



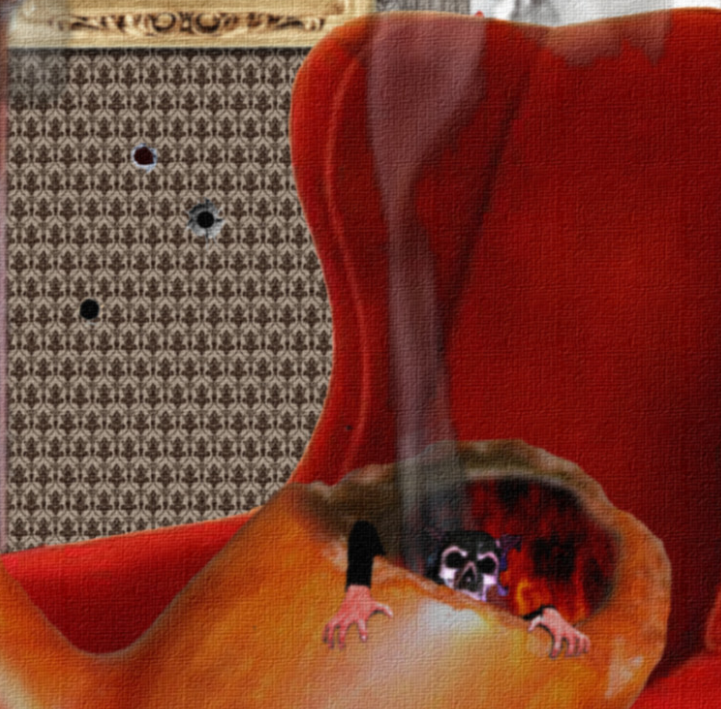
JERSEY



Devil

PRESS

It might be surprising, then, to find that the story of our state, as told in a little book called "The Devil's Press" by John H. Johnson, is not only a true story, but also a very interesting one. The book is a collection of articles from the "Devil's Press" for many years, and it is a very good read. It tells the story of the "Devil's Press" from its beginning to the present day. It is a very interesting and informative book, and it is a must-read for anyone who is interested in the history of our state.



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Introduction

Spend a couple months editing an issue of Sherlock Holmes stories and you'll encounter a strange truth: for a character so famous for his asexuality, lots of people want to fuck him. (Or, at least, know who he's fucking.) Fortunately, the writers in this month's issue explore the subject with both grace and skill.

Not surprisingly, Irene Adler figures prominently in many of our tales, appearing as a time traveling researcher scientist in Jill Hand's "Killing Sherlock" and returning to Victorian London with an unexpected surprise for Messrs. Holmes and Watson in "Bohemian Soul" by Abra Deering Norton. Ms. Adler's presence is also hinted at in Robert Perret's whirlwind "A year in Sherlocku," and she could very well be the true author of Catherine Wald's excellent elucidation of Holmsian desire, "Sexing the Detective."

A second thing you learn editing a Sherlock Holmes issue is that it's not really about the mysteries or the deductions, it's not the deerstalker or the magnifying glass. What made Conan Doyle's stories so special was just going along for the ride with Holmes and Watson on wherever adventure might take them. Pat Woods understands this perfectly and throws in a dash of the mystic (for JDP-good measure) as he constructs an absolutely beautiful lost tale from the archives of John Watson. "The Adventure of the Etheric Projection" closes out our issue.

We hope you can read it somewhere foggy.

Mike Sweeney
Guest Editor

Sexing the Detective

Catherine Wald

I like my men tall, angular and on the spectrum.

I want a guy who knows every intimate detail of my life and nothing about the movements of my heart, who has transformed rudeness into art form, whose intellect induces vertigo.

Let me have an obdurate specimen who wears long, loose coats and strange headgear; who has a brother named Mycroft and a healthy fear of the terrifying anaesthesia of boredom,

a guy who has only one friend—one more than he deserves—and has yet to encounter arc, release and declension as physical phenomena.

Wouldn't I love to prove beyond a reasonable or maniacal doubt his body's insistent logic, take him to the end of the line and make him scream nonsense syllables at the top of his lungs?

CATHERINE WALD's poems have appeared in *American Journal of Nursing*, *Buddhist Poetry Journal*, *Chronogram*, *Classical Poets*, *Exit 13*, *Friends Journal*, *Jewish Literary Journal*, *New Verse News*, *The 5-2 Crime Poetry Weekly*, *The Lyric*, *The New Poet*, and *Westchester Review*. She is the author of the poetry chapbook *Distant, burned-out stars* (Finishing Line Press, 2001) and *The Resilient Writer: Tales of Rejection and Triumph from 23 Top Authors* (Persea, 2005).

Bohemian Soul

Abra Deering Norton

Of course I'd heard of Godfrey Norton. It was only that I didn't quite recall the name. I was busy with my own life, my own distractions. The wife and I were having some marital distress. Mainly, I was ready to begin our healthy brood and she wasn't in the mood for breeding. Whether that was due to a distaste for breeding with me, or breeding in general, I could not say. I will admit I'd been drinking too much as of late and that had done little to advance marital bliss with my rose of a wife so I moved out. Mrs. Hudson welcomed me back to 221B Baker Street without so much as a blink and a how do you do.

Holmes was at his most distracted. Gone for days at a time, meeting with Mycroft over some super-secret urgent mission, on this case or that. It was as if he hadn't even acknowledged that I'd moved back in to our lodgings. I told him it was temporary. He said nothing to me but raised one eyebrow.

I was surprised then, on Tuesday morning the fifteenth, when a young woman called. Mrs. Hudson announced a "Miss Norton" and a young American girl came over the threshold and settled herself in the chair opposite mine. The woman had the most beguiling features. Cat-like eyes that reflected the light in a mercurial way. Hair as dark as a raven's. Smooth skin that tended to be ruddy. Her hands were jittery. They went from her hat, to her lap, to her parasol, to her beaded reticule. She sat stiff in the chair, her white shirtwaist was neatly pressed. She said her name was Miss Adler Norton and she hailed from New Jersey. She was in England visiting a friend of her father's, a barrister. He was a member of The Honorable Society of the Inner Temple, of course. His name was Brosnan. He'd recommended that she hire Sherlock Holmes at once.

I was so taken with her that it took me a long while to put two and two together. She dropped a glove which I fetched for her. I noticed the dirt and clay under her nails. I was taken aback.

"Forgive me," she said. "I'm a sculptress. My mother says I have a Bohemian soul," she said.

My eyebrows shot up. "Indeed? That sounds like someone I know," Holmes was quite the bohemian. "Sherlock Holmes sometimes frequents the Algerian in Soho. The coffee is dark and sweet, served in tall glasses. I went with him once. Ran into a bohemian fellow, head to toe dressed in ruby red corduroy, sat on one end and a literary agent on the other. Everyone smoking Eastern cigarettes. They talked until well past midnight."

"You describe the scene accurately. I find it not so much Hogarthian as stimulating."

"What do you sculpt?" was all I could think to say. I'd never known a sculptress before.

"People," she said. "They are the most difficult."

"Why is that, do you suppose?"

"Because they are not always what they appear to be."

Just as I was about to speak, the door pushed open. Holmes stood on the threshold, somehow appearing taller than he had this morning. His cheeks, nose and ears were red from the cold and he carried the smell of London's streets, mixed with crisp air, with him. He wore his Inverness cape, a scarf tossed over his shoulder, and a hat with ear flaps. It was an Ushanka hat. A gift from a client and due to the inclement weather, he'd taken to wearing it in the city and in the country, in place of his deerstalker.

Miss Norton shifted in her seat. I opened my mouth to introduce her but Sherlock had removed his fur cap and nodded his head in greeting. He said nothing to her. But he stared. For a second longer than necessary.

"Watson, you must haste. Take notes please. I will return."

With that he spun on his heel and left.

I was flabbergasted.

Miss Norton looked stunned. Too tough to be injured, even if his manners were curt, she simply nodded.

"I best get on with it then," Miss Norton said. "My mother has disappeared. She left me a note and told me to see Mr. Brosnan. You see, she said I am to come into a small fortune and she feared for my life."

"Your mother?"

"She's an old... acquaintance... of Mr. Holmes."

I found myself scoffing at such a notion. A female acquaintance of Holmes! Then I stopped. She couldn't be! Could not be!

"You're Irene Adler's daughter!" I blurted, astounded.

She stared at me, a tone of defiance in her look, "I am," she said but her tone seemed to imply a "what of it?" and being that she was American, I didn't want to press further, knowing how liable Americans are to brawl at the slightest provocation.

"I am just, surprised. I remember Mrs. Adler, er, Norton. Holmes remembers her well."

She pressed her lips together. "There's some doubt," she said, "as to, well, my natural birth... origins. This is awkward."

"My dear, you best tell me."

She nodded. "My father, Godfrey, married my mother and raised me."

"I recall," I said, "that they were married in some haste before departing London."

She nodded. "I am not Godfrey's natural daughter. It seems that I am, in fact, Wilhelm Gottsreich Sigismond von Ormstein's daughter. Ormstein was the King of Bohemia before the Kingdom was to be ruled by Emperor Ferdinand."

"How old are you?"

"I'm already eighteen. One could make the argument that I am an heir to the Kingdom of Bohemia," she said.

I stared at her. I was overcome with the desire to fall into a pique of laughter, for some strange reason. Perhaps it was

something Mrs. Hudson had put in the tea. Wilhelm had been found dead a few months prior in a harlot's house near Haymarket. He'd been disgraced and Emperor Ferdinand had taken over, marrying his widow, the Swedish Queen so that she could keep her title. It had caused quite the scandal. She had a daughter but no sons. The daughter was about Miss Norton's age.

Ah. Yes. Matters complicated, indeed. "Well, do you have any proof of your assertions?"

"I do, of course. I have a letter from King Wilhelm. With the official stamp."

She produced the letter from her reticule. I went over to Sherlock's desk, found his magnifying glass and gave a look. I ran my fingers over it. It seemed authentic enough. I recalled, from my memory banks, the King's personal stationary. I remembered it and this matched. I read aloud: "My dearest Irene, you and I have known the truth all these years and you honored your end of the bargain. I shall honor mine. I do not wish any shame to be brought upon the House of Ormstein. You shall keep our little secret, the darling 'parcel' as we call her, and you will receive the following items: a selection of photographs, one bumbershoot, and the rare opal, gold, and diamond necklace which was worn by my mother that will be bequeathed to our little parcel."

I looked at the "little parcel." She looked as scared as a bird that would start pecking at the air in a nervous fashion at any moment. I felt protective of her somehow.

"Does Holmes know?"

She shrugged. "Brosnan suggested we contact him. My mother said she and Mr. Holmes were dear friends." I doubted it but didn't want to say so. Miss Norton's eyes roamed our sitting room. She took in the walls of books, the odds and ends that could be in a curiosity-shop, the cigars and pipes, even a scarab from the great Lady Meux. Miss Norton nodded. "Yes, mother described this

room in great detail. It appears that it hasn't changed much in eighteen years."

"Your mother was *here*?"

"Oh yes. Before she left for the states with my... father, er... you know... Godfrey."

I doubted that too but remained mum. I wanted to pat her hand and make her feel safe. She had a face of steel, yet there was more vulnerability in her eyes than a hundred does in the meadow.

"Pray, may I ask Miss Norton, what do you want Mr. Holmes to do, precisely?"

"To keep me safe. There's a bounty on my head. Mr. Brosnan, the barrister, contacted the royal house on my behalf and naturally they resisted."

"Naturally. That's awful. I am not certain Holmes can keep you safe."

"There's also this..." she reached inside her shirt and pulled out a gold necklace. The chain was thick as a rope. In the center was the largest opal I'd ever seen. It was ringed with diamonds. Two rows of large, dazzling diamonds. It was stunning. I gasped.

"Well you have it. I'm confused, it's beautiful, what's the problem?" I asked.

"Dr. Watson, I'm saying that this necklace – the one my true father, the King, bequeathed to me – is not this. This. Is a fake."

"A fake?"

She nodded. "It's worthless. I don't know if it was a cruel trick he played on my mother or if someone in his House sent me the fake. My mother was hysterical because the first thing she did was have it appraised. Then she put us on the next steamer and planned to confront him. On our journey over – he passed away. She looked up a friend of my father, er, Mr. Norton's, and he said we should contact Mr. Holmes. She told me she was on her way to see Holmes – a few days ago – I haven't seen her since."

She began crying into her muckender. "I just d-don't know what to do."

"So what you're saying is that you are, in fact, a princess."

Her eyes went wide. "Now that you put it like that. I hadn't thought of it that way. Do you really think so?"

"I daresay, Miss Norton, if you are the king's daughter you have a claim to something. I know that many a King sired unnatural children, forgive me, and they often do not get recognized – certainly not an ascension to the throne. Take Edward IV, for example – his two sons, two princes, were locked in the Tower of London and never heard from again. And I believe it was Elizabeth I who reigned but...my dear you couldn't possibly believe..."

"Oh gosh no, I don't. I couldn't. I wouldn't. I'm American, Dr. Watson. I just want to give my mother some peace. She's convinced I'm a princess. It seems to mean so much to her. Godfrey was a wonderful father to me. I'll always consider him my father. Still. I always felt distant, somehow, different."

"I suppose all children feel that way at one time or another. How did you feel different?"

"I often felt bored. If I'm being honest. It is like I can see things other people can't. Strange details. All details. I can remember things too. I never forget a face. I feel, and this sounds horrible to say, but I feel as if people are ants and I'm looking down at them. I become exasperated at times at their slow-wittedness. For example, I could tell you a few things about yourself."

"Such as?"

"You drank too much last night. I noticed it immediately. You wince at light and sounds. The little capillaries around your eyes are broken. You were sick this morning, no?"

"Correct but not unusual. Any observant person would know that –"

"You would think so, but I often find not many seem to notice what I observe. You have the air of an upset man. Deeply upset, something nagging at you. I would guess that you and your wife are getting a divorce."

I stared. "Yes. Well, I suppose that type of insight could be awful."

She smiled sheepishly. "At times it is. The funny thing is I do like people. I'm an adventurer at heart, like my mother, and I love to feel alive, you know. That's why I sculpt. It's the only time I feel truly at peace."

She stood up and came over to me, her eyes looking into mine, piercing. "Did you know Praxiteles, the ancient Greek sculptor, sculpted the most beautiful Aphrodite? Some built altars to her whereupon you could cleanse your heartsick soul. The Cyziceni had a well and just one taste would mitigate your lovesickness. Sculpting heals me. Do you need to be healed Dr. Watson?"

I couldn't move. At that moment, for the first time in months, I felt the gloom evaporate. She was a basket of oranges, no doubt, as beguiling as she was pretty. I scarcely knew what to say. My throat was as dry as the Registan.

There was a banging upon the door. Inspector Bradstreet opened it. The man in the frogged jacket and tall cap. He kept his head hanging low.

"Where is Mr. Holmes?"

"I haven't the slightest idea at the moment, he left some minutes ago," said I.

Mrs. Hudson was in the doorway. "Is everything all right Inspector?"

"Excuse me a moment," Miss Norton took her leave.

Holmes had instructed me to not let her out of my sight until he returned and I would not fail.

"May I be of service, Inspector Bradstreet?" I asked.

"No, just looking for Holmes." Bradstreet glanced down at the letter and magnifying glass.

I waited until he left. Miss Norton was still absent to freshen up and Mrs. Hudson headed back to her apartment.

I stood for a moment looking out at the skyline. The grey, ethereal mist blanketed a city dotted with soft glowing lights and

eerie ghosts of dark chimneys and bridges punctuated the night. The poetry of the city landscape was much more inspiring than that of the suburbs, if one were inclined to poetic notions, which I was not. The gloom was not as heavy on me now. There was no denying it, being at Baker Street agreed with me. I felt better than I'd felt in a while. My marriage was done.

I saw a blur of black coat and skirt run past me. I heard thumping down the stairs and the front door of our terrace slam closed. I grabbed my hat, coat, and broly and headed out into the pattering rain. As luck would have it, I saw Miss Norton up ahead on the street and followed. She dodged a Growler and slipped in the mud but continued on. In the rain I could not see well. The Strand was a jumble of cabs, horse trams, crossing sweepers, pedestrians – nothing but a river of black bowlers and coats under the glare of lampposts. I feared she would disappear into the Underground.

I ran down the street, the rain pounding on me, blurring my vision. I saw a black skirt, jacket and hat dart around a corner. I dodged a Growler and came into a tunnel. There, for a few moments, I found relief from the downpour. I couldn't see her. There was a workman leading his horse—holding a lantern high, two men in discussion, and another carrying a plank of wood. I came upon her conferring with the three men. She held a parcel. What, were they a team of Dragsmen?

"Miss Norton," I said. "What do you have there?"

She spun around and the man with the wood plank – swung it in my direction. Fortunately for me, I ducked. Then with my good leg – I struck out and kicked his shins. He went down.

I grabbed Miss Norton and took her by the arm. The parcel was in the mud. She yanked her arm away and fell to the ground. She opened the package and pulled out goose feathers. "It's *not* here! It's not here!" she cried.

"All right, don't go off your head."

She swirled to standing and foisted me with an evil stare and shriek, then let out the hue and cry: "Toast your blooming eyebrows!"

She wailed and fussed all the way to Baker Street but that didn't stop me from dragging her past the trams and Growlers and throwing her into a cab. In no time, we were back in our apartments and Mrs. Hudson was fetching tea.

Miss Norton seemed to be in a fit. She was distraught and feverish. Our landlady recommended putting her to bed. My room (and certainly Sherlock's) was out of the question so instead we made a bed on the sofa. Mrs. Hudson tended to her. I read the newspaper. Finally, when we had a crackling fire, the girl sat up.

"I think you best come clean."

"Okay," she said in a quiet voice staring at her teacup. Then she looked at me and her young eyes were filled with tears. She was indeed, young, and I saw the conviction in her eyes. "But I know I'm not Godfrey's daughter!" She rummaged through her reticule. "Look! We look nothing alike!"

Indeed, a photo showed Godfrey and he was tall with dark hair but the features were entirely different.

"So you expect me to believe you really are what? An unrecognized princess?"

"Believe what you want. I know *Godfrey* is *not* my father. I believe my mother. She told me he was not my father."

Mrs. Hudson returned with a message. "It's from Holmes," she whispered, out of earshot of Miss Norton.

I took the note and retired to Holmes's desk. It said that he found the real necklace at a jeweler's in Marylebone. The instructions were specific. I was to go to the jeweler's and obtain the necklace by any means necessary and then I was to meet Holmes at the hotel lobby. He would be in the corner, in the dark, and I was to leave the necklace in a parcel nearby. Holmes was meeting a representative from the House of Ormstein and needed the necklace to vouchsafe her life.

This was no small order. I made my way to the jewelers and after some arguing and a promise that I was "borrowing" it and leaving some items for collateral, the jeweler parted with the necklace. Miss Norton was with me and said not a peep.

We walked to the hotel and it was still raining. "I forgot my bumbershoot," she said. I held out my broolly and she turned to me. "Dr. Watson, you've been such a dear. I'm sorry, for any trouble –"

I interrupted her. "Nonsense. It's been awhile since I've helped Holmes and it's gotten me out of a rather gloomy time."

"I'm glad," she said smiling. Then I saw her eyes take on the faraway look. "I'll wait outside," she said.

I went into the lobby. It was dimly lit and I could barely make out Holmes sitting in the corner with several people. I saw his profile quite distinctly and he was smoking a pipe. All was in shadow, as I expect the House of Ormstein wouldn't have it any other way.

As instructed, I left the parcel on a table and turned to go.

I saw a woman rise from the table, dressed in a fine dress and fur. A flicker of recognition ran across my face. I staggered backwards. It couldn't be! It was Irene Adler. She looked as if she hadn't aged a day in eighteen years.

Holmes was meeting with Irene Adler?

Just then I spun around to see Holmes cross into the lobby, dragging Miss Norton by the arm. She twisted and turned and got out of his grasp. "Mother!" she cried.

Holmes held up a lantern and called out. The lights came on. Inspectors Bradstreet and Hopkins came forward.

"There!" Holmes cried. He pointed to the corner. Now that the lights were on I saw the men from the tunnel – when Miss Norton had hoped to have the real necklace then but the box had been empty. Mrs. Irene Adler stood with a triumphant look upon her face. And the Sherlock Holmes profile I'd seen in shadow?

It was a bust of plaster.

Miss Norton had done a marvelous job sculpting it.

"Your game is up," Holmes said. "I don't know why you should go to such lengths. It's ridiculous. I would never believe that Miss Norton is Ormstein's daughter. I saw the letter; Mrs. Hudson slipped it to me. I was, in fact, in disguise as Bradstreet in his hat and frogged coat. The chief clue was this – the word in the letter. "Bumbershoot" is an American word. It's an Americanism of umbrella when Americans are trying to sound British."

"I don't understand," Miss Norton said. "Mother?"

"I suppose you're right," Irene Adler said. "But you don't understand, either, it was not my choice to be here – to do this."

"We all have a choice," Holmes said, "and this is not the way to get my attention."

"Oh no? You ignored all my letters. It worked, didn't it?"

Holmes stared at her, for the first time (well, the second time – the first time being the first encounter with Mrs. Irene Adler) he was rendered speechless. I often find women have this effect on men, but never have I seen it on Holmes, until her.

Holmes came to her slowly with the utmost delicate and gentle of expressions. He reached out his hand. Irene began weeping. She dropped her head.

"We both have bohemian souls, do we not? We – three?" Irene said.

Holmes soothed her. He took her hand. He lifted her chin. We all stared in awe.

"Indeed, my dear, we do. We do."

What did that mean, exactly? Bohemian soul?

As if reading my thoughts, Holmes answered:

"We know that there is more to life than meets the eye. Most people cannot see beyond the ordinary. Most poor fools are blind. Artists see the extraordinary in every day."

Miss Norton came forward, her voice a whisper. "Bohemian souls have the gift of sight. It is... magic."

For a moment, the room seemed to dazzle. It was as if everything grew sharper, just for an instant, heightened, more spectacular. In that moment, I'm not afraid to admit – even a Blackheath man like myself – I did believe in magic. It would not be the first time I thought Holmes in possession of some otherworldly gifts. What would the world be without artists, writers, and "magic?" Without people like Holmes? It would be a very dull place, indeed.

Irene dabbed at her tears. She put on the stiff upper lip and turned to Miss Norton. "All I wanted, Holmes, was to show you – the apple doesn't fall far from the tree."

I stared in awe, my head bobbing from one to the other of them. What was going on? Were they all mad?

"You could've called and had a tea and conversation," Holmes said. "Like ordinary people."

"How dull. How unextraordinary. How unlike our bohemian souls."

Holmes had nothing to say at that.

Miss Norton was not in tears but had a certain steely resolve.

"The king is not my father?"

"No, dear," said Irene Adler.

"And neither is Godfrey?"

"I'm afraid not," she said with a smile.

"Well... who then? Mother, who is my father?"

Irene Adler looked at Holmes and smiled. "The man who is your father is in this photograph, here. An old cabinet I saved. From long ago. When I first encountered this."

Just then a smoke bomb went off. We were dazed in a fit of coughs. The Inspectors called out and we stumbled through the lobby and outdoors. By the time Holmes and I made it to the street – they were gone.

Gone with the necklace too.

The necklace I'd obtained for them!

We went back inside as the windows were opened and the smoke was fanned. Holmes had the most curious expression on his face. One of such pain and longing as I'd never seen. We made our way over to the table whereupon we regarded the bust in his image. The sculpting showed real talent. It was quite remarkable, masterful, even.

There was a photograph set on the tabletop, leaning against the bust.

Holmes couldn't bring himself to pick it up. I glanced at the photo – then back at him – then back at the photo.

"Why – why – why, Holmes!" was all I could say.

ABRA DEERING NORTON's recent fiction and poetry have appeared in *Jersey Devil Press*, *The East Coast Literary Review*, *Star 82 Review*, *Eunoia Review*, *The Haiku Journal* and elsewhere. She has an MFA from UCLA. She's written for the *Los Angeles Times* and her essays have appeared in *The Huffington Post*. She recently completed an upmarket historical mystery-suspense novel with a female sleuth set in 1899. She's originally from Minneapolis, lives in California and misses the rain. You can find her online at her website: www.thismywritinglife.com or twitter: @adeerLA.

Killing Sherlock

Jill Hand

"I'm terribly sorry, old man, but I'm afraid that I must kill you."

That was Arthur Doyle addressing Sherlock Holmes – Artie, as I liked to call him with a flirty little wink, just to see him blush.

Sherlock steeped his long fingers under his chin and gave Doyle a chilly grey look that would have done credit to a basilisk.

"Get your revolver, John. Doyle has threatened my life," he drawled to John Watson, the fourth person in the room. Watson lounged in the basket chair in the room overlooking the street of the flat they shared. It was not located at 221b Baker Street. The address was one I won't disclose, except to say that it was in London, neither posh Mayfair nor gritty Bermondsey, but somewhere in-between.

John made as if he were about to stand, causing Doyle to look like a panicked walrus. It was mainly the bushy mustache that did it, but there was an undefinable something about Doyle that reminded one of a walrus. Give him tusks and flippers and set him down on the Arctic ice and the walruses might accept him as one of their own.

"No! I didn't mean that I was actually going to kill him. Good heavens! I meant that I intend to kill the other Sherlock."

"Your alter ego," I told Holmes. I tentatively bit into one of the scones that Mrs. Hudson had brought upstairs upon Doyle's arrival. Mrs. Hudson's scones were terrible, but I was hungry so I nibbled on one anyway, wondering if she made them out of plaster of Paris as a joke, or if they were intended for decorative purposes only.

"Indeed, Miss Adler," Doyle said, nodding gratefully to me. "What I meant to say was that I find it necessary to kill the fictional Sherlock Holmes."

He smiled at me and I smiled back, crossing my legs as I did so. His mouth dropped open at the sight of my bare ankle and six inches of calf.

“Oops!” I said, tugging down the hem of my long, navy blue serge skirt. “I forgot to put on stockings. I forgot to put on drawers, too.”

Watson burst out laughing at that. Sherlock gave a chilly smile as Doyle gasped and turned red. Ladies weren’t supposed to cross their legs, let alone flash bare skin. They certainly weren’t supposed to mention their undergarments (or lack of undergarments) in mixed company.

But what did Doyle expect? Look what he did to me in *A Scandal in Bohemia*. He made me an adventuress, a seductress. I was “the woman,” the one who beat Sherlock, using her brains as well as her feminine wiles. Since he made me a shady lady in his story I enjoy shocking him.

In reality I’m a research scientist. I was occupied with gathering data on London’s air and water pollution, of which there was a great deal at the time the conversation about killing Sherlock took place. I’ve never even met the King of Bohemia, let alone had my picture taken with him. I was never an opera singer, either. My singing isn’t any better than Mrs. Hudson’s baking.

The only true detail in that story in which I play such a prominent role was my place of birth: New Jersey. Paterson, to be precise. The year of my birth wasn’t somewhere around 1855, as is assumed by devotees of the fifty-six short stories and four novels that Doyle wrote about the adventures of the great detective – it was 2234.

You see, John and Sherlock and I are time travelers, as are quite a few people in the twenty-third century, most of them researchers of one kind or another who like poking around in the past. You can imagine how surprised Doyle was when we told him.

“Remarkable. Time travel! It’s like something out of the writings of Monsieur Jules Verne,” he said. He gazed at us in

fascination. "I should like to write about you. Not the kind of thing Verne does, but a different kind of tale."

And so he did, mixing fact with fiction, a little fact to a great deal of fiction. The man had quite an imagination. He claimed to have inherited his talent for spinning tales from his mother, who used to tell him stories when he was a boy in Edinburgh.

John Watson really is a medical doctor, like his fictional namesake. He came to late nineteenth-century London in order to study diseases that no longer exist in the modern world but were rampant back then, nasty things like rhinoviruses that used to cause something called the common cold. I can't imagine how people were able to put up with all the sneezing and coughing and sore throats, but somehow they did. People who lived long ago must have been made of stern stuff; either that or they just gave up and died young.

There were even nastier diseases than colds floating around back in 1893, the year in which the conversation about killing Sherlock took place, things like smallpox and cholera. John found them absolutely fascinating. He practically danced with excitement when he discovered a case of leprosy in Limehouse, that's how much he enjoys his work.

Sherlock, of course, was there because John was there. The two of them are inseparable. Theirs is one of the happiest marriages that I know of. You can imagine how Doyle reacted when he found out the nature of their relationship.

"But you seem like such hearty, wholesome fellows," he sputtered, shocked to his very core. "At least you do," he told John. "Sherlock is just..."

He paused, at a loss at how to describe him.

"Extraordinary?" Sherlock suggested, adjusting the lapels of his mouse-colored dressing gown.

Artie nodded numbly. "Men getting married to each other. My word! The future must be terribly strange."

He shook his head regretfully. "My readers will never have that. It would be absolutely scandalous. I might be brought up on criminal charges if I wrote something like that. I shall have to make you devoted friends instead."

"We *are* devoted friends, aren't we, dear?" said Sherlock, drawing John close and giving him a lingering kiss.

I thought Arthur's eyes were going to pop out of his head. He was chummy with Oscar Wilde, so he wasn't a homophobe, but the sight of two men kissing wasn't something he was used to.

Arthur and Sherlock met one day in the summer of 1887 on Blackfriars Bridge. Doyle was gazing morosely out at the river, mopping his forehead with a cotton handkerchief. Lightweight men's suits had yet to come into fashion in England and he was sweating in his heavy wool trousers, wool vest, and suitcoat. He may have been wistfully thinking of his trip to the Arctic Circle aboard a whaling vessel seven years previously, longing for a bit of that frigid air. Sherlock walked up to him and did that thing he does, the thing he can't resist doing.

"I see, sir, that you've met an old acquaintance, one who's down on his luck, and had a drink with him. I further deduce that your old acquaintance is a sea-faring man."

Doyle made his astonished walrus face.

"Good lord! However did you know that?"

"It was simple," Sherlock smugly replied. He explained that Doyle's boots had traces of tar on them and there were strands of hemp fiber clinging to the sleeve of his jacket, indicating that he'd been to the docks. There was a piece of pasteboard sticking out of his pocket with a picture of a three-masted schooner and the words HOPE & ANCHOR printed on it, obviously the name of a public house, one frequented by sailors.

He didn't mention that he could smell the alcohol fumes on Doyle's breath from five feet away. Sherlock has a nose like a bloodhound.

“You are correct. I ran into an old friend from my days as a ship’s surgeon and stood him to a drink. But however did you know he was down on his luck?”

“By your pocket watch,” Sherlock said.

“I’m not wearing one.”

“But you are accustomed to wearing one,” Sherlock told him, smiling. He absolutely loves playing this game. “There is a circular impression on the watch pocket of your vest, but the watch and chain are absent. You were patting the pocket when I walked up, and looking down at the gold ring you wear on your left hand: a wedding band. You were obviously thinking about how your wife would react to finding out that you’d given your watch and chain to an old acquaintance, one who was too proud to accept money from you but who would take a watch and chain as a gift in memory of old times. How did I do?”

“One-hundred percent correct,” breathed the astonished Doyle. “Who are you, sir?”

Holmes extended his hand. “My name is Sherlock Holmes.”

And that’s how they met. Sherlock brought Arthur home to meet John and me. It wasn’t long before he was writing about us, or rather a fictional version of us.

In our time, the world of the twenty-third century, Sherlock is a consultant who works with businesses, suggesting ways for them to increase their productivity. Sometimes he’s called upon to find out who’s been stealing from them. That last part intrigued Doyle.

“So you solve crimes? You’re a detective?”

“I’m a consultant.”

“But you’re called in to solve crimes. You find the guilty parties and then you hand them over to the police. That makes you a type of detective, a consulting detective.”

“As you will,” Sherlock replied negligently. I might add that he was not smoking a pipe when this conversation took place in the

flat that was not in Baker Street. Unlike the fictional Sherlock, he knew tobacco was bad for you, a point on which Doyle disagreed.

“A good pipeful of tobacco does no harm at all. It stimulates the thought processes and strengthens the lungs. I know hordes of men who would sooner go without their dinners than go without their tobacco.”

“That’s because it’s addictive,” put in John. “So is cocaine.”

Doyle agreed that cocaine was not good for one when taken in excess, but on the subject of tobacco he refused to budge. He could be very stubborn, although sometimes we were able to get him to change his mind.

For instance, it was initially his idea to make his great detective’s sidekick Chinese, or as he put it, “a Chinaman, with a long queue and yellow silk robes and a funny way of talking.”

We convinced him to make him an ex-soldier instead, a medical man, like himself and Watson.

“I shall call him John Watson, and make him the narrator of the stories,” he declared. “I’ll make him less clever than Sherlock.”

He gave Watson a sidelong look at that, possibly still bothered by the fact that a doctor from the future had told him tobacco was addictive and harmful to one’s health. Doyle smoked a pipe and cigars.

The four of us collaborated on the Sherlock Holmes stories, with Doyle having the deciding vote on their final form. The stories caused a tremendous sensation. Readers loved the brilliant, eccentric crime-solver who played the violin and jabbed himself with a syringe full of cocaine when he got bored. They couldn’t wait for a new issue of *The Strand* magazine to come out with another Holmes story.

My own contributions were small ones, aside from my name. I suggested that Holmes keep his tobacco in a Turkish slipper, and that he pin his bills to the mantelpiece with a jack knife. I also gave Doyle the idea of having his detective shoot the Queen’s initials, VR, into the wall of his flat. I accomplished this by shooting the

heads off a pair of Staffordshire china dogs while in a state of exasperation.

Doyle was puzzled by the fact that I went about collecting air and water samples. "But it's good English air!" he protested one afternoon, when an evil, greyish-yellow miasma swirled outside the window, making it impossible for anyone on the streets to see more than three feet in any direction. London's air pollution problem would eventually result in the Great Smog of December 1952 that killed as many as 12,000 people. Clean air laws were enacted after that, but in Artie's time, pea soup fogs, or London particulars, as they were called, were accepted matter-of-factly as just another meteorological phenomenon, like rain or snow.

The nature of my work not only baffled him, it concerned him that I went about the streets by myself while collecting my samples. What if I were approached by a ruffian?

"I have these," I told him, taking a set of brass knuckles and a lead truncheon with a braided leather handle out of my pockets and placing them on the table where the tea things were with small but decisive thumps. "I have this, too," I added, drawing a tiny, silver-plated revolver from my reticule. The gun was the kind called a "cyclist's friend." They were popular with bicyclists, who carried them as protection against savage dogs and tramps.

Doyle chuckled indulgently. "Oh, now really, Miss Adler. That little gun is no more than a toy. It couldn't do any real damage. It's not as if you even know how to..."

I took aim at one of a pair of china dogs on the mantelpiece about twelve feet in front of where I stood and blew its head off. I shot its companion's head off too, to prove that my first shot wasn't just lucky.

"Here! Who's shooting?" That was Mrs. Hudson, who'd hurried up the stairs at the sound of gunshots. "My dogs!" she wailed when she saw the decapitated canines. I told her I was sorry and offered to replace them.

"You can't shoot guns in this house," she said, stamping a foot clad in a high-button boot. "I won't have it."

I apologized again. She took up the tea tray with a sniff and departed.

Doyle was looking at me dazedly. "Remarkable," he said. "Utterly remarkable."

We were able to talk him out of some of his more outlandish plots for Sherlock Holmes stories. For instance, he wanted Holmes to lose his memory and arrange for a gang of criminals to steal the crown jewels, believing himself to be his nemesis, Professor Moriarty. Most of his tales were excellent, but he admitted when *The Blue Carbuncle* came out in the January 1892 issue of *The Strand* that he was running out of ideas.

"They wanted something with a Christmas theme, and I thought of having a Christmas goose swallow a valuable gem, but it's not my best work," he told us glumly as we sat around the table drinking tea and dispiritedly poking at plates of Mrs. Hudson's horrible plum pudding. "I've had my fill of Holmes. I feel about him as I did about *pâté de foie gras* after I ate too much of it. I can't stand the stuff now. The name of it gives me a sickly feeling."

Mrs. Hudson entered the room at that point, catching John in the act of tipping the contents of his plate out the window. "I slaved over that pudding," she told him with narrowed eyes. "I thought I'd give you a nice treat, but I see that I needn't have bothered."

"I like your pudding, Mrs. Hudson," I told her.

"Don't tell lies, Irene," Sherlock said. He swallowed a forkful of pudding and gave Mrs. Hudson an adoring look. "Delicious! I appreciate your cooking, even if Watson and Miss Adler don't."

She *harrumphed* and turned to Doyle, her hands on her hips. "What's this about you tiring of Sherlock Holmes? He's wonderful! You can't be thinking of giving him up."

"Dear lady..." Doyle began, but she cut him off. "I don't just like the stories because the housekeeper has my name (not that I *am*

the housekeeper. I'm their landlady, a fact that they always seem to forget when they want somebody to make their tea.) I like them because they're *good*. If you stop writing about Sherlock Holmes the public will be furious."

She was right, but that came later.

Doyle was into Spiritualism. He'd asked us many times if the people of the future embraced it, and whether proof of life after death had been discovered by our time. We refused to comment. We wouldn't tell him any details about the world of the future, no matter how much he begged us.

"At least tell me whether the future is better or worse than the world of today."

"In some ways it's better, in some ways it's worse," John replied, evasively but truthfully.

"Well, I think it will be better," Doyle declared. "I believe the people of the future will be Spiritualists. They will have the comfort of knowing that their departed loved ones live on, in the happy Summerland beyond the veil."

Despite his mother's objections to him killing off the great detective (Mary Doyle, like Mrs. Hudson and thousands of others, was a rabid fan of the Holmes stories), Artie decided there'd be a final Sherlock Holmes story in which the great detective met his end. After that, he planned to devote himself to writing about Spiritualism. He began mulling over ways in which to dispose of Holmes. So far he'd come up with having him blown up by a bomb, run over by a Benz Patent Motorwagen driven by Moriarty, or being eaten by a tiger.

None of those sounded good to me. Doyle eagerly leaped on my suggestion that he have Holmes engage in a battle to the death with his archenemy in which they both would die.

"What a capital idea, Miss Adler! That way, I shan't be pestered by people who want me to write about Moriarty's nefarious activities after Holmes has gone to his final reward, and beg me to

create some other champion to match wits with him. I shall have to think of a means of killing them both off, two for the price of one, you might say.”

Our visit to the past concluded, John, Sherlock and I wrapped up our work and returned to our time, the world of the twenty-third century. It took considerable adjustment after we’d been gone for nearly six years. While I didn’t miss the smells and the appalling poverty that I’d witnessed in parts of the East End, I missed the sound of horses’ hooves and carriage wheels in the streets, and the leisurely pace of life back then.

Weeks went by. I was working on a paper about the research I’d done on air pollution in late nineteenth-century London one morning when Sherlock dropped by for a visit. He’s not in the habit of visiting without John and I wondered why he’d come. Strange to relate, he seemed nervous. Sherlock was never nervous. I wondered what was going on.

“I have something for you,” he said, after he’d seated himself and declined an offer of a cup of tea. He shifted around in the chair, crossing and uncrossing his long legs before withdrawing a sealed envelope from an inner pocket of his jacket and passing it to me. *Miss Irene Adler* was written on the front in a neat handwriting that I recognized as Doyle’s.

“I didn’t open it,” Sherlock assured me. “The contents, I believe, are highly personal. Doyle asked me to pass it on to you after we’d returned to our time. I suspect he was too shy to give it to you himself.” He gave one of his thin smiles and sat back in his chair, waiting for me to read what was inside.

I opened the envelope and withdrew a single sheet of heavy linen paper. *My dear Miss Adler*, it began. *You have gone far away to a place where I cannot follow. If you will pardon a touch of melodrama, by the time you read this I will be dust. I devoutly hope that I shall have entered into the happy land beyond the veil that awaits all of those who have lived honourable lives and who have done their duty to the best of their ability. I look forward to meeting you again in the land where there is*

no time. It is with the greatest admiration and devotion that I say that to me, you will always be "the woman." Yours, Arthur. P.S. It may amuse you to know that I had my great detective meet his end by going over a waterfall. It was your description of the Great Falls in your native Paterson that gave me the idea. I remember you speaking of them, just as I remember everything you ever said to me, my very dear Miss Adler.

Sherlock watched as I finished reading and folded the letter back into the envelope. "He loved you," he said gently. He passed me a handkerchief and I blotted my tears.

"You knew?" He nodded his head.

I hadn't known. I'd thought of him simply as Artie, gentlemanly, a little stodgy, someone at whom I'd liked to poke fun. Certainly no one in whom one would suspect the fires of unrequited passion burned. I asked Sherlock how he knew when I hadn't.

"I notice everything," he said. "I'm Sherlock Holmes; it's what I do." He waited for me to blow my nose before continuing.

"Unrequited love can be painful, but in Arthur's case, the love he felt for you brought him great joy. He knew you didn't love him, but he was happy when you teased him and called him Artie and made him blush. He was quite a singular gentleman. Did you know that he wrote a book declaring his belief in fairies?"

"No? Really?" The thought made me smile.

"Indeed," Sherlock replied. "He brought my alter ego back, too, just as I suspected he would." He gave a cat-who-swallowed-the-canary smile. "I inspired him, you know, not that Joseph Bell fellow. It was me, Sherlock Holmes."

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A Year in Sherlocku

Robert Perret

the snow lies heavy
upon but one window sill
cold hearth cries cold blood

the fresh cut bouquet
conceals a hard diamond heart
as does the lady

the problem with sand
is that it gets everywhere
even to the truth

harvest apple pie
a sour secret message
for the rotten man

ROBERT PERRET is a devout Sherlockian and librarian living in north Idaho. His haiku have appeared in *Frongpond* and have been honorably mentioned at the Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival.

The Adventure of the Etheric Projection

Pat Woods

Foreword by J.S. Watson

When my beloved father, the revered Dr. John H. Watson, passed away, it was my unhappy but necessary task to put his personal effects into order. Many of my father's most important papers were filed in a travel-worn and battered dispatch box in the vaults of Cox and Co., of Charing Cross. Nearly all of them are records of cases that illustrate the curious problems which Mr. Sherlock Holmes, the peerless consulting detective and my father's dearest friend, had at various times to examine. Knowing that the public is still keenly interested in the adventures my father shared with Mr. Holmes, I took it upon myself to read and categorise these notes.

Amongst these cases, I discovered many curious incidents which may one day be published, yet the most striking of all I have wasted no time in delivering straight to the offices of The Strand Magazine.

I have not edited my father's words in any way, nor will I ever find cause to do so. His readers will, I am sure, realise by the end of his tale why an account of this business has never seen the light of day. As to the rest, I doubt not that there will be some who scarcely credit the extraordinary events of the case. Yet how often have we thought and said the same of the remarkable adventures of Mr. Sherlock Holmes?

J.S. Watson

"Wake up, Watson!"

How many times had I been awoken by that masterful voice? Sprung from slumber to find Holmes at my bedside, candle in hand, hurrying me into my clothes even as he leapt down the seventeen steps of 221B Baker Street to call for a cab. How many of

my adventures with the great detective began in just such a fashion?

It should be no surprise therefore that I was out of my bed in a twinkling, reaching for my trousers, my nightshirt already half-way removed. I was filled with the old familiar joy, which dispelled the last vestiges of my sleep like the slap of cold rain.

“What time is it, Holmes?” I asked.

“Half-past five,” my friend replied. “Come, Watson. Time, I fear, is already against us.”

It was the darkness that brought me to my senses.

I had been looking to see the expression on my friend’s face, for the tone of his voice conveyed to me the absolute seriousness of the affair. But the room was as black as a coal-mine. There was no candle to illuminate Holmes’ lean features, nor light to dance in his piercing grey eyes.

There was no Holmes at all.

For how could there be? Sherlock Holmes had been dead for almost two years; lost in the swirling chasm of the Reichenbach Falls, along with Professor Moriarty, his deadliest foe.

I was not in my old room at Baker Street. Painful memories had made it impossible for me to so much as knock at the well-remembered door. Nor was I residing at the same address as I had been in 1891. My darling wife, Mary, had also passed away, succumbing to the lung infection that to this day I blame myself for failing to diagnose. That house also held too many memories for me.

I was alone in the world, even as I had been upon my return to these shores after my discharge from the army. My meeting with Sherlock Holmes had redeemed my meaningless existence.

Was it then a dream that I had heard? Some trick of my mind, bereft as I was of both my closest friend and my beloved wife? I could not deny that I longed for the days when Holmes and I would plunge into the London fog in pursuit of a desperate villain, or in the hopes of preventing some abominable crime.

“Quickly, man. We must not delay!”

I heard Holmes’ voice again, as loudly and clearly as if he had been standing at my side.

Was I mad? Or was I yet dreaming, and this was no more than a vivid reminder of all that I had lost and still yearned for in my heart?

“Holmes?” I asked, my voice faltering. “Is that really you?”

“There is no time for this, Watson,” he said, and I heard the suppressed annoyance in his voice.

“But... you’re dead.”

“My dear Watson, I assure you that I am quite alive.”

I glanced quickly around, fumbling for the candle and matches I kept on my bedside table.

“But where are you?” I asked.

“Tibet.”

“*Tibet?*” I was jerked up short. “Then how—”

“Watson, there is no time!” If I were indeed only conjuring Holmes’ voice from the depths of my memory, I had imbued it with all the sharpness it has possessed of old, when he would bark impatiently at a Scotland Yard inspector who impeded him. “I give you my word that I will explain everything later. But even as we speak we are losing precious moments. Into the street, Watson, I beg of you. There is not a moment to lose. The game’s afoot!”

There was no gainsaying that voice. Like all great men, Holmes could command the limbs and wills of we ordinary mortals. With that voice beside me, I had walked unafraid into darkness and danger, confident in my friend’s incredible powers and the knowledge that he did nothing without good reason. Ever he found me a willing follower, and did so once again.

Perhaps I merely wished to believe it was truly Holmes, and one last adventure was beginning. “Once more unto the breach,” as brave Harry would have it. But more than anything, it was my friend’s voice that had me throwing on my overcoat, taking my old

service revolver from the drawer of my desk, and emerging into the early morning fog of the capital with more animation in my person than I had possessed in two long years.

My head was spinning with questions as I hailed a Hansom with two short blasts on my cab whistle. I know from long practice, however, that Holmes, even had he been there in person, would not have answered them. When he was engaged upon a case, he could spare no attention for any other topic. Thus I only asked one question as the sound of hooves and the creak of wheels told of the approaching cab.

"Where are we going, Holmes?"

"The Savoy Hotel," said he, then "I beg that hereon in, you do not address your remarks to me out loud. It will only cause confusion, and that we cannot afford."

"Then what am I to do?" said I, still speaking, though now in a whisper.

"Form your words inside your head, and say them silently, as if I could hear them."

"You can read minds?" I gasped.

"Nothing so unsystematic." Even from afar I could hear Holmes' scorn. "Our brains are bubbling whirlpools of half-formed thoughts and ideas, words and sentences crisscrossing like tangled fishing lines. Do but direct a conscious thought to me, and I will understand it. Try to do so now, before the Hansom arrives."

Like this? I essayed a thought, forming the words with the same application as if I were writing up a case.

"Just so. Now, where is that cab?"

It is just now drawing near. Can you not hear it?

"I can hear nor see nothing save what you direct to my attention, Watson. That is why your assistance to-day will be more vital than ever before. You, my dear Watson, will be my eyes."

The cab drew up and I sprang in, directing the driver to take me

to the Savoy. I saw through the windows that a thin light was beginning to penetrate the mist and coal-smoke of the capital. In this wan illumination, I saw the carts and wagons of farmers on their way to market. Save for these hardy tradesmen, there was almost no traffic on the roads. Knowing that we had little time before arriving at our destination, I pressed my companion for details on the business at hand.

"A man is dead, Watson. He was found early yesterday morning alone in his rooms at the Savoy, with the doors and windows locked on the inside and no signs of violence. The doctor diagnosed a sudden heart attack, but Mycroft does not accept that theory."

Mycroft? I was astonished. Holmes had intimated that his brother had some employment with the government, though I knew no more than that. How was Mycroft concerned with the death of a guest at the Savoy?

Who is this man?

"His name is Lucien Auget, and by all appearances he is a French businessman with many interests in London. What is known only to a select few is that Auget, whose mother was an Englishwoman, was one of Her Majesty's government's most highly-placed and trusted agents in France."

A spy.

"A spy, Watson, and one in possession of vital information. Information, alas, that he was unable to communicate to my brother's superiors before his untimely demise."

It's murder, then, I surmised.

"That is what we must discover, Watson. Save Mycroft, there is none other whom I would trust to report everything that is to be found in that room."

I flushed with pride at my friend's words, though they also sparked in me a hint of apprehension. How often had I looked at the same people or locations as Holmes, yet seen not one-tenth of all that he observed? Nor was I aught but a beginner at drawing

inferences from what I saw, being merely the chronicler and biographer of my friend's remarkable powers of deduction. It was no small burden that my friend had placed on me.

Something of my doubts must have communicated themselves to Holmes, for he said then: "Fear not, my friend. We shall solve this mystery together, you and I."

Emboldened by Holmes' words, I returned to the statement of the case.

"The body was discovered at eight o' clock yesterday morning, that is the sixth," Holmes informed me. "Auget took all his meals in his room, a fact that would be unusual if we did not know exactly upon what business he was engaged. When the maid knocked at a quarter past seven, Auget did not answer. She left the tray, planning to return later. When she did so, the tray was untouched. The girl called the floor manager, who, after repeatedly knocking and calling for Auget, and receiving no reply, sent for the spare key and unlocked the door.

"Auget was lying in the centre of the room, all life fled from his body. There were no signs of violence, or that anyone else had entered the room. The only detail that the floor manager noted was that the faucet in Auget's en-suite bathroom was still running. It had apparently been turned on prior to Auget's death. A Scotland Yard inspector was summoned at once, and by and by a doctor, who, after examining the body, diagnosed a sudden heart attack, and death by natural causes.

Yet your brother disputes this.

"He does. The government has agents in Scotland Yard, of course. As soon as the death of Auget was reported, Mycroft asked for my assistance."

I needed not the deductive powers of my companion to reason that there was one man at least who knew that Sherlock Holmes was still alive. Though I tried my utmost to concentrate on the mysterious death at the Savoy, I could not help but feel a bitter disappointment that Holmes, though it was quite natural for him to

confide in his elder brother, had not until now revealed himself to me. How much heartache he could have spared me. I would have said so then and there, but Holmes was already moving on with his recital of the facts as he knew them.

“Mycroft assures me that Auget was in the peak of health, with no family history of heart attacks. The British government would not stake so much on an agent with so doubtful a constitution.”

Then what killed him? I wondered.

“Think, doctor. You know of a dozen things that can induce cardiac arrest, and I, with my knowledge of poisons, could list dozens more. If Mycroft says it was murder, then murder it is, unless we can conclusively prove otherwise.”

Was the doctor able to determine how long Auget had been dead?

“Seven or eight hours was the verdict.”

So whatever occurred took place around midnight. Were there any other guests on that floor of the hotel?

“Excellent, Watson! I know no more than I have told you, so that is just one of the questions to which you must speedily supply the answers.”

But the other guests—if there were any—may have left the hotel yesterday.

“Mycroft assures me that they would be detained by the Yard, and that the room would be preserved until we have seen it. There is a government man posing as a police constable awaiting us at the hotel. He has orders to follow any instructions you may give him, as well as to compel any cooperation you need from the staff of the Savoy and any guests who have been kept for questioning.”

Holmes was interrupted by the arrival of the Hansom at the Savoy. I alighted, paid the driver, and gazed up at the magnificent building. The electrical lights on the outside shone out in the early-morning gloom like sedentary fireflies, glowing over the broad facade and making the name of the hotel, spelled out in gilt letters on the arch above its wide front doors, glow as though they were

fresh from a blacksmith's forge. The walls themselves seemed to glow, for they were built of glazed brickwork that would keep off the unsightly discolouration of the London fog.

"Let us be about our business, Watson." Holmes' voice interrupted my perusal, and I obeyed his commands and walked forward. A glass door was opened for me by a young man in uniform. In the sumptuous and spacious foyer, illuminated with more electric lights, I found a man in quite a different uniform, that of the Metropolitan Police, waiting for me. He was in every respect a nondescript individual, unremarkable in height and build for a policeman, with a face that could have belonged to a man of anywhere between twenty-five and forty. The fellow was evidently on the lookout, for he took note of my arrival at once and came forward to greet me.

"Dr. Watson?" he said, in a low voice that barely carried more than a few metres. "A very great honour, sir."

"A pleasure to meet you, Constable..."

"Palmer, sir." We shook hands, and he gave me an almost imperceptible nod, which I took to be his way of communicating that he was the government man Holmes had told me to expect.

"I'll take you upstairs right away, Doctor," Palmer said briskly. He waved away a smartly-dressed hotel employee, who had been hovering nearby, and took me through the well-appointed foyer, past comfortable chairs and couches, past marble columns and busts depicting the heroes of post-Revolutionary France, to the foot of a set of stairs.

Set into the rail of the stairwell, between two immense steel columns, was a metal gate, the bars of which were burnished to a bright sheen and crafted into curving, concentric circles. It fronted the sturdy wooden frame of an elevator, one of the new electric models pioneered by the American engineer F.J. Sprague. It was manned by another member of the hotel staff, who opened the gate to admit the constable and I.

I had not had the opportunity to ride in one of these new

elevators, and the entire process quite fascinated me. Holmes lay quiescent, permitting me to enjoy the experience. The conductor, whom I now noticed to be tall, wiry, and dark-haired, somewhat swarthy in the manner of southern Europeans, joined us in the elevator box.

“Which floor, *Messieurs?*” he asked, his accent and choice of words clearly marking him as French.

“The sixth,” said I, though given that I was with Constable Palmer, our conductor had guessed my answer and his hand was already moving towards one of the buttons on a gleaming panel next to the interior door of the elevator, which he had closed. Each button corresponded to one of the Savoy’s nine floors, and our friend pressed the one marked “6.”

How can I describe the feeling as the constable, the conductor, and I were launched into the air with a shuddering jerk? I grabbed at the handrail the moment we began to ascend, and something of my emotions, a mixture of excitement and alarm, must have shown on my face, for the conductor smiled slightly before his professional training took over and his face returned to a polite, passive expression.

I had scarcely grown accustomed to the sensation when the elevator lurched to a halt. I glanced up in amazement at the brass dial above the door, where an arrow indicated at which floor the elevator now stood. I could not believe the contraption had taken us so quickly to the sixth floor. Yet it was not so; the arrow merely pointed to the third.

“*Excusez-moi, Messieurs,*” said our conductor, and I caught his irritation, which he made no attempt to hide. “The elevator has been giving trouble all this week. We have three times called for the service man. Please accept my sincerest apologies.”

“It is no matter,” said I generously, for it was no fault of his. “We shall walk the rest of the way.”

“Of course, *Monsieur.*” The man opened the door, then, finding

that the elevator had not aligned itself exactly with the third floor, but had instead halted a foot above it, courteously alighted in order to assist the constable and I to do the same, whereupon he continued to offer apologies to me as we left him and took the stairs to the sixth floor.

“At last!” Holmes spoke, and I could once more hear his impatience. “Have the goodness to ask your companion to show me his boots, then he may stand to one side while we conduct an examination of the corridor.”

I carried out Holmes’ request, and Constable Palmer complied. I knew enough of my friend’s methods by now to understand—he wanted me to examine the carpet and mat in the corridor, and needed the constable’s footprint to compare with any others we might find.

“Describe it to me, Watson,” he said, and I did so, framing the words in my mind. I give this example to convey to my readers how our investigation proceeded so that I need not trouble them with a laborious recital of each future circumstance.

First the corridor. Here all was “mess and confusion,” to use Holmes’ very words. There were indeed the marks of many feet, but they were so crowded around the door that no individual mark could be found. In the corridor itself, I could identify the heavier boots of the policemen and see specks of mud that they had brought with them from outside. I could also discern the more shallow marks, quite unmuddied, of soft shoes, pointed at the toes.

“Doubtless those of the hotel staff,” Holmes said. “You must check later to be sure.” It occurred immediately to me that Homes would have already cast his keen eye over the shoes of our elevator conductor for this very purpose, and this thought was definite enough for my friend to notice. “*Nil desperandum*, Watson. There will be time enough for that. In any case, with all the comings and goings, I did not expect any revelations from this quarter. Now, to the door itself, and the keyhole.”

I bent to look. *There seem to be no new scratches here*, I said. *A few*

old marks, as any keyhole might bear. The lock has certainly not been forced. There is nothing to discover about the lock.

“It is a capital mistake to form such a conclusion when we only have half the available data,” said Holmes, his voice taking on the air of a schoolmaster, as often it did when he was giving a demonstration. “Well, there is little more to be learned here. Let us examine the interior of the suite.”

The door was unlocked. I pushed it open and walked inside. As I did so, I was careful to step to the side so as not to further obscure any traces that might have remained. I looked at the carpet, but to no avail; there was only more mess, the overlapping prints of the same kind that had trampled all over the corridor, police boots and soft shoes.

“The lock then,” Holmes prompted me, and I gave it my full attention.

Here is something, said I. There are scratches here, fresh ones. But why on the inside? Was Auget trying to get out? Fleeing in terror from something inside his rooms, and in such a panic that he failed to fit the key into the lock?

My thoughts went immediately to the dreadful business of Dr. Grimesby Roylott and the adventure of the Speckled Band. I knew that the venom of some snakes caused heart failure. Were we dealing with a similar evil here?

“This is all speculation, Watson,” said Holmes sharply. “Imagination, as I have told you before, is an essential quality in a detective, but wild suppositions are quite useless. Tell me more of the lock and of these scratches.”

They are remarkably thin, almost as if they were made by the blade of a knife or the point of a needle rather than by a blunt key.

“That is more valuable. It is a great pity you do not have a magnifying glass.”

Holmes, of course, never went to the scene of a crime without one. I did not possess anything of the kind.

Would you like to see the rest of the room first, or the body?

“The body. Make particular note of his clothes. Was he in shoes or slippers? Was he dressed for a rendezvous, or for bed?”

I went to ascertain these details. Auget’s body lay under a sheet, which I removed with all decorum. Beneath lay a man of perhaps thirty-eight or forty years of age, clean-shaven save for a thin, dark moustache. His hair was of a similar hue, cut in a fashion somewhat more debonair than was common in London, though which I knew from my travels was quite in keeping with our French cousins. As Mycroft had suggested, he appeared to have been strong and fit. His comely features were twisted with an expression of anguish that I knew all too well from victims of a cardiac arrest. I made a further examination and noted other corroborating signs—flushed skin, save for a blue-grey cyanosis around the nose, jaw clenched, the right hand forming a fist across the chest. I relayed all this to Holmes, and then, my recollections of the Speckled Band still fresh, I checked Auget for any visible signs of snakebite. I found nothing. However, as I unclenched the fingers of Auget’s right hand, which had frozen in an iron grip, I saw a red mark in the centre of his palm.

This looks like a burn, I said. It is a new injury, no more than a day old. How did Auget burn himself? Or did someone burn him?

“Keep sight of that fact, Watson,” Holmes replied. “We may discover something later that bears upon it. Now, as to Auget’s clothes.”

He was barefoot and wearing a hotel dressing gown over his shirt and trousers.

“From this we may infer that Auget was not expecting a visitor,” said Holmes. “That rules out one line of investigation.”

Holmes, I said, a sudden idea striking me, is it not possible that Auget was poisoned some time ago? It could have been slipped into his supper as it was being carried to his room by the killer, or one of his confederates. The maid?

“Good, Watson. That is a worthwhile theory to pursue. Make a

point of speaking to the maid. Consider, however, that a man like Auget played a deadly game of espionage. Habit would have engendered in him an extreme caution against just such an attempt. Describe to me again his symptoms in detail, and it may be that I can rule out a number of common poisons. There are only a few that can act so rapidly that our man could not at least have called out for assistance once he was aware that he had indeed been poisoned. Each of these betrays their presence by certain subtle signs."

I conducted as good a post-mortem as I could without recourse to a complete autopsy. Holmes aided me with prompts from his vast store of toxic pathology. Yet at the end, neither of us could find any definite proof of poison.

"Let us see what the room can add to our notes," said Holmes after we had exhausted our combined knowledge.

I tried first the window, which was closed and fastened. There were no signs of entry. Next I checked the chimney above the small coal fire in the room, but found it too small for anyone to enter by, even had the fixed grille some way up not provided an impenetrable barrier. I even checked in cupboards and under the bed, just in case any clues were waiting there to be discovered, but there was no result. Holmes remained silent throughout, absorbing the room as I described it to him.

Well, Holmes, I said, after we had made a thorough examination of the bathroom and the faucet, which, though it had since been turned off, had still been running when the hotel employees entered the room. *Are you any closer to solving the mystery?*

"There is a distinct paucity of data," Holmes replied, choosing, as ever, not to reply to a direct question of mine while a case was in a state of flux. "We must make every attempt to gather more cards into our hand. It is time we answered an earlier question of yours, Watson; that is, who was staying on this floor on the night Auget met with his most unfortunate end."

We returned to the corridor, and I informed Constable Palmer as to our next objective.

"Only one room was occupied, sir," the agent replied. "A Mr. Boot and his wife."

"I shall see them immediately," said I, and the constable conducted me to the room in which the couple had been confined for almost twenty-four hours.

Mr. Boot, whom my readers from the East Midlands may know thanks to his excellent chemist's shop, was rather indignant over his situation. It was some time before I could calm him down and, with the aid of Holmes, ascertain a few key pieces of information.

The couple had arrived that day from Nottingham and had gone back to their room after dinner. There they were disturbed by maintenance on the elevator, which had not ended until past ten o'clock. Mrs. Boot believed she had heard a knock on a nearby door at around half-past ten.

"I assumed it was the maid bringing a late supper," Mr. Boot said, but his wife disagreed.

"I thought it sounded louder than that," she said. "More urgent. I thought he'd had a visitor."

They had heard no other noise, nor seen anything out of the ordinary. I thanked Mr. Boot and his wife for their time and patience, and promised to bring what influence I had to bear on Scotland Yard to recompense them for their inconvenience.

"I'll see they are taken care of," Constable Palmer said when we had exchanged the Boots' room for the corridor and I mentioned the matter to him.

I was about to ask Holmes what our next stop was to be, when I noticed that the elevator had finally made it all the way up to the sixth floor. Its door was open, and I could see the back half of a maintenance man protruding from the box. I went over to see what he was doing, Constable Palmer following at my heels.

"Sorry, gents, it's out of order," said the engineer, a whippet of a man with oil stains on his puckered forehead.

“So I have observed myself,” said I.

“Fourth time I’ve been out here in the last few days,” the man remarked, with something of a rueful grin. “They ought to keep me on a retainer, eh?” He took off one glove and wiped his brow, smearing the greasy smudge across even more of his skin.

I now noted that the gloves the fellow wore were not the usual sort worn by those who tinkered with and repaired engines powered by steam or coal. They were almost entirely rubber, as indeed were the high white boots that covered his feet and lower legs. It was not hard for me to comprehend why. *Of course. The electricity.*

“Fraid you’ll have to take the stairs, gents,” the engineer said, bending down to pick up a large spool of copper wire. “And if you’ll excuse me, I ought to get on with fixing this ‘ere box. Might be a few sparks, and the current’s been known to jump.” He patted his boots with his free hand. “You’ve not got this stuff to keep you safe.”

The constable and I followed the man’s warning, stepping back and retreating down the corridor to the stairwell. I was about to question Holmes as to our next move, but he was, as ever, one step ahead of me.

“We must speak to the maid and learn what time she brought Auget’s supper, and if it was indeed she who knocked on his door at half past ten.”

“I need to speak to the maid for this floor,” I said to Palmer as we descended the stairs.”

We reached the lobby, and the constable went to enquire at the front desk. It was not long before she arrived. Mademoiselle Rigal, who, like so many of the Savoy’s staff, was French, was an attractive young woman with hair the colour of dark honey. Though she evidenced some distress at having to answer yet more questions about Auget’s death, her answers were clear and concise. She had taken Auget his supper at eight o’clock; she had not

returned to his room; in fact, her day had finished at nine. The night service would have handled any calls after that. We also questioned the night staff, but to no result; Auget had not called for anyone that night.

“So there was no member of staff on that floor at all at that hour,” Holmes said thoughtfully. “That is worthy of note.”

I confess that I did not understand Holmes’ meaning, yet he did not deign to explain himself and spoke no more.

For myself, I tried to emulate my companion and attempt to put the events of the case in order. Were Holmes here in the flesh, he might have retreated to the smoking room of the Savoy with his pipe, but I had no such recourse, having, with an effort, overcome my own tobacco habit some years previously. In fact, I found it hard to think in the electric glare of the Savoy’s light bulbs. They had not troubled me while I was upstairs, but now that I had the chance to slow down and catch my breath, their unflickering potency began to irritate my senses. I felt the need for some air and the natural light of the early morning sun. Holmes had remained silent for some time, no doubt engaged upon that same quiet contemplation that I now sought.

As I returned to the lobby, I saw the engineer step out of the door of the now-working elevator. He was burdened by all the tools, spare parts, and protective garments that I had earlier observed, and a heavy burden it was. The staff of the Savoy were solicitous towards guests, but as none seemed inclined to assist a mere paid workman, I stepped forward to lend the fellow a hand.

“Cor, you’re a gent, sir,” the man said gratefully as I took the copper wire and a box of tools from his arms. “I normally have a lad with me, but he don’t come on the job for another half-hour. If y’can just get me to the front street, I’ll be much obliged.”

“Why don’t you leave your things here and come back later?” I asked.

“It’s against regulations,” the man said with a grimace. “Tell you the truth, I did leave me clobber here the night before last. I’d

not finished, but it was getting late and they were worried about disturbing the guests, so they just told me to come back in the morning. Thought it'd be alright, but when me foreman found out, he gave me a right talking to. Called me irresponsible, he did. Won't be making that mistake again, I tell you. More than my job's worth. Here, be careful with that, sir!"

He gave this last exclamation as I stopped dead in my tracks. The events of the past few hours had gotten me into the habit of relaying almost everything that I saw and heard to Holmes. Now, as the engineer spoke, Holmes' voice thundered with such urgency that I almost dropped the tool box.

"*Watson!* Find out who looked after the equipment that night!"

"When you left your equipment here," I asked the man, speaking more loudly than I needed to in order to drown out Holmes' demands and his irrepressible need to act, "who looked after it?"

"Why, I gave it to the chap who minds the elevator."

Holmes was practically bellowing instructions at me, yet I hardly needed them. I shoved the box and the wire back into the man's arms, causing him to spill his entire load. Before the crash of metal had been replaced by his shouts of anger, I had turned and was advancing across the lobby. Constable Palmer came forward and I seized him by the sleeve, dragging him with me. We marched together to the elevator. Its operator had heard the crash and was looking to see what was the matter.

We did not wait a second.

"Constable," said Holmes and I together, "arrest that man!"

At the same time I drew my revolver, cocking and aiming it in a single movement. If the man had thought of bolting, the sight of my pistol froze him to the spot. In those seconds of hesitation, Constable Palmer had reached his side.

"Are you quite sure, sir?" he asked.

"Yes," said I. "This is the murderer of Monsieur Lucien Auget."

The following afternoon, I sat with a certain amount of grateful relief in the easy chair of my consulting room. It was the first time I had been granted some time to myself; time to think and, hopefully, to talk.

From the arrest at the Savoy the previous day, Constable Palmer and I had escorted our prisoner—one Davide Pillon, originally of Lyon—directly to Scotland Yard. The interviews and paperwork had taken quite some time, and after it was mostly in order I had been treated to a drink by Inspectors Lestrade and Gregson and several other acquaintances from ‘the old days.’ Holmes, who had supplied many of the details I gave to the Yard, had excused himself, though not without promising me that we would talk again when the investigation could proceed unaided. This was now the case.

So I sat, a tumbler of brandy within easy reach on the side table, feeling the rigours of the past few days fade from my muscles. They were replaced by weariness, but also by that deep, warm sense of contentment that I knew well from my days with Holmes. Yet behind this I sensed another wave of emotion gathering pace and building slowly until it washed over me. After Holmes and I spoke again, then it would be over. My last adventure would end. I had hastily written up my case notes during the hours of waiting at Scotland Yard; now I had to close the tale, and that I was by no means eager to do.

“Well, Watson.” Holmes finally returned, his voice tinged with the same lassitude that he always fell into after a case was concluded. I tried to imagine him sitting in the chair across from me with his dressing gown on, his long legs stretched out to the fire, his black clay pipe nestled in the palm of his hand as it dangled from the corner of his mouth.

I truly believe I could see him.

Well, Holmes, said I.

“I must express my sincerest congratulations. I could not have done it without you.”

I was merely your conduit.

“You do yourself an injustice, my friend, as ever.”

Of course, it is all clear to me now, I remarked, though I still cannot entirely follow your reasoning.

“Then I shall endeavour to enlighten you,” said Holmes. I believe we both knew that we were delaying that moment when we had to part. Holmes, I am grateful to say, seemed in no more haste to arrive at that moment than I was.

“The lock was my first clue,” he began. “I realised at once that something must have been carefully threaded through from the outside, where there were no marks, to the inside, which the murderer could not see, and this action caused the scratches. If I may make a confession, I was on the wrong track at first. My first hypothesis was that some kind of poison-coated needle had been used.

“Then your post-mortem told against poison, and I was forced to reconsider. It was then that I realised the significance of the running tap.”

The tap that was never turned off.

“That suggested to me that Auget had been washing his hands or face when the knock at the door came. Water, of course, is an excellent conductor of electricity, and as you had already encountered all the modern electric wonders of the Savoy, I decided that Auget must have received enough of a shock to induce cardiac arrest. The burn mark you discovered on his hand was certainly caused by electricity and suggested to me that he had grasped an object holding an electric charge.

“Then you encountered our friend the engineer and saw his equipment. The copper wire immediately presented itself as a means of carrying a current from the damaged elevator—which I firmly believe was deliberately sabotaged. Our murderer fed the

wire through the keyhole, scratching the inside with the charged tip. He waited until he heard the faucet running in Auget's room to ensure the greatest chance of administering a lethal shock, then knocked urgently to bring Auget to the door. He grasped the handle, was thrown several feet across the room, and we know the rest."

So you were convinced that the murderer was an enemy agent?

"Who else would have known of Auget and his purposes? But the question remained—who was that agent? Since Auget had come from France, I decided that the assassin was most likely French, or at least Continental, as well. It was clearly not Mr. Boot, nor the engineer, as creating aliases of that sort would have been far too difficult. Since the Savoy is well known for hiring French staff, it would have been easy for our man to find a place there. A corroborating factor is that a staff member would have access to the elevator, not to mention the corridor itself, and be familiar with the workings of the Savoy—such as when the maid went off duty, giving him a clear run at Auget."

But the Savoy has an extensive staff. How could you be sure you had the right man?

"I had already begun to suspect the fellow in charge of the elevator—who was in a better position to learn all that he needed of its workings and to damage it in such a way that it would be stuck on the sixth floor, giving him access to a supply of electricity? But the method of assassination had to be considered. Our man had at least as good a chance of electrocuting himself as Auget. Electricity is a random force, apt to bite the hands that wield it.

"So when you saw the equipment the engineer carried, I had to assume our man had gained possession of it in some way and used it to protect himself. When the engineer admitted to leaving his gear at the Savoy, I knew whomever had taken charge of it was likely the murderer. The engineer named the elevator operator, confirming my theory and giving me the last link in the chain."

You seem to have explained everything, said I, then I smiled.

Although there are still a few points upon which I would appreciate a little further clarification.

“Ask away, my friend. We have some little time ahead of us.”

Time before what? I asked, but Holmes, infuriating as always, did not supply a direct answer, saying instead,

“How may I enlighten you further?”

Well, I must admit to being curious from the first as to exactly what you are doing, and how this trick of yours is accomplished!

“It is no mere trick, Watson. I have no time, nor indeed the permission, to instruct you in the deep mysteries of Tibetan Buddhism, but I may say to you that one of the disciplines that I have obtained some small facility for is etheric projection.”

I seem to recall some mention of astral projection from a mystic I saw during my time in Afghanistan, I began.

“It is not the same thing at all. Astral projection allows one’s mind to pass through time as well as space, with the aim of being as one with the cosmos. Etheric projection, on the other hand, permits one to project one’s consciousness through physical space. I am at this moment sitting in a small meditation chamber in Lhasa, yet my mind is there with you in London.”

This is astonishing, Holmes! This knowledge will throw open the doors of human science!

“This knowledge, and more besides, is not to be made public,” Holmes said sharply. “I have already said too much, and I pray that you question me no more upon the subject.”

Then at least you will allow me to ask how it is that you are alive, and in Tibet, I begged.

I could already feel the lonely darkness gathering about me. I knew in my heart that Holmes was preparing to leave me again. Perhaps he was concealing the real truth—that in some way he was speaking from beyond the grave. Or had the events of the past few days been nothing more than a dream after all, a hallucination visited upon me by my scarred and desperate heart?

“That is a long story, Watson. One that I fear I do not have time to tell you in full. Let us just say for the moment that I did not fall into the Reichenbach chasm, though the late Professor Moriarty did. I saw at once the expediency of being ‘dead,’ and resolved to make myself so. Since then, I have been travelling. This business alone has forced me to take a hand once more in the affairs of the world.”

That is hardly adequate, I said, and I could feel myself getting angry. It has been two years, and you did not once attempt to contact me to tell me that you were alive.

“There is reason for that too, Watson. Please believe me.”

“Damn it all!” I said aloud. Then I mastered myself. *What possible reason can you have for being so cold?* I could feel tears forming in my eyes.

“One that I do not have time to explain to you now.”

Why? Why are we running out of time?

Even as I spoke, there was a soft rap at my door. It was the maid, who announced that I had a visitor and handed me his card. I stared at it in astonishment.

It read, in plain block capitals:

MYCROFT HOLMES

“Show Mr. Holmes in at once,” I said. *Did you know about this?* I asked Holmes a moment later. The succession of shocks threatened to overwhelm me.

“I was aware,” Holmes admitted.

I made an intuitive leap. *You have been speaking to Mycroft in the same way.*

“Who do you suppose taught me the technique in the first place?” Holmes said with a certain wry amusement. “Did you not wonder how news of the Savoy murder reached me here in Tibet? Lhasa is ill-provided with telegraph offices.”

Any further explanation, if indeed any was forthcoming, was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Holmes, senior. Mycroft was a bulky, corpulent man, well groomed, though presently red in the

face with the unfamiliar exertion of movement.

"Dr. Watson," he said in a voice deeper, though no less piercing, than that of his brother. "It is good to see you again."

"And you, Mr. Holmes," I said. "May I offer you a brandy?"

"Thank-you, no," said Mycroft, settling his frame into a chair. "I shall not be staying."

"My brother is here," Holmes said, "because in addition to etheric projection, Mycroft is a master of hypnosis. In a few moments, he will use this to ensure that you remember nothing of the past few days. The same will apply to the Scotland Yarders, even Constable Palmer. No one must know that you have any connection to this case. I beg that you submit yourself to this process."

But why, Holmes? I was falling apart. I was not to retain the memory of this case or even that Holmes was alive.

"It is for your own safety, my dear Watson. Mine own as well, but yours in particular. If you value our friendship, please allow Mycroft to do what he must."

"And this is to be all?" I said aloud so both brothers could hear my distress. "You are going to abandon me again?"

"I must," said Holmes. Then, even as my heart broke, he added, "For now."

My eyes widened.

"I will promise you this," said Holmes. "I will return. One day, perhaps a year from now, I will return."

Those words gave me all the strength I needed. Holmes would come back! I would not be on my own forever.

"Then I will do it," said I. "May I write up these few notes?" I turned to Mycroft. "You may file them with Cox & Co."

"As you like," Mycroft said. "You will not even remember writing them. But if you wish to do so, then I shall take that brandy you so kindly offered."

I poured him a generous measure, then hastily scribbled these last few lines.

"I am ready," I told Mycroft when I had finished.

"Please take a seat," he bade me. I did so, watching as Mycroft heaved himself to his feet.

It has been a joy to accompany you on a case again, Holmes, I said, yet it is more wonderful still to know that you will come back.

"The pleasure was all mine, my dear Watson. Indeed, this case has made me even more eager to return to London. Look out for me."

I shall. I smiled. *Good-bye, Holmes.*

"Au revoir, Watson."

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