOWN HOLMES

headway in tracking him down. My agency has been called in to help with the investigation."

"But why come to me, all the way across the Atlantic?" asked Holmes.

Lancaster squirmed with embarrassment. "Well, Mr. Holmes, the fact is that the prime suspect in the actual bomb-throwing, an immigrant and anarchist named Rudolph Schnaubelt, has evaded the police and we have information that he has fled to Canada. Now that he is within the Commonwealth, we suspect his next move may be to try to make it to England, if he has not already."

"How has a suspect in such a high-profile case managed to elude the authorities?" asked Holmes.

Lancaster looked even more embarrassed. "Well, the truth is, gentlemen, the police laid hands on him pretty quickly after the event and brought him in for questioning. But then they released him. He actually hung around town for a while, inquiring after his mates who were being held in jail, and was never confined himself. Eventually he disappeared. It was originally thought that he had gone to California, but now we are fairly sure he headed to Canada instead. Police Captain Schaack is of the opinion that Schnaubelt has a 'friend on the inside' at City Hall."

"Ah, the famous integrity and efficiency of the Chicago metropolis," remarked Holmes. "And no doubt you are here to enlist my aid in apprehending this supposedly homicidal character."

"That's the long and the short of it, Mr. Holmes," said Lancaster. "With your contacts throughout all of London, we thought you would be best positioned to sniff out this fellow if he's anywhere in the vicinity. My agency has authorized me to offer you whatever terms you care to name to render your assistance."

"Very well, Mr. Lancaster, I'll take on your case. It appears to offer a change from the common run of London crime. Where can I get in touch with you?"

"Inspector Lestrade here will be able to reach me at any time, day or night. The citizens of Chicago will be truly grateful to you for your help in removing this threat to public safety."

"Well, we'll see," said Holmes with a chuckle.

For the next several days, Holmes was in and out of the apartment at odd hours, often dressed as a workingman in threadbare garments and worn-out boots. Beyond mentioning that he was frequenting the East End, he was close-mouthed about his doings. But after a few days of this, he suddenly appeared in his usual attire, rubbing his hands gleefully, and requested Mrs. Hudson to send up tea and biscuits for half a dozen people. "Well, Watson," he gloated, "mixing in the poorest quarters of Whitechapel may not always be pleasant, but it can uncover some very interesting information. For example, did you know that the Socialist League has just wrapped up its second annual conference? But listen, I believe our invited guests have begun to arrive."

Mrs. Hudson ushered in Inspector Lestrade and Mr. Lancaster. "So, Holmes," said Lestrade, "You say you have found us our man. Where is he? I've got a couple of constables outside waiting to step in if he causes any trouble."

"I don't believe that will be necessary," Holmes replied. "In fact, here is Mr. Schnaubelt now, along with a comrade of his."

Two other men appeared at the door, one tall and stooped with light brown hair and beard, dressed in coarse workmen's garb, and looking distinctly nervous, the other

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

of a more scholarly and self-assured appearance. The second cleared his throat, and with a slight bow, addressed Holmes and the detectives.

"Gentlemen, allow me to introduce myself and my companion. I am Henry H. Sparling, journalist and editor. With me is Rudolph Schnaubelt, late of Chicago."

Lestrade and Lancaster leapt to their feet. "Aha, you've brought him to us after all! Lancaster, grab him and make sure he can't get away!"

Holmes quickly interposed himself between Schnaubelt and the detectives. "Now, now, gentlemen, let's not be hasty. I strongly advise you to partake of Mrs. Hudson's excellent tea - and I believe these are currant scones - while Mr. Sparling brings us up to date on developments."

Lestrade backed off, but remained tense and on guard. "If it were anyone but you, Mr. Holmes, I'd clap this murderer in darbies and be off with him before you could blink. But I've learned that it doesn't do to ignore your advice, strange as it often seems."

"Thank you, sir," said Sparling. "As you are no doubt aware, the Socialist League, of which I am honored to serve as secretary, is dedicated to pursuing the wholly laudable end of better pay and working conditions for the laboring classes. Unfortunately, it is also becoming more and more associated with a strain of anarchism that can lead to the sort of bomb-throwing that we saw so recently in Chicago. I do not believe that our cause is aided by indiscriminate murder. So I was not pleased when one of my members came to me for help in hiding Mr. Schnaubelt, who was accused of the Haymarket bombing and yet had somehow made it to England. But when I heard Mr. Schnaubelt's story, I changed my mind, as I am sure you gentlemen will as well. Since his English is poor, I will relate the events for him."

"Yes, Mr. Schnaubelt was at the demonstration in the Haymarket. And yes, he was at the speaker's platform, along with the other organizers. But his intent was to dissuade his more violent fellows from their plans. The witness who saw him take a small object from another organizer and put it in his pocket didn't realize that he was trying to spirit the bomb away from the crowd, not prepare to hurl it. And the men who claim they saw him throw the bomb described someone who looks nothing like Mr. Schnaubelt. In truth, the real bomb thrower followed Mr. Schnaubelt away from the platform and wrestled the bomb away from him."

"A pretty story, but why should we believe it?" asked Lestrade. "Anyone can make up a tale like that."

"Because," said Sparling, "I can produce the real bomb thrower! Mr. Schnaubelt was not the only one who fled Chicago. In the confusion, the culprit was able to slip away and light out for England before the dragnets began to close in, counting on his fellow anarchists in London to help conceal him. But not everyone in the Socialist League has fallen prey to the anarchist insanity. On learning of his true nature, his helpers came to me with their story, so when Mr. Schnaubelt arrived looking for aid, I already knew the facts. I let the killer, an American named Jackson, think that I was on his side while I decided what to do with him. When Mr. Holmes began hanging around our convention asking questions, I soon suspected his true identity and offered to team up. With his help, and that of some of his more brawny associates, I've brought Jackson in here in the cab that's been waiting down the street. Let's bring him in and see what he has to say."

Still looking skeptical, Lestrade directed his constables to fetch the inhabitant of the cab. They brought in a scruffy-looking specimen, gripping him tightly on both sides.

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

"You class traitor! You filthy..." sputtered Jackson, attempting to lunge at Sparling but brought up short by the constables.

"Now, now, Mr. Jackson," Holmes said smoothly. Surely you must have known, spilling your story to Mr. Sparling in the presence of numerous witnesses wasn't the wisest course of action."

"I thought I was among friends. I thought the working man on this side of the pond would feel some solidarity with the cause. But no – you rat out your brother without a second thought!"

"So you admit," said Holmes, "that you were the one who seized the bomb from Mr. Schnaubelt and threw it at the policemen?"

"Ja, das ist the bomber," broke in Schnaubelt in a state of agitation.

"And I'd do it again!" screamed Jackson. "Long live the revolution!"

With a sudden burst of almost superhuman strength, he tore free from the constables and flung himself out of the sitting room and down the stairs.

"After him!" shouted Lestrade, as he, Lancaster, and the constables flew down behind him. Holmes and I watched from the window as Jackson outdistanced his pursuers and disappeared around the corner. Lestrade and Lancaster returned to the apartment, having left the constables to continue the pursuit and report to headquarters.

"So," said Holmes as everyone settled back in. "Inspector, Mr. Lancaster, do you still view Mr. Schnaubelt as the menace to society that he's been made out to be?"

"Well," drawled Lancaster, "I heard what sounded an awful lot like a confession from that other fellow. But I don't know if I'll be able to drag him back to the U.S. unless you London lawmen manage to round him up. I hate to go home empty handed, but I hate even more to send an innocent man to certain death. And if I go home with Mr. Schnaubelt and without Jackson, and with no solid evidence that Jackson was the real bomber, I wouldn't count on the authorities in Chicago to go easy on old Rudolph. They're out for blood, and I'm not sure that they care that much whose it is. I'd be happier if he stayed out of the country from now on."

"I couldn't say it better myself," agreed Lestrade. "But what will we do with him instead?"

Henry Sparling, who had been observing quietly, stood up. "I have a suggestion, if Mr. Schnaubelt will agree to it. With my contacts, I can arrange safe passage for him to Argentina. It's a long way from home for him, but it's a place where he should be safe, and where there are opportunities for a man of energy to make a new life for himself. What do you say, Rudolph? Are you game to give Argentina a try?"

Schnaubelt thought for a moment. "Ja, I see no other way. It is better than the end of a rope."

"Then it's agreed," said Sparling. "Mr. Holmes, I can't thank you enough for saving an innocent man from the gallows."

"All in a day's work," said Holmes. "While straightforward, the case did present some interesting features."

Over the next months, I followed the news of the Haymarket trials closely in the London papers, and was perturbed to read in November of 1887 that four of the accused conspirators were hanged. At this point, I was not sure that any of them were truly guilty of more than rabble-rousing. Years later, in 1893, governor Altgeld of Illinois apparently came to the same conclusion, when he criticized the conduct of the trial and pardoned the remaining convicted men. When I pointed out the newspaper

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

article to Holmes, he simply replied "Well, Watson, sometimes even officialdom manages to admit their mistakes, although it can take them a long time to do it."

# LAST MISSION OF DOCTOR WATSON

## MICAH COVER

**D**iary Entry found within Watson's Tin Box in the vaults of the Cox & Co Bank,  
Charing Cross Road, London

Saturday, the 31<sup>st</sup> of October, Halloween, 1936, Hollywood, California, USA

My name is Doctor John H. Watson, of London, of the 5<sup>th</sup> Northumberland Fusiliers, Army. As I will be dead in 5 years, this shall be my final Diary Entry.

When I received the letter from the widow Bess Houdini, I was at first shocked. Her husband had become mortal enemies with my late literary agent and fellow occult investigator, Sir Arthur "Artie" Conan Doyle. However, I was still best known for my association with The Great Detective, who joined forces with The Great Escapist before his death to debunk Spiritualists across Europe and America. It was for this association, I was sure, that the widow of Houdini reached out to me one final time. But, as the ironies continued to circle each other, I read and realized her missive was to ask me for advice – to conduct a séance.

To speak to Houdini himself.

I was already aware of their strange pact, now manifesting. Despite his skepticism, Houdini held on to the hope that communication with spirits was possible. He even collaborated with Thomas Edison himself on a radio to talk to the Dead. In that "spirit," Houdini concocted a plan with his wife. Whosoever should die first, that deceased partner would attempt to communicate with the living counterpart using a code (Holmes always did like that part himself). The living would conduct a séance on the anniversary of the dead spouse's death for the following 10 years - in an effort to hear the coded message from The Beyond.

The great Harry Houdini died – in my estimation, under *extremely* mysterious circumstances – on Halloween, 1926.

The pact began – and, therefore, so did Mrs. Houdini's séances. Nine séances – nine Halloweens - nine attempts - had come and gone. The 10<sup>th</sup> was upon us.

And Bess Houdini wanted *my* help in arranging it all.

My mind began to race. Of course I would help – she was the widow of a former

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

friend, after all. But, God forgive me, I saw *another* opportunity – one to aid my friend, Sherlock Holmes.

It occurred to me that this could be a psychic event of unprecedented, international magnitude. Hundreds – perhaps thousands – perhaps *more* – believers, psychics, Spiritualists, and everyone in between - would be summoning their psychic energy - *at once*. Regardless of whether or not Houdini *could* speak from Beyond the Veil – and, in all my research, despite what Doyle always believed, I knew how unlikely that would be – *I myself* could tap into that power, using Doyle's mysterious Grimoire. And with that power would come knowledge – knowledge I could then share with my friend.

Using all resources at my disposal, I hatched a plan. A plan to help both *her* and my own motivations.

*Two ravens with one moonstone.*

In her letter, Mrs. Houdini informed me that the past séances were performed in New York City – coincidentally, where my friend now based his operations. Since *he* would be *there*, it occurred to me that *I* could be on the *other* side of the continent, in an effort to connect as much space as possible. Why not Hollywood, where Houdini pursued his exciting film career? I found a hotel named The Knickerbocker (there was even one in New York – perfect for Holmes) on Ivar Avenue. And why not invite a total of 300 to it? And why not broadcast this séance *live* – so *everyone* around the *world* could now participate? A total of 20 simultaneous séances should do, I thought.

I rang up Mrs. Houdini, and I was met on the other end of the line by her agent and business manager, one Edward Saint. I shared all my ideas. He was amenable to most. To those he felt reluctant, Doyle's Grimoire saved the day. By the end of the conversation, *all* my... "suggestions" were approved by this Mr. Saint. It was then I discovered that his title was "Doctor." I immediately asked him what he had received his Doctorate in; Saint cleared his throat, complained of a bad connection, and abruptly ended the call.

Soon after, I received my engraved invitation from Mrs. Houdini. I was sure to stamp my pentagram upon its face.

I travelled the 5 days from London to New York to check in with my friend and receive further instructions. Another 5 to cross the country to meet Mrs. Houdini. 5,437 miles total from my London, England, to Hollywood, California. I was proud of how well my 84-year-old body persevered through the trip. And yet, it was the 10 flights of stairs leading to the roof of the Knickerbocker Hotel that caused me the most grief and suffering.

But I had a job to do – the day *before* the séance the next night.

That next night, I joined the excited guests as they huddled onto the hotel's roof. It was chilly for Hollywood, and I could feel it down to my aging bones. So I was more than happy to shake hands with as many as I could, if only as a feeble attempt to dispel the cold. Of the 300 invited, I pressed palms with the Judge of the California High Court; the Mayor of Los Angeles; and countless journalists from every conceivable publication across the globe. I even met the past President of the California Spiritualist Organization, someone whom Doyle would have loved to have met, if only he hadn't crossed into the Great Beyond himself. But I was most interested in a lawyer turned magician, one William Larsen, who had the glow in his eyes of a child about to see his first magic trick.

I approached the table that was to be used for the purposes of the séance. On it, and on a satin pillow, lay a pair of shining handcuffs, beckoning me. These were the infa-

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

mous Mirror Handcuffs, which (supposedly) gave Houdini so much trouble in 1904. With Mrs. Houdini's permission, I carefully lifted and inspected them. True to their name, they clearly reflected everything behind me. And, like Holmes' moment gazing into the reflection of a window while tangling with a Sussex Vampire, I saw it. Doctor Edward Saint and Mrs. Houdini exchanging a furtive glance. As Holmes would insist, this was *my* department; there was no mistaking the moment's meaning. Saint was *more* than her manager – the man tasked to summon the dead ex-husband was the widow's new paramour.

I put down the handcuffs back on the satin pillow. By it sat another object. A dull, weathered, tin box. My curiosity soon overcame me.

I turned to Mrs. Houdini. "Mrs. Houdini," I said to her, "do you know the origins of this tin box?"

She peered at it with... perhaps... *nostalgia*?... or perhaps... *bitterness*?

"That box has a lock," Mrs. Houdini replied, "a lock that my Harry never showed me how to open properly. You can see the 5 keys sitting on the table. One of them, Harry said, could open the tin box. But I never discovered which."

"Very curious indeed, Mrs. Houdini," I replied, as I carefully placed the box back down. But, as I turned, I could see her attention was already misdirected back to Saint. The wife of the greatest defeater of locks would never know how to open it.

The ironies continued to swirl.

And so did the attendees. Almost 300 fans were crammed into a set of bleachers, but I was invited to join what Doctor Saint referred to as "The Inner Circle" - the carpeted area of the roof dedicated to the séance.

Lording over the proceedings, Saint sat in a huge chair. Next to it was a small shrine of Harry Houdini. His photograph shone under a dimly lit bulb – a red, hypnotic glow – *like a ruby. Like the hypnotic ruby ring Holmes now wears*, I thought.

Mrs. Houdini sat in a chair identical to Doctor Saint's on the other side of the Houdini shrine, facing him. The two regarded each other with curiosity - maybe even excitement. How often had Holmes and I sat in our rooms at Baker Street in just such a regard, such excitement – he, wondering what his next thought should be, I, wondering if he could read mine.

Someone flipped a loud switch. The sound equipment started humming. In one moment, we were now part of 20 séances connected live around the world.

I turned away, pretending to be overwhelmed by uncontrollable emotions. I flipped open Doyle's Grimoire. I promptly closed my eyes.

Saint began with a pronouncement of the veracity of Spiritualism. "We are seekers after truth," he announced to us all. "Remove the fraud, what is left *must be the truth*."

*"When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth."* I thought, feeling the energy surge.

"Oh, disembodied spirits," he intoned, "we greet thee... Houdini ... Are you here?... Are you here?" His voice rose: "Please manifest yourself in any way possible ... We have waited Houdini, so long...now *this* is the night of nights...SPEAK, HARRY!"

"Pomp and Circumstance" followed, the stage music Houdini used for his show openings and closings. I suggested they play it. Mrs. Houdini and Saint agreed (with a little help from Doyle's Grimoire) that it was befitting of the solemn occasion. I liked it for *other* reasons – a march, to stir the emotions - *and psychic energy*.

And my plans were working. I could *feel* the energy crackling through the music,

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

the air, and *everyone's* otherworldly expectations. This power was supposed to summon the great Harry Houdini. *I* would use it instead. For me, and for *Holmes*.

But I still listened to Saint as the group's energy flowed into me like water.

"One secret, now public, is that Houdini had one vault in a bank," Saint said. "In this vault were highly secret papers – things left untold. This secret vault has never been located to this day."

*Two ravens, one moonstone*, I thought, as the energy signature continued to flow through me. I always wondered where I would keep my Diary Entries – the 5 cases of Holmes I could not share with the world until we were both "gone" - *now I knew*.

"Mastermind of the universe, let the spirit descend in The Inner Circle!" Doctor Saint cried. "Manifest yourself in any way! Take any vital thing from us as you may need!"

I willed the energy to flow from them, to the Grimoire, and finally, to *me*.

*"THE TIME IS AT HAND!"*

And with that - and an incantation I muttered - a sudden burst of cold wind blew.

And I could *see* it. I could see it *all*.

First, I could see inside the very hotel below us. Inside the building's very *future*. A filmmaker named... Griffith, convulsing horrifically in his hotel room, dying of a cerebral hemorrhage on the way to hospital. Then further – some athlete at the bar named... DiMaggio... with an actress named.... Monroe.... on his arm, blowing a kiss.

Then, my vision widened *more*. Racing forward, I clearly saw Dash Houdini, fervently conducting his simultaneous séance at the Knickerbocker Hotel in New York City. And there was Sherlock Holmes – now in his latest identity – peering over Dash's shoulder, expectantly.

My vision continued to race. For now I saw Colonel Harry Day, Houdini's European agent, conducting his séance in London, not far from Baker Street. I could even see Day's home in Sussex, not far from where Holmes ultimately retired.

And my vision continued to speed through space - and *time*. I saw more – *much* more.

*Another* world war – and *again*, with Germany... sweet, merciful *God*... and the United States engaged in *yet another* - in *Korea*.

Sweat poured down my brow. I wiped it away with the back of my hand. *I must focus*, I thought.

And there, I heard... *it*. Holmes' eerie laugh, echoing through the swirling corridors of time. I followed the sound, and soon I caught a glimpse.

A glimpse of... *a shadow*.

I saw the first case. I saw how to break into a New York prison (Houdini would have *loved* that – although, his forte was breaking *out* of things, not *in*).

Then, one year from today. A scheming professor committing evil. Holmes would be ready, as he was with Professor Moriarty.

Then, seven years from today. The secret of Valhalla Lodge. A secret lost to history. It *wouldn't* be to *Holmes*.

Then, 12 years from today. The discovery of a bleached skeleton on the shore... *Covey*. The man's name was *Covey*.

Then, 18 years from today. Five hours to save an innocent from the electric chair. The testimony was indeed false. Holmes would know the *truth*.

But then, my strained efforts to help my friend – in the future – were suddenly supplanted. I saw Mrs. Houdini, on a train, racing to New York, where Holmes now

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

was. Was she trying to reach... *him*?- did she *know* something? The world would never know.

Suddenly, I returned to Hollywood. I watched the lit screen of the El Capitan Theatre. And there I saw an actor, playing Houdini, dying from drowning inside a glass cell. *Not* from a stomach blow – a blow that, across time, historians would debate if it came from a Spiritualist conspiracy.

And then my vision began to collapse, deeper, into... *myself*.

And then, *I saw myself*. Delivering a speech on the occult, deep within the vaults of Cox & Co. Bank. During this horrific second war. German bombers outside attacking London.

And then, I saw... nothing.

Nothing... but an eerie *shadow*.

His voice rising to a mad pitch, Doctor Saint spoke, breaking my reverie and the reverie of everyone else present.

"Mrs. Houdini," Doctor Saint sobbed, "the zero hour has passed! The ten years are up! Have you reached a decision?"

The widow of Harry Houdini slowly rose from her chair. "Yes," she replied, almost tearfully. "Houdini did *not* come through. My last hope is gone."

I bowed my head, knowing full well why the séance did not work as intended.

*The ends justifies the magick*, I thought, hoping this would be proven right – in *time*.

"It is finished," Mrs. Houdini continued, moving toward the light. "And so, good night, Harry."

She turned off the light.

Hollywood is known for its lack of weather – *especially* rain. But when it *does* rain, it rains continuously – for *days*.

The skies over us – Hollywood - were clear only *moments* ago. But the *moment* Mrs. Houdini turned off the ruby light, it started raining upon us.

Mrs. Houdini's entourage quickly ushered her back into the hotel. But, before I lost sight of her, I called out.

"Mrs. Houdini!" I shouted over the din and the downpour. "The tin box – may I –"

"You may take it, Doctor," she shouted, as she was quickly hustled below to warmth.

Over the years, I discovered that Mrs. Houdini would part with a countless number of her dead husband's precious belongings. "Ten years is long enough to wait for any man," she'd say in an interview.

The attendees jockeyed for access to the dry floors below. Eventually, I was left alone, the last man standing on the roof of the Knickerbocker.

Standing on the carpet, below which, now wiped away by the water, was the pentagram I painted the night before.

Then finally, I, too, descended to the hotel's lower floors. And the *moment* I joined everyone else, *it stopped raining*.

Over the years, historians would often comment on that downpour. *Was* it Houdini coming back? *Was* it a *grand gesture*? A barrage of his *tears*?

I thought of the film I saw in the future. Houdini's greatest triumph was his Underwater Torture Cell, which the film claimed had killed him.

Despite my hijacking of the séance, Houdini *did* break through – to get the last laugh. Houdini would *not* be defeated. Not even by water, the very *earthly* symbol of *life*.

I tucked the tin box under my arm - and heard its 5 mysterious keys jingle in my pocket - as I trudged back to my room.

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

I picked up the telephone.

"*Watson!*" Holmes cried over the static crossing the United States. "You were successful, I trust?"

Then, I told Holmes *everything*. Everything I could still remember. His hypnotic hold over me was always so powerful, but the visions were fading fast.

"My apologies," I then said. "I could not see as far as I wanted to. In fact, only up to —"

"1954?" Holmes interrupted, which made me gasp for my breath.

"How on *earth* did you —"

"Think of the maths, Doctor."

It suddenly dawned on me – the anniversary of Holmes' "birth."

"I have what I need - my new identity shall commence," he said – and, suddenly, I felt more than a continent between us - I felt an *ocean* – an ocean of *time*.

"Please, Holmes, do be careful."

"I always think ahead, Doctor."

*I cannot argue with that*, I thought, as I gazed out my spattered hotel window. And then I started laughing.

"You see something, don't you?"

"Yes, indeed I do, Holmes. I can see the fabled El Capitan Theatre from here. You'll never guess what's playing."

"*How to Be a Detective.*"

*He knows – he always knows*, I thought, as his eerie laugh crackled over the line.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** If Watson had been able to see past 1954, he would have seen Larsen's son create the world-famous Magic Castle in Hollywood. Within its walls is the famous Inner Circle, where magicians congregate, perform and even compete. And above the Inner Circle is the famous Close-Up Gallery, where Baker Street Irregular Kurio's great-great-great-granddaughter, Krystal Kurio, would eventually perform



*Doctor John H. Watson's Invitation to the Final Houdini Séance*



*Mrs. Houdini and Dr. Saint*

## HOMETOWN HOLMES



*Krystal Kurio at 221B Baker Street, Los Angeles, CA, USA*

# THE CASE OF THE GOLD FRAME

## KARIN DISKIN

Sherlock was playing the violin when I walked into 221 B Baker Street. I could tell that he was sorting through some issue that confounded him. Playing the violin was a common way for Sherlock to address perplexing problems.

Suddenly Sherlock threw the violin down on his bed.

"Confound it man. I am at a loss. You were visiting a patient when my latest client was shown into our rooms. Her shoes were wet as was the hem of her dress. Her hair, light brown with gold flecks, was out of order and her hat was somewhat askew. I could tell that she had walked a distance in the rain rather than taken a coach. She presented me with her issue and pleaded with me to assuage her misery but she had little money with which to compensate me for my troubles. Watson, I listened to her patiently, and saw her eyes fill as she recounted her story. Drat, man. It was a sad one."

I was patient while Sherlock described his visit. Indeed, I had been called away. London was full of sick people this fall. It was a rare day the past couple of weeks that I could sit and listen to my friend, I had been so used for my skills. The disease was such that little use of our medicinal supplies could relieve these suffering individuals. If one member of a household fell sick, so also would the other members of the household, one by one. I recommended cold compresses to reduce the fever and a regimen of Shoop's cough syrup. So like the Russian epidemic of 1889 was this sudden illness that I was sure this was the French la grippe running through the city. But Sherlock had yet to inform me of the lady's plight.

"Sherlock, tell me. The lady's plight must be grievous."

"Indeed. I am going to recount the lady's story as she told me. Louisa works for the Duke of Warrington and his wife, who had asked Louisa to be her lady's maid after a short stint as a general parlour girl. The wife, named Maribelle, is fond of clothes and will try on several gowns before choosing one to wear in the morning and then again when dressing to pay her afternoon calls. Interestingly, the Duchess has many friends, in particular a young man who is yet to marry and who continues to live with his good mother. The living arrangement keeps the Duchess's visits quite

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

away from London's gossip. Louisa is asked to accompany the Duchess on most occasions.

On a particular day, the young man, the Honorable Roger Rocca, asked Louisa to bring a particular keepsake of Her Grace so that he could remember her between visits. Rocca is familiar to me. He plays cards at a card club near the Wilton Theater. The club has a reputation for strong-arming members to obtain the funds owed to them when the game loser has forgotten to resolve his debts. So, Louisa said that she must ask Her Grace for permission to carry to the young man the gold frame with a photograph of the Duchess in a riding habit. His Lordship, however, demurred, explaining that the photograph was so that he could paint a portrait of Her Grace without her knowledge and that it would be a present for her birthday.

Louisa became more enthusiastic and felt that the secret would have a happy outcome and did not think of what Her Grace would say should she discover the photograph's absence. The fine lady had many baubles and photographs in beautiful frames on her dressing table.

Our client went on and explained that she supports her ill mother and her two younger siblings, a girl of eleven years, and an 8-year-old brother who is lame. This job is important to her. Louisa was told last Thursday morning that she should prepare Her Grace's visiting clothes for an afternoon visit to the Marchioness of Thorgood, Roger Rocca's mother. Louisa knew that she had to make a plan to spirit the gold frame and photograph to the Honorable Roger Rocca. It was time.

Well, Louisa placed the gold frame and photograph inside her pocket. As you know, some women who work are of the mind to wear garments that have their pockets within their garments unlike what we have grown used to seeing with the more common reticule."

Here Sherlock interrupted his story to direct me to his recent monograph on the pickpocket's world and what the inner garment pocket would do to the usual pickpocket. After a brief discussion of how he had experimented with his group of younger pickpockets, he continued his story.

"Apparently, the Duke had planned to have the gold frame inlaid with the same number of sapphires and rubies as the good lady's age. Thus, when the good lady left her bed chambers, the Duke himself came into the bed chamber only to find Louisa dusting off her mistress's favorite visiting dress. She had no chance to remove the gold frame from her pocket because she did not want the Duke to think that she had taken it for nefarious reasons.

The Duke became agitated while trying to locate the gold frame and asked Louisa if she knew where his good woman had placed the item. Louisa recounted that she felt nervous, but lied to the Duke and told him that she hadn't seen it for several days. The Duke's countenance, Louisa described, became dark, and he asked Louisa if she was in the habit of accompanying the Duchess on her afternoon visits. When Louisa replied that this was the usual case the Duke became less agitated and left the room pushing anything remotely in his way with a careless arm movement. Louisa reported that she felt herself shaking after the Duke's exit. Still, she didn't know what to do. If she hid the gold frame in a dressing table drawer the Duchess would question why it was placed there, if she kept the gold frame in her pocket and loaned it to Rocca she might be accused by the Duke of stealing the item."

At this point in the story Sherlock sat down and reached for his pipe. After lighting it and taking a few moments to enjoy his mix of tobacco, he continued Louisa's story.

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

"I love the Duchess. She has been so good to me and my family. She has sent clothes for my sister and mother and given me time to care for my brother when he took ill last winter. 'She is like the aunt that I yearned for,' Holmes said that Louisa sobbed when telling this part of the story."

Sherlock told me that he'd sent her home while he thought out what should be done. But before she left he had taken possession of the gold frame with the photograph.

"Holmes," I said to him, "Have you come up with a solution? It is a bit unusual for someone of the Duchess's stature to be so caring for her ladies' maid. Louisa is indeed fortunate that the Duchess has taken such interest. Obviously, the Duchess is seeking attention from her husband or she wouldn't be seeking the company of young men. What say you?"

Sherlock stared at me and sat down in his chair by the fire thumping the arm of the chair. "You have put an idea in my head, Watson. Give me a few moments of quiet while I think out the steps to ensure that Louisa keeps her job and the Duke has his gold frame, while Rocca is kept from gossiping about the Duchess."

I became quiet and sat in the chair opposite Sherlock. The fire was warm and I was tired from the many patients I had visited in the past several days. My eyes had begun to close when I noticed that Holmes had been looking through his Burke's. Why, I wondered but began to drift off.

Suddenly, Sherlock jumped up. "Watson, your hat and stick. We are off to see the Duke. We are going to appeal to his desire to please his wife."

"But won't Louisa suffer for having taken the gold frame? The Duke will say that Louisa wanted to use the frame to pawn to help support her family and the Duchess will lose her ladies' maid and good companion. I do not see a happy outcome from any of this."

"Watson, the Duke must have great regard for his wife. He wanted to surprise her for her birthday with quite an expensive present. Rocca, I suspect, wanted the frame to pay his debts without his mother the Marchioness of Thorgood knowing of her son's loose habits. We don't want Rocca gossiping about the Duchess or the Duke feeling betrayed by the Duchess. Most importantly, we don't want Louisa to lose her position with the Duchess."

I have sent a letter to the Duchess inviting her here this early evening. She is seeing her seamstress this afternoon for the dress she is to wear for her birthday event and will be ready for a visit to us. My letter implied that it involved Rocca and would be to her benefit to come. I would be surprised if she is not anxious for the visit."

"Then what is the plan?" I queried.

"We will appeal to the Duke's love of surprises and explain to him that the Duchess was trying to surprise him with a gold frame to match the one he had given her. She had planned to have a photograph of the Duke taken in his Ducal finery. That will start my plan. You will have to wait to see how the rest plays out."

By this time, we had walked with such energy that we were only blocks away from the Duke's London house. The rain had abated and we were able to walk without using umbrellas. I was grateful for that and the change of pace from my visits to patients.

When the door was answered and Holmes asked to speak with the Duke we were ushered into the Duke's sitting room. Sherlock's plan went according to how he had set it up. The Duke expressed his affection for his wife. He had been annoyed that he couldn't find the gold frame to have the jeweler inlay the stones that the Duke had

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

purchased. The Duke explained that he had planned to present it to the Duchess for her birthday in 3 weeks. Sherlock artfully inserted the fact that the Duke's birthday was in 5 weeks and asked him if the Duchess had inquired about his agenda for the day. The Duke remarked that Holmes was psychic. Indeed, the Duchess had asked after the agenda.

Sherlock asked me to hand the gold frame to the Duke who expressed his gratitude. Holmes suggested that the Duke keep the acquisition of the gold frame from Rocca's hands secret so that the jeweler would be able to complete the Duke's original surprise. Sherlock explained to the Duke that Rocca had pressured the Duchess to supply the gold frame to him and that Holmes was sure it was to pay his debts. At this, the Duke stood as we did and shook Holmes's hand.

"You're a good man, Sir. I had thought that I had lost Maribelle to that scoundrel Rocca. I am indebted to you."

We started to make our exit with the Duke following behind. When we got to the door, the Duke gave Sherlock an envelope.

"Consider this a new friend's gift to you and not payment in kind. My wife is my jewel and I have her back."

When we got out of the house I turned to Holmes and inquired about the envelope.

"Oh, Watson. We will use this for Rocca's debts. Tomorrow I have an appointment with the manager of the card club Rocca uses. The manager and I will settle Rocca's score. In the afternoon Rocca and I have an appointment in our rooms. Make sure that you are free. But first, we must entertain the good Duchess."

I looked up and saw that the sky was darkening again. "Let us hurry, Sherlock. I don't want to get caught in the rain."

We walked quickly and on our way up to the rooms let Mrs. Hudson know that there would be two visitors to the rooms so that she could prepare tea for the four of us.

Several moments later, just as Mrs. Hudson had finished laying the tea, we heard a knock at the door. Mrs. Hudson answered and showed the Duchess and Louisa in. Louisa had a grayish tinge to her skin but the Duchess presented as a beauty. Her photograph had not done her justice. The young woman's skin was radiant, her smile lit up the somber room, and her voice sounded like bells tinkling in an early spring breeze. No wonder the Duke was besotted. Louisa, I realized, had not slept since the Duke had looked for the gold frame. Poor child. Sherlock, as usual, took command of the situation.

"Please sit down. Mrs. Hudson has laid a fine tea."

And, yes, Mrs. Hudson had outdone herself. There were small biscuits and sandwiches with tasty spreads as well as a small cake. Sherlock poured tea for each and offered the different plates. The Duchess took one of each and no sugar in her tea. Louisa took only a biscuit and tea with two sugars. She looked to the Duchess before accepting any of Holmes's offerings.

"Your Grace, thank you for coming. Louisa has told me of your devotion to your husband, the Duke. He is a fortunate man. I understand that you are friends with the Marchioness of Thorgood. She will need a friend now."

"Oh, Sir, what has happened?"

"She is going to have the most grievous news. Her son, Earl Rocca, is expecting Lady Thorgood to pay his debts to Maximillian Fanfort, the owner of the card club he frequents. The sum is a growing and large amount and will cause Lady Thorgood to

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

have to sell some of her jewelry to settle the debt. Your husband is willing to make the debt good with the proviso that you not see Earl Rocca again. Your husband has informed me that you are his jewel and no one may hurt you or harm you."

"His Grace thinks that highly of me?"

"Your Grace, your husband dotes on you and would put you on a pedestal should you be a piece of porcelain."

Louisa looked on as if in a trance. Her eyes watered but not a tear went down her cheek. She kept her hands folded in her lap, but two red spots appeared on her cheeks.

The Duchess started to sob. "I am the luckiest and most foolish of women. Hurry Louisa. We must get home. His Grace will be waiting."

The two ladies made their exit as Holmes bade them bye. The coach met the ladies on the street and Holmes and I were again alone in our rooms.

"Holmes, what are you going to say to Rocca? You have settled Louisa's issue, but you have Rocca yet with whom to deal."

"Oh, I will make short shrift of him. He is a weak eldest son and his mother ignorant of her son's proclivities. I am tired Watson and will play the violin for a while."

Holmes lost himself with his violin. He played without ceasing for more than an hour. I found myself dozing in front of the fire. The rain had started again and it was warm inside the rooms.

The next morning I was called to attend a family for which only the mother hadn't taken sick -- poor woman was desperate for help. I did what I could but the youngest child was doing poorly. I knew in my heart that I would be making another visit to the house. No sooner than I made my exit from that family the boy from the building two blocks away called to me and asked me to come. His family had also been taken with la grippe. Would this dratted disease take more young people to their heavenly repose? I made my way to the house and thus I missed witnessing the end of the Case of the Gold Frame.

Holmes chuckled as he told me Rocca's change of stance. He had come into Baker Street blustering. By the time he had left he was stooped and near to whimpering. Holmes recounted how Rocca looked when he was told that he may never see the Duchess again and that the Duke had paid his debts and that his mother knew about his gambling and his debts. His good mother had received a letter outlining the mischief her son had enjoyed. Holmes showed me the letter he received back from the good woman. She had professed her gratitude and sent Holmes a generous money order for having kept the family name from the London gossip mongers.

"We had a good time, huh Watson? It was a most satisfying end."

"Oh, Holmes, I am ready for a warm chair near the fire, a glass of wine, and some rest. Play your violin, Sherlock. It eases us."

The Case of the Gold Frame thus came to a fine end. I write this as an addition to the collection of Sherlock Holmes's Enterprises.

# THE SCARLET HORSE

## AMELIA HIGGINS, AGE 10

D iary,

Today, I went to my friend Crystal's farm in New Cambria, Kansas and I met her horses. I saw this beautiful mare named Scarlett and here's her story! Scarlett was born in Ireland. Her parents were Irish Race Horses. Her parents' names were Billy and Zoe. When she was one, her herd left her at a garden, which just happened to be owned by the butcher. He had pity on Scarlett because she had lots of scars and her family left her.

The butcher had another horse named Boxcar Betty. Scarlett and Boxcar Betty bonded. That was not good because the butcher knew that in a week he was going to ship Scarlett to San Francisco. Once in San Francisco, she would have to get on an airplane to Manhattan, Kansas where she would go to auction. Crystal went to that auction and saw Scarlett and was in love with her.



WHILE I WAS DAYDREAMING of training Scarlett, she grazed quietly in the paddock.

This man approached me and asked, "Do you own this horse? "

I said, "No."

"I'm sorry for this" the man said and knocked me out.



WHEN I WOKE UP, Scarlett was gone and I yelled "NO!!!"

I cried out for Crystal and she came running.

Crystal asked "What's wrong? Calm down." She looked behind me and gasped.

"Okay, we can panic now!" said Crystal. We called the police and everyone we knew. Our call to the police got disconnected and no one else picked up when we called. We called the last number; he picked up and said.

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

"Hello, this is Sherlock Holmes, ready to assist."

I say, "Please come to 342 Streeting Drive right away!"

He arrived quickly and we told him everything. Sherlock went over to the barn and found Scarlett in a stall next to the Silver Blaze. We thanked Sherlock Holmes and never saw the man who knocked me out ever again. I still hope to start schooling Scarlett soon.

- John Watson

# HIGH PLAINS GRIFTER

## LUKE HIGGINS

A mysterious stranger from Europe helped solve a recent fraud perpetrated on the good citizens of Abilene, KS. McAlistor Winthrope III swept into the Abilene area a week ago in a wagon painted every color of the rainbow pulled by two cantankerous mules.

Mr. Winthrope warmly greeted the good people of Abilene, and proceeded to display bottles of all shapes and sizes from his multicolored wagon. Mr. Winthrope declared, in a sonorous voice, that these various bottles could cure one of everything from gout to smallpox, scarlet fever to chicken pox. These miracle cures could even make weak men strong, short men tall, and ugly men, well, less ugly. Even the lady of the house could benefit from increased endurance and would find themselves energetically whistling "Home On the Range" after a long day of gathering eggs, dressing the children, feeding the children (said eggs), seeing the kiddies off to the school marm, milking the cows, washing the clothes, hanging the clothes, feeding the tikes as well as her husband, cleaning the house, tucking in the children, and then finding the five minutes allotted to pray to the good Lord to thank him for her restful life. These bottled remedies could even be beneficial to our four-legged friends as well.

Needless to say, people were lining up within the hour, to purchase one elixir after another. Folks rushed home to start applying this salvation tonic to address every ailment under the sun. People were going easy to their beds knowing that tomorrow would be a brighter day.

Mr. Thomas Franklin, the bank clerk at Abilene Federal, awoke to bird song and exhilaration. He leaped from bed prepared for the day even without taking his morning constitutional nor consuming his bacon and eggs. Glancing in the hallway mirror, Mr. Franklin noticed that every speck of hair on his once golden-locked head had simply vanished!

Shoving on his bowler hat and exiting his home, Mr. Franklin contemplated what had become of his wavy locks. As he barreled down the sidewalk, pondering his personal tragedy, Mr. Franklin collided with Mrs. Rose Hamlin. Mumbling his apolo-

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

gies, Mr. Franklin glanced up to see Mrs. Hamlin's glare over the inch long beard hanging from her dour visage.

As he stumbled into the bank, hurriedly proceeding to his work station, Mr. Franklin could not help but notice that his co-workers kept their hats on even inside the building. Minutes later, Mr Raymond Pierce, the blacksmith, came vaulting into the bank shouting, "For the price of bending my own horseshoes, I lost all the hair a man could want! It's all because of Winthrope's Wondrous Concoction. Who's with me to lay hands on this rascal?!"

Every man, woman, and child within the bank squealed like a thunderous gathering of banshees and darted out the door to find the culprit who stole hair from men and added it to women. As they approached the town square, they noticed that the colorful wagon had disappeared in the night. It was time to round up the posse and see that justice was served.

Everyone in town scattered to find whatever conveyance they could summon. It's a wonder that there were only three overturned wagons and four horses absconded with, but such is the price of justice.

As the posse followed the wagon's tracks east of town, they discovered the wagon standing motionless just a few miles from town. Standing next to the notorious Mr. Winthrope was a tall man with an aquiline profile as well as one of the young girls from town. The tall man appeared to be engaging in a maneuver of a clearly eastern origin that left Mr. Winthrope on his back as well as incapacitated.

As the posse reigned in, it became apparent that the tall man with the aquiline profile was none other than Mr. Sigerson, the Norwegian gentleman who had been residing at the Brookville Hotel a couple days before Winthrope arrived.

Sigerson, extracting the pipe that had caused no end of a distraction to Mrs. Grover, owner and proprietor of the Brookville Hotel, as the smoke from said pipe seemed to emit continual London fog to the old Brookville from morning to night when it's occupant was in residence, explained to the citizenry of Abilene gathered around the scene that "Mr. Winthrope" AKA Slithery Sam Penkenham had to flee Chicago after perpetrating that very same crime on the citizens of that metropolis. Sigerson went on to inform the populace of Abilene, Kansas, that in a couple of weeks, as long as the devilish concoction was not ingested, their hair would grow back upon the masculine noggins and the beards would vanish from the fairer sexes comely (and not so comely visages in Mrs. Groves' case).

The good citizens of Abilene thanked the Scandinavian hero emphatically as well as discussed giving him the Key to the City, however Sigerson stated that he must continue east as he had a dear friend he was eager to see in the Old Country.

Sigerson, upon mounting one of the only horses not devoid of fur, stated that one other was deserving of the Key to the City. "This intrepid young lady was invaluable in helping me to bring this villain to justice. I was certain that Penkenham would attempt to foist his swill for another day, however, this sharp-eyed, young waif had suspicions of her own and alerted me when Pekenham attempted to abscond with his ill-gotten booty in the wee hours of the morning.

All eyes turned to the beaming Irish lass, Amelia Byrne. As the crowd gathered round the triumphant child, Amelia made eye contact with the mysterious man from the north who proceeded to wink at her as he reigned his steed towards the glimmering golden sun rising in the east.

# IN, OUT & ABOUT ONTONAGON

VALLI HOSKI, EDITOR UP WARD NEWS-  
HERALD; LIBRARIAN UP TOWN  
ONTONAGON LIBRARY

Ontonagon, Upper Peninsula, Michigan. October 2, 1896

**A**fter the "Great Blaze of Diamonds", we are recovering our lives, property and community from the frantic fire at the Diamond Match factory. We owe a debt of gratitude to those who, while not local citizens, gave their all to rescue Ontonagon residents, schools, churches and businesses from the conflagration.

The *Boys Club Irregulars* (BCI) under the direction of Mr. Sherlock Holmes and our own ceramic artist and educator Miss Mary Chase Perry Stratton gave freely of their strength, determination and skills. They saved many of us and are aiding us in recovery. Their indomitable spirit gives us hope of returning to a normal state of life in the Ontonagon community much sooner than we had dared hope.

**Mr. Sherlock Holmes**, the indefatigable detective , BCI leader and mentor is to be lauded for his leadership and excellent deduction skills in identifying the reason, rationale and real culprits behind this terrible fire. Without his direction, we would have lost more, much more of the community, individuals and family.

Mr. Holmes is called home by HRH Queen Victoria, queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and Empress of India. He has taught many good skills to our boys and men during his hiatus here. As founder of the BCI, he has set a durable foundation for our sons towards an honest, knowledgeable and skilled path in life.

**Professor Moriarty**, a visitor and fellow rescuer, received an urgent telegram requiring his return to his college. His assistant Colonel Moran will also depart as he is the Professor's right-hand man in London.

Many thanks to our neighbors and friends for upholding the fine spirits of hospitality and gratitude with our rescuers. The BCI remain in our hearts, each one demonstrating his heroism and chivalric assistance. We welcome these fine individuals to the UP forests, waters and towns from Lake Superior and the Keweenaw peninsula to White Fish Bay and Sault Sainte Marie. Please bless our shores with your return at any time and in any season.

THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

We bid all very grateful wishes and hopes for a safe journey and upward success in any future endeavor.

# THE ADVENTURE OF THE GOLDEN MAN

## NACHING T. KASSA

Being a reminiscence of Dr. John H. Watson, M.D.

**T**he following story was found in a strong box within the charred ruins of The Yale Hotel, a historic edifice which burned to the ground in Chewelah, WA on August 3, 2023. With hope and prayer, they will rebuild.

SHERLOCK HOLMES HAD ONCE LIKENED his mind to a “a racing engine, tearing itself to pieces.” As a doctor and having spent most of my time with the man, I must dispute this statement. I, for one, am of the opinion that this comparison does not describe his mind. Rather, it describes his body and constitution far more accurately.

Holmes often went days without food and sleep, driving himself to the height of exhaustion. In '87, his time in Lyon resulted in a complete breakdown at the Hotel Dulong. In '97, Dr. Moore Agar, that respected physician of Harley Street, sent him to rest in the country, lest he be restricted from work altogether.

Few know of the collapse he endured a short time after his retirement. Just as they are unaware of the cases he solved during it. The illness that had overtaken him in Russia, had sent him not to Surrey or the Cornish Coast for rest, but across the Bering Sea to the Yukon and down into that far western state of Washington, a strange and wondrous place.

I was present during this journey and bore witness to Holmes’ involvement in several cases, many of which he brought to a satisfactory conclusion. Unfortunately, because of the rather secret status accorded us by Mycroft, he could not take credit. Instead, it was awarded to the local police, men who, I’m sorry to say, showed less initiative and imagination than Lestrade and Gregson in their youth.

We encountered only one exception to this rule, a striking fellow with a good mind and a quiet demeanor. He played a large part in the tale I am about to relate.

Heavy snows had halted the journey of our southbound train, that dark November

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

day, and we had been forced to find lodgings in the small town of Chewelah. The conductor had recommended The Yale Hotel, or "the best hotel north of Spokane" as he called it, and we had left the train to make our way there.

Few stood on the snow-covered street as we made our way to The Yale. Though one man, a drunkard by the look of him, managed to collide with Holmes as we walked. I barely glimpsed the scowl on his face as he hurried away.

"That was rather rude," I remarked as Holmes and I gazed after him. "He didn't even offer an apology."

The man, who sported a mass of straw-colored curls upon his head, darted into one of the many saloons which lined the main street.

"And inept," Holmes said. "His attempt at theft was rather amateurish. The Irregulars could've taught him a thing or two."

"What? He made an attempt to rob you?"

Holmes chuckled. He opened his gloved hand. A golden watch lay upon his palm.

"That isn't your watch," I cried. "You took it from him?"

"He explored my pocket and I his. I came away with the watch. He came away with the Spokane train schedule. Our friend will learn a valuable lesson from this, for I will turn the watch over to the local constabulary and he will need to recover it from them. In the meantime..." Holmes studied the timepiece beneath the electric streetlamp above us, and as he did so, his expression grew grave. "Hmm... It seems our friend is not the true owner of this watch either."

"How do you know that?"

"The man who owned this watch has been murdered."

I stared at my companion in astonishment.

"There are traces of blood in the filigree work. And, by the amount of it, I would say the watch has lain in a veritable puddle of the liquid."

"That might be easily explained," I argued. "We have seen much that is brutal and primitive since our entrance into the Americas. This could be the blood of some beast."

"The watch is expensive and of good quality. It is old but well-cared for—as evidenced by the lack of scratches about the keyhole where it is wound and the lack of dents upon the case. A man who would care for his watch so meticulously for so many years would not lay it in a puddle of animal blood."

My mind was thrown back to my own watch, the one which had belonged to my unhappy brother and Holmes' own observations upon it. Then, as now, I could not fault his logic.

"You are correct," I admitted. "That is not a likely scenario. But it doesn't necessarily mean murder."

Without a word, Holmes opened the watch and revealed the photograph inside. It was of a man and a woman, presumably on their wedding day. To my horror, I realized that the man's face had been savagely disfigured, so much so, that one could not begin to guess at who he had been.

Holmes had turned back toward the saloon and our vanished quarry, the eagerness of the chase evident in his expression. I held up a hand.

"You are unwell, Holmes," I warned. "And should we not acquire rooms at The Yale before it is too late?"

"You may acquire the rooms, old fellow," he said, "then join me at the Old Past Time Saloon. I give you my word, I shall not lift a finger until you arrive."

Ten minutes later, I entered the saloon to find that Holmes had indeed kept his

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

word. He stood at the long bar engaged in conversation with a crowd of locals. Our blonde friend was not among them.

I glanced about the rather rustic establishment, so different from the pubs of London and environs. Animal heads adorned the wooden walls and looked upon me with glassy eyes. A billiard table stood at the back of the room.

A man sat at one of the many round tables nearby, the only man seemingly uninterested in the free drinks my friend was offering. He was clothed in a fur coat and hat, a drink in his hand. He did not look up as I settled at the table nearby.

Holmes left the bar and joined me at my table just as the piano across the room began to play of its own accord.

"It appears our friend has fled," Holmes said, in a loud voice. He withdrew a torn sheet from his pocket. "I found this just outside the door." He passed me the torn train schedule for Spokane. "I don't believe he ever entered the saloon. No one here has claimed to see him, not even with such motivators as gold and whiskey."

"He has simply disappeared?" I said in a hushed voice, glancing toward the man at the table beside us.

"It would seem so." Holmes continued in his strident voice. I wondered, at that moment, if he had partaken of too many of his own rounds of drink.

"We must go to the constable," I said.

Holmes shook his head and lowered his voice at last. "There is no constable, only a sheriff. And, according to the patrons of this place, he has taken a prisoner to the town of Colville, twenty miles to the north of here."

"Then we must await his return."

"I think not. There would be little point in bringing the case before him. There have been no murders, unsolved or otherwise of late. Only a disappearance." He raised his voice again, competing with the jangle of the piano. "There is a young woman staying at the Chewelah Hotel. She searches for her father, one Lucas Monaghan, and fears for his safety. What think you, doctor? Am I well enough to aid a lady in distress?"

I shook my head in defeat. "You cannot do otherwise."

Together we rose and hurried into the street.

The Chewelah Hotel stood just up the street from The Yale. The building, a simple affair constructed of wood, seemed more modest than the large and luxurious brick building we had sought lodgings in. When we entered, we found a nervous little fellow with thick glasses and a waxed mustache at the front desk.

"We are in search of a Miss Sophie Monaghan," Holmes said. "I was told she could be found here."

"Women are not allowed male visitors after seven," the little man said firmly. "You will have to return in the morning."

"We are here on a most urgent matter," I said, "and must speak with the lady right away."

"You may speak with her in the morning," the little man said, raising his voice slightly.

"Clarence, do you know who these men are?" a voice sounded from behind us.

We turned to see the fur-dressed stranger from the Old Past Time Saloon standing near the door. As he approached the desk, the little man shrank away.

"I-I'm sure I don't know," the little man stammered.

"Come now, Clarence. You must have seen their pictures in *Colliers*. This is Sherlock Holmes and his friend Dr. Watson," the man said.

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

"Sh-Sherlock Holmes?" the fellow cried. "My heavens! *The Sherlock Holmes?* Why didn't you say so in the first place!" He rang the bell three times and a young boy came running.

"Jason, go upstairs to number four and speak with Miss Monaghan. Tell her there are two--"

"Three," the stranger interjected.

"*Three* gentlemen to see her."

The boy hurried off.

"I am so very sorry, Mr. Holmes," the little man said. "I didn't know."

"You would've if you'd allowed them to speak," the stranger retorted. He turned to us. "I apologize for the familiarity, gentlemen. I suppose you must be wondering who I am."

"You are Officer Waterbury of the Spokane Police," Holmes said with a smile.

Waterbury's eyes opened wide. "You know me?"

"No, unfortunately, I do not," Holmes said.

"Ah. I see. Someone at The Old Past Time told you."

"The patrons of the saloon told me nothing of you—as you intended. You are here on Miss Monaghan's request, are you not?"

"How could you possibly know that?"

"You carry an envelope with her return address in the pocket of your coat."

Waterbury glanced down. "So I do."

"And, as to your identity, your name is engraved upon your badge," Holmes continued, motioning to the man's lapel.

"It really is quite elementary, isn't it?" the man said with a half-smile.

"Quite."

The boy, Jason, returned at that moment. "Miss Monaghan will see you now," he said.

We followed him up the stairs to room number four.

A beautiful and dark-complexioned woman answered the boy's knock. Clad in lavender, her dark hair trailing down her back, she stared at each one of us, her gaze lingering on Waterbury the longest. Then, she stepped aside and allowed us entry.

"Mr. Holmes," she said, her voice tremulous, a faint light of hope in her eyes. "The boy just told me your name and I can scarce believe it. Albert, did you do this? Did you bring him here?"

"No Sophie, though, I think we may be on the same track."

Holmes removed the watch from his pocket and held it out to her. The lady gasped and snatched it from his hand.

"How did you come by this?" she cried.

"It belongs to your father?"

She quickly peered inside and, at the sight of the mutilated photograph, let out a little cry.

"This is my father's watch," she exclaimed. "But who has done this to his picture?"

"That is what we wish to discover," Holmes said in a soothing tone. He helped the lady to a chair. "Can you tell me, Miss Monaghan, when did you last see your father?"

"August. I'd been visiting an aunt in Oregon," she frowned. "Though now, I wish I hadn't gone at all. If I'd stayed at home, my father might not have disappeared."

"Tell him, Sophie," Waterbury said softly. "Tell him what you told me."

The lady nodded and faced Holmes, her eyes bright. "I've already told my story to

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

the sheriff, Mr. Holmes, and he didn't believe me. All I can say is that it's the truth and I won't take back a word of it."

Holmes nodded, "Then I should be glad to hear it," he said and took a chair across from her. He leaned back, his fingers steepled.

"My father remarried this past June," Miss Monaghan began. "He had become acquainted, through correspondence, with a spinster from Pennsylvania and after some months of writing, decided to marry her. He sent for her and she arrived a week before the wedding. To his surprise, she was not alone.

It seems my new stepmother was not a spinster after all. She was, in fact, a widow with a grown son—Matthew Walker. She told my father that she had been afraid to tell him of her true circumstances, that other gentlemen had ceased to communicate once they discovered the truth. My father, a kind man who put little stock in the thoughts of others, forgave the lie and married her anyway.

My relationship with my stepmother was strained from the beginning. Mostly because I believe she only married my father for his money. Our farm is not as large as the others round Chewelah, but we have always lived comfortably and some might consider us wealthy. My father does not keep a large fortune in the bank, in fact, he has no faith in them and keeps what money he has in a secret place at home. My stepmother was always hinting about it, all while being sweet as sugar to my father, but a pure devil to me. It soon became clear to me that I was not welcome in my own house. Of course, she turned this about, poisoning my father against me, saying it was I who did not want her there. My father and I had never had a cross word between us until she came and drove the wedge in."

The lady paused, her cheeks flushed. She looked down at the watch.

"At last, I could take no more. As you know, I have an aunt in Oregon, the sister of my dear departed mother. I decided to stay with her, even though my father pleaded with me not to go."

She clutched the watch in her hand.

"A week ago, I received a letter from Albert here," she continued. "My stepmother had gone to the sheriff and reported my father missing. She said they'd had a terrible argument, and as was his wont, he had taken his horse and ridden away. She said he usually returned after a few days, but this time, he hadn't and he had taken all of the household accounts with him. She didn't even have money to pay the grocer's bill."

I don't mind telling you, Mr. Holmes, that the moment I heard this tale, I knew it was a lie. My father had written me several letters while I'd been in Oregon, and not once had he mentioned any sort of discord between him and my stepmother. In fact, he had continued to defend her to me, saying that I should be the one to come home and give her a chance. The only truth that woman told was that my father was indeed missing. I know this because his letters ceased to come. I haven't received one from him in more than a month.

Albert's letter worried me greatly and I decided to come home at once. I did not give my stepmother any warning. I did not think I should have to, considering it was the home I had been born in.

When I arrived at the house, I found things much changed in my absence. The stable had been dismantled and it looked as though the timber had been used to build a new shed near the barn. I also noticed that the crops in the backfield had not been harvested. They lay wilted and forgotten, the ground untilled for the next season. I saw no sign of our hired men.

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

I had borrowed a horse from the stables in town and as I rode up toward the house, an old man suddenly rushed from the barn toward me. He shook his fist as I dismounted.

"Mrs. Monaghan isn't seeing visitors today," he called out. "You'll have to leave."

"I am Miss Monaghan," I replied. "And this is my father's house. Who are you?"

The man froze at the sound of my name. "Miss Monaghan? There ain't no Miss Monaghan."

"Perhaps we should take that up with my stepmother," I said, trying to keep my temper.

"My stepmother stepped onto the porch then, and upon seeing me, rushed down the steps. She wrapped her arms about me and began to weep.

"Oh Sophie!" she cried. "I am so happy you've come. Your father is missing, dear girl, and I've no idea where he has gone."

"So I have gathered," said I. I did not return her embrace. "Why didn't you tell me? I learned from a friend that he had gone missing."

She pulled away and began to wring at her handkerchief with both hands. "At first, I thought your father had gone to see you. I even wrote your aunt to see if this was the case. She did not return my letter and, knowing what you think of me, well, I did not press the matter." She dabbed her eyes with her handkerchief. "I am at my wit's end, dear girl. Do you know where your father might have gone? Could he have gone camping in the mountains? He has often talked of that."

I shook my head. "He would not go with snow so close."

I heard the sound of a horse then, and when I turned, I saw the silhouette of a rider on the horizon. The old man waved his arms in the rider's direction and whistled. The rider, seeing this strange display, turned and rode back the way he'd come.

"Damn interlopers," the old man said. "Can't leave an honest woman alone."

My stepmother had been much affected by this. She grew pale and began to tremble.

"What is it?" I asked.

"The men your father hired. They haven't been paid," my stepmother said. "I've told them I haven't any money, but they keep coming back. They've even threatened me. I had no one aside from Matthew to run the farm, and so I asked my father to come and stay." She turned to the old man. "Where are my manners? I haven't introduced you. This is my father, Mark Blake."

I nodded to the fellow, the memory of his welcome fresh in my mind. "And where is Matthew?"

"In Chewelah," she said with a sigh. "He spends much of his time there, I'm afraid. Matthew never was meant for life on a farm."

Holmes leaned forward then. "Miss Monaghan, could you describe your stepbrother?"

"He is a short man with dark hair and eyes, quite a contrast to his mother. She is tall, quite pale, and blonde. I did not see him while I stayed at the farm."

Holmes nodded. "Please, continue."

"I stayed at my father's house for two days. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary. There were no more visits from the unpaid hired hands. And the old man, who seemed used to farm work, took care of the chores."

"What of the shed?" Holmes asked. "Why was it built?"

"My stepmother said the stable had collapsed during a storm in September and my

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

father had decided to construct an icehouse instead of rebuilding it. It was like my father to do such a thing. With one horse, there was no use for the stable and my father could not abide waste."

"One horse? The one your father rode away on?"

"Yes. And that horse is the reason I left my father's house and came here to Chewelah. It is the reason I will not return until that woman and her family have gone for good." The lady's eyes blazed at these words. "On the third day of my return, I woke early in the morning to the familiar whinny of my father's horse. At first, as I lay in my room, I thought myself dreaming. But when I rose, and looked out the window, I saw the horse standing near the barn, his reins wrapped about a post. There is no mistaking my father's horse, Mr. Holmes. It is a great bay with a black mane, the only one of its kind in all of Steven's County. I rushed down the stairs, not even bothering to dress, calling my father's name.

But when I opened the door, the horse was gone. I looked about, hoping to catch sight of it and saw nothing. But I know it was there, Mr. Holmes! I know it. For months, the horse had gone without a shoe—I had told my father of it many times—and the hoofprints near the post revealed a horse with only three shoes!

My stepmother and the old man walked out of the barn at that moment, and I told them what I had seen. To my shock, neither would believe me! My stepmother glanced at the old man and shook her head, a sad look in her eyes."

"You were dreaming, Sophie," she said. "Your father's horse is gone. If it had been here this morning, we would have seen it."

"It was right here," I cried. "Look at the hoofprints."

"Where?" the old man said.

"Here! Can't you see them?"

"And then, to my horror, Mr. Holmes, the old man began to walk through the prints, obscuring them with his own boots! He pretended he couldn't see them. I know he did.

I returned to my room, suddenly unsure of what I had seen. Perhaps, I had been dreaming and because I wanted so badly to see my father, had imagined the horse and the prints.

I might have continued to believe this if I hadn't descended the stairs a few moments later. That was when I heard the whispered conversation below. It was difficult to make out the words, and I didn't catch many, but the meaning was clear. I heard my name and the words, "Do you think she knows?"

The words sent me back up the stairs. I did not emerge until I was sure my stepmother and the old man had left the house. Then, I hurried to the barn, saddled my borrowed horse and fled the only home I had ever known.

When I arrived in Chewelah, I hurried to the sheriff's office and revealed to him everything I knew. I should have known he wouldn't believe me. He treated me in the same manner my stepmother and the old man had, as though I were nothing but a child driven mad by grief.

I was at a loss as to what I could do. I could not return to my father's house and so I came here."

Holmes rose from his chair and began to pace the floor. He paused before the lady and said,

"Miss Monaghan, I must ask a question of you. One which you must answer as truthfully as you can."

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

"Very well."

"Are you acquainted with a blond man? One with a headful of curls?"

She thought a moment. "I can't say that I am."

Holmes smiled, rather thinly. "I am afraid I must bid you good day then. There is nothing I can do to aid you."

"Here, now," Waterbury cried.

The lady rose to her feet, her face quite pale. Holmes bowed and took me by the arm. He led me out the door and down the stairs.

"Do not worry, Sophie," Waterbury cried from behind us. "I will make him see reason." He followed us out of the hotel and into the street. "Please, Mr. Holmes, I beg you. Stop."

Holmes halted and faced the officer.

"You have as much as accused her of being a liar," Waterbury said.

"And so she is," Holmes replied. "And how may I trust what she says if it is not the whole truth?"

The officer nodded and pulled the hat from off his head, revealing a wealth of golden curls. "How long have you known?"

"Since I entered the saloon. Though you had reversed your coat—a ploy I have found most useful, and covered your head with a fur hat, you could not change your boots. I noticed the fresh snow on them...and on no one else's."

"Ah," Waterbury said.

"The clumsy attempt at robbery on the street. You orchestrated that so I would investigate?"

"Yes. I was at the depot when you stepped off the train and I recognized you at once. I overheard the conductor direct you to The Yale, and so I took my chance. I have read all of your adventures and I knew the first place you would go is the saloon. It is like your English pubs, a good place to find out information. I made sure you saw me enter the Old Past Time."

Holmes glanced at me, a smile on his lips. "As I made sure you heard me say I would visit Miss Monaghan. Perhaps, you will be so good to explain your subterfuge."

"I feared you would not help otherwise. You have heard Sophie's story. She has very little evidence, certainly nothing a lawman would believe. And yet I believe her completely. I would have you believe her as well."

"How did you come by the watch?"

"Sophie found it in the snow where she saw the hoofprints. When the sheriff wouldn't believe her, she sent a telegram to me. I came as soon as I could and we hatched this plan."

"Have you told her of her father's fate? You would not have allowed me to take the watch if you didn't know what the blood on it signifies."

Waterbury shook his head. "It will take much to convince her."

"Then we must find the body," Holmes replied. "And we must hurry. The lady did not return home. They will know she suspects."



AS MISS MONAGHAN HAD INDICATED, the Monaghan farm lay close to the town of Chewelah, perhaps not more than a mile. Nonetheless, it was an unpleasant journey for a man my age. My boots did little to keep out the chill of the snow and the frosty air

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

seemed to bite at my hands and cheeks. What's more, Holmes had decided that we should travel without a lantern. We depended on the glow of the moon above and the reflection it made on the snow below.

Holmes, who had been so ill only a few months ago, had regained some of his old energy with the advent of the case and moved ahead like a man half his age. Even Waterbury had trouble keeping up with him.

We reached the farm a little past midnight. The house stood as a dark and foreboding sentinel against the sky. Either the inhabitants were asleep or they had forsaken the place for the night.

The frozen snow crunched beneath our feet, signaling our approach, and Holmes motioned us to slow our pace in order to quiet the sound.

A grove of trees soon separated us from the house and we found respite from the snow there. The wet leaves made no sound as we traversed the forest floor. When we reached the edge of the grove, Holmes halted.

Dim lantern light shone from within the doorway of a shed which, due to its proximity to the barn, could only be the icehouse.

A woman stood in the lantern's light, her face a mask of fear. She peered into the darkness and then turned back toward the doorway.

"Are you sure it's here?" she asked.

"It's the only place it could be," a male voice replied. "He said we should go back to the beginning, and here we are."

Holmes held a finger to his lips and withdrawing his hunting crop from the recesses of his coat, crept forward. Waterbury and I drew our revolvers and followed.

The snow had been reduced to a fine slush here and made little noise as we moved forward. We reached the icehouse undetected.

The woman stood with her back to us, a lantern in her hand. We peered into the icehouse and were met with a terrible sight.

An old man, his face a mass of wrinkles and his hair a shock of white, stood within a hole that had been dug in the earthen floor. Something, covered in dirt and wrapped in a blanket, lay at his feet.

Holmes rushed forward. He surprised the woman, catching her by the wrist and wresting the lantern from her hand. She fell back against the wall. The old man caught hold of his shovel and made as though he would lunge forward, but Waterbury and I trained our revolvers on him and he soon abandoned all thoughts of violence. He dropped the shovel into the grave.

"Who are you?" the woman cried. "What are you doing here?"

"Officer Waterbury of the Spokane Police," Waterbury said.

"You have no jurisdiction here," the old man sneered.

Waterbury lowered himself into the hole and lifted the blanket. He grimaced as he revealed the corpse of Lucas Monaghan. "No. But the sheriff in Chewelah does. And, by the looks of things, he'll have enough to hang you both."

"We didn't kill him," the woman said.

"Your son did," Holmes said quietly.

The woman seemed to wilt at these words. She fell to the floor and held her head in her hands. "He didn't mean it," she moaned. "He only meant to scare Lucas. But he got carried away. Matthew always gets carried away."

"Where is your son now?" Holmes asked.

"I don't know. He could be anywhere. He hasn't been the same...since that night."

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

"He took it, didn't he?" Holmes asked. "He's taken it and you can't leave without it."

"What are they searching for?" I asked.

"Come now, Watson. You must know what it is they seek. Why they haven't fled this farm. Why they came here in the first place."

"The money," Waterbury said.

Holmes nodded. "Excellent, Officer Waterbury. Now, if you would be so good as to keep your eye on these two, Watson and I shall recover the stolen money. Come, Watson."

He led me toward the farmhouse and soon we were within the confines of what must've been a pleasant and homey place. Unfortunately, knowing the circumstances of why we now visited, it had taken on a rather melancholy air. Even the turn of an electric switch and the ambiance of such light could not dispel the feeling.

"Keep your weapon at the ready, Watson," Holmes whispered. "As Mrs. Monaghan has said, her son could be anywhere."

I nodded. "Then, I should go first. The fellow may have a pistol, ready to shoot at the moment he sees you."

"I think not, Watson," Holmes said. "You saw the body. Matthew Walker prefers the blade."

Holmes led me from room to room, his hunting crop at the ready. Most were illuminated by moonlight, so there was no need to switch on the electric light.

Once he was assured the room was empty, he would survey the floor and the ceiling above. He repeated this process in every room, lifting rugs and pushing furniture aside.

"What are we looking for?" I asked Holmes after we had searched the third room.

"The beginning of it all," Holmes replied.

When we entered an abandoned bedroom at the back of the house, Holmes gave a soft exclamation and rushed toward the bed. The white coverlet, covered with a thin layer of dust, revealed a large spot of dried blood.

"We have found it, Watson," he said softly. "We have found the room where Lucas Monaghan died."

"Are you quite sure, Holmes?" I asked. "That is hardly the puddle you spoke of."

Without a word, Holmes gestured toward the ceiling. I gazed up at the large stain upon it.

We left the bedroom and hurried upstairs.

Holmes remained cautious as we drew close to the room we sought. Unlike most of the doors below, this one stood open and moonlight streamed into the hall.

"I hear you out there," a voice called out.

I froze, hardly daring to breathe. Holmes did not. He moved forward and into the light. "We have come to the beginning," said he.

I joined him and stared into the room.

It proved to be a study. Moon glow washed the room in silver, revealing shapes in light and shadow. A shelf with a few books lined one wall, and the pelt of a black bear adorned the other. Near the window was a desk, and a man sat in silhouette behind it.

A blade glinted in his hands.

"You aren't Lucas," the shadow said. The voice seemed strange, and devoid of emotion. "Are you a friend of Lucas?"

"We have never met him," Holmes said.

"We?"

"My friend, Dr. Watson, is here as well."

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

"I don't want to see a doctor. My mother, she says I'll go to one, if I'm bad."

"Have you been bad, Matthew?" Holmes asked.

"Mother says I have. But...I don't know. She wanted me to kill Lucas. She said he was cruel to her. He hurt her. I hated him. I took his watch and I cut his face. I cut other things too." He paused. "Do you believe in ghosts?"

Holmes glanced at me. "I believe in the ghosts of the past. Those who haunt our memories and our dreams."

The shadow shifted as though nodding. "I believe in ghosts. Hamlet's father was a ghost. And Banquo. After I killed Lucas, he came to me and he gave me his horse. He said he forgave me. He was the first to ever say that to me. I didn't hate him after that. That's why I took the bag. I couldn't let my mother have it. Lucas said it should go to Sophie."

"We are friends of Sophie."

"Turn on the light."

Holmes took a step into the room and turned the switch. The young man blinked against the sudden brightness. His dark hair and suit appeared unkempt.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Sherlock Holmes."

"Ah," he said rising from the desk. He crossed to the corner and, using the blade, pried up a section of board. Then, he reached into the hole and withdrew what appeared to be a heavy carpet bag.

"Lucas said I should give this to you," he said, and handed Holmes the bag. Then, after a second's hesitation, he handed over the knife as well.



MATTHEW WALKER, Mrs. Monaghan, and her father gave little resistance when we walked them back to Chewelah. Officer Waterbury took them to the jail and we were witness to their confessions. They were, in fact, a confidence gang who traveled the west looking for wealthy widowers in search of a wife. Mrs. Monaghan, whose name was in truth, Gloria Munson, would marry the man and then extort him for money by setting her son or father upon him. The murder of Lucas Monaghan had unnerved them all, especially Walker whose already fragile mind broke under the strain.

Though it was late, we then proceeded to the Chewelah Hotel to give Miss Monaghan the terrible news. She was awake when we arrived and received it with quiet reserve.

"So it was Walker who rode my father's horse, and not my father," she said.

"Yes," Holmes said. "The ghost in his mind told him the money belonged to you and, I believe, he was trying to return it. That is why the old man was so intent on keeping you two apart. Why he shouted and gestured at the rider which passed your farm. I believe the rider you saw that day was Walker. It is also why they tried to convince you the sight of the horse was only in your mind. They had much to hide and Walker had hidden the money from them. They wished only to find it and flee. But they could not understand the cryptic clues Walker gave them. They unearthed the body, thinking Walker had hidden the money there. They did not think to go back to the room where your father had been murdered."

"You are a marvel, Mr. Holmes," she said. "I don't think my father's murder could've

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

been solved without you. I must apologize for lying. Would you accept this as a reward for your services?"

She held out a handful of coin from the carpet bag.

Holmes held up a hand. "I cannot accept this, Miss Monaghan. For the simple fact that I was not alone. Officer Waterbury deserves as much of the credit as I. He is a very observant fellow and possesses a sharp mind. I believe he will go quite far in any endeavor he chooses."



AS THE SUN ROSE, weariness overcame me and when my friend suggested we stay one more day in Chewelah, I gave no argument. We left the Chewelah Hotel and, as we made our way to The Yale, a sudden thought came to me.

"Holmes, Walker told us the ghost wanted you to have the money. How can that be? Lucas Monaghan died before we came to Chewelah. And Walker could not have heard of you."

"On that point, you are quite incorrect, Watson," Holmes replied. "Walker had heard of me. Did you, by chance, happen to see the books on the bookshelf in the study?"

"I'm afraid I did not."

"If you had observed them, as I did, you would note among their number several volumes of *Collier's Magazine*. Many contained accounts written by a certain John H. Watson, M.D. A fellow as well-read as Walker, would not have failed to read those."

"And yet, you said you believed in the ghosts of memory and dream."

"Then, perhaps I shall amend a previous statement I have made and concede that *some* ghosts need apply."

# A DIAGNOSIS OUT OF TIME

ROBERT S. KATZ, MD, BSI, ASH,  
DECKMATE/CBLS

**I**t was 1974 and I was well into my time in medical school. I was doing a rotation in Internal Medicine at one of the many hospitals associated with my medical school. I'd gotten to the stage of my education where I was allowed to serve as an acting intern, and admitted my own patients under the supervision of one of the residents. It was an exciting time as I was finally able to spread my wings a bit and begin to feel like a physician.

One rainy morning, I was paged to the nursing desk and told I had an admission.

"It's an older man who arrived at the emergency room with a fever and shortness of breath. Probably pneumonia. He has a funny accent and is a bit cranky. He's all yours. His name is H.A. Gillette, by the way."

"Thanks, an uncooperative patient is just how I like to start my day".

I went down the hall of the ward and entered his room. He was, indeed, an older man but I could not precisely judge his age. Quite tall and slim, and clearly having difficulty breathing.

I introduced myself and shook his hand. His grip was firmer than I expected.

"Well, sir, what brings you here today," using the standard hospital admission opening question.

"I hope I have landed in competent hands. Perhaps you can tell me," he replied with a decidedly British tone of speech.

"I do plan to examine you but, if you want to play games, I'm your huckleberry".

The handshake revealed his fever and his breathing pointed to a pulmonary issue. His teeth were tobacco-stained and there was a cleft in his dentition that suggested long-time pipe smoking. He had trouble lying still in bed, which suggested a back problem.

"An initial observation suggests that you have chronic bronchitis and emphysema from smoking, with the recent onset of pneumonia. Incidentally, you've got chronic back issues, which make it more difficult for you to breathe comfortably in your

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

current circumstances. Of course, I'll get out my stethoscope, do a full examination, and send you for some X-rays. Will that do?" I said with a bit of sarcasm.

He did not smile but started to say something about a "game" before his cough got the better of him.

His hands were interesting. Long spidery fingers with interesting changes in the distal portions of the digits.

"How long have you played a string instrument?"

"Since childhood. You did spend a while looking at my hands."

"You can tell a lot by looking at them."

"I once wrote about that very subject."

"Really, are you an anatomist?"

"No, perhaps some would call me a dilettante. I prefer to think of myself as furnishing a lumber room."

After the examination, I drew a blood specimen for laboratory studies and had him cough some sputum for culture. Then, he went off to Radiology.

Later, I stopped to look at his films with the radiologist.

"Bob, he's got COPD and a right lower lobe pneumonia. Pretty typical picture."

"What about his spine?"

"Yes, there is a healed lumbar fracture, but it appears old."

"Too old to cause any pain?"

"Oh, it could give him a twinge now and then."

I went back to his room, made sure he was getting enough supplemental oxygen, and started him on intravenous fluids and an antibiotic.

"As I suspected, you have chronic lung damage from smoking and an area of pneumonia, probably bacterial. I think you'll be okay but you did get here just in time. Another day or two and it would have been more extensive."

His tone was rather more gracious than when we first met and he thanked me for moving swiftly.

"I will be back to see you later. Don't try to smuggle any tobacco into your room. The nurses will catch you no matter how hard you try."

"And I don't want to set the oxygen ablaze either."

"Don't tell me you're also a chemist".

"Just a dabbler."

On the way out of the room, I turned my head back to him. "Yeah, and you probably got that vertebral fracture while falling off a mountain!"

He didn't laugh.

I was on duty that evening and, fortunately, had a quiet night. I came to his room on my rounds. He was clearly more comfortable and his respirations were much easier. He was not out of the woods but his quick response was encouraging. I told him to get some sleep and I'd see him in the early morning.

"I see you are doing something in the night-time. Can you stay for a few moments?"

I was more than intrigued by all this. This whole interaction seemed silly, ridiculous, and yet utterly fascinating. Something was being drawn out of the depths of my mind and I wanted to talk more as well.

"How did you know about the mountain?"

"It was something between a joke.....and a shot in the dark. You never answered so I thought I'd said something stupid and left it at that."

"I didn't answer because I did not want you to know you were right."

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

"I may be young, but I was not born yesterday. This is all some odd series of coincidences. But I'll play along. Is that your real name?"

"Why would you doubt it?"

"You only tell us that you go by H.A. and Gillette. H. A. Saintsbury and William Gillette both made a career out of playing a particular role on stage for years. That did strike a chord with me. Your fingers suggested the playing of a string instrument. You're tall enough and with long enough arms to handle a viola or something even bigger."

"Actually it was just a violin. Purchased from one of your kinsman long ago."

"I've yet to meet someone who owns a Strad."

He faintly smiled.

"Come on now, this is all impossible. Why are you jerking me around?"

"I'm not, as you so eloquently put it, jerking you around. I seem to be under the care of someone who saw and observed, and now it's all afoot."

"This is 1974. Everything began about a century ago. You can't expect me to believe you."

"Neither did Professor Einstein.....at first"

"He's been dead for some time. They've even named my school for him."

"He was quite functional when we spoke. When I arrived, he was about to sign a letter that Leo Szilard had drafted for him."

"For the purposes of conversation, I'll suspend disbelief. But why are you here, now, and on my list of patients?"

"Some of this was by intent and some was, indeed, coincidence. A few days ago, I began to feel unwell. A physician and friend, whose name we need not mention, made a diagnosis similar to yours. But there was nothing that could be offered to me then and a fatal outcome was to be expected. I called upon my friend, Herbert, and availed myself of his useful device."

"Herbert. Do you really mean Herbert George Wells? He wrote novels".

"That is how he made his bread and cheese. But no one could have imagined all that. He was an inventor, quite secretive, but an inventor. He needed some equipment only my brother could obtain and that brought the two of us into his confidence. He's probably somewhere off fighting Morlocks. They will exist someday."

"And you are probably going to tell me that the mountain was by a waterfall."

"Everything I have to say about that has already crossed your mind."

"You broke open a bust of a French Emperor..."

"...and found a pearl."

"You passed a dish of curried chicken...."

"....and showed off a naval treaty."

"You're way off your usual pathways. How did you come to be here, now, and with me?"

"Again, some of this is coincidence. I had merely planned to go to some point in time where a treatment might save my life. My original destination was Bart's but, as Professor Einstein warned, there are some unpredictabilities in the space-time continuum and I appeared in this unexpected location. I believe it's called The Bronx."

"It sure isn't Piccadilly Circus."

"But perhaps this is all for the best. I seem to have acquired the services of someone who both saw and observed."

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

"This is still something I just can't accept. However, I am still responsible for your care and you are improving. We'll leave it at that for the time being."

"Ah, but this must be our secret. You can't tell anyone."

"First of all, no one would believe me. I'd be ruled insane and thrown out of school. So this is all confidential."

And then I thought about it for a second. Perhaps, just perhaps this was my chance.

"We'll make a deal. I won't tell a tale for which the world is not yet prepared. In return, you must tell me something important."

"My brother would never allow me to divulge the secrets of the Realm. What could you possibly want to know?"

"Where were all, and I mean all, of your friend's wounds?"

For the first time since we'd met, he laughed. In fact he laughed quite heartily until his coughs put a stop to his chuckling.

Then....he told me. And only I know.

Over the next few days, he continued to improve and was ready for discharge. I'd checked his stated address and figured that placed him somewhere in the middle of the Thames. I kept that quiet.

As he was discharged, he extended his hand. His grip was even firmer than before.

"Thank you, Doctor. I think it was fortuitous that Herbert's device went slightly off course and brought me here. I'm now well. I noted that you do both see and observe. Now I have two physician friends. I'll tell the other that you are kindred spirits. He'll enjoy learning that. You've made the right choice of careers."

I was still in denial about all of this, but the sound of his words moved me.

Twenty-five years passed. I had finished school, training, and was well-ensconced in my chosen specialty of Pathology. I did not see patients anymore but was happy spending my career looking down a microscope, performing autopsies, and managing blood banks.

Then, early one morning I got a call from the President of the Hospital.

"Bob, we have a problem that you might be able to help us with. We admitted a patient earlier today. The folks in the Emergency Department think he has an exacerbation of an old vertebral fracture. However, he won't allow any treatment until you come to see him. He asked for you by name. He seems to know you, even though he says he does not live in New Jersey. He certainly does not sound like someone from Jersey."

For a moment I was dumbfounded. Could this be? Was the experience in the Bronx a quarter century earlier truly what I thought it might have been?

I spoke into the phone.

"Ask him if he started getting the pain when he struck a pig carcass."

"Are you okay, Bob?"

"I'm fine. Just ask him and call me back."

"Okay, he's making such a ruckus in the ED that I'll try anything to get him to cooperate."

The call came a few minutes later.

"He said forget about the pig. It happened while doing something called 'single-something'."

"You mean singlestick?"

"Yes, that's it. How did you know?"

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

"I'll be right down. Remind me of his name."

"He's registered as Ellie Treville."

"Tell him I'll be right down and that we have eliminated the impossible."

# SHERLOCK HOLMES IN DETROIT

RICH KRISCIUNAS, ASH, DECKMATE/CBLS

**H**<https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/images/thumb/2/22/Map-1894-east-usa.jpg?1278px-Map-1894-east-usa.jpg?20160408224154>



There are two types of Sherlockians; those who believe that Arthur Conan Doyle wrote four novels and 56 stories about Sherlock Holmes and those who trust that Conan Doyle was merely the literary agent for Dr. John H. Watson, the real storyteller, and that both Holmes and Watson were real. I'll let you decide which theory is more credible but the following information is all corroborated as true. This article will carefully examine the dates when the stories were published and the dates when the stories took place. For this article, I will use the chronology of Vincent Wright that appears on his website "Historical Sherlock" found at [historicalsherlock.blogspot.com](http://historicalsherlock.blogspot.com).

Dr. Watson's first story about Sherlock Holmes, "A Study in Scarlett," was published in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* in November, 1887 and chronologists agree the story took place in March 1881. If chronologists are correct, Watson, believed that Sherlock Holmes disappeared at Reichenbach Falls in April, 1891 after a fight with Professor James Moriarty and both were presumed dead. After Holmes' purported death, Dr. Watson began submitting stories to his literary agent, Arthur Conan Doyle for two

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

years. The stories appeared in *The Strand Magazine* from July 1891 (SCAN) through December 1893 (FINA) and were later published in two books; *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* and *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*. The stories written by Watson in those two books described cases that Holmes had handled during the time period between 1879 (Musgrave Ritual) and 1890 (Dying Detective). According to Wright, Watson wrote about 28 cases that Holmes handled during that time, including the other novels, *Sign of [The] Four* (1888), *Valley of Fear* (1888), and *Hound of the Baskervilles* (1889).

Conan Doyle took credit for writing the stories. The world's readers didn't discover that their favorite consulting detective was no longer alive until over two and a half years later in December 1893 when "The "Final Problem" was published in *The Strand Magazine*.

In 1894, Conan Doyle took credit for the death of Holmes when he was famously quoted as saying, "Had I not killed him he certainly would have killed me." "Either Holmes or I had to die. I did it in self-defense."

Prof. Moriarty's band of criminals continued to seek out Holmes, as evidenced by Sebastian Moran's arrest after an attempt on Holmes life, years later, in April 1894 which was chronicled by Watson in "*The Empty House*." That's where Moran was arrested for shooting at a bust of Holmes with an air gun at 221B Baker Street. But that story wasn't published until 1903. As far as the reading public was concerned, Holmes had been dead for several years. Conan Doyle used the notoriety he had gained from being thought of as the author of the Sherlock Holmes stories to be invited to tour the United States in October 1894.

Moran was acquitted at his murder trial in the case of Ronald Adair because the Crown could not link Moran to the bullet recovered in Adair's upstairs room. In fact, Holmes mentioned Sebastian Moran's still being alive in "*The Illustrious Client*" which occurred in September 1902. After the Adair trial, Holmes and Moran decided to make a truce. Moran would not try to kill Holmes and Holmes would not try to prosecute Moran. Holmes, using his knowledge of English law, knew that Moran couldn't be prosecuted for his shooting of the bust of Holmes because the law in England, at the time Moran fired the shot, held that one couldn't be convicted of attempted murder where the crime was impossible to commit. (1) Since Holmes was never in danger when the shot was fired, there was no crime. Holmes and Moran were both free to walk the streets of London.

It's important to point out that the first stories written about Holmes weren't published in "*The Strand*" until *after* Watson believed Holmes died. "*Scandal in Bohemia*" was first published in July 1891, two months after Holmes' supposed death. All of the stories that were published in the books "*Adventure*" and "*Memoirs*" were, first, printed in *The Strand* in the 24 months that followed. One can understand the stress that working with Holmes placed on Watson's marriage(s) and medical practice. As Holmes constantly took him away from his medical practice, Watson was in need of income which he supplemented by writing the adventurous stories about his dear friend. That's probably why he labeled the second set of stories, "*The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*," in Holmes' memory. In December 1893, as Watson's financial situation improved, Watson informed Conan Doyle that he planned to discontinue writing stories about Holmes after "*Empty House*" was published.

But unbeknownst to Dr. Watson, Holmes was still alive. After he fought Moriarty in Switzerland, Holmes sought shelter from Moriarty's associates. Holmes, later, described where he went during his three year hiatus and what he did to avoid Sebas-

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

tian Moran and his associates. Holmes said he traveled to Tibet, Norway, Persia, Mecca, Khartoum, France and Montpellier before returning to London. The list of places Holmes gave Watson was incomplete because Holmes visited other places as well. One of the places Holmes visited was in the United States and this is a story about that trip.

Arthur Conan Doyle, in addition to being Watson's literary agent, was an author in his own right. After he graduated from medical school and tried to establish a practice, Conan Doyle would sit in his office waiting for a patient to appear. To fill his free time, his mind would wander. Between 1879 and 1886, Conan Doyle had written 31 stories that were published in magazines and journals like the monthly *London Society* magazine, the weekly *Chambers Journal*, the British weekly periodical, All the Year Round, the monthly magazine, *Temple Bar*, the weekly magazine *Bow Bells*; a British weekly periodical created by *The Religious Tract Society*, the monthly *Cornhill Magazine*, a weekly newspaper, *Cassell's Saturday Journal* and *Belgravia*, a monthly illustrated literary magazine.

Conan Doyle's first story, "The Mystery of Sasassa Valley" was published in *Chamber's Journal* on September 6, 1879. Conan Doyle wrote stories with titles like "My Friend the Murderer," (1882) "Selecting a Ghost, The Ghosts of Goresthorpe Grange," (1883), "The Captain of the Polestar"(1883) and "The Parson of Jackman's Gulch." (1885) In addition to Sherlock Holmes, Conan Doyle was known for other works like "The White Company," "Micah Clarke" (1889) and "The Refugees." Conan Doyle was well known as an author in the UK. This is probably the main reason that readers assumed it was Conan Doyle who wrote the novel *A Study in Scarlet*.

Conan Doyle arrived in New York on October 2, 1894 to begin a literary speaking tour that would take him from the east coast, to the Midwest and Canada through December 8 so he could return to his wife and family before Christmas. The tour included stops in New York, Cincinnati, Chicago, Indianapolis, Boston, Toronto and Detroit. Sherlock Holmes decided to visit Conan Doyle during that tour to tell him he was alive and about his agreement with Moran.

Newspaper reports about Conan Doyle's North American lectures were carried in the United States and Europe. Detailed newspaper articles about Conan Doyle's travels and lectures in 1894 can be found in one of a series of six books edited and annotated by Mattias Boström and Mark Alberstat titled, "Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle in the Newspapers, Volume 6 October 1894," available through Wessex Press.

When Conan Doyle arrived in New York he planned to deliver 40 lectures in principal American and Canadian cities. Conan Doyle was accompanied on his cross Atlantic voyage by his younger brother, Lt. Hay Doyle, an Army officer in the Royal Artillery of the British army. Conan Doyle planned to use the trip to promote his new book, "Round the Red Lamp," a book about the experiences of a general medical practitioner, was published three weeks after he arrived.

Sherlock Holmes elected to go to Detroit and wait for Conan Doyle to arrive there for a speech he planned to deliver at the Church of Our Father on October 22, 1894. Holmes had brought with him a letter of introduction from Insp. Gregson at Scotland Yard. While in Detroit, Holmes befriended two Detroit police detectives, Sergeant Baker and Detective Downey, who worked in a precinct by the Detroit River in the slum area of the city. In the two days before Conan Doyle's speech, Holmes worked with the two detectives and helped solve two homicides and broke up a jewelry theft ring. The detectives marveled at Holmes' deductive abilities and were so impressed

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

with his assistance that they would do anything for him. On October 23, 1894, Holmes finally caught up with Conan Doyle in Detroit.

A practice known as slumming was common in London among fashionable Londoners. They would dress up, leave their homes and take busses to East London slums for midnight tours. Conan Doyle was taken on a similar tour by the two police detectives, Sgt. Baker and Detective Downey. They led Conan Doyle and his party to some of the roughest areas of Detroit. They showed Conan Doyle how they handled crowds in the lodging-houses and visited the coal docks by the Detroit river, where a man named Lawton had been shot. Much to Conan Doyle's surprise, Holmes appeared out of the shadows. Conan Doyle was stunned and speechless, just like Watson had been when he was reunited with his Baker Street roommate in April earlier that year. Holmes said, "My friend, I wanted you to see that I was still alive so you could believe it when you heard the news from our friend Dr. Watson."

The police detectives invited Conan Doyle to accompany Holmes as they investigated the Lawton shooting. Conan Doyle watched as Holmes went with the detectives to observe a group of men sleeping in a dozen shanties spread out in different positions near the scene of the shooting. While the detectives watched and waited, Holmes observed each man and asked to carefully examine each man's hands. After looking at a dozen men, Holmes pointed to one man and suggested that he be arrested. As the man stood up to be handcuffed, the detectives found a gun under his blanket where he had been laying. "How did you know?" asked Sergeant Baker. "It was elementary," Holmes replied, without explaining and walked away. Holmes looked at Conan Doyle and said, "We'll talk later," and walked away into the shadows.

After solving the shooting, Holmes convinced the two Detroit Police Department detectives to pull a prank on Conan Doyle. After taking the arrested man to police headquarters, the party went to a dive bar, where a woman with flaming red cheeks was behind the bar. After the group had seen all they wanted to see, the woman asked if the gentleman, meaning Mr. Doyle, was going to treat his party to drinks. Conan Doyle was a good sport and paid for everyone's drinks. (3) Unbeknownst to Conan Doyle, Holmes, the master of disguises, had dressed up as the female bartender.

Later that night, Holmes met Conan Doyle at the Russell Hotel. They talked for close to an hour. No one else was present. Many Sherlockians suspect, in addition to telling Conan Doyle about Moran, the two men came to an agreement that would allow Conan Doyle to continue to take credit for writing the stories written by Watson as long as he gave Watson a greater percentage of his profits. This turned out to be a good deal for the family of Conan Doyle who earned income from the rights to the Holmes stories for over a century.

Holmes ended up returning to London, but not before helping the Detroit Police Department solve a series of thefts relating to Henry Ford and Thomas Edison. According to Dr. Watson and chronologists, while Conan Doyle was on tour, Sherlock Holmes returned in time to solve, "The Golden Pince-Nez" which began in what Watson described as "a wild, tempestuous night, towards the close of November." Holmes didn't return to Detroit until 1914 when disguised as Altamont, an embittered Irish-American, Holmes became a member of a secret Irish society before going to Chicago, Buffalo and Ireland.

(1) In **Regina v. Gaylor** (1857), Chief Baron Pollock said: "If I, believing that there is a person in an adjoining room, when in fact there is no one there, fire a pistol

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

through the doorway with the intention of killing him, I have committed no act cognisable by the criminal law." See also: "Was it Attempted Murder?" by S. Tupper Bigelow, "The Baker Street Briefs, The Writings of S. Tupper Bigelow, BSI, The Five Orange Pips." The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box, 2000.

(2) *The Daily Inter Ocean*, October 24, 1894.

(3) *The Daily Inter Ocean*, October 24, 1894.

# THE ADVENTURE OF THE SNOW ANGEL

## RON LEVITSKY

**I**t was July, 1916, the midst of the Great War when, at the request of his brother Mycroft, Sherlock Holmes sailed to Washington, D.C. His mission – advise the American government how best to combat German sabotage and protect the critical shipment of food and munitions to England. The remarkable success of Holmes' mission can be found in several official Allied records.

However, a footnote to our American journey had yet to be told. I say "our," because I had accompanied Holmes to the United States. Now that his intergovernmental meetings were concluded, he asked that I assist in a personal matter.

"I suspect, Watson, you will find it a bit like being back at Baker Street."

He said nothing more, despite my insistence, until we were on a train bound for Chicago. We sat across from one another, and, indeed, it did feel like the old days.

I hadn't seen my friend since his capture of the German spy Von Bork two years earlier. Holmes' hair had thinned and gone gray, his body appeared even more gaunt, but his back remained erect, and his gray eyes were alert as a hawk's.

After lighting his pipe, he said, "This unexpected trip to the United States permits me a singular opportunity."

From an inside coat pocket, he handed me a telegram, dated a week ago, which read as follows, "Could use your help." It was signed, "Knuckles."

I stared incredulously at the telegram. I expected Holmes to laugh, but his face grew somber.

"In trying to infiltrate Von Bork's espionage ring, I first needed to establish my cover in Chicago as a violent Irish nationalist. It was close business. Those Irishmen were no fools. More than once I would have met my end if not for the assistance, at the risk of his own life, of Police Captain Robert "Knuckles" Corrigan."

Holmes recounted his adventures in Chicago with Knuckles Corrigan, until the rising of the moon and rocking of the train brought us yawning to our beds. The next morning, we breakfasted and then adjourned to where we'd sat the night before, this time silent, as through the window we watched pass what seemed to be the world's

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

bounty. Stalks of corn, nearly my height, stood row upon row like soldiers at attention. I imagined them magically transformed into troops fighting side-by-side with our own gallant lads.

"Yes, Watson, it won't be long before the Americans become our comrades."

I'd long accepted Holmes' ability to read my mind through his acute observation. But this was more; he had read my heart.

The train pulled into Chicago late in the evening. Two porters entered to take our luggage. We followed them onto the platform. Suddenly, Holmes was lifted and swung about like a child, and then embraced by a man as large and imposing as a Bessemer furnace. Everything about him was in excess, his broad chest and shoulders, lump of a nose, cauliflower ear, and hands big and strong as a lobster's, which I learned from his crushing grip.

The porters and I followed Holmes and Corrigan to another track, where we boarded a commuter car unlike any I'd ever seen. It was more of a gentleman's club, with arm-chairs along the windows, card tables on an Oriental rug, and a well-stocked bar. As the only passengers, we took the center table and gave the attendant our drink orders.

Corrigan said, "Welcome to the 'Millionaire's Special' – the only privately-owned commuter car in these United States. It's late, so we won't be hobnobbing with the Captains of Industry – McCormick, Swift, Armour, Marshall Field, and the like. I was permitted use of this car when I mentioned your work for the U.S. government."

Holmes asked, "Where are we going?"

"About an hour's commute north to the town of Lake Forest, where I now work. Thought I'd be in the catbird seat, retiring from the skull-cracking of Chicago to become Police Chief of a place where the only worry is leaving the stable door open and letting the polo ponies run loose. But death came and found us, and I need your help putting it to rest."

"Of course, you have it, but something more than your job is behind this request."

Corrigan nodded. "You're sharp as ever. That's what I've counted on. If you're not tired, I could go over the facts now."

"By all means."

Holmes leaned forward, eyes alert and a twitch of his nose as if catching the scent.

And so, Corrigan told his story.

On a bitter cold morning the previous February, instead of taking the commuter train to high school, Marion Lambert met her college boyfriend Will Orpet, and the two walked through the snow into the nearby woods. Both were the children of head gardeners of Lake Forest estates and had been seeing one another for over a year. From their letters as well as Orpet's testimony, it was clear that initially, he had wooed her in earnest. Then Marion, fearing she'd become pregnant, had demanded a meeting. She wanted marriage, but by then his desire had cooled. They argued, Orpet insisting that she couldn't have become pregnant by him. Then he spoke of his love for another woman and began to walk away.

Crying, "Is there no hope?" she gasped and fell to the ground.

He turned back to find Marion dead, her lips bloody and blistered. Instead of seeking help, Orpet fled, taking the train back to college in Madison, Wisconsin, about a hundred miles away. Mr. Lambert frantically searched for his daughter the night of her death and found her the following morning. The coroner determined that Marion had died from potassium cyanide mixed with an acidic solution.

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

There were several reasons to suspect Orpet of murder. He had tried to establish a false alibi to hide his rendezvous with Marion, such as mussing his bed in Madison to make it appear he had slept there the night before, instead taking the evening train into Lake Forest. A Madison pharmacist testified that, before leaving for Lake Forest, Orpet had purchased a small empty medicine bottle. According to prosecutors, the bottle was used to hold the poison. Clumps of cyanide crystals were found in the basement ash heap of his father's greenhouse.

At first, Orpet denied having brought the bottle to their meeting and said his mind was "in a fog" regarding what had happened to it. Authorities searched the wooded area in vain. Yet, a week after his arrest, he drew a map that led his defense team directly to a bottle, not far from where Marion died. The bottle contained molasses mixed with water, a pseudo-abortifacient, which Orpet said he had planned to give Marion to allay her fears. Of course, the prosecution questioned if that bottle was really the one he had taken into the woods.

Then there was the girl's behavior. She had just celebrated her eighteenth birthday. Although Orpet claimed she was depressed, her best friend Josephine Davis testified Marion was in excellent spirits.

Corrigan insisted that Marion and all her girlfriends were "God-fearing and proper young ladies."

Then he nodded, through the window, to the wooded area they were just passing.

"There, gentleman, a little way past those trees is where Marion Lambert died, lying face up in the snow like an angel. To be sure – an angel, for the coroner said not only was Marion not pregnant, she was still a virgin."

We stared into the woods, as twilight shrouded the trees in shadows.

It was Holmes who finally spoke. "I take it the prosecution is calling the girl's death homicide, and the defense suicide."

"That's right. And both sides agree that if the poison was a liquid, it was brought by Orpet in a bottle. If a solid, Marion most likely carried it to their meeting, perhaps in her handkerchief, and planning, if rejected, to kill herself. The poor girl .... She ...."

Holmes put his hand on the other man's great arm, which was shaking.

"What is it?"

Corrigan lowered his head between his hands.

"Will Orpet, that sniveling coward, is my sister's boy."

A few minutes later the train stopped, and we stepped onto a platform opposite a town square. The area was still under construction, with planks arranged in a crazy quilt of improvised sidewalks over the mud and dirt. Yet, those shops already constructed – with their Tudor half timbers and stucco, along with a mix of steep gables, bow windows, and cozy dormers – had a fairy tale kind of feeling.

Corrigan said, "That's Market Square – first of its kind in America. All these shops designed together by one architect, with even a place to park your automobile. The swells in town got together to build it. They're putting a fortune into the architecture and landscaping, but it'll be beautiful."

Odd having just spoken of a possible murder in such an affluent and idyllic community. Yet Holmes once had observed that the loveliest countryside often hid more sin than the darkest alleys of London.

Corrigan handed Holmes a briefcase bulging with copies of the investigation reports. We bade him good night and checked into the Deerpath Inn. While I fell asleep

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

over a novel, Holmes read the documents deep into the night, and by morning the smoke from his pipe had turned the air thick as a London fog.

Court was not in session that day. Early morning, the three of us walked into Helms Woods, the area near the railroad tracks where Marion had died. Corrigan said that the couple's footprints had been easy to track in the snow. After Marion cried-out, Orpet's tracks indicated he had started to leave but returned to where she fell. Then he ran away.

Holmes asked, "Are there no other witnesses?"

The policeman shook his head. "It's an isolated area."

"So, we only have your nephew's word for what happened. Is it possible to see him?"

"I was hoping you'd ask. Let's get back to my car."

It took half an hour to reach the Lake County Courthouse in Waukegan. The holding cells were in the basement. Corrigan had called ahead, and Will Orpet was waiting for us in a dirty gray box of an interrogation room. He was a handsome lad, with straw-colored hair, deep blue eyes, and a sensuous mouth. Even though the room felt warm and sticky, he was trembling.

We all sat around a greasy oak table.

"They won't let me have any more cigarettes. Do something, Uncle Robbie. For God's sake, make them give me a cigarette!"

"That's what concerns you, instead of worrying about giving your poor mother a broken heart? Here are two men who have traveled a thousand miles to help you. Tell them the truth. It's your only chance."

Orpet remained sullen but eventually admitted what was already known – faking an alibi to make him appear to have been a hundred miles away in college the morning he and Marion had met. And he had lied, until his love letters revealed the truth, when insisting they were not romantically involved.

Holmes asked, "What state of mind was the girl in? I read notes of the investigation. Her family and best friend say she was in good spirits."

"I don't care what they say. Marion was off her rocker about being pregnant. If you read notes of the investigation, you know the coroner said she was still a virgin."

"You had fallen in love with another woman. You needed to separate from Marion, but she was giving you a difficult time."

Orpet gripped the table edge until his knuckles turned white. "I admit to being a liar and coward, but I swear on a stack of Bibles that I didn't harm Marion. Please, you've got to believe me!"

Outside the jail, Corrigan asked Holmes, "What do you think of him?"

"He's not someone I'd like associated with a daughter of mine."

"What are you planning to do?"

"I feel the need to attend church."

"Holmes," I exclaimed, "you can't be serious!"

"Never more so. I'll try to be back in time for dinner."

We returned to Lake Forest. After dropping me off at Market Square, Corrigan and Holmes drove on. Carefully negotiating the plank sidewalks, carpenters, and bricklayers, I entered Fitzgerald's Cigar Store. I sat on a stool at the counter and sipped a rather weak cup of tea, while chatting with the local tradesmen. They asked if I'd come to town to be "one of them expert witnesses" at the trial. Shaking my head, I asked their opinion of the case. To a man they swore to Orpet's guilt and hoped he would hang. Perhaps Holmes was correct in going to church.

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

We had dinner with Corrigan and his wife. Refusing to discuss the case, Holmes had me entertain the couple with some of our early exploits. We stayed late into the evening. Returning to the inn, Holmes lit his pipe and, once again, opened the case files.

"Tomorrow, Watson, we shall see the mysterious ways in which the Lord works."

The next morning, we sat in the third row as court resumed. The defense called a surprise witness – Marion's best friend. Josephine Davis had already testified for the prosecution. However, in an amazing turn of events, the pretty strawberry blond reversed her testimony, saying that Marion had been extremely depressed over Orpet's cooling of affection. Also, that Marion knew she wasn't pregnant but had said so to pressure him into "doing the right thing." Josephine's previous testimony was untrue, because she had resented how poorly Orpet had treated her friend.

The prosecution was caught off guard, and court was adjourned until the following day.

I asked, "How in the world did you do it, Holmes?"

"Remember when Corrigan said Marion and her friends were "God-fearing"? I took him at his word. He helped arrange a meeting with Josephine and her minister, Reverend Borland. The Reverend reminded her of the importance of honesty, especially while under oath. Josephine seemed relieved when she confessed the truth to us."

"Wonderful, Holmes!"

"Elementary. There is something else the girl confirmed, but we'll speak of that another time. For now, we must move from psychology to science. Corrigan is helping to prepare an experiment. Come along."

An hour later we walked into the science laboratory of the local high school. Corrigan nodded a greeting. Both Holmes and Professor Craego, Marion's science teacher, had slipped into white laboratory coats. Craego, a young scarecrow with longish red hair, was busy adjusting the flame of a Bunsen lamp. On the table were two round jars, each containing a cloudy solution, and a wire loop with a handle.

Holmes said, "In reading the investigation report, I was struck that the cyanide kept in this classroom laboratory was potassium, the same type of cyanide that killed Marion. The documents also reveal that the prosecution's chemistry expert had conducted three different types of tests to determine that the cyanide in the greenhouse of Will Orpet's father also is potassium. But as Professor Craego knows, four distinct tests are necessary to verify potassium. Gentlemen, let us do the fourth. Professor, may I?"

"Of course."

"This simple experiment is called a flame test. After cleaning a wire loop like so, I dip it into this solution of cyanide taken from a supply found in the school laboratory. Placing the loop in the flame like so..., you can see it burns yellow – almost golden, indicating that it is potassium cyanide."

"Now let us try the same experiment with the cyanide from Will Orpet's father's greenhouse basement."

Holmes repeated the procedure.

Ah, look! It burns a lovely lilac color! Meaning, Professor?"

"It isn't potassium, but sodium cyanide."

"Precisely. This wasn't the poison that killed Marion. Therefore, the scientific evidence points to Orpet's innocence."

Craego said, "In fact, the day before Marion died, I saw her alone in the laboratory near where the potassium cyanide is kept. At the time, I thought it rather odd."

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

Before I could congratulate Holmes, Corrigan once again had hoisted him into the air.

The tests were repeated by three noted chemists with the same results.

A few days later, after deliberating five hours, the jury found Orpet not guilty.

The young man promised to enlist in the army. If America was soon going to war, he would have a chance to redeem himself. Holmes and I had seen others do so.

The next day we began our journey home. As the commuter train left Lake Forest for Chicago, I congratulated my friend once again.

"Thank you, Watson, but there's one observation I have yet to share. According to the coroner's report, the morning she met Orpet, Marion had worn rather old undergarments – dirty, torn, and pinned together. She was a fashionable young lady – the other detail her friend Josephine confirmed – and had just received several intimate articles of clothing as birthday gifts."

"Holmes, why must you go into this? It is most indecorous."

"That is why I only share my conjecture with you. If she had planned to commit suicide, Marion would never have worn such unseemly undergarments, for fear of her corpse being examined in such clothing."

"But if Orpet didn't kill Marion, and she didn't commit suicide, how did she die?"

Holmes shook his head. "Haven't I said the fair sex is your department? Therefore, picture a high-strung young woman who is being rejected by her suitor. To frighten him into acceding to her demands, she removes from her pocket a small amount of potassium cyanide taken from the science laboratory and makes a dramatic gesture by putting it to her lips. Perhaps inadvertently she tastes a little, which kills her immediately."

"By Jove, Holmes, it was an accident! What shall we do?"

"Since I have no absolute proof, perhaps this conjecture would only cause the family more grief."

He nodded at the window. The train was passing the woods where Marion had died.

"Let the woods keep its secrets. After all, no matter how she died, Marion Lambert is now an angel."

# SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE CHICAGO BLUEBEARD MURDERER: THE EVIL THAT MEN DO

DIANE GILBERT MADSEN

## Chapter 1: A Chance Meeting

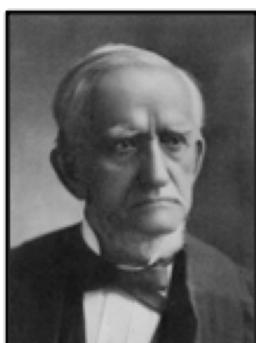
Only now in 1906, after receiving certain communiques from colleagues in America, can I set down the tale of how Sherlock Holmes helped solve a series of complex and perplexing crimes and identify a daring criminal whom he never met face to face.

It began in late March of 1894, three years after my friend and companion, Sherlock Holmes, had disappeared into Reichenbach Falls with his arch-enemy, Moriarty. I, Dr. John H. Watson, confess that my existence during that time had been rudderless and despondent. I decided to attend an International Medical Congress in Rome to meet physicians and surgeons from around the globe. As I packed, I questioned my decision to go, but reminded myself that I must endeavour to learn more about rapidly changing medical techniques and new drugs to improve my practice. I also told myself that this venture might stimulate me out of my deep lethargy.

Owing to favourable weather and a light traveling kit, my journey to the Eternal City was pleasant enough.

Not being in a mood to see the sights, I watched the opening ceremonies which were impressive.

Thereafter, I devoted myself entirely to the activities at the Congress. On the second day, I was surprised and delighted to be overtaken by a lean gentleman in his early seventies sporting a formal frock coat and a large black bow tie. His face was handsome and clean-shaven with a



Dr. Nathan Smith Davis



Opening Ceremonies of X1 Congress

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

prominent forehead and searching eyes. With a quick, agile movement, he thrust his elegant hand toward me, and in a clear, reverberating, American voice, he introduced himself as Dr. Nathan Smith Davis, the retired Medical Examiner of Chicago, Illinois.

I knew his name at once, for every medical student during my time had had to study his treatises on *Principles and Practice of Medicine*. How he knew that I was Dr. John Watson was a mystery to me. I looked into his clear blue eyes and congratulated him on being one of the founders of the American Medical Association and the *Journal of American Medicine* for which he was well-known.

We later dined together where he amazed me with his knowledge of subjects ranging from modern medicine, to relations between Britain and America, to current events. Soon we became fast friends.

### Chapter 2: Chicago – The Good and the Bad

One of the many things Dr. Davis and I discussed was Chicago's Columbian Exposition, a World's Fair which had been a rousing success the previous year and had reestablished Chicago after its devastating 1871 fire.

"Ah, yes, Dr. Watson, its wonders were many. Messrs. Tesla and Westinghouse had the Fair electrified with street lights and lamps on walkways and outside buildings so that as night dawned, visitors were amazed by the sights."

"I have seen photographs of George Ferris' tremendous wheel and confess I would have liked to ride it to the top."

"I myself was one of its passengers, and I assure you, it was a thrill as great as a successful surgery," he chuckled as the waiters removed our dinner plates.

"Many new products were introduced there as well, such as Edison's

Kinetoscope, zippers, electric irons, and the first dishwasher."

While we were served coffee, Dr. Davis frowned. "Unfortunately, the Fair also brought serious crime to Chicago as well."



I nodded. "Like the rest of the world, I have heard of H. H. Holmes, his horrible murder castle, and how they finally found and hanged him."

"He was the arch-fiend and the most well-known villain, but the Fair seems to have sparked a new boldness in the criminal element."

"How so?"

"Crimes suddenly escalated. Some increase was expected with the huge

number of visitors, but new saloons opened all over. When men took to fighting over which liquor tasted better, murders often resulted. Then the Levee District opened on Chicago's south side where over 60 women began what I might say, a "fair"

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

business, specifically attracting the male visitors from the Fair." He paused to sip his coffee.

"Hmm. I see what you mean."

"That is not all. Last year, Chicago saw a spike of over 300 per cent in spouse-killings."

Shocked, I tried to digest the magnitude of this statistic. "What happened to make so many men murder their wives?" I wondered aloud.

"Possibly divorce. More women today rebel against the status quo and try to get a divorce. But today's man reacts badly to this, and often it ends in tragedy for the wife. But my dear Dr. Watson, the reverse is also true." He smiled sardonically. "Many women are resorting to murder, mostly when they can no longer accept being brutalized by their drunken husbands."

"Women killers ... that is against the laws of nature, surely."

"Many are desperate. I was called to an autopsy recently of a husband. His pretty young wife, who was black and blue from her husband's mistreatment, admitted she had pawned a blue dress to purchase a revolver and four bullets. She pumped all four into her husband, and later said only that she 'was sorry she did not have more bullets.'"

I coughed, not wanting to believe this, but suddenly I remembered Britain's own first serial killer, Mary Ann Cotton, nicknamed the Black Widow, who reputedly murdered 21 people. My vision of women as the fair sex was assuredly being shaken.

"I am sorry if I upset you, Dr. Watson."

Holmes told me not to trust women, but I venture to think that he, too, would be shocked by the extent of this unnatural trend. He was always a great fan of you Americans."

"You bring up Mr. Sherlock Holmes, your fallen colleague. Like everyone else in the world, I, too, am sad about losing him."

"I miss him enormously." It was not surprising that Dr. Davis knew of Holmes, whose reputation as the world's greatest consulting detective had grown even more wide-spread since he was gone. Now it seems I hear of him everywhere.

"Will you be writing more of his amazing adventures in your inimitable style?"

"He thought my little efforts too flowery. I shall pen no more of them, however, as he had forbidden me to write any he had not expressly proposed."

"Ah, a great loss."

"Holmes often let Scotland Yard take credit for solving cases he cracked because he was in the game for the game's sake, not for adulation." I sighed. "I would like to record more of those cases, but as it was not his intention for me to do so, I must respect his desire."

Dr. Davis bowed his head. "How I wish he were still here. Holmes could be of assistance to us in Chicago. We have a puzzle no one seems able to solve."

"Holmes always fancied a good puzzle. If you wish to tell me something of it, I shall endeavour to employ Holmes' methods to assist you however I can."

He folded his napkin and pushed back his chair. "I was hoping you would say that. Let us retire to a quiet corner."



Mary Ann Cotton

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

Since Rome's weather was a pleasant 68 degrees, most of our colleagues had gone outside to explore the city. The noise level had dropped, and we settled into a cozy nook with cigars and brandy.

"Dr. Watson, I confess I purposely introduced myself to you. Knowing your familiarity with Mr. Holmes' method, you might be our last hope to solve this case."

I hoped earnestly that, in this instance, I might achieve something more than the indifferent success which heretofore had been my only results.

Dr. Davis lifted his brandy glass, turning it to reflect the soft gaslight. "In this case, we have come across at least six widows in the past three years who died within months of their second marriages. There may well be more we have not yet uncovered."

I swirled the brandy in my glass. "A shocking statistic. All widows, you say?"

He nodded. "Tracing the groom or grooms has met with no success."

Our quiet area was getting crowded as people came back in and meandered round our chairs. I took a long swallow of the pleasantly smooth liquid.

"If it is one man," I ventured, "he must be clever, adroit and charming."

"Agreed, but we have learned little so far. The husbands of the dead widows all have different names, and we are investigating signatures of the grooms on marriage licenses and property leases."

"Anything come of that?"

"Three clues have emerged which seem to connect the deaths," he said. "One is that the physical descriptions of the grooms we got from clergy and neighbours are all very similar, leading us to suspect we may be after only one man. Secondly, the widows all died within a few weeks or months of the marriage; and lastly, the six murders all happened in one area of the city."

"Even Holmes would need more facts. I am sure he would scrutinize the area where the murders happened to find connections among the crimes. Holmes said that the site of a crime was crucially important and should be the starting point in a line of investigation."

"Well said, Dr. Watson. They are expanding the interviews now to include incidental witnesses such as newspaper men, patrolmen, waitresses, florists, and the like."

"Hopefully something connecting the victims or the killer will emerge," I replied encouragingly.

As I finished my brandy, a distinguished gentleman I had seen in passing at the Congress approached us. He was in his late fifties with a neat head of white hair and a full mustache, but I had noticed him for his dapper attire - a red tie and kerchief.

"Aha, my dear-a Doctor Davis. I had-a hoped I would find you."

I was then introduced to Professor Guido Baccelli of Rome, who was the President of the Congress and the Minister of Public Education. He apologized profusely in his Italian-accented English, and explained that Dr. Davis was needed at once to help clarify some points involving an operation to be performed tomorrow by a Signor Durante at which a large kidney with a cyst was to be removed from a woman.



Prof Baccelli

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

"I would be interested in observing that operation," I interjected.

"I am-a sorry, Signor," he said. "Tis-a reserved for a group of eminent Congressists because-a we must adhere to rigid antiseptic procedures."

We three parted then, and although I wanted to hear more about the Chicago murderer from Dr. Davis, I did not see him again before the Congress adjourned.

I left on April 4<sup>th</sup>, a day before the elaborate closing ceremonies which I knew would draw a huge crowd. As I journeyed to London, already my spirits had fallen back into that listlessness I have lately suffered.

### **Chapter 3: Revelations and Rejuvenations**

I spent the evening reading the accumulated newspapers, all of which featured the murder of the Honourable Ronald Adair. I even read the notes on the inquest, but could not see through the maze. Once again I regretted that Holmes was not here to solve the case as only he could do.

I slept fitfully, and next day went through my rounds, turning the facts of the Adair case over in my mind, but not finding any explanation. Towards evening, I strolled along Park Lane and found myself in front of number 427, the site of young Adair's murder. In the crowd gathered there, I bumped into an elderly, deformed man behind me and knocked over some books he was carrying. Faithful readers of my little tales well know what befell me next. It was Sherlock Holmes himself in disguise, and I admit freely that I succumbed to the grey mist that swirled across my eyes, for never have I been so incredulous, surprised and happy in all my life.

That very night, as in the old days, my dear colleague asked for my co-operation in a daringly clever scheme to capture Adair's killer. I need not go into further details here, as my readers will recognize the tale in my previously written story, "The Adventure of the Empty House."

After Adair's killer was apprehended, we were back at 221B where I was seated again in my chair, happy to see the Sherlock Holmes of old in his mouse-coloured dressing gown. We fell easily into our old routine and talked so late into the evening that Holmes insisted I stay overnight, which I happily did.

### **Chapter 4: The Past and the Present**

Mrs. Hudson prepared a special breakfast of rashers of bacon, eggs and toast, and she hovered about as we read the morning papers. I was content, for it was lonely living alone without my wife, Mary. As we finished eating and Mrs. Hudson cleared things away, I realized my listlessness had vanished. I felt a cheerfulness I had lost over the past three years. I folded the *Morning Post* and warmly thanked Mrs. Hudson, who blushed as she left the room.

"I see you are feeling much better this morning, old friend," Holmes said, putting down the *Morning Chronicle*.

"That was not hard to guess, Holmes."

"Your smile tells all. It is good having you here again. Can you spend the day or must you see to patients?"

"I will gladly stay. There's a fellow in need of more work who is willing to take over for me."

"Excellent. Mrs. Hudson will take your telegram, and then you can be of great

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

assistance to me. I have tried to keep up with things during my absence, but perhaps you can fill in some details. I know your penchant for carefully following the news that I was unable to read much of the time."

After I asked Holmes more questions about his ingenious escape from Reichenbach and the death of Moriarty, I gave him detailed summaries of important matters covering the veiled head coinage; Prince George, the Duke of York's marriage to Princess Mary of Teck; the government taking control of Uganda from British East Africa Company; and the newly independent Colony of Natal. Of the last two, his knowledge of the status of things was greater than that which I had gleaned from the newspapers. I was about to tell him of Isinglass winning the Triple Crown, when Mrs. Hudson knocked and entered. A gentleman followed her, and I was surprised to recognize Dr. Nathan Davis. I rushed from my chair to welcome him and realized he was quite overcome when he saw Holmes.

Holmes stood. "Yes, it is indeed Sherlock Holmes in the flesh." Holmes then gave him a hearty handshake to prove the matter.

"But how...?"

"Suffice to say I outwitted the devil and live to fight on. Watson will fill you in on the circumstances and why I needed to keep out of sight."

"I did not expect to see you again, Dr. Davis," I interjected, glad to see he had regained his composure.

"Your landlady told me you were here. And fortune smiles on me to see Mr. Holmes as well. It is my little Chicago puzzle I wished to see you about."

### Chapter 5: Holmes and the Chicago Puzzle

"Ahh, a puzzle!" Holmes smiled broadly. "The thing I most love – except if it involves a lost cat."

"Indeed, it involves multiple murders, and we are at a loss to track down the killer. We are not even certain it is only one man. I beg you to look into it. I feel you and Dr. Watson may be able to shed some light on the case."

"Yes, Watson knows my methods," Holmes nodded as Mrs. Hudson came in with the sherry. Dr. Davis proposed a toast of good health to Holmes, and I heartily concurred. Then Holmes lit his pipe and bade Dr. Davis to present the facts of the case.

Holmes listened intently, his pipe smoke curling around us as Dr. Davis repeated what he had told me a few days ago about the six murders of the newly married widows. When he finished, Holmes sat silently for a time as I had seen him frequently do, weighing and considering all aspects of a case. Meanwhile, Dr. Davis readied a pencil and notepad.

"For this kind of crime, you must spread your net far and wide and take advantage of similarities in the crimes and in the women," Holmes advised. "Firstly, what is unique about the area in which the murders occurred?"

"Dr. Watson said you would be interested in that point," he replied, "so I gave it some thought. The neighbourhood is filled with foreign immigrants, many from Germany."

"I suspected that because it reflects the surnames of these poor victims - Hoch, Meyer, Schmitz, and Irich which is a German form of Elrich."

"Do you suspect the killer is a German?"

"I would trace the name Hoch, as that is the married name of the first deceased

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

wife. Also check his country of origin for prior crimes. Also check in other states for similar crimes to get names of other possible suspects."

"We can do all that," he nodded, writing furiously in his notebook.

"If this perpetual groom married other women whom he stole from but deserted rather than killed, you might find living witnesses," I offered.

"Excellent point, Watson," Holmes said. "This groom marries so frequently, he might be using an ethnic newspaper to advertise for the wives, especially if he speaks German."

Dr. Davis, still making notes, said, "We have our German paper, the *Chicago Abendpost*, and they do carry matrimonial advertisements."

"Similar to our Agony Column," I chimed in.

"Make sure the notices are perused regularly. It should be easy to spot our man, for his advertisements will have some commonalities. Check the relatives of the widows to see if you can locate a photo of this eager groom. Then spread it everywhere. Someone might recognize him and provide a path to trace his whereabouts."

"Are you so certain it is one person, Holmes?" I asked

"Remember, Watson, that the descriptions from witnesses were all quite similar, and the *modus operandi* is strikingly similar."

"He must be a truly evil force," I said.

Holmes rose to knock the ashes from his pipe. "I remind you, Watson, there are some trees which grow to a certain height and then suddenly develop some unsightly eccentricity. This often happens in humans, and I fear it has manifested itself in this self-styled groom. Money is his love, not women."

"You are certainly correct," Dr. Davis agreed.

"One final point," Holmes said, pacing the floor. "Be sure to trace the sales of any properties these widows owned before marrying this fiend. You may get solid information from that avenue."

"Mr. Holmes, I never imagined I would have the opportunity to work with the world's first consulting detective. You have been generous with your time. What is your fee?"

"My fee is standard, Dr. Davis. I never vary it. Watson here will handle the matter."

With that, Dr. Davis profusely thanked us both. After some further pleasantries and promises to keep in touch, he took his leave back to Chicago.

### **Chapter 6: Holmes and the Chicago Bluebeard**

Dr. Davis and I frequently corresponded after that meeting, and Holmes was always keen to learn the progress they were making to apprehend the man they now called the Chicago Bluebeard Murderer. Holmes was pleased to learn that his suggestions on using the advertisements to track the killer and using a photograph all worked to locate the killer who was identified as John Schmidt of Germany. He used the name Johann Otto Hoch when he emigrated to the US in 1881, and thereafter adopted a slew of other aliases. A Police Inspector named George Shippy was on his track, but Hoch was elusive, moving from Chicago to San Francisco, to Baltimore and to at least fifteen other cities. Everywhere he stole money, diamonds and properties, and he was suspected of killing some 50 women.

We were sent a lonely-hearts advertisement Hoch had placed in the *Chicago Abendpost*, which read:

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

"Matrimonial—German; own home; wishes acquaintance of widow without children; object, matrimony. Address M 422, *Abendpost*."



Hoch/Schmidt

Holmes shook his head and read a woman's reply:

"Dear Sir: In answer to your honorable advertisement I hereby inform you that I am a lady standing alone. I am forty-six years and have a small business, also a few hundred dollars. If you are in earnest I tell you I shall be. I may be seen at 12 Willow Street. MARIE WALCKER."

Sadly, Dr. Davis died before the Chicago Bluebeard was finally caught, but Police Inspector Shippy sent me word of Hoch's capture in January, 1905 and his conviction in May of murdering Marie Walcker. He was hanged in February, 1906.

Holmes was intrigued that Hoch's downfall came because Marie Weckler's mortician used a new embalming fluid with no traces of arsenic, so when arsenic was found in her body, they knew it had come from Hoch who carried an amount in his fountain pen.

The same day Holmes agreed I might publish the Chicago Bluebeard notes, I asked him if I might also write up his involvement in the infamous London serial killer case that he had worked on with Scotland Yard in 1888.

Holmes interrupted. "No, Watson. Our role in that case shall never be told, and I ask you now to pledge that you will never again broach the subject."

Holmes grabbed his coat and scarf and rushed out the door. It was the only time I remember him slamming it.

# THE ADVENTURE OF THE AUSTIN AXE MURDERER

STEVE MASON, BSI, ASH, DECKMATE/CBLS

When one considers that Mr Sherlock Holmes was in active practice for twenty-three years, and that during seventeen of these I was allowed to co-operate with him and to keep notes of his doings, it will be clear that I have a mass of material at my command. The problem has always been, not to find, but to choose. There is the long row of year-books which fill a shelf, and there are the dispatch cases filled with documents, a perfect quarry for the student not only of crime, but of the social and official scandals of the late Victorian era. Concerning these latter, I may say that the writers of agonized letters, who beg that the honour of their families or the reputation of famous forebears may not be touched, have nothing to fear. The discretion and high sense of professional honour which have always distinguished my friend are still at work in the choice of these memoirs, and no confidence will be abused. I deprecate, however, in the strongest way the attempts which have been made lately to get at and to destroy these papers. The source of these outrages is known, and if they are repeated, I have Mr Holmes's authority for saying that the whole story concerning the politician, the lighthouse, and the trained cormorant will be given to the public. There is at least one reader who will understand.

For those who have followed my chronicles of my long-time companion's adventures, you should easily recognize the above paragraph from one of those narratives, "The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger." As you read through the missive below, you will no doubt recognize it as very similar to the narrative concerning the events surrounding Eugenia Ronder and the murder of her husband. This can be simply explained. While the events recounted here occurred after those of the murder of the circus-leader, the circumstances of this case was determined to be too volatile to be put forth to the public. Thus, though I had written up this adventure before those of the Veiled Lodger, I chose to place it in my dispatch box, to be released long after the demise of all related to the case. I then took much of what I wrote about this adventure and simply inserted them into the Lodger.

One forenoon - it was late in 1903 - I received a hurried note from Holmes asking

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

for my attendance. When I arrived, I found him seated in a smoke-laden atmosphere, with an elderly, motherly woman of the buxom correctional type in the corresponding chair in front of him.

'This is Mrs Cartwright, of Aylesbury,' said my friend, with a wave of the hand. 'Mrs Cartwright does not object to tobacco, Watson, if you wish to indulge your filthy habits. Mrs Cartwright has an interesting story to tell which may well lead to further developments in which your presence may be useful.'

'Anything I can do—'

'You will understand, Mrs Cartwright, that if I come to Mrs Maybrick I should prefer to have a witness. You will make her understand that before we arrive.'

'Lord bless you, Mr Holmes,' said our visitor, 'she is that anxious to see you that you might bring the whole parish at your heels!'

'Then we shall come early in the afternoon. Let us see that we have our facts correct before we start. If we go over them it will help Dr Watson to understand the situation. You say that Mrs Maybrick has been your charge for eight years.'

'Do you know anything about her history?'

'Simply what I have read in the newspapers. She has not opened up to me.'

'Then what has brought you to me for assistance?'

'Her health, Mr Holmes. She is slowly wasting away. And after working with her at the prison for several years, I just cannot believe she is guilty of the charges she has been sentenced to.'

'But I assume a jury must have found her guilty,' I offered.

Holmes countered, 'While I am a strong advocate of our justice system, errors do occur.'

'A few days ago, I suggested to Mrs Maybrick, "if you have anything that is troubling your soul, there's the clergy," I says. "For God's sake, not the police!" says she, "and the clergy can't change what is past. And yet," she says, "it would ease my mind if someone knew the truth before I died." "Well," says I, "if you won't have the regulars, there is this detective man what we read about" - beggin' your pardon, Mr Holmes. And she, she fair jumped at it. "That's the man," says she. "I wonder I never thought of it before. Bring him here, Mrs Cartwright, and if he won't come, tell him I am the wife of Maybrick, and give him the phrase, "The Juves are The men That Will not be Blamed for nothing." "That will bring him, if he's the man I think he is."

'And it will, too,' remarked Holmes. 'Very good, Mrs Cartwright. I should like to have a little chat with Dr Watson. Tomorrow morning, you may expect to see us at Aylesbury Prison.'

Our visitor had no sooner waddled out of the room - no other verb can describe Mrs Cartwright's method of progression - than Sherlock Holmes threw himself with fierce energy upon the pile of commonplace books in the corner. For a few minutes, there was a constant swish of the leaves, and then with a grunt of satisfaction, he came upon what he sought. So excited was he that he did not rise, but sat upon the floor like some strange Buddha, with crossed legs, the huge books all round him, and one open upon his knees.

'The case worried me at the time, Watson. Here are my marginal notes to prove it. I confess that I could make nothing of it. And yet I was convinced the system was wrong. Have you no recollection of the Maybrick tragedy?'

'None, Holmes.'

'And yet you were with me then. But certainly, my own impression was very super-

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

ficial, for there was nothing to go by, and none of the parties had engaged my services. Perhaps you would care to read the papers?

'Could you not give me the points?'

'That is very easily done. It will probably come back to your memory as I talk. Mrs Maybrick was arrested and subsequently convicted of the murder of her husband, James Maybrick, by poisoning. She was sentenced to death, but the sentence was commuted soon after to life in prison, where she has been for the past 14 years.'

'Was the case against her solid?' said I.

'You may well say so. And yet there were one or two points which worried me at the time. I may now have the opportunity to explore those concerns more thoroughly.'

After a short train ride, our hansom deposited us at the front gates of the prison. After meeting with the warden, and signing the visitors' log, we were escorted to the visiting area by Mrs Cartwright.

It was a close, musty, ill-ventilated place, as might be expected. Long years of inaction had coarsened the lines of the figure seated at the table, but at some period it could have been beautiful, and was still full and voluptuous. I could well conceive that she had indeed been a very remarkable woman. Curls of blondish hair, which I had seen from photos, had been shorn close to her scalp. Her voice, too, was well-modulated and pleasing.



'My name is not unfamiliar to you, Mr Holmes,' said she. 'I thought that it would bring you.'

'That is so, madam, though I do not know how you are aware that I was interested in your case.'

'I did not know... it was simply a hope on my part.'

'And what is that hope?'

'Simply that the truth about my husband should be brought forward. I do not harbour any hope of my own release from this hellish entrapment.'

I wanted to find one man of integrity to whom I could tell my story and beliefs, so that when I am gone all might be understood.'

'You compliment me, madam. At the same time, I am a responsible person. I do not promise you that when you have spoken, I may not be able to take any appreciable action on your behalf.'

'So be it, Mr Holmes. I know your character and methods too well, for I have followed your work for some years. But in any case, I will take my chance of the use which you may make of my tragedy. It will ease my mind to tell it.'

'My friend and I would be glad to hear it.'

The woman rose and took from her dress pocket the photograph of a man. He appeared slightly sickly, and just a hint of a smile breaking from under his heavy moustache - the self-satisfied smile of the man of many conquests.

'That is James,' she said. 'Mr Holmes, I know you respect a concise narrative, and so I will condense my tale. I was born in Mobile Alabama to the former mayor of the City and a partner of a banking firm. Sadly, my father passed away before my birth. My mother then married a cavalry officer of the German Army.'

'During travels with my mother, I met my future husband, James, aboard a ship. Although it was looked upon as strange at the time, I spent much of her time aboard the ship alone with James. By the time we reached port, I had acceded to his request of marriage. I was 18, he was 42.'

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

James was a cotton merchant from Liverpool. And though many questioned a young girl consenting to a gentleman 24 years her senior, we were married at St James's Church, Piccadilly, in London. We then settled in Battlecrease House, Aigburth.

'We attended all the important functions and balls in Liverpool, and for all appearances, we were a happy couple. I enjoyed being the centre of attention, and my tastes became more lavish, not being used to having a large disposable income to spend. My husband ultimately stated we were in financial trouble, and though I tried to manage my spending, we soon found ourselves deeper in debt.'

'What most of our neighbors and friends did not know was that my husband was a hypochondriac, causing him to be a regular user of arsenic and patent medicines containing poisonous chemicals. In addition, he had a number of mistresses, one of whom bore him five children. James frequently travelled to America on business trips, which will play an important role later in my story. I am not proud to admit I also participated in a few liaisons.'

'A few?'

'Several. My husband found out about one, resulting in him assaulting me and announcing his intention of seeking a divorce. I must say the wish for divorce was mutual.'

James was taken ill on 27<sup>th</sup> of April, 1889. While I did not personally witness the incident, he admitted to self-administering a double dose of strychnine as a sexual stimulant. His doctors consequently treated him for acute dyspepsia, but his condition deteriorated. Two weeks later, in a lapse in judgment, I sent a letter to my lover, which was intercepted by James' family. In a strange twist, I was ordered under house arrest while James recuperated.

My husband died on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May, with me at his bedside. In my mind, the thought of divorce had ended, and we had reconciled for the children's sake.

'Shortly before his death, I discovered he had rewritten his will bequeathing me much less than he had set out in the original version. I also discovered a nurse had told James' family I had tampered with a Valentine's Meat Juice bottle that was afterwards found to contain a half-grain of arsenic.'

James' family had his body examined, finding slight traces of arsenic, which was not considered fatal. I was then accused of extracting arsenic from flypaper and administering it to my husband. I was charged with murder and found guilty, though anyone witnessing the proceedings would have been baffled by the evidence the prosecution presented. They argued if I was depraved enough to have an affair, then my moral compass was obviously broken. I murdered my husband as there was no other explanation.

'A city chemist testified he had supplied James with arsenic for a prolonged period. Others testified I had little motive to murder my husband, as I was financially better off with him alive than dead. I was not allowed to give testimony, but only allowed to read a prepared statement.'

'I was found guilty and sentenced to death. This was later commuted to incarceration for life. I have lost my children, as they have been adopted by another family.'

'With no hope of appeal, I have languished in prison all these years. But again, that is not why I called you here. The rest of the story is much more interesting and something in which you may be able to act upon.'

'My husband was born in Liverpool, one of 7 siblings. As I stated earlier, James' cotton trading business required him to travel regularly to the United States, and in

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

1871, he settled in Norfolk, Virginia, to establish a branch office of his company. While there in 1874 he contracted malaria, which was then treated with a medication containing arsenic; he became addicted to the drug for the rest of his life.

'After our marriage, my husband continued to divide his time between the American and the British offices of his company and this caused difficulties within our marriage, as you may guess. Much of his time was spent in the small town of Austin, in the State of Texas.

'Between 1884 and 1885 a series of attacks resulted in the deaths of 7 women and 1 gentleman, while several others suffered serious injuries. All of the attacks occurred while the victims were asleep in their beds. Five of the women, including Mollie Smith, were dragged from their houses and killed outside. Sexual assault was a recurring theme, as was the murder weapon. Many of the victims were attacked with an axe, and the bloody blade was left behind at more than one of the crime scenes, leading some to dub the killer the Axeman of Austin. As many of the victims were employed as domestic help, the murderer became known as "the Servant Girl Annihilator," actually coined by the Austin writer O. Henry.

'Many of the murdered women were severely mutilated, with some accounts claiming that the bodies were posed in a signature fashion. According to sources, six of the victims had a "sharp object" inserted into their ears.

'Over 400 men were arrested in connection with the case, although there was only 1 conviction for 1 of the murders. Later the conviction was overturned.

'Many have maintained the similarities between the Servant Girl Annihilator and Jack the Ripper—a fixation on female targets, sexual assault, mutilation, and corpse posing—point to the same culprit. My husband was in Austin when the servant murders took place, which is chronicled in his own journals. After my husband returned to London, the murders in Austin ceased. But within a year or so, the first victim of Jack the Ripper was discovered.

'Mr Holmes, not to drag this out any further, while my husband was slowly deteriorating from his use of arsenic as an aphrodisiac, I discovered his diary. Though his name is not to be found in the journal, it is obvious from the references to his established life and habits that it is obvious it is his. The diary documents details of actions and crimes over a period of several months, taking credit for slaying the five victims most commonly credited to Jack the Ripper as well as for two other murders which have to date not been historically identified.

'While the journal does include some details of the West End crimes which were included in newspaper accounts but later refuted by police. I believe this is due to James' impaired memory and thus things he would read about his own actions could be truth to him.

'I also discovered a gentleman's pocket watch in my husband's belongings, with "J. Maybrick" scratched on the inside cover, along with the words "I am Jack", as well as the initials of the five Ripper victims. Why would my husband have such a timepiece, unless he had a hand in the murders?

'Mr Holmes, I know these items are more a curiosity than proof of my husband's dastardly actions. I do not know what you can do with this information, but I hope you can ensure the truth of his deeds is made public.



## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

With this, our visit to Mrs Maybrick ended. While Holmes gave no assurance of helping her, I knew he was touched by her story, and he would not allow her life to end in such a squalid state.

And while Holmes was not able to ever prove the involvement of Mr Maybrick in the murders that occurred in that small western town of the United States, or those closer to home in the Whitechapel district, he immediately started a new investigation into Mrs Maybrick conviction. Holmes was soon to discover a series of blunders by not only the prosecution, but also of the presiding judge. Armed with this information, as well as forensic evidence, which was ignored during the trial, both Holmes brothers petitioned the Home Secretary on his views of Mrs Maybrick's predicament. Holmes later indicated he was advised to not discuss the connection of Maybrick with either Austin or Whitechapel, and that advice applied to me as well. He used that leverage to his advantage. While I would never suggest the brothers used undue pressure, I believe their reputation carried enough weight Mrs Maybrick was released in January 1904, and soon after moved back to the United States to live out the rest of her life. Holmes's arguments concerning her botched trial were vaguely similar to those used by my friend Conan Doyle in his exoneration of Edalji and Slater.

One final word about our visit to Mrs Maybrick. Just as we rose from the table to leave, the woman stated, 'Yes,' said the woman, 'the case is closed.' There was something in the woman's voice which arrested Holmes's attention. He turned swiftly upon her.

'Your life is not your own,' he said. 'Keep your hands off it.'

'What use is it to anyone?'

'How can you tell? The example of patient suffering is in itself the most precious of all lessons to an impatient world.'

Two days later, when I called upon my friend, he pointed with some pride to a small note upon his mantelpiece. I picked it up.

'It came by post. "I have accepted your advice. I will live my resulting years in trying to correct the abuses of our correctional system, as well the injustices of the justice system itself." That was the message. I think, Watson, we can guess the name of the brave woman who sent it.'

# THE ADVENTURE OF THE RESCUED REVOLUTIONARY SHERLOCK HOLMES

DAVID MCCALLISTER, ASH

Being a reminiscence of Dr. John H. Watson, M.D.

One of the perquisites of being friend and fellow lodger of Sherlock Holmes' is that I sometimes get to benefit from the largess of his satisfied clients when they choose to reward him with more than his requested fee. These ranged from gratis subscriptions to newspapers, and The Strand magazine, courtesy of my editor, to membership at the Diogenes Club, thanks to Holmes' brother Mycroft. One that I particularly appreciated, though, was the monthly box of cigars sent by the embassy of San Pedro in gratitude for the unmasking of ex-president Tiger Murillo.

The box of November of 1892, however, came with a special note inside. As Holmes broke the seal of the cedar box with his penknife, I noticed that this month's selection was of Dame Irene Adler Coronas, featuring a lithograph of the famous diva which I found particularly sprightly.

Holmes handed me the note. Diogenes letterhead.

"What does it say, Watson?"

"Supper at the Diogenes this evening, I need your help. Bring Watson." It's signed Mycroft."

"My Brother. What could he want now, I wonder."

That evening we dressed and took a hansom to the Diogenes Club. We were ushered into a private room with Mycroft and two other gentlemen.

"Sherlock, and Doctor Watson, may I present Consul Don Manuel Lopez from Spain, and Senor Diego Martinez, attache from San Pedro."

After the usual greetings, we ate an excellent meal. While liquors were brought in, we smoked fine cigars while the Messrs Lopez and Martinez discussed the relative merits of Cuban and San Pedran tobacco. Mycroft finally broached the subject of the summons and dinner.

"My friends here want you to undertake a mission for us. It is in the interests of the Empire that the unsettled, not to say disturbing, situation in the Spanish colony of

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

Cuba not spill over into our ally, the Republic of San Pedro. We, that is I and these other gentlemen, have received reports from our respective agents concerning a partisan of Cuban independence by the name of Jose Marti."

"Not the poet," I exclaimed.

"Yes, the same. He is presently agitating, and raising funds, and recruiting soldiers, in New York City, where many expatriate Cubans support the revolution."

Senor Lopez then spoke. "We want you to approach this Marti on behalf of our three governments, and see that he is warned, in no uncertain terms, that we will not countenance any expansion of his revolutionary thought to other Caribbean colonies."

"Or nations allied with European, as opposed to American, interests," added Senor Martinez.

Mycroft spoke up, "None of us can be seen to interfere with his activities while on American soil. That's why I can not use my own special agents. But you and Watson can go as private individuals and approach the man without causing a diplomatic incident. Senor Martinez will give you letters of introduction as friends of San Pedro, although you will really be working on behalf of Britain."

Holmes thought for a moment and responded. "Mycroft, I will undertake your mission, along with Watson here, if he's willing, but only on the condition that I may judge for myself to what extent to communicate your warning. If I feel that any of you are threatening a patriot, with whom I have some sympathy already, I may find myself moved to protect him rather than menace him."

Ambassador Lopez spoke. "That is acceptable. We do not want him harmed. Irritating though he may be, he is nonetheless a famous writer and intellectual. We are not barbarians"



OVER THE NEXT day we packed and prepared for our trip to America. The crossing was uneventful, although the accommodations, thanks to Mycroft's influence, were First Class, and the company congenial.

Upon arrival in New York, we contacted the British consulate as planned. The Consul knew of our mission, but had news of our quarry. Mr. Marti had apparently given a speech at the Cooper Union the previous week and was now immediately to depart for Tampa, Florida, before returning to Cuba, as was his custom after collecting contributions.

Thus we were obliged to change plans abruptly, and travel by rail to Florida. Luckily, we were able to catch the same train as Holmes expected Mr. Marti had taken. There was one train per day on this route - the Silver Meteor, leaving from Pennsylvania station. At the station, Holmes dispatched telegrams to the British Consul in New York as well as Mycroft, informing them, in code, of the change.



THE TRIP on the Silver Meteor was to last about one day, with limited stops at cities such as Baltimore and Washington. Holmes manoevered a meeting with Mr. Marti in the dining car by tipping the waiter to arrange the seating.

Holmes introduced himself. "Excuse me, sir, do I recognize you as Senor Marti of Cuba?"

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

"Yes, I am he, with whom do I have the pleasure?"

"I am Sherlock Holmes of London, and this is my friend, Dr. Watson."

"Ah, Dr. Watson, I have read your accounts of Mr. Holmes' adventures. It is good to meet a fellow author."

"That is kind. I am not on a par with your literary achievements, or your political involvement."

"Please join me. Will you have a drink? I indulge in a beverage called Coca-Cola."

At this Holmes' ears pricked up, "Coca, you say?"

"Yes, it was invented ten years ago by a pharmacist in Atlanta as a tonic for veterans of the American War of Southern Secession who had lost limbs. They tried to free themselves from the Northern Yankee, as we Cubans and Phillipinos try to free ourselves from Spain in the spirit of the great Bolivar. But they failed in war; as we, too, have failed. At least so far. War is such an awful experience, do you not agree?"

"Certainly, I was in the Afghan War, and injured, myself. I wonder if this Coca-Cola mixture will help my achy leg."

"Or my headaches," said Holmes.

Ordering this concoction, the three of us shared reminiscences and soon were fast friends. I find that Holmes can make himself agreeable when the occasion called for it. On our third glass, the waiter suggested that perhaps a drop of Southern Bourbon would not go amiss. Marti demurred and asked for white Bacardi.

"And perhaps an orange?"

"Sorry Sir," said the barman, "no oranges until we get to Florida. But we have limes."

"Limes will be fine" Marti said.

He mixed the ingredients into his glass and prepared ours, also.

"This is a popular combination in my country, the sweetness of the tonic and the sharpness of the lime. My friends, a toast. I give you "Cuba Libre."



WE SLEPT SOUNDLY after a few more rounds of rum and the Coca-Cola. I planned to bring some of this marvelous syrup back to Baker Street when we returned.

The next morning, as we travelled through the open savannah of Florida on Henry Plant's rail line, we passed a region devastated by a wildfire after a recent hurricane. The trees had been burned and the blackened trunks stood like sentries. Between the burnt pillars, new palms and pines were growing. Marti was in a pensive mood.

"Those young pines," he said, "are like the next generation of Cuban patriots. They will replace us, myself included. When we are done with our struggle—the cause shall go on."

Finally, we alit at Union Station in Tampa. Mr. Marti suggested that we stay at the same lodging house as he did, Madam Pedroso, he said, regularly held a room for him in the cigar-making enclave of Ybor City. The Consulate had wired ahead for rooms at the Cherokee Hotel, however, so we demurred.

"In any case, come for supper after my speech to the cigar workers. After I deposit the money from New York, I'll be speaking at the east entrance to the factory. There's a set of iron steps which make for a good platform. Senora Pedroso will be serving authentic Cuban dishes."



## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

WE HEARD Marti speak to the crowd from atop the iron steps at the Vincente Martinez Ybor cigar factory. He was passionate. I could understand how he could arouse patriotic feelings and incite young men to fight for liberation. Baskets were passed and money collected.

That night we met Marti at the Pedroso's. Madame Paulina and Ruperto, her husband, welcomed us to their casita. The house was a modest two-story building with a porch in front, apparently typical of workers' houses, although somewhat larger than most, constructed by the tobacco companies owned by Ybor and Haya. It had a garden with lush and colorful semi-tropical plants.

I noticed a bush with a particularly bright berry, red with a black dot like a ladybug. Mrs. Pedroso explained, "that's a rosary bean, strung together to make bracelets and necklaces."

"Careful Watson, Holmes said, "some of these tropical plants have sap that stains."

Mrs. Pedroso led us inside. "I have another couple of men for supper tonight. Chicken and yellow rice, black beans with chopped onions."

At the dinner table we met Esteban and Joseph, two swarthy cigar workers. We sat with the pair at the communal table. "Are you rollers?" enquired Marti.

"Si."

"Are you with our cause? Mambisies"

The men seemed reluctant to answer. Marti lectured on the struggle as the men grew more and more uncomfortable, passing stealthy glances, but saying nothing.

Mrs. Pedroso entered and placed bowls on the table which we passed around. Holmes was watchful. Mr. Pedroso asked Marti to say grace and there was a passing of condiments. Be began to eat.

Suddenly, Holmes dashed the bowl of black bean soup from Marti.

"Don't eat that, he said, It's poisoned! Marti, Watson - hold these men."

There was no struggle. The men were sulky and silent. Pedroso went for cord and they were tied. "Let's take them to the sheriff's office," he said.

"No," said Holmes, "Better not to have official intervention. This is serious, but delicate. He took the bowl and Senora Pedroso collected the fragments of the serving. The two agents were secured, to be dealt with when convenient the next day. Holmes, Marti, and I as well as our hosts retired to the parlour.



MRS. PEDROSO WAS FURIOUS. "Poisoned? How? In my home?"

Sitting back and lighting his pipe, while the rest of us passed a box of Ybor's Principe De Gales cigars, Holmes explained, "I observed that the men were not cigar workers. Despite their clothing, their hands were not stained from constantly touching tobacco, and properly calloused from gripping the chaveta knife as opposed to the machete. I concluded that they might be agents, Spanish or Cuban, acting under the direction of General Weyler, no doubt. When I we saw the rosary beans in the garden, I noted them because they are used in India as a poison when ground. I watched as the agent Joseph seemed to drop some powder into Marti's bowl as we were passing out the soup. I first suspected that the rice might be the vehicle, as the saffron, which turns the rice yellow would mask any unusual smell. But it was the black beans with chopped onion they used."

Marti observed, "I would say that they are not so hardened assassins. Probably

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

recruited for their mission from the dispossessed and starving population. We, too, use their poverty as motivation. It is men like them that we are trying to turn into citizens of a free country; not slaves of the sugar cane and tobacco leaf."

"Was it not Cervantes who wrote, 'hunger is the best sauce?" opined Holmes.

"Yes, Cervantes, too, expressed the noble sentiments of joy and imagination which free the human soul."

"Quite so," said Holmes dryly, "In any case, Senor Marti, you are alive to continue your work. Sooner or later, renewed insurrection is coming. Perhaps the freedom you write of will follow. Human nature, though, is difficult to overcome. Meanwhile, these agents, if not prosecuted, will at least be sent back to their masters."



THE NEXT DAY, Holmes and I received the British consul at the Cherokee Hotel. He informed us that the matter would be hushed up per Mycroft's instructions. After a pleasant fortnight in Tampa, enjoying the Southern hospitality, we returned to London. But not before Holmes had made a side-trip to Savannah, Georgia, as he said, "to clear up some old business with the KKK."

And that's another story.



### AFTERWORD -

It may not be widely remembered that Great Britain was intimately involved in the long struggle for Cuban independence from Spain. While the USA is given the lion's share of the glory for effecting Cuban independence, there was certainly an undercurrent of British involvement. A young Winston Churchill was famously sent as a journalist to report on the progress of the fighting in the "Necessary War," which began in earnest in 1895. As Britain supported Spain, he was attached to Spanish troops and was under fire. While travelling through America, he stayed in Tampa at the Cherokee Club Hotel.

Earlier, In 1892, Jose Marti was engaged in serious revolutionary activity, along with publishing many articles and poetry promoting liberty, in the process of reigniting the Cuban spirit.

It is a historical fact that there was an attempt on the life of Jose Marti at the home of Paulina and Ruperto Pedroso in 1892 by agents of Spain. They were famously forgiven by Marti and according to tradition, eventually joined the Cuban liberation army of General Maceo.

What has been a mystery, until now, is the involvement of Sherlock Holmes in saving Marti's life at a crucial moment in the Revolutionary movement.

And, while it can not be proven that Marti invented the rum and Coca-Cola cocktail, "Cubra Libre," it is certainly a curious coincidence.

# A SINGULAR DISCOVERY

J. T. PAGE JR.

I was born and raised on the Southside of Chicago. My neighborhood was in a typical middle-class section known as “The Back of the Yards” (meaning stockyards). I always felt this area was a key part of the Windy City’s namesake poem by Carl Sandburg when he referred to my hometown as “Hog Butcher for the World.”

Another line from that poem states “And they tell me you are crooked and I answer: Yes, it is true I have seen the gunman kill and go free to kill again.” Sandburg’s “Chicago” poem was actually first published in 1914 which was prior to the Capone crime era of the 1920s and 30s.

It is about crime that I write this story and, particularly, the rather surprising results from investigative research that led me, step by step, towards a singular discovery.

The occasional criminal brutality of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Chicago is legendary on multiple levels...but never has the name Holmes been associated with crime in that city other than one notable exception: H. H. Holmes. This man, who ultimately was hanged for murder a week before his 35<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1896, became infamous during the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair. He established a hotel during the Fair and some say he may have lured over 200 men, women, and children to their deaths in what came to be known as Chicago’s “Murder Castle.” The more likely truth is that less than a dozen may have perished but H. H. Holmes was doubtless one of America’s first serial killers. The newspapers had a field day with this fellow. It is certain, even in faraway England, that Mr. Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson were aware and had at least a passing interest in this notorious American contemporary and his terrible crimes.

But my interest in another Chicago crime story actually emanated from my childhood in the 1960s. My older Cousin Jimmy was a Chicago cop who, besides being Irish and the funniest member of my family, loved to tell stories. Jimmy passed away from a heart attack while on the job several decades ago but I still think of him fondly.

During a recent power nap, I was reminded of Jimmy in what I can only presume was a semi-lucid dream. He simply appeared and told me a story that really grabbed my

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

attention and interest. I cannot say for sure if it was a repeat of one of his stories when I was a child...or something new. In any event, we had a memorable back and forth conversation. I can remember certain details with absolute clarity and would like to share them with you, dear reader.

Jimmy's story began back in the year 1929 and involved the shocking "Saint Valentine's Day Massacre." Briefly, the victims of this infamous criminal outrage were reported by the *Chicago Tribune* as associates of the gangster known as Bugs Moran. The perpetrators were ultimately identified as members of the "Egan's Rats" gang which worked for Al Capone. A total of seven men were gunned down execution style by four other men, two of whom were dressed as policemen. Witnesses, according to detailed newspaper articles, reported immediately after the killing that four men emerged from the crime scene at the Lincoln Park garage. There were two men with their hands up and two policemen leading them out of the garage at gunpoint. They reportedly departed in unmarked vehicles.

Both leading local newspapers, the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Daily News*, headlined the massacre for weeks with a particular emphasis on alleged police involvement. The Chicago mayor at the time, a rather dubious fellow, was William "Big Bill" Thompson. Despite his sometimes open and shameless support of Al Capone, Thompson anxiously wanted to protect the reputation of the police ("Chicago's Finest") at all costs. He ordered his staff and the Police Commissioner, William F. Russell, to disprove the claims of direct police involvement in the Saint Valentine's Day Massacre.

As my Cousin Jimmy told it, the Chicago police ultimately decided to call in an expert consultant who would be impartial, effective, and anonymous. He could not remember enough to offer me a name since the department was keen to keep the outside investigation under wraps. "It was all very hush-hush" I recall him saying about the story which had been passed down over the years from cop to cop. I asked him if he could recall any details about the expert. Jimmy said the only thing he remembered hearing was that the man was brought all the way over from Europe and, after a successful career as a consulting detective, had been retired for several years. There had also been some odd and rather meaningless rumor about the consultant which had something to do with raising bees.

Being retired now myself, I decided I would take the time to look a bit deeper into this unique dialogue with Cousin Jimmy. My Sherlockian instincts had, for better or worse, tweaked me into action. I decided to hunker down and do some research before I got too carried away with all the possibilities I was now suggesting to myself.

Thanks to the internet, I began to dig through Chicago newspapers beginning mid-February 1929. Lots of fascinating material was uncovered...but not any Sherlockian nuggets as I had hoped. I deduced, after a few weeks working on and off, that it was probably time to pack it in. Suddenly, I stumbled across a seemingly unimportant comment at the very end of an obscure article from the *Chicago Sun Times*. It dealt with exoneration of the Chicago police from any involvement with the Saint Valentine's Day Massacre.

Citing an anonymous source, the comment noted that a European criminal expert had been called in to work with the Chicago police on the case. The article went on to say that the same expert, who reportedly went by the name of Sigerson, had previously worked with a Chicago newspaper reporter named Maurine Dallas Watkins five years earlier in 1924. How Ms. Watkins and the expert met was never addressed and could be anyone's guess. But Ms. Watkins, a *Chicago Tribune* reporter at the time, wrote a

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

series of sensational articles titled “Murderess Row.” This was an ongoing newspaper series covering separate trials involving two women, Beulah Annan and Belva Gaertner. Each woman was accused of murdering her respective husband and both were eventually found not guilty via a jury trial.

It seems almost impossible to believe that Sherlock Holmes could have been involved with one, much less two rather extraordinary criminal cases in Chicago during the 1920s. Was it simply just a dream or some sort of splendid reality uncovered by a bit of serendipitous research?

Whatever the truth, the fact is that Maurine Dallas Watkins quit her job as a reporter just a few months after the *Chicago Tribune*’s “Murderess Row” series was completed. She went on to write a dramatic play based on her articles. She called it “Chicago” which opened to rave reviews in 1926 and it ultimately made her a multi-millionaire. And probably to avoid any potential lawsuit, the names of the lead characters had changed. Beulah Annan was now called “Roxie Hart” and Belva Gaertner became “Velma Kelly.” In 1969, shortly after Ms. Watkins passed away, the rights for the play were purchased by three individuals who included Bob Fosse and Gwen Verdon. They went on to create the amazing show “Chicago” which became the longest running musical in the history of both Broadway and London’s West End. The film adaptation of the musical went on to win the Academy Award for Best Picture in 2002.

A retired consulting detective from Europe apparently played a role in all these remarkable events. He quietly and anonymously worked with both the local police and the print media in helping to solve two of the City of Chicago’s most notorious crimes.

Who could imagine such a singular discovery?

In any event, I remain grateful to my Cousin Jimmy for sharing his stories with me. Whether it was or was not a dream, I am delighted to have had such a remarkable Sherlockian adventure...and it is my pleasure to share it with you.

# THE ADVENTURE OF THE EYES OF OLD MAIN

TRACY J. REVELS, BSI

I was there when Sherlock Holmes solved the puzzling case of the Eyes of Old Main, and though the events occurred many decades ago, they are as fresh in my mind as if they happened yesterday.

I was a sophomore at Wofford College in Spartanburg, South Carolina. I was a poor boy, but Dr. James H. Carlisle, Wofford's kindly president, secured a scholarship for me. This grant came with a long list of duties, including tidying the rooms in the Old Main building on campus, locking Old Main's doors for the evening, and ringing the campus bell in the structure's western tower.

It was a Thursday in early November of 1896 when my adventure began. Aunt Nancy, Dr. Carlisle's housekeeper, was fond of me, and often set aside some tidbits from the great man's table for me to eat during my lonely vigil. That evening, as she passed me a basket filled with bread, cold ham, and cheese, she whispered that Dr. Carlisle was planning to entertain two special guests from England. This was hardly surprising, as Dr. Carlisle was known for his dinner parties to which celebrities and notables, as well as favored students, were invited.

"It is the detective man—Sherlock Holmes, and his companion. It is a secret," Aunt Nancy said with a twitter. "They have been summoned by President Cleveland himself and are on their way to Chicago, where a great crime has been committed!"

Aunt Nancy was a font of gossip. She indicated that none of the students had been told of the visit or invited to the dinner. I hugged this knowledge to my heart, and at seven that evening I peered from my perch in the bell tower to watch the guests arrive.

Sherlock Holmes was a tall gentleman, and the great cloak he wore, which swirled around him with every brisk, active step, made him appear even taller. His companion was a bright sort of fellow, with a heavy mustache and a sensible dark coat, though I noticed a slight limp in his gait, as if he nursed an old wound. Dr. Carlisle dismissed the hack and led his guests to his home, a neat dwelling just a hundred yards from Old Main.

I wished I could hurry down and shake their hands, but instead, I returned to my

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

studies, working quadratic equations, and muttering over my French grammar. At eight-thirty, I rose to stretch my limbs and look through the window. It was a bright, cloudless night, illuminated by a bone-white full moon. A scholar bundled in a heavy coat and scarf was running across the commons, clutching a satchel to his chest. The rooms in Old Main, including the small library and museum, were available only until curfew, so whoever this fellow was, he did not have much time to spare.

At nine sharp I rang the bell, then began my routine of locking each chamber. Halfway through my chores, I heard a shrill cry, but dismissed it as some late-semester mischief down in the chapel, a large auditorium in the center of the building where we were required to attend morning worship. When I arrived downstairs, I was surprised to find the chapel's great door ajar. I peered inside and saw a fellow lying in the aisle. At first, I merely shook my head and called out for him to wake up. Then I drew closer, and realized—to my horror—that he was dead.



TEN MINUTES LATER, I was holding a lantern aloft for Sherlock Holmes. I had immediately alerted Dr. Carlisle to the tragedy. The old professor's face turned ashen, for he dearly loved all his students. Mr. Holmes insisted that he be allowed to inspect the scene before the police were summoned. The Englishman was a commanding presence, and Dr. Carlisle merely nodded and hurried along behind him. Doctor Watson quickly ascertained that the young man was beyond succor, and Holmes knelt to conduct an inspection of the corpse.

"Do you know this lad?" Holmes asked Dr. Carlisle. The detective moved deftly about the body, which was laid upon its back, an expression of pain and surprise frozen upon its features.

"His name is Egerston Edwards. He is our best boy, a senior who takes all our prizes, is first in his class. I have never met a smarter, brighter child." Dr. Carlisle pulled out a handkerchief and began to loudly weep. "Oh, how shall I ever tell his parents?"

"Watson, would you be so kind as to take our host home, and administer a sedative?" Holmes asked. "This youngster and I shall notify the proper authorities, and report back afterward."

I could tell something passed between Holmes and Watson, some private communication, as if they had read each other's minds. The doctor gently drew the wailing professor away, and as soon as the door closed, Holmes looked up to me.

"What is your name, son?"

"Joseph Miller, sir. My friends call me Joe."

"I hope I may count myself among your friends, Master Joe. What can you tell me about this poor chap before us?"

"He is—was—a good student. All the other men in his class are jealous of him. They called him 'Eggy'...I never even knew his real name was Egerston until just now."

"He does not appear to have been a healthy boy."

I nodded. "Eggy was sick all the time. I used to think a strong wind would blow him away, he was so skinny. We feared he was consumptive."

"Yet there is no blood upon his lips to indicate a fatal hemorrhage." Holmes bent down, sniffing. "However, there is a very strong smell of brandy. Was he known to drink?"

I shook my head, and Holmes removed the contents of the dead man's pockets,

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

spreading them upon the floor of the stage, some five feet away. I held the light over them. Holmes asked me to identify each object.

"That must be the key to his room at the boarding house---he lives just across Church Street, at Mrs. Thompson's. And those are tickets to the circus, which will be here next week." These items, along with a handkerchief, a tiny bottle of cologne, a wrapper for a peppermint candy, and five nickels, were Eggy's solitary possessions. Holmes took my lantern and returned to Eggy's body. He ran his hand along the boy's jaw, then examined his collar, cuffs, and tie. "Come here, Joe," Holmes said, "and tell me if something strikes you about our unfortunate scholar?"

I repeated Holmes's actions. It suddenly occurred to me what he meant by his question.

"Why, he is clean shaven, and it is late at night. His collar and cuffs are new, his tie is neat. He was not coming here to study."

"Very good," Holmes clean-shaven. "It is all suggestive of an amorous rendezvous. The cologne seems," he brought his hand, which had touched the boy's face, up to his nose, "to have been applied quite recently. The candy wrapper also hints at the desire for fresh breath, and the presence of two tickets is a persuasive argument. Edwards arrived at this meeting hoping to secure a second social engagement with the lady."

"But sir, no girls are allowed on campus."

Here the great detective gave me a look which informed me I was not yet a man of the world.

"I suspect liquor is not permitted either."

I felt my face go red. "I see your point, sir. And I have heard rumors that..such things occur." When I assumed my duties as the bell ringer, I found a corset and a lady's petticoat in the tower, evidence of my predecessor's romantic encounters. "I wonder if they came to see the Eyes of Old Main."

"Eyes?" Holmes asked.

"A legend, sir. This building was constructed in 1854. One of the workers fell from a ladder just there, to the right of the stage, as he was painting. He died of his injury, and ever since, it is said that on certain nights a pair of red, glowing eyes appear at the last spot his paintbrush touched."

Holmes nodded. "And this legend is used to stage larks or pranks?"

"Oh yes---the seniors tell the story to the freshmen, and then they hide inside to scare the younger boys when they are challenged to prove their courage by sneaking in after hours."

"That is instructive. Now think hard, Joe. Clearly, based on the coat and scarf, which have been flung across that pew, Eggy is the same boy you told me you saw entering the building earlier. Is there anything else you recall...anything missing?"

I gave a start. Why hadn't I thought to mention it?

"His book satchel, Mr. Holmes. He was carrying it across his chest, as if it was very precious to him."

"Yet it is not near his body. Let us search for it!"

I retrieved another lamp and together we combed every inch of the chapel. The satchel was nowhere to be found. However, I discovered a single sheet of paper beneath a pew by the door.

"This could be merely a scrap left behind by some other student," Holmes noted. "By any chance do you recognize the handwriting?"

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

"It is Eggy's sir! I would stake my life on it---he tutored me in Ancient History class, and he always made those distinctive flourishes on his capital letters."

We sat side by side on the back pew. The page of paper was covered with notes, front and back, written in pencil. The material concerned the lives and works of several obscure Renaissance artists. Many names were underlined, as if to help a student recall them as especially important information.

"It seems Edwards was quite the expert in art. Did he plan a career as a painter or a teacher?"

I shook my head. "There are no art classes offered at Wofford. And Eggy told everyone he hoped to become a lawyer, like his father." I frowned at all the information on Italian fellows I had never heard of before. "This sounds like something a girl would study."

Holmes smiled at me. "You are a conductor of illumination, friend Joe! Is there a women's college nearby?"

"Converse College, sir. It is just down the street."

"Well, I think we have done all we can tonight." Holmes pulled a pipe from his pocket and lit it. "The body cannot remain unguarded and yet the police must be informed. Go and summon the local *gendarmes*. I will wait here and meditate upon the sad subject, and then afterward return to Dr. Carlisle's. Also—I will require your services in the morning. Please be at the president's house by breakfast."

Before ten the next morning, Mr. Holmes had a theory and a way to test it. He instructed me how to conduct myself, and Dr. Carlisle had given the expedition his blessing, but I was still so nervous I feared I would give the game away.

Holmes stood at the head of the Converse College classroom, next to Dr. Jules Faraway, the Professor of Ancient and Renaissance Art. Ten young ladies, all quite beautiful (to my eyes) and of good families, took their places at their desks, and opened their satchels and notebooks. Faraway cleared his throat and introduced the great detective as a 'Mr. Sigerson' who was 'conducting important research on physiological matters.' Holmes then stepped forward, performed a most gracious bow, and told the students he was interested in how their studies effected their heartbeats, and whether women were more sensitive to the stress of academic work than men. Several of the ladies laughed hardily at this assertion---they were all specimens of the 'New Women' of the age and very bold. Holmes asked their permission for his companion, 'Doctor Hamish,' to take their pulses while they completed an unannounced exam.

"That is not fair!" one girl cried.

"I will allow you to use any notes you wish," Holmes said. At this, each girl in the class opened her bag and spread her paperwork upon her desk. Professor Faraway wrote a question on the board about the artist Artemisia Gentileschi, and the students dove into their work. Doctor Watson moved about, gently lifting each lady's left wrist. I followed him on the opposite side of the desks, supposedly writing down their pulse rates.

Instead, I was looking at their notes. At the fifth desk, where a young woman with remarkably beautiful chestnut hair sat, I recognized the elaborate capitals that distinguished Eggy's handwriting. I nodded to Holmes, and I glanced across at Watson. The doctor's face showed alarm. Clearly, his subject's pulse was racing.

Holmes whispered to Faraway, who called out "Time! Pencil's down!" The professor then instructed the ladies to depart, thanking them for their participation in the exper-

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

iment. Holmes moved to stand beside the door, graciously shaking the hand of each girl as she exited. The chestnut-haired beauty was the last in line.

"A moment of your time, Miss—"

"Julia Sullivan, sir." She looked back and forth between us as we closed around her. "Is something wrong?"

"Your heartbeat is dangerously rapid," Dr. Watson said.

"And those notes belong to Eggy Edwards," I added.

The girl gave a cry and dropped her books and papers upon the floor. She staggered, but Holmes caught her and guided her into a chair. Her face was suddenly white.

"Oh, I know I did wrong to cheat but—mother will never forgive me if I am sent home in disgrace, having failed all my classes. Brother said it would be harmless enough, just to get help, as Eggy is brilliant, but—" she looked up, her eyes awash with tears. "Tell me he is well. I was so startled when he collapsed in the aisle. Brother told me the draught would make him sleepy, not that he would fall over in a fit. It frightened me so badly that I ran away."

"Who is your brother?" Holmes asked.

"Howard Sullivan, sir. He is a senior at Wofford, and Eggy's best friend!"

I gasped, then slapped my hand over my mouth. Howard was a big fellow, a star of the new football team, but also rather a blockhead. More than once, he had been summoned to Dr. Carlisle's house for a tongue-lashing and warned he might be dismissed from Wofford for his "failure to profit" from his education. He was certainly no friend of Eggy's, and had played many cruel pranks on the smaller, smarter man.

Yet it was clear from the look on Miss Sullivan's face she did not know any of this. She wiped away a tear.

"I will accept my punishment, Professor Faraway."

Holmes held up a hand, preventing the teacher from speaking. He whispered something to Faraway, words that sent him skittering from the room. Holmes sat down next to the girl and spoke very softly.

"Miss Sullivan, I will tell you what happened last evening. If I make a mistake, you will correct me, please. A great deal depends on your honesty—do you understand?"

"Of course, sir."

"Very well. You bemoaned your struggles in this class to your brother. He recommended that his friend Eggy would make notes for you, but at a price—he was in love with you and wished to meet you."

The girl's cheeks turned pink.

"Yes—Howard said Eggy would not do it for pay, but he would if I would agree to meet him and be wooed by him. I told Howard I did not wish to make a boyfriend of Eggy. I have a fellow back home!"

"So, Howard purposed to arrange a rendezvous for you and Eggy in the chapel of Old Main. Howard planted the idea of a romantic evening in Eggy's mind—it would explain why Eggy was so neatly dressed and even arrived bearing a gift beyond the satchel filled with notes. You feared he might try to force his attentions upon you, but Howard had that taken care of as well."

"Oh, yes—why sir, you must have been a spirit in the air, to know these things. Howard gave me a flask. He told me it held brandy and a bit of laudanum. He said I was to offer it to Eggy, who would naturally drink it to show his manliness. I only had to play along and be charming until Eggy fell asleep. I felt terrible when it happened. He was a sweet fellow, and so awkward and endearing. When I gave him the flask, he

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

bolted it down as if seeking courage. And then he...he gave a cry and fell upon the floor. I grabbed the satchel and fled. Howard was waiting for me with a buggy and brought me home to my dormitory."

The door opened and the Converse nurse came inside. Holmes noted her entry.

"It is time for us to depart, but I must ask one final question—did your brother warn you not to drink from the flask?"

"He did, sir. He told me, under no circumstances was I to let it touch my lips, as it was a mix of spirits far too strong for a lady."

"Thank you, Miss Sullivan."

She seized Holmes's hand. "But sir, you have not answered my question! Is Eggy well? Is he angry with me, and did he tell you what I did?"

Holmes's face was grim as he slowly removed his hand from her grasp.

"Miss Sullivan, I am sorry. Mr. Edwards is dead. Your brother has made you the agent of his murder."

There was a terrible, suspended second, and then the girl gave a bloodcurdling scream and fainted. I understood, suddenly, why Holmes had sent Professor Faraway to summon the nurse.



I HAD the great honor of driving Mr. Holmes and Dr. Watson to the train station. Doctor Watson asked his friend if justice would be served in this case.

"That depends upon the skill of the police and the coroner," Holmes said. "Clearly a strong and obscure poison was used, and it will require a talented chemist to pinpoint it. There is also the matter of whether the siblings tell different tales when confronted by the authorities. I believe we heard the truth from the young lady's lips, though whether that truth will be spoken again remains in question." He turned to look back toward the college. "Within a few years, the event will become a legend of how a nervous young man was found dead in the Wofford chapel, killed by the eyes of Old Main."

"I wish you could stay in town," I blurted, only to be embarrassed by my sudden speech. "I mean, if you were here, you could direct the investigation."

"Indeed, but I fear that President Cleveland's problem must have precedence, as the fate of a nation may be a stake." The two men stepped down from my buggy just as the train's whistle sounded in the distance. I thanked them for allowing me to take part in their adventure.

"You would make a fine Irregular," Holmes said. "Allow me to reward you as one."

To this day, I carry the bright shiny quarter—my 'American shilling' as Holmes laughingly pronounced it—on my watchchain.

# KENILWORTH, ILLINOIS 1966: THE DOG THAT DID NOT BARK

BRENDA ROSSINI

*The leaves of brown came tumbling down  
Remember that September in the rain  
The sun went out just like a dying ember  
That September in the rain*

*That September that brought the pain  
That September in the rain*

## Sunday, September 19, 1966

And so it was late Saturday, September 18, 1966, a “September in the Rain” about which Nancy Wilson sang mournfully. Rainy, dark, and silent along the Lake Michigan seashore. No footprints in the wet sand, but yet, an apocryphal clue: a dog that did not bark in the nighttime. The scene of the crime: 40 Devonshire Road along a private lane parallel to Sheridan Road in Kenilworth, Illinois, a town rated among the richest and Wapiest in the state. It was a community of such inert elegance that none but the Republican patriotic and private-school-educated walked its fabled paths.

Valerie Percy, age 21, was murdered, it was reported, around 4:30 in the early Sunday morning hours while asleep in her bedroom. Her stepmother, Loraine Percy, stumbled upon the intruder who escaped without a trace. The murder remains unsolved. The records have been withheld from the public for nearly 60 years.

The most recent attempt to keep them sealed was by court order in 2016 when Valerie’s twin sister, Sharon Percy Rockefeller, appeared in court. A Probate Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County was moved by Sharon’s heartfelt pleas against disclosure. The tragedy of Valerie’s murder affected even the later generation of the Percy family; to open it up would cause more pain. The judge entered what can reasonably be described as an extraordinary order, barring release, agreeing with Kenilworth

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

Police that the 1966 case was still pending and therefore, the cold case records would remain in the sole custody and control of the Kenilworth police.

Charles Percy, former chairman of Bell & Howell, shared the Kenilworth home with his 21-year-old twin daughters, Valerie and Sharon, and son, Roger. They were the children with his first wife, Jeanne, who died, age 23, in 1947. Chuck Percy married Loraine Guyer, a California girl, in 1950. She took up the stepmotherly task of raising the three toddlers along with two more with Chuck: Gail and Mark,

Percy was campaigning for the Republican U.S. Senate seat. Campaign aides and politicians often visited and the caretakers were kept busy with all that the visits required. Among the deep pocket, north shore Republicans grooming and donating was W. Clement Stone, an optimistic insurance baron with a pencil-thin, dyed-black mustache. Stone lived a mile north, in the village of Winnetka. In front of the massive Stone estate, the American flag was hoisted daily. When a person of distinction, such as President Nixon, came to visit, the red carpet was rolled out all the way to the gate entrance. Stone's estate lay less than a mile north of Percy's and on one occasion, Nixon's presidential limo drove the short distance to visit his then-supporter, Chuck Percy.

Percy's 17-room home sat astride Lake Michigan; at the front of the house lay a sprawling expanse of lawn that kept it secluded from the main drag of the northern suburbs, Sheridan Road. Chuck Percy was an avid swimmer and water polo enthusiast. His twin daughters often went sailing with him, swimming, and relaxing beachside at sunset. They were young women typical of that era: wholesome, fit, educated, and active.

Sheridan Road was an arboreal wonder. Tourists from Chicago drove along the avenue, lined uninterruptedly with a finery of trees as stately as the mansions that lay hidden within. Sightseers drove through at slow speeds, hope-filled of catching sight of a recognizable nabob. Rock Hudson, Charlton Heston, and Ann Margaret once lived in this affluent corner of Chicago's north suburbs.

An all-day rainfall on a cool September 18th turned the beach sand to a soft clay. Feet walking along the sand would leave deep footprints. Running in wet sand was even more challenging, each stride leaving a deeper impression.

Five weeks before the November 1966 election, Valerie was home. She had just graduated from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York and returned to work on her father's senatorial campaign. She intended to return back east once the campaign was over to attend John Hopkins University for her master's degree.

Valerie was a happy, friendly young woman. She had no enemies nor skulking boyfriends. Like her twin, Sharon, she was lovely, smiling beatifically in photographs. Her father, with whom she was very close, called her his "best precinct captain."

## THE DREADFUL RECORD OF SIN

Saturday night, 9:30 p.m. Valerie was in the kitchen having a bite to eat with two campaign workers, Tully Friedman and his roommate Tim Drescher. Loraine sat in. She later confirmed that the two young men left in their car between 10 and 10:30 p.m. 13-year-old, Gail was asleep in her room. Mark, age 11, was staying the night with friends. Roger, 19, was away at college.

11 or 11:30 p.m. Sharon returned home from a date. No cars were parked out front and she saw no one. She stopped in Valerie's bedroom to return the raincoat she'd

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

borrowed. Valerie, in a nightie, was sitting up in bed watching TV. She asked Sharon to hang up the raincoat. Sharon went to her room and went to sleep.

Sunday 12:30 a.m. Chuck Percy said he returned from campaign headquarters and watched a little TV with Loraine who had waited up. Then both went upstairs to the master bedroom at the southeast of the house. Everyone was fast asleep, including Li-Fu, the golden retriever, and the houseman whose residence was above the garage. The waves of Lake Michigan splashed and crashed in a nightly chorus.

1 a.m. to 4:30 a.m. Between these reported hours, an intruder murdered Valerie Percy. There was one witness to the crime: Mrs. Loraine Percy.

Lorraine had been asleep since almost 1 a.m. Her husband slept in the bed beside hers. He had a permanent hearing impairment from his years as a Naval gunnery training officer. Loraine, however, was awakened within a half hour of falling asleep, at 1:30 a.m. She heard a distant, low moan from Valerie's bedroom about 35 feet from the master bedroom.

Lorraine recalled that she'd heard the tinkle of glass. The intruder may have walked to the house from the beach to the rear French doors, broken the glass of the doors, and entered. The doors were rarely opened. A piece of cracked glass was recovered with an unidentified, bloody fingerprint. Loraine hadn't thought much of the sound of glass breaking because, with campaign aides and visitors in and out of the house, there was always noise.

An intruder stood in the dark at the northeast end of the house below the second floor where Valerie's bedroom lay. He would have seen when her lights went off—at about 11:30 p.m. Other lights were still on. He would have been aware that Chuck Percy kept frenetic hours during his campaign and that he wasn't yet home. At midnight, he would have heard Percy's car driving into the garage. Why wouldn't the intruder have chosen another day? A dry one where there wasn't a chance of wet footprints. Why stand outside, in the cool and dark wetness, holding metal weapons?

He entered, purportedly through the French doors and into the dark of the house. He didn't skid on the slate floor and woke no one except for Loraine. He walked up the staircase, passing Mark's empty room and then Sharon's bedroom where she slept. He knew where Valerie's bedroom was, and opened the door without making a sound though carrying his weapons. He found her asleep.

Holmes defined two separate acts of a calculating killer: just as the crime can be premeditated, the means to commit the crime (here, double-edged knife and fireplace poker) can also be "coolly premeditated" (*The Problem of Thor Bridge*). In *Thor Bridge*, Holmes investigated the murder of Maria Gibson, the hot-blooded, middle-aged, Brazilian wife of an American "Gold King," Neil Gibson. She was found dead at the eponymous bridge, a gunshot wound to the head, and a note from young Miss Grace Dunbar, the children's governess. The note—that the two women meet—was contrived by Mrs. Gibson. She was bent on suicide and for revenge against the young woman who had caught her husband's eye. In this case, the murdered woman's husband had no misgivings that culpability lay with his wife. Neither did Holmes.

Here, an intruder carried three weapons identified (from the wounds) by police, the Coroner, and the pathologist: a flashlight, a fireplace poker, and a double-edged knife. No weapons were found on the premises nor outdoors. Police searched the sand and the waters but found nothing. Days later, a Coast Guard vessel some miles offshore found a piece of a WWII bayonet in the waters west of Kenilworth and the suburb of

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

Wilmette. It proved a distraction, which led sleuths towards mythic conclusions about the killer and the bayonet.

The killer entered *softly, softly*, and Valerie did not awaken. In a contradictory sign of mercy, he bludgeoned her while she slept. Her skull, crushed from repeated blows, left marks that the Coroner concluded were made by a fireplace poker. No human moans could have been heard because Valerie died from those blows. If noise was to be heard, it may have come from the smash of a poker upon Valerie's skull, doubtless accompanied by the killer's frantic breathing.

Dr. Robert Hohf reported her nightie had been pulled up. Had that been a calculated maneuver? There had been no rape. A single, comely female, a male intruder, yet no rape.

The killer wasn't finished once Valerie lay dead. She was slashed 10 times through her breasts, heart, and abdomen. The mutilation was the work of a madman. The weapon used was a double-edged knife. The Percy family had employed a Chinese chef and the man who gave the Percy dog its name of Li-Fu. A Chinese knife is double-edged and sharp; it would have been among the chef's kitchen utensils.

The bed was blood-soaked. Given the direction and positioning of the knife attack, the psychotic killer would have lain atop Valerie in that soup of blood. The Coroner found that a stab to the throat had been so forceful that it ended at Valerie's spinal column. Two of Valerie's fingers had been bitten, leaving behind the killer's teeth marks and DNA (testing not yet in use). The killer's face, mouth, teeth, and clothing would have been soaked with flesh, blood and bone.

The slashing was violent and demented. Had it been intended to draw attention to another psychotic madman? Just two months before, Richard Speck, a drifter high on drugs and alcohol, stabbed and strangled to death eight student nurses in their south Chicago townhome.

Lorraine was asked if what she'd heard had been a sexual moan but replied with a firm "No." Dr. Robert Hohf believed Valerie's murder was in fact a crime of passion. A white-hot intensity ruled the society woman in *The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton* when, after shooting him dead, she ground her heel into his face.

In *Charles Augustus Milverton*, Holmes closed his eyes to passing judgment on an aggrieved but murderous woman. Watson was stunned by her intentional act. He recalled how the anonymous lady "poured bullet after bullet into Milverton's shrinking body" to punish him for his evil deeds. Milverton's helplessness did not abate the violent assault of the lady holding the revolver. In Valerie's case, another helpless victim, Chicago Homicide Detective Joe DiLeonardi concluded, just as had Dr. Hohf: "this was personal."

## THE SCARLET THREADS

No one but Lorraine was awakened by a moan in the house. Li Fu, wherever he was, slept. He didn't bark. It was improbable that Valerie moaned so audibly that it was heard down the hall—by Lorraine alone. Once she was bashed in the head, she was dead or near dead.

There was an alarm system in the house but it hadn't been turned on. Without waking her sleeping husband, on hearing splintering glass downstairs and moans from down the hall, Lorraine got up from her bed in her nightie.

She walked along the carpeted hall without turning on a light, waking no one. She

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

passed Sharon's room, heard nothing, and didn't open her door. Still hearing a moan, Loraine continued on to Valerie's room. How likely was it that Valerie was moaning with a crushed skull and her throat and chest sliced open? Her life had ended.

Lorraine explained to police and at the Coroner's Inquest that when she opened Valerie's door, she was aghast. The bed was one of two in the room. Valerie slept in the bed furthest from the door. In the dark, Loraine said she saw a dark-haired young man, about 5'8", standing at Valerie's bedside, holding a flashlight. Loraine was a very tall woman, taller by a few inches than Chuck Percy. The intruder who stood staring at Valerie's dead and mutilated body then turned and shone his flashlight at Loraine, "blinding" her. She later recalled him weighing about 160 lbs. and wearing a checked shirt. She didn't describe him as bathed in blood. He should have been from lying atop Valerie as he carved her body.

Lorraine did not speak nor scream though a stranger was standing in her stepdaughter's dark bedroom. She said nothing to Valerie. She couldn't have seen the condition of Valerie's body yet didn't rush to the bedside to protect her.

Instead, what Loraine did was to slam shut the bedroom door and run. The killer ran out after she did, presumably leaving fingerprints on the doorknob. Down the stairs he flew, not noiselessly, yet waking no one. Loraine said she "heard him bounding down the stairs." He knew his way out.

5:05 a.m. As the intruder ran out, Loraine, who raced back to the master bedroom, screamed wildly, waking her husband. Chuck rose immediately while Loraine activated the siren, waking the neighbors, Dr. Hohf, head of Northwestern Hospital's vascular surgery, and his wife, Nan. The Hohfs lived two properties south. They were close friends. Dr. Hohf had watched the Percy children grow along with his three sons.

With the lights turned on, Loraine and Chuck ran to Valerie's room. Chuck saw instantly that his daughter was dead. Loraine wiped Valerie's face, pulling up the bloody bed sheet to cover her. When police and then Dr. Hohf arrived, Loraine was still in her nightie. A streak of blood marked her face.

### COME AT ONCE

Sherlock Holmes, alert to preserving the crime scene in the *Boscombe Valley Mystery*, grumbled good-naturedly: "Oh, how simple it would all have been had I been here before they came like a herd of buffalo and wallowed all over it."

5:10 p.m.- 5:15 a.m.—Chuck Percy telephoned Kenilworth Police Chief Robert H. Daley. Kenilworth police began to arrive.

5:15 a.m. Chuck telephoned Dr. Hohf asking that he come quickly and that a policeman would pick him up. The policeman who arrived told Dr. Hohf that Valerie Percy was dead.

Mrs. Hohf stepped outside. The sky was dark and overcast. The sun had not yet risen. She saw that the Percy floodlights had been turned on. She saw no one sprinting down the beach or along Sheridan Road. The only sound she heard was the Percy siren and the waves.

What Dr. Hohf found at the house disturbed him. The family was fully dressed. Loraine was wearing only a short nightie and showed signs of mild hysteria. Police were already there. Loraine and Chuck didn't first call Dr. Hohf, a friend who lived two doors down as soon as they saw Valerie's body. He was called only after Chuck Percy spoke with the Kenilworth police. He was to write: "Much had happened before I

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

arrived—the crime scene had been cleaned up.” Why? To protect Percy’s senatorial ambitions? Bloody instruments? Bloody footprints? A diary?

Before Percy telephoned the police and Dr. Hohf, the family took time to comfort one another and to pray. They dressed (except for Loraine), called family, the Percy campaign chairman, and his trusted business partners. The siren was activated at 5 p.m. once the family was prepared for the investigation and not before. The actual time of the murder was in question.

Chuck led Dr. Hohf to Valerie’s bedroom. The doctor said there was nothing he could do because she was clearly dead. Her nightgown had been pulled up to her ribs, and she was so disfigured that he could barely recognize her. There were four, cone-shaped punctures in her skull. He then told the family what they already knew—that Valerie was dead. Sharon and Gail, sitting in the master bedroom, were overcome with grief. Chuck and Loraine sat downstairs. Outside the home, Dr. Hohf was interviewed by a reporter. He wrote a long report which remains with the Kenilworth Police, undisclosed to the public.

Countless investigators, police, detectives, and assistant Illinois state’s attorneys began to arrive. There followed a Chicago and Cook County contingent of crime technicians and Chicago homicide detectives, Cook County Coroner Andrew J. Toman, and his assistant, Sidney Berman. GOP operatives, including Donald Rumsfeld of Winnetka, came to express condolences and morbid curiosity.

### ELIMINATING THE IMPOSSIBLE

Had the assailant entered the house with metal weapons, balancing them noiselessly as he walked up the stairs, opening the door to Valerie’s bedroom as he held them?

There was no evidence that Valerie had awakened in a fright to see an intruder, or heard the opening of her door, or that someone was rifling through her purse for money. Had something been said by Valerie during the 9 to 10 p.m. break with the campaign aides that alerted the assailant?

Nothing was taken. The motive had not been robbery. Valerie’s wallet still contained \$60. The intruder took the bloody metal weapons with him, though Loraine had seen only a flashlight. Nan Hohf had not seen nor heard anything when she stepped outside at 5 a.m.

Lorraine told police the murderer may have been one of the household staff. Police cleared staff after interviewing them but said Loraine’s account was disjointed.

The houseman, Henry Witting, lived in rooms over the garage at the southwest of the house. Li-Fu’s doggy bed in the garage below lay beside a doggy door so he could enter and exit as it pleased. The police concluded that the intruder was familiar with the house because the dog had not barked during the entire time of the incident. The dog slept undisturbed.

As Holmes recalled on finding a dead man on the beach, the “first task naturally was to note who was on the beach.” He examined the consistency of the clay and footsteps ... ascending and descending. No sandy footprints of the killer, leading from the Kenilworth beach to the Percy house, were found. Police walked the property and the beach with grief-stricken Chuck Percy and Li-Fu. In the presence of the strangers, Li-Fu was so demonstrably agitated that Percy had to leash him.

Sherlockians are attuned to the famous quote of “the dog that did not bark in the nighttime.” (*Adventure of Silver Blaze*) Holmes determined that the removal of a race-

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

horse from a stable was not the work of a stranger but by someone known to the dog.

Inspector Gregory: Is there any other point to which you would wish to draw my attention?

Holmes: To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time.

Inspector Gregory: The dog did nothing in the night-time.

Holmes: **That** was the curious incident.

Would this evidence have been stricken in a trial court as hearsay? Doubtful. A dog does not "utter" hearsay whether it barks or whether it does not bark.

## IN THE LITTLE BRAIN ATTIC

Was it revenge? Was it sexual? Was it hatred?

Let us turn to Holmes' gimlet eye: "And yet the motives of women are so inscrutable..." (*Second Stain*).

In the *Adventure of the Second Stain*, Inspector Lestrade brought news of a Parisian connection to the London murder of Eduardo Lucas (known in Paris as Henri Fournaye) who had been knifed to death: "Mme. Henri Fournaye, occupying a small villa in the Rue Austerlitz, was reported to the authorities by her servants as being insane. An examination showed that she had indeed developed mania of a dangerous and permanent form. On inquiry, the police have discovered that Mme. Henri Fournaye only returned from a journey to London on Tuesday last, and there is evidence to connect her with the crime at Westminster. Mme. Fournaye... suffered in the past from attacks of jealousy which have amounted to frenzy."

Within three days, Valerie Percy was cremated. Her funeral was attended by many of the falsely suspected friends, her natural mother's New Trier girlfriends, relatives, neighbors, and Chuck Percy's business and political friends. Sharon was inconsolable. Chuck trembled and wept. Loraine remained stoic. The family escaped the scene of the tragedy and the heated police investigation and flew to Loraine's hometown in California. It was their time to regain their health and to consider the prospects of continuing Percy's political campaign. The family was not made available for questioning. In the solitude of their retreat, it was decided to continue Charles Percy's political campaign which Valerie had so enthusiastically supported.

Holmes believed that even the most minute evidence should suffer scrutiny. By the year 1966, investigators should have absorbed and applied the lessons of forensic science. Chicago's Joe DiLeonardi, a highly influential and experienced homicide detective was hamstrung by the Kenilworth Police Chief's refusal to take polygraphs. The Chief stood firm that Kenilworth would retain its dignified reputation and further, that the Percy family was not to suffer more than it had from the tragedy. When police did attempt contact, Percy's campaign frontman interceded, halting access to the family.

In October, Percy began to hold press conferences. The family returned to Kenilworth only to attend the Coroner's Inquest on October 13 where Percy, Loraine, and Sharon testified. Chuck remembered his daughter, Valerie, as the "embodiment of freshness and sweetness." The jury returned with a finding of homicide by a person unknown. Several days later, the Kenilworth Police reported that after full investigation, all the members of the Percy family and its staff had been cleared.

Lady Hilda Trelawney Hope, the beautiful youngest daughter of the Duke of

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

Betminster, plaintively asked Holmes whether the terrible incident in the *Second Stain* would harm her husband's political career. Holmes' words were prescient to Charles Percy's prospects: "Unless it is set right..." The Kenilworth Police set it right. In November, Charles Percy won the election. He and his family remained thereafter in Washington D.C. except for Loraine's frequent retreats back to California.

Nevertheless, police continued with their investigations of every boy or man who'd dated, been friendly with, worked with, swam with, took the train with, or partied with Valerie. Thousands of supposed suspects were questioned by the FBI (a case where the state of Illinois had jurisdiction). No one was identified as having a personal vendetta against Valerie—who, significantly, had been away at college in Ithaca, New York for the past four years. Nothing whatsoever was uncovered in connection to the crime from these wildly expansive inquiries of boys and men.

## THE PRESS IS A MOST VALUABLE INSTITUTION

Because little substantive evidence was released to the public, newspapers ran unfounded conclusions and leads until there was no more to tell. Considering the media's now frenzied WOKEness, 1967 headlines were its antithesis. The papers announced that Valerie Percy's killers were "De Mau Mau." Who? In an era of angry Black Power, once the Civil Rights Act acknowledged that justice and reparation were due to the black nation, white Americans overreacted. J. Edgar Hoover and his FBI were determined to discredit Black Power movements. Hoover was intent on finding Valerie Percy's killer. Here lay his solution for the Percy family. But "De Mau Mau" proved to be a red herring—like the convict out on the moors in *Hound of the Baskervilles*. The media's "De Mau Mau" accusation was more in keeping, anachronistically, with Holmes describing Tonga-like men "braining their survivors with their stone-headed clubs." It was the world in 1895 and still the world in 1966 and 1967. Still, Holmes would gauge the looks and character of a suspect, male or female, notwithstanding color. Here, that singular introspection, by the media and by the police, was absent and Valerie Percy's murder remained "unsolved."

# THE DISAPPEARANCE OF AMBROSE SMALL: MYSTERY SOLVED

BARBARA RUSCH, BSI, ASH< MIT,  
DECKMATE/CBLS

“Peggy, have you got a minute?”

“I’ll be with you in a second, Jessie,” replied Peggy, only half listening. Peggy MacFarlane, Special Collections Specialist at the Toronto Reference Library, was seated at her desk, engrossed in the examination of a medieval palimpsest with a magnifying glass. “What can I do for you?” she asked, not raising her head from the worn-looking parchment captivating her attention.

“I think there’s something you should see,” replied Jessie, trying to keep control of her voice. Jessie Amaolo had been curator of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection at the Toronto Public Library’s Arthur Conan Doyle Collection since 2018, a position she had inherited from Peggy, who had held it for the previous eight years. It was her job to acquire and maintain library materials, some purchased at auction, others through private donations or from dealers who specialized in books, artifacts, and documents related to Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes.

Peggy, sensing Jessie’s urgency, tore herself away from the palimpsest and looked up at her enquiringly. “What is it?”

“Just this. I discovered it this morning as I was looking through the ‘Personalia of Sherlock Holmes.’ There’s no telling how long it’s been there. I’ve never noticed it before.”

She carefully placed a small cardboard box, tied with string, on Peggy’s desk.

“Should we open it?” asked Jessie tentatively.

Peggy turned the otherwise unremarkable package around, but there were no markings to identify it whatsoever.

“I suppose so,” replied Peggy, hesitating only momentarily. She gingerly undid the string and, glancing momentarily at Jessie, carefully removed the lid. Inside lay a single, ordinary-looking manila envelope. It was the writing on it, which startled both the seasoned curators, recognizing immediately the neat, round hand. “Under no circumstances to be opened for a hundred years,” it read, and the date, “October 31, 1922.” On

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

the reverse lay a large, red, wax seal. At first Jessie and Peggy were too incredulous to speak.

"It's Conan Doyle's handwriting," said Jessie, her eyes wide with excitement. "It's unmistakable."

"I know," gasped Peggy. "But what could it be, how did it get here, and how did it go undetected? For all we know, it might have been here since Cameron Hollyer launched the collection in 1971 – or it might have been placed there just last week by some unknown hand." She was thoughtful for a moment. "Perhaps it became dislodged from some obscure niche during the renovations."

She examined the seal with her magnifying glass. It was cracked and dried out with age, and at her slightest touch, it suddenly gave way. "I suppose we may as well see what's inside." With care bordering on reverence, Peggy extracted from the envelope what appeared to be a document many pages in length, all in ACD's hand. On the top sheet, underlined and in capital letters, read the title, "THE DISAPPEARANCE OF AMBROSE SMALL: MYSTERY SOLVED."

"Well, it seems there may be more than one mystery at play here," Peggy observed with a wry smile. "I think you'd better sit down. We might be here awhile."

"Yes," agreed Jessie, looking a little pale, "before I fall down." She pulled up a chair beside Peggy. "But who's Ambrose Small?"

"I believe he was a prominent theatre owner around the time of the First World War. Well, shall we see what can be gleaned from ACD's account of it?"

"By all means."

Peggy carefully put the palimpsest aside, lay the papers flat on the desk, and began to read aloud.



"HOW THE DEUCE should I know where the fellow's got to?" bellowed Sherlock Holmes. "Do I look like a lost and found department? And why do they keep hounding me every time the local constabulary is too incompetent to solve their own cases?"

"Well, after all, Holmes," I replied in as cool and even a voice as I could muster, "you do pride yourself on being the world's first consulting detective, the relentless seeker of truth."

"Leave it alone, Doyle, and leave me be. I WAS the world's first consulting detective, but I'm retired now, and I've more than enough work here to keep me happily occupied at present, what with my bees and my writings. My retirement has been a peaceful and fulfilling one. And what exactly is *your* interest in all this?"

"I hold you accountable for it, Holmes," my agreeable tone in marked contrast to my friend's belligerence. "Because of my long association with you, I'm asked to solve innumerable mysteries and criminal cases all over the world. I have on several occasions been of assistance as an amateur detective, though not on your level, to be sure. As often as not, I politely decline their entreaties, citing my numerous writing, travel, and speaking obligations."

"Then why come all the way to the Sussex Downs to persuade *me* to take it on?"

"I have long maintained friendly relations with the Toronto constabulary, having made their acquaintance on previous visits to that city, and they are a most persuasive lot. Thus far I have assiduously avoided their pleas. But so great is the demand to learn Small's fate, the city fathers have implored me to discover his whereabouts, be he alive

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

or dead. Truth to tell, I'm ill-equipped to track the man down, and am begging you to disturb the peace and tranquility of your retirement to take on this one final case. Will you do it?"

"Well, what's it all about then? I'll hear your missing person's tale, though I commit myself to nothing. Who is this Small fellow, anyway?"

"Thank you, Holmes. I am indeed indebted to you. It is a vanishing act so inexplicable, Houdini himself could not unravel it."

"No doubt Houdini would not attempt to. He has too much sense."

"Be that as it may, it involves the disappearance of a prominent impresario, Ambrose Small, who was last seen on December 2, 1919 in the office of his Grand Opera House."

"What? Two and a half years ago? And they've just begun to look for him now?"

"That's just it, Holmes. They've been searching for him ever since, to no avail. I am their last court of appeal. The truth is, he is alleged to be something of a blackguard, a bounder, and an inveterate gambler, whose activities are reputed to be just this side of the law."

"Then why search for him at all? Why not, as with sleeping dogs, just let him lie?"

"Because the entire population of the city, nay the country, is fixated on the case. In the two years since his disappearance, curiosity as to his fate has only intensified, to the point that it's become a national obsession."

"No doubt ran off with one of his mistresses, if I know that type. Well, let me ponder it. Surely a few days cannot make a great deal of difference at this point. Am I correct in thinking that I would have to travel to Toronto if I agreed to take it on?"

"I'm afraid so. There's no way around it."

"Then it will require some intensive pondering. I can promise no more. In the meanwhile, you may occupy yourself with some volumes in my library."

"Thank you, Holmes. I shall attempt to patiently await your response. And perhaps I ought to mention that there's a reward of \$50,000 for information leading to his safe return."

"Ah, now that, I must confess, is a consideration. Why didn't you say so before? Not that pecuniary matters are of paramount importance. There is little for which I lack. Nevertheless, I am at present engaged in some experiments which may lead to new discoveries in apiary studies which will require some rather costly equipment. Leave it with me for now."



OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL DAYS, while Holmes mulled over my impassioned plea, I remained on the South Downs, though I wisely did not press him for a precipitous response. On the third day, Sherlock Holmes gave me his answer.

"Truth to tell, as healthful and bracing as the bucolic country air has been, a good dose of the grime and grit of the city and a change of scene might do me good. Not to mention that I occasionally long for the excitement and the mental stimulation of the old days. I've become a bit of a dullard of late. And I confess that my interest in Mr. Small has been piqued. Fifty-thousand dollars is a not inconsiderable incentive. I'll do it, Doyle – upon two intractable conditions. Number one, that you accompany me. I shall deputize you and we'll tackle the problem together."

"And the second?"

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

"That I undertake this mission entirely incognito. I do not wish to be officially associated with this imbroglio, nor do I wish to be importuned either by the local authorities or by the citizenry of the city to enter into any further investigations. The name Sherlock Holmes shall not pass your lips. I shall be known as Stoddart, your literary agent."

I resisted the temptation to laugh aloud at the absurdity of this notion, as it appeared we would in effect be exchanging roles in this little escapade, though naturally, I agreed immediately to both his stipulations.

"As it happens, Holmes, I am embarking on a lecture tour of the United States and Canada in two months' time, accompanied by my family. You could board the ship without anyone the wiser."

"Then we are agreed. Let us book passage without delay."

I looked forward to an adventure with Holmes. It had always been Dr. Watson who had been privileged to accompany him and record his celebrated cases. This was a singular opportunity not to be missed. Though his hair was now a distinguished shade of pewter, the lines in his face etched a bit deeper, and his step a bit slower, it was clear from the glint in Holmes's eye that his faculties were as acute as ever, unimpeded by age or any evidence of a solution, 7% or otherwise. I could barely contain my excitement for our quest to begin.



I WILL NOT TRY the reader's patience with details of our crossing. Suffice to say that we boarded the *Baltic* on April 1, 1922. Holmes took a stateroom under the assumed name Stoddart and kept mostly to himself. From time to time during the voyage, I would meet with him surreptitiously on deck, where we discussed a plan of action in anticipation of our arrival in Toronto. As I gazed out at the vast ocean, recollections of the ill-fated *Titanic* and its doomed passengers and crew plagued my thoughts. The tragedy had affected me deeply. At the time, I had engaged in something of a war of words in the press with George Bernard Shaw, I defending Captain Smith as a hero, while he held him to account. But that was all water under the bridge now, so to speak. Fortunately, the rules of the sea had changed for the better in the intervening decade, and were being conscientiously enforced, as the world had tried to put that terrible tragedy behind it – though I doubt it would ever entirely forget. Nevertheless, the similarities were too great to ignore – the same time of year, the icebergs I spied from the deck floating ominously on the surface of the water – and filled me with unease. I was glad indeed when our ship arrived without incident at the port of Halifax, that great hub for thousands of immigrants searching for a better life in Canada. I determined before travelling on any further to pay a visit to the Fairview Lawn cemetery, where many of those who had not survived the catastrophe had been interred, grave upon grave laid out in the form of the bow of the ship that had put them there.

From Halifax we boarded a train to Toronto. I was familiar with the Grand Trunk Railway, which had provided me and my family with a private car when the Canadian government engaged me to promote western tourism just prior to the Great War. While there, I had penned a poem called "The Athabasca Trail," which, I'm told, has since garnered a gratifying following. Gazing from the window at the countryside beyond, I was once again struck by the majestic beauty and untapped potential of this

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

vast land and rejoiced to recognize many of the landmarks with which I had become familiar in earlier days.

Toronto has become affectionately known as Hogtown, after the half a million hogs slaughtered in the stockyards there every year, whose distinctive aroma wafts over a good portion of the city. By the time we arrived at Union Station on May 15, the headlines in the *Globe* screamed, "Sherlock Holmes Takes Small Case Under His Wing." Of course, they were referring to me, not realizing that the man himself was accompanying me incommunicado. We immediately took a cab to the King Edward Hotel, the elegant inn erected some years before, an enormous portrait of the late sovereign gracing the lobby. We didn't waste much time admiring it though, but took ourselves at once to police headquarters, where we had made an appointment with Detective Austin Mitchell, the inspector in charge of the case. It appears he was expecting us, as we were immediately ushered into his office.

"Conan Doyle, couldn't be more pleased to see you again," enthused Detective Mitchell, shaking my hand somewhat over-vigorously. He was a large, bluff man with a broad, clean-shaven face and a pleasant, mellow voice.

"Allow me to present my friend and literary agent, Mr. Stoddart, who is to accompany me on my speaking tour. I thought he might find the details of our conundrum instructive, as he is something of an amateur sleuth himself."

"Delighted. You are both most welcome," said Mitchell, extending his large, beefy hand to my companion as well. "Would that your celebrated colleague, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, could have accompanied you as well. No doubt he would be able to unravel this mystery in no time."

"Indeed," I concurred, casting a sideways glance at the man himself. Motioning to two chairs opposite his desk, Detective Mitchell said, "I hope your crossing was a pleasant one. Well, shall we proceed to business?"

Holmes, evidently eager to do so, placed his fingertips together and leaned forward in anticipation. Here indeed was the Sherlock Holmes of old.

"Well then, as you undoubtedly already know, the case involves this fellow Ambrose Small, who vanished from this city on December 2, 1919, though he was not declared missing until some weeks later. Though the investigation was slow to gain momentum, it has since evolved into the most intensive manhunt since the search for Jack the Ripper – and proven equally fruitless. Frankly, Sir Arthur, we are stymied, and at a complete loss as to what has befallen him. He had just concluded the sale of his vast theatrical holdings the day before, at the unprecedented sum of \$1,750,000 to the Trans-Canada Theatre Co., a cool million in the form of a cheque, the remainder to be paid out in installments over several years. He took the cheque to the bank and deposited it in his account. The next day he went out on something of a spending spree for his wife, Theresa, who was also his business partner, purchasing extravagant gifts in the form of a pearl necklace, costly furs, and a new Cadillac automobile. Returning to his office in the Grand Opera House, he met briefly with his lawyer, a man from out of town named

E.W.M. Flock, who left him there at 5:30 in the afternoon. From that moment to this, he has never been seen again."

"Any incriminating evidence? I asked.

"Mrs. Small reported that a pocket watch not belonging to her husband found its way beneath his pillow the morning of his disappearance. Yet another confounding piece of the puzzle."

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

"Do you have a physical description of the man?" I asked.

"Here is a copy of the circular we have been distributing across Canada since January of 1920."

Mitchell handed us the missing person's handbill with a photograph of the man in question, whose description ran thus: "Age 53, 5 ft. 9 ins, 150 – 160 lbs. Blue eyes, reddish complexion. Brown hair and moustache. Hair receding on temples. Is very quick with his movements."

"Any peculiar physical features?" I asked.

"As a matter of fact, yes. His eyes are of an intense shade of blue, and of a piercing nature, and it seems that he has a hammer toe on his left foot. We intentionally neglected to make this fact known to the public, but naturally, we have taken special notice of the feet of all the corpses brought to our attention under the pretense of being Small's. None of them displayed that particular characteristic."

"And what sort of person is he?"

Detective Mitchell took a deep breath and shook his head. "Now there we enter into rather deep waters. By profession, he is an impresario and an entrepreneur, by reputation a rogue and a swindler. To be perfectly frank, the fellow is – or was – like his name, diminutive in stature, yet voracious in his appetites. Devoid of every sense of integrity or moral scruple, he either owns people or they become his enemy, in which case he had no qualms about destroying their reputations or their prospects. He consumes everything he sees, and with consumption comes power and control. He either possesses you or he destroys you – there is no median path. Precise in his ways, he takes elaborate pains to exact revenge. He has earned the title of "jackal of Toronto's business world," and there is no limit to his spite. Breaking his enemies in retaliation for some slight, real or perceived, is more than a mere passing fancy. It borders on obsession – nearly a religious ritual in which he glories in a godlike sense of supremacy. He is smooth as ice and poisonous as a cobra. The man – this loathsome creature rather – is a monster, a predatory beast, but with enough charm, good looks, and that air of romance and mystery about him that either sex finds him difficult to resist. His velvety voice and engaging manner conceal a black heart, which lures in his prey, like a spider in its web, until they become inextricably entangled and there is no escape. He fancies himself a big man, but he is actually the smallest of the small – forgive the jest."

"Sounds very much like another villain we know all too well, Doyle," murmured Holmes under his breath, a sly smile upon his lips. We exchanged knowing glances at this oblique reference to Baron Adelbert Gruner.

"Yes, well," continued Mitchell, "his felonious activities were for the most part unknown to the public, and many of these shocking revelations have only come to light since his disappearance, with his adversaries coming forth to reveal their tales of horror and abuse at his hands. He schemed to write up contracts with business associates which they were forced to sign, then found to be untenable when some inevitable discrepancy was found in Small's favour. He reneged on his contractors, citing some negligible problem with their workmanship. He routinely stole the evening's cash receipts from the travelling troupes who performed in his theatres. He travels with a dubious class of men. An inveterate gambler, he is a horse fancier, addicted to the ponies, and regularly frequented Woodbine Racetrack, where he wagered enormous sums of money, and was rumoured to "fix" certain races, thereby ensuring his profits. But to do so he had to pay off the owners and trainers of the

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

horses, and owed vast sums to gangsters from as far afield as Chicago. He is reputed to have allied himself with those in the darker recesses of the criminal underworld, such unscrupulous mobsters as Al Capone, with whom he entered into some shady speculations. If he attempted to outwit those thugs of their ill-gotten gains, I assure you his life would be as worthless as one of his fraudulent contracts. In short, he is as dangerous a villain as any who appeared on his stage."

Throughout Detective Mitchell's grim narrative, Holmes sat, cold, stern, and silent, his figure as spare, his face as keen and eager as of old.

"And that's not the worst of it." Mitchell took a deep breath and looked at the ceiling as if searching for some delicate way of relating this part of the story. "He had a mistress by the name of Clara Smith, a married woman. At the same time, he maintained a "secret chamber" off his office, separated by heavy velvet drapes, whose walls were hung with paintings of unclothed women, and furnished solely with a bar and a bed for his personal use. There, I grieve to say, he took unfortunate chorus girls and actresses from his shows for secluded trysts. Should they object, they found themselves without employment, either in his productions or anywhere else. He has destroyed many a lovely, innocent girl without the slightest pang of conscience or remorse. The man amassed women as others might collect butterflies or Chinese porcelain. It was deplorable, and one of the beast's worst-kept secrets.

"Problem was, he either owned or operated over thirty theatres in southern Ontario, specializing in a menu of sobs and villainy, which featured mostly vaudeville acts and cheap melodrama, and operated as sole booking agent for many more as far afield as New York State. In short, he had a stranglehold on the entertainment world, accumulating enormous wealth, in addition to a host of enemies who might well have liked to see him destroyed, as he had destroyed so many of them. He became known, only half facetiously, as the "robber baron of the limelight."

"As likely as not a jilted lover or an irate husband took their revenge. The real mystery," interjected Holmes, "is why everyone is so determined to find him. Surely the world is immensely better off without him."

"But that's just it, Mr. Stoddart," replied Mitchell, leaning forward intently, his chair creaking beneath him. "It's the mystery of it all. How could such a powerful and formidable figure simply disappear? We've searched everywhere – in ravines, in city dumps, in the basement and backyard of his home, in the furnace of his Grand Opera House, from which there were reports of a foul odour emanating shortly after his disappearance." Detective Mitchell chuckled. "Every time someone is found digging in his garden, you may be sure a crowd gathers to enquire, 'Have you found Small yet?' Anguished wails have been heard rising up from beneath the floorboards and spectral figures seen backstage and in the balconies of more than one of his theatres. Do you believe in ghosts, Sir Arthur?"

"Well, I would certainly not dismiss the veracity of the sightings. Truth to tell, the tour I am about to embark on is for the most part on the subject of spiritualism and the paranormal, the study and promotion of which has become my new calling."

"I see. Mr. Stoddart, what is your opinion of hauntings and apparitions?" asked Mitchell.

"By contrast with my friend here, my agency stands flat-footed upon the ground and there it must remain. The world is big enough for me. No ghosts need apply. But more to the point, has it occurred to you that perhaps our man orchestrated his own

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

demise? Possibly the fellow is less vanished than banished, a fitting exile for a pariah such as Small."

"I suppose anything is possible. But where would he hide? His is practically the most famous face in the world."

"Have there been any leads?" I asked.

"Have there been any leads?" Mitchell chuckled and swiped at his forehead in frustration. "There have been sightings in the state of New York, in the state of New Jersey, and in a state of unconsciousness. He was seen ambling along a highway, spotted ranting in an asylum, taken in by ruffians as a double amputee whose legs had been crushed in a horrific accident. He has been kidnapped by a criminal gang in Chicago and positively identified by the famed magician Harry Blackstone at a roulette table in a casino in Mexico, but vanished yet again when approached. There is some evidence that his wife, as beneficiary of his estate, had him murdered to avenge his womanizing and because he deposited the cheque for the sale of the properties in his private account rather than their joint one, as agreed upon. His personal secretary, long over-worked and underpaid, was overheard planning to kidnap and extort money from him. Business associates and contractors whom he had cheated vowed vengeance. Disgruntled employees muttered threats against him. Nearly everyone he met had reason to want to do him in. One detractor predicted, 'One day someone is going to get Amby.' And sure enough, a young press agent, wronged by one of Small's wonton acts of treachery, pointed a gun at him in his office, threatening to 'finish him off for good and all.' His reaction was to erect a kind of metal fence in an attempt to protect himself from further threats of violence.

"Interested citizens have taken up the chase – interested mostly in the reward money. Crackpots of every description have woven unlikely plots and written letters sending the police in every direction. All have led to a dead-end. Psychics have had visions, mediums have held séances, definitively shown him to be alive, to be dead, to be in some nebulous condition in between. He is being held in a kiln in Brampton, Ontario. He is lying murdered in the Rosedale Ravine, in a dump, in the furnace of one of his theatres, under his basement floor. He is alive and well and residing in London or Paris or Minneapolis. He is living in luxury, tormented in poverty. He is suffering from amnesia. What is indisputable is that he remains forever in absentia. In the meanwhile, the pool of suspects has grown into a vast ocean. And yet, despite the fact that I have followed up every lead, tracked down every enemy, and travelled to the far corners of the continent, I have come up empty every time. Two persons of interest distinguish themselves above all others – the wife and the secretary."

"What can you tell us about them?"

"Ambrose and Theresa are decidedly mismatched. A less likely couple it would be difficult to imagine."

"How so?"

"You may have observed how extremes tend to call to each other, the spiritual to the animal, the cave-man to the angel. Such was the case with Ambrose Small and Theresa Kormann. A devout Catholic, she has been called a "paragon of virtue," raising thousands for the war effort, recruiting an entire battalion, and shipping over more than 2,000 pairs of socks overseas. She is refined, speaks eight languages, gives lectures on her many travels to eastern climes, and is philanthropic to a fault, where he is parsimonious, his artistic tastes inclining toward French postcards and paintings of naked women, and he regards the Racing Form as the height of literary merit. His interest in

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

theatre never ran beyond the night's box office receipts. Nevertheless, both Ambrose and Theresa are both ambitious and have a talent for turning money into more of it."

"And where did all this money originate?"

"Theresa Kormann is the wealthy scion of a family-owned brewery concern. It was her inheritance that furnished the down payment on the Grand Opera House, which they purchased for the appropriately grand sum of \$200,000. Theresa's older sister married Ambrose's father, making her, oddly, Ambrose's aunt as well as his wife. Some interesting firsts: Ambrose and Theresa were one of the first in the province to own a motor car, which they kept in one of the first backyard garages, and they claim the macabre distinction of being one of the city's first to run over a pedestrian, a nurse waiting for a streetcar before her shift at the local lunatic asylum."

"Fascinating, if irrelevant. What can you tell us about her demeanour since her husband's disappearance?" asked Holmes.

"Strangely enough, it took weeks for her to come forward to file a missing person's report. It was not until the beginning of January of 1920 that she offered a \$5,000 reward for information leading to his safe return. That has now been increased to ten times that sum. She claims her initial reticence was the result of her belief that he was in the clutches of a 'designing woman,' notably his mistress, Clara Smith, with whom she believed he had cut off the affair some years before, and she was certain he would soon return. She claimed he would be angry with her if she drew attention to his absence, perhaps causing a scandal. She had recently come across incriminating letters that proved he had, like so many of the promises he had made, not kept to his word. There is ample reason to believe that she is responsible for his disappearance, though perhaps she had no more motive than so many others. She has now petitioned the court to have him declared legally dead, where, as his beneficiary, she can lay claim to his vast fortune. She is also rumoured to have taken a lover who may have assisted her in doing her husband in."

"And the mistress?" I asked.

"I managed to find Miss Smith, now married and living in the United States. She appears to be as ignorant as anyone else as to his whereabouts, and from all accounts is still madly in love with the man. Some fools never learn."

"And the personal secretary?"

"Jack Doughty rose from usher to trusted factotum, in effect becoming assistant manager of the entire Small empire. His employer trusted him implicitly, handing over the keys to his safety deposit box at the bank, where he often deposited or withdrew cash and bonds at Small's behest. No doubt unbeknownst to his boss, Doughty detested him and was often overheard referring to him as 'that lousy, cheap bastard,' and attempting to recruit associates to rob and kidnap him. The day after Small disappeared, Doughty appeared at the bank and withdrew over \$100,000 from Small's box, which he subsequently handed to his sister before boarding a train for parts unknown. He was not discovered for another year, when he was found working in a pulp and paper mill in Oregon and promptly hauled back to Toronto, where he stood trial for theft of the bonds. There was no hard evidence to charge him with either kidnapping or murder, and he is now serving out six years in Kingston Penitentiary."

"A pretty pair, these two," observed Holmes.

"Indeed," agreed Detective Mitchell. "It's been rumoured that the wife and the secretary were working in tandem, but again, so far no conclusive evidence has come to light against either one of them."

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

"I believe it's time to pay a call on Mrs. Small," I said. Holmes nodded his head in agreement.

Without further ado, we took ourselves in Detective Mitchell's police car to the home at 51 Glen Road in the leafy and decidedly affluent neighbourhood of Rosedale, where the Smalls resided. The long, winding drive was lined on either side with banks of topiary, while the house itself exuded wealth and privilege. Imposing in its size and solidity, the three-storey brick edifice boasted a castle-like turret and an open balcony on the second floor. Gracing that picturesque pile, at the centre of an immaculately manicured lawn, stood a magnificent fountain, water splashing merrily around a majestic bronze statue of Winged Victory. A splendid automobile stood in the drive.

A ring at the bell summoned a swarthy-looking butler of middle height and wiry build, wearing coloured eyeglasses and a chauffeur's cap worn low over his forehead. His hair and beard were white and he wore a starched and immaculate uniform with a high collar and cravat.

"We're here to see Mrs. Small," said Detective Mitchell. "I believe she's expecting us."

I thought I detected the most subtle of sneers on the servant's face as he motioned for us to follow him down the hallways of the opulent mansion. Stained glass windows spread fractured light and shadow over the oaken floors, making the house feel more like the interior of a church nave than a home. Brass doorknobs opened onto wainscotted passageways and secret chambers until at last we found ourselves in a tastefully decorated drawing-room. Several paintings of a beatific Christ, either hanging lifeless on the cross or wreathed in halos and gazing heavenward, graced the walls. Brocaded settees, yellow satin curtains and plush Oriental rugs filled the room with lush splendour, while occasional tables laden with rare and costly bric-a-brac were interspersed with silver picture frames, richly chased and filigreed, enclosing photographs of a smiling Ambrose and Theresa in happier times. The setting was a curious and discordant juxtaposition, suggestive at once of self-sacrifice and self-indulgence. Mrs. Small rose tentatively from the settee and gestured for us to join her. As well-upholstered as her furniture, and equally formal, she wore a fashionable costume affixed with elaborate lace and silk flowers, accessorized with a necklace of magnificent pearls wound round her neck several times and hanging down to her waist, which she twisted and fiddled with obsessively like a rosary.

"Thank you, Kelso," she said, nodding to the servant. He never left the room, however, but continued standing near the door, his legs spread apart, his fists clenched tightly behind his back, a scowl on his face. Though he remained motionless, his foot tapped nervously on the floor. There seemed to be a dark energy about him.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Small," said Detective Mitchell. "I'd like to introduce you to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the celebrated author, and his agent, Mr. Stoddart, who have come all the way from England to lend a hand in solving the mystery of your husband's disappearance."

"Good afternoon, gentlemen," said Theresa Small, self-contained and aloof, waving us into yet another elegant settee and armchair opposite. "Thank you for attending upon me. How may I be of assistance in your investigation?"

"First, we wish to offer you our deepest sympathies on your husband's prolonged absence. It must be terribly distressing for you," I ventured.

"To refer to my situation as distressing is to trivialize it," retorted Mrs. Small. "It is no less than a calamity. I'm well aware that Amby was far from the ideal husband. He could be quarrelsome, and his infidelities were a constant source of pain and embar-

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

rassment, though perhaps no worse than many wives are compelled to endure. Nevertheless, deep down I knew he was devoted to me, and what's more, respected me. We were, in addition to being loving husband and wife, business partners, and he constantly remarked upon my exceptional intelligence and superior business acumen. This terrible vigil of endless nights has been a hideous nightmare to me. The omnipresent thought that my poor husband may be alive and suffering torture at the hands of some vicious kidnappers has spurred me to employ every means to locate him. At one time," she sighed, "I was regarded amongst the elite of the city. Now I have become something of a recluse, abandoning all my previous literary pursuits and social obligations due to my overwhelming anguish and relentless torment. Has a woman ever been placed in a more trying position?"

"I understand that you neglected to notify the authorities of Mr. Small's absence until some weeks had passed," I ventured, as delicately as possible.

"I was convinced that he had fallen into the clutches of some designing woman, and would return to me soon enough, as he always did. I have now offered a considerable reward for information leading to his safe return."

"So I understand," murmured Holmes. "And what is your present opinion as to his whereabouts?"

"Sadly, I believe he is no longer in the land of the living, and have taken the matter to the courts in an attempt to have him declared legally deceased. But that doesn't signify that I have abandoned all hope of discovering him alive, for I live in hope, gentlemen. Amby may be small and slight, but he would put up a terrific fight."

"What can you tell us of his final moments?"

"As you may be aware, he had disposed of all his theatrical holdings the day before his disappearance, for the sum of one million dollars. He personally deposited the cheque in the Toronto Dominion Bank on the afternoon of December 1, 1919. The next day he went out and, in a final act of generosity, purchased these magnificent pearls, some fabulous furs, and the Cadillac motor car you passed in the drive. Kelso here is my chauffeur and majordomo, and you may make enquires of him relative to that machine. That afternoon, the afternoon of December 2, Amby met with his lawyer, Mr. Flock, to make some final arrangements pertinent to the sale. Flock left his office at the Grand Opera House around 5:30. My beloved husband has not been seen or heard from that moment to this, aside from the testimony of a few fraudsters and swindlers who hope to cash in on the reward money, which I have now increased to \$50,000."

Throughout this narrative, which merely confirmed much of what Detective Mitchell had already conveyed, Mrs. Small, who had been sitting stiffly on her divan, now slumped down, pulled out an embroidered handkerchief from her sleeve, and began to dab at her eyes. "Do you gentlemen have any expectations of finding my darling Amby?" she enquired.

"I assure you, Madam, if your husband yet lives, we shall find him and bring him home to you. May we have a look at the pocket watch you discovered under his pillow the morning of his disappearance?"

"Certainly. Kelso, would you fetch it for us, please?"

Upon examination, the watch revealed that it was of American manufacture, of superior quality, and evidently well cared for.

"Madam," said Sherlock Holmes, "I believe it would be most instructive if we made a thorough examination of Mr. Small's office, the place where he was last seen.

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

Despite the passage of time, there may yet be some useful information to be gleaned there."

"Certainly," said Theresa Small. "Kelso can drive you there in the automobile. And I'm sure the present proprietors would have no objections to allowing you admittance."

Detective Mitchell declined to accompany us to the theatre, as he could personally attest to the fact that the police had made a thorough search of the premises in the weeks and months following Small's disappearance. Along the way, Holmes took the opportunity to interrogate the chauffeur, who fidgeted in his seat, while his eyes darted furtively around. "How long have you been in the employ of Mrs. Small?" he enquired.

"About a year," Kelso responded, his hands twitching and thumbs twiddling compulsively on the steering wheel, "ever since I arrived in Toronto from the American Midwest." Holmes looked somewhat skeptical at this response. He leaned over and whispered softly in my ear, "This fellow has something to hide. There's a curious, secretive streak to him that's altogether suspicious. And his accent is on no account from the Midwest, you may rely on it."

"Do you think he could be the lover of whom we've heard rumours?" I asked. Holmes just shrugged and smiled knowingly.

Kelso elected to remain in the car while Holmes and I entered the theatre, a grand dame to be sure, if a bit neglected and dilapidated. We were greeted by a William Wampole, who had run the candy concession and cloakroom while Small had been the proprietor, now elevated to theatre manager. No one was better acquainted with the building, inside and out.

"What kind of employer was Mr. Small?" I enquired.

"A kind and fair one, sir. He was one of the best friends I ever had. I never had words with him so long as I was in his employ, and should be inconsolable indeed to learn that anything untoward had befallen him."

"Can you show us to his office?"

"Certainly, gentlemen." Mr Walpole escorted us to the second floor and into the former office of the missing man. The furniture had been rearranged or replaced, though the metal fence remained in place, much as it had been on the day Small vanished, though the *sanctum sanctorum*, the secret "love nest" behind the heavy burgundy curtains, had been thoroughly dismantled. Wampole interrupted our somewhat lurid thoughts to offer helpfully, "The furniture was arranged in such a way that it would be impossible for even an accomplished marksman to get an accurate shot at him. Further, he had a private staircase leading to the back laneway, in case a hasty retreat became suddenly imperative."

"Did he have so many enemies then?"

Wampole hesitated before responding. "Well, there were those who did not think so highly of him as I did, it's a fact."

Holmes removed a high-powered lens from his coat pocket and launched into his peculiar investigation of the room, lying flat on the floor, examining the walls, floor, and desk most thoroughly. His inspection concluded, he rose, wiped the dust from his trousers, and declared, "Something foul has taken place here."

"I don't know what you mean, sir," said Wampole, his eyes assiduously avoiding Holmes's.

"I mean that there's been murder committed here, and I believe you know all about it. There's a smear of something that looks suspiciously like dried blood on the wall

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

behind the desk. Now tell me, Wampole, in what condition did you find the office on the day after Ambrose Small went missing?"

"It was in disarray, sir, it's true, papers and cigarette butts strewn everywhere, a broken chair and telephone. It spoke of some sort of altercation. It took me three days to scrub the blood off the floor and ensure there were no tell-tale stains beneath the carpet."

"And your employer?"

"Nowhere to be found, I swear. I withheld the information from the police because I feared some heinous act might have been committed here. One of my responsibilities was to deflect any unwanted inquiries regarding Mr. Small's whereabouts. He often disappeared for weeks at a time when he went off on his 'special journeys.' I suppose I felt I was obliged to continue protecting his privacy, and so elected not to tell the police all I knew – or suspected. After all, it was not my responsibility to solve their case for them."

"I see. Now I should like you to take me into the basement where the furnace is located."

Wampole looked askance, but complied willingly enough. As we followed him two floors down, Holmes whispered in my ear, "This fellow is lying too. It seems everyone involved in this case has something to hide."

In the boiler room, Holmes resumed his inspection, carefully sifting through the debris in the furnace, though finding very little of note. Upon further examination, he did locate a gold cufflink engraved with the initials AC stuck beneath the boiler, which somehow had been missed. It is uncanny how he manages to find evidence everyone else has overlooked.

As we were both done in from our long journey and the calls we had paid, we returned to the King Edward Hotel, situated mere steps from the Grand Opera House, where Small met his swan song. There I bade Sherlock Holmes good evening and rejoined my family. My prolonged absence I explained away on the pretext of arranging some business relative to the lecture tour. After an elegant supper, we retired to our rooms, where I slept like a man with nothing on his conscience – unlike nearly everyone we had met that day.

The next morning I called upon my friend. His door was unlocked, and I entered unannounced. His room was wreathed in smoke, as dense as a London fog. I could barely make him out as he sat cross-legged on the floor, propped up by cushions and bolsters from the bed, a distant and contemplative look upon his face.

"Have you been there all night then, Holmes?"

At the sound of my voice, he came suddenly back to earth. "Is it morning so soon? This is indeed a three-pipe problem, Doyle, which has presented some singular features." He turned to me. "I am infinitely obliged to you for calling my attention to it. I wouldn't have missed it for the world. It has at least as many singular points as a missing jewel or abducted racehorse, regardless of their value or pedigree. And I might add, Doyle, that you are as admirable a collaborator as Dr. Watson – quite as bright a conductor of light, and a veritable whetstone of the mind."

I must confess to have been enormously pleased with the words of praise conferred upon me. It was like being anointed with holy oil.

"And have you drawn any conclusions?"

"Doyle, you know my methods. It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts."

"Can you not share your thoughts to this point?"

"Regrettably not. The only safe plotter is he who plots alone." It was clear that Holmes was not about to share his plot with me.

"However, I do have some suspicions. Let us see if they hold water, and what further clues our investigations may bring."

Holmes determined to return to the home of Theresa Small, courtesy of her ill-tempered chauffeur. As we alighted from the elegant automobile and were passing close by the fountain, Holmes whispered to me, "Quick, jostle my arm." Knowing enough not to question his instructions, I feigned tripping along the pathway, inadvertently knocking into my friend, who had been about to fill his pipe. Both his tobacco pouch and the pipe went flying high overhead, landing precipitously in the middle of the fountain, at the foot of the triumphant Winged Victory.

"Oh dear, what an ungainly oaf I am," said Holmes.

Kelso shook his head and muttered, "Never mind. I'll retrieve it." Looking somewhat disgruntled, he reluctantly rolled up his trousers, removed his shoes and socks, and waded into the fountain, salvaging the now sopping smoking apparatus and handing them to Holmes.

"Here you are sir, somewhat the worse for wear."

"I apologize for the inconvenience, Kelso. Very kind of you," said Holmes, again berating himself for his clumsiness.

As the door had been left unlocked, we all three entered the house, once again making our way into the elegant front parlour, where Kelso announced us to Mrs. Small, who was eagerly anticipating our arrival.

"Good morning, gentlemen. And have you brought news of my darling Amby?"

"Indeed we have, Madam," replied Holmes.

"And where is he?" asked Theresa in some surprise.

"He is here."

"Here? Here where? What are you playing at, Mr. Stoddart? If this is some kind of joke, it is hardly the subject for pleasantries."

"Far be it from me to attempt to deceive a woman of your exceptional intelligence and superior business acumen, Mrs. Small," observed Sherlock Holmes, with barely concealed derision.

"Then pray explain yourself, sir," she demanded, her voice as cold as the wind off an iceberg, "though I can clearly see this is no more than a farcical waste of time."

"I think not, Madam. He is here – in this room." Holmes turned and cast a meaningful glance at Kelso, who was in the process of turning down his trouser legs and putting back on his socks and shoes. On hearing Holmes's words, he turned abruptly and attempted to run off, then thought better of it.

"Too late now, Mr. Small. The game is up."

"I tell you, sir, that you are under some absurd delusion."

"I think not. If you work with me, I can arrange everything. If you work against me, I must expose you."

"How did you know I was here?"

"Because I knew you were nowhere else. It is a maxim of mine that when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth. I

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

am already aware of the broader strokes of your adventure of the past two years. Why don't you fill in some of the finer details?"

Ambrose Small's mouth twisted in passion as he cast a malignant glance in Sherlock Holmes's direction. "And by what right do you go inquiring into my affairs?"

"Sir, the entire world has been inquiring into your affairs. It was you who gave them leave to do so with your deliberate subterfuge. And you are not the first to label me a busybody. It does not disturb me in the least. Come, come, sir. Take my advice and be frank with me. It is your only chance to avoid the public scandal you are so desperately trying to avoid."

"You dare to threaten me?" Small retorted with a snarl of contempt.

"Threaten you! Assuredly not. But it is rather amusing to see you trying to play a hand with no cards in it. Amusing, but rather pathetic all the same."

During this entire exchange, Mrs. Small began to totter and looked as if she were about to faint. "Do sit down, Madam," said Holmes. "You will hurt yourself there if you fall." She clutched at her pearls, then collapsed with a thump into the depths of her divan, her head dropping back against the plush upholstery, where she remained, motionless and stone cold. Somewhat defeated, Small sat himself down next to her, and calmly removed his chauffeur's cap and tinted glasses, as if removing a mask. The infamous blue eyes flashed with such heat and malevolent intensity that it was not difficult to imagine the devilry the man had caused to so many of his adversaries. Taken together, husband and wife resembled nothing so much as fire and ice.

"I am thankful, sir, that you have come to your senses," said Holmes. "Now tell me frankly the real meaning of this extraordinary affair."

Small hesitated momentarily, then suddenly dropping all pretenses, began to deflate like hot air from a balloon. "Very well, then. I may as well level with you," he growled. "I can see there is no getting past you. You must be some kind of wizard or a sorcerer. You seem to be possessed of powers that are hardly human. But I no longer have any reason to obfuscate. I'll tell you everything as truthfully as I am able." Summoning up as much composure as he was able, Small took a deep breath and in a more submissive tone began his tale. As he was as rapid in his speech as he was in his movements, it took all our concentration to follow along.

"I had entangled myself with some pretty unsavoury characters and had made the mistake of incurring the wrath of a number of them involving the manipulations of horse races. The upshot was that I owed a considerable sum – in the hundreds of thousands, to be precise – which I promised to repay just as soon as I wrapped up the sale of my properties. It seems that one of them, however, a Mr. Arthur Clemente, one of Al Capone's henchmen in Chicago, had very little in the way of patience, and showed up at my office in the Grand Opera House early on the evening of December 2, 1919, brandishing a gun and demanding the money owed to him and his gangland boss. These are men who are not to be trifled with. I begged him for just a little more time, but he would have none of it. It was clear he was seeking a more definitive resolution to the personal matters that lay between us – and at the point of a gun. He fired at me, grazing my shoulder, but my reflexes were sharp, and I grabbed the ornate letter opener on my desk, and before he knew what hit him, I had thrown it and stabbed him in the neck. Whoever advised never to bring a knife to a gunfight never saw the likes of my lethal letter opener. Clemente shrieked and fell back onto the floor. I assure you gentlemen my actions were entirely in self-defense. The man was a cold-blooded killer, and his demise

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

does not weigh heavily upon my conscience. Hearing the commotion, my personal secretary, Jack Doughty, came rushing into the inner office, in time to see Clemente fall, blood spurting from his throat. We summoned William Wampole, another trusted employee, who by that hour was the only other person in the building. Having determined that he was indeed dead, together we hauled the deceased gangster down two flights of stairs and into the basement, where we removed his pocket watch, his cuff-links, several rings, and a cross necklace. Somehow I managed to mislay one of the cuff-links. The other jewellery I took home and entrusted to Theresa. The pocket watch I placed under my pillow, for what purpose I cannot now recall. By that point, I was half-crazed. Having stoked the fire in the furnace, we threw him in, incinerating him. I'm told the entire building emitted a foul stench for days, but by then I knew I'd be long gone, and as there were no productions in the theatre that week, I didn't think there would be too many inquiries on the subject. Nevertheless, once Capone and his cronies discovered Clemente missing, I was well aware that my days were numbered. As I valued my life, I had no recourse but to flee. I withdrew \$20,000 in cash from my office safe to ensure the loyalty of Doughty and Wampole. Another \$20,000 I stuffed into a valise. Well aware that one day I might find myself in just such a desperate predicament, I was prepared to make a quick getaway. I escaped into the back alley, drove back to Glen Road, explained the situation to Theresa, and packed what few belongings I would require in my flight. Doughty arrived soon after in his car, and we left the following day, after he had, at my instruction, withdrawn \$105,000 in Victory bonds from the bank and hidden them away. We drove to the American border at Niagara Falls, and continued on. The escape route was an arduous one, a perilous drive over highways, dirt roads, and gravel paths, stopping for weeks at a time when our vehicle required repairs, while I attempted to learn if news of my disappearance had yet filtered out. I trusted that Theresa, my long-suffering wife, the best a man ever had, would maintain her secrecy for as long as possible. She was good as her word, keeping mute and giving us a long head-start on my pursuers, both those who looked to rescue me and those who sought to do me harm.

"We landed in Juarez, Mexico, a place far enough afield that I felt some sense of security – until at a roulette table I locked eyes with Harry Blackstone, a magician who knew me well by sight, as he had performed his light bulbs and handkerchief vanishings many times in my theatres, but somehow I managed to elude him. I came to realize that so great had my notoriety become, there was no place on earth that could conceal me, and truth be told, life on the run had taken its toll. I have aged ten years in the last two. Whether by happenstance or by design, my appearance has altered dramatically. My hair has turned white and I was forced to dispense with my luxuriant moustache, of which I was exceedingly proud. As it was my most closely identifying feature, it couldn't be helped. Ever since, I have been compelled to don this infernal mask. I am so changed, I scarcely recognize myself."

"Perhaps not an altogether unwelcome alteration," observed Sherlock Holmes.

"Be that as it may, I surreptitiously headed home, and have been hiding in plain sight ever since. I sent Jack Doughty off with a handsome reward, confident that the payoff would be sufficient to ensure his loyalty. He made it as far as Oregon before he was caught, and though he is presently serving a prison sentence, thus far he has maintained his silence. I have resided under the same roof with my wife for the last year, living a quiet life, having given up the limelight and repented of my profligate ways. I can neither condone nor justify the sins of my past, but I *can* assure you that the infamous Ambrose Small of yesteryear is no more. He has vanished as thoroughly as one of

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

Blackstone's handkerchiefs.

"And that, sir, is the truth, the whole truth. I know not how you saw through my disguise. But I have committed no crime, and if you expose me, my life would likely not be extended by an hour, as given half a chance, my enemies, with whom violence is all too familiar, will stick at nothing. I have now told you everything without any attempt at prevarication or concealment. I am trusting that you are both men of discretion."

Throughout this startling confession, Theresa Small sat silent and aloof, but thoughts of the danger her husband still faced drained her cheeks of all colour.

"Mr. Small," said Sherlock Holmes, "I believe every word you've said. I appreciate your candour and cannot but feel your sincerity. I have no desire to bring trouble to you, nor am I in an official position. You have been charged with no crime of which I am aware, therefore there is no reason, so long as the ends of justice are served, why I should disclose to the authorities all that I know. There have been instances in which I have granted even the most contemptible miscreant a full pardon, should I be convinced his penitence to be genuine. In remorse lies redemption, and I have faith in yours.

"As for the manner in which I divined your true identity, I am no stranger myself to either self-vanishing acts or the art of camouflage. In short, I recognized your rapid movements, I took note of the lifts you wear on your shoes to increase your height. Nor was I fooled by the tinted glasses, your hair colour or the absence of your signature moustache, now replaced by a full beard. The final proof took the form of a little ruse. Losing my tobacco in the fountain was merely a contrivance to have you remove your footwear, so I could have a look at your toes. The hammer toe positively gave you away, and my suspicions were confirmed. As for your secrets, I shall not betray them. They shall remain safe with me, and I wish you and your wife well in your reformed life and future endeavours."

"Thank you," said Small, relief etched on his face. "But don't think you have deceived me either, Mr. 'Stoddart.' There is only one man on earth who could have seen through my disguise. I recognized you immediately from the drawings of Sidney Paget and Frederick Dorr Steele. You are none other than the inimitable Mr. Sherlock Holmes. It seems we have both been engaging in subterfuge all along, while not fooling the other at all. And may I add that your reputation for persistence and ingenuity has been well earned. It's not for nothing that you are regarded as the first criminal agent of Europe."

"You are a fascinating man, Small, and I have gained a certain admiration for your intellect as well, though I deplore your methods. I congratulate you on penetrating my little masquerade. I too am not unfamiliar with vanishing acts, having disappeared myself for some years, after tumbling off a cliff. As for the art of disguise, I have been told I might have made a brilliant career upon the stage, and have at one time or another posed as a plumber, a seedy old bookseller, and a priest, amongst other unremarkable personalities. I have also been known to expose the concealed identity of others, including a stolen horse and a street mendicant. Thankfully I had no need to take soap and water to *your* face. But there is one other small matter to attend to – that of the reward."

"Surely it is not quite right, Mr. Holmes, to accept the reward money when the mystery was so easily solved."

"Not so easily as that, I assure you. The reward was offered for information leading to the safe return of Ambrose Small, and I have fulfilled its stipulations. Let us not

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

quibble over trifles. I should be glad if you would make out the cheque in my name for the \$50,000, as stipulated."

"Very well, then. I suppose a bargain is a bargain."

Mrs. Small reluctantly took pen in hand and wrote out the cheque in the amount specified, and handed it to Holmes, who folded it in two and placed it in his silver cigarette case, which he thrust into the inner pocket of his coat. "A most remarkable case, indeed," he said, a coy smile upon his lips as we took our leave of the home on Glen Road.

We found our way back to police headquarters, and were ushered once more into Detective Mitchell's office. "And what conclusions have you reached, Sir Arthur?" he asked in anticipation.

"I conclude," I said, "that some mysteries are meant to remain unresolved. I'm sorry, Detective, that we have been unable to assist you, and I wish you luck in your ongoing investigation." The disappointment on Detective Mitchell's face was palpable. As I was giving a lecture that evening at Massey Hall, I bade Sherlock Holmes farewell, and continued on my tour. I was scheduled to speak in Toledo, Ohio in two days' time. In the meanwhile, my companion played tourist incognito in the grand city of Toronto before boarding a ship back to England.

I have vowed to keep the resolution of the disappearance of Ambrose Small a close-kept secret, and have fulfilled that promise – until now. Should anyone recollect or continue to give a single thought to the fate of one Ambrose Small a century hence, I hope whoever finds these words can, at last, reveal the mystery to the world without fear or retribution.



SUCH WAS Arthur Conan Doyle's astonishing account of the disappearance of Ambrose Small. For several minutes Jessie and Peggy just stared at each other in shock and disbelief.

"This is inconceivable," said Peggy. "A previously unknown Holmes story and the resolution to a century-old Toronto mystery all at once?"

"What shall we do with it?" asked Jessie.

"Contact the police, who closed the case of Ambrose Small's disappearance in 1960, then put in a call to a few people who might still care about what befell him. There have been several recent biographies, websites, and fictional accounts which made use of library materials. Let's find out how close they came to the truth. This may well be a story for which the world is not yet prepared. Nevertheless, I sense an altogether new Sherlock Holmes tale is about to be told."

# THE MURDER OF BENJAMIN F.M. CHAMBERLAIN

PALLAVI G SHANMUGAM AND MEGHNA G  
SHANMUGAM

**J**uly 29, 1870. 5:30 AM New York City.

It was time for his morning run. Shortly after 5:30 he woke up and drew the window curtains overlooking the street. There was a police officer on his beat. He wondered if they even needed police officers in this safe neighborhood. He opened the door to his room when he heard a loud scream from the second floor below.

"Come quickly, Fred" his brother cried from downstairs. What he saw shocked him. His father, who spent the night on the second floor was sprawled on his back dead. His brother Washington had collapsed on the floor next to his father. Frederick was paralyzed with shock. A wave of nausea swept through him. He grasped the door for support.

When the brothers had recovered, they bolted down the stairs, and ran out on the street shouting for help. The police officer responded quickly. Opposite the luxurious four-story townhome on West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, was the Fifth Avenue Hotel. The janitor from the hotel was hosing down the sidewalk. He accompanied the officer and the brothers upstairs as they headed to the second floor. Responding to the commotion, the maid Florence and her son Andrew had arrived. They were horrified by what they saw.

## THE CRIME SCENE



Benjamin Chamberlain lay spreadeagled on the floor on his back. His upper body lay in the larger reception room outside his office, while his legs were in the smaller office. The body was in the doorway. He had multiple skull fractures, which had bled profusely.

Close by, lay a blood-soaked wrench, with strands of hair on the shaft. The walls were splattered with blood

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

and several handprints were visible. The carpet was soaked with blood.

One of the drawers from the safe had been removed and was on the bed. A watch, \$500 from the safe, and three diamond studs on Benjamin's shirt were missing.

Some papers and documents from the safe were missing.

Benjamin Fitzgerald Maxwell Chamberlain was 57 years old. He was the President of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), and the director of the Chicago and North-western Railroad. He mostly lived at his country home in New Jersey. He would periodically visit his townhome in New York.

He had arrived on July 28 along with his sons Frederick and Washington Chamberlain. On July 29, he would visit the synagogue and offer prayers commemorating his mother's death anniversary.

Their arrival was not expected. The house was being renovated. The maid Florence put together a temporary bed of mattresses in the reception room outside his office.

At 8 PM on July 28, they attended a service for his mother at the synagogue. Benjamin returned home, worked in his office, and went to bed.

Frederick Chamberlain's spent time with his friends, went to the theatre, and then to the "Dancing Pig" bar where he had a meal of poached eggs and brandy mash. He arrived home at 11:15 PM, had a brief conversation with his father, and went to bed in his third-floor bedroom.

Washington Chamberlain spent time with his girlfriend and had several drinks at the "Dancing Pig" bar, before returning home shortly after midnight. He noticed that the lights were out in his father's room and went to bed in his third-floor bedroom.

Benjamin Chamberlain was rich and famous. News of his death sent shockwaves through New York.

The police considered this as a burglary gone wrong. This theory was quickly abandoned. A large amount of money was not stolen. Professional burglars in New York seldom came prepared to commit murder. There was no evidence of a break-in.

## THE INVESTIGATION

Absent a break-in, the police believed that one or more people who spent the night in the townhome were responsible for the murder.

Under intense public scrutiny, the investigation was swift. The police were spectacularly incompetent. The investigation was intentionally or unintentionally inept. There were no significant clues from the autopsy. The brothers, the maid, and her son underwent intense interrogation. The brothers had alibis for most of the night. None of them had a motive to kill Benjamin Chamberlain, and therefore could not be incriminated.

No clues emerged from the questioning of the tradesmen. The investigation was conclusive. It was concluded that Benjamin Chamberlain had been murdered by an unknown person or persons and the inquest was closed *sine die*. Some newspapers argued that the investigation was rigged.

## SHERLOCK HOLMES

"Mr. Holmes, you have a visitor", stated Mrs. Hudson.

"Who is it, Mrs. Hudson?" asked Watson.

"It's Inspector Dixon who insists on meeting you on a matter of utmost importance."

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

Holmes reacted, as if struck by a lightning bolt. There was a gleam in his eyes.

"I thought we were on vacation, Holmes" said Watson with a tinge of irritation in his voice.

"Well, Watson. Let's see what Dixon has to say".

"Good morning, Dixon. To what do we owe the pleasure of this visit?".

"Welcome to New York, Holmes, and Dr. Watson. The President of the NYSE was recently murdered. The investigation was quick, inefficient, probably rigged, and inconclusive. The family demands justice. I wondered if you would perhaps be interested in solving this crime."

"Why certainly, Dixon. Dr. Watson would like nothing more than a few days of intense cerebral activity."

"Absolutely," said Watson sarcastically. "This is the very reason that we sailed across the Atlantic."



HOLMES, Watson, and Dixon arrived at the magnificent townhouse. It was a colossal four-story structure. Andrew had spent the night of the murder on the fourth floor. The brothers had slept on the third floor. Florence was asleep at the rear of the second floor and Benjamin Chamberlain retired to bed in the large reception room outside the office on the second floor.

"What exactly do expect to see, Holmes?" queried Watson.

It had been a long time since the crime was committed. The walls were scrubbed clean. The carpets had been replaced. All repairs to the house had been completed.

Holmes opened the curtains and looked outside. For several seconds he stood transfixed as he stared at the Fifth Avenue Hotel on the opposite side of the street. Some windows were open, and he could see the guests in these rooms.

"What are you looking at?" asked Dixon.

"Oh, nothing" remarked Holmes.

As he prepared to exit the room he noticed a few blue fibers in the reception room, just outside the doorway to the office. He knelt on one knee, inspected the fibers using his magnifying glass, and placed them in his pocket.

"Would you like some tea?" asked Florence as the three men, approached the living room on the first floor.

"I would love some tea with scones" remarked Watson eagerly.

"Does Mr. Chamberlain stay here often, Florence?"

"He would visit us about once every month, Mr. Holmes. On each occasion, he would stay for two or three days."

"Do you have the dates, on which he visited the townhouse recently, Florence?".

"He stayed here on the 20th and 21<sup>st</sup> of June, the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of May, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of April."

"Did all the tradesmen have access to the home?"

"John Cruise, the head mason, was the only one who had the keys to the home."

"Who else visited the house frequently?"

"Tim Carter, the janitor from the Fifth Avenue Hotel, would visit frequently and speak to us and the tradesmen."

"Thank you. That will be all."

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

### THE FIFTH AVENUE HOTEL

"Where would like to go next, Holmes" asked Dixon.

"We would like to check in, into the Fifth Avenue hotel," remarked Holmes.

"We just checked into the Sheraton on the next street," remarked Watson.

"Oh, I would much prefer to be at the Fifth Avenue Hotel," said Holmes.

Watson and Holmes were greeted at the front desk by a young girl.

"Good afternoon, Jane. We would like to request a room for a few nights if you would be so kind."

"Oh certainly. We have a beautiful room on the fifth floor that would suit your needs."

"Would it be possible for us to have a room on the second floor, preferably room 221. I am quite superstitious."

"Very well, we will make room 221 on the second floor available to you Mr. Holmes".

Holmes lapsed into one of his extended periods of silence as he smoked his pipe. Watson busied himself reading the newspaper.

"Since when have you become superstitious, Holmes?"

"I'm no more superstitious now than I was before Watson. This room directly overlooks the second floor of the Chamberlain townhome."

An hour later, Holmes rose from the couch. "Let's head to the bar, Watson. I understand that the brandy mash is excellent there and would like to have a drink."

### THE DANCING PIG

The two men arrived at the "Dancing Pig." Holmes identified a large man, with a handlebar moustache, who was the owner of the bar. After speaking to him for several minutes, he asked if any of the bartenders had worked on 28<sup>th</sup> of July. Of all the bartenders, there appeared to be one – *Jim Stanton* who had worked at the bar on the day.

Holmes approached the bartender and ordered brandy. He struck up a conversation with Stanton. After several minutes, Holmes quietly asked Stanton if he had served Frederick and Washington Chamberlain on 28<sup>th</sup> of July. The bartender indicated that he had. The brothers visited this bar frequently and were well known.

"Would you like to answer a few questions for \$50?" asked Holmes quietly, as he pressed a \$100 bill into Stanton's palm. The bartender looked at him suspiciously. He looked around and saw nobody in the vicinity.

"What would you like to know?"

"Were you instructed to slip a few sleeping pills into each of their drinks?" asked Holmes, as he steadily looked into the boy's eyes.

The boy flinched. "Now, look here, mister. Are you here to make trouble?"

"Listen to me, carefully. We assure you that you will not be in trouble. Another \$50 bill went into the boy's jacket pocket. He hesitated.

"Can you describe the person or persons who instructed you to slip the pills into their drinks?" persisted Holmes. "You have a choice between telling us who instructed you or risk having to answer the same questions, at the police station."

The boy stayed silent for several seconds. His eyes scanned the room. "He was tall

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

and looked like a laborer. He was about 6 feet 3 inches and weighed about 210 pounds. He wore a pair of blue denim jeans and a gray T-shirt."

"Thank you," said Holmes as he and Watson left the bar.



"WHAT ARE you planning to do next, Holmes?"

"Watson, could you go down to the front desk and obtain the list of all the guests that checked out on 29<sup>th</sup> of July. I'd like a list of guests who checked into the hotel on the 26<sup>th</sup>, the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of July. I also want a list of guests who stayed at the hotel on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of June, the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of May, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of April."

"Mrs. Hudson, would you be so kind as to meet the laundry staff at the hotel and talk to them about anything unusual on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of July? Specifically, I am interested in knowing if any guests had bloodstained clothes."

"What are you going to do, Holmes?" asked Watson.

"Ah, I will read the old newspapers, as I lie on the couch, Watson."

"I'm worried that you might be sick from physical exhaustion, Holmes," said Watson mischievously.

### TIM CARTER

Holmes spent an hour reading the newspapers. He then headed downstairs to meet Tim, the janitor.

"Good afternoon, Tim. Would you care to join me at the restaurant for tea?"

"Oh, sure, Mr. Holmes. It would be my pleasure".

As they sipped their tea, Sherlock casually asked Tim if he knew Florence and Andrew. Tim indicated that they were having tough times, and he helped him quite often. He had helped them find the tradesmen, and every week provided them with food and drink from the restaurant.

"On 28<sup>th</sup> of July, did you take food and drink to Florence and Andrew?"

"Yes sir. I did. Their favorite meal, broiled mutton chops was on the menu, and I took this from the chef in the restaurant and delivered it to the house. I also took them some brandy mash in a pitcher as a compliment. The restaurant was mostly empty. The only person in the restaurant was Jack Knight."

"Who is Jack Knight?"

"Oh! He sometimes stays at the hotel. In fact, he got me the brandy mash from the bar."

Tim revealed that he had recommended and hired John Cruise as the head mason, with whom he shared a key to the house.



"HERE ARE ALL the lists that you requested, Holmes. What do you intend to do with these lists?"

"Well, Watson. Seventeen guests checked out of the hotel on 29<sup>th</sup> of July. Eleven of them had checked in on one of the previous three to four days. Let us see if any of these 11 guests had also stayed at the hotel on the dates that Florence provided us."

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

"This is very interesting, Holmes. There are only two people who had stayed at the hotel on all those dates - *Samuel Goldberg and Jack Knight*".

"Oh! There's Mrs. Hudson. I wonder what she has for us."

"Well, Mr. Holmes. I had a lengthy conversation with Carla, the laundry maid. She was on duty on the 29<sup>th</sup> of July. She distinctly recalls one guest who had a pair of torn, blood-soaked blue denim jeans. Carla was very curious and very furious. She refused to let him place the blood-soaked clothes in the laundry. He was in a hurry and therefore simply discarded the pair of jeans and left."

"Do you think we could look at them?"

"Oh! I've done better than that," she said, as she triumphantly pulled out a pair of long blue jeans with dried blood on them. On the right trouser leg, there was a long tear about 3 to 4 inches above the ankle!

"Well, well, well. This mystery is now certainly heating up, Holmes."

"The mystery is way beyond hot, Watson. It is radioactive. Samuel Goldberg is currently an executive at the NYSE and is likely to be the next vice president. Before this, he worked for the Open Board of Stock Brokers (OBSB) and for the New York Gold Exchange (NYGE) before that. Jack Knight was probably a railroad employee at one of the many railroads that have shut down in the last 10 years. Let us get more information on Samuel Goldberg and Jack Knight from Inspector Dixon."

"How did you know all this, Holmes?"

"Well, Watson, I was reading newspapers on the couch. It was physically exhausting!"

## NORTH-WESTERN RAILWAY DOCKS

Watson and Holmes made their way to the dockyards and the offices of the North-western railway. They met with the superintendent of staff Dominic.

"Hello, Dominic. My name is Dr. Watson. This is my friend Holmes. We are here to meet one of your workers, Jack Knight."

"Jack Knight has not been to work since 29<sup>th</sup> of July, Dr. Watson."

"Could you tell us why, Dominic?"

"He fell ill and was admitted to the hospital."

"What was the nature of his illness?"

"I do not know, Dr. Watson. We do expect that he will join duty in about a month."

"Thank you, Dominic."

## MOUNT SINAI HOSPITAL

"Good evening, Dr. Smith. I understand that you are the chief medical officer at Mount Sinai Hospital. My name is Dr. John Watson. This is my friend, Mr. Holmes. This is Inspector Dixon. We are here to inquire about the illness for which one of your patients Jack Knight was treated."

"It was an injury, Dr. Watson. He had a long cut on the back of his right leg. This was likely caused by a knife. The knife had sliced through the skin, the fat, and the muscles of the calf. It barely missed the Achilles tendon. He was bleeding profusely. His injury was surgically repaired. The bleeding was controlled. He was treated for an infection and was discharged home."

"Thank you, Dr Smith."

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

SAMUEL GOLDBERG

"Good morning, Mr. Goldberg. I am Inspector Dixon. With me are Sherlock Holmes, and Dr. Watson. We would like to ask you a few questions."

"Sure, Inspector."

"How long have you been with the NYSE?"

"For about a year."

"Did you know Benjamin Chamberlain very well?"

"I knew him well. We all did."

"Did you have a good working relationship with him?"

Samuel's eyes narrowed. "Yes, Inspector, I did."

"There was to be an emergency meeting of the board, a week from the date of his death, which had been called by Benjamin Chamberlain. Why was this an emergency meeting? What was the meeting going to be about?"

"I do not know. We had not received an agenda."

"You have been buying large quantities of bank stock recently. Is there a specific reason for this?" asked Holmes, suddenly changing tack.

"That, Mr. Holmes, would be none of your business."

"How were you able to purchase such large quantities of bank stock, given your current salary at the NYSE?"

"You are way out of line, Mr. Holmes."

"It would be my business, Mr. Goldberg, particularly if there is suspicion that the quantities of stock that you have acquired are disproportional to your salary and your assets," said Inspector Dixon.

"This meeting is over, Inspector."

"This meeting will be over, Mr. Goldberg, when I say it is over. Unless you would like to continue this conversation at the police station."

Goldberg glared at the three men in silence.

"Who is Jack Knight?"

"I am not sure, Inspector. I do not recall."

"Let me refresh your memory, Mr. Goldberg. Jack Knight and you spent several nights at the Fifth Avenue Hotel. The last time, the two of you stayed at the hotel coincides with the death of Benjamin Chamberlain."

"This is atrocious. This is preposterous. Are you implicating me in the death of Benjamin Chamberlain?"

"Do you know William Brock?"

"Who is William Brock? Why should I know him?" snarled Goldberg.

"Brock is a counterfeiter. He supplies you with counterfeit currency. Have you used fake currency to acquire stock?"

Goldberg's face was getting redder by the minute. He was sweating as he squirmed in his chair.

"Did you retrieve documents from Benjamin Chamberlain's office on the night of the 28<sup>th</sup> or the early hours of the 29th?"

"Inspector! I am not involved in the death of Benjamin Chamberlain. This is ridiculous."

"We have strong reason to believe, Mr. Goldberg that you and Jack Knight, were involved in the murder of Benjamin Chamberlain!"

"You have absolutely no proof," yelled Goldberg.

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

"Jack Knight talked," stated Holmes quietly.

"Did he tell you everything?"

"He sang - like a canary."

"This meeting is now over," asserted Inspector Dixon, as the three men arose to leave.

### FIFTH AVENUE POLICE STATION

"There you have it, Dixon. You now have the culprits - *Samuel Goldberg and Jack Knight*."

"Thank you very much, Holmes and Dr. Watson. I cannot thank you enough for your services."

NEW YORK HERALD, SEPTEMBER 30, 1870

### THE MURDER OF BENJAMIN CHAMBERLAIN HAS BEEN SOLVED BY THE WORLD-FAMOUS DETECTIVE SHERLOCK HOLMES CRIMINALS APPREHENDED!

Samuel Goldberg and Jack Knight were arrested today by the New York police for the murder of Benjamin Chamberlain.

On the evening of 28<sup>th</sup> of July, Goldberg and Knight checked into room 220 on the second floor of the Fifth Avenue Hotel. They had stayed in this room several times before. This room offered a vantage point, and the culprits were able to observe the townhouse of Benjamin Chamberlain across the street. Jack Knight slipped many sleeping pills into the brandy that was served to the maid Florence and her son Andrew, which was delivered to them by Tim Carter, a janitor at the hotel and a friend of the maid.

Jack Knight also bribed a bartender at the "Dancing Pig" to put sleeping pills into the drinks of Frederick and Washington Chamberlain. All four inmates at the house were therefore drugged into a deep slumber on the night of the murder. Nobody heard any sign of a struggle on that night.

Goldberg and Knight observed Washington Chamberlain arrive home shortly after midnight, enter his room on the third floor, switch off the lights, and go to sleep. Jack Knight had stolen the key to the house from Tim Carter. He let himself into the office on the second floor and signaled to Goldberg that the coast was clear. Goldberg joined him at 2:00 a.m., July 29.

Goldberg stole documents relevant to the NYSE. Those documents would have revealed that Goldberg was buying massive quantities of stock using counterfeit money. Chamberlain discovered this and threatened to reveal this to the board at the emergency meeting. This would have jeopardized Goldberg's position at the NYSE, as well as his ambition to ascend to the position of the President of the NYSE. On that fateful night, Samuel Goldberg managed to steal the documents and destroy all evidence of his illegal transactions.

Their search was interrupted by Chamberlain who barged into the study when he heard the noise. Goldberg knocked him to the floor but could not subdue him. He was then assaulted by Jack Knight who was much bigger and stronger. As he lay on his back, he grabbed his knife and lashed out at the intruders. This accounted for Jack

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

Knight's leg injury. The infuriated Jack Knight struck Chamberlain viciously and repeatedly on his head, killing him. The culprits left the home at 3:00 in the morning. Jack Knight went to the hospital and Goldberg left New York City for a week.

Samuel Goldberg was an executive at the New York Gold Exchange (NYGE). In 1865 he lost his job, when the NYSE acquired the NYGE. He joined the OGSB and helped grow it into a powerful competitor to the NYSE. In 1869, the OGSB merged with the NYSE – a move that was orchestrated by Chamberlain. Goldberg was relegated to the rank of junior executive, while Chamberlain became more powerful. Goldberg was bitter, livid, and cynical and swore to take revenge on Chamberlain. This provided the motive for the murder.

He determined that he would be rich, would displace Chamberlain, and take over as the NYSE president. He became wealthy by acquiring stock using counterfeit currency.

Goldberg first met Knight at the "Dancing Pig." Jack was a railroad employee, who had lost his job several times, as many railway lines shut down between 1857 and 1867. The chair of Chicago and North-Western happened to be Chamberlain. Knight swore revenge.

Goldberg and Knight observed the townhouse several times prior to July 1870 and were familiar with the daily routine at the townhouse. They befriended Tim Carter and through him the maid, Florence, and executed their plan that fateful night.

### 221B BAKER STREET

"You have a package in the mail, Mr. Holmes," said Mrs. Hudson.

"Open it, Mrs. Hudson. Let's take a look."

In the package were three diamond studs for Mrs. Hudson, \$100,000 for Dr. Watson and Sherlock Holmes, and a letter:

"Dear Mr. Holmes and Dr. Watson,

We are appreciative and grateful to you for bringing justice. We cannot thank you enough for all that you have done for the Chamberlain family.

Sincerely,

The Chamberlain family."

# HOLMES DIES ON THE SCAFFOLD

BOB SHARFMAN

May 7, 1896, *Philadelphia Enquirer* headline:

**CONVICTED MURDERER HOLMES HANGED.**

What? Holmes a murderer? Hanged? Read on.  
I found the following story...much to my relief.

*Henry Howard Holmes was hanged today after being convicted of murder. At his request he was buried in a cement-filled coffin so as to prevent his body ever being dissected; something he did to all of his 200(?) victims.*

Wow! This guy is worse than Jack the Ripper (only 5 to 11 dead) or John Wayne Gacy (23 to 27 victims). Well, my research has revealed the accounting for Holmes' victims is a little sketchy at best. He claimed at various times he only killed 27, then it was 9, but whatever the true number, he was one poor example of a good citizen—even in Chicago where the murders probably started, if you don't believe that story about him killing his first wife and three children elsewhere.

The year was 1893, and the Columbian Exposition was in Chicago. Frederick Law Olmsted literally created the "Midway" for the event in a beautiful park named Jackson Park on Chicago's South Side (pronounced "Soside" by those who know Jackson Park well and were born and raised there), Mr. Ferris put the first Ferris Wheel there and Sally Rand did a fan dance. There was even a 1,500-pound statue of Venus de Milo made of chocolate. Lots of countries built exhibits to show off their wares and talents. One of the buildings still stands as the Museum of Science and Industry. The midway is part of the University of Chicago. The Golden Lady (as I called it ), named The Republic and the symbol of the Exposition still guards Jackson Park Golf Course from the likes of me. (She is a failure in this regard. I have played on this course for 75 years

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

and still go there every Thursday to join other “mature” golfers for a day of golf and comradeship.) But I digress.

So it seems this guy Holmes built a hotel (now called the “murder castle”), lured guests into its rooms, killed them, and then disposed of the remains with knives, saws, acid, nitrate, and other devices and chemicals. It was a very sophisticated operation for its day. You can read more about this in Erik Larson’s best-selling book, *The Devil in the White City*.

Well, Holmes (not our Holmes) moved away, the police found evidence of the murders, and the “murder castle” became a small-time tourist attraction. On August 19, 1896, two men were seen entering the building, now occupied by a sign shop and a bookstore! An explosion occurred shortly thereafter and the resulting fire destroyed the entire building. The neighbors were thought to have been the arsonists so as to prevent their neighborhood from being overrun with tourists. The lot remained vacant until the postal service built a post office on the site—which is still there (63<sup>rd</sup> and Wallace for those interested).

So now that you have read this far, what has this to do with our hero, the Master, Sherlock Holmes? How about this!

H.H. Holmes, this serial killer, was born Herman Webster Mudgett in New Hampshire and changed his name to Holmes in honor of Sherlock Holmes. There is probably, most likely, certainly, a volume of *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, or copies of *Colliers* with the stories sold by A.C. Doyle to *Colliers* in the effects of H.H. Holmes, as part of his “estate” whatever that is.

I will write to our favorite consulting detective asking him to find those books and magazines—maybe in the last box of books in the used bookstore in the “murder mansion.” Just imagine what they could bring for the BSI trust at the vendors’ table. Get on it Sherlock Holmes—Glen, Ira, Steve, Don, Bill, Steve (there are two of them), and hundreds of others are waiting to buy these books which gave the name to America’s first serial killer.

As for me, I will be busy sending this to the Crew of the Barque Lone Star, hopeful that the royalties from its publication would allow me to bid on these Holmesian (not Sherlock) items.

# NOW IT CAN BE TOLD

## JOSEPH JEFFERSON “SHOELESS JOE” JACKSON ASKS SHERLOCK HOLMES FOR HELP

**Bob Sharfman**

A recent discovery of some old letters of “Shoeless Joe” Jackson, a star for the Chicago White Sox during the 1919 World Series, was recently discovered in a tin box in the attic of his former home in Greenville, South Carolina.

The letters were part of correspondence between the world’s first private consulting detective and the disgraced (but found innocent by a jury) ballplayer. The letters tell the story better than I.

Jackson, being unable to either read or write did have help in putting his thoughts on paper. A friend did the writing with Joe Jackson supplying the thoughts.

Here are exact reproductions of the letters.

Sherlock Holmes  
21B Baker Street  
London  
England

June 10, 1923

Dear Mr. Holmes,

I need your time. They say I threw the Series and are calling it a crime.  
I did my best for that Old Roman Comiskey: a miser. I hit .375 and nobody on either team hit higher.

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

I played the field without a single error and threw home in time to cut down a player.

And that Cincinnati team was no pushover either, their ERA was better for a short series battle.

My twelve hits were a record for sixty-four years.

The state charged us with all sorts of crimes, but a jury in two hours said "No" and we all did no time.

But I still need your skills to clear up my name, so that someday I can enter the Hall of Fame.

/s/ Joseph Jackson

Mr Joseph Jackson  
Greenville, S.C.  
U.S.A.

19 June 1923

Dear Mr. Jackson,

I received your plea and considered it well, but I have too many cases now to make you think I am swell. I am moved at your grammar as I heard you can't read and write. But I must still decline to attend to your serious plight.

I hope you understand my current hectic pace, and I hope someday you will "save your face."

/s/Sherlock Holmes

Sherlock Holmes  
21B Baker Street  
London  
England

July 6, 1923

I received your note and am sorry to hear you feel my case is not to you clear. Let me say again I am being kept out of the Hall even though I was cleared, and my Series stats were .375/.394/.563 (which means I batted .375, on base .394, and .563 percent of my hits were for multiple bases). That alone should set me free. That cheapskate Comiskey is behind this whole thing, he doesn't care for performance and just wants his cash register to ring.

My teammates, all seven, now join in my request for they knew from the stories that you are the best.

These words are not mine, but the thoughts I hold dear, the writer is from a scion quite near.

/s/ Joseph Jackson

THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

Mr Joseph Jackson  
Greenville, S.C.  
U.S.A.

18 July 1923

As I mentioned before I cannot help your cause, but talk to Judge Landis, I am sure your story will give him pause.

Justice is sure and I believe in your story, but that blind Justice will I hope restore your glory.

But you see the real reason I demure is that I root for the Cubs; I always felt the Sox were just lugs.

/s/ Sherlock Holmes

# THE ADVENTURE OF LAFITTE'S BURIED TREASURE

LIESE SHERWOOD-FABRE, DECKMATE/CBLS

**I**t was one of those languid Saturday afternoons in the fall of 1894 when the package arrived. By this time, Holmes had once more established himself in his Scotland Yard consulting practice after his years abroad when everyone—including myself—thought he had fallen to his death at the Reichenbach Falls, and we had both returned to our routines at 221B.

Between the day's temperate climate and Mrs. Hudson's plentiful breakfast, I wanted to curl up in my customary chair and doze like one of those cats some ladies fancy. My eyelids seemed peculiarly heavy, and I might have allowed them to close had it not been for Holmes' pacing. Having solved some interesting cases, which I had yet to put to paper, such as that of the missing heiress and the adventure of the leopard's spots, he now complained no new adventure had crossed his path to task his mind. I feared if no such case appeared, he might be tempted to return to his old cocaine habit —after I had weaned him off that terrible addiction.

The package's arrival, then, was a blessing for us both. It pulled me from my near-catatonia and Holmes from his inner ruminations.

After thanking our dear housekeeper for the delivery, my friend examined the packet carefully before taking it to his desk to open.

I joined him at the other side of the desk for a better view of what it held inside.

"It's traveled a long way," I said, observing the address. "New Orleans, Louisiana."

An absent-minded *mm-hmm* was his only response as he slid a penknife along one side of the packet. Tipping the opening toward the desk, he let its contents spill out. A heavy gold coin fell with a muted *thump* onto a pile of newspapers awaiting Holmes' review.

Two sheets of folded paper floated after.

Holmes retrieved a magnifying glass from the desk drawer to study the coin more closely while I unfolded one paper, leaving the other for later review.

Immediately upon opening the missive, I said, "It's from a woman."

"I could have told you that from the handwriting on the packet," he said as he

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

stepped to the window to better study the coin in the sunlight. "Would you care to read it aloud?"

"Dear Mr. Holmes," it began. "I come to you with a matter of utmost urgency. My husband, Mr. George West, has disappeared, and I fear for his safety. He was last seen aboard the ship 'The Southern Empress,' which was sailing to Galveston from New Orleans. No one has heard from him or any of the crew for over a week."

I glanced up from the paper. "Galveston, Texas. Where is that, exactly?"

Holmes paused to turn the coin over and continued his examination. Without raising his gaze, he said, "On the southern coast of the United States, Watson. Known historically for its hurricanes, pirates, and, unfortunately, yellow fever outbreaks."

"Doesn't sound like a very inviting place," I mumbled mostly to myself.

"I wouldn't say that. It's currently considered 'The Wall Street of the Southwest.' And I may have yet another example of that wealth here."

"You mean that coin?"

"In a manner of speaking. Please continue the letter."

"My husband has always considered himself something of a historian but has limited himself to treasure hunting. He has become obsessed with the pirate Jean Lafitte, a privateer who operated first out of New Orleans and later, Galveston. Talk of Lafitte's missing treasure has been a matter of speculation for more than seventy years. The pirate established a base on Galveston Island in 1817 but was forced to leave in 1820 after attacking an American merchant vessel."

"Recently, a Mr. James Farthington approached my husband, stating he had found a letter written to one of Lafitte's acquaintances detailing the location of a treasure buried on the island. As proof, Lafitte included this coin for the friend. My husband agreed to finance the search in return for half the find."

"A week ago, George and Farthington set off for the island. There have been no storms or other occurrences that would explain his ship's disappearance, and I, therefore, fear the worst. Someone has heard of this discovery, and the expedition has fallen into nefarious hands and my husband is in grave peril."

"Given the distance, by the time you get this letter, another week will likely have passed. Please respond by telegram as soon as possible to let me know if you have any advice on how I might find George and the others."

When I turned to the other piece of paper, I found the thin paper held a map. "It looks as if she included a copy of the directions Farthington shared with her husband."

Holmes lowered the coin and returned to the desk, where he held out his hand. I placed the map into it, and he held it up to the light. "A very lightweight paper used for tracing. She must have traced the original map to share a copy with me." He faced me. "It seems we have a mystery on our hands, Watson. And one that may lead us to uncover the lost treasure of Jean Lafitte."

My interest was piqued. "Lost treasure? Sounds like something from a yellowback novel."

Holmes waved a hand dismissively. "It is not a fairy tale, Watson. Jean Lafitte was a real pirate, and there have always been rumors of a treasure buried somewhere on Galveston Island. Many have searched for it over the years, but none have discovered its whereabouts."

"So, you believe that this Farthington fellow may have discovered the location of the treasure, and now someone is after it and them?"

"It is a possibility, Watson. And one that we cannot ignore."

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

"Then what do we do?"

"Send off some telegrams."

For the next half hour, Holmes prepared three telegrams and sent our page Billy to the telegraph office. After that, he changed from his smoking jacket into a hat and coat.

"Would you like me to accompany you?" I asked as he headed toward the door.

Turning back to me, he shook his head. "I appreciate the offer, my friend, but I'm going to consult a coin expert who is rather eccentric and something of a recluse. It is doubtful he would receive both of us. I shouldn't be more than an hour or so. In the meantime, please be so kind as to wait for any responses to my telegrams."

While I felt he had given the assignment more out of pity than any great concern for the arrival of a few telegrams, I consented to remain behind.

After Holmes left, I settled back into my chair and pondered the case at hand. It was certainly intriguing, and the possibility of discovering lost treasure stirred my imagination and prompted me to do some research of my own. Turning to Holmes' extensive library of encyclopedias and notebooks full of clippings on any variety of subjects, I found accounts of Lafitte's exploits as a privateer as well as mentions of his treasure—but nothing specific concerning its location.

While the man had once run a very successful smuggling operation in New Orleans and other ports in Louisiana, he was forced out in 1817. He moved his operations to the island of Galveston. There, he and his men founded a town that grew to 2000 inhabitants and 120 structures. The grandest was, of course, his own *Maison Rouge*. This red house actually had a moat around it. After only four years, Lafitte left the island, forced out by the US Navy after one of his captains attacked an American merchant ship.

Given the urgency with which he had to leave the island, it was rumored he buried some of his treasure there with the plan to return for it. But before he left, the *Maison Rouge* and other structures were burned, making it more difficult to find the exact location of the buried treasure.

The daringness of this "gentleman pirate" and his amassed fortunes intrigued me. Robert Louis Stephenson's tales of pirates and buried treasure paled in some comparisons to actual fact. I found myself understanding George West's fascination, imagining myself standing on the deck of a ship, prepared to capture and board another vessel to take for myself the gold and other valuables in its hold.

So deep was I in thoughts and flights of fancy that when someone knocked on our door, I searched for my cutlass, ready to battle the invader. By the time I rose to my feet, I was back at 221B and thanking Mrs. Hudson for bringing me two telegrams that had arrived together. She had carried them up on a tray holding my afternoon tea.

I selected one and saw it was from the Port of New Orleans:

"Ship records show that 'The Southern Empress' set sail from New Orleans with Mr. West and Mr. Farthington aboard. No distress signals were received. Will update if any new information comes to light."

My hands trembled slightly with a mixture of elation and dread as I re-read the message. The telegram confirmed the existence of Farthington, West, and the ship, but also no sign of the ship facing any disasters. It also provided no information on the ship's whereabouts or destination.

The second telegram, from the local constabulary, confirmed that a Mr. and Mrs. George West did reside at the address Mrs. West had supplied in the original packet.

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

Furthermore, Mrs. West had visited the station to report her husband missing two days before she wrote to Holmes.

I set the telegrams next to Mrs. West's original envelope on Holmes' desk and planned to return to my chair for further research on this pirate when footsteps echoed through the hallway. After hearing the same tread over these many years of friendship, I knew my friend had returned.

When he entered, I asked, "Was your numismatist able to shed any light on the coin?"

Holmes removed his hat and coat and hung them by the door. He then helped himself to a cup of tea. "Yes, he confirmed that the coin is indeed from the early 1800s and is consistent with the period in which Lafitte was active. He also believes it to be from a private mint, which would have been consistent with the practices of the time."

I leaned forward, eager for more information. "And did he have any insights to help interpret the map?"

"He did not, but he did make a rather unusual suggestion." He paused and glanced out the window. "I hadn't realized it was getting so late." He set down the teacup with a clatter and strode quickly to his room. Over his shoulder, he said, "I'll be going out again, Watson. Don't wait up for me."

About twenty minutes later, a weathered seaman entered our living room. Had I not known Holmes' ability for disguise and that only he could have entered the room from his bedroom, I would have never recognized my friend as this sun-brown, wind-burned old sailor.

"I'm off to the docks in search of someone who knows the waters between Galveston and New Orleans. With any luck, both the whereabouts of Mr. West and the treasure can be deduced."



WHEN I ENTERED the room for breakfast the next morning, a scruffy old sailor sat in my place, helping himself to my coffee and scones. His shaggy hair and beard were more gray than black, his boots were of weathered leather, and his canvas shirt was open to reveal a clipper ship sailing across his chest. Despite the open window allowing the early morning breeze to enter, the room carried the scents of musty wool, salt, and raw fish.

"Good morning," I said.

The man stopped slurping his coffee long enough to grunt at me before continuing to slather half a pot of jam on the last of the scones. My stomach growled at the sight of the bread sliding into his mostly toothless mouth. I could only hope Mrs. Hudson had additional pastries in her kitchen.

With a step backward toward the middle of the room, I called out over my shoulder to my friend. "Holmes?"

"Ah, Watson, I'm so glad you're here," he said when he exited his bedroom. While he still wore his sailor clothes, he had removed the makeup from his face. "Allow me to introduce Monsieur Francois Moreau, a former sailmaker's assistant. He served on several crews in the Gulf of Mexico and is quite familiar with the coastline."

"Oui," he said in a hoarse voice and returned to emptying the coffee pot into his cup.

"He agreed to return with me to study the map Mrs. West provided. His keen

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

memory and knowledge of both the New Orleans and Galveston coastlines have provided an excellent understanding of the positions shown on the map."

I nodded, taking a seat opposite the sailor in Holmes' usual place, and helped myself to a cup of tea—the coffee having been depleted. "And have you solved it?"

"It seems that the map Mrs. West provided us with is not a map of the region as it currently exists. In fact, it appears to have been drawn from memory by someone who knew the area well but did not have access to modern cartographic tools."

Holmes poured himself a cup of tea and moved to his desk where the coin and papers lay.

"*Oui,*" Moreau said with a grunt and picked at the crumbs caught in his beard. He chewed for a moment, then said, "*La Maison Rouge.*"

I perked up, pleased to contribute to the conversation. "I read about it. That was Lafitte's home in Galveston."

Moreau shoved himself back from the table and marched to the desk. He stabbed a stubby forefinger onto the paper. "*La Maison Rouge.*" He moved his finger about an inch to the right of the original spot and raised his gaze to me. His beard parted to form a smile reflecting greed and triumph. "The treasure."

"Do you truly think West is there?"

"If he survived the trip. According to Monsieur Moreau, the areas at the end of the islands have very strong currents in which a man could drown. There are also sandbars that can appear at low tide and run a ship aground."

"The sea can be *dangereuse*," the Frenchman said with a knowing nod. He truly was a man of few words.

I considered the information shared so far, and asked, "What do you propose next? Going to Galveston?"

"Not a very logical move. The trip would require too many days at sea. I have another plan in mind. With Monsieur Moreau's knowledge of the area, I have been able to construct a more accurate map and have pinpointed the treasure's location on what Mrs. West sent to us."

He pulled a drawing from under Mrs. West's letter and spread it flat. Retrieving a compass from a desk drawer, he drew a circle around the X marked on the new map. "I surmise they buried the treasure within an area of about ten feet from this point. I have already calculated the longitude and latitude of this point and plan to pass the information on to Mrs. West."

"Brilliant, Holmes," I said, beaming, and turned to the old seaman. "And I'm certain that Monsieur Moreau deserves a 'job well done' as well. It is early, but given you have not yet gone to bed, I think a drop of brandy or two in celebration is in order."

I went to the sideboard and filled three snifters from the bottle in the tantalus. Moreau's tongue traveled around his lips in anticipation. He fairly grabbed the glass from my hand and downed it in one gulp.

Holmes took his glass but set it aside before tasting it. Instead, he took several blank pieces of paper from the desk drawer and composed another series of telegrams. Turning to Moreau, he handed him a coin and the papers. "Thank you very much, Monsieur Moreau. Your services have been most helpful. Please be so kind as to pass these to Mrs. Hudson for Billy to take to the telegraph office on your way out."

Moreau nodded and tucked the coin and papers into his pocket before lumbering out of the room, casting a longing glance at the brandy bottle on the sideboard as he went.

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

Once we were alone, I turned to Holmes. "Do you think it wise to pass the location to Moreau? I don't think a single one of those telegrams will arrive at their destination."

"I don't anticipate that they will. I have a new set of telegrams to send off."

With that, he spent the next quarter hour preparing three telegrams. After confirming with Mrs. Hudson that Monsieur Moreau had never passed her way when he left, he handed her the new batch, requesting she arrange their delivery. When she left, I studied my friend carefully. While his face was unreadable, I could sense excitement building within him. He stepped out of the apartment once again, but this time with a spring in his step that signaled he was on the verge of a major breakthrough. I found his enthusiasm contagious, putting me in a restless mood as well. I waited on pins and needles to witness the conclusion of what he had set in motion.

Unable to concentrate, I alerted to every sound on the street or creak in the house. Even Mrs. Hudson had been infected. She was forced to make three trips up the stairs with our dinner because she kept forgetting items. Of course, her efforts were in vain when it came to Holmes. He was in such a state, he only helped himself to a cup of tea. I, too, only picked at the repast, a victim of both my own nerves as well as our landlady's. The meal wasn't one of her best attempts.

After several hours of such agitation, I decided to retire to my bedroom (although I doubted sleep would come easily). To my delight and dread, a knock at the outside door made both of us jump. Moments later, Mrs. Hudson's quick step on the stairs told us whatever had been announced below carried some urgency.

She stood in the doorway, her hand on her chest as if to slow her heart or her breathing—or possibly both. "Mr. Holmes, you have received *three* telegrams."

"Thank you," he replied, taking them from her. "Please have Billy at the ready to carry any response to the telegraph office."

She nodded but remained where she was.

"Something else?" he asked her.

With a glance first at the floor, she shifted slightly on her feet and said, "I was hoping to hear the replies."

I could feel my lips twitching slightly. The woman was as curious as I, and who could blame her? The entire case resembled a play read in the dark. All the events occurred an ocean away, and our only insight into the action was passed through a series of brief reports.

After studying the envelopes of each telegram, he opened one, read it, and passed it to me.

"It's from the New Orleans constabulary," I said and read it aloud for Mrs. Hudson's benefit as well. "In response to your suggestion, we questioned the staff at the West residence. They reported Mrs. West left to visit relatives three days after her husband. The servants were to forward any correspondence to an address in Galveston."

As I considered the implications of this news, Mrs. Hudson drew in her breath. "Oh, that wicked, wicked woman."

"You mean, her husband—?" I didn't complete the sentence with the realization that Mrs. Hudson had understood the implications before I had.

"Yes. It was as I feared when I received no response to my earlier telegram. I believe she and Farthington have some sort of previous liaison. While Farthington distracted West on their trip, she contacted me hoping I could identify the treasure's location using my own investigative skills," he said with a frown.

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

"And her husband has most likely met some terrible fate," I said, understanding the implications of Holmes' deductions.

"Precisely," he said and handed me another telegram. "Read this from the US Life-saving Service in Port Aransas, Texas."

"Dear Sir, thank you for your advice on a possible shipwreck near the coast of Galveston. Found the ship Southern Empress grounded on a sandbar. All but two were rescued. Mr. George West and Mr. James Farthington are feared missing after they left in a dinghy to seek help."

"Good lord," I said. "What about the treasure? Will Moreau beat the others to it?"

Handing me the final telegram, he said, "I think the Texas Rangers have everything well in hand."

The third telegram read, "Your reputation has traveled here to Texas, Mr. Holmes, and we are indebted to you for your swift warning regarding the Lafitte treasure and related murder. When we arrived at the location you provided, we came upon what could only be described as a battlefield. A group of what appeared to be sailors had exchanged shots with a group of laborers, presumably hired by Farthington and Mrs. West—both now deceased. We arrested all survivors until we could determine their contributions to the mayhem and any clues to the whereabouts of Mr. George West. The treasure itself remains to be uncovered. The Rangers will be excavating the area to discover and claim the treasure in the name of the great state of Texas."

"Mr. Holmes," our landlady said, drawing in an excited breath, "you solved a case thousands of miles from here without even leaving the city."

"Four thousand, eight hundred and forty-seven miles, to be exact," he said and sighed. "Now, if you don't mind, I think I shall retire for the evening. I've been up for a while now."

With that announcement, he left us, closing his bedroom door firmly behind him.

The case's last stroke came a week later when a box arrived with the afternoon mail. Holmes had gone out on another case, reducing Mrs. Hudson and me to bundles of nerves while we awaited his return. It took all my willpower not to attack the strings securing its contents, and I almost assaulted my friend when he finally returned home.

"Holmes, if you do not open this box immediately, I will truly lose all my self-control and open it myself," I said, having lost all composure.

He chuckled as he finally opened the box. "There, Watson, satisfy your curiosity."

Inside the box, I removed first a very impressive parchment, a letter, and a gold coin.

Deciding to start with the letter, I opened and noted the heading. "It's from the governor of Texas. 'Dear Mr. Holmes, the state of Texas wishes to express its gratitude for your assistance in capturing a murderer and solving one of the great mysteries of our state—the existence of the lost treasure of Jean Lafitte. We will be eternally in your debt for restoring to the state treasury these valuable artifacts from our colorful history. As a reward, please find the enclosed coin from the buried chest found by our diligent Texas Rangers only a few feet from the location you pinpointed for them. It is also my great pleasure to declare you an honorary citizen of Texas, with all the rights and privileges afforded thereto, as the certificate indicates. Please know if you should ever choose to visit our state, our Congress is prepared to honor you with a 'Sherlock Holmes' Day.' Sincerely, etc."

Holmes studied the parchment, coin, and letter when I handed them to him. "I

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

suppose these will be some interesting additions to your dispatch box at Cox and Company."

"You aren't going to display them? That coin must be worth—"

"It's blood money, Watson. Not only did several die in this incident, much of Lafitte's wealth originated from the sale of slaves. That does not even consider the lives lost when he attacked and captured the ships. This 'gentleman pirate' was no gentleman. The only satisfaction I take in this case is that the treasure, now found, will not lure others into the same trap."

# MYSTERIOUS INCIDENT AT PERRACHE STATION

SONIA YAZMADJIAN

*Journal fondé par Sonia de la Croix-Rousse Siège : 15 rue du Chariot d'Or – Lyon*

LA GAZETTE DE LYON  
*English edition - Friday 1st April 1887*



P. Martel, Lyon

Yesterday at 7 p.m., Mr. Blondet, head of the Perrache station, surprised a man prowling along the special PLM train bound for Cannes with an English personality on board, the Countess of Balmoral,

Suspecting the individual of wanting to board clandestinely, Mr. Blondet tried to arrest him but the man brandished his cane like a weapon. The station master deemed it more prudent to call the Sûreté. Indeed, Monsieur Blondet remembered an attack with a cane once carried out in England against Queen Victoria and preferred not to risk a similar attack against a British national.

The agents called in reinforcement questioned the suspect on the spot. Although dressed elegantly and not appearing to be under the influence of alcohol, they found the man particularly agitated and of a thinness indicative of exhaustion.

In a French marked with a strong English accent, the man said his name was *Charlot Côme* and he did not want to board without a ticket but to meet the Countess of

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

Balmoral. However, according to the servant of the Countess, no meeting was planned, which was confirmed by her secretary who was waiting for dinner which was to be delivered before the train left at 8 p.m.

Mr. *Charlot Côme* then launched into an incoherent speech from which it emerged that he would be related to the painter Vernet, of whom a certain *Marquesse au Verfort*, a collector by trade, would have acquired certain works in a dubious manner. It was on this subject that he wanted to appeal to the justice of Queen Victoria, which the poor man claimed was the true identity of the Countess of Balmoral.

Faced with so much extravagance and fearing for his mental health, the Sûreté agents preferred to take the individual *Charlot Côme* back to his hotel, which was not an easy task since the man designated it as the Dulong hotel which, as everyone knows, does not exist. After research, it turned out to be in fact the Hotel Dubost, on Place Carnot, in front of the train station.

Barely returned to his room, the man was seized with a violent cerebral fever. The doctor called to his bedside recommended the greatest calm for the weeks to come.

No complaint having been filed, and in order to avoid a diplomatic incident, the case is now closed with only the obligation to bring from England a person who will take care of the patient as soon as his condition improves.



221B Baker Street.

August 3, 1900

My dear Smith

I HOPE the enclosed manuscript finds favour with you and you will consider publishing my account of a baffling murder mystery which took place in the colonies.

In the fall of 1894, a 33-year old seamstress was charged and prosecuted for the fatal shooting of an 18-year-old-man in Toronto, Canada, after he answered a knock at the front door of his family's stately home in the city's affluent Parkdale neighbourhood. Remarkably, she was acquitted by the jury despite confessing to the crime. Dr. Conan Doyle was asked to offer his opinion of the case while visiting Toronto on a lecture tour but he declined. Since the verdict, the local constabulary have made no progress in ascertaining the murderer.

When we all (save Mycroft) believed that Holmes had perished at the hand of Moriarty at the Reichenbach, I contemplated travelling to Toronto to investigate the Parkdale case which the literary agent would not and the consulting detective could not – as an antidote to the sorrow of my sad bereavement over the loss of our dear mutual friend and my dear wife.

However, I had not done so by the time of Holmes' miraculous survival at the abyss and welcome return from his foreign travels to our empty house. Although interested in the unsolved Toronto murder, Holmes could not safely divert his attention to the matter.

I assure you that it is not my intention to be Watson, the busybody or a Scotland Yard Jack-in-office – but as the junior partner of my consulting colleague, I consequently resolved to follow through and undertake the voyage to Toronto, hoping the data I might collect first-hand would allow me to formulate a theory and identify the murderer, thereby solving the outstanding mystery.

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

I was optimistic of success and doing Holmes proud, based on the following considerations:

1. The prime suspect who was put on trial for the murder was a woman, and as Holmes has pointed out, the fair sex is my department and my knowledge of women extends over many nations and three separate continents.
2. I have observed Holmes' methods for over a decade, and I resolved to take great pains to apply them by dwelling on the logic rather than the crime – as he has admonished me over the years.
3. I proposed to determine the murderer through the exact science of deduction – although I resolved to relate how I did so in my usual manner, not in a cold, unemotional one untinged with romanticism, as Holmes has urged upon me.

Earlier this year, I carried out my mission and have returned from Canada to our London rooms, 17 steps up from our hall entrance on Baker Street. I am pleased to enclose a short manuscript of my enquiries and findings abroad, and hopeful that it suits and convinces both editor and consulting detective that I have solved the curious incident of the knock at the door in Toronto. If so, I owe it to my putting to use the knowledge and experience which I have gained from my mentor and friend, whom I shall ever regard as the best and wisest man whom I have ever known.

Monday next is my 48th birthday and I would be honoured and delighted if you would accept an invitation to join me for a celebratory dinner at seven o'clock at Simpson's.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours,  
J.H.W.

# THE 1894 PARKDALE MURDER MYSTERY IN TORONTO, CANADA

DONNY ZALDIN, BSI, MBT



H. Greenhough Smith



JHW and SH

Being a reminiscence of Dr. John H. Watson, M.D.

## 1894 TORONTO

**I**t was the best of times, it was the worst of times in 1894 Toronto, Canada.

Unlike America, which mounted a treasonous rebellion against her benevolent mother country by taking up arms against King George III, Canada achieved her independence peaceably by an Act of Parliament at Westminster, with the approbation of a certain gracious lady.

In fact, Toronto, previously named York, was commonly referred to as the “Queen City” – with numerous thoroughfares (including its main street), parks, schools, a viaduct and a national holiday named in Her Majesty’s honour.

The “best” includes electric lights in place of gas lamps, electric street cars in place of horse-drawn trolleys, paved streets in place of dirt roads, water and other municipal services, and a burgeoning factory economy.

## HOMETOWN HOLMES



Best of Toronto



Worst of Toronto

### THE MURDER

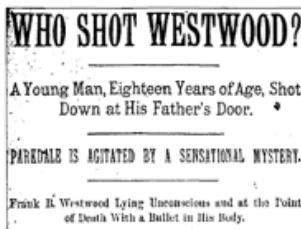
On October 6, 1894, 18-year-old Frank Westwood, youngest son of a wealthy, influential, industrialist father and society doyenne mother, returned after dark from a Saturday night out with friends and entered his family's lakeside mansion at 28 Jameson Avenue in the peaceful, law-abiding, upscale Parkdale neighbourhood. He was a recent high school graduate and employed as a clerk.



After young Westwood greeted his mother on the second floor, she retired to her bedroom about eleven o'clock, while Frank descended the staircase to turn off the main floor gas lighting. Upon hearing the door-bell ring, he re-lit the gas lamp in the hallway, unhooked the latch and opened the front door, where he was met by an intruder, heard the deafening report of a gun, and felt a sharp pain in his stomach, which was bleeding profusely. "Mother, I've been shot," he cried out and staggered upstairs for help. The police and three doctors were telephoned and summoned. One of them, who lived nearby, arrived within minutes and immediately tended to the wound by removing the bullet. The attending police detective asked Frank to describe his attacker. In a semi-conscious state, he described "a medium-sized, relatively heavy-set, middle-aged man with a thin mustache, in a dark coat and wearing a fedora," whom he did not recognize. Frank's wound was a deadly one and he died four days later, on the morning of October 10.

"The Parkdale Murder Mystery" or "The Murder that Shocked Toronto" became sensational news in Toronto and in the rest of Canada.

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR



### ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

As part of his American tour, our literary agent was scheduled to visit Toronto in late November of 1894, to deliver a lecture at the city's brand-new Massey Hall.

By this time, Conan Doyle was quite famous as a result of my Sherlock Holmes stories; and, as a result, he was often contacted to help solve various, unsolved mysteries and crimes in British and foreign jurisdictions.

Following the October 6th Westwood murder, the *Toronto World* newspaper sought ACD's opinion on the case. In response, Conan Doyle wrote the following note from Chicago, which was published in the *World* on October 29.

Dear Sir,

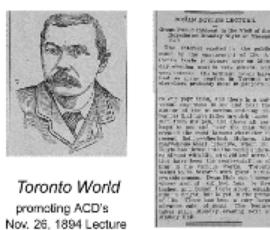
I shall read the case but you can realize how impossible it is for an outsider who is ignorant of local conditions to offer an opinion.

Thanking you, I am, faithfully yours.

A Conan Doyle

He declined to assist in the matter.

Upon his arrival in Toronto, an article appeared in the Nov. 25 edition of the *World*, reporting great local interest to see and hear the great English man of letters.



### THE POLICE INVESTIGATION

THE TORONTO POLICE made a city-wide search for viable suspects but no obvious candidates stood out and the broadening of the investigation continued for five weeks into mid-November, when detectives interviewed 23-year-old Gus Clark, whose family lived next door to the Westwood residence. Clark denied any involvement in

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

the murder – but suggested that Clara Ford, a 33-year-old, local, black seamstress had a bad history with the victim and matched the description of the murderer because she dressed in men's clothing, and owned two revolvers.



The police immediately transferred their attention from Gus Clark to Clara Ford and picked her up for questioning at the police station on November 20. She was poor and black (in a city of 500 blacks in a population of 250,000) and not permitted a lawyer, family member, or friend to be with her during questioning, which lasted 8 hours, from 3:00 pm to 11:00 pm. She was not cautioned as to her right not to answer questions, as a white person usually was. Clara was badgered, coerced, and finally out-and-out lied to in order to obtain a confession from her: she was promised by the detective in charge that if she made a voluntary statement that Frank Westwood had previously assaulted her person and her female dignity and she feared him and later shot him in self-defense, then the shooting was justifiable and she would be found not guilty of the charge and she would receive a \$500 reward from the government. This was subsequently denied by the police and based on her confession, she was charged with murder and detained in jail until her trial, five months later.

## TORONTO NEWSPAPERS

In the 1890s, the number of newspapers published in Toronto reached a printers' dozen, including seven larger dailies, the *World*, *Star*, *Globe*, *Mail*, *Empire*, *Telegram*, and *News*, all of which engaged in a furious circulation war for readers, advertising and publishing profits. While directed at different interest groups and readership (based on class, religion, politics, etc.), scandals and crime were the bread-and-butter which had the widest appeal and therefore outsold the competition. Regrettably, sensationalism was more important than the plain truth in Toronto, much like the Fleet Street periodicals in London.

In order to boost circulation and outsell competitors, the newspapers ran fantastical stories about Clara Ford, almost on a daily basis, depicting her as a brutish, homosexual monster with the strength of two men, and that she regularly drank human

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

blood, when in fact she simply enjoyed making blood pudding for herself and her children.



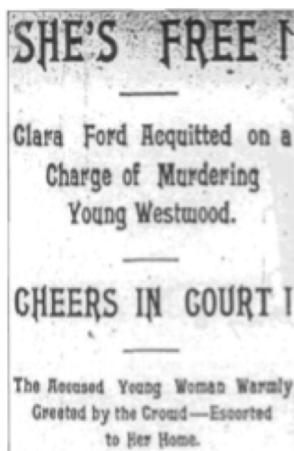
### THE TRIAL

The Westwood murder trial commenced in the spring assizes, on April 30, 1895, before an experienced senior judge whose every ruling went against the defendant, an experienced prosecutor for the Crown, and counsel for the defendant who believed in her innocence. Clara's lawyer proved that the detective in charge suborned perjury by offering false testimony by a witness who claimed that Clara was a prostitute and Frank Westwood was one of her clients.



She testified on her own behalf in a forthright manner and recanted her coerced confession, coming across to the all-white jury of men as an honest, hard-working, self-supporting, single mother, albeit extremely eccentric in her manner and mode of dress. The trial lasted four days, about twice as long as other murder cases of that time. The Judge's summation to the jury lasted an hour, virtually instructing them to render a verdict of guilty. The court, press, and spectators, including many of Clara's supporters, expected the jury to return a guilty verdict within a short time. While it did take a short time, the jury believed that Clara was an innocent victim and returned a unanimous verdict of "not guilty" – to great public acclaim and celebration. Clara Ford had waged and won a valiant and successful fight against prejudice, corruption, and incompetence, securing her deserved and hard-earned freedom.

## HOMETOWN HOLMES



### MY INVESTIGATION

Sometime after the autumn 1895 trial of Clara Ford, I travelled to Canada, by water and rail, in a similar manner to Conan Doyle's 1894 voyage to America, although disembarking at Halifax, Canada rather than New York City.



As Holmes would have done, I examined the scene of the crime, read all the court documents and multifarious newspaper articles and reports of the trial, and talked to the police, lawyers, witnesses, family, and friends, who would talk to me.

### CONCLUSIONS

Although I am neither as well-read on sensational literature nor as observant, ratio-cinative, or deductive as Sherlock Holmes, I am familiar with the philosophical problem-solving principle known as "Ockham's Razor." Formulated by the 14<sup>th</sup>-century English philosopher and theologian, William of Ockham, the proposition, commonly known as the "principle of parsimony," recommends searching for explanations constructed with the smallest set of assumptions. This philosophical rule of thumb allows for the elimination of unlikely explanations where a simpler one is at hand.

I recall with pride Holmes's compliment to me that he had never met a man who was more eminently fitted to represent a British jury. Acting as a juror of this Canadian case, I categorically reject the false and dishonest testimony of Gus Clark, who attempted to divert suspicion away from himself by implicating an innocent, unfortu-

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

nate woman of lesser status and limited means. And I believe and accept the testimony of Clara Ford that she played no part whatsoever in the cold-blooded murder of Frank Westwood.

From my first-hand investigations and collected data, I deduce that the likeliest murderer was 23-year-old Gus Clark. Although he was the son of the Westwoods' upper-class next-door neighbour, he had a criminal record and had been in jail several times; his motive was to avenge being shot at by Frank's father over a theft at the Westwood boathouse only a few weeks earlier; and he purposely diverted attention from the police away from himself to Clara. She was an easy target because she previously lived with her mother and two children at the back of the Clark residence and she fit Frank's description of his killer because she wore men's clothing and owned two revolvers. She was also extremely vulnerable to the prevailing prejudice of class and colour.

*Quod erat demonstrandum.*

### DENOUEMENT

Sadly, the Westwood family never recovered from the brutal murder of their youngest son, and within a short time sold their notorious mansion and its grounds "at a sacrifice" and moved out of the city.

After the trial, Clara Ford stayed on a short time in Toronto but, to escape both her notoriety and celebrity, she moved away to the United States to join a travelling, coloured theatrical show, never to return.

No one else was ever charged with killing Frank Westwood, so his cold-blooded murder has never been avenged.

# THE AFFAIR OF THE BROTHER'S REQUEST

DAVID MARCUM

## Holmes and Watson in Tennessee (Part I)

I have related elsewhere how Sherlock Holmes and I visited the United States in May and June of 1921, as we traveled from New York City to Johnson City, Tennessee, and over the Blue Ridge Mountains to Linville, North Carolina. There, Holmes and I found ourselves involved in a complicated affair relating to his long-standing feud with the Moriarty family.\*

By the fourth of June, the matter had not been completely resolved. However, there was nothing we could do for several weeks but wait for events to unfold. Holmes and I spent a few additional days exploring the beautiful areas around Linville, including nearby Grandfather Mountain, and the picturesque towns of Blowing Rock and Boone. My third wife had passed away several months earlier, and I was in no hurry to return to England. I sensed that Holmes felt no pressing need to return, as well.

At some point during our explorations, I mentioned to Holmes a few of the details of a visit I had made to America the previous December with my wife. At that time, I had followed up on some of the research I had been making into my own family tree, and had managed to trace a branch that had emigrated to the United States many years before, traveling down through Virginia and into the wilderness of northern Tennessee. Although I tried to be subtle about my wishes, in case Holmes did not wish to fall in with my plans, he immediately perceived what I hoped to do.

"I certainly have no objection whatsoever to returning over the mountains and visiting for a while in Tennessee," he said. "In fact, I was going to suggest something along those lines myself in the next day or so, as I have some business there that I have put off for far too long."

Holmes asked me where my relatives lived. "I suppose one can use the term relatives only in the loosest sense," I replied. "Their branch of the Watson family left Scotland so long ago that one would have to examine many generations to determine the exact connection between myself and my American cousins. However, the branch of

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

the line in question appears to have ended in a small town on the northern Tennessee border known as Oneida. I have not communicated with anyone there, and I have only one specific individual to try to contact. I'm not sure if she has married with some other family, or if the name has been absorbed or lost."

At the time of this conversation, Holmes and I were sitting on the porch of the Green Park Inn in Blowing Rock, which had been our base of operations during the past few days as we explored the local countryside. As I rocked in my chair, Holmes leaned forward and checked his handy United States atlas, laid open on his bony knees. He ran his finger along the page, tracing a route and murmuring to himself. Finally, he sat back in the chair and said "This is more than satisfactory, Watson. My business is not too far from your Oneida. Train travel to the place may be a nightmare, but if you are game, we shall leave tomorrow."

"Where is your destination, Holmes," I asked. "And what longstanding business could you possibly have in the wilds of Tennessee?"

"Ah, Watson, I'm sure you've never heard of where I need to go. It is a curious little village known as Rugby, located some miles southwest of Oneida. I fear a long carriage ride that day. And as for my business . . . I am going to fulfill a promise from long ago, made if I should ever find myself back in that part of the United States."

"Back in that part?" I asked. "You have been there before?"

"Yes, Watson, many years ago. But I will tell you the tale in a few days, after I have had a chance to refresh my mind on the circumstances, and when we are closer to Rugby. It was long ago, and I must confess that the details have become somewhat hazy."

We continued to sit on the porch as I thought about Holmes and his previous trip, unknown to me, to the American Southeast. I had known him for over forty years, and although we were both in our late sixties at this point, he still had the power to surprise me. There were so many parts of his past that I would probably never be told, in spite of the fact that in many ways we were closer than brothers. He was naturally secretive, he liked to withhold other facts just in case he could reveal them dramatically someday, and the nature of his work required that some things could never be told. I was simply grateful that, even after so many years, I would soon be finding out additional information about something that had taken place during Sherlock Holmes's travels.

The next morning, shown in my journal as the seventh of June, 1921, Holmes and I departed quite early to make certain that we did not miss our train. Slowly we wound our way over the mountains. The scenery was amazing, like nothing I had observed anywhere else in the world. I had seen the mountains of the Indian highlands and Afghanistan, as well as the Swiss Alps and other wonders of six continents. However, nothing could compare with the wildness around us. The ancient forests spilled down the mountains to shallow, fast streams and rivers. Occasionally a tiny hamlet or grouping of cabins or farm buildings might appear, on a small plot cut back into the forest, but they were nothing compared to the thousands of square miles of old-growth forest and wildlife.

At times the train seemed to struggle as it pulled its tired way up along steep mountainside drop-offs. I questioned the wisdom of building a railroad in some of the locations where we traveled, and then realized that the builders had probably picked the easiest way, indicating that other routes would have been even worse. I simply tried to have faith in the railway and hope for the best.

The view never palled, in spite of hours of being surrounded by tall dark trees, so

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

thick that one could not see much past those growing beside the tracks. We saw deer, too many to count, eating in the shade along the tracks. Most were visible in the morning, but the observations decreased dramatically toward the middle of the day. We saw a fair number of black bears, however, throughout the day. Both the deer and the bears appeared to have no fear of the train, simply pausing in whatever activity they were engaged in as we passed, staring at us as we stared at them.

I have since read that the Appalachian Mountains are among the oldest in the world, and that their rounded heights are due to many more millennia of weathering than the younger Alps or the American Rockies. I know that the mountains over which we traveled contained some of the last remnants of the old forest that at one time covered a great deal of the entire North American continent, and that they were not as deserted or wild as they appeared to me that day. Settlers had moved all through those mountains, creating little communities and pockets of civilization connected throughout the wilderness. On that day, however, I found it easy to believe that, except for the train in which we rode, there were no other people within hundreds of miles. The mountains seemed to be saying that they were here before us, and they would be here long after we were gone.

The landscape gradually began to change as we descended on the Tennessee side of the slopes. Farms and towns became much more apparent, and the illusion I had felt while riding through the forest faded somewhat. By mid-afternoon, our train arrived back in Johnson City, where we had departed for Linville just days before.

As I waited on the bustling platform, looking at the nearby hills and breathing the clear air, Holmes arranged to find seats on the train bound south for Knoxville. I eavesdropped on several nearby conversations, enjoying the various local dialects in the same way that I did when traveling through different parts of the British Isles.

Holmes gestured toward me. As I joined him, he began quickly walking down the platform. "We are just in time to catch the Knoxville train," he said. "I was afraid that we were moving so slowly through the mountains that we would miss it, and have to stay here tonight."

Like all the trains I had seen in this part of the United States, the carriage did not have separate compartments, so we found seats within one that was only two-thirds full. After several minutes of maneuvering through the busy train yard, we reached an open landscape and picked up speed, heading south.

I was fascinated with the surroundings, but Holmes appeared lost in thought. Finally, he sank lower in his seat, made himself more comfortable, and began to doze. I, on the other hand, continued to look around me at the passing countryside. We were traveling south down a long, wide valley, with mountains in the far distance on both the east and west. Although we passed some wooded areas, none were as thick or old as those we had been through that morning in the mountains.

Most areas seemed to be devoted to agriculture, with many lonely houses perched in the middle of vast fields, within sight of the train tracks, but miles from their nearest neighbors.

I recalled Holmes once commenting on lonely country houses, and the horror that they gave him. "You look at these scattered houses, and you are impressed by their beauty," he had said. "I look at them, and the only thought which comes to me is a feeling of their isolation, and of the impunity with which crime may be committed there."

I had questioned how he could feel that way. He replied, "They always fill me with a

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

certain horror. It is my belief, Watson, founded upon my experience, that the lowest and vilest alleys in London do not present a more dreadful record of sin than does the smiling and beautiful countryside."

"You horrify me!" I had cried.

He had explained that in town, everyone lived so closely that no vile deed could go unknown or unpunished. In the country, however, there were no nearby neighbors to know the crimes that happened there.

"Think of the deeds of hellish cruelty," he had said, "the hidden wickedness which may go on, year in, year out, in such places, and none the wiser."

Looking at the lonely houses, now in shadows from the setting sun, I was glad that Holmes was asleep. Although I knew that he was probably right, I preferred to look at them with optimism and try to see their beauty, rather than their potential for evil.

We arrived in Knoxville late that evening. As we stepped out of the ornate station, we could smell the nearby stockyards and meat processing plants, along with a smell that I later identified as roasting coffee. On the horizon was a glow, which resembled a fire, but I knew that it was simply electric lighting, shining from the businesses along the city's main thoroughfare. We engaged a cab, which drove us several blocks before depositing us at a small hotel, located beside the bluffs dropping to the nearby Tennessee River.

We checked into the hotel, and after freshening ourselves, went out onto the street, where we walked for an hour or so before finding a restaurant. We ate a quiet meal, and then set off to the west, where we found the sprawling grounds of the University of Tennessee. Compared to the ancient buildings of Oxford and Cambridge, the school appeared to be an upstart child. We entered some of the buildings, including Estabrook Hall, which were left open for late studies by the students. After an hour or so we returned to our hotel rooms, planning to make an early start in the morning.

The next day, Holmes and I were at the train station with time to spare, making sure we understood the convoluted route we would need to take to reach Oneida. After hearing the details of our journey, I began to question why I had not simply opted for a return to England by way of New York. Perhaps a few days in America's most successful city would have been more enjoyable than moving west into the remote and rugged poverty-stricken areas of the country. However, I recalled that Holmes had business there as well, and if I had not initially suggested a trip to Tennessee, he probably would have.

Our train left promptly, an odd mixture of passenger and freight cars. I had not thought of Knoxville as a particularly prosperous city, although I knew it was probably the largest metropolis in that part of the world. However, its citizens had looked considerably wealthy in retrospect as compared to the individuals currently sharing our carriage. Although a few of the men, such as Holmes and myself, were dressed in suits, most were dressed in work clothes, clean but much worn and well-used. The few women traveling on the train wore plain dresses, augmented by bonnets, often the only color shown in their outfits.

As I pondered our fellow traveling companions, I thought of what I knew about the area to which we traveled. Based on my researches of the previous year, I had learned that the area was still considered somewhat wild, lying toward the middle of the state along the Tennessee-Kentucky border. It was a land of harsh, dramatic wilderness, but in a different sense from that which we had crossed in the mountains the previous day. The geographic feature to which we journeyed was on the edge of Tennessee's central

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

Plateau region, a vast area that straddles the center of the state like a table. The western side of the state drops from the plateau toward the rich fertile lands along the Mississippi River. On the eastern side was the wide Tennessee River valley, down which we had partially traveled the previous day from Johnson City to Knoxville. Of course, other smaller mountain ranges bounded different portions of this valley as well, but essentially the valley lay between the plateau and the Appalachian Mountains on the state's far eastern border.

The plateau itself existed due to a variety of geologic causes. I had learned that the area near Oneida was quite unique in terms of its various natural wonders, such as stone arches and towering sandstone bluffs. In some way they reminded one of America's southwest, except that there the natural wonders were exposed in a desert-like setting, while I had read that the eastern Tennessee Plateau was still covered in old forest, hiding the geologic formations from view until one was almost on top of them and only if one knew where to look.

The state's capital, Nashville, lay to the southwest of our destination, far beyond the initial rise onto the plateau that we were now traversing.

As we traveled northwest, the land became more mountainous, folding on itself. We rode along the low-lands, beside streams and rivers, and through dry valleys, our view of the sky limited to the open space between the tops of tall peaks.

After several hours, the people in the carriage began to shift restlessly and rearrange their belongings. I deduced that they were aware of our impending arrival. Holmes, who had been silent through the entire journey, seemed to notice as well, and sat higher in his seat. I wondered at his silence. I considered that perhaps he was still thinking of our unfinished business in Linville, or more probably that he was considering his task in the mysterious Rugby, where we would visit after finding my distant relations. I could tell that something about the idea of going to Rugby saddened him, but I knew better than to ask, and that he would tell me only when or if he was ready.

The train pulled into a station that lay next to a wide tangle of tracks, far more than I would have suspected for a remote town such as Oneida. Many of the tracks had rows of rail cars sitting idly, being connected in some random manner in order that they might be taken elsewhere. Our train seemed to be pulling the only passenger cars in sight, as all the others were loaded with heaping mounds of black coal or long trees, stripped of their branches, bound for the lumber mills.

As we stood next to the station, the conductor yelled, "All aboard! All aboard for Jamestown!" The last of the passengers not already loaded scurried to the train, and within moments, the great mechanical beast had gone, continuing down the tracks away from the direction of Knoxville.

There were no cabs outside the station, but as the town did not seem to be very large at all, we asked a man at the ticket window for directions to a hotel. He looked at us for a long silent moment, no doubt considering our British accents, before directing us down a dirt street and around the corner of some buildings in the distance.

Holmes and I picked up our meager bags and started down the dusty lane. Luckily we had always traveled light, and carrying the bags was no great burden. As we moved closer to the cluster of buildings, I could see that they were actually the back of a row of structures that stood side-by-side up a paved roadway. A similar group of buildings was facing them across the street. In the distance were some houses, located on dirt side roads, each standing under large shade trees.

As we stepped onto the main street, apparently the only paved street, of Oneida, we

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

were watched by the natives with expressionless faces. All were dressed as the people on the train, the women in plain dresses, the men in worn work clothes. Some of the men were obviously coal miners, while others were farmers. Only the business owners and shopkeepers were dressed in suits, although these were quite worn as well.

I was struck by the obvious poverty of the area. I knew that the town subsisted on the local coal mines and timber industry, as evidenced by the products loaded on the train cars in the rail yard. I was greatly reminded of towns in Scotland and Wales, where Holmes and I had traveled during several of his investigations. The people there had the same look, a lean pride and suspicion of outsiders. It was no surprise that I was reminded of those British towns and villages, as most of the people in this area were descended from Scottish, Irish, and Welsh immigrants. That, combined with the fact that coal mining towns have the same look and feel to them, whether in Wales or eastern Tennessee, it was no wonder that it felt familiar.

We found a small hotel where we were able to obtain two rooms. I sensed that the rate charged to us was perhaps more than the manager usually asked because we were obviously from somewhere else, but it was still cheaper than our rooms had been in Knoxville, so we made no complaint. After getting settled, we made our way to a nearby restaurant, where we ordered a late lunch.

I was intrigued by an item on the menu that I had seen elsewhere during a previous trip to the United States. It was identified as country ham, I suppose in contrast to city ham, which uses a different curing process. The country ham was very salty, thinly sliced, and fried tough in its own grease. However, the flavor was wonderful, and went very nicely with the local vegetables, green beans, potatoes, and turnip greens, as well as homemade bread. Holmes made do with a bowl of hearty stew, and bread as well.

Following a dessert of some sort of apple and dough confection, I leaned back quite satisfied, while Holmes glanced idly about the room. "Well, Watson," he said, "how do you wish to proceed in finding your distant relations?"

I glanced at the waiter, heading toward our table. "I suppose the best way to start is simply to ask." As the waiter arrived, I said, "We are looking for a lady that I believe lives here in town or somewhere nearby, and I wonder if you might know her. Rebecca Watson?"

The waiter said nothing for a moment, and then replied, "Why do you want to talk to her?"

"I am a distant relative," I said. "A very distant relative, and while I am passing through this area, I thought I would like to introduce myself to her."

The waiter thought for a moment and finally seemed to decide that I passed some sort of test. "She lives here in town at times, and out at their home place at No Business on the Big South Fork at others. And she isn't a Watson anymore, either. She's been married for years to a man named John Sherman Marcum."

Before I could ask where the picturesque area known as "No Business" was located, the waiter added, "But some of her sons live here in town. One of them works at the lumber mill, just on the other side of the train yard, not far from here. Willie Marcum. He should be there now."

Thanking the waiter, we paid our bill and departed. As we walked back down the humble street toward the train tracks, I thanked Holmes again for accompanying me on this journey.

"It is no bother, Watson. It is always a pleasure to see new parts of the world and to observe that no matter how differently people live, in what circumstances or locations

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

or state of wealth or poverty, they are still essentially the same, wherever one looks. And in any event," he continued, "I am still expecting your company when I complete my errand in this part of the world, at nearby Rugby."

After crossing through the rail yard, stepping gingerly over each parallel track, we reached the far side, where we found ourselves at the lumber mill. The whine of saws became louder with each approaching step, and the smell of freshly cut wood filled the air. We began to walk through small drifts of sawdust and strings of sawn bark.

Identifying the office, we entered and asked to speak to Willie Marcum. The man there did not question our business, but simply told us to wait a minute while he stepped outside. In no time, he returned with a tall man in his late twenties, his thin hair cut rather short but unkempt and waving in the slight breeze. He was wearing overalls, and sawdust was sticking to his clothing up and down his body.

In appearance, he somewhat physically resembled a younger version of Holmes. However, his facial expression was one of open friendliness, whereas Holmes, in contrast, had always maintained the watchful look of a predatory bird.

"Mr. Marcum," I said, "My name is Dr. John H. Watson, and this is my friend, Sherlock Holmes."

Mr. Marcum stuck out his hand in my direction, but his glance turned sharply toward Holmes at the mention of my friend's name. After shaking my hand, he shook Holmes's, whereupon he said, "You're kidding, right? Sherlock Holmes? I read about you in some books. I thought you were a made-up story."

Through the years, as my writings had become increasingly well known, this experience had happened more and more often. Holmes had managed to learn to respond politely when this type of thing occurred, but I knew that he had never come to appreciate the attention he had received from my published narratives.

"It is nice to meet you, Mr. Marcum," he said. "I am afraid that Dr. Watson's stories have given many people the impression that I am a 'made-up story.' However, I assure you that I am, in fact, a real person."

Mr. Marcum grinned and looked at the two of us. "I can see that. And call me Willie. It's short for William. What can I do for you two?"

I explained that I had been to the United States the previous year, and during that time I had researched some of my own family background, tracing various offshoots of the Watson family that had come to America from Scotland. "One linear relationship seems to have passed through Virginia and Kentucky into this area. Your mother is the most direct descendent of that branch that I can identify, and as Holmes and I were journeying through this part of the country, I wished to make a detour and possibly meet her."

"Well, I think she'd enjoy that very much," said Willie. "But she doesn't live here in town right now. The family has land here in Oneida, quite a bit of it actually, due to my father's foresight. My brothers and I have divided it and are farming it, but my parents spend time here and also a ways out in the woods, where all of us boys and my sisters were raised. Right now the family is out there, getting some things cleaned up after the place sat empty last winter."

"The waiter in town who told us how to find you said it was a place called 'No Business'."

"That's right," Willie replied. "I've been planning to go out there soon myself to help out. What I can do is leave today, if that's agreeable with you, and take you both with me."

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

"Why, certainly," I replied.

"Well, let me just tell my boss that I'm going, and we'll be on our way."

He was back in a moment and said he was ready to go. "I hope you don't mind walking some, but I live a mile or two away, and we'll need to go by my house to get my truck. The saw mill is so close that I usually just walk back and forth every day."

Holmes and I assured him that it would not be a problem, and we headed back across the tracks and into town. On several occasions, we stepped to the side of the road as horse-drawn vehicles went by. Much more rarely, we were passed by automobiles, or trucks carrying lumber.

As we neared the hotel, Willie asked if our things were there. When we said yes, he replied, "You might as well check out and bring it all with you. By the time we get to my parents' place, it will be too late to come back tonight, and anyway, mother will insist that you stay overnight. It won't be as nice as the hotel, though. I hope you won't mind."

We assured him that we did not, and we entered the hotel. We were soon checked out, to the relative displeasure of the man behind the desk, and resumed our walk down the street. Within the lengths of a few buildings, we had left the main part of town behind. We continued on out the dirt road, passing several nice homes, before bearing left onto a smaller lane. Around us were tilled fields, crossed by small brooks, and bordered by distant woods. "Almost there," Willie said, smiling.

We could see a white frame two-story house, wrapped on two sides by a wide porch, in our path. Behind it was a large barn. Near the barn was parked an old truck and a hay rake. Before we got too close to the house, the door opened and a woman stepped out and watched us approach. She was very pregnant, and I could see that she would deliver within just a few weeks. A young boy, six or seven years old, stood beside her, while a girl of about three years stood behind her, peeking from behind the woman's skirts.

As we reached the porch, the woman looked at us, and then said to Willie, rather sternly, "You're home early."

Willie nodded and said, "Ola, I want you to meet some people. These men are Mr. Sherlock Holmes, and Dr. John Watson, all the way from England. Gentlemen, this is my wife, Ola, my son Howard, and my daughter, Wilma. The doctor is distant kin to my mother, and I am going to take them out to the home place tonight to meet her."

Willie's wife greeted us politely, but I could see that she was not pleased that he was going to be leaving. "Will you be staying out there tonight as well?" Willie said yes, and she turned to us. "Could I fix you something to eat before you go? I've got some dinner left on the stove."

Holmes and I politely declined, explaining that we had only recently had lunch. Willie left us and walked to a nearby barn, where he was soon involved in starting the balky truck. Holmes glanced around the farm, his gaze lingering on a large walnut tree in the front yard. "You have a lovely place here," he said. "Are you from this area as well?"

"Yes," replied Ola. "I grew up right over the hill there. I was a Smith, and my father owns a small store."

The girl, Wilma, had sat on the porch floor and begun to play with some small broken bits of toys. Holmes gestured to the road near the house, which at that point was somewhat sunken between two high banks on either side. "That road must have

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

been here quite a while to have been worn down so," he said. "I had not realized that Oneida had been settled for so long."

Ola glanced at the road. "I don't know how long that road has been there, but they say that General Burnside and his army marched on it during the Civil War. In fact, the troops camped right here on this land during the march. Although they were from the North, they were welcomed here, you know. When Tennessee seceded from the Union to join the South, the town of Oneida and Scott County, where we are located, remained loyal to the North and seceded from Tennessee. As far as I know, we've never officially been put back into Tennessee, although it doesn't seem to matter to anyone now."

"This area was settled for who knows how much earlier, though, by Indians, although there's none left around here now. There are many places around here where you can find Indian bones and pieces of pots and arrowheads. There's a great rock sticking out of the ground within walking distance of here that has something of a cave beneath it. Everyone knows you can find old bones under the Indian Rock."

"And that field right over there," she said, pointing behind us. "We plow it every spring, and I can't tell you the number of arrowheads that turn up in the dirt. We have buckets full of them. I don't know what happened in that field, whether there was a village there or a great battle, but somehow all those things were left behind in that field."

At that point, Willie drove up with the truck, and we took our leave from his wife. "Is it all right to leave your wife so close to her term?" I asked.

Willie nodded. "She's got kin staying with us. I'm just in the way. In any case, I'll be back before anything happens." He turned the vehicle, and started out in a westerly direction. "Sorry the truck's not more comfortable," he said. "But if we went by wagon it would take until tomorrow to get there. I actually had one of those new automobiles, once. Ola and I managed to get it right after we got married. We drove it into town, the first one that was ever driven into Oneida. It was a rainy day, and the thing sank into the mud on Main Street, up past the tires. It was very embarrassing, but pretty funny, too."

We drove on past some farms before entering the woods again. "All this belongs to my family," he gestured, pointing left and right. "We used to have much more. My grandfather owned most of the land where the town is, but we've been selling it off over the years." The creaking of the truck's springs and the occasional grind of gears or a racing motor could not hide the sounds of the numerous birds in the trees surrounding us. Holmes spent some of the time questioning Willie about the Indian artifacts and settlements mentioned by Willie's wife, but Willie had nothing further to add.

Suddenly, I interrupted when a question occurred to me. "What can you tell me about Rugby?" I said. "Are we close to it?"

"Rugby is about ten or fifteen miles on the far side of No Business, through some fairly rugged woods. It's a pretty rough ride. Why do you want to know about Rugby?"

I looked at Holmes, to see if he had any objection to my revealing the reason behind my question, or if the matter was some sort of secret. He showed no reaction. "After we meet your mother," I said, "Holmes has said he would like to go to Rugby. However, I've never heard of the place, and did not know exactly what it was. The name sounds British," I added. "There is a town in England of that name."

"I suppose I can take you there tomorrow," Willie said, "after we leave my parents'

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

place. Then I can bring you back to Oneida, or take you on down to Rockwood, where you can catch a train to wherever you want to go. But as to Rugby, well, there isn't much there anymore. Although I hear that it was something special, once."

"You said you'd been there before, Holmes," I said. "Do you know anything of the place?"

Holmes's gaze, which had seemed distant and unfocused, sharpened, and he said, "Yes, I know some of the history of Rugby. Please feel free, Willie, to add in anything you might recall."

Holmes took another moment to focus his thoughts and then began.

"Rugby was a community founded in about 1880 by Thomas Hughes, the British author —"

"— of 'Tom Brown's Schooldays'" I interrupted. "I enjoyed it when I was much younger."

"As you say," agreed Holmes. "He named the town after Rugby in Warwickshire, where he had attended school, and which I believe served as the setting for his book."

"Hughes developed the idea that he wanted to build a perfect community, an experiment in a cooperative effort with a strongly agricultural atmosphere. He recruited the younger sons of the English gentry, who had rather limited prospects if they chose to remain in England."

"Why limited?" asked Willie.

"In England," I answered, "there is an accepted system among the rich and noble classes known as *primogeniture*. Under this arrangement, the eldest son in a family inherits the property, the wealth, and the title should there be one. Often properties and estates are entailed, so that the eldest male heir has use of them through his life-time, but he cannot sell them or pass them on as he might like. After his death, the next eldest male heir inherits the entailment."

"For younger sons in this system, there is usually very little money or property left over. They can live off their elder's charity, for as long as that lasts, and if anyone is willing to provide it. Or they can seek employment. There are very few socially acceptable jobs for younger sons. In many cases, it is assumed that younger sons will enter the military or government service, or will undertake a diplomatic post at some location in the Empire."

"I see," said Willie. "And these younger sons were the men that Mr. Hughes recruited to come live and work in Rugby?"

"Yes," said Holmes. "The idea of traveling to an area far from England and creating something of a 'New Jerusalem' in the wilderness was very appealing to these young men, the ones who did not want to or who were not suited to enter the military or government employ."

"Hughes and his new disciples came to Rugby, which had been purchased earlier by Hughes due to its proximity to a newly-built rail line nearby. They set to work, many of the young men doing that type of labor for the first time. They worked hard, and learned from their many mistakes. Soon a number of buildings were constructed on the site. From my research at the time, I believe that in the first few years, the early eighteen eighties, there were over seventy structures built, and over three hundred residents in the growing community."

"The young men, all of whom had been well-educated while growing up in England, attempted to bring their culture and society with them. By day they would work in the fields, tending their crops, and making repairs to their houses and community build-

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

ings. At night, they would have meetings of drama clubs, literary societies, and numerous sporting teams. Within a few years, a fine inn had sprung up, a large well-stocked library had been built, and regular train service was connecting the town to the outside world, providing a means of obtaining other valuable goods and services.

"Of course, trying to build a paradise on earth is always doomed to failure. In the early years of the colony, a typhoid epidemic swept through the citizens. Word of this reached England, causing a decrease in confidence in Hughes's planned community. Later, in the mid-1880's, the inn, which had been the center of the community's activities and cultural efforts, burned to the ground. As time went on, Hughes himself began to spend less and less time in Rugby, possibly due to the fact that his family, which had initially lived there with him, began to absent themselves more and more, eventually staying there only one month out of each year.

"Hughes continued to pour much of his own money into the colony, but it continued its downward slide into failure. Hughes died in the mid-1890's, a few years after I visited. By about 1900, the official colony was at an end, although I understand some people, descendants of the original settlers, continue to live there."

Holmes looked at Willie. "Is that essentially correct?"

Willie replied, "I suppose so, Mr. Holmes, but actually you know more about the place than I ever did, and I grew up near it. There are some people still living there, but they have always tended to keep to themselves, and now I guess I understand why a little better.

"I guess we will go over there tomorrow," he continued. "I would have liked to have seen the place in its heyday. You say you were there in the nineties?"

"In 1893," Holmes replied.

"The year I was born," interjected Willie. Holmes nodded. "I was presumed dead for several years during that time, as you may have read."

"I read how you came back, too," said Willie with a grin. "Back when I thought you weren't real."

"Yes," said Holmes. "During those three years, I carried out a number of activities for my brother, working for the British government, in various locations in Asia, Europe, and North America. I traveled under a variety of aliases, and for a time, I lived in New York City. I think I may have referred to those times in the past, haven't I, Watson?"

I nodded, and he continued. "During the time I was in New York, I was notified that one of my great enemies, Colonel Sebastian Moran, might possibly be in that city as well, hunting me. In order to verify or disprove this, I surfaced and traveled quite openly from New York to Florida, taking care of several small matters of business along the way. Of course, I was constantly on the alert to see if I was being stalked.

"As my business in Florida neared completion, I notified Mycroft, who said he had a task for me in New Orleans. I went west for a short period of time. While still traveling there, Mycroft arranged for information to be sent ahead of me to New Orleans about Rugby and a small task he needed for me to accomplish there. I then passed through this part of Tennessee on my way back to New York."

"But what was the task?" I asked. "Why would your brother, whom you have said sometimes *was* the British government, need you to travel to this remote location?"

"Ah, Watson, that is a part of the story that I will tell you tomorrow when we are on our way to Rugby."

The sun was setting as we finally reached the Marcum cabin. We had journeyed

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

through the ancient forests, occasionally lurching as the truck was driven through narrow rock-choked streams, and once across a shallow riverbed. The muddy water came rather high on the wheels, and seemed as if it were threatening to overtop the sides of the vehicle as well on one or two occasions. However, it probably looked much worse to me than it actually was. "This is the Big South Fork," Willie said, calmly turning the wheel as the truck pulled us onward, seemingly oblivious to the water surging around its wheels and the uncertain footing in the hidden rocky river bottom. "The Big South Fork of the Cumberland River. We're lucky it's low right now. I would have had to go the long way around otherwise."

"Lucky indeed," I muttered, as water splashed over the side of the door, drenching my face.

We had no other mishaps on the river, however, and we were soon at the cabin, located at the bottom of a gorge along the river bank. As we neared our destination, I saw countless other homes nearby, and realized with surprise that this area was much more heavily populated area than I had expected. "Welcome to 'No Business,'" said Willie. "I guess they call it that because nobody has any business living way out here."

I had smelled wood smoke hanging in the air for quite a while before we arrived. Finally, we rounded a bend and saw the Marcum cabin in the distance. At the side of the river nearby was a great round rock, probably twelve to fifteen feet around, squatting along the shore. Tied beside it was a small boat. My attention was drawn back to the cabin as a series of barks arose, coming from a group of lean-looking dogs rising to their feet near the door.

An older man and woman stepped out of the cabin. In a moment they were joined by several young men and women, Willie's younger brothers and sisters, I assumed, from their similar physical features. The entire family had the look I had seen on a variety of people since arriving in this area. Obviously, most of the people in these parts were of Scots-Irish descent. They were so similar to those that I had met in the small towns and villages of England. As I watched, more of the family appeared from various buildings around the main house. They waited silently as we arrived.

Willie hopped down lightly, while Holmes and I descended more cautiously. "Mother? Father?" Willie said. "I have brought someone who would like to meet you." Willie then introduced us, again explaining that we were from England. His father, a tall older man, stooped and wearing a large mustache, stepped up and gravely shook our hands, while his wife and children simply nodded. "Dr. Watson here has been tracing his family tree, and he has found that we are distant relations, Mother."

I had noticed an added interest when my name was mentioned. When Willie finished explaining my purpose, the small woman stepped forward, smiling for the first time. She was wearing a plain cotton dress, covered with a flour-specked apron. Her graying hair was pulled back in a bun, and her finely drawn features showed a beauty and grace that was unexpected to me in that wilderness. However, she reflected the hard life where she had lived, and looked older than she probably was.

"Welcome to our home, cousin," said Rebecca Watson Marcum. She took my hand, smiled also at Holmes, and pulled me toward the door. "You're just in time to eat."

We went into the log and plank building, very clean and tidy, and surprisingly well-lit considering the small windows. The odor of kerosene was immediately noticeable from the numerous lanterns hung about the room, but it was not unpleasant. Mixed with it was the smell of vegetables and heat from the stove.

We crowded around the table, and the room began to fill with good-natured

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

conversation as the brothers and sisters started to ask Willie of news from town and the farther world. We began to pass the dishes around, and both Holmes and I took generous helpings of the pork loin, green beans, potatoes, and the corn meal bread with fresh butter. Soon both Holmes and I were answering questions about life in England and our visit to the United States.

Willie explained that Holmes was a famous detective, and he told one of his brothers to go upstairs to retrieve a book, apparently originally owned by Willie and now left for the younger men. In a moment, everyone was eagerly passing around one of the published collections of Holmes's cases, amazed that we were actually visiting in their home, and commenting that the illustrations did not much look like Holmes. I pointed out that the American illustrator had unfortunately based his drawings of Holmes on the likeness of a popular actor, while the British illustrator had been much more accurate in his portrayal of his subject.

Holmes took all of the attention in stride, responding good-naturedly to questions, and making a few simple deductions about the brothers and sisters, to the delight of all at the table. The meal passed far too quickly, and I tried to treasure every minute of it.

Later, Holmes and I sat with Mr. and Mrs. Marcum, and Willie, while the others went about their business. Mrs. Marcum and I spent a while looking through her old and fragile family Bible, tracing dates and relationships back to our common ancestor. I had brought some of my own documents with me, and we compared our information. Mine was surprisingly consistent with what was written in the Bible, and I could tell that Mrs. Marcum was glad to learn some about her family's earlier history in Scotland and England before her branch had emigrated to America.

I was aware that Holmes was talking with Willie and Mr. Marcum about various matters, including the description of the geology of the local area, with its dramatic bluffs, caves, and sandstone arches towering over the ground below. Willie offered to take us by one or two of the sites on the way to Rugby the next day, saying that it would not be too far out of the way. I heard Holmes asking a few questions about Rugby, but neither Willie nor Mr. Marcum had any additional information to offer.

That night, we were offered Mr. and Mrs. Marcum's bed, and when we wouldn't hear of it, they tried to turn out their children and give us their upstairs loft. Finally we convinced them that sleeping in the clean straw in the barn loft would suit us down to the ground, and, wrapped in warm blankets, we fell asleep to the sound of a soft wind and the distant chuckling of the river.

We were up early the next morning, finding that Mrs. Marcum had been up even earlier, making biscuits, which we ate with more of the fine country ham, preserves, and local honey. After saying our goodbyes, Willie drove us away in his truck. I turned and waved until a bend in the dirt road put them out of sight. Settling back in my seat, I was very glad that we had come here. My new-world relatives, however distant, were fine people, and I would not have missed this for the world. I was saddened when I realized that I would not be able to share my experiences with my recently deceased wife, who had participated so often in the research into my family's history.

Willie drove through a meandering series of narrow roadways, up and down hills, along ridges, and down in small valleys opening onto flat lands before rising again. He seemed to know exactly where he was going. Occasionally through the trees, I could see distant cliffs, rising far over the valley, their vertical walls worn smooth by countless eons of wind and rain. Sometimes caves seemed to be visible high on the inaccessible cliff faces, but it may have been a trick of the shadows.

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

Once we stopped at a cabin so Willie could pass on a message from town to the occupants. It was a rude little place, with low ceilings and small rooms that could only be reached from the outside, with no internal access between rooms. It seemed as if the place were more of a barn than a home for the poor little family that lived there. Nearby was a small stream that Willie identified as Charit Creek. I knew that if the creek flooded, portions of the home would be underwater.

Eventually we departed, the children staring at us in silence until we were out of sight. I knew that our visit was probably the most exciting thing that had happened there in weeks. Gradually we were pulled higher until we seemed to be out of the valleys and onto a small plateau. A short distance away, suddenly visible, was a pair of twin arches, giant stone behemoths carved by uncountable years of water and wind.

Willie stopped beside them and we all stiffly climbed down, sore from sitting for so long, and also from constantly moving to retain our balance in the ever-shifting truck. We walked up to the arches, dwarfed by their size. Standing under the larger arch, I looked up, realizing that the inner roof was so far above me that I could not make out any details in the stone. The floor of the arch was shaded and sandy, and filled with large boulders, some as big as a room. I assumed that they had fallen from the arch ceiling in generations past.

I was content to walk under that arch, and a few minutes later to make my way through tangled shrubs to the smaller arch as well, before returning to the vast room under the larger arch. Holmes, however, was like a child, dashing back and forth, leaping like a goat from rock to rock, never betraying that he was in his late sixties. He found a narrow cave leading out of the base of the larger arch, disappeared into it, and soon reappeared in a completely different place, explaining that the passage had exited somewhere on the far side of the great rock. Then he was gone again, and when he returned a quarter of an hour later, he revealed that he had been to the top of the arch, climbing a ladder that had been built for that purpose by the locals who obviously used this place as an occasional picnic spot. Although I'm sure we could have spent longer there, we eventually returned to the truck and resumed our progress toward Rugby. We drove in silence for a while, until Holmes asked, "How close are we?"

"Not far now," said Willie.

"Then perhaps it is time to tell you why we have come here," Holmes replied. "I hope you don't mind having to listen to me reminisce, Willie."

"Not at all, Mr. Holmes," said Willie. "It is an honor, sir."

"Well, I don't know about that," said Holmes. "In any case . . . As I said yesterday, I was asked to stop by here years ago by my brother, Mycroft. I was traveling from New Orleans to New York in 1893, and I assure you that before I had received information from my brother I had never heard of the Rugby colony."

"Mycroft had sent a package to me in New Orleans, delivered by a fast steamship of the British Navy. It contained several sets of instructions for upcoming tasks he wished for me to carry out. None of those are relevant to this tale. But included in the packet was the request to stop in Rugby, as a personal favor to Mycroft. He wished for me to deliver a message."

"The message was from the Earl of Nash and his older son, William Sexton, to their son and younger brother, respectively, Thomas Sexton, asking him to please come home to England. Thomas was one of those men who had come out to Rugby to participate in Hughes's dream of a perfect society. In addition to the message, Mycroft had sent the history of the whole unhappy family, which I read before I arrived."

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

"It seems that the family had estates in Somerset, near Frome. In years past the family's wealth had drained away, leaving them with a title and a great run-down house, but not much else. William and Thomas's father, the Earl, had made a new fortune in textiles, and with his increased wealth, had refurbished the family estates to their original condition. In the eighteen-eighties, the family lived there, with the Earl making regular trips to London and other cities to keep track of his interests.

"The family consisted of the Earl, whose name was Joseph Sexton, his wife, and his two sons, William, the eldest, and Thomas. There were no other children living. The sons were close in age, and had always spent much time together, although they were vastly different in temperament. William was somewhat studious, while Thomas was wilder, preferring to spend his time roaming outdoors. As they grew older, Thomas seemed to tease and bait his older brother, sometimes excessively, although William took it all good-naturedly.

"By the mid-eighties, both boys were in their early twenties, and William was obviously being groomed by his father to assume the duties of running the business, as well as someday becoming the next Earl. Although Mycroft made it clear that younger Thomas always knew that there would be a place for him in managing the textile mills, he seemed to resent it, as well as the fact that simply because he was younger, he was not able to inherit the title or much of the estate.

"As the young men grew older, Thomas's anger at his long-suffering and patient older brother continued to grow. On many occasions, Thomas picked fights with William, seemingly for no reason at all. During one of these, Thomas worked himself into such a rage that he grabbed a nearby pair of scissors and stabbed William in the arm. The family was shocked, but William kept insisting that it was an accident, and nothing further came of the matter.

"Throughout this time, William continued to be shaped for his future position, learning both the business and his responsibilities as a future earl. By the late eighties, William became engaged to be married to the younger daughter of a minor nobleman from Surrey.

"Unknown to anyone else at the time, including the young lady, Thomas himself had been interested for a while in William's new fiancée, although there was never any sort of real contact between the two. However, William's announced engagement was enough to inflame Thomas's jealousy even more. While William continued to prepare for his future, Thomas brooded about the house, sometimes disappearing for days at a time before returning smelling of drink. His parents, who loved him greatly, did not know what to do, and could not understand his growing rage at what he felt was an unfair arrangement. In particular, his mother seemed to suffer more and more as Thomas became increasingly wild and angry.

"These matters had continued for a number of years, until one night, not long after the engagement was announced, William became violently ill. His parents feared for his life for several days before he eventually recovered. As he rested weakly in his bed, the doctor spoke to the Earl and his wife, informing them that he believed that William had been poisoned. This was later confirmed through a privately hired chemist. The doctor did not know what circumstances might have led to this poisoning, but he felt that it must have been intentional due to the substance used, arsenic. However, he agreed not to call the police, and to let the Earl handle the matter.

"The Earl thought for several days, watching Thomas's behavior throughout that time. It soon became obvious to him that Thomas knew something about the poison-

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

ing. Finally he could avoid it no longer, and the Earl asked Thomas if he could offer any information about the matter. To his surprise, Thomas readily confirmed that he had poisoned William, although he said it was not his intention to kill him. Rather, it was just to scare William, and that it had all been a brotherly joke. However, the longer Thomas talked, the more he worked himself into a rage, and the Earl was soon convinced that the poisoning had indeed been a murder attempt.

"When William was better, the Earl called in his wife and sons, and explained that he had given the matter a great deal of thought. It was with a heavy heart that he had decided that he had no choice but to send Thomas away. He could not have his own younger son arrested and prosecuted, but he also could not let the younger son try to kill the older.

"The family was shocked and dismayed, especially the boy's mother, who sobbed with grief. William himself argued to let Thomas stay. Thomas simply sat, stunned and feeling betrayed, in spite of the fact that he himself had tried to kill his own brother. When his father announced that he had arranged for Thomas to move to America, and to join the Rugby colony, Thomas simply stood, bowed, and left the room. He packed and moved out that night.

"It was several days, however, before Thomas was scheduled to depart. He seemed to be in perfect agreement with the plan, and was visited several times by both his father and William. The meetings seemed to be cordial, but strained. On the night before his departure, Thomas attended a dinner at the family home, where the participants were civil, if somewhat saddened and subdued by events. Thomas said goodbye to his father and weeping mother, and reluctantly shook hands with his brother before departing.

"The next morning, a pair of prostitutes presented themselves at the home of William's fiancée. They proceeded to relate a vile — and totally spurious — tale about their supposed long-standing relationship with William. One claimed to have married William the previous year in Penzance, while the other said she had proof that she had borne William a child. The women stated that unless they received one thousand pounds, they would relate their story to the press.

"Of course, no blackmail was paid. The fiancée's father contacted the Earl, who quickly showed that the rumor was an ugly lie. Further investigation, in the form of arresting the prostitutes and learning their story, revealed that they had been hired by Thomas several days before his departure, and coached specifically in whom to approach and what to say in order to ruin William's reputation.

"William was absolved of the lies, but it came out what his own brother had tried to do to him. William attempted to reconcile with his fiancée. However, the young woman was shocked and scandalized, nonetheless. Within days, the engagement was called off.

"At the same time the prostitutes were relating their fabricated story, Thomas was boarding a train to the coast, where he would catch a ship to America."

The trees had begun to thin as we listened to Holmes's story. The ground around us flattened into fields, many overgrown, but some with occasional early summer crops reaching toward the sunshine. I thought of the happy family with whom we had stayed the night before, and felt all the more the sadness of the Earl's family, and how it had been hurt by one young man's jealousy and anger.

"My brother, Mycroft, was a longtime friend of the Earl, and during this time he learned some of the Earl's difficulties," Holmes continued. "The next time the Earl was

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

in London, Mycroft made a point of inviting him to dinner, where the whole story came out.

"Thomas arrived in America, and proceeded to Rugby as planned. I suppose one might expect that a person of Thomas's nature would have done something else instead, possibly falling into hard times, and certainly not followed through on his father's plan to join a rural agricultural colony. But Thomas appeared to be willing to give his new future a chance. The distance between himself and England, and his family, appeared to calm him. He arrived at Rugby, and was soon a hard-working and respected member of the community.

"Not much is known specifically of Thomas over the next few years. He seems to have fit in well with his peers, been active in the community events and opportunities, and generally managed to make a new home here. In the meantime, the Earl's family was devastated. William was heartbroken, both at the loss of his future wife, as well as by the treacherous actions of his brother. He was a good man, and could not understand why his brother, whom he unconditionally loved so much, hated him so, for no comprehensible reason. Thomas's mother seemed to age overnight, and she became ever-more weaker. Her health had never been good during the best of times, and Thomas's actions and subsequent departure had accelerated her declining condition. The Earl was in a similar plight, as worry for both his wife and William wore him down as well.

"In the meantime, Thomas built a home in Rugby, married, and had a child. His new wife was the daughter of one of the other colonists, who had brought his family here in the early days. Finally, Thomas seemed to have found a place to be happy. However, by this time, the early nineties, the colony itself was somewhat in decline, and Thomas's luck was about to change. In late ninety-two, his wife took a sudden fever and died. He was alone after only a year of marriage, and forced to raise his very young child by himself. The community attempted to step in and help, but the death of his wife seems to have reawakened the old Thomas. He became bitter and withdrew from the community. His house fell into disrepair, and as time went on, it became obvious that his child suffered from some sort of long-term, debilitating illness. Thomas began to feel cursed, and he would often tell whomever would listen that it was the fault of his family, back in England. His rants soon made him so unpopular that the rest of the residents began to avoid him whenever possible.

"The Earl had managed, with Mycroft's help, to keep track of Thomas in the colony, and he was initially cheered that Thomas was living a successful life. When he became aware of the death of Thomas's wife, as well as the poor health of the grandchild that he had never seen, he resolved to do something to help his estranged son.

"He discussed the matter with Mycroft for some time, and it was finally decided to offer passage to Thomas and his child back to England, with the promise of forgiveness and a fresh start. Should Thomas not wish to leave his new life in America, the Earl was prepared to send him a small fortune in order to improve his circumstances. This was in the spring of 1893, and Mycroft explained to the Earl, in confidence of course, that I was not actually dead. In fact, I was working on something for Mycroft in the southeastern United States at that moment, and Mycroft would be happy to divert my path in the direction of Rugby if the Earl wished me to relay the message.

"The Earl graciously accepted the offer, and Mycroft then sent a message to me. He included a narrative of the family history with the packet he dispatched to me in New Orleans. And that is how I ended up in Rugby the first time.

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

"I do not recall exactly how I reached Rugby that day. It may have been by way of that town you mentioned yesterday, Willie. Rockwood, I believe you said. In any case, I did not approach from the direction we are traveling this morning. My route was much more genteel, arriving by rail in the small town, and then riding in a well-kept carriage down a tree-lined road, passing the occasional fine home.

"In those days, Rugby had somewhat passed its glory days, but it was still a show-place, with several hundred fine houses of varying architectural styles. I took a few minutes to walk around the streets, admiring this plucky British colony. I examined the library and its proud collection of over seven thousand volumes. I was quite amused to see several periodicals with your stories in them, Watson.

"Eventually I asked my way to Thomas Sexton's residence. Even without directions, I fancy that I could have identified it. It was much more rundown than the neighboring houses, with weeds growing in the yard, pickets missing from the fence, and peeling paint and bare patches on the house boards.

"I had knocked several times with no response before I finally heard the sound of movement deep within the house. The door flew open to reveal a man who appeared to be in his forties, although I knew that he was only in his early thirties. A stale sour smell rolled out of the house, and behind the man I could see that all the curtains and blinds had been drawn, leaving this house in a depressing midday darkness.

"I introduced myself, and asked if I was speaking to Thomas Sexton.

"'Yes,' he replied, 'and if it's about the bill for the medication, I'll tell you the same thing I told your employer. You'll get paid when I get the money, and if you do anything to withhold the medicines in the meantime, I'll see you are all held responsible for what happens!'

"I quickly explained that his assumption was mistaken, and that I was not there about payment for medication. Rather, I had been sent by his father, the Earl, to ask if he would not consider returning home. Failing that, I let him know that his father was prepared to offer him a substantial amount of money to ease his current conditions.

"He was silent for several moments, staring past me. Finally, he said softly, 'Does my brother still live?'

"'Yes,' I replied. 'He has never married, and spends his time alternately between helping with your father's affairs and doing good works.'

"'Then,' he said, taking a step back, 'You can tell them both to go to hell.' With that he shut the door. As I heard him turn to walk away, his muffled voice came through the door. 'And you, too!'

"I knocked several times more on the door, and walked around the house, pounding on the back door as well, but there was never any answer. I went back several times that same afternoon and evening, again with no response. I spoke to several people in town, and they confirmed that Thomas's condition was becoming somewhat strained, and that his baby son appeared to be suffering from some sort of wasting illness. I wrote a letter to Thomas, explaining again his father's offer and urging him to accept it. I then took some of the money I had with me and spoke to the chemist, paying the outstanding debt for the child's medicines, as well as arranging the purchase of additional medication for several months into the future. I also let him know the address in England of Thomas's father, and told him that all debts would be taken care of if only the Earl were notified.

"There was nothing else that I could do. My schedule required that I return to New York as soon as possible, and I could not force Thomas Sexton to accept his father's

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

charity. I continued on the next day, pursuing Mycroft's errands. At a later date, I was able to wire Mycroft my singular lack of success during the visit to Rugby.

"The next year, some months after my 'resurrection' and return to England, I happened to call on my brother at the Diogenes Club, only to find that he already had a visitor in the Stranger's Room, the only place in the entire club where conversation can occur. The visitor was William Sexton, who was now the Earl of Nash following the death of his father a month or so before. Mycroft introduced me to the Earl as the man who had visited his brother in 1893. William was a pale, gray fellow, quite thin in a stooped, scholarly way. When he learned who I was, his face lit up with sudden color, and he grasped my hand, asking for every detail I could remember about his brother, Thomas.

"It saddened me to have to relate the circumstances in which I had found his brother, as well as the reception that I had received when relaying the Earl's offer. I considered withholding part of the story, but I was uncertain how much had already been told to him by Mycroft, and so I told him everything. He did not seem surprised, and the initial joy at meeting me faded into the persistent chronic sadness that hovered about the man.

"Later, after William had departed, Mycroft told me that William and Thomas's parents had died not long after I had visited Thomas in Rugby. Mycroft had not doubted that the sadness resulting Thomas's final rejection of them had led indirectly to their deaths. Over the next several years, after that meeting in the Stranger's Room, I heard of William, the current Earl, as he continued to perform the good charitable works that he had begun as a young man. He never married.

"I saw him again, one last time, not long after the end of the War. I was traveling near Frome, and my name appeared in the newspaper, against my express wishes, in connection with a trifling matter there. The next day, I received a small note at the inn where I was staying, from William. He stated that he had seen my name in the paper, and asked me to visit him."

By this time, we had arrived in Rugby. It had been over forty years since the optimistic little community had been founded. After the death of the founder in the mid-nineties, a slow malaise and decline had obviously settled on the area. Now, there were only a few dozen standing houses. There was no inn, and no one building that seemed to serve as a center of the community. Holmes paused in his story for a moment, and we all took a few moments to look around. None of the residents seemed to be outside, and we felt the illusion that we had the place to ourselves. Holmes looked into the distance, toward a church steeple rising above trees in the early afternoon haze. "Drive that way," he said.

We rode in silence for a few minutes, before Holmes resumed speaking. "At my last meeting with William, he informed me that he was dying. His life, he felt, had been a good one, but it had been full of regret at the pain caused by the separation from his brother, whom he loved but could not understand. He did not know why Thomas had hated him so, and he knew that now he never would know, at least not in this world. In spite of his brother's rejection, William had continued to keep track of Thomas since that day we spoke at the Diogenes Club in 1894. He told me some of what had happened since, and that Thomas had remained in Rugby. It was William's wish that I would pass on a message to his brother, should I ever find myself in this part of the world again.

"I let him know that it was highly unlikely I would ever be returning to Rugby. He

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

said he understood that, but just in case, he wished me to promise him that I would relay the message. 'Promise me, Mr. Holmes,' he whispered, a man wasted by illness, lying alone in a large bed on bright, sunlit sheets. 'I don't know whom else that I could ask.' He fumbled on the bedside table and gave me an object, folding my fingers around it with his own. 'Take that to him. So he will know what you say is true.'

"I promised him. I told him that if it were ever possible I would relay the message, never believing that I would ever be back here to do so."

Willie pulled the truck to a stop beside the old church. Opening the door and dropping to the ground, Holmes said, "When I knew that we were coming to North Carolina, I brought the object with me, thinking we might have an opportunity to travel here as well."

Willie and I were standing on the ground beside him, as he turned to walk away. For one shocked instant, I thought I might understand. What if Thomas had redeemed himself, and found some worth in his life? What if he was the minister at this little church? What if he had made up for the pain he had caused for his family, doing good works in this small forgotten village?

I began to see that my hope was wrong when Holmes made no effort to enter the church. Instead, he walked along the side of the building, and I began to feel a little cold inside, in spite of the sunshine.

"William had kept track of Thomas," Holmes said, over his shoulder as we followed. "He sent money here, but there was never any acknowledgment. None of the local creditors ever sent any bills to London, as I had instructed them to do during my original visit."

We had reached the back of the church, and Holmes led us through a small iron gate into a fenced, poorly tended cemetery. The decline of the community was painfully obvious when observing the leaning, overgrown tombstones and shabbily painted church. Holmes began to move systematically among the graves, stepping respectfully over them when necessary, intently reading the carvings on the markers. Some took longer to decipher than others. Finally, on the far side near the rear fence, in a somewhat sunken area below a ragged pine tree, he stopped in front of three stones. "Here," he said softly.

Although I did not want to go over there, I joined him. Willie was silent at my side. We stood on either side of Holmes, staring down at the three lonely graves and their cheap stones. That area of the cemetery was in a low spot, and the rainwater runoff from the church and the rest of the cemetery had carved an eroded path across these graves. There was no grass here, simply exposed reddish earth, pebbled with countless bits of protruding gravel and mica.

The gravestone on the left was smaller and somewhat older, reading simply, "Jane Powell Sexton 1870-1892." In the center was a smaller stone, topped by a worn and moss-encrusted carving of a lamb. On it were the words "Joseph William Sexton, b.1892 d.1894 Beloved Son." To the right, a slightly larger stone read "Thomas Sexton, b.1863, d.1896 Far From Home."

Holmes fished in his pocket and produced a heavy gold ring, bearing some sort of family crest. He wiped it on his waistcoat, and turned it in the sun as he examined the results. Apparently satisfied that it was clean, he knelt down and pushed the ring into the loose soil of Thomas's ill-kept grave. Then he rose and stood silently for some minutes, his arms hanging and his hands folded together while he looked at the stone. Overhead, a mockingbird sang with uncontrolled joy in the June sunshine.

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

"Your brother sent you a message, Thomas," Holmes finally said, speaking softly but clearly. "He loves you. He always did." After another minute, he added, "And he forgives you."

Holmes turned and walked away. Willie soon followed, but it was several minutes before I joined them. We climbed in the truck and drove away.

\* EDITOR'S NOTE: The exact details of Holmes and Watson's journey through Johnson City, Tennessee and Linville, North Carolina can be found in "Sherlock Holmes and the Brown Mountain Lights", edited by James McKay Morton. The narrative was originally published *Mountain Living* magazine in 1977-78, and subsequently on the internet in a slightly revised form at [www.carolina.cc/sherlock.html](http://www.carolina.cc/sherlock.html). It was this narrative that provided additional proof of Holmes and Watson's travels in the southeastern United States during the lifetimes of my grandparents.

# THE ADVENTURE OF THE MADMAN'S CEREMONY

DAVID MARCUM

## Holmes and Watson in Tennessee (Part II)

“We really are quite unaware of so much that happens around us,” stated Mr. Sherlock Holmes, as we sat in a lurching truck moving through the surrounding forest. We had been discussing the unseen events that were occurring in the all-encompassing woods during every minute, as animals, insects, water creatures, and microscopic beasts struggled, lived and died in their own epic dramas that would never be known or recorded by man.

Although I understood that Holmes’s statement referred to the conversation we were having then, his words could well have applied to the small town we would soon visit. There, the residents were completely unaware of the sinister events threatening to take place within days, or that evil itself was about to be revealed in their midst.

As I have related elsewhere, Holmes and I traveled to the United States in May and June of 1921\*. While waiting for events to conclude during our initial investigation in Linville, North Carolina, Holmes and I spent nearly two weeks traveling in eastern Tennessee. It was during the first part of this visit that I was able to become acquainted with a distant relative, Rebecca Watson Marcum, and her family, living in one of the northern Tennessee border counties. After meeting with my distant American cousins, Holmes and I had been taken through the nearly untouched wilderness by Rebecca’s son, Willie, to a wayside train station in the small town of Rockwood, Tennessee. Along the way, we had made a short stop in Rugby so that Holmes could fulfill an old promise.

Rugby was started in the eighteen-eighties as a social experiment, where younger sons of the British upper classes could come and work and live in an agrarian community while retaining the civilization and culture of their forebears in England. The effort was failing by the mid-eighteen-nineties, and at the time we passed through, only a few houses were left of the once-thriving colony.

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

The day was turning toward a pleasant afternoon as we passed through Harriman, having wandered through more of the same rugged and dramatic landscape that we had traversed that morning. Willie explained that Harriman had originally been founded as a temperance community. It was another attempt at a wilderness Utopia, much like Rugby, where we had been visiting just a few hours before. The original inhabitants of Harriman had soon failed in their purpose, but the town remained, apparently surviving due to its proximity to the coal trains that regularly passed through.

Willie indicated that it might interest us to visit in Harriman for a day, after having seen Rugby, but I could tell that Holmes was ready to return to Knoxville. Soon we reached the train station in nearby Rockwood.

We stopped on the main road by the train station, seeing more cars than we had the previous day in Oneida, where we had arrived to meet Willie and his family. The town was laid out alongside the railroad tracks, which traversed from east to west at the base of a great mountain that loomed over the northern horizon. At the top were numerous rocky crags, hardly covered by the scrub trees that managed to root there. I was certain that the view from those heights would be wonderful, but at my age, I would never think of attempting the climb. Unless there was an unseen, easier way to the top, I doubt if many of the residents ever did.

We were in time to catch the last train of the day back to Knoxville. I tried to give Willie money in order to stay at some local lodgings for the night, as I felt that it was too late for him to return through the woods to his parents' home. He did agree that he would stay in town, but he refused to take any of the money both Holmes and I urged upon him. Finally, we said our goodbyes as the train seemed ready for imminent departure.

"A fine young man," said Holmes as we found our seats in the half-filled carriage. "You can be proud of your relations in the colonies, doctor." I agreed, and we did not speak again for several hours, as we each settled in for the long journey and prepared to read the newspapers purchased before boarding the train.

We reached Knoxville after dark, and again stayed at the small hotel near the river, as we had done several nights earlier. After finding something to eat, I returned to my room, while Holmes decided to explore the small city by night. After urging him to be careful, we separated. I went to bed early, somewhat sore from the past two days of riding in a truck over very uneven terrain.

A knock on my door the next morning revealed Holmes, as neat as ever, and apparently completely unscathed by his explorations of the previous evening. "Good morning, Watson," he cried. "Ready for breakfast?"

"An old military man never turns down the chance for a meal," I replied. "A soldier never knows when the next one might be."

"Oh, I venture to say that we shall safely remain in civilized territory for a day or so," he replied.

After breakfast, we strolled up the street for several blocks, and down a side street toward what sounded like a great deal of activity. Rounding a corner, we saw the city's market house, doing only moderate business on this mid-week morning. Various vendors were set up throughout the site, dealing in vegetables, poultry and meat, and other farm products.

"Not quite Covent Garden Market, is it?" I asked with a smile.

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

"Indeed," replied Holmes, before stepping away for a moment to speak with a heavy-set and jolly man selling honey. While he and Holmes had a short and esoteric discussion of joys and sorrows of keeping an apiary, I explored the adjacent stalls. I discovered a little old woman selling a confection called a fried pie. It appeared to be some sort of bread-like crust, folded over a mashed fruit filling. The edges were pressed closed, and the entire thing was fried in oil and then covered with a sprinkling of sugar. In spite of the fact that I had just eaten breakfast, I purchased one of the apple pies. While the woman watched, I devoured it in three bites. I smiled my pleasure, and she simply nodded.

"You have pie filling on your mouth," said Holmes, joining me.

Wiping my lips with my handkerchief, I urged him to try one of the pies, as well. He selected a peach pie, which I had not noticed. As he finished his pie and announced that it was delicious, I purchased another peach pie for myself.

"For later," I said. Then I noticed that Holmes had made a purchase as well.

"For comparative purposes?" I asked, nodding toward the small bottle of honey that he held.

"I am curious," he replied, "about the taste of honey gathered from American clover by American bees. As you know," he continued, as we walked out of the market, "the flavor of honey is affected by the flowers from which the bees gather nectar. You may also recall the matter several years ago when I discovered that Jonas Finley had been poisoned with honey made by bees that collected solely from poisonous plants."

As we walked, Holmes asked if I had any objections to remaining in the local area for a few days. "We are not due back in Linville for a while, and I have some research that I can do here, if it suits you."

"By all means," I answered. "I will visit the local college again, and perhaps see some of the other sites in and around the area."

For several days I did just that. Holmes spent his days at the University of Tennessee, located less than a mile west of Knoxville, while I looked at some of the downtown buildings. On one afternoon, I hired an automobile and traveled west out of town, along an excellently engineered rural road, admiring the well-tended farms and occasional larger houses. On the second afternoon I stopped at a fine old brick house, ten or eleven miles from town, with the intention of asking for some water. I ended up visiting for several hours with the gracious hosts, learning some of the more interesting details of Knoxville's history, as well as that of the house where I was visiting. It was reputedly haunted by the ghost of a man killed in the Civil War. I saw no signs of him, however, and when I mentioned it to Holmes that night, he simply scoffed.

On the morning of the fourteenth of June, a Tuesday as I recall, Holmes asked if I had any objections to moving our base of operations slightly south. "None at all," I replied, setting my coffee cup down on the breakfast table. "May I ask why?"

"Just a little more research," he replied. "I have spent the past several days examining some of the American newspapers for the last few years. The University library has an excellent selection, and my researches were as easily carried out here in this picturesque little town as they would have been elsewhere."

"Yesterday I received a message, forwarded from England, from an old acquaintance, Mrs. Mary Thaw, widow of the famed Pittsburgh railroad mogul and philanthropist."

"The wife of William Thaw?" I asked. "Wait," I said. "Surely she is not the mother of the infamous Harry K. Thaw?"

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

"One and the same," Holmes replied. "You know of the case?"

"I followed the news reports of the murder and subsequent trial with some interest. It was in 1906, I believe. You were living in Sussex by then. Isn't Thaw still in a hospital for the insane?"

"Yes, for at least the past five years."

"Don't tell me that you know Mrs. Thaw due to some sort of involvement in the murder of Stanford White?"

"Thankfully, I had no involvement in that seamy affair," Holmes said.

I recalled the details of the case quite clearly, in spite of the fact that they had taken place a number of years before. Mrs. Thaw's son, Harry K. Thaw, had grown up a troubled and sometimes violent young man. In his early thirties, he had become increasingly unstable, and he irrationally blamed more and more of his problems on a young architect, Stanford White. His paranoia increased, as did his anger toward White, although as I understood it at the time, White was probably innocent of any questionable actions toward Thaw. At some point in the early 1900's, Thaw fell in love with a chorus girl named Evelyn Nesbit, who had been romanced in the past by White.

Thaw began to pay frequent visits to the girl, spending a great deal of money on her, and taking her to Europe on several occasions. Over several years he begged her repeatedly to marry him, but she always refused. Eventually, however, he overcame her resistance and they were wed. In part, this occurred because Harry Thaw's mother begged Evelyn to marry her son, as she hoped it would be some sort of stabilizing influence on him.

Harry Thaw continued to show the same instability that he had displayed his whole life. After marriage, he appeared to lose interest in Evelyn, often traveling for long periods without her. Finally, in early 1906, Harry and Evelyn went together to Europe. On their return to New York, they happened to see Stanford White at a restaurant. This seemed to reawaken Harry's jealousy. Harry learned that White would be attending a show that evening, a performance that the Thaws were already planning to see. That night, Harry wore a heavy black overcoat to the theatre, and refused to take it off, in spite of the evening's heat.

He wandered erratically through the audience during the performance, approaching White several times before veering off. Eventually, at the end of the show, he approached White and shot him three times in the face. White was killed instantly.

The crowd had initially believed the entire incident to be a joke, or part of the show. Harry Thaw walked through the crowd with the gun held high above him, collected Evelyn, and departed. Soon Thaw was arrested. His first trial ended in a jury deadlock. Mrs. Thaw, Harry's mother, urged Evelyn to testify at the second trial that Stanford White had abused her, and that Harry had killed White in an effort to protect her. Evelyn was promised a great deal of money and a divorce from Harry if she so testified. Evelyn did so, and Harry was found not guilty by reason of insanity. He was placed in a mental hospital for the criminally insane, where he resided for several years before his release. In the meantime, Evelyn was granted her divorce.

I recalled that the events of the White murder had been heavily reported in the British press at the time. Seamy murders amongst the American rich were always of great interest to the masses, on both sides of the Atlantic. The later details of Thaw's life were less clear, but I thought I recalled one further fact.

"Wasn't Thaw arrested a year or so after his release for some other violent act?" I asked.

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

"Yes," replied Holmes. "He was convicted of assaulting and horsewhipping a teen-aged boy. He was again judged insane and returned to an asylum, as you mentioned, where he currently resides."

"Surely Mrs. Thaw does not want you to look into the matter of her son's current conviction?" I asked.

"Luckily, no," said Holmes, "and I would not do so if she did ask. I have no interest in becoming involved in the lifelong madness of Harry K. Thaw. People will be discussing him for years, and I do not wish to have my name associated with him."

"Mrs. Thaw has something much more sedate in mind for me. It seems that she has pledged a large amount of money to a local college near here, in order that they might construct a new building. However, some whispers of possible corruption at the institution have reached her ears in Pennsylvania, and after learning that I was nearby, she asked if I would discreetly look into the matter."

"How did she know that we were here?" I asked.

"It seems that we were observed by someone a few days ago when we were in Blowing Rock, at the Green Park Inn. This person, a crony of Mrs. Thaw's, recognized us, and happened to mention that we were in North Carolina. Mrs. Thaw, using those speedy and efficient resources available to the very rich, verified the fact by cabling England. She determined that a message sent there could be forwarded to us here in America. She then sent a wire, which followed until it found us. I sent a return message, informing her that we were indeed in the United States, although we had now moved from North Carolina to Knoxville, Tennessee. She replied that it was very fortunate that we were here, as the college she wishes me to investigate is located only fifteen or twenty miles south of where we are seated now."

"How could a small college in this area have attracted the charity of a rich Pennsylvania family?" I asked.

"According to Mrs. Thaw," Holmes said, "one of the former presidents of the school approached Mr. Thaw in the 1860's. At that time, the school had been closed due to the Civil War, and the president was trying to raise funds to reopen it. Thaw sent a check for \$1,000, which was used to buy the land where the current college is located. Thaw became very interested in helping the school, and gave a number of donations over the years, until his death in 1889. After that, his widow has continued to contribute, most recently giving a substantial amount of money to construct the large building on campus as a tribute to her late husband."

Pushing back from the table, I said, "That sounds like a pleasant way to spend a few days. Do you wish to leave this morning?"

Holmes was indeed ready to depart. Within a few minutes, we had packed and checked out, and were on the local train headed south for the short journey.

"How did you initially come to know Mrs. Thaw," I asked, looking nervously down at the river as the train crossed over the narrow trestle bridge from the city side on the north bank to the rugged bluff on the south side.

"In 1913, when I was traveling in the United States under the name Altamont, I spent some time in various cities, cementing my reputation as an Irish radical. Starting in Chicago, I traveled through numerous towns, including Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. While there, I happened to come across a plot to sabotage some of the mining facilities and related railway connections. These happened to be owned by the Thaw family. I could not warn anyone as Altamont without taking the chance that my disguise would

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

be penetrated. In the end, I slipped into the Thaw home, where I revealed my true identity to Mrs. Thaw. I can tell you that I had a few tense moments as that feisty woman held me at gunpoint while I urgently tried to explain why I was there.

"Once she understood what I was telling her, and more importantly, believed me, she wasted no time. She set her own forces in motion, quickly ending the plot, and all without ever revealing my own involvement. Over the years, we have corresponded sporadically, but she has never asked me to help her professionally until now. Thankfully, she did not seek to involve me in any of her son's defenses. I would have refused, and her goodwill toward me would have evaporated."

The train had picked up speed, and the cars settled down to a steady rocking as we left the points and junctions of the city behind us. The morning was beautiful, somewhat windy, but with skies as blue as I had ever seen them. It seemed no time at all that we were slowing. I expected to reach the station momentarily, but our fellow passengers showed no signs of preparing to disembark. I soon realized that the train had slowed to navigate a complicated series of parallel and intersecting tracks. In the distance I could see some of these running toward a large factory made of brick, belching smoke into the air from its tall stacks.

"What is that?" I wondered.

"I have no idea," replied Holmes. "I really do not know anything about this town we are visiting, although it has a pleasant enough name: Maryville."

The town, with its inclusion of my dear deceased wife Mary's name in it, saddened me for just a moment. Although Mary, my second wife, had been gone since 1893, I still missed her. My pain was increased by the recent passing of my third wife earlier in the current year. This entire trip to America had been partially due to Holmes's efforts to distract me in order to help me move past my mourning.

Eventually we traversed the crazed pattern of tracks and pulled into a small station. It was a fairly new building, set between two lines of rails, with platforms constructed all around the building to provide access to the trains on either side. On one side of the building were several warehouses, surrounded by horse-drawn wagons, automobiles, and trucks.

As our group disembarked, I noticed an equal number of people on the opposite platform, apparently waiting to depart on the return train to Knoxville. Everyone on our train had gotten off at the station, and I watched as it left, the empty carriages rocking as they were pulled away.

"This would seem to be the last stop on the line," I deduced. As Holmes nodded, a young energetic man stepped up to us.

"Right you are," he said. "The engine goes right up the line there to a turntable, where it will be reversed, re-attached to the cars, and returned to Knoxville." He stuck out his hand to me, shaking vigorously before moving on to Holmes. "Ray Rathbone," he said. "I'm pleased to meet you." He stepped back and looked at us. "You sound like you're from England," he said. We confirmed it, stating our names. He appeared to have no recognition of us, replying, "If you need anything here in town, I'm your man. I drive a taxicab," he said, jerking his thumb over his shoulder at one of the automobiles parked beside the station, "and I'd be happy to take you wherever you want to go."

We stepped to the side as a group of passengers moved past us to the stairs down from the platform. They walked together in a strange shuffling manner, their eyes all downcast. Holmes appeared to study them for a moment as they descended from the

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

platform and walked away, and then he looked at Rathbone for a moment before stating, "We are going to be in town for a few days, while I do some research at Maryville College. Are we close? Can you recommend somewhere to stay near the college?"

Rathbone nodded. He was a stocky man, about twenty years of age. He was dressed in a worn white shirt and work pants, worn and faded as well, but clean. His high hair-line was damp in the morning heat, and he pulled out a handkerchief, running it across his brow, carefully avoiding the glasses with small, round, rimless lenses perched upon his nose.

"It's an easy walk from here to the college," he said. "Right up that hill, in fact. Usually it's only the students in the spring and fall, with their big trunks, that need any help getting there. As for a place to stay, well . . ." he said, and then faded into thought for a moment. "I know just the place," he exclaimed. Replacing the handkerchief in his pocket, he said, "I'll be happy to drive you there. It's about a mile past the college. I was just speaking to the woman who owns it this morning, and she said that she was thinking of renting out the little outbuilding behind her house. I'm sure she won't mind letting you use it for a few days. Right this way, gentlemen!"

We were led to an old Model T Ford, well on in years, but clean and excellently maintained. Rathbone stowed our few bags and held the doors as we entered. Within moments, we were bouncing across the tracks by the station and turning left onto the dirt street.

"You were right about this being the end of the rail line," Rathbone said. "We've only had an L&N spur from Knoxville to here for a few years. It's already changing things, though. The town is growing like crazy. Just two years ago, we got our first library, and an airplane even landed on a farm near here! We've started changing some of the street names to sound more like a city, and we even have a five-story building, which is more than you can say for most of the towns around here. Why, last year, our population grew to over thirty-seven hundred people."

As the vehicle bounced through several water-filled holes in the dirt street, Rathbone twisted the steering wheel from left to right, maneuvering his way out of town. "We just got a second fire truck," he said proudly. "In fact, Mayor Cox has even started talking about some sort of permanent road being built to Knoxville. I think it's a good idea, but a lot of people think it's a mistake. They say that ever since the railroad arrived here, we've started to grow too fast, and the whole nature of the area has changed."

On the left, fields stretched for a distance before revealing small residential neighborhoods in the distance. A group of buildings was prominent on our right as we motored past.

"There it is," said Rathbone, pointing to the buildings. Holmes, in the front seat, leaned his head, while I shifted in the rear seat to look out the right window. Almost immediately, we saw a tall white tower, topped with a flagpole flying the American flag. The tower was twenty or thirty feet tall, and rested centrally on a three-story red brick building. The bottom of the building was not visible, as our view was blocked by trees and bushes. On either side of the building were several wooden frame buildings, as well as a few brick structures of varying sizes. "That's Anderson Hall," said Rathbone. "That's the main building at the college. Those wooden buildings are dormitories for the students. There's a gymnasium, and a library, and some other buildings as well. In a minute you can see part of the college farm."

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

The road continued to climb slightly as we headed east, and in a moment we topped a low rise. In the distance, fifteen or twenty miles away, we could see the Smoky Mountains, as this part of the Appalachian range was named. The morning sun was over them, so they simply appeared to be one long, flowing, blue shape, where individual peaks seemed to blend together. In front of us, and quite a number of miles away, stood a mountain that looked to have three distinct and equal summits, sitting side by side. Rathbone noticed where I was looking and said, "Those are called 'The Three Sisters.' They're actually three separate mountains, well separated from each other, but the way they are lined up from this view, it appears that they are one mountain. And that," he said, gesturing to the right, "is the College Dairy Farm. The male students work there to earn money. Best milk and butter around."

"Male students?" Holmes said. "So the college is co-educational."

"That's right. The women work in the sewing shop. It just opened last year." He braked the car as we started down a shallowly-sloped hill.

"We're almost there now."

He negotiated a narrow one-lane bridge across a small stream that was joined on the south by a wide mere, filled with cattails and bobbing dragonflies. The bridge itself was about fifty feet in length. Holmes saw me notice it and smiled.

"It is rather like the bridge where Mrs. Gibson killed herself, is it not?"

"Indeed," I replied, recalling those events from so many years earlier.

Rathbone applied more power to the engine of his automobile, and we started up the slight hill on the other side of the stream. After another few hundred feet, we rounded a corner and saw a white two-story house, set back fifty feet or so from the road. Around it stretched several fields containing various crops, including young corn plants already standing a foot or so high. The fields extended behind the house for several hundred feet before joining a stand of trees that appeared to rise out of a lowland.

Parking the automobile in the drive, Rathbone opened our doors and led us onto the porch of the house. Before he could knock, the screened door was pushed open and a small woman stepped out with a welcoming smile. Rathbone introduced us, explaining that Holmes and I were from England, "to do some important research," he added mysteriously, and asked if the rooms that she had mentioned to him earlier in the day were available.

The woman, Mrs. Jones, stated that the rooms were available, and that they were located in the small building immediately behind her house and next to the barn. "If that's acceptable," she added. We readily agreed, and went with her to inspect the rooms.

I should add at this point that the woman's name was not actually Mrs. Jones. However, after the subsequent events that took place in Maryville, our temporary landlady recognized who we were, and she asked me to keep her name out of any future narrative that I might record of the matter. Honoring her wishes, I have changed her name to Jones. However, I must state that during the few days we stayed on her property, she was a most gracious hostess, and that we were fortunate to meet her.

About one hundred feet behind her house stood a large barn, with a small white-washed cottage located to its right. The farm smell was strong here, both from the tilled soil of the nearby fields and from the livestock. However, it was pleasant and clean, and Holmes seemed happy that he was within walking distance of the college.

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

Mrs. Jones pointed out that her fields and those of the college farm joined one another, and Holmes would be able to walk to the school either by the main road, or on the trails that crossed the properties.

Arrangements were made with Mrs. Jones regarding the short rental of the cottage. No meals were included, although she would supply us with linens. We settled our debt with Rathbone and retrieved our things from his cab. Holmes stopped Rathbone before he could climb back into his automobile. "Are you aware of any distant relatives you might have in England?" he asked.

"Possibly," Rathbone said. "How come?"

"Simply curiosity," Holmes replied. "Several days ago, Watson and I stayed with some of *his* distant relations, and this morning after hearing your name, I recalled that I am somewhat distantly related myself to the Rathbone family\*. I did not know if you might have some information relating to your family history."

"As a matter of fact, I do," replied Rathbone. "Or at least, my sister does. I'll speak to her tonight, and let you know what I find out. You'll be here a few days, you say?"

"Yes," said Holmes. "I look forward to seeing you again."

As we unpacked our few belongings, I asked Holmes his plans. "I will go over to the college this afternoon, in the guise of a researcher. Actually, meeting Rathbone was fortuitous. I will use our possible family connection as a reason to examine local genealogy records, while also checking to see if anything appears to substantiate Mrs. Thaw's suspicions of possible corruption at the school. And what are your plans, Watson?"

I pointed to a small table beneath the rear window, facing a southern view across the fields filled with verdant growth. Some of the distant mountains could be seen over the tops of the trees rising from the lowland. "I will sit there for a while, catching up on my journals. Then perhaps a walk."

"Excellent," said Holmes. "Then we shall meet tonight for dinner."

And with that, he turned and left.

I stood for a moment before settling at the table. I spent a few minutes describing the events of the last few days within my journal. Soon, however, my memory returned to the small bridge we had recently crossed in order to reach this house. The bridge was very similar to the one where Mrs. Neil Gibson had died, back in early October 1900. The initial antagonism between Holmes and Gibson had dissolved following Holmes's brilliant solution of the case, and a warm friendship had developed between the two. Holmes and I admired the humanitarian impulses shown by Gibson after his marriage to his second wife. It had been several years since I had visited Gibson's estate, but as I sat at the small table, all the details of those days investigating the mystery of Thor Bridge came flooding back to me.

Recently I had published an account of "The Mazarin Stone" in *The Strand* magazine, and I resolved that the next manuscript to be submitted would be the account of Mrs. Gibson's death. I had no doubt that the public would be gratified to learn of the strange events on that peaceful country bridge.

I wrote for an hour or so, I suppose, before I recalled that Holmes and I had never eaten lunch. Wishing that Rathbone and his cab had not departed, I left and began to walk back toward town to begin my explorations with a midday meal.

We arrived in Maryville on a Tuesday. I spent the rest of the week leisurely exploring the town, while Holmes used his days at the college. On occasion he visited with several local civic leaders, bankers, and such, couching his relevant questions

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

within innocent ones. Once he visited the new town library, but found it decidedly lacking in the materials he required. On Wednesday afternoon, I ended my day's rambles at the college library, a small, attractive brick building with a large stained-glass window.

Holmes was finishing up his research, and I spoke for a few minutes with the college minister, Reverend Stevenson. He pointed out a few of the campus buildings, including the site where initial construction had begun on Mrs. Thaw's donated building, which would be the largest on the college campus. Some of the walls were beginning to rise from the foundations, surrounded by scaffolding. As Holmes prepared to leave, Stevenson invited us to tea on Friday afternoon, at a small home that had been built in the woods adjacent to the college dairy farm.

Holmes and I walked by the half-completed building, making our way down the trail that passed through the college farm, going towards Mrs. Jones's house. I started to take the wrong trail before Holmes corrected me. "I have already explored this area," he said, pointing toward the direction I had initially chosen. "That trail goes to a spring house, not far from the house where we are taking tea on Friday." He gestured to the numerous saplings growing within the fields around us.

"The college farm has only been in existence for two or three years, and it is already something of a failure," he said. "There are less than two dozen young men enrolled here who are involved in agricultural studies. There is talk at the college that within a year or so, the program will be discontinued, and this entire area will probably be allowed to return to woodland."

My own explorations had been pleasant, but rather without purpose. I spent several hours the first day walking along the main street, placed along a ridge-top, circled on three sides by the wide creek that seemed to be the initial reason for the town's location. I strolled through the nearby residential neighborhoods, before moving on to the college grounds, where I examined more closely the large, partially finished building being funded by Mrs. Thaw. I walked around the site, and then spoke for a moment with the construction supervisor, asking him about some strange openings in the ground next to the building's proposed foundation.

"Oh, it's one of them sinkholes, doctor," he said. "It happens a lot around here. There's limestone rock under this whole part of the county, and wherever you find limestone you'll find sinkholes." He gestured toward the low areas of the college farm behind us. "Down there you'll find lots of rocks sticking out of the ground, and some springs as well. There are numerous springs all along the bottom of the ridge where Main Street is built. This whole area is probably riddled with caves."

During my time walking about the town, I had noticed a number of small groups of people walking together, all displaying the same downcast mien that I had observed from the group at the train station the day we arrived. Talking with Rathbone one afternoon, I asked him if he knew anything about these people.

"Not really, doc," he said. "They've been showing up for a week or so. They get off the train and head out of town. I heard they're camping somewhere north of here. I suppose if they get to be any trouble they'll be asked to leave, but so far they're laying low."

On Thursday night, Mrs. Jones invited us to eat with her and her sons, a quiet group of young men who listened politely to our conversation with their mother before solemnly turning their attention to the food.

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

Later that evening, as Holmes and I strolled through the empty main street, I asked him if he was having any luck at finding indications of corruption.

"None, Watson. I suspect that Mrs. Thaw has simply become suspicious for no reason. Perhaps it is a function of her age. She is quite elderly now, you know." We stopped by an old brick church building, looking at the streetlights from the nearby main thoroughfare as they reflected off the building's windows. The structure was very much like other churches I had seen in England, and could have been picked up from any number of small British villages and placed here. The wind sighed through the tall trees growing within the adjacent cemetery.

"All has not been wasted, however," Holmes continued. "Rathbone stopped by yesterday with some of his sister's family papers. The connection between his family and mine is there, although somewhat convoluted. He did not seem to be as impressed with his English ties, however, as with those to a German family, which he can trace back much further."

Friday evening was spent at the small house on the college farm, inhabited by Reverend Stevenson and his wife. It was a pleasant brick building, with a high sloping roof, and much larger inside than it had seemed from without. I had an enjoyable time, and even Holmes appeared to be relaxed and in a good mood. The following day, I accepted an invitation from Stevenson to take a drive around the area, in order to see some of the more distant sites that I had missed during my strolls in town. Holmes chose to continue his research.

Stevenson showed me the locations of some of the original forts, or stations as they were called, that had been built by the first settlers to the area. Originally, the Cherokee had used this area, and in fact the great north-south Indian Warpath, stretching all the way from the northeastern United States to the far south, had passed through Maryville.

"A number of Indian attacks occurred at these forts. None matched the massacre of the British soldiers, however, in the mid-1700's."

Stevenson went on to explain that twenty or so miles south was an abandoned fort, Fort Loudoun, constructed well before the American Revolution, and manned for several years by British troops. The Cherokee Indians had held it under siege for a number of months before allowing the inhabitants to depart in safety, as long as they promised to return to England.

The troops, along with their families, had departed from the fort and traveled several miles before the Indians broke the agreement and massacred the entire British contingent. I was surprised to learn of this event, as I had always been under the impression that the American settlers' problems with Indians had taken place in the northeast, or later out west. I had grown up reading the works of Cooper, and later the stories of cowboys and Indians. When I had visited my relatives northwest of here several days earlier, the only mention of Indians had been the implication that they were ancient inhabitants, long gone by the arrival of the settlers.

Later in the afternoon, we motored north in his automobile, with the intention of seeing some of the marble quarries that lay along the Tennessee River. These had supplied some of the stone for several of the national buildings in Washington, D.C.. Off to the right I could see the large factory that I had observed on the day we arrived in town.

"That's the Aluminum Company," Stevenson said, pronouncing *aluminium* in the

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

American fashion. "That is the largest factory building in the world. They produced their first aluminum last year." He explained that after the invention several years earlier of a process to produce relatively cheap aluminum from bauxite ore, a factory site was sought that would provide access to the abundant electricity necessary for the procedure.

The area north of Maryville was chosen due to its proximity to railways for transportation of the finished product. A hydroelectric dam was built many miles away, and electric lines were run across the countryside to the factory building. My minister friend showed his disgust as he related the story. "The dam was built in the mountains, making a mountain river into a lake, and using the water to power the electric generators. The community around the dam is known as Calderwood.

"When the Aluminum Company approached the state legislature for permission to incorporate a town, they provided a series of map coordinates where this town would be located. Everyone assumed that they would be incorporating the area around Calderwood. The new town was to be called 'Alcoa,' which stands for 'Aluminum Company of America.'

"What no one realized was that the map coordinates were not for Calderwood, the mountain town near the dam, but instead for a sizeable chunk of what we called 'North Maryville,' right over there around that factory," said Stevenson. "No one thought to actually look at a map to see where the new town would be, and the legislature approved it. Suddenly, the town of Maryville lost a third of its area, and had another town growing out of the top of it. This was all done, of course, so that any tax revenue generated by the place would go to the new company-owned town, and not to Maryville.

"I must admit," my new friend continued, "they are trying to make the place nice, for a company town. They've laid down streets, and built a number of houses, although many of them are completely identical to one another. There is talk of building parks there, as well. I suppose it will turn out all right. It's not as if anything would have been built there otherwise. The place was unofficially known as the 'Maryville Swamp.' Lots of groundwater there, poorly drained. I've even heard rumors of a cave or two."

The following Monday, Holmes continued his researches while I decided to visit Alcoa, and look more closely at the largest factory in the world. Little did I realize how the day would end. I walked into town, where I contracted with Rathbone to drive me to the factory in his cab.

He dropped me off and offered to wait, but I declined, wanting to explore for a while. I visited the main office of the great factory, and was given some slight information regarding the history of the aluminum separation process invented by Charles Hall, the company itself, and the decision to build a town here. However, I was soon given to understand that idle tourists were not encouraged, and I departed, intending to walk some among the nearby residential streets before returning to Mrs. Jones's farm.

As my new friend the minister had told me, many of the houses were identical to one another. They were all of wood frame construction, most only one story high. The entire area was clouded with the smoke from a hundred cook stoves and fireplaces. I noticed that several of the street names, Dalton, Maury, and so on, were named for famous scientists, while the significance of others, such as Vose, completely escaped me.

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

While strolling down Maury Street, I observed a young man standing in front of one of the rarer two-story houses, watering a young tree. All along both sides of the street, oak trees had been set out in rows several feet back from the roadway. In later years, I was certain that the tree-lined avenue would be quite beautiful as one traversed it. Now, however, the trees were little more than saplings.

The young man, probably in his early teens, spoke to me as I passed. I stopped and answered, complimenting him on the neighborhood and his house, which was well-kept. He informed me that his father was one of the company managers, and as such, was entitled to one of the larger two-story houses. At that moment a woman, obviously his mother, stepped out onto the porch. I introduced myself, and explained that I was exploring the neighborhood. "My name is Mrs. Wade," she said, "and this is my son, James." She graciously invited me in for some lemonade.

While Mrs. Wade stepped through the swinging door to the left of the fireplace, into the kitchen, I looked at the pleasant room. Stretching along the left side of the house, it had tall windows at the sides and rear. While somewhat dim this morning, I was sure it would be bright and cheerful in the afternoon. The house itself, a great square box, seemed to have only three rooms on the ground floor. The long formal parlor in which I sat took up the left half of the ground floor, while the other half contained the kitchen at the rear and a small dining room at the front of the house. The stairs must have been located somewhere behind the fireplace, between the kitchen and dining room.

The woman returned with the lemonade, and as we sat and talked, she asked polite questions about England. At some point during the conversation, I became aware that her son was becoming somewhat agitated. Finally, his mother could not ignore it any longer, and asked, "What is the matter, James?"

He started to whisper, but she asked him to repeat it aloud. "He's Dr. Watson!" said the boy.

"Yes, that is his name."

"No, *the* Dr. Watson. Like in Sherlock Holmes!"

She looked at me anew, and raised an eyebrow, as if asking me to confirm or deny her son's statement. I acknowledged that I was that Dr. Watson, and stated that Holmes and I were visiting in town for a few days, but that we did not want knowledge of our stay to become widespread.

She thought for a moment, nodding to herself, and then stated, "Perhaps, since you are here, you and Mr. Holmes can offer an opinion on something that has been bothering me."

She proceeded to relate a tale so strange that I agreed to seek Holmes's help. She let me use her telephone. I managed to be connected to Maryville College, where I found someone willing to relay a message to Holmes, if he was still in the college library. In a while, Mrs. Wade's telephone rang. It was Holmes, to whom I repeated the basics of her story. Within twenty minutes, he was stepping to the curb in front of her house from Rathbone's cab. He indicated that Rathbone should wait.

Young James appeared to be stunned as he watched Holmes energetically walk up the front walk to the house. Mrs. Wade gave no such impression, ushering Holmes in and offering him lemonade and refreshments. When he had his glass in hand, I had her repeat for him what she had told me.

Essentially, her story concerned recent goings-on in a nearby clearing. "It has become something of a neighborhood park," she said, explaining that the aluminum

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

company, which owned all the houses and property in the town, intended to improve the location eventually, "building recreational areas, and schools." In the meantime, however, the vast fields had remained a wide open space, cleared and mowed, but with numerous old-growth trees allowed to remain, shading the various havens created by the meandering brook that wandered through the tract.

"The small stream is formed from several springs that rise near a hillside in the center of the parkland. The hill is more of a small cliff, really. The largest of the springs, a rather wide sandy pool, is near this small cliff, which is something of a rocky outcropping exposed in the hillside.

"At the base of these rocks is a wide crack in the earth, extending back at a downward angle, out of sight and into the darkness. The crack extends thirty feet or more from left to right, and is only one or two feet in height at the entrance. A cold breeze blows from it, and animals shy away from the place. In fact, during the times I have walked there, I do not recall birds even sitting in the nearby trees to sing.

"As James can tell you, I often take strolls in the mornings, and I frequently go by the place of the springs and the cliff, to look at the wildflowers growing among the rocks. In spite of its eeriness, I have never felt any fear or nervousness about the place. I believe that a cavern of some sort begins there, and that would probably explain the excessive number of springs around this area. I have read something of geology, and I understand that areas such as this, with a large number of rocky outcroppings sticking up out of the ground, are indicators of high groundwater, as well as caves and sinkholes."

Holmes nodded. "It is known as a *karst* area."

"Exactly," said Mrs. Wade, nodding. "In any case, we have lived here for a couple of years now, and nothing has changed until just recently. In the last week or so, a great number of people have been arriving in town and making their way to that park, setting up campsites throughout the fields. They are quiet enough, I suppose, but they do not belong here. They have even taken to walking through our neighborhood, sometimes knocking on doors and asking if they can buy eggs or bread. I thought that Dr. Watson was one of them when I saw him talking to James earlier. I rushed out to send him away, and I was so relieved to learn that the doctor was not one of the strangers that I invited him in for lemonade.

"Several of the residents have complained to the company, which owns the land, but we were put off by Mr. Timmons, one of the managers who seems to have given them permission to camp there. He stated that they are part of a religious group, here to celebrate one of their holy days, and that once they are done they will go. Mr. Timmons's wife is said to be a member of that faith, and possibly Mr. Timmons is as well. It was because of this relationship that the strangers knew to come here in the first place, and why he gave them permission to stay here."

Holmes and I looked at one another. We had both seen some of the people to whom she referred over the last few days, as the groups were arriving in town. We had discussed them on several occasions, and one evening as we smoked our pipes I had told Holmes what Rathbone had said about the group camping somewhere north of town.

"I went walking there this morning, as I usually do," continued Mrs. Wade, "making my way around the edge of their camp. The people were somewhat standoffish, but friendly enough, and I spoke to one of the group's women. She said that the festival they are celebrating will culminate tomorrow morning at sunrise. She implied there is

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

something special about this particular gathering, and that they do not assemble this way every year.

"As I was leaving, I saw some of her laundry, a pile of folded white robes. A closer look showed that the robes were hooded, and embroidered on the shoulder was this emblem."

She leaned forward and picked up a piece of paper, turned face down until now on a side table. "I tried to draw it when I returned home." She held it up, showing Holmes the sketch of a symbol that I had instantly recognized when viewing it a few minutes earlier. Seeing it had been enough to make me reach Holmes immediately.

Holmes's eyes widened minutely, but he made no other movement or comment. Mrs. Wade leaned forward and handed him the paper, which he brought closer to his eyes. I knew what he was seeing.

Drawn on the paper was an egg-shaped circle, surrounded by the squeezing coils of a snake. The wide part of the egg was at the top, and hovering over it was the serpent's head. His tail jutted from the smaller end at the bottom. Shaded onto the oval behind the body of the snake were a pair of large dark spots, giving the impression of eye sockets, and making the egg into the death-head of a human skull. Around the outside edge of the oval were a series of small faint crosses.

Pointing to them, Holmes asked, "What do these small x's represent?"

"The stitching on the white robes was in much greater detail than I was able to draw," said Mrs. Wade. "I am not much of an artist, I'm afraid. There were actual diamond-like patterns on the snake's body, and its face wore an expression of crafty evil, almost gleeful and proud. Around the edge of the skull were a series of smaller symbols, rather like letters, but nothing like the alphabet that I know."

Holmes pulled a pencil from his pocket and wrote for a moment at the bottom of the page. "Did these markings resemble the embroidered writing you saw?" he asked, holding up what he had produced.

Mrs. Wade leaned closer and examined the sheet. "That looks quite similar to what I saw. Of course, I cannot say for sure."

Holmes nodded. "I am fairly certain that what I have written is correct, combined as it is with the skull and serpent design which you copied. I have made a small study of these symbols in connection with a past case. The writing is Ogham, an ancient Celtic script sometimes used by the Druids."

I had also learned something of the symbols on Mrs. Wade's paper years before, during an investigation in which Holmes and I were called to Stonehenge in order to determine who had chalked the serpent drawing on various menhirs in the ancient ruins. At the time, Holmes had taught me that the symbol of a snake coiled around an egg was one of the ancient symbols of the creation of the universe, used variously by Egyptians, Indians, Druids, and even Freemasons. However, sometimes the symbol was polluted, changing the egg to a skull. I had no doubt that the text written by Holmes said exactly what had been written years before on the great monoliths at Stonehenge. Loosely translated, "For new life, first death."

Holmes looked at it for another moment. We both knew that the symbol, combined with the writing, was the ceremonial badge of death. I saw that he wished to pull out his pipe and smoke, but he would not ask to do so here in the Wade's home. Finally he looked up at me.

"Tomorrow is June twenty-first," he said.

I nodded. "At sunrise?" I asked.

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

"Most likely." Turning to Mrs. Wade, he asked, "Do you know of anyone that has gone missing in the last day or so? Any children? Any animals or pets?"

Mrs. Wade said, slowly, "No, no, I'm not aware of anything like that."

James interrupted, "What about Tyler?"

"Oh, well, there is Tyler," Mrs. Wade replied, with a small laugh. "Tyler Roberts. He's a young boy, several years younger than James. He lives a few doors up the street. He often disappears overnight. He likes to camp and hike. He's a very self-sufficient boy, and his mother has learned to stop worrying when he is gone. He wanders off all the time. I was not aware that he was away right now, but it is not unusual."

"He is gone," James said. "His mother asked me this morning if I had seen him. Usually he only stays away overnight, but he has been gone for two nights now. I think she is starting to get a little worried. And also, Mrs. Floyd up the street said that their dog is missing. Maybe it just ran away, but Mr. Holmes did ask about any missing pets."

"How old is Tyler," asked Holmes. "Please describe him."

"He is about twelve," said Mrs. Wade. "Small for his age, but very strong and scrappy. His skin is quite tanned and dark, but his hair is blonde, almost white. His skin is often covered in one place or another with scrapes and scratches from whatever outdoor mischief he has gotten himself into."

Holmes checked his watch, and then stood. "Mrs. Wade, I believe that what you have described in the nearby park is a gathering of individuals who are up to no good. I regret that I have to ask this, but I would like you to keep secret the fact that Dr. Watson and I have visited you this morning, and also what you have told us. Please do not discuss with anyone what you have seen in the park. I'm afraid that I must ask you and your son not to tell even your husband."

"That would be fine," said Mrs. Wade. "When I tried to talk to him about it before, he gave me to understand that I was simply being a busybody, and that in any case the people would soon be gone."

"Thank you," said Holmes. "Dr. Watson and I are going to discuss this matter with the local police. I think it is quite serious. I would like your permission to take James with us. In case we have any further questions, he will be at hand to answer them. He may be with us until tomorrow, if that is all right."

James immediately showed his eager agreement, and Mrs. Wade had no objection, although she did seem somewhat worried, and repeatedly made James promise to stay out of the way and to stay out of trouble. Thanking her again, and reminding her not to mention our visit, we departed in Rathbone's waiting cab.

When we directed Rathbone to take us to the police, he explained that the new city of Alcoa only had the beginnings of a police department, and that the city of Maryville had just appointed a police chief for the first time that year. "N.L. Brewer," he said. "Seems like a good man. Before we had a police chief, we made do with a town marshal."

At the courthouse in the center of town, we introduced ourselves to the chief, a seasoned man who carried himself with a military bearing, no doubt earned in the recent European war. Brewer listened with patience as Holmes explained his suspicions about the group camping near the Aluminum Company neighborhood. Holmes drew the symbol that Mrs. Wade had seen on the hooded white robes. James nervously told of the missing boy and dog. Finally, Holmes outlined what he believed was about to happen, and the significance of tomorrow's date.

Brewer listened with intelligent gravity, understanding exactly what Holmes was

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

telling him. He did not seem to question either Holmes or the story, replying, "You were right to come to me, Mr. Holmes. I have also been noticing these people arriving in town for a week or so, and wondered what they were about. If someone at the Aluminum Company invited them, it is probably better not to involve the company. I have some men that I trust completely. We can use them. When do you want to begin?"

Holmes indicated that immediately would suit him. The chief set about finding his men, while Holmes and I explained the situation to Rathbone, whom Holmes had instructed to wait. Rathbone was eager to join us, and showed no surprise that Holmes and I had turned out to be more than simple visitors doing research.

By late afternoon, Brewer's men had gathered. They were carefully briefed on what to expect. A number of them were veterans of the War, and they all appeared to be exactly the type of men we would require that night. Weapons were issued to some of the men, while others made do with clubs fashioned from new axe handles purchased at a nearby hardware store. Now we simply had to wait until sundown.

Holmes had explained that the group we would be facing no doubt intended to have an initial bonfire ceremony after the sun had gone down. The revels would certainly last for hours, and to a casual observer it would seem curious but harmless. The ritual would likely turn sinister with the approach of sunrise on the next morning. The plan was to sneak into the Druids' camp after dark, when they were gathered at the bonfire. Holmes explained that we would still need to be quite cautious, as guards would likely be placed around the gathering. "Remember," Holmes said, "most Druids are harmless. It is the inclusion of this death symbol that makes these people more dangerous. All of them may be involved, or it may just be a few of the leaders. In any case, stay alert."

As the sun finally dimmed over the western horizon, we departed in a collection of automobiles, driving in a roundabout way to the far side of the parkland, so that we would not be observed by anyone in the houses that surrounded the park or the factory. Holmes, James, and I rode in Rathbone's cab. James had been allowed to accompany us, on the condition that he stay in the cab while we carried out our invasion.

Holmes had privately told me earlier that he wished to keep James close so the boy would not return home and be tempted to reveal our plans to his mother and father.

It was full dark when we and the other vehicles arrived. We were nearly half a mile north of the park, in an abandoned pasture on the far side from the company houses. The men around us formed up. With Holmes and the chief in the lead, we set out across the choked fields.

Our progress was slow due to the necessity of finding a path through brush and brambles in the dark, as well as the need to cross the occasional small brook or rill, produced by some nearby spring. If there was any moon, it was hiding behind the clouds. Several times I tripped over some of the karst stone showing above the plants. However, it was all small and insignificant compared with the great rocky tors that I had seen on Dartmoor many years before.

As we progressed, I began to be aware of the light of a great bonfire in the distance. It flickered and waved, and in front of it were countless black shapes, dancing and swaying as they rotated around it in some trancelike orbit. The wind was light, and blowing from the direction of the fire. I could sometimes smell smoke, and once or twice heard the eerie songs of the revelers as their monotonic chants were carried by the breeze.

The chief had known exactly which spot we meant when describing the great hori-

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

zontal crack below the rocky cliff. It was only a hundred feet or so from where the bonfire was located. The fire burned on the top of a nearby cone-shaped hillside, its very brightness helping to make the surrounding areas seem much darker. Even though we were in shadows, the light from the fire reflected on the rock face of the stones above the cavern entrance. Suspecting that there might be guards, Holmes and the chief had arranged for two of the more stealthy men accompanying us, both big silent fellows, to move ahead and clear the way.

Our group paused in deep shadows as the two men, both stepping soundlessly, crept toward the open space before the rock. In a moment I heard the peculiar ringing sound of an axe handle striking another object, followed by a soft dusty thud as something sank to the ground. In a few seconds, one of the men returned, gesturing us forward.

The other man was tying a robed figure, lying unconscious on the ground. I knelt and examined him briefly. He would be out for quite a while, but his breathing was sound, and he would recover. In the meantime, Holmes was directing the men toward the crack. Only inside would they be allowed to use their electric torches. Initially, they must all crawl into the black passage in blind darkness.

I myself felt some trepidation, but none of the men showed anything of the sort. The chief went first, followed by Holmes. Then it was my turn, aided by a dark figure whose face I could not see. Only when he said, "Easy, doc," did I recognize that it was Rathbone, now dressed in dark clothing like the rest of us. It was the first time I had not seen him in his white shirt and light faded pants.

The crack dropped into the earth at a fairly steep angle. The floor entrance was dirt, pebbled with gravel, and the feeble light from the bonfire only revealed the first few feet. As I slid in feet first, I initially moved on my back. As the overhead rock loomed closer, I tried to turn so that I would be sliding on my stomach. I discovered that the awkwardness of turning while dropping only made me slide faster, and I experienced a second of blind panic as I pictured myself dropping ever faster before sliding off the edge of the entrance, shooting over a final lip of rock and falling into eternal darkness.

Almost immediately, however, hands grabbed me and helped me stand upright on the floor of the inner cave. I was pulled back as other men slid down into the spot where I had just stood. As my eyes adjusted, I could see that we were in a small chamber, approximately fifteen feet square, with the floor about four feet lower than the sloped entrance rock above me. The floor itself was stone, and dropped gradually toward the rear of the room, where an opening in the rock seemed to lead deeper into the earth.

The last men to enter brought the bound guard with them. He could not be left outside where his discovery would signal our presence. Holmes stepped over to the rear passage out of the room and snapped on his torch, shielding it with his hand. A path led down into the darkness. I joined him, followed by Chief Brewer and Rathbone. In the distance we could hear the sound of rushing water. With the others following, we moved deeper into the cave.

The passage only lasted a hundred feet or so before opening into a much wider room. While traversing the connecting corridor, I observed the walls and floor, which appeared to have been widened and formed at some point by tools. However, the marks and grooves on the walls and floor appeared to be ancient, and I idly wondered how long this site had been in use by men before tonight.

The large room we entered was about fifty feet across, and nearly twenty feet high.

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

The ceiling was rounded, and there did not appear to be any stalactites or stalagmites whatsoever, as if they had been cleared out at some point to preserve the openness of the chamber. Numerous large boulders stood around the perimeter of the room, where the roof sloped down sharply to join the floor. Along the far side of the chamber, running from left to right, was an underground stream, only three or four feet across, its depth unknown in the near darkness. The surface of the water was a black mirror in the torch light, and it could have been six inches or six feet deep. I could see from the sides of the room that in times of great rains the water level would rise and fill the entire volume of the place.

Holmes walked around the room, examining foot scuffs in the mud on the floor. He gestured me to his side, and indicated a curious stone located centrally in front of the stream. It was carved out of the very floor of the room, left in place by the ancients, rising in one solid piece out of the ground. It was about six feet long and three feet high. Flat on top, it resembled a narrow table. Placed in the center of it, apparently there for future use, was a dagger. It was not beautiful craftsmanship. Rather, it had a homemade look, as if the metal had been shaped and sharpened by pounding it with a stone. It looked very old, and in that setting, very evil. Holmes and I looked at one another. Our interpretation of the embroidered symbol had been correct.

Holmes called our group together and explained that we were not certain when the people at the bonfire would shift their location to this cavern. Therefore, the men would need to hide behind the rocks around the walls and wait, hidden, possibly for many long and miserable hours.

They were all hardened men, and they did not need to have any explanation about what was to come. Silently, each man took a position, two slinging the bound and gagged guard between them, and we all settled into our places of concealment. Holmes was the last, remaining in the center of the room with his torch until we were all in place. The other torches went out, leaving Holmes holding the single source of light. Then, he found a place near me, sank to the ground, and turned off the torch, plunging the cavern into darkness.

How to describe those hellish hours of waiting? The cool, damp air of the room quickly permeated our clothing. The constant sound of the tumbling water in the stream, moving from God knows where to God knows where, soon became a maddening drone in my ears. Within minutes or hours, I could not tell, I was hearing what I thought to be voices murmuring in the dark. I knew that it was my imagination, but at times I was tempted to stand and remind everyone to be quiet, so certain did I almost become that people were carrying on conversations.

The worst, of course, was the darkness itself. It was absolute, and my eyes would not adjust. Countless instances I held my hand in front of my face, but I could see nothing. I am not a fanciful man, but there were times when I had to remind myself that I was sitting behind a solid rock on a solid floor, and that the darkness was not closing in on me. On another occasion, I became obsessed with the idea that the clouds I had observed earlier had thickened, and it had started raining outside. We would never know it, in this room under the earth, until the underground stream began to rise. Soon we would drown, trapped in the rock chamber, unable to ever find the exit before it was too late.

The only awareness I had of anything other than myself was the occasional movement beside me of Holmes as he shifted to a more comfortable position. I was certain

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

that his disciplined mind was not misbehaving like mine, and that his hand knew exactly where the electric torch was, ready to turn it on at a moment's notice.

My watch would later reveal that it was somewhere after four in the morning, a half hour or so before sunrise, when we first became aware that someone was entering the cave. At first, I heard chanting, weaving its way into the eternal song of the underground stream. I believed that it was my imagination, but gradually the terrible music became louder, and I knew that it was real. Then my eyes, in the dark for hours, began to perceive the glow of light as it increased from the direction of the opening. The walls around it seemed blacker as the rude stone doorway grew brighter, illuminated by the first robed people entering the room, carrying smoking torches.

I shifted on the ground, keeping behind the rocks as I carefully observed the newcomers. They continued to enter, their feet scuffing through the dried mud, filling the center of the room, swaying and singing. Only a few held burning wood torches, so the light never became very bright. As the majority of the group finished entering the place, they started to shuffle, splitting into two groups and leaving a pathway between them leading from the entrance to the stone table on the far side by the stream.

A group of three men appeared in the door, taking solemn steps as if they were university dongs participating in a convocation ceremony. The first man was tall and thin, and his white robes were decorated with numerous embroidered designs, leaf-like patterns winding about his shoulders and arms. He was obviously the leader, and a shudder passed through the crowd with his appearance. The droning of their chant never faltered.

Following him were two men, each in plain robes like those worn by the general followers. They were large men with stern expressions, and they each had their hands on the shoulders of two boys being pushed in front of them. From where I hid, I could tell that the boys' hands were bound behind their backs, and their mouths were covered with gags. The first was a small boy with very light hair. He was struggling as he was pushed forward with each step. The second prisoner did not fight his captor, and looked both right and left with terror in his eyes. He was James Wade, who was supposed to have waited for us with the automobiles.

As the boys were stopped in front of the raised platform, the chanting changed from a monotonous drone to some sort of words, in a tongue that I could not understand. It was full of sibilant hisses and odd tonal changes. In that setting, it seemed extremely evil, as malignant as something uttered by the tempting serpent in the Garden. The pitch seemed to rise as the first boy, obviously the missing Tyler Roberts, was lifted onto the table and placed on his back, held down as he kicked and fought.

James watched from the side, terrified and still. I glanced at my watch in the dim flickering light. Outside, the sun would be rising on the morning of June twenty-first, the solstice, the first day of summer, the day of rebirth. The leader, from his place behind the sacrificial table, raised the ancient dagger and began to shriek in the vile language of the chanters.

"Stop!" shouted Holmes, standing beside me. The mass of robed figures paused, fell silent, and stared at him, but the leader continued his sing-song call as Tyler renewed his bound struggles. As the knife began to descend, I heard an explosive report beside me. The leader's hand snapped back, and the dagger flew away from him into the rushing stream.

At my side, Rathbone stepped around the boulder behind which he had hidden, a smoking pistol thrust in front of him. All around the room, other men were appearing,

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

holding guns, rifles, and axe handles. One robed man bolted toward the cavern entrance, only to be stopped as an axe handle met his skull, dropping him instantly to the muddy floor.

The leader stood motionless, holding his bleeding hand above Tyler, who was staring up in fascination. The hand was now nothing more than a thumb jutting out from a ragged mess that was the remaining bottom half of the man's palm. Blood ran down his wrist, staining the sleeve of the white robe. Rathbone later explained that he had chosen to use expanding bullets in his revolver, which had caused the extreme damage to the leader's hand. Rathbone did not appear to regret his decision.

The boys were quickly freed, while I tended to the leader's shattered hand. As I bound it with strips torn from his decorated robe, I examined the man's face. He was expressionless, and appeared to be in shock. He gave no indication that the pain affected him at all. When he had entered the cavern he had seemed to be one of the most sinister and fearful figures I had ever seen. Now, up close and defeated, he was simply a middle-aged man, his face covered with the broken veins of the chronic alcoholic, and his shoulders and thinning hair flaked with dandruff.

It would later be revealed that his name was Lloyd Duff, and that he had founded this branch of Druid revivalists in England several years before. When that country became too hot for him, he had relocated to America, where he had continued his nefarious activities. Initially, he had been nothing more than a con man, playing on the weakness of those who sought false comfort in the rituals of ancient religions that they did not understand. Gradually, Duff began to believe in the hokum that he was peddling. He had sought out the darker side of the religion.

It was then that he became acquainted with the two men who had been herding the boys, Luther Simmons and Matthew Boyd. They were criminals from their early years, also originally from England, and they had exploited Duff for their own gain. Using Duff's corrupted knowledge of ancient Druid practices, they fashioned a new cult, which progressed from simply bilking the money of the worshipers to the occasional sacrifice.

It was discovered that Duff, Simmons, and Boyd were linked to several murders in England, related to their activities there before they fled to America. Eventually, they were extradited back to England, where Duff was tried and placed in a hospital for the insane, while Simmons and Boyd finally received their long overdue punishments in the form of poorly attended and barely reported executions.

The robed revelers, now with broken spirits, were herded from the room to the open ground outside. They huddled like sheep by the spring near the rock face. Vehicles were summoned to transport them in groups back to the county jail. As the sun continued to rise, Holmes and I verified that both boys were all right before they were sent home. A quick check revealed that Mrs. Floyd's dog, as well as several other pets, were all right, and were tied up in the Druid camps.

Holmes walked over to the man who had been knocked unconscious while attempting to flee the underground chamber. He was now awake and being questioned by Chief Brewer, who explained to us that the fellow was Mr. Timmons, the Aluminum Company official who had allowed the group to camp in the park.

"He says that he and his wife are long-time Druids, and that today is one of their holy days," said the chief. "He first discovered the cave a few years ago when he first moved to this area, and he could tell that it had been used in the past for ancient ceremonies. When Duff communicated with him about plans to pass through this area,

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

Timmons suggested using the cave. Duff then finalized plans for his followers and recruits to meet here for this special day. Only after they had arrived did Timmons realize that Duff and some of the others were not harmless worshipers. It became obvious to him that some sort of sacrifice was planned, and he did not know how to stop it.

"He was afraid to go against Duff, and so he and his wife just let it go on. Apparently they had originally planned something else, possibly just the sacrifice of some of the local pets that have been missing, but when that Tyler boy showed up in their camp the other day, and they caught him exploring the cave, it was decided that he would be offered instead. Timmons said he only found out a few minutes before the ceremony that the sacrifice was to be human. Before then, Tyler Roberts had been kept in the Duff's tent and Timmons never saw him.

"It was only when things were happening in the cave, and Timmons finally understood what was going to happen, that he realized that he had to do something to stop it. That's his story, anyway. He claims that he was trying to run out of the cave to get help. Funny that he didn't run for help until Rathbone shot Duff, though."

"How did they find James Wade?" I asked.

"James came following after us last night," said the chief. "He didn't stay with the automobiles like he was supposed to. The guards caught him when he got too close to the bonfire. Luckily, they all just assumed he was a curious boy from the neighborhood, and never thought to ask him if anyone else was with him. I'd hate to think what would have happened if they had known we were in that cave and came in after us."

Holmes theorized that after the sacrifices, Duff, Simmons, and Boyd had intended to flee the area, leaving the other worshipers to be questioned later by the locals regarding the missing boys. This was later confirmed by Boyd, who seemed to have no feeling one way or another about the deaths in which he had been involved, and those which had just been prevented.

Later in the morning, Holmes, Rathbone, Brewer, and I reentered the cavern. Holmes agreed with me that the walls appeared to have been shaped and augmented by man at some distant point in the past. Even with the faint daylight penetrating through the outer entrance into the chamber, and with the light of our torches, the place held an evil aura.

Back in the sunshine, we held a discussion. The chief stated that he could vouch for his men, and that this matter would be kept in strict confidence. "It wouldn't do for the folks around here to realize what has just happened," he said. He indicated that most of the people arrested had probably not realized what they were getting into until the boys were actually brought forward to the sacrificial table. Then, they had been too caught up in the religious frenzy to try and stop it.

Holmes stated, "I suppose that is possible, and there is really no way to prove otherwise. However, for so many Druids to have willingly agreed to greet the sunrise on one of their most important days while deep in a cavern, with no possible view of the sun, indicates to me that they were quite aware of what was going on. As soon as Watson and I saw the Druid death symbol, and learned of the proximity of an underground opening, we both knew that we were dealing with a dark mirror of true Druidism. Surely these people knew it as well, or they would never have agreed to miss the rising of the sun."

Brewer explained that the participants would simply be charged with vagrancy and thrown out of the county. He was certain that none of them would ever return. Duff

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

and his cronies would be charged with attempted murder, but he would work to keep the graphic details of the events from becoming common knowledge.

"I think that it would be best if this place were filled up," said Holmes, gesturing toward the entrance to the chamber. "Locations like this are magnets of evil. You need to prevent something like this from happening again."

The chief agreed, and stated that some of his men would begin immediately to fill the chamber with stone and then blast the entrance, making it impossible to enter. "And I'm sure I can get Mr. Timmons to arrange things so that the aluminum company will pay for any expense, in the name of making this park safer. After all, Timmons probably won't be charged in the matter, either, and he is going to owe me."

Rathbone drove us back to our lodgings at Mrs. Jones's farm. We retired to change out of our dirty clothing, and then returned to the main house to find that Rathbone was engaged in relating our night's adventures to the lady. It was at that moment that Mrs. Jones recognized us, and it was then that she made me promise not to use her actual name, should I ever write a narrative of what had taken place. We agreed, as long as she promised not to reveal what Rathbone had told her.

Later in the day, we checked on Mrs. Wade and James, where we found that he had completely recovered from the incident. In his mind it had already become somewhat dreamlike, and the horror was starting to blur. We told Mrs. Wade some of the less graphic details of the previous night's events, and assured her that the Druids were gone and that the cavern was to be destroyed.

James went to Tyler's house, returning with the small boy in a few minutes. He confirmed that he had been captured by Duff and his men while trying to explore the cavern. He had been aware of the passageway and buried chamber for months, and he wondered what the visiting Druids were doing in it. He thought of the whole thing as a great adventure, and was not traumatized in the least. His parents were not concerned at all for the simple reason that he had not told them of it, and had no intention of doing so.

Back in town, we met with Chief Brewer once again, who informed us that work was already underway to close the ancient underground room. We gave him information on how to reach us with future details regarding the disposition of the case. He looked at our addresses, mine in London and Holmes's in Sussex. "Not 221b Baker Street?" he asked with a grin.

"No," replied Holmes, "not anymore."

The next day, Rathbone delivered us to the train station, where we intended to travel to Knoxville, and from there back to Linville, where we would conclude our business before returning to England.

As we shook his hand, Holmes thanked Rathbone for his assistance. "Think nothing of it, gentleman," he said. "Most fun I've had in years. Too bad that you had that hole filled in, though, Mr. Holmes. I would have liked to have set up a stand and given paid tours through the place. Just think, 'Ladies and gentleman, this way to the amazing Druid Death Cave!'"

We laughed, and Rathbone waved and walked to his cab. Later, as we adjusted to our seats for the short ride to Knoxville, Holmes remarked, "I have enjoyed this little side trip, Watson."

"As did I. By the way, did you ever find any evidence of corruption at the college?"

"None whatsoever. I have been in touch with Mrs. Thaw several times by wire, and I learned that her suspicions arose out of a comment relating to the construction of the

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

new building. Apparently there are some sinkholes beside the proposed location, and the builder indicated that those would have to be 'covered up.' Word reached her, and in her confused elderly state, she misunderstood and believed that the college was involved in a different kind of 'cover-up' relating to the building. From that, she extrapolated the notion that there was some sort of plot afoot to misuse her funds."

I laughed, and said, "Perhaps if we let him know, Rathbone can persuade the college to leave the sinkholes open. It's not quite a Druid horror chamber, but he could still sell admission."

Holmes shook his head with a smile. "An enterprising young fellow, this American cousin of mine. As was your relative, Willie Marcum."

"Yes," I agreed. "We have no reason to worry about our American relations."

"What if, Watson," said Holmes, "what if, someday, Willie were to have a son or daughter, and that person were to marry Rathbone's son or daughter. Then our families, however distant, would be linked."

"I think I would like that, Holmes," I replied. "That would be a fine thing to happen."

The train picked up speed, our first step on the return home. Holmes and I fell into a comfortable silence, each gazing out the window at the beautiful passing landscape.

### Postscript: Two Letters

9 JULY, 1929

Dear Willie,

I HOPE that this letter finds you and your family in excellent health, and that you are doing well. I apologize for not having written in so long, and can only beg your forgiveness and understanding. I could plead that the long intervals between letters is due to my age, but I must confess that I have been writing, working on more records of Holmes's cases, so I really have no good excuse at all.

I was sorry to hear of your mother's passing, as well as the tragic death of your young son Howard from rabies. I realize that it has been two years since they both passed, but I know that you must still think of them every day. I am greatly saddened that in this modern world in which we live, a treatable disease such as rabies was still able to take your son from you.

As I mentioned, I have been working to complete a number of my records of Holmes's cases, and recently I came across the notes I made during our visit to your part of the world in 1921. Although it was just a few short years ago, I must confess that it seems like much longer, as my age has really caught up with me in the intervening years. Upon completion of the manuscript, I propose to send you a copy, with the fond hope that you and your family might enjoy a record of those two days.

Holmes and I have stayed busy since that time, although I must admit that Holmes has been more active than I. He has still engaged himself in the occasional investigation, while I am more content to remain in England. However, he and I both traveled to your country in the fall of 1927, where we were involved in one of the most trying matters of our careers.

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

Before the case was over, we had asked several people to come over from London to help us, including Holmes's nephew and a former Belgian policeman, both of whom have set up private consulting detective practices in London. Joining Holmes's nephew was his good friend, Dr. Parker. In New York, we were assisted by Holmes's son — now there's a fellow you didn't know about, I'll wager! — as well as his assistant, a Mr. Goodwin, and also the unlikely team of one of the New York Police inspectors and his brilliant son, Ellery, who shows every sign of being Holmes's deductive rival.

In spite of the fact that we had all of that deductive brain power working on the case, I don't think that the matter could have been satisfactorily concluded without the last minute arrival of a young law student from California named Mason, who provided the last bit of missing and vital information to our case.

After the matter concluded, we had a wonderful celebration at the Hotel Algonquin, before those of us returning to England all set sail together. (Of course, I know that I don't have to ask you to keep this information to yourself, as the identity of both Holmes's son and his nephew are both rather closely guarded secrets.)

Since that time, I have lived a relatively peaceful life, working, as I said, on putting my notes in order. However, I was excited to hear from Holmes just the other day. He needs my help on another case! It seems that his son, who has been living in New York for several years and working as a private detective under some outlandish assumed name, has traveled to Zagreb to track down the whereabouts of a girl, Anna, that he adopted in 1921, during the time he wandered Europe after the War. Now he has been thrown into jail there, and we are off to rescue him! Joining us will be Holmes's nephew and Dr. Parker.

While I am traveling, I will continue to work on the manuscript of our Tennessee visit, along with a few others, and will forward to you a completed version when I return to England. In the meantime, I hope that everything is going well for you and yours, and that I will be able to visit the United States again at some point in the future, where we will be able to renew our friendship in person.

Until that time, remember that I am,

Always your friend (and distant cousin!),  
John H. Watson



8 AUGUST, 1929

Dear Mr. Marcum,

I AM VERY sad to inform you that Watson passed away on 24 July of pneumonia, which he acquired while traveling with me and some associates to Zagreb on something of a rescue mission. I knew that Watson's health had been failing for some time, but against my better judgment, I allowed him to accompany us. It thrilled him, I believe, to be asked to go along on one more investigation.

He became ill on the way back from our journey, which I can tell you was a complete success. I insisted that he return with me to my Sussex home to recuperate,

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

but after we had settled in there, his condition worsened, and he died peacefully a few days later.

As the enclosed letter from Watson mentions, he had worked for the past several years on the monumental task of wrestling his voluminous notes into some sort of readable shape. He had completed a number of manuscripts, some of which have been placed in safe-keeping, while others he generously gave to the individuals involved in the events that he had recorded.

He had finished preparing the narrative of our trip to your part of the world, as well as a few other stories contained in the same copy book, when he died. I have kept his final versions of the events, but I thought, as it was his intention to send you a copy of the narrative, that you might like to have the original copy book, containing a few other matters as well.

It may interest you to read that after we left you in Rockwood that day, we journeyed back to Knoxville, and then on to Maryville, where we were able to stop a rather diabolical assembly. During that time, we had a chance to spend several days in and around Maryville College. I believe that Watson has mentioned to me how you attended this college for a few years in 1911 or 1912. Possibly you will recognize some place where you walked there as you read Watson's narrative.

WATSON and I both enjoyed meeting you, and Watson was very proud of his American cousins. If there is ever anything that I can do for you, do not hesitate to let me know.

With all best wishes,  
SHERLOCK HOLMES

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### AFTERWORD

I've been a Sherlockian since I was ten years old in 1975, and for many years, it was a world of Sherlockian isolation. No one else here in East Tennessee where I was born, raised, and still live – to this very day – is a deep-dive Holmes fan – or much of a Sherlockian at all. I received my first real deerstalker in 1984 for my nineteenth birthday, and have worn it as my only hat ever since – winter and summer, to work and church and the store and movies and coffee shops and the grocery store and walks in the park – and it usually elicits no comments. Sometimes someone will say “Hello, Dr. Watson!” or “Inspector Clouseau, I presume!”, but nothing Holmes. Alas.

Since discovering Mr. Holmes, I've collected Holmes-related books – over 4,000 of them, primarily traditional pastiches – and I now have most of the pastiches that have ever been written, except for a few odd and expensive rarities. In addition to collecting pastiches, I also read and chronologicize and remember them – so it was natural that, at some point, I'd follow Edgar W. Smith's advice and write one. (For those who don't

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

recall, Mr. Smith advised that all true Sherlockians worth their salt should write at least one Holmes pastiche.)

In early 2008, at the start of the Great Recession, I was laid off from my job as a civil engineer. After doing the usual job search stuff at the beginning of each day, I would then do chores or read or just hang out. And it was then that I decided to see about writing that pastiche.

I had an idea in mind. It had gestated for a long time: To tell the origin story of Solar Pons, and his connection to Sherlock Holmes. (If you're a Sherlockian who hasn't yet met Solar Pons, you should.) I wanted to write this story, but it was a somewhat ambitious tale, so I decided to write a practice pastiche first. That ended up being "The Adventure of the Least Winning Woman." After that, I kept writing others for practice – and enjoying it. By the time I wrote the Pons origin story, "The Adventure of the Other Brother" (and Pons *isn't* the other brother – but he's a nephew,) I had nine stories, and I was done. I had no plans for them, and I put them on a binder on a shelf in my collection, labeled *The Papers of Sherlock Holmes*.

A couple of years later, I was emailing with a Sherlockian – by now I'd "met" just a few online – and I had the opportunity to timidly announce that I've written some pastiches. I picked and sent one for this person to read, and the positive reaction prompted me to send a couple more. And then I found, to my tentative surprise, that I wanted to see these published in a real book, and not just hidden on my shelf. (In the course of my collecting, I've obtained several unpublished manuscripts from deceased authors who never saw their books published, and I didn't want to be like them.)

In 2011, *The Papers* was published by the Battered Silicon Dispatch Box – they may still be selling their version – and in 2013, I shifted to MX Publishing, where working with Steve Emecz literally changed my life. *The Papers* went on to have an audio version, and to be published in Russia. Steve published my subsequent Holmes books, and he immediately said yes when I had the idea for *The MX Book of New Sherlock Holmes Stories* in early 2015 – now at 42 volumes, with over \$116,000 of donated royalties, raised for the Undershaw school for special needs children. From there, I've gone on to write 113 Holmes pastiches (so far, published in a variety of anthologies, magazines, and my own books), 30 new Solar Pons adventures, and to edit over 1,000 Holmes pastiches by other authors. Working with Steve at MX and also Derrick and Brian Belanger of Belanger Books, I've had the opportunity to edit nearly eighty books, most of them anthologies of new traditional Canonical Holmes pastiches – the kind of Holmes stories that I support and want to read.

THE TWO STORIES SUBMITTED HERE, "The Affair of The Brother's Request" and "The Adventure of the Madman's Ceremony", as well as the related "Postscript: Two Letters", were part of that initial set of nine stories written in Spring 2008 and later published in *The Papers*. I've never written with an outline. Instead, when it's time to write a new story, I open a blank Word document and wait for Watson to start dictating. I'm as surprised at what happens in the adventure as Watson is. And it was a surprise in 2008 when Watson started telling me a story about when he and Holmes came to East Tennessee in June 1921.

They say that all writing is autobiographical to some degree, and there are lots of personal Easter Eggs in these two stories, tossed in because then I never thought anyone else would read them. In the first story, Holmes and Watson pass through

## HOMETOWN HOLMES

Johnson City, TN, where my wife is from, and then visit Knoxville, TN, about fifteen miles north of where I live. Later, they travel to Oneida, TN, where my dad was born and raised, and are assisted on their quest by my grandfather, Willie Marcum. They also meet my grandmother and my aunt, Wilma, then a small child. (1921 was over a decade before my dad was born, so he doesn't make an appearance. In the foreword to *The Papers*, it's explained that Watson had sent these manuscripts to Willie, who passed them down to my Aunt Wilma – and it was in her papers that I discovered them.)

It was great to have Holmes and Watson visit my dad's hometown – and I've just written a somewhat-sequel, still unpublished, in which Solar Pons and Dr. Parker have a reason to go to Oneida in June 1942 – where they also meet my grandfather, and my father, who was then nine years old.

From Oneida, Holmes and Watson travel to Rugby, the famous "colony" started near there for British second sons. On the way, they stop to visit my great-grandparents. (It turns out that my great-grandmother, Rebecca Watson Marcum, daughter of James Watson, son of a Scottish immigrant, was one of the Good Doctor's distant cousins.) After that story ends, Holmes and Watson return to Knoxville, where they visit places in town known to me, including a building at the 1921-version of The University of Tennessee which would have been there then, and where I spent a lot of time taking Civil Engineering classes. Theyn they find a reason to visit my own hometown, Maryville, TN, near the Great Smoky Mountains. There they spend several days exploring while Holmes gets involved in an investigation. (It's here that Holmes meets one of his own distant relatives, my maternal grandfather, Ray Rathbone. You may recall that in an episode of the Sherlock Holmes radio show, "The Case of the Very Best Butter" [from *The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes Radio Show*, April 18, 1948] Holmes tells Watson that he is distantly related to the Rathbone family.)

They arrive at the old train station (still within walking distance of my house) and stay in a small cottage behind a larger farmhouse (still there) which, coincidentally, is in exactly the same spot where my house is now located. In fact, when Watson has some time and sits down to write "Thor Bridge" – as he's reminded of it by a similar bridge very close to my house – the spot where his desk is located and the direction he's facing while seated and writing just happened to be in the exact same spot where I was transcribing "The Madman's Ceremony" – and where I'm now writing these notes.

Other described spots are all there too – Maryville College, where I earned my first college degree, is less than a mile from where I live, and the house in the young company town of Alcoa (immediately adjacent to Maryville) where Mrs. Wade and her son lived has personal importance too: That's the first house that my wife and I bought just a year or so after we got married. It really is next to a fine park, and that park really does have the remnants of that filled-in cave. (I work with someone whose grandfather played in that cave back then, before it was filled in – not by blasting, but simply by sediment.) And when I went to Maryville College in the 1980's, my student job was in Thaw Hall, and there were sinkholes that formed beside it.

When I first wrote these stories, way back in 2008, I hadn't been to England, and I didn't know if I'd ever get there. (Baker Street was the place I most wanted to go in the Whole World. I finally did make it there with Holmes Pilgrimages in 2013, 2015, and 2016.) My thinking in writing these stories was that if I couldn't get to where Holmes and Watson walked, then I could tell the stories of where they walked in my part of the world.

When Steve Mason announced the theme for this collection, I realized that it

## THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR

exactly fit the two stories I'd already written, and he graciously said that he'd include them. Many thanks to him for all that he tirelessly does to support Our Heroes, and for the work that he's doing on this volume. I look forward to reading it and seeing who else's hometowns that Holmes and Watson visited.

David Marcum  
September 2023

