Vikram’s English Academy (ICSE)

**Question Bank: The Adventure of the Speckled Band**

1. **Who visited Sherlock Holmes’ house? When?**

**Ans:** A young lady by the name Helen Stoner visited Sherlock Holmes’ house. She came on an early morning in the month of April.

1. **Why was the visitor shivering? What solution was given by Sherlock regarding the visitor’s shivering?**

**Ans:** The visitor shivered due to terror. Sherlock Holmes told her to draw up to the fire as she was shivering.

1. **Give a brief background of Helen’s family life.**

**Ans:** Helen Stoner lived with her stepfather Dr. Grimesby Roylott of Stoke Moran. When Dr Roylott was in India, he married Mrs Stoner who was the young widow of Major General Stoner. Helen’s twin sister Julia and she were only two years old at the time when their mother remarried.

1. **What had the mother left to Dr Roylott? What was the provision?**

**Ans:** Julia and Helen’s mother had left her fortune to Dr Roylott. It was with a provision that a certain annual sum be given to each of the daughters in the event of their marriage.

1. **What happened after the family returned to England?**

**Ans:** After thefamilyreturnedto England, Julia and Helen’s mother died. Dr Roylott then took them to live with him in the old manor house at Stoke Moran.

1. **Describe the change that took place in Dr Roylott’s behaviour.**

**Ans:** Dr Roylott would shut himself up in the house and would seldom come out, except to indulge in quarrels with whoever might cross his path.

1. **Which animals does Dr Roylott have? Who are scared of them?**

**Ans:** Dr Roylott had a passion for Indian animals. He had a cheetah and a baboon at that time. The villagers are scared of the animals as much as they are scared of their masters.

1. **Why had Helen gone to meet Sherlock Holmes?**

**Ans:** Her sister had died mysteriously two years ago and it was of her death that she wished to speak to Sherlock Holmes. So, Helen had gone to meet him.

1. **To whom was Julia going to marry? How was her father’s approach to it?**

**Ans:**  Julia had been to visit their aunt near Harrow and she got engaged to an officer from the Marines there. Their stepfather did not object to the marriage.

1. **What strange thing happened then?**

**Ans:** After Julia’s marriage was fixed within a fortnight a terrible event occurred and that deprived Helen of her sister who was a companion to her too. Julia died under mysterious circumstances.

1. **What happened on the fatal night?**

**Ans:** Julia had come to Helen’s room to ask Helen if she had heard anyone whistle in the dead of the night. Helen answered negatively and asked why she was asking. Julia shared that since the last few nights about three in the morning she would hear a low clear whistle. Saying this Julia went to her room and Helen heard the key turn in the lock. Helen could not sleep that night as she had a vague feeling that something terrible might happen. Suddenly Helen heard her sister screaming wildly. As soon as Helen opened the door, she heard a low whistle. Her sister, Julia, appeared at the door, her face blanched with terror. She fell to the ground and shrieked that there was a speckled band and she pointed in the direction of their step-father’s room. A fresh convulsion seized her and choked her words. Helen immediately called out her step-father who called for medical aid from the village but all efforts were in vain and Julia died out of shock.

1. **How has Helen’s life been since the death of her sister? What happened in her life since a month?**

**Ans:** Helen’s life had been lonelier than ever since two years after her sister’s death. A month ago, a dear friend asked her to marry him. Her stepfather did not oppose the match and they were to be married in spring.

1. **What happened two days ago and the previous night?**

**Ans:** Two days ago some repairs were started in her room and she had to move into Julia’s chamber where Julia had died. She was extremely terrified and last night she suddenly heard the low whistle again which had heralded her sister’s death. She sprang up and lit the lamp but nothing could be seen. She was too shaken up to go to bed again and as soon as day broke, she came to Sherlock Holmes to ask for his advice.

1. **What did Sherlock Holmes ask for after Helen’s narration? What was Helen’s answer to it?**

**Ans:** Sherlock Holmes, after a long silence, asked if Watson and he were to go to Stoke Moran and if it would be possible for them to see those rooms without the knowledge of her stepfather. Helen responded that as he had spoken of going into the town that day on some important business, it was probable that he would be away all day.

1. **How was the case, according to Dr Watson? Did Sherlock Holmes agree?**

**Ans:** The case seemed to be a most dark and sinister case. Yes Sherlock Holmes too agreed to it and said that it was dark and sinister enough.

1. **Why did Sherlock Holmes decide to visit Doctors’ Commons? What information did he get there?**

**Ans:** Sherlock Holmes visited Doctors’ Commons where he hoped to get some information which might help them in the matter. He saw the will of the deceased wife i.e. Mrs Stoner, mother of Julia and Helen. The will had a provision that each daughter could claim an income of two hundred and fifty pounds, in case of marriage.

1. **What was Sherlock Holmes’ understanding of the will and its provision?**

**Ans:** Sherlock Holmes noticed that if both girls would have been married, the doctor would have had a mere pittance. Even if one of them was getting married, it would ruin him.

1. **What did Sherlock Holmes first notice on going to Miss Stoner’s former room? What did it indicate, according to Sherlock Holmes?**

**Ans:** Sherlock Holmes’ first noticed that that there wasn’t any great need for repairs at the end wall. Surely it indicated that Helen’s shifting was deliberately done to trap her and murder her.

1. **Mention what was observed in Julia’s room in detail. What did Sherlock Holmes interpret?**

**Ans:** It was observed that there was a bell which had a thick rope attached to it. It was hanging beside the bed and looked newer than the other things. After a keen observation, Sherlock Holmes took the bell-rope in his hand and gave it a brisk tug. He found out that it was a dummy and it was not even attached to any wire. It was fastened to a hook just above the little opening for the ventilator. The room had certain strange features. Sherlock Holmes thought that the builder must be a fool to open a ventilator into another room when he might have opened it out to the fresh air. Sherlock Holmes also noticed that the bed was clamped to the floor.

1. **What was found in Roylott’s room?**

**Ans:** Roylott’s chamber was larger than that of his stepdaughter. Sherlock Holmes noticed a small saucer of milk from under the bed and asked if there was any cat there.

1. **Which was the first piece of advice given by the detective? How did the other two react to it?**

**Ans:** Sherlock advised that both he and his friend must spend the night in Helen’s room (i.e. Julia’s room). Helen and Dr Watson looked at him in astonishment.

1. **Mention the instructions given to Helen to carry out the plan.**

**Ans:** Holmes further mentioned that Helen should be in her new room first (Julia’s room) when her stepfather would come back so that he doesn’t notice anything wrong. After that when he retires for the night, she must open the shutters of the windows, give a signal to Watson and Sherlock Holmes by putting the lamp and then quietly go into the room which she used to occupy first.

1. **Give a sequence of events that took place till Watson and Holmes entered Julia’s room.**

**Ans:** After a few instructions had been given to Helen, Watson and Holmes went outside to wait near the gates. At about nine o’clock the light was put out and all was dark in the direction of the manor house. Two hours passed slowly and then at the stroke of eleven they saw a single bright light shining in their direction. That was the signal meant for Holmes and Watson. They entered the grounds through the in the old walls.

1. **What happened after Sherlock Holmes and Watson entered Julia’s room till a cry was heard?**

**Ans:** Once Sherlock and Watson were in Helen’s current bedroom (originally Julia’s room) Holmes instructed Watson to be quiet and not to fall asleep as his life completely depended on it. After a few minutes a very gentle soothing sound became audible. It was like that of a small jet of steam escaping continually from a kettle. Holmes sprang from the bed the moment they heard it, he struck a match and lashed furiously with his cane at the bell-pull. After a while, Sherlock Holmes ceased to strike and gazed up at the ventilator. Suddenly the silence of the night was broken by the most horrible cry they had ever heard.

1. **Mention the different things Sherlock Holmes had carried with him.**

**Ans:** Holmes had brought with him a long thin cane which he placed beside him on the bed. He also carried a box of matches and a stump of a candle which he laid beside that long thin cane.

1. **What did Sherlock Holmes and his companion notice in Roylott’s room after the cry?**

**Ans:** Sherlock Holmes and his companion i.e. Dr Watson noticed an unusual sight. Dr Roylott was sitting on a wooden chair. His eyes were fixed in a dreadful rigid stare at the corner of the ceiling. Bound tightly round his head was a peculiar yellow band with brownish speckles. The strange headgear began to move from among Dr Roylott’s hair. A diamond-shaped head and puffed neck of a loathsome serpent arose.

1. **What happened to Roylott? What is the speckled band in the story? Where was the creature put back? Why?**

**Ans:**  Roylott died within ten seconds of being bitten by the speckled band i.e. the snake. It is a swamp adder; the deadliest snake in India. The creature was put back into its den so that the police would know what had happened.

1. **How had Sherlock cracked the case and reached a viable (logical) conclusion?**

**Ans:** Holmes explained to Watson that his attention was speedily drawn to the ventilator and to the bell rope which hung down to the bed. The discovery that it was dummy and the bed was clamped to the floor raised his suspicions. He suspected that the rope was a bridge for something passing through the hole and to come to the bed. The idea of snakes came to Sherlock Holmes and he connected it to the fact that Roylott kept a supply of Indian creatures. He realised that the whistle was of the snake and to call the snake back before the morning light he would keep a saucer of milk. The rope was a bridge for the snake which would crawl down and land on the bed.

1. **How did Sherlock Holmes unravel the mystery of Roylott’s death by a snake bite?**

**Ans:** On that night, when Holmes heard the creature hiss, he instantly struck the match and attacked it. It resulted in driving it back through the ventilator and roused its snakish temper because of some of the blows of Sherlock’s cane that heavily came upon it. The snake instantly attacked its master on the other side.

1. **Did Sherlock Holmes hold himself responsible for Roylott’s death? Did he feel guilty? Justify.**

**Ans:** Yes Sherlock Holmes held himself indirectly responsible for Dr Roylott’s death but it didn’t weigh very heavily on his conscience i.e. he wasn’t guilty. It was because it was proven that Roylott was responsible for Julia’s death and he had also attempted to kill Helen.